

WEATHER

Max: 34.0°C
Min: 21.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy.
Max/Min temp.
34/21 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Magha Shuddha
Chaturdasi till 3.44 pm
Star: Ashlesha till 12.30 pm
Varjyam: 11.52 pm to 1.23 am
(Saturday)

Durmuhurtam: 9 am to 9.46 am;
12.52 pm to 1.39 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

HIJRI CALENDAR
Rajab 13, 1442 AH
PRAYERS

Fajar: 6.05 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.00 pm
Maghrib: 6.14 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.27 AM

SUNSET TODAY 6.13 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 5.24 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 6.29 AM

COUNTER POINT



Not bail papers, he is distributing party tickets to potential candidates!

JAGAN OFFERS LAND SWAP WITH RAILWAYS IN VIJ

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy has addressed a letter to Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal, offering transfer of some land to the railways in lieu of the land occupied by nearly 800 families within the municipal corporation limits here.

He requested that the railway land in Rajarajeswari Peta be handed over to the Andhra Pradesh government so that this could be regularised.

The CM explained that nearly 800 poor families lived in houses they had built on railway land in Raja Rajeswari Peta area here more than 30 years ago and that they had unsuccessfully made several representations to the government to regularise these encroachments. "No meaningful effort had been made in the past to resolve the issue," the CM said.

He said that suitable state government land could be provided to the railways by way of an exchange in lieu of this encroached land.

"It is not out of place here to mention that the Railways had not been able to put this land to any use for more than 30 years. The land identified by the state government to be given to the Railways is suitable and located within the limits of the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation," he said.

"More so as the land offered in exchange is of equal value. Both the encroached land and the land proposed for exchange were inspected by a joint team of revenue and railway officials," he said.

RUMOUR | MILL

Demand rises due to belief that it cures people

Meat love threatens donkeys

VADREVU SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, FEB. 25

Donkeys are illegally being slaughtered on the banks of Eluru Canal in West Godavari and the remains are being dumped in the canal, endangering public health.

Donkeys are named in the extinction list. Yet, hundreds of them across the country and in Andhra Pradesh are being slaughtered for meat. Belief is that donkey meat can cure respiratory and breathing

problems and increase the sexual potential of humans.

According to sources, many donkey meat shops exist on the sly in Guntur, Cherukupalli, Bapatla, Tadepalli, Vetapalem, Chirala in Guntur, Krishna and Prakasam districts. The sellers are bringing the donkeys from Maharashtra, Karnataka and Rajasthan.

For the past two years, animal activists in Maharashtra are lodging complaints on illegal transport of donkeys. Some cases

were filed.

Donkey meat is sold at ₹600 per kilo. The meat sellers are buying the meat at ₹15,000 to ₹20,000 per donkey. Meat sellers say meat shops in Krishna, Guntur and Prakasam chose Eluru for selling the meat.

Animal rescue organisation secretary Gopal R. Surabathula said donkeys are being carried to Andhra Pradesh from other states. Nobody makes any effort to curb it, though there are so many check-posts along the

way of its transportation.

He lodged a complaint with the DGP, seeking stoppage of illegal transportation and killing of donkeys. Sale of donkeys is rampant in several districts in the state, the complaint said.

He said that the survival of donkeys is at serious stake. It has almost vanished from the state while donkeys are illegally transported from other states.

FSSAI issued a direction that the slaughtering of donkeys is not permissible.

Nirav can be extradited

UK judge says diamantaire must answer Indian courts

London, Feb. 25: In a comprehensive extradition win for the Indian authorities, a UK judge ruled on Thursday that fugitive diamantaire Nirav Modi not only has a case to answer in the Indian courts but that there is no evidence to suggest he would not receive a fair trial in India.

Nirav Modi, wanted in India on charges of fraud and money laundering in the estimated \$2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, lost his



Nirav Modi

legal battle against extradition on all grounds as District Judge Samuel Goozee also concluded

that there are no human rights concerns that his medical needs would not be addressed as per several Indian government assurances.

The 49-year-old appeared via video link at Westminster Magistrates' Court from Wandsworth Prison in south-west London, dressed in a formal suit and sporting a thick beard, and showed no emotion as excerpts of the judgment were read out in court. "I am satisfied that there is evidence upon which NDM [Nirav

Deepak Modi] could be convicted in relation [to] the conspiracy to defraud the PNB. A prima facie case is established," the judge noted.

"I am not required to exclude all Mr Modi's various alternative theoretical possibilities and narratives; nor exclude his personal interpretation of the evidence, in order to find a prima facie case has been established," the British judge noted, referring to the extradition case of Vijay Mallya as a precedent. — PTI

India, Pak armies agree to observe strict ceasefire

PAWAN BALI and
SRIDHAR
KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, FEB. 25 | DC

The Indian and Pakistan armies on Thursday announced that they would strictly observe a ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) and all other sectors from February 24 midnight in a major de-escalatory move.

The announcement comes after 2020 had seen a 18-year record high of 5,133 truce violations at the LoC and the interna-

tional border with Pakistan in J&K.

In contrast, there were 3,479 such violations in 2019 and 2,140 in 2018. The tensions at the LoC had risen after the terror attack on CRPF convoy in Pulwama in February 2019, and the revoking of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019.

There have been nearly 600 violations in first two months of 2021.

India's director-general of military operations, Lt. Gen. Paramjit Singh Sangha, and his Pakis-

tani counterpart, Maj. Gen. Nauman Zakaria, held discussions over the hotline, and the two sides reviewed the situation along the LoC and all other sectors in a "free, frank and cordial atmosphere". A joint statement by both armies read: "In the interest of achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace along the borders, the two DGMOs agreed to address each other's core issues and concerns which have the propensity to disturb peace."

Short & Sweet



Indian captain Virat Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant and R. Ashwin celebrate the wicket of England's Jack Leach on the second day of the third cricket Test match against England at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday. India registered their second Test win inside two days overhauling a meagre target of 49 against England to take an unassailable 2-1 lead in the four-match series on Thursday. Spin duo Axar Patel and Ashwin swung the match in India's favour. England's previous Test loss inside two days came way back in 1921 against Australia. ■ **Reports on Page 7**

— PTI

Centre tightens rules for social media, OTT

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, FEB. 25

The government on Thursday announced the tightening of rules governing social media and streaming companies, requiring them to take down contentious content immediately, appoint grievance redressal officers and assist investigations by revealing the originator of a message or tweet.

The new Code of Ethics and self-regulation mechanism for video streaming services mean that anyone who misuses social media and OTT platforms will be under the strict vigil of the government and is liable to face punishment.

As part of new rules to regulate online content, the government will ask the platform to reveal the originator of a message or tweet, and WhatsApp,

Facebook, Twitter and other social media firms as well as streaming services such as Netflix, YouTube and Amazon Prime Video will be required to quickly take down any contentious content flagged by the government or legal order.

They also have to appoint executives to coordinate with law enforcement and remove content depicting nudity or morphed pictures of women.

YSRC PICKS SIX MLC CANDIDATES IN MLAS QUOTA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

The YSRC on Thursday announced the names of its candidates for the six MLC seats in the MLA quota and decided not to field candidates in the Teacher's constituency MLC election.

Speaking to reporters, adviser to the government (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said that its candidates would Balli Kalyan Chakravarthy (Tirupati), Mohammed Iqbal(Hindupur), Challa Bhageerath Reddy(Kurnool), C. Ramachandraiah (YSR Kadapa), Mohmmmed Karim-unneesa (Vijayawada), and Duvvada Srinivas from Srikakulam.

■ Full report on Page 2

यूनियन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Union Bank of India

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SHORT TAKES

HC DIRECTS NACO DG TO APPEAR ON MARCH 9

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Andhra Pradesh High Court directed the additional secretary and director general of National Aids Control Organisation (NACO) to appear before it on March 9 to show cause as to why contempt of court proceedings should not be admitted.

AP State Aids Control Society contractual employees S. Venu. P. Venkata Subbaiah and M. Jaya Kumar moved the High Court seeking contempt of court proceedings against the NACO officials as they failed to concede to their basic demands. The employees submitted a representation to the senior officials earlier, seeking enhancement of remuneration on par with employees working in the same project. However, NACO revised remuneration to only senior medical officers and medical officers.

The employees approached the High Court to direct the additional secretary and director general of NACO Aarti Ahuja to act on the representation and pass an order.

However, the court allowed the NACO official to either appear before the court in person or through an advocate.

TD EX-MLA MOVES HC TO PERMIT HIM IN CIVIC POLLS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Former Telugu Desam MLA J.C. Prabhakar Reddy along with four others filed a petition in the High Court to allow them to contest in the ensuing municipal polls in Tadipatri on Thursday.

The petitioner's counsel informed the court that the petitioners were not allowed to file their nomination papers to contest in the civic polls earlier and their nomination papers were torn.

The counsel further informed the court that the State Election Commission issued an order recently asking those who failed to file their nomination papers and also those who were forced to withdraw their nomination papers under duress, to approach the district collectors to seek remedy.

After hearing the parties, the court posted the next hearing to March 1.

KADAPA OFFICIALS TOLD TO PAY ₹10K TO PETITIONER

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Andhra Pradesh High Court directed the district collector and district educational officer of YSR Kadapa district to pay ₹10,000 to the petitioner, granting leave to file counter affidavit as the duo failed to file it for a long period of 10 years.

A single judge bench headed by justice Battu Devanand held hearing on a petition filed in 2010, seeking appointment on compassionate grounds for untimely death of a teacher on 17-04-1995 in harness, here on Thursday.

The court observed that though both the officials who were the respondents were served notice to file a counter affidavit in the case on 18-10-2010, they failed to do so. The court said that as per Rule 12 of AP Writ Proceedings Rules, 1977, the respondents, who intend not file counter affidavits were to file within six months from the date of receipt of notice. In case they intend to file counter affidavit beyond six months stipulated period, they have to seek leave of the court by filing an appropriate application. However, under Rule 12 (ii), the six months period was reduced to 120 days through an amendment in 2017.

The court observed that the respondents came up with counter affidavit along with a leave application at present, with a reason for failing to file the counter affidavit for 10 years saying that due to oversight. It said that central government and state government and its instrumentalities were the biggest litigants in the country and around 80% of all cases were either contested by the state or appealed by it. The court felt the need on the part of officers to be made accountable for disposal of long pendency of cases.

Accordingly, the court granted leave to the officials (respondents) to file counter affidavit on condition of payment of ₹10,000 to the petitioner within 10 days from Thursday.

Committed to develop Amaravati, says Botsa

Govt has clarity on developing of the region as Legislative Capital

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

The state government has a clear-cut clarity on the development of Amaravati region as Legislative Capital towards which it has taken appropriate initiatives, said minister for municipal administration Botsa Satyanarayana.

Speaking to the media here on Thursday, he said a bank guarantee of ₹3,000 crore has been approved from the government side, which includes developing seed access and karakatta roads.

The minister alleged that Telugu Desam was intentionally creating confusion among the people on Amaravati development even though N. Chandrababu Naidu failed to provide a wide access route to the region during his tenure.

He wanted Naidu to explain why seed access roads could not be laid

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● The minister alleged that Telugu Desam was intentionally creating confusion among the people on Amaravati development even though N. Chandrababu Naidu failed to provide a wide access route to the region during his tenure.

● He wanted Naidu to explain why seed access roads could not be laid during the five-year TD term, and whether anyone had obstructed him.

during the five-year TD term, and whether anyone had obstructed him. He stated that Naidu had spent hundreds of crores on temporary structures misusing public money but did not acquire land for a small connecting bridge.

Satyanarayana said that the state government has proposed to construct karakatta road at a cost of ₹150 crore. That apart, the current seed access road would also be completed to

fully connect it to Kaza village on the National Highway. He assured to provide all basic infrastructures like roads, drainage and electricity in the capital area of Amaravati as promised by the previous government.

The minister wanted to know what Naidu had done for Kuppam and why he did not come up with the idea of urbanising Kuppam to elevate it as a municipality or a small city.

