

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | THURSDAY | 4 FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 31.0°C
Min: 17.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Partly Cloudy.
Max/Min temp.
31/17 °C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+13,092)	(+113)
1,07,91,123	1,54,742

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+185)	(+2)
TS: 2,94,924	1,604
(+95)	(+1)
AP: 8,88,099	7,157

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

10,46,01,795

DEATHS 22,69,164

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 219

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Pushya Bahula Saptami
till 12.07 pm
Star: Swati till 7.45 pm
Varjyam: 1.03 am to 2.34 am (Friday)
Durmuhurtam: 10.37 am to 11.22 am; 3.08 pm to 3.53 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

HJRI CALENDAR

Jamadi- ul- Akhir 21,1442 AH

PRAYERS

(ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5.40 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.30 pm
Maghrib: 5.48 pm
Isha: 8.30 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.33 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.00 PM
MOONRISE TODAY --
MOONSET TOMORROW 12.06 AM

COUNTER POINT

Not public, but our employees are insuring their jobs!

SHORT TAKES

Sebi bars Biyani from markets

New Delhi: Sebi on Wednesday barred Kishore Biyani and certain other promoters of Future Retail Ltd from the securities market for one year for indulging in insider trading in the shares of the company. Apart from Kishore Biyani, others facing ban are Future Corporate Resources Pvt Ltd, Anil Biyani and FCRL Employee Welfare Trust.

Bezos quits Amazon CEO post

New York: Billionaire Jeff Bezos, who founded Amazon as an online bookseller nearly three decades ago, will step down as the CEO of the \$1.7 trillion retail giant in the third quarter of 2021 with Andy Jassy being named his successor. Amazon said Bezos, 57, will transition to the role of executive chair in the third quarter of this year.

Bihar: No govt jobs for protesters

Patna: The Bihar government has landed into controversy after the police headquarters issued a directive stating that people indulging in road blockages and protests will not be eligible for government jobs or contracts. The Opposition slammed the BJP-JD(U) government for the order which it said was “against the Constitution”.

NATION | 4

Pak army chief seeks peace with all

WORLD | 5

Lanka halts port deal with India

SPORTS | 8

Rahane says Kohli makes it easy for him

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Vol. 25 No. 275 Established 1940 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

Nadu-Nedu P-2 gets more funds to fix govt schools

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

The second phase of the Manabadi Nadu-Nedu for renovation of government schools in AP would start soon. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed officials to prepare a comprehensive schedule for the works.

The CM held a review meeting on Nadu-Nedu and Jagananna Gorumudda at the CM camp office in Tadepalli on Wednesday. He asked the officials to start the Nadu-Nedu second phase in a more effective manner by taking special steps to resolve the issues that had cropped up in the first phase. He said a fund of ₹4,446 crore has been reserved. The first phase cost ₹3,700 crore.

● **CHIEF MINISTER Y.S. Jagan Mohan REdDy** said a fund of ₹4,446 crore has been reserved for the second phase of Manabadi Nadu-Nedu scheme. The first phase of the scheme, to renovate government schools, cost ₹3,700 crore, officials said.

The CM asked officials to start the Nadu-Nedu works from April 15, and take into account the experiences gained and problems faced during the first phase. “Efficiently implement the Nadu-Nedu initiative without compromising on the quality and standards,” he said.

Officials said the second phase of Nadu-Nedu will be completed by December 31..

The CM enquired about

the attendance at schools after the reopening and advised officials to develop an app to record the attendance. He said that in case the children are absent from school, an SMS has to be sent to the parents and a volunteer sent directly to their house on the second day to find out the details on the student’s absence. Officials said the app will be ready by February 15.

As regards Gorumudda, the CM directed officials not to compromise on quality and implement it without errors. He said the toilets in schools must be maintained well. The state government signed an MoU with Sulabh International, wherein 49,000 toilet maintenance staff will be trained to maintain clean toilets.

SSC exams from June 7

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

The Class 10 exams will be held across the State from June 7 to 16, said education minister Adimulapu Suresh on Wednesday.

Examination dates are common for regular, private, OSSC, and vocational candidates and will be conducted in a single shift from 9.30 am to 12.45 pm.

Speaking to the media, Suresh said that exams will be held for seven papers, of which three would be for languages, two group subjects and two science papers, where all the examinations except science papers will be held for 100 marks each.

SSC SCHEDULE
June 7: First language
June 8: Second language
June 9: English
June 10: Mathematics
June 11: Physics
June 12: Biology
June 14: Social Studies

examinations for students studying between classes first and ninth will be from May 3-10, with the last working day on May 15. Summer vacations start from May 16 and will stretch up to June 30. The academic year 2021 will begin on July 1.

The minister announced that the Intermediate students of the previous academic year both first and second-year students who were just awarded pass marks due to Covid-19 situation can now appear for improvisation. Further, he said that the examination fee for Intermediate students shall remain the same as last year, without any hike.

Risky moves



Indian Air Force's Sarang acrobatic team, flying the made-in-India Advanced Light Helicopters, performs during the first day of Aero India at the the Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru on Wednesday. The government formally sealed the ₹48,000 crore deal to procure 83 Tejas Light Combat Aircraft from Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, a deal described by the government as the biggest Make in India defence contract. — AFP

AP awaits funds for cyclone, flood relief

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

Andhra Pradesh is eagerly awaiting Central assistance worth nearly ₹1,000 crore as compensation for damage to crops and infrastructure following the continuous rains and floods from August to October, 2020 and again due to Cyclone Nivar storm in November last. Two Central teams visited the affected areas to inspect the damage.

The state government prepared the estimates for the loss of crops and damage to infrastructure to provide interim relief in the form of input subsidy to the affected farmers and also to take up restoration of damaged infrastructure, worth ₹6,386 crore as per the

norms of National Disaster Response Fund. The state government asked for interim relief worth nearly ₹1,000 from the Centre. The Central teams assured to extend nearly 80 per cent of the relief asked by AP.

Sources in the state government say that when AP suffered crop damage due to natural calamities during kharif season in 2018-19, AP got drought relief worth nearly ₹900 crore in December 2019. Similarly, when parts of AP suffered badly due Cyclone Titli in October 2018, the state received relief worth of nearly ₹500 crore from the Centre for crop damages and loss at an early date.

■ **Page 2: AP sent several reminders for Central funds**

WELCOME | CHANGE

New gen brings peace to Seema

NAGABHUSHANAM
HOSKOTE | DC
ANANTAPUR, FEB. 3

The centuries-old culture of ‘factionalism’ with its roots set in the medieval history is grinding to a halt in many villages of the Rayalaseema region.

Mental diversions, professional pursuits, and a resultant change of mind-set are evident in the new generation. This includes even those from families with a long history of local rivalries. Youths are now pressing their elders in the family to stay clear of faction politics.

Normally, gram panchayat polls had a history riddled with factionalism, clashes and murders. A majority of the families with a faction-background, however, sent their chil-

dren for higher studies; more so after the turn of this century. These children settled down in big cities as software engineers or in other professions. They are forcing their parents to keep off factionalism.

The last elections witnessed compromise deals between faction leaders at the top levels including former ministers and MLAs in many parts of Anantapur, Kadapa and Kurnool districts. Such trends continued even in the present gram panchayat polls.

Jammalamadugu, a hard-core faction-ridden area in Kadapa district as also Tadipathri and Penukonda in Anantapur district had a change of mind.

C. Adinarayana Reddy and Ramasubba Reddy worked for the TD, while

action taken report would be sent to the complainants, he said.

He maintained that the Commission did not mistrust existing apps like ‘Nigha and eVigil,’ but only wanted to conduct the elections in a more transparent manner with zero-tolerance to violence and poll-related irregularities like booth capturing.