He said, "While Naidu

failed miserably in Kuppam, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy enhanced Pulivendula to a model city by taking up developmental activities. People are furious with Naidu and feel betrayed. This anger has been reflected in the recent panchayat elections."

Satyanarayana claimed that people have immense faith in the YSRC government as Jagan Mohan Reddy does not encourage unnecessary graphics to deceive people and public welfare is the priority. He added that Naidu is only concerned about the 29 villages in the Amravati region rather than the overall development of the state.

The minister further added that as per the government policy, Visakhapatnam will be the administrative capital, Amaravati the legislative capital and Kurnool the judicial capital.



Minister Velampalli Srinivas conducts campaign at One Town in Municipal elections for YSRC candidates in Vijayawada on Thursday.

Naidu meets partymen to retrieve lost ground

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 25

Put on a slippery wicket and shocked to his bones, former chief minister and Telugu Desam supremo Nara Chandrababu Naidu returned with folded hands on Thursday to Kuppam, his assembly segment that has turned its back on him and his party in the Gram Panchayat polls.

Naidu, representing the assembly segment for the seventh consecutive term, has found his Telugu Desam won only 14 of the 89 panchayats, while the ruling YSRC took 74. He is seeking to rejuvenate the party cadre in an effort to retrieve the lost ground.

The former CM started a three-day tour of his constituency on Thursday and was chairing back-to-back meetings with party leaders in the constituency to review the results.

Addressing a gathering at Gudupalli, Kuppam rural, the TD chief indirectly hit out at panchayat raj and rural development minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy. "The Punganur leader would not have contested from his constituency in previous elections if I had a thought of taking revenge on him. But I have never encouraged revenge politics."

● Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said the YSRC would not be involved in the Teachers quota elections and left the decision to Teachers Unions.

TD ACTIVIST ATTEMPTS SELF-IMMOLATION NEAR NAIDU'S CONVOY IN KODATHANAPALLI

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 25

Tense situation prevailed for a brief while as Telugu Desam chief Chandrababu Naidu's convoy passed through Kodathanapalli in Kuppam assembly segment. A party activist attempted self-immolation by pouring petrol on himself.

The youth was identified as Somu. "He was unable to bear the harassment from YSRC leaders during the panchayat elections,

TD leaders claimed.

When the activist poured petrol on his body and tried to self-immolate, some local leaders prevented him and brought the issue to the notice of Naidu. The TD chief asked these leaders to take Somu to Amaravati where he would speak to him individually.

In the meanwhile, the Chittoor district police tightened security for Naidu. Some YSRC leaders had warned that they would obstruct his visit to Kuppam.

years to do unethical politics and dent the morale of the TD cadre. I have seen many politicians but never anyone as bad as YSRC leaders. They should know that politics is meant to serve people's interests but not to serve personal interests and take revenge," he said.

Alleging that the polling process in panchayat elections was manipulated, Naidu lamented that the polls were held under the influence of money and power, and that the candidates supported by the TD were threatened by the YSRC leaders.

"Candidates supported by the ruling party spent huge amounts of money and distributed liquor brought from Karnataka

to win the present elections in Kuppam. They should feel ashamed about this. Telugu Desam didn't lose in Kuppam, it is the democracy that got defeated," he alleged.

Naidu also alleged that the YSRC leaders who had camped in Kuppam to threaten and influence TD workers had deployed outsiders there to defeat democracy. "Kuppam is known for its peace, reputation and ethical values. But the ruling party had completely polluted the atmosphere here, only to take revenge on me. I'm confident that the Kuppam people will revolt against the YSRC's unethical ruling and teach them a befitting lesson in the coming days," he said.

stock and had to throw away all the clothes, utensils, and other articles leaving behind a bare minimum. "The gas is etched in our minds, and traces can be still found all over," she said.

Veteran CITU leader P. Venkata Reddy, whose wife P. Seetharatnam is contesting the elections, said the government forgot about the super speciality hospital promised soon after the incident. Experts have said the gas will have its



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy congratulates K. Kaivalya Reddy from Nidadavolu, West Godavari, at the camp office on Thursday. Kaivalya Reddy found discovers asteroid between Jupiter and Mars with the help of Pan Stars Telescope.

CM hails girls on achievement, announces cash incentives

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Kaivalya Reddy of Nidadavolu, accompanied by her parents Srinivasula Reddy and Vijayalakshmi, called on Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at his camp office here on Thursday.

The Chief Minister congratulated her and announced a cash intensive of ₹1 lakh for finding asteroids between Jupiter and Mars using Pawn Stars telescope.

International Astronomical Search Collabor-

● International Astronomical Search Collaboration, which is recognised by NASA, has presented Kaivalya Reddy an award in recognition of her work.

● Kaivalya Reddy took her training from Space Port India Foundation.

India Foundation. In a separate programme, the Chief Minister congratulated Jonnadula Lishitha and announced a cash incentive of ₹1 lakh for her record in fire limbo skating. Lishitha created a world record in vajra in the 8-inch low and 20-metre length category.

Lishitha, who hails from Tanuku in West Godavari district, was accompanied by Tanuku MLA Karumuri Nageswara Rao, her parents Anusha and Uma Maheswar and coach Lavanya.

LOKESH: YSRC'S FAN WILL STOP FUNCTIONING

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Telugu Desam national general-secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Thursday said the YSRC leaders are greatly worried at the fearless manner in which the TD cadres fought the gram panchayat polls despite the false cases, attacks, threats and murders.

He said that the speed of the YSRC fan in the gram panchayat polls was reduced to a great extent and the public mood was such that the fan would stop functioning altogether in the coming municipal elections.

He stated that everybody should condemn the YSRC attacks on former MLA Tangirala Sowmya in Nandigama and on the TD leaders in Tiruvuru and other places and alleged that the lawless Y.S. Raja Reddy constitution was brought in to strike fear and suppress all sections of the people.

On Thursday, Lokesh called on former MLA Sowmya and expressed his solidarity to her fight against the mafia involved in the illegal mining activities.

He also visited the TD victims' families in Tiruvuru assembly segment. He told the Krishna Reddy family in Ramachandrapuram that the party would stand behind and extend all support to them in their struggle against the oppressive attacks by the ruling party leaders.

Lokesh said that Jagan and his party leaders talked about the TD finding no candidates in the panchayat elections and boasted that they had won 151 MLAs seats in the assembly elections but after the panchayat polls started, the CM began to feel the real impact of the people's disapproval of his Government's policies.

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy instructed officials to take foolproof measures for the smooth organization of the 29th Southern Zonal Council meeting scheduled to held at Tirupati on March 4. He conducted a preparatory meeting to discuss about the agenda and arrangements of the meeting at the CM Camp office at Tadepalli on Thursday.

The officials briefed the Chief Minister on the issues to be addressed at the Council regarding the state. Union home minister would chair the meeting to be attended by Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana state, Puducherry and special invitees from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep. Officials said

that 26 issues will be coming up for discussion during meeting.

The Chief Ministers/Lieutenant Governor/Administrators of eight states/UTs in the Southern Zone will participate along with their respective Chief Secretaries, Advisers and other senior officers in keeping with important agenda items.

On the whole, approximately 90 to 100 dignitaries/officers are expected to participate in this meeting.

The Union government had requested host state AP to make requisite logistical arrangements for the meeting including reception, security, transport, boarding, lodging, etc., for about 80 dignitaries/officers from state/ UT governments and Central ministries.

All members and advisers of the council from state also asked to attend this meeting.

SEC, DGP APPRECIATE PARA POLICE FOR SERVICES DURING GP ELECTIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 25

State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar lauded Prakasham collector Pola Bhaskar and SP Siddharth Kaushal for effective use of Para Police, a first of its kind initiative to utilise the services of staff from different departments to prevent any untoward incidents during the recent gram panchayat elections.

The SEC appreciation came after the DGP Goutam Sawang told the Election Commission that the para-police had worked tirelessly to prevent any untoward incidents during the panchayat elections.

Among the 3459 Para Police deployed during

the election, 1024 are those working as Grama Mahila Samrakshana Karyadarsi, 22 are Tribal Welfare staff, 55 are BC Welfare staff, 577 are Welfare Education assistants, 836 are Village surveyors, 205 and 740 are Engineering Assistants. They were given a special uniform at the instance of the SP while performing Para Police role, DGO told the SEC.

According to the DGP, special training programme was conducted on what duties the para-police should perform during the elections. They bravely stayed at the polling stations allotted to them till the end of the elections and carried out their duties with commitment and without any temptations.

Thousands of gas-leak affected people have not received ₹10,000 package, says an electrician

Styrene affected people may not make it easy for YSRC

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 25

Styrene gas affected residents in the industrial suburb of Visakhapatnam may give a tough time to the ruling YSRC that is confident of winning ward No. 92 that encompasses six gas-hit villages.

Styrene leak from LG Polymers chemical plant in RR Venkatapuram under Visakhapatnam West assembly constituency on May 7 last year killed

11 people and injured over a thousand people. Many are still complaining of ailments related to the gas and getting treatment from a makeshift clinic.

The state government gave ₹1 crore to the families of the deceased and ₹10,000 to every individual in the affected villages covering a population of 20,000.

"People are happy with both the packages but about thousands of others who have not received the

₹10,000 package?" asked K. Satish, an electrician by profession and whose son was six months old then had a close brush with the death.

A resident of Venkatapuram said people lost more than what the government gave in compensation. The administration forgot about the chronic illness that has been giving traumatic moments to the residents.

His neighbour, Alivelu Mangamma, said most people lost their groceries

impact for 30 years on the people, he said.

The high power committee has recommended that compensation be paid to the people living with 2.8 km radius, but the government ignored and paid to only half the affected people, he said.

TD is also making styrene an important issue in campaigning. Visakhapatnam West MLA P.V.G.R. Naidu said compensation was yet to be paid to thousands of people.

TD WILL REDUCE PROPERTY TAX BY HALF, SAYS JAGADISWARA RAO

Visakhapatnam: Telugu Desam will reduce the property tax amount by half if the party won the majority in the GVMC council, said MLC Buddha Naga Jagadiswara Rao while campaigning for the party candidate Boddeda Varalakshmi in ward no 80 in Anakapalle on Thursday.

He said the tax had been hiked by 10 times after YSRC government came to power. Now the tax was being based on the house's capital value, which was earlier based on rental value. If the party won in all the five wards in Anakapalle, he would try to resume Anna canteens in these wards.

SHORT TAKES

AP RECORDS
82 NEW CASES OF
COVID, NO DEATHDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Andhra Pradesh registered 82 fresh Covid-19 cases and no death in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported that out of 35,443 samples tested on Thursday, 83 persons were found infected with the virus. Out of a total number of 1,38,43,190 persons tested for the virus, 8,89,585 were found infected with the virus and of them, 8,81,806 were recovered while undergoing treatment and 611 are still active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of confirmed Covid-19, Chittoor reported 21 cases, followed by eight each in Guntur and Kurnool, seven each in Krishna and Visakhapatnam, six in Nellore, five each in Anantapur, East Godavari, Srikakulam, West Godavari, four Kadapa, one in Prakasam and zero in Vizianagaram.

With regard to cumulative Covid-19 active cases, Krishna continued to top the state with 91, followed by 84 in Chittoor, 67 in East Godavari, 66 in Nellore, 46 in West Godavari.

Identifying people
for jabs turns tricky

AP awaits rules for vaccination to people aged over 60 yrs

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

With the Centres issuing directions to states on administering Covid-19 vaccine to people aged more than 60 years and also to those aged 45 years plus with comorbidities from March 1, and even as Andhra Pradesh gets ready to take up vaccination as per the schedule, they are facing a tough task in identifying the beneficiaries.

State health authorities are awaiting guidelines from the Centre on taking up vaccination for these two categories of people. Though there is an option to register on CoWIN app to undergo vaccination, it remains to be seen as to how many aged persons are able to download such an app on their smartphones and use it. With

● **HEALTH SOURCES** maintain that nearly 60 to 70 per cent of healthcare workers underwent both the first and second dose of vaccine as a good number of them, including doctors, avoided undergoing vaccination for varied reasons, including the fear of health complications.

regard to the 45 years plus people having multiple health complications, they are supposed to get a certificate from their doctor about the kind of health problems they are facing to become eligible for the vaccination.