He said that the moment they received a complaint of severe nature like booth capturing, their job was to de-escalate the situation within half-an-hour by attending to it promptly.

He warned that district collectors and SPs would be held responsible if they failed to resolve such grave violations.

■ **Page 2: Give publicity to new app, SEC orders**

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar launched a software application called ‘eWatch’ to keep tab on poll-related irregularities, here on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that it was an in-house software application developed at the request of the State Election Commission by Reliance Jio for use in the ensuing gram panchayat elections.

Explaining the importance of the app, Kumar stated that it was user-friendly. He urged the people to use the app to complain about poll-related irregularities and assured to attend to such complaints promptly. The

Kids force their parents to give up factionalism

New gen brings peace to Seema

● **THE CHILDREN** of faction leaders, who have settled down in big cities as software engineers or in other professions, are forcing their parents to keep off factionalism or asking them to shift to Bengaluru.

Bogathi Naryana Reddy, a close aide of the J.C. Diwakar Reddy family, joined hands with his rival K. Pedda Reddy in the last assembly polls. Political borderlines are blurring.

Senior leader J.C. Diwakar Reddy’s family has been with the Telugu Desam for long. He faced cases in the murder of Paritala Ravindra. Bogathi Narayana Reddy had openly declared two years ago that he would keep away

cially the Congress, RLD and Samajwadi Party. The importance of the khaps, especially in the politically dominant Jat communities, is such that even Prime Minister Narendra Modi had to seek their blessings for his party during the 2014 elections.

With khap after khap rallying behind Mr Tikait and extending support to the protests against the farm laws, there is an increasing sense of vulnerability within the BJP ahead of the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections.

The fact that the Muzaffarnagar mahapanchayat saw the return of shared unity of Hindu and Muslim khaps can also be

a cause of further concern for the saffron party.

The khaps play a crucial role in Haryana politics. About 90-odd khaps spread across Sonapat, Jhajjar, Rohtak, Bhiwani, Dadri, Jind, Hisar and Kaithal and Jat community have already expressed solidarity with the protestors.

At Jind mahapanchayat, several khap leaders said the Prime Minister and Union home minister Amit Shah should hold direct talks with the farmers’ unions. But Mr Tikait made it clear that the decision to resume dialogue with the Union government will be taken by the Samyukta Kisan Union, an umbrella organisation of the protesting farmers.

Haryana’s khap meeting seeks farm laws repeal

Farmers leader Tikait warns Centre of consequences

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

In a show of strength by protesting farmers, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Wednesday warned the government that it could find it difficult to stay in power if the new agri-marketing laws are not repealed. Thousands of people who attended the khap mahapanchayat in Haryana’s Jind adopted a five-point resolution which called for repeal of the three laws, constitutional guarantee of MSP, implementation of the Swaminathan Commission report, waiver on farm loans and withdrawal of cases registered against farmers following the Republic Day violence.

Just before Tikait was to begin his speech at the ‘mahapanchayat’ in Kandela village, the stage on which the farmer leaders had gathered collapsed under their weight.

Nobody was reported hurt and the BKU leader went on to address the large gathering. Calling for a “wapsi” (withdrawal) of the three new central laws, the BKU leader indirectly warned the Narendra Modi government that it could lose its “gaddi” (power) if the agitation continues. “We have so far talked about “bill wapsi” (repealing the farm laws). The government should listen carefully. What will you do if the youth call for



Farmers during Kisan Mahapanchayat against the new farm laws in Jind district on Wednesday. — PTI

After the farmers’ peaceful protests ran into trouble because of violence at the tractor rally on Republic Day, the agitation has been garnering support from different state panchayats. There have been mahapanchayats at Muzaffarnagar, Mathura and Baghpat in the past few days. But the mahapanchayat at Jind in Haryana was the first one to be attended by BKU leader Rakesh Tikait who has now become the face of the farmers’ agitation.