Health sources maintain that nearly 60 to 70 per cent of healthcare workers underwent both the first and second dose of Covid-19 vaccine as a good number of them, including doctors, avoided undergoing vaccination for varied reasons, including the fear of health complications and also due to death of two such workers after vacci-

nation.

At present, the frontline warriors, including police personnel, are undergoing the first dose of vaccination.

Health authorities admit that there is no readily available data on the beneficiaries and they may have to rely on details mentioned in Aadhar cards or any other document, especially with regard to their age.

Meanwhile, the state health authorities are planning to take up training programmes for health personnel on going about the process of identifying beneficiar-

ies and counselling them on the need to undergo vaccination.

A senior health official said, "We are awaiting directions from the Centre on dealing with these two categories of beneficiaries."

On the other hand, as the Centre is also allowing private hospitals to administer vaccine by charging a specified amount, it has to be seen how many will go for such a vaccine as most people prefer government facilities as it is provided for free of cost.

IMA state president Dr S. Vijaya Kumar Prasada Reddy said "When the government intends to administer Covid-19 vaccine free of cost, not all targeted beneficiaries are turning up for varied reasons and if people are asked to pay, very few people will go for the jab."

Punish stalker sternly: Panel

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

AP Women Commission chairperson Vasireddy Padma said that the government would support the family members of Kota Anusha, who was murdered by a stalker Vishnuwardhan Reddy. She paid floral tributes to the body of Anusha at Gollapadu village and consoled her parents. She stated that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy reacted seriously to the incident and directed stern punishment to the culprit.



Vasireddy Padma

Padma lamented that she was shocked to know about the murder of Anusha by the stalker. She assured the parents about filing the case in the fast-track court.

● **PADMA LAMENTED** that she was shocked to know about the murder of Anusha by the stalker. She assured the parents about filing the case in the fast-track court.

Meanwhile, members of Students Federation of India took out a rally in Narasaraopet on Thursday demanding swift and stern punishment to the culprit. They staged a human chain protest at the Saibaba temple bridge centre and demanded protection and safety to girl students.

SPECIAL TRAIN SERVICES EXTENDED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 25

East Coast Railway decided to extend the special train services between Visakhapatnam-Jagdalpur (via Araku Valley) following demand from the public.

The train comprises a Vista dome coach up to Araku Valley.

The train will leave Visakhapatnam daily at 6.45 am, with effect from March 1, which will reach Jagd-

alpur on the same day at 4.25 pm.

In the return direction, the train will leave Jagdalpur daily at 9.55 am with effect from March 2, which will reach Visakhapatnam on the same at 8.20 pm.

These pair of trains will have stoppages at Simhachalam, Kottavalasa, Srungavarapukota, Borraguhalu, Araku, Koraput, Jeypore and Kotpar Road between Visakhapatnam and Jagdalpur.

First ancient engraving refers
to Devaraya's death, unearthedDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Officials from Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) discovered the first epigraphical reference to the death of Krishnadevaraya Nayaka, the emperor of Vijayanagara empire during 1509-1529, in an inscription found near Gopalakrishna temple at Honnenahalli of Tumkur district recently.

The inscription found in Kannada recorded the demise of Krishnadevaraya, the third ruler from Tuluva dynasty on October 17, 1529 AD.

The ASI received a photograph of this inscription from Prof. K.R. Narasimhan. It is engraved on a slab kept to the north of Gopalakrishna temple at Honnenahalli. The inscription mentions about Honnenahalli being empowered to provide

offerings to the god Viraprasanna Hanumanta of Tumkur by Timmappanna Nayaka along with some officials and inhabitants of Tumkur village.

Krishnadevaraya was born on January 17, 1471 and died of ill-health on October 17, 1529.

The finding of an inscription dated July 27, 1532 earlier, engraved on the north and west walls of the third prakara of the Kalahastisvara temple at Srikalahasti in Chittoor district, mentioned the coronation of Krishnadevaraya's cousin Achyutaraya as the king on October 21, 1529 AD before Kalahastisvara in Kalahasti.

Historians say that findings from these two inscriptions have confirmed for the first time that Achyutaraya was crowned on the fourth day after the death of Krishnadevaraya.



ASI discovers first epigraphical reference to the death of Krishnadevaraya Nayaka in an inscription found near Gopalakrishna temple at Honnenahalli of Tumkur district in Karnataka recently. — DC

129 URS
CELEBRATIONS
TO START ON
MARCH 1DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

The 129 Urs celebrations of Hazarath Kale Mastan Shah Aaulia Baba Dargah would be held from 1 to 5 March at Guntur. Dargah hereditary trustee Ravi Rammohan Rao released the posters and brochures of Urs and said that Hindu and Muslim in large numbers would attend the Urs celebration from AP, Telangana and other states. Addressing a press meet here on Thursday, he said that Mastan Baba is worshipped by Hindus and Muslims in unison and this Urs is organised for the past 128 years at Dargah.

Rammohan Rao said that the Urs would begin on March 1 with Gandha Mahotsavam on the Baba's tomb with Chandini decoration and Sandal rally would be held at 11 pm night on the same day in which thousands of devotees would participate. He said that on the second day on March 2, Deeparadhana (lamp lighting), Gandham prasadam and Annadanam (poor feeding) would be performed. He stated that on March 3, Gyarmi Sharif would be held under which Quran recitation and special prayers will be held. Rammohan Rao said that the Dargah committee will distribute the Chaddars of the Baba among devotees on March 4 and Fakirs would be honoured. He said that the conclusion of Urs would be held on March 5 performing religious devotional rally with special prayers.

Groupism mars
chances of YSRC in
Kurnool civic pollsDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, FEB. 25

Groupism in YSRC causing trouble to the party leaders ahead of Municipal elections. Kurnool Municipal corporation which has 52 wards is divided between MLA Hafeez Khan and former MLA S.V. Mohan Reddy. Same situation is prevailing in Nandikotkur and Gudur Municipalities. Councillor aspirants are in a dilemma in aligning with strong leadership.

Kurnool Assembly constituency law maker Hafeez Khan and S.V. Mohan Reddy have been at loggerheads in establishing their control over the civic body. S.V. Mohan Reddy, who has returned to YSRC fold just before the general elections in 2019 claims that his support base is an asset to the ruling party and wants his candidates to be fielded as official councillors. The tussle to wrest more number of councillors to their fold has taken the issue before a minister who called both the warring factions and tried to work out a solution.

But that did not go through. MLA Hafeez Khan said out of 52 wards in Kurnool city, 33 falls under his constituency and he has all the candidates for the ward councillors. He said it is impossible to provide any place to S.V. Mohan Reddy supporters in the given matrix. He said all the 33 ward councillor aspirants have been doing commendable social work in the past year when the Covid hit the people. They had been reaching out to the needy people and supplying them vegetables,

● **KURNOOL ASSEMBLY** constituency law maker Hafeez Khan and former MLA S.V. Mohan Reddy have been at loggerheads in establishing their control over the civic body.

● **THE TUSSLE** to wrest more number of councillors to their fold has taken the issue before a minister who called both the warring factions and tried to work out a solution.

ration and medicines when the majority of the poor people had no gainful employment. As such all the 33 ward councillor aspirants are well entrenched in the wards and would easily win the contest.

SV Mohan Reddy faction was demanding 16 of the 33 ward councillors and it may be difficult at this point, said Hafeez Khan. On TDP poll preparations, he said they don't have candidates in majority of the wards in Kurnool.

When contacted, TDP Kurnool President TG Bharath said his party cadre is intact and has good support from the public. He said the party has solid candidates in all the wards and would give a tough fight. Bharath said ruling party may have its own advantages but we are pitting strong candidates to have their candidates elected.

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, KATNENI GEETHA PRIYA, D/o PANAKALA SUBBARAO, D. No.5-90-28/1, Chandra Mouli Nagar 7/1, Guntur, A.P. I have changed my name as PANAKALA GEETHA PRIYA. Hereafter my name is known as PANAKALA GEETHA PRIYA.

DECCAN Chronicle

26 FEBRUARY 2021

Disha bail order should set welcome precedent

The order of the additional sessions judge of Patiala House Courts, Delhi, granting bail to Bengaluru-based climate activist Disha A. Ravi, arrested for her alleged role in the preparation of a “toolkit” that the police claimed led to the violent incidents in the nation’s capital on January 26, has sought to right two wrongs. One, it has made a timely intervention and stopped the state from using legal tools to put dissenting citizens behind the bars for no end. Two, it has reassured the people that Article 19 (1) of the Constitution which guarantees the freedom of speech and expression has the strength to come to the aid of a legitimate dissenter.

The court demolished the Delhi police’s case by pointing out that it was devoid of material evidence to connect the activist with the case slapped on her; and more importantly, whatever she did was protected by the Constitution. The court found that the investigating agency which charged the activist with sedition has produced “not an iota of evidence” to link her with seditious or violent acts; and reminded the police that it cannot resort to “surmises or conjectures” to convince itself of the culpability of an accused. The “scanty and sketchy” pieces of evidence the agency has produced are not enough to send a 22-year-old young woman with absolutely blemish-free criminal antecedents to jail, it said. The strong words on the nature of the evidence were, in fact, a censure of the police, which went overboard picking up a citizen violating the Supreme Court’s guidelines and her basic rights.

It’s an irony that a government manned by people who have participated in the greatest freedom restoration movement in Independent India is resorting to suppressing voices of legitimate dissent

The court made a series of observations on the citizen’s rights that a democracy would love the judiciary to assert and protect in the face of state assault. “Citizens are conscience keepers of the government in any democratic nation,” it said. “They cannot be put behind the bars simply because they choose to disagree with the state policies.” In a warning to the self-appointed “patriots” who miss no chance to threaten dissenters with the label “traitor” and the state which has a profligacy to slap sedition charge at the drop of a hat, the court said, “The offence of sedition cannot be invoked to minister to the wounded vanity of the governments.” The court observed that difference of opinion, disagreement, divergence, dissent, or even disapprobation, are recognised legitimate tools to infuse objectivity in state policies. If the Constitution was not enough, the judge referred to the nation’s 5,000-year old civilisation and the Rig Veda to remind everyone that we were “never been averse to ideas from varied quarters”.

It’s an irony that a government manned by people who have participated in the greatest freedom restoration movement in Independent India is resorting to suppressing voices of legitimate dissent. They should not ideally expect the nation to experience the silence of a graveyard when they go about implementing their agenda. They will face, to quote the judge, an “aware and assertive citizenry, in contradistinction with an indifferent or docile citizenry”, which is, “indisputably a sign of a healthy and vibrant democracy”. The refreshing thoughts must set in motion a process to free many more that are languishing in prisons facing similar charges.

An act of sycophancy

The Gujarat Cricket Association succumbed to the temptation of naming the stadium after the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The cricket arena had many earlier monikers like Gujarat and Motera, besides having borne the name of a famous son of the soil in Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

The baptism does break an unwritten law that no edifice should be named after a living person even if it seemed apt to honour a person who headed GCA in the long running Indian tradition of politicians getting themselves elected as presidents of cricket associations. The concept of a magnificent, cricket arena that cost more than ₹800 crores came from his grand vision and its creation was carried out by the other leading contemporary political personality, Union home minister Amit Shah, and his son who is the BCCI secretary. Donald Trump, as US President, even paid a ceremonial visit there just before the pandemic was declared in 2020.

The honour bestowed spontaneously and sentimentally on Narendra Modi is somewhat akin to India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru being awarded the Bharat Ratna by the first President Rajendra Prasad. But it does rankle considering this is a stadium named like this since the Maharashtra politician and chief minister S.K. Wankhede named one in Churchgate in Mumbai after himself in 1974. A second cricket stadium within a stone’s throw of historic Brabourne was owed to a clash of egos between Maharashtra Cricket Association and Cricket Club of India. The era of building an edifice of homage to members of one political family is thought to be well and truly over. And so the Congress playing the Sardar Patel card in criticism seems hypocritical now. The issue, however, is to do with the need for 21st-century India to evolve from a sycophantic, fetishist and neta-worshipping past.

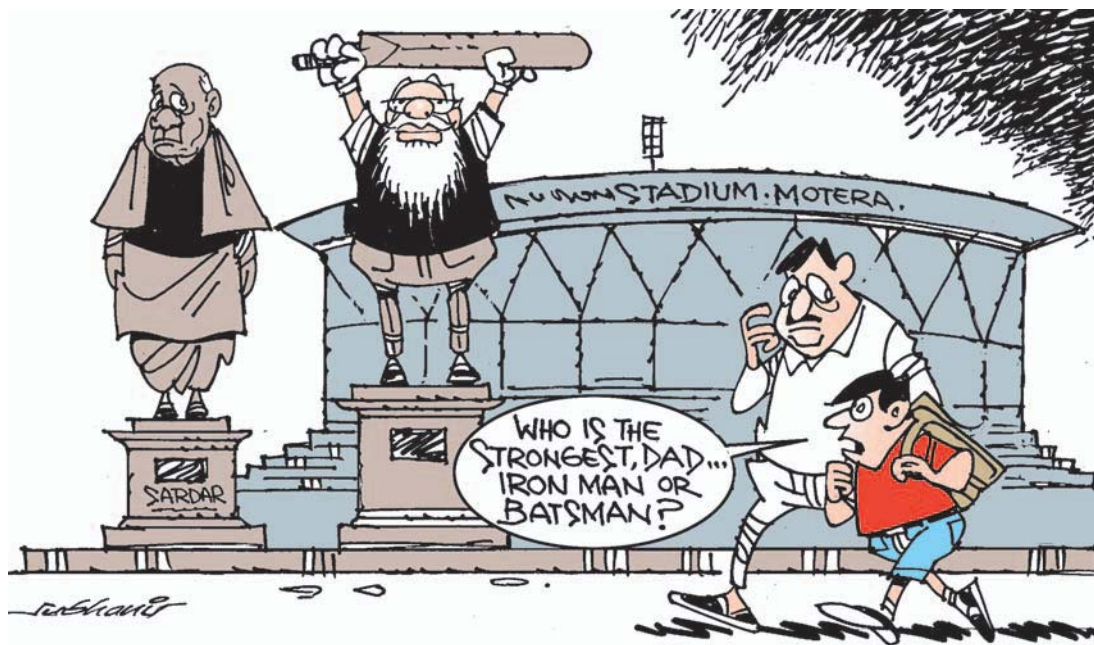
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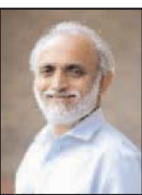
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Subhani



Arrests on flimsy basis undermine democracy



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

It has been the bad practice and bad habit of the Indian police and criminal investigators to slap a mountain of charges against any accused in the hope that at least some, or even one, of them would stick. This amounts to indulging in slander in more than a legal sense. And this is what the Delhi police and its investigators have tried to do with the violence that erupted on January 26, 2021 when the farmers’ tractor parade went off the rails at some points. Instead of focusing on what went wrong during the tractor parade, the Delhi police went off on a tangent, distracted by the tweets of American pop singer Rihanna and teenage climate protester/warrior Greta Thunberg. Greta Thunberg put out a toolkit, retracted and put it back again. And it is here that Bengaluru climate activist Disha Ravi, 22, entered the picture. The Delhi police saw it as a good opportunity to nail the international linkages of the imagined conspiracy when they found the toolkit linkage between Ms Ravi and Ms Thunberg. The police discovered that Ms Ravi had a hand in the toolkit when she edited it for Ms Thunberg.

In the heightened atmosphere of the exaggerated nature of the petty violence that broke out at Red Fort on January 26, the reckless overreach of the police under the guidance of an authoritative Union home ministry came into play. The Delhi police went off to Bengaluru, arrested Ms Ravi and brought her to Delhi in total violation of all legal norms in a democratic polity. The courts did not

cover themselves in glory when the legal process was short-circuited in bringing Ms Ravi from Bengaluru to New Delhi as though this country was under martial law and no questions could be raised about the way the Delhi police went about hauling up an ordinary citizen in Bengaluru. The pusillanimity of the courts was further underscored when the police custody of Ms Ravi was readily granted for five days by duty judge Dev Saroha on February 14. This was the police riding roughshod over the law and the judge allowing it tamely. It is at the end of five days of police custody, two days of judicial custody and another day of police custody, with the police wanting to confront Ms Ravi with the other two accused, Nikita Jacob Shantanu Muluk, that she was finally granted bail and released.

The excesses committed by the cybercrime branch of the Delhi police should have been condemned by additional sessions judge Dharmender Rana. It was easier for him to exorcise the police on the serious charge of sedition that they brought against the young woman from Bengaluru. The judge tore into the flaky evidence on which they based their charge. It was necessary that the judge had said what he had about the innocuous toolkit and the laboured connect that the police wanted to make between the toolkit, Ms Ravi and the Poetic Justice Foundation (PJF). And he rightly pointed out that the PJF was not a banned organisation for

the police to charge Ms Ravi with having associated herself with an illegal entity.

Judge Rana could have avoided the homilies about pluralist Indian civilisation going back to the Rig Veda and rapped the police for creating a faux chargesheet. He did admit that the investigation was on, but the evidence produced by the police so far to oppose bail to Ms Ravi was paper-thin. But in times when the government is keen to spread the pall of fear by invoking demons who are less than paper tigers, Judge Rana seems to have found refuge in pious platitudes about democracy, liberty, and the right of the citizen to dissent. It would however be mistaken to get carried away by Judge Rana’s quiet plaint. Something more serious is amiss in the police’s line of investigation into the violence of January 26. Traces of “Khalistani” elements behind the three-month-old farmers’

agitation against the new laws brought by the Narendra Modi government have been the theme song of the government and the ruling party. It seems that the police just follows the lead of their political masters.

The “Khalistani” elements have been simmering beneath the surface for many years now, but it is quite clear that the farmers have nothing to do with them, and the people, whether Indian or foreign, who sympathise with the farmers’ agitation have nothing to do with them either. The government and the police are fully aware

Judge Rana could have avoided the homilies about pluralist Indian civilisation going back to the Rig Veda and rapped the police for creating a faux chargesheet

that showing support for protesting farmers cannot be an offence and it cannot be deemed sedition. It is only by bringing in the “Khalistani” factor that people like Ms Ravi can be charged with a crime, and even if the charge fails, they can be defamed. It is in this diabolical bid to outlaw dissent and protest that the government and the Delhi police are committing the crime of undermining democracy.

The Disha Ravi case goes much beyond the Delhi police’s cyber-crime cell. It is a blatant misuse of the laws of the land. The police can claim that they investigate charges against people in good faith, and they nurse no animus against anyone. We can readily concede the point if they had gone about the investigation in a sober manner. They could have easily built up more evidence, they could have interrogated MsRavi in Bengaluru without the cheap theatrics of arresting her and bringing her to Delhi.

There is a clear need for the courts to rule clearly and loudly that the police have no right to arrest people as long as they are cooperating with the investigation, and there is no danger of the person absconding. In the case of Ms Ravi, it is self-evident that she would have cooperated with the police investigation. Arresting Ms Ravi was an attempt by the police to humiliate and intimidate her and make an example of her to other dissidents. This just cannot be allowed in a democracy. The powers of the police to arrest people and keep them in custody for 24 hours before they are brought before a magistrate for being remanded smacks of a police state. A citizen’s liberty cannot be left to the mercy of a policeman or police-woman.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

LETTERS

INDO-CHINA BIZ

India and China are inter-dependent for heavy machinery, electronics, highways and pharmaceuticals (*Business trumps nationalism, DC, Feb. 25*). Since there is a mutually agreed withdrawal of forces, it is the right time to normalise relations in limbo for some time affecting both economies.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

MURDER MOST FOUL

It is disheartening to note the murder of a girl student (*Stalker murders girl, people stage protest, DC, Feb. 25*). Government usually announces compensation. It must find out the root cause for such crimes and take remedial measures. Youth is being misled by movies on love and marriage. Young boys fail to realise that girls can choose whom they want as partner.

K.L. Rao
Visakhapatnam

PRIVATISATION COST

The Centre seems determined to divest public sector undertakings, if one goes by the Prime Minister’s statement. Privatisation at full throttle cannot be a panacea for persistent economic problems. Moreover, such strategy will go against the economic and social aspirations of India by potentially deepening the divides between rich and poor and between socially advanced and disadvantaged by leaving the measures of social justice unattended.

Dr D.V.G.Sankararao
Vizianagaram

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Mulki rules cover all TS appointments

HYDERABAD, February. 25 A full bench of the AP High Court today held that the Mulki Rules constitute a Special Law and appointments contrary to it would be invalid, although reservations for Mulki were not specially made in departmental rules. The full bench consisted of the Chief Justice N. Kumaraya, Justice Gopal Rao Ekbote and Justice Sambasiva Rao.

The petitioners, who were all superintendents of the Government departments, filed a writ petition challenging the rules for appointment of Assistant Treasury Officers and to set aside the appointment to that post by departmental recruitment.

to have discussed much more than “progressive politics”. As for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the ultranationalist Hindu head of the BJP, he is, like Donald Trump, a populist with a cult following. Mr Biden may well court Mr Modi too. Noticeably Mr Blinken, like Donald Trump, refers to Asia as “the Indo-Pacific” — a term that the Chinese government detests.

While the geopolitical interests of America and India are clearly in alignment, bringing them into a more formal arrangement may be difficult. India is proudly independent. It does things its own way, and its prickly relationship with the West remains.

While India — currently engaged in border skirmishes with China in the remote Himalayas — is fully aware of the Chinese threat, it may be difficult to lasso the country into a formal mutual defence relationship. The D-10 is one of those neat ideas that might look good in a state department or Foreign Office briefing but, given the difficulties of co-opting India and Germany, can it cut the mustard in the real world?

By arrangement with the Spectator

Francis Pike



India, America & China: Can ‘D-10’ forge new relationships?

Is Antony Blinken, US President Joe Biden’s secretary of state, preparing to abandon Barack Obama’s powder-puff Asian foreign policies? It is now widely agreed that Mr Obama, under whom Mr Blinken served as deputy secretary of state, ceded to China uncontested control of the South China Sea. Mr Obama’s so-called “pivot to Asia” was all talk and no trousers. Mr Blinken, who believes diplomacy must be “supplemented by deterrence”, may be about to implement a more aggressive foreign policy in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

In his first speech as general secretary of the Communist Party of China in 2012, Xi Jinping made his intentions clear. He stated his commitment to “accepting the baton of history and continuing to work for realising the great revival of the Chinese nation in order to let the Chinese nation stand more firmly and powerfully among all nations”. President Xi’s international adventurism, under the umbrella of his “Belt and Road Initiative”, has been most evident in his illegal military occupation of the South China Sea, but it is a global strategy for domination which can be observed in Central Asia, the Indian Ocean, the

Middle East, Europe, even the Arctic.

How did Mr Obama respond? He did nothing. He issued platitudes. He vacillated over whether the Mutual Defence Treaty with the Philippines included the disputed South China Sea. By the end of his presidency, it was too late. And weakness in the South China Sea was undoubtedly an invitation for Mr Xi to push elsewhere on Mr Obama’s open door.

There are indications that the Biden administration will seek to construct alliances in Europe and Asia to contain the Chinese and Russian threats. As a former deputy secretary of state, Mr Blinken has long been President Biden’s point man on Europe and is known to be a long-time confidant. For a “multilateralist” who speaks fluent French, getting Europe onside will be important.

British PM Boris Johnson has been floating the idea of a “D-10” group: G-7 plus India, South Korea and Australia. Having finally decided to ditch Huawei, and persuaded by China’s crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong, the UK has thrown its hat into the “Stop China” camp. D-10 is a grouping that has some logic. By comparison,

Nato is undermined by the continuing membership of Turkey, now closely aligned with China. Even France’s President Emmanuel Macron said Nato was “brain dead”. But is the D-10 a credible base for an anti-Chinese containment strategy?