The massive turnout in different mahapanchayats has raised concerns for the BJP and given new hope to Opposition parties, espe-

cially the Congress, RLD and Samajwadi Party. The importance of the khaps, especially in the politically dominant Jat communities, is such that even Prime Minister Narendra Modi had to seek their blessings for his party during the 2014 elections.

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MODI TO BEGIN WB CAMPAIGN ON SUNDAY

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, FEB. 3

Targeting West Bengal’s Trinamul Congress in what was once its home turf, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will kick-start his Assembly election campaign from Haldia in East Midnapore, the Adhikari family bastion, with a BJP rally next week amid the party’s rathiyatra led by its president J.P. Nadda and home minister Amit Shah seeking “parivartan” in the poll-bound state.

While Mr Modi’s Haldia visit was already due on February 7, when he will inaugurate three big-ticket Central industrial projects, his political rally was not on the one-day tour agenda as he was supposed to start his campaign only after the poll schedule was announced, BJP sources said.

However, the party’s state and central leadership decided at a meeting in New Delhi Tuesday to hold Mr Modi’s maiden rally for the polls as part of his Haldia tour. State BJP chief Dilip Ghosh said: “The PM will visit Haldia to attend a government event. We invited him to address a party rally there the same day.”

The sudden inclusion of the rally in the PM’s tour reflected local TMC MP Dibyendu Adhikari’s calculated preparations that fuelled speculation about his defection to the BJP in Mr Modi’s presence.

SHORT TAKES

TOP SEERS MEET IN TN TO DISCUSS TEMPLE ATTACKS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 3

Top seers and heads of important peethams of the country on Wednesday met at a small village Ponpadi in Tamil Nadu, about 56 km from Tirupati, sources close to the organisers said. This is the day one of the first phase of Sanathana Dharma Parirakshana Sadassu.

The day-long meeting discussed about the attacks on the Hindu temples in Andhra Pradesh, state government role and the united action plan to be drawn on putting pressure on the pro-active political leaders. The seers also discussed on the systematic attack on the Hindu society, religion and institutions and how to protect them.

The sources added that not many religious heads from across the country could participate as the meeting was convened in a hurry.

Meanwhile, Srinivasananda Swamy said there was no need for some seers to meet in a village in Tamil Nadu when the issue was about attack on the temples in Andhra Pradesh.

All the religious heads should unite on a single platform in Andhra Pradesh and discuss the burning issue and not outside in a secret place," the Swamy told the reporters in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

Those who participated in the Ponpadi meeting include Kanchi Kamakoti Jagadguru Vijayendra Saraswati Mahaswamy, Dakshinamnaya Sringeri seer Bharati teertha Mahaswamy and Sringeri administrator K. Gowri Shankar, Humpi Vidyaranya seer Vidyaranya Bharati Mahaswamy, Pushpagiri seer Vidyasankar Bharati Mahaswamy, Tuni Sacchitananda Tapovana seer Sacchitananda Saraswati Mahaswamy, Ahobila Matha-deeswarulu seer Ranganatha Yatindra Mahaswami, Sri Bhuvanewari Mahapeetham seer Kamalananda Bharati Mahaswamy and Mumukujana seer Muttavi Sitaram guru.

EX-TTD CHIEF ALLEGES FAKE CHARGES ON TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, FEB. 3

Former TTD chairman Putta Sudhakar Yadav has said that the YCP government is sending TD leaders to jail on false charges as it feared impending defeat at the panchayat polls. The government is making false cases to silence the Opposition, he said.

Yadav told a media meet he held at the district TDP office on Wednesday that while some police chiefs wanted to act impartially, the YSRC leaders were pressuring them to register false cases against political rivals.

"The ruling party leaders are trying to intimidate mandal-level leaders of the Telugu Desam Party by arresting top leaders and registering false cases against them," he said.