A containment strategy needs real military power. Besides the UK and France, the other European nations are largely window dressing. One suspects neither Mr Biden nor Mr Blinken have the cojones to initiate armed conflict to contest China’s already established military control of the South China Sea.

If Southeast Asia is lost, what next? China has already moved on to securing control of the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and Suez Canal trade routes. Burma is in China’s pocket. Bangladesh, with 165 million people, where in 2016 Mr Xi made the first state visit by a Chinese leader in 30 years, is being increasingly suborned by Chinese infrastructure investment and armaments. In the south, where the Bay of Bengal meets the Indian Ocean, China is entrenched. In 2018, China negotiated a 99-year lease for Sri Lanka’s Hambantota port and 15,000 adjacent acres — just off

India’s coast.

There’s the rub. For China’s Southeast Asia strategy is to contain India, which it sees as its long-term geopolitical rival. Although India lags a distant third to America and China in terms of aggregate GDP, it is also likely to overtake the US in 20 to 30 years. India already ranks fourth in the world in terms of aggregate military power.

As the world’s largest democracies, the United States and India should always be the best of friends. Yet US-Indian relations have rarely worked well. India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, rebuffed President Eisenhower; Nehru’s meeting with President Kennedy was a car crash. (Kennedy later admitted it was “the worst head of state visit I have had”.) Henry Kissinger described Indira Gandhi’s meeting with Richard Nixon as a “dialogue of the deaf”; even the normally polite Kissinger described Mrs Gandhi as “a bitch”.

Relations between American and Indian heads of government have later improved, but their substance has not. Mr Obama liked Dr Manmohan Singh but judging from his autobiography they do not seem

SHORT TAKES

I-T RAIDS OFFICES, RESIDENCES OF HARYANA MLA

Chandigarh, Feb. 25: The Income Tax Department carried out raids on the offices and residences of Haryana's Independent MLA from Meham, Balraj Kundu, in Rohtak on Thursday, officials said here.

A residential building linked to his relatives in Hisar district and another one in Gurgaon which is connected to the legislator himself were searched as well, they said.

Kundu, a vocal supporter of the ongoing farmer's agitation against the new central farm laws, had in February 2020 withdrawn support to the M.L. Khattar dispensation in Haryana, saying he was "deeply hurt" with the government giving "clean chit" to those involved in the alleged corruption in sugar which he had flagged.

In October 2020, the Haryana Police booked him and three other people in a cheating case. The FIR was registered in Gurgaon based on a complaint from a resident of the city, the police had said.

The MLA had then hit back, saying the FIR, like another one lodged against him in January 2020, was due to "political considerations" and that he had been raising his voice against the BJP-led government in Haryana on various issues. The state police had in January 2020 booked Kundu and his brother Shivraj for allegedly cheating a Rohtak resident.

When the case was registered, Kundu had claimed that he was being framed in the case due to political vendetta at the behest of a BJP leader and former minister from the state. Kundu, who runs a construction company along with his brother, was not answering calls.

MUMBAI MAYOR UNVEILS RESTORED TRAM CAR

Mumbai, Feb. 25: Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar on Thursday unveiled a tram car restored by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) in south Mumbai, a civic official said.

The civic body had earlier displayed the tram car on an elevated podium at Bhatia Baug garden next to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, but due to various reasons including the Covid-19 pandemic, it was not open for public viewing.

"The BMC has taken this tram from the BEST and installed it at Bhatia Baug so people could re-experience the past glory of Mumbai," Pednekar said, while unveiling the tram.

The yellow and maroon coloured single-decker tram car is decorated with lights for tourists to enjoy viewing it at night time as well, the mayor said.

Trams were part of Mumbai's public transport system for nearly 90 years and were one of the cheapest and favourite modes of transport for citizens, before they were discontinued from service in 1964.

RSS ACTIVIST'S MURDER: 8 SDPI WORKERS HELD

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 25

The brutal murder of RSS activist in Vayalar in Alappuzha district of Kerala allegedly by SDPI workers, the political arm of PFI, has created tension in many parts of the area.

Nandu N. Krishna, 23, was hacked to death allegedly by SDPI workers on Wednesday night following a political clash between the rival groups. Eight SDPI workers have been arrested in connection with the murder; Suneer, 33, Yasir, 32, Abdul Khader, 52, Mohammed Amaz, 24, Ansil, 33, Riyaz, 38, Nishad, 32, and Shabudeen, 49.

The police said that the murder was well-planned as the assailants had arrived at the spot in a car carrying sharp edged weapons. These weapons were used for hacking the RSS worker.

The BJP and Hindu outfits had called for a dawn to dusk hartal in the district on Thursday against the murder.

The police have clamped prohibitory orders in some areas of Cherthala and Vayalar to check retaliatory attacks by the rival groups.

The area had witnessed political clashes in the recent days.

Nirav: From diamantaire to fugitive

He has been lodged at Wandsworth Prison in south-west London since his arrest in March 2019

● **PICTURE PAINTED** in court was one of a talented jewellery designer who was only driven by one mission to make the Nirav Modi brand worthy.

expert, told the UK court during the course of the extradition hearing last year.

As someone who had served on the Advisory Board of Nirav Modi's company for three years since 2015, Fritsch was deposed by the defence team to vouch for Nirav's integrity and skills as an entrepreneur and creative person, who was passionate about establishing the first international brand of luxury jewellery out of India.

A gems expert, Dr Richard Taylor, was also fielded to go into the nitty-gritties of the diamond trade and how the Nirav Modi brand had succeeded in making a mark around the world.

"The industry relies on sending out high-value product to companies and to do that they require trust and confidence," said Taylor, in an attempt to establish Modi's credibility in the business.

"India is the largest and most important centre of diamond cutting it was a very significant trend that he [Modi] was part of," he added.

The picture painted in court was one of a talented jewellery designer who was only driven by one mission to make the Nirav Modi brand worthy of competition with the likes of global luxury jewellery brands such as Tiffany or Cartier. And, the accusations associated with the extradition case were painted as nothing more than a commercial dispute.

The CPS, in turn, presented documents and video evidence in an effort to establish a complex web of misuse of a bank credit facility called letters of undertaking (LoUs) and threats issued to so-called dummy directors of front companies to keep them out of the reach of Indian investigative authorities.

Throughout the extradition case in London, Nirav Modi's depression and mental health condition remained at the heart of arguments with his extended incarceration said to have worsened his condition.

Coupled with a severe condition of depression, in my view, he presents a high risk of suicide albeit not immediately, Dr

LONG ROAD TO EXTRADITION

A UK court on Thursday ruled that fugitive diamantaire Nirav Modi can be extradited to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering amounting to an estimated \$2 billion. Following is the chronology of the case and its origin

JANUARY 29, 2018: Punjab National Bank (PNB) files police complaint against Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and others accusing fraud to the tune of ₹2.81 billion.

FEBRUARY 5: The CBI launches an investigation into the alleged scam.

FEBRUARY 16: The ED seizes a cumulative ₹56.74 billion worth of diamonds, gold and jewellery from Nirav Modi's home and offices.

FEBRUARY 17: The CBI makes first arrest in the case. Two PNB employees and an executive of Nirav Modi's group were detained.

FEBRUARY 17: Government suspends passports of Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi for four weeks in connection with the PNB fraud.

FEBRUARY 21: CBI arrests CFO of Nirav Modi's firm and two other senior executives of his firms. It also seals his farmhouse in Alibaug.

FEBRUARY 22: The ED seizes nine luxury cars belonging to Nirav Modi and his firms.

FEBRUARY 27: A magistrate's court issues a bailable arrest warrant against diamond trader Nirav Modi.

JUNE 2: The Interpol issues Red Corner Notice against Nirav Modi for money laundering.

JUNE 25: The ED moves a special court in Mumbai seeking Nirav Modi's extradition.

AUGUST 3: The Indian Government sends a request for the extradition of Nirav Modi to the UK authorities.

AUGUST 20: The CBI officials request Interpol Manchester to detain Nirav Modi after the latter informs about his presence in London to Indian authorities.

DECEMBER 27: The UK informs India that Nirav Modi is living in the country.

MARCH 9, 2019: British newspaper 'The Telegraph' confronts Nirav Modi on London's streets and confirms his presence in the country.

MARCH 9: The ED says the government of the UK has sent an extradition request



Nirav Modi

of fugitive diamantaire Nirav Modi to a UK court for further proceeding.

MARCH 18: Westminster Court in London issues arrest warrant against fugitive Nirav Modi after the Indian government request was forwarded to the court by the UK Home Office

MARCH 20: Nirav Modi arrested in London and produced in Westminster Court, which denies him bail.

MARCH 20: Nirav Modi sent to Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Wandsworth till March 29

MARCH 29: A Westminster Magistrates Court in London rejects Nirav Modi's second bail application, saying there are "substantial grounds" to believe that he will fail to surrender. The judge fixes April 26 as the next date of hearing when he will appear via video link from jail.

MAY 8: Nirav Modi denied bail for a third time, to remain in UK jail.

JUNE 12: UK court rejects Nirav Modi's bail for fourth time over fears he would abscond.

AUGUST 22: Nirav Modi's remand extended till September 19, UK extradition trial expected in May 2020.

NOVEMBER 6: UK court rejects Nirav Modi's new bail application

MAY 11, 2020: Nirav Modi's five-day extradition trial in PNB fraud case begins in UK

MAY 13: Indian govt submits more proof against Nirav Modi in money laundering case

SEPTEMBER 7, 2020: UK court given fresh video tour of Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail

DECEMBER 1: Nirav Modi's remand extended, final hearings in 2021

JANUARY 8, 2021: UK court decides to pronounce judgement in Nirav Modi's extradition case on February 25

FEBRUARY 25, 2021: UK court rules Nirav Modi can be extradited to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering.

— PTI



Journalists report the verdict to allow the extradition of Nirav Modi, outside Westminster Magistrates Court in London on Thursday.

— AP

MEA: Govt will liaise with UK for Nirav's early extradition

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 25

India on Thursday evening said that "since the Westminster Magistrate's Court has recommended Nirav Modi's extradition to the UK home secretary, the Government of India would liaise with the UK authorities for his early extradition to India"

On Thursday, the Ministry of External Affairs said, "Nirav Modi is wanted in India in connection with the multi-million dollar Punjab National Bank Fraud case. On the request of CBI and ED, his extradition from UK was sought in August 2018. He was arrested and produced before the Senior District Judge at Westminster Magistrate's court on 20.03.2019. Since then he is facing extradition proceedings while in judicial custody. The final hearing in this case was held on 7-8 January 2021. On Thursday, the Westminster Magistrate's Court in London has pronounced that Nirav Modi be extradited to India to stand trial."

The MEA added, "Dismissing the mental health concerns raised by Nirav Modi, the judge observed that Nirav Modi conspired to destroy evidence and intimidate witnesses. Since the Court has recommended his extradition to the UK

CBI SAYS VERDICT IS REMINDER TO ALL FUGITIVES

New Delhi, Feb. 25: The CBI on Thursday termed the judgement of a UK court in the Nirav Modi's case as "significant" and said it should serve as a reminder to all fugitives, who have indulged in large value frauds, that they cannot escape the law merely by changing their countries of residence.

The CBI said the court order vindicated the painstaking probe carried out by the agency especially since Modi had raised various issues on admissibility of evidence, fairness of investigation, trial, prison conditions, availability of health facilities in India and extraneous consideration, with a view to divert attention from his own acts.

— PTI

Home Secretary, India would liaise with the UK authorities for his early extradition to India."

A senior diplomat at India House said the judgement paves the way for the government of India and the high commission officials to liaise with the UK authorities on the next stages of the procedural matters for extradition.

Vehicle with explosives found near Mukesh Ambani's house

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 25

An abandoned vehicle with 20 gelatin sticks was found just metres away from business tycoon Mukesh Ambani's house in Mumbai on Thursday.

The SUV was noticed at around 3 pm after which some people from the vicinity alerted the local police, who rushed to the spot and cordoned off the entire area, sending the state government and the police into a tizzy.

A Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) team reached the spot immediately, he said. It was not an assembled explosive device, he said, adding that further investigation was on.

"A Scorpio with 20 gela-

● **THE SUV** was noticed at around 3 pm after which some people from the vicinity alerted the local police, who rushed to the spot.

● **CCTV FOOTAGE** of the area revealed the SUV was parked beside a tree on the Carmichael Road at around 1 am.

tin sticks was found near Mukesh Ambani's Mumbai residence. The crime branch of Mumbai Police is investigating the entire matter and the truth will emerge soon," Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh said.

According to reports, CCTV footage of the area revealed the SUV was

parked beside a tree on the Carmichael Road at around 1 am. More than one person was seen alighting from the car.

Deshmukh said that the car was parked some distance away from Ambani's palatial house.

Mumbai Police spokesperson, DCP S. Chaitanya, said, "The gelatin sticks recovered in the SUV were not an assembled explosive device. But details of the risks they posed would be known only after a thorough probe."

Efforts are on to trace the persons who parked the vehicle there, from where they came, what were their diabolic motives, who or what were the exact targets etc., officials said.

Electrifying protest



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee rides an electric scooter during a protest against the hike in fuel price in Kolkata on Thursday. She slammed the BJP-led government at the Centre, "We are protesting against the fuel price hike. The Modi government only makes false promises. They have done nothing to bring down fuel prices. You can see the difference in petrol prices when the Modi government came to power and now."

— PTI

NEW MEMBER

Chaurasia had earlier pledged to spread Godse's last court statement to 1L people

Godse 'devotee' inducted in MP Congress

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB. 25

A 'devotee' of Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse has been inducted in Congress here, much to the chagrin of a strong section of the party.

Babul Chaurasia who had a few years ago pledged to spread Godse's last court statement to one lakh people was welcomed into the party by MP Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) presi-

dent and former chief minister Kamal Nath here on Wednesday.

The official Twitter handle of MP Congress on Wednesday evening broke the news of Chaurasia being admitted to Congress by sharing the picture of the event in the party HQ here.

Former PCC president of MP Arun Yadav reacted to the development with a one-liner, "Bapu hum sharminda hai" (Bapu, we are ashamed).

He tagged the photo-

graph showing Nath welcoming Chaurasia into the party in his Twitter account, while posting his comment.

Sources in the party said the decision to induct Godse's "follower" in the party has left many senior leaders in Congress flabbergasted.

Chaurasia had quit Congress and joined Hindu Mahasabha in 2014 to contest the local civic body elections in Gwalior.

He was said to be one of the brain behind the tem-

ple built for Godse in Gwalior in 2017.

He was also reportedly present at the 'consecration' ceremony held to install Godse's statue in the temple.

Later, the Gwalior district administration had removed the idol.

Talking to reporters in Gwalior on Thursday, Chaurasia described his joining in Congress as his "homecoming".

"I was not aware then that the idol I was worshipping was that of Godse.

I was pushed into worshipping the idol", he said.

Hindu Mahasabha national vice-president Jaiveer Bhardwaj took a swipe at Chaurasia for disowning his devotion to Godse, saying, "He (Chaurasia) used to be present in almost all the events organised to pay respect to Godse in the last several years".

"It shows Congress is not averse to accommodating people who espouse the nationalistic ideology of Nathuram Godse", he

added. BJP took a jibe at Congress for inducting the Godse 'devotee', saying that this has exposed the grand old party's double standard as far as sticking to its ideology is concerned.

"On one hand, Congress projects itself as the rightful inheritor of Mahatma Gandhi's legacy, on the other the party is not hesitant a bit to embrace a staunch follower of Godse", BJP spokesman Rajneesh Agrawal said.

KEJRIWAL'S SECURITY COVER REDUCED: AAP

New Delhi, Feb. 25: A day before Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's roadshow in Gujarat's Surat, sources in the AAP government alleged on Thursday that his security cover has been scaled down, a charge denied by the Union Home Ministry. Joint Commissioner (Security) of Delhi Police ID Shukla said Kejriwal has a Z+ security cover and his "complete Z+ security" is being maintained.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

GERMAN POLICE
RAID ISLAMIC
EXTREMISTS

Berlin, Feb. 25: Hundreds of German police officers conducted coordinated raids early Thursday in Berlin and the surrounding state of Brandenburg in the investigation of an organisation banned over allegations of Islamic extremism.

Some 800 police, including SWAT teams, were involved in the raids of apartments linked to members of the organisation, authorities told the DPA news agency. The raids were carried out with the primary focus of obtaining evidence. No arrests were immediately reported.

DRONE HIT ON
SAUDI PALACE
WAS FROM IRAQ

Baghdad, Feb. 25: Explosive-laden drones that targeted Saudi Arabia's royal palace in the kingdom's capital last month were launched from inside Iraq, a senior Iran-backed militia official in Baghdad and a US official said. Speaking to *The Associated Press* this week, the militia official said three drones were launched from Iraqi-Saudi border areas by a relatively unknown Iran-backed faction in Iraq and crashed into the royal complex in Riyadh on Jan. 23.

Biden revokes
Green Card ban

Lawyers: Was blocking legal immigration

San Diego, Feb. 25: President Joe Biden has lifted a freeze on green cards issued by his predecessor during the pandemic that lawyers said was blocking most legal immigration to the United States. Former President Donald Trump last spring halted the issuance of green cards until the end of 2020 in the name of protecting the Coronavirus-wracked job market — a reason that Trump gave to achieve many of the cuts to legal immigration that had eluded him before the pandemic. Trump on December 31 extended those orders until the end of March. Trump had deemed immigrants a “risk to the US labour market” and blocked their entry to the United States in issuing Proclamation 10014 and Proclamation 10052.

Biden stated in his proclamation on Wednesday that shutting the door on legal immigrants “does not advance the interests of the United States”. “To the contrary, it harms the United States, including by preventing certain family members of United States

citizens and lawful permanent residents from joining their families here. It also harms industries in the United States that utilize talent from around the world,” Biden stated in his proclamation.

Most immigrant visas were blocked by the orders. As many as 120,000 family-based preference visas were lost largely because of the pandemic-related freeze in the 2020 budget year, according to the American Immigrant Lawyers Association. Immigrants could not bring over family members unless they were US citizens applying for visas for their spouses or children under the age of 21.

It also barred entry to immigrants with employment-based visas unless they were considered beneficial to the national interest such as health care professionals. And it slammed the door on thousands of visa lottery winners who were randomly chosen from a pool of about 14 million applicants to be given green cards that would let them live permanently in the United States. The

blocked visas add to a growing backlog that has reached 437,000 for family-based visas alone, said California immigration lawyer Curtis Morrison, who represented thousands of people blocked by the freeze. “I’m thrilled for my clients who are now in a position that they can now enter the US,” he said.

“But that backlog will take years if the administration does not take ambitious measures.” A federal judge last year issued a ruling that all but lifted Proclamation 10052 by allowing temporary foreign workers to enter the United States if their employers are members of the US Chamber of Commerce or several other large organisations that represent much of the US economy. But Proclamation 10014 continued to block thousands of immigrants. Immigration lawyers said they were surprised Biden did not immediately lift the freeze like he did with Trump’s travel ban imposed against people from mostly Muslim-majority countries. —AP

Coup attempt: Armenia PM

Yerevan, Feb. 25: Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan accused the military of an attempted coup and brought supporters to the streets on Thursday, as months of tensions over its defeat in last year's war with Azerbaijan came to a head.

Thousands marched through the streets of the capital Yerevan in support of Pashinyan, with the opposition urging him to step down to avoid bloodshed or even civil war.

President Armen Sarkisian, whose role is largely symbolic, said he was taking

urgent steps to try to defuse the crisis, calling on all involved to “show restraint and common sense.” Under pressure for his handling of the conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Pashinyan has ignored repeated calls to resign for losing swathes of territory to Azerbaijan in the war.

After largely backing the prime minister for months, the military's general staff on Thursday joined calls for him to step down, saying in a statement that he and his cabinet “are not capable of taking ade-

quate decisions”.

Pashinyan hit back with an accusation that top brass were mounting an “attempted military coup” and fired the chief of the general staff Onik Gasparyan. Hundreds of supporters then joined Pashinyan to march through central Yerevan, chanting “Nikol Prime Minister!”

Speaking to supporters through a megaphone, Pashinyan called for calm, as dozens of police deployed outside the main government offices. “The situation is tense, but we must agree that there cannot be

clashes,” said Pashinyan, who was joined by his wife, daughters, ministers and security detail.

He said the situation in the country was under control and that the military's call had been an “emotional reaction” to his firing the previous day of the deputy chief of the general staff Tigran Khachatryan. Khachatryan had ridiculed claims by Pashinyan that Iskander missiles supplied by Russia — Armenia's main military ally — had failed to hit targets during the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. —AFP

Eradicated poverty
in China, says Xi

Beijing, Feb. 25: President Xi Jinping on Thursday declared that China has scored a “complete victory” in its fight against poverty by lifting over 770 million people out of it in the last four decades, calling it another “miracle” created by the country that will go down in history. Absolute poverty has been eradicated in the world's most populous country, Xi announced while addressing a gathering held here to mark the country's accomplishments in poverty alleviation and honour its model poverty fighters.

China has a population of around 1.4 billion. “No country has been able to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in such a short time,” Xi said. Xi said that all poor people in rural areas have been lifted out of poverty. With this, China has achieved the UN goal of poverty eradication 10 years ahead of the 2030 deadline, he said.

Over the past eight years, the final 98.99 million impoverished rural residents living under the current poverty line have all been lifted out of poverty. All the 832 impoverished counties and 128,000 impoverished villages have been removed from the poverty list, he said. Since the launch of the reform and opening up in the late 1970s, 770 million impoverished rural residents have shaken off poverty when calculated according to China's current poverty line, he said. China has contributed to more than 70 per cent of global poverty reduction over the same period, Xi, also General Secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), said.

With such achievements,

China has created another “miracle” that will “go down in history,” he said. Xi said since he assumed power, China has invested accumulative fiscal funds of nearly 1.6 trillion yuan into poverty alleviation over the past eight years. He said according to the World Bank's international poverty line, the number of Chinese people lifted out of poverty over the past 40 years accounts for more than 70 per cent of the global total.

China considers extreme rural poor are those with annual per capita income of less than \$620, or about \$1.69 a day at current exchange rates, which compared closely with the World Bank's minimum standard of \$1.90 a day. Complete eradication of poverty in China was the main goal announced by Xi when he came to power in 2012. At that time, China had about 100 million poor people, mostly living in remote areas. He has made effective use of targeted eradication of extreme poverty besides crackdown against corruption as the main political goals to consolidate his power: in the ruling CPC emerging as its most powerful leader after Mao heading the party, the presidency and the powerful military. With the removal of the two-five-year term rule, Xi, 67, like Mao now has a lifelong tenure in power instead of retiring next year.

His claim of poverty eradication came ahead of the CPC's centenary celebrations this year.

The CPC also boasts of being the world's only Communist Party with longest tenure in power in the one-party state since 1949. —PTI

MANA MOVIES

RELEASING TODAY

కళ కళ కళ

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY KARTHIK MEDIKONDA
PRODUCED BY DR. WARLU DR. MANNAM CHANDRAMOULI
MUSIC BY ROSHAN SALUR DOP SIDHARHA KARUMURI EDITING GOVIND DITTAKAVI PRO GSK MEDIA

U/A

CINEMA HALL ENTERTAINMENTS

అక్షర

B. CHINNI
SURESH VARMA ALLURI
AHITEJA BELLAMKONDA

SRINIVASREDDY K. SUMANTH KOPPURAVURI
NAGESH BANELL SURESH BOBBILI
NARESH BABU THIMMIRI SATHYA GUDUTURI
GAURE NAIDU GANGADHAR S.S. RAJU GLETT
GSK MEDIA OMKAR KADIYAM

IN THEATRES FROM TODAY

U

#AKSHARA

U/A

RELEASING TOMORROW

SUSPENSE THRILLER

ADITYA MUSIC

V.G. ENTERTAINMENT

APRIL 28

నిం జరిగింది?