He alleged that TD activists on campaign in villages were being threatened and false cases were being registered. A case of SC-ST atrocity was registered by a BC individual in Badripalli panchayat of Chapadu Mandal, he said.

Telugu Desam Kadapa Parliament in-charge M. Lingareddy demanded the removal of the Mydukuru Rural police inspector who was "terrorizing" Telugu Desam party workers. The government was adopting repressive measures like the arrest of Achannaidu, the murder attempt on TD national spokesperson Pattabhi, and the registration of SC and ST atrocity cases against Kadapa district leaders, he said.

SEC's 'eWatch' app not to be trusted, says YSRC

MLA alleges the app is developed in Telugu Desam office

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

Ruling YSR Congress has said the poll app of the State Election Commission, eWatch, is not trustworthy as it is a privately developed app.

YSRC MLA and the party's official spokesperson, Ambati Rambabu, said the ruling party in the state has no trust in the app launched by SEC Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar for monitoring the panchayat elections. He alleged that the app was developed in the Telugu Desam office.

Addressing the media here on Wednesday, the MLA said the election monitoring app was designed in the TD office in the same way SEC Ramesh Kumar's letter to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) was drafted there.

Rambabu said the government is not involved in the arrest of Achannaidu. He was caught with evidence of threatening a candidate over filing the nomination for panchayat polls. The police did their duty. He criticised Achannaidu for threatening to avenge the police act.

"TD leaders are day-dreaming and under the illusion of coming to power and forming the next state government, and they hope Lokesh, father Naidu, Achannaidu and current SEC Ramesh Kumar would hold plum positions in future," he said.

Speaking on the SEC's visit to Gollagunta in East Godavari district, where the husband of a sarpanch candidate died under suspicious circumstances, Rambabu said that the job of SEC is to oversee the elections and not visit families. Police would take care of the investigations. He said the election commissioner visited Gollagunta "as a pilot" for Lokesh and as a representative of the TD.

Rambabu said TD leader K o m m a r e d d y Pattabhiram's car had been attacked in the past and the reason could be personal enmity. He criticised Pattabhiram for not filing an official complaint on the attack and accusing the YSRC leaders for no reason.



State Election Commissioner N Ramesh Kumar inspects Civil supplies department vehicles at SEC office in Vijayawada on Wednesday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

EC SEEKS TRANSFER OF MANDAL PARISHAD OFFICERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

In yet another letter to Chief Secretary Adityanath Das, State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar sought transfer of mandal parishad development officers where unanimous elections were held for posts of Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies and Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies in the last elections in the state.

As the State Election Commissioner is very particular to avoid any unanimous elections by force in the ensuing gram panchayat polls, he wrote a letter to the CS seeking the transfer of present MPDOs holding them responsible for such unanimous election earlier.

In Chittoor district alone, the SEC asked for the transfer of 30 MPDOs.

It is yet to be known as to how many MPDOs to be transferred in the entire state. However, it has to be seen as to how the Chief Secretary responds to the letter from the SEC.

He said the government has no reason to attack

Scrap election app, demands YSRC

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

YSR Congress on Wednesday lodged a complaint with State Election Commission (SEC) objecting to the release of e-watch application without following proper norms.

Party state general secretary Lella Appireddy said that the Commission has released a mobile application named "e-watch" a technological platform to ensure free and fair elections. He said that it was both surprising and shocking that SEC has developed an election surveillance app without following the appropriate government regulations and it had not been developed by any State of Central government organisation or by any government empanelled organisation, which is violation of the citizens' right to free and fair elections.

Appireddy said that it was appalling that the Commission is resorting to clandestine acts. He pointed out that during

Chandrababu Naidu or his men since

● **PARTY STATE** general secretary Lella Appireddy said that the Commission has released a mobile application named 'e-watch' a technological platform to ensure free and fair elections.