PRODUCER V.G. ENTERTAINMENT
WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY VEERA SWAMY.G

MUSIC: SANDEEP KUMAR DOP: SUNIL KUMAR.N EDITOR: K.SANTOSH ACTION: REAL SATISH SCREENPLAY: HARIPRASAD JAKKA
CHOREOGRAPHY: BHANU, PRUDVI COSTUME DESIGNER: MALLIKA.G PRODUCTION DESIGNER: M.KISHORE PRO: MADHU MADURI

U/A

bc bhavya creations

GRAND RELEASE TODAY

కళ

V.ANANDA PRASAD CHANDRA SEKHAR YELETI

ANNE RAVI KALYANI MALIK RAHUL SHRIVATSAV
VIVEK ANNAMALAI M.NARESH REDDY SANAL ANIRUDHAN RAVI VARMA

U/A

ADITYA MUSIC

SHORT TAKES



Dutee Chand (right) flashes a victory sign beside her coach N. Ramesh of Hyderabad.

Dutee, Hima set the track ablaze

Patiala: Sprinter Dutee Chand blazed the track to win the women's 100m in the Indian Grand Prix II athletics at the Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports campus on Thursday. Dutee won in 11.44 seconds, an improvement on the 11.51 seconds she had clocked last week in the first GP. She is hoping to qualify for the Olympic Games by meeting the 11.15 seconds standard. She can also qualify as one of the 56 starters in the Tokyo Games on the basis of her rankings. She is world No. 33 at the moment.

Meanwhile, star Indian sprinter Hima Das ran her first competitive race in more than a year and won a gold in the women's 200m in 23.31 seconds. Hima, who is yet to qualify for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, had run her last competitive race in August 2019. She had suffered a lower back injury at the 2018 Asian Games and that forced her to miss the World Championships in Doha in September 2019. — PTI

Manideep upsets seasoned Savio

Hyderabad: G. Manideep outplayed seasoned player Savio Mendes in the first round to register an upset in the Senior Snooker event of the Telangana State Ranking Snooker & Billiards Championship being played at the Telangana Cue Sports Association premises at Khajaguda on Thursday. Manideep won the opener in straight frames at 3-0 — 55-44, 55-45, 63-33. Meanwhile, Vibhas and Syed Maaz Ali set up the final in junior snooker. In the semis, Vibhas mauled Md Faisal 54-22, 66-10, 57-15; Maaz jinked past Jeetendar 53-13, 41-33, 59-15.

THE SCORES
Senior Snooker first round: Manideep G bt Savio Mendes 3-0 (55-44, 55-45, 63-33); Faisal Zubairi bt Vamsi Krishna 3-0 (69-19, 64-31, 71-31); Md Moin Ashrafi bt Syed Ghouse Mohiuddin 3-0 (52-41, 66-23, 68-20); Srikanth bt Dheeraj Kakumanu 3-2 (49-40, 57-32, 29-61, 32-55, 51-33).
Junior Snooker semifinals: Vibhas bt Md Faisal 3-0 (54-22, 66-10, 57-15); Syed Maaz Ali bt Jeetendar 3-0 (53-13, 41-33, 59-15).

Guptill stars in Kiwi victory

Dunedin, New Zealand: Veteran batsman Martin Guptill returned to form with a blistering 97 as New Zealand held on for a nail-biting win over Australia in the second Twenty20 international in Dunedin on Thursday. Guptill's Black Caps set Australia a challenging target of 220 after losing the toss but were made to sweat as Australia came within four runs of victory.

Both sides took advantage of University Oval's short boundaries in a thrilling match that featured 30 sixes and 434 runs at an average of 10.9 an over. Marcus Stoinis starred for the Australians with 78 from 37 balls but Guptill's 97 from 50 laid the foundation for New Zealand's win. — AFP

Brief scores: New Zealand 219/7 in 20 overs (Guptill 97, Kane 53, K. Richardson 3/43) bt **Australia 215/8** in 20 overs (Stoinis 78, Santner 4/31).

Live on TV

CRICKET
South Africa T20 Challenge: Cobras vs Lions from 1.30 pm; Dolphins vs Titans from 6 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

FOOTBALL
Indian Super League: North East United vs Kerala Blasters from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

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AXARDHAM

Patel strikes back, makes Motera his own

Ahmedabad, Feb. 25: Left-arm spinner Axar Patel created an illusion of turn with 11 straighter deliveries that put India on the brink of the World Test Championship final with a 10-wicket demolition of England inside two days in the day-night third Test here on Thursday.

In only his second Test, Patel (15-0-32-5), with a match-haul of 11/70, relentlessly hit the good length area and hood-winked England batsmen, who played for turn only to find that there was none on offer from him.

The result was their lowest total against India — 81 all out in 30.4 overs leaving the hosts with a target of 49 which they achieved with minimum fuss taking a 2-1 lead in the four-match series.

At the other end, off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (15-3-48-4) was an ideal foil, becoming the fourth Indian bowler and second fastest in the world to complete a commendable milestone of 400 Test wickets with the dismissal of Jofra Archer.

Incidentally, after Afghanistan's debut Test in 2018 in Bengaluru, this was the second time that India won a Test match, well inside two days.

This was after England skipper Joe Root's fabulous career-best spell of 6.2-3-8-5 resulted in India's dramatic collapse from 114 for 3 to 145 all out.

India lost as many as seven wickets for only 31 runs after looking solid at 114 for 3 at one stage in the game but England lost all 10 in an entire session in which no pacer was seen in action.

Ironically, it was the non-turning deliveries from Patel that had the England's rank and file pressing the panic button as they pre-empted away turn every time.

Whether it was Zak Crawley, Jonny Bairstow or skipper Root, everyone lost the mind-game as Ashwin also joined the fun with records tumbling one after another.

When Patel sent back Ben Foakes, he became the first spinner to get 11 wickets in a pink ball Test match.

While a bowler might end up getting the man of the match, Rohit Sharma's 66 off 96 balls in the first essay was 24-carat gold given that other batsmen looked like sitting ducks.

But Indian batsmen save Rohit did have a torrid time during an afternoon session when Root and Leach made their lives miserable.

Ajinkya Rahane was rapped on the pads as Leach fired one in and it was not much of an issue for umpire Nitin Menon to adjudge him leg before. — PTI

Benjamin hit 115 in 106 balls with 10 fours and two sixes in Sportive CC's second innings and then took five wickets with his off-spin while conceding 25 runs to help his side beat Secunderabad Nawabs.

In another match, G. Vikram Naik (111) and Rahul Buddhi (108) scripted Evergreen's win. The A-2 Division two-day games threw up some top notch performances. M. Sai Pratheek of Acrylic and C. Siddharth Rao of SK Blues hit a double century each while Sahith of Swastik Union took seven wickets.

Pratheek's 206 that contained 28 boundaries and a six propelled Acrylic to 499 for 4 in 90 overs against Adams XI. Siddharth slammed 200 which came off 156 balls and included 36 boundaries as SK Blues piled 540 for 9 against Mayura.

Sahith's 7/34 meant Lords CC crashed to a humiliating 109 against Swastik Union.



Axar Patel of India appeals for England's Zak Crawley's wicket during Day Two of their third Test at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday. — BCCI

SCORECARD

England 1st Innings: 112

India 1st Innings (Overnight 99/3): Rohit Sharma lbw b Jack Leach 66, Ajinkya Rahane lbw b Jack Leach 7, Rishabh Pant c Foakes b Root 1, Ravichandran Ashwin c Zak Crawley b Root 17, Washington Sundar b Root 0, Axar Patel c D Sibley b Root 0, Ishant Sharma not out 10, Jasprit Bumrah lbw b Root1. Extras (B-2, LB-2, W-1) 5. **Total (all out in 53.2 overs) 145. FoW: 1-33, 2-34, 3-98, 4-114, 5-115, 6-117, 7-125, 8-125, 9-134. Bowling:** James Anderson 13-8-20-0, Stuart Broad 6-1-16-0, Jofra Archer 5-2-24-1, Jack Leach 20-2-54-4, Ben Stokes 3-0-19-0, Joe Root 6.2-3-8-5.

England 2nd Innings: Z. Crawley b Axar Patel 0, D. Sibley c Pant b Patel 7, J.

Bairstow b Axar Patel 0, J. Root lbw b Axar Patel 19, B. Stokes lbw b Ashwin 25, O. Pope b Ashwin 12, B. Foakes lbw b Axar Patel 8, J. Archer lbw b Ashwin 0, J. Leach c Rahane b Ashwin 9, S. Broad not out 1, J. Anderson c Pant b Sundar 0. Extras 0. **Total (all out in 30.4 overs) 81.**

FoW: 1-0, 2-0, 3-19, 4-60, 5-56, 6-66, 7-68, 9-80.

Bowling: Axar Patel 15-0-32-5, Ashwin 15-3-48-4, Sundar 0.4-0-1-1.

India 2nd Innings: Rohit Sharma not out 25, Shubman Gill not out 15. Extras (B-8, LB-1). **Total (for no loss in 7.4 overs) 49.**

Bowling: J. Leach 4-1-15-0, J. Root 3.4-0-25-0.

NUMBERS GAME

RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN JOINS 400-WICKET CLUB IN TESTS:

● Ravichandran Ashwin became the fourth Indian and 16th bowler overall to claim 400 wickets in Tests. The off-spinner from Chennai reached this milestone by dismissing Jofra Archer, leg before, in England's second innings on the second day of the third Test match at Ahmedabad on Thursday (February 25).

● By achieving this feat in his 77th Test match, he is the second fastest after Sri Lankan Muttiah Muralitharan who took his 400th wicket in his 72nd Test match.

● Anil Kumble (619 wickets in 132 Tests), Kapil Dev (434 wickets in 131 Tests) and Harbhajan Singh (417 wickets in 103 Tests) are the other Indians to take 400 wickets before Ravichandran Ashwin.

● Joe Root recorded his best bowling performance by taking five wickets for eight runs in India's first innings. It was first time England skipper has taken five-wicket haul with his off breaks in any type of the game. His previous best in Tests was four for 87 against South Africa at Port Elizabeth in 2019-20.

● India slumped to their joint sixth lowest total against England at home by bowling out for 145 in 53.2 overs.

● India's lowest against England at home is 83 in 38.5 overs at Chennai in 1976-77.

● Jonny Bairstow became the eighth England batsman to receive ducks in the both innings of a Test match against India. He is only fifth England batsman to achieve this 'unwanted' feat on Indian soil.

● England were bundled out for 81 runs in 30.4 overs. It was first time when England were dismissed under 100 against India in Tests. Their previous lowest against India was 101 in 45.1 overs at The Oval in 1971.

● Axar Patel became the fourth Indian bowler to take 11 or more wickets in a Test match against England. His match figures of 11 for 70 is the fourth best for India against England.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER



Mumbai's Prithvi Shaw celebrates his double century against Puducherry in the Vijay Hazare Trophy match at Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Thursday.

Shaw smashes domestic record

Jaipur, Feb. 25: Mumbai captain Prithvi Shaw on Thursday became the highest individual scorer in Vijay Hazare Trophy national 50-over championships as he smashed an unbeaten 227 off just 152 balls to help Mumbai beat Puducherry by 233 runs in their Elite Group D game here.

The 21-year-old Shaw, who has played in five Tests and five ODIs, broke the earlier record of the highest individual score held by Sanju Samson (212 not out against Goa in 2019). Puducherry's decision to put Mumbai in to bat backfired badly as Shaw and Suryakumar Yadav (133 off 58 balls) toyed with their bowling attack at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium and post a mammoth 457/4.

Prashant Solanki (5/48) then picked a five-for as Mumbai bundled out Puducherry for 224 to reg-

ister their third win on the trot.

Shaw and Yashasvi Jaiswal (10) added 58 runs for the first wicket to lay the foundation. After Jaiswal was dismissed, Shaw found an able partner in Aditya Tare (56, 7x4) as the duo stitched a 153-run stand for the second wicket. Suryakumar, who came in at No. 4, was in his elements, hitting 22 fours and four sixes. He and Shaw added 201 runs for the third wicket stand and helped Mumbai go past the 400 mark. — PTI

BRIEF SCORES

■ Mumbai 457/4 in 50 overs (Prithvi Shaw 227 not out, Suryakumar Yadav 133; Pankaj Singh 2/79) beat Puducherry 224 (Damodaran Rohit 63; Prashant Solanki 5/48). ■ Himachal 251/8 (Nikhil Gangta 100 not out, Kulwant Kherjioliya 2/30) lost to Delhi 252/4 (Kshitiz Sharma 67 not out, Lalit Yadav 52 not out).

Silva, Jesus score in Man City win

Budapest, Feb. 25: Premier League leaders Manchester City closed in on the Champions League quarterfinals after cruising past Borussia Moenchengladbach with a comfortable 2-0 win in Wednesday's Champions League last 16, first leg tie in Budapest.

A first half header from Bernardo Silva and a Gabriel Jesus strike in the second extended a winning streak by Pep Guardiola's high-flying side to 19 games in all competitions. With six changes from the side which started

Sunday's win over Arsenal City camped inside the Gladbach half for most of the game, moved to Hungary due to Germany's Covid-19 travel restrictions.

Although clear favourites City took time to break down a stubborn German defence however, often foiled by the interceptions of Algeria left-back Rami Bensebaini. Debutants in the Champions League knockout stages, a nervy Gladbach was being urged by coach Marco Rose to be brave against Guardiola's side. — AFP

REDS KEEPER ALLISON'S DAD DIES OF DROWNING

Sao Paulo, Feb. 25: Two Brazilian clubs have expressed condolences following the sudden death of the father of Liverpool goalkeeper Allison Becker.

Fluminense posted on social media Thursday that it's deeply sorry for the death of Jos Agostinho Becker. Allison's brother, Muriel, is a goalkeeper at Fluminense. Internacional, where both Allison and Muriel played, also offered condolences.

Brazilian media reported that 57-year-old Jos Agostinho Becker had drowned after going for a swim on his property in the city of Lavras do Sul, in the south of the country. Local police confirmed the body of man was found on Wednesday night.

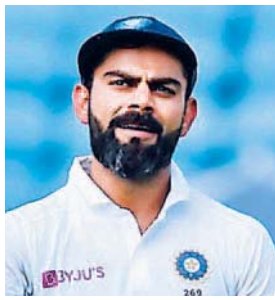
The 28-year-old Allison played at Internacional between 2013 and 2016 before he joined Roma. He left Roma after two seasons to join Liverpool. — AP

Kohli bests MS India sit atop as with most wins Eng out of WTC

Ahmedabad, Feb. 25: Virat Kohli on Thursday surpassed Mahendra Singh Dhoni's record of winning maximum number of Test matches as captain on home soil after leading the side to a 10-wicket victory over England in the day-night third Test here.

Kohli now has 22 victories at home in 29 Tests as captain which is one better than Dhoni, who had 21 wins in 30 Tests. Kohli already is India's most successful Test captain with 35 wins.

India chased down a target of 49 runs in only 7.4 overs to win the Test by 10



Virat Kohli

wickets and go up 2-1 in the series.

Sourav Ganguly and Mohammed Azharuddin have 21 and 14 victories to their credit as captains.

— PTI

Ahmedabad, Feb. 25: India knocked England out of contention from the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) final in June with their 10-wicket triumph in the day-night third Test here which propelled the hosts to the top of the standings.

India now have to either win or draw the final game here starting March 4 to claim the right to take on New Zealand at the Lord's. The Black Caps have already qualified and are placed second in the latest list.

"England have dropped to 64.1 percentage points

on the points table, which is now led by India with 71 percentage points," the ICC stated.

"England are out of the race for a place in the final of the ICC World Test Championship after losing the third Test against India in Ahmedabad," it added.

England needed to win the four-match series 3-1 to play the June 18-22 final. New Zealand are assured of a place in the final with 70 percentage points.

If India lose the final Test then Australia will sneak in to make the final.

— PTI

Benjamin brilliant; Pratheek, Siddharth hit double tons

Vikram, Rahul, Sahith, Aashlesh, Sachit, Harsha, Saif, Suresh, Advait, Suraj, Yuganand, Gautam, Vasu also do well in league

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 25

Benjamin Thomas batted and bowled brilliantly to emerge the top performer in the Hyderabad Cricket Association's A-1 Division three-day league matches played on Thursday. Benjamin hit 115 in 106 balls with 10 fours and two sixes in Sportive CC's second innings and then took five wickets with his off-spin while conceding 25 runs to help his side beat Secunderabad Nawabs.

In another match, G. Vikram Naik (111) and Rahul Buddhi (108) scripted Evergreen's win.

The A-2 Division two-day games threw up some top notch performances. M. Sai Pratheek of Acrylic and C. Siddharth Rao of SK Blues hit a double century each while Sahith of Swastik Union took seven wickets.

Pratheek's 206 that contained 28 boundaries and a six propelled Acrylic to 499 for 4 in 90 overs against Adams XI. Siddharth slammed 200 which came off 156 balls and included 36 boundaries as SK Blues piled 540 for 9 against Mayura. Sahith's 7/34 meant Lords CC crashed to a humiliating 109 against Swastik Union.



Benjamin



Sai Pratheek



C. Siddharth



Aashlesh



Sahith



Sachit Naidu



Advait Reddy



Vasu Deva Raju

Aashlesh Vaman (176) of Vijaypuri Willowmen was the other big scorer while Sachit Naidu of Abhinav Colts took 6/17.

D. Harsha Vardhan (5/9) of Rakesh XI, Adilabad's Md Saif Ali (5/6), Warangal's B. Suresh (5/14), Advait (5/23) of Cheerful Chums, Bharat CC's P. Suraj Rao (5/39), Y. Yuganand Sree (123) of Elegant CC, V. Gautam (105) of Ours CC and Acrylic's M. Vasu Deva Raju (101) were the others who did well in the two-day league.

Brief scores:

A-1 DIVISION (THREE-DAY)

■ Sportive 241 in 85.5 overs & 297/4 in 40 overs (Benjamin Thomas 115 — 106b, 10x4, 2x6, Abhishek Murgan 56, Shaik Sameer 63 n.o) bt Secunderabad Nawabs 296 in 73.1 overs & 184 in 36.1 overs (Takshit Rao 34, Jaidev Goud 75, Aryan Cariappa 3/43, Benjamin Thomas 5/25 — 71-0-25-5). **Points:** Sportive 6, Nawabs 0.

■ Evergreen 430/8 in 90 overs & 289/5 in 40 overs (G. Vikram Naik 111 — 94b, 7x4, 7x6, Rahul Buddhi 108 — 78b, 13x4, 3x6) bt Combined Districts 288 in 67.3 overs & 228/7 in 40 overs (B. Vikram 76, Ritwik Surya 34, G. Ganesh 53 n.o, G. Aniket Reddy 3/15). **Points:** Evergreen 6, Districts 0.

■ BDL 329/9 (all out) in 87.5 overs & 211/8 in 40 overs bt Income Tax 188 in 37.5 overs & 235/8 in 38.4 overs (Vamshi Vardhan 74, Harshavardhan 47, Sai Vihari 42, Swaroop 40, Mahendra 3/0). **Points:** BDL 6, Income Tax 0.

■ AOC 247 in 64.1 overs & 64 in 24.5 overs bt Continental 200 in 78 overs & 106 in 35.1 overs (Anirudh Reddy 54). **Points:** Continental 0, AOC 6.

■ Jai Bhagwathi 191 in 65 overs & 104 in 30 overs (Nitin Sai Yadav 3/15) lost to Rohit XI 484/7 in 90 overs. **Points:** Rohit XI 6+02, Jai Bhagwathi 0.

■ Balaji CC 377/7 in 90 overs & 236/8 in 40 overs (HK Simha 63, B. Raja Shekar 49, Md Zafarullah 3/50) bt Sri Chakra 224 in 86.5 overs & 215/8 in 40 overs (Koushik 41, T. Rohan 36, K Vikas Rao 42 n.o). **Points:** Balaji 6, Sri Chakra 0.

■ SK Blues 540/9 (all out) 80.2 overs (Ibrahim 91, C. Siddharth Rao 200 — 156b, 36x4, K. Srihar 84, Md Ali 48, K. Anil 30 n.o, Sunil 3/99) vs Mayura 14/2 in 7 overs

■ Vijaypuri Willowmen 406 in 72.3 overs (Aashlesh Vaman 176 — 172b, 30x4, 3x6, M. Saketh Reddy 46, Md Ayub Khan 37, Md Nayeemuddin 74, Kiran Pant 3/53) vs Eleven Masters 42/2 in 9 overs.

■ Swastik Union 238 in 66.3 overs (Govardhan 41, Karthik 61, Hasan 4/48) bt Lords CC 109 in 44.3 overs (Jasper 36, Sahith 7/34 — 18-6-34-7).

■ Noble CC 104 in 30 overs (B. Ambarish 43, Sachit Naidu 6/17 — 9-0-17-6) lost to Abhinav Colts 106/2 in 16.3 overs (Varun Tej 51 n.o). **Points:** Colts 5, Noble 0.

■ Adilabad District 123 in 34.5 overs (L. Mahesh 35, B. Srinivas 34, D. Harsha

Vardhan 5/9 — 6.5-2-9-5) bt Rakesh XI 89 in 39.4 over (Md Saif Ali 5/6 — 14-4-10-6-5). **Points:** Adilabad 5, Rakesh 0.

■ Saint Sai 56 in 23.3 overs (B. Suresh 5/14 — 9-3-14-5, N. Pavan Reddy 4/9) lost to Warangal District 59/1 in 5.3 overs (B. Kumar 36 n.o). **Points:** Warangal 5, Saint Sai 0.

■ HUCC 66 in 27.5 overs (Advait 5/23 — 9-5-3-25-5, TNR Mohit 3/24) lost to Cheerful Chums 68/1 in 12.5 overs (Yash Satwalekar 30 n.o). **Points:** Cheerful Chums 5, HUCC 0.

■ Hyderabad Panthers 179 in 32.4 overs (Rahul Adwala 34 n.o, P. Suraj Rao 5/39, Rahul Karthikeya 4/75) lost to Bharat CC 180/7 in 48.4 overs (K. Rahul 38, Adithya Verma 32 n.o, Rahul A 4/26, Ananya Raj Shekar 3/59). **Points:** Bharat 5, Panthers 0.

■ Elegant CC 229 in 64.2 overs (Y. Yuganand Sree 123 — 166b, 18x4, Raghavendra 3/36) vs WMCC.

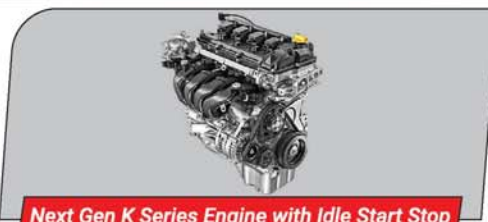
■ Ours CC 312/9 in 90 overs (V. Gautam 105 — 191b, 14x4, Kaushik Chevendra 96) vs Nizamabad District 2/1 in 2 overs.

■ Hyderabad Cricket Academy 389 in 86.3 overs (Pranav 97, Rishi 38, Zaheer

38, Tejveer 55, Praveen 3/37) vs Manikumar.


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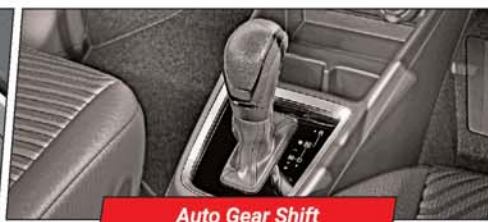
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