MPTC, ZPTC elections that were scheduled to take place last year, Nigha, a SEC-approved election vigilance application was given an overwhelming thumbs-up by citizens. He recalled that during the 2019 General Elections, the Centre-owned C-Vigil application was put to use in the state. He said he did not understand the rationale to have a new app. He demanded an immediate response from the SEC with regard to concerns about safety and security measures of huge volumes of data when it is hosted in private servers. He wanted to know who would take responsibility in case of any data breach. He sought immediate scrapping of "e-watch" application.

File nominations without fear: Naidu

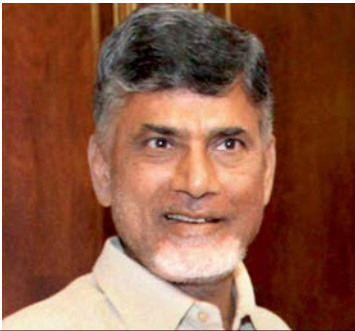
DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday lauded those who were filing their nomination papers for the panchayat elections "without succumbing to the pressure tactics" of the ruling YSR Congress leaders. He alleged that the ministers and ruling party MLAs were resorting to politics of threat and intimidation because of their fear of defeat.

Naidu said that with over 3,335 panchayats going to the polls in the second phase, aspirants should file their papers without fear.

Addressing a teleconference with party leaders for the second phase of polls, Naidu urged them to ensure 100 per cent nominations without slippage. He asked the nominations

● **Telugu Desam** chief N. Chandrababu Naidu said that with over 3,335 panchayats going to the polls in the second phase, aspirants should file their papers without fear.



● **Addressing a teleconference with party leaders** for the second phase of polls, Naidu urged them to ensure 100 per cent nominations without slippage. He asked the nominations should be filed without delay, and any mistakes that occur could be rectified later.

should be filed without delay, and any mistakes that occur could be rectified later. "It is everyone's duty to fight and restore democracy in Andhra Pradesh," Naidu said. The TD called on the can-

didates to send the copies of their nomination papers along with the enclosures to the district panchayat officers, district collectors and the TD Central office. He alleged that the YSRC was trying

to destroy democratic systems and institutions in the state. The government cannot threaten everybody with false cases and arrests forever, he said.

Naidu alleged that the Chief Minister "did not do a single useful thing for the state" and had betrayed all all sections of the people with his false promises. The CM could not get anything for AP in the Union Budget. There were no funds for Polavaram and Amaravati, he pointed out.

He alleged that the CM had "failed totally" to get funds to fill the first year's revenue deficit, the development of seven backward districts and implementing various items under the Reorganisation Act.

The TD chief asserted that the YSRC's 28 MPs had mortgaged the state's interests for the sake of ensuring relief to the CM in his illegal assets cases.

spectators. It was only Botsa who tried to pacify the unruly attitude of Siddarth Reddy," an insider said.

Arthur said that when the discussion was taken up as to who should be fielded from Jupadu Bungalow panchayat, a few names popped up and were TD supporters who had joined YSRC. It was objected to by Siddarth Reddy and verbal objections turned violent when Reddy lifted a chair and threw it

AP BJP LAUNCHES TOLL-FREE NUMBER FOR POLL PLAINTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

State BJP has launched a toll-free number to lodge complaints on poll-related irregularities in the Andhra Pradesh.

State BJP president Somu Veerajulu said here on Wednesday that anyone who found irregularities in the wake of ensuring gram panchayat polls, could complain to the toll-free number 9650713714 to enable them take such issues to the notice of the law enforcing agencies for taking necessary action. He called upon the people to avail toll-free number to complain on attacks and untoward incidents related to the polls.

Reacting on the State Election Commission launching an app called 'eWatch', he asked for action on those who resort to irregularities in the polls.

2,598 PAPERS FILED FOR PHASE-II SARPANCH POLLS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

As the filing of nominations by the contestants for the positions of sarpanch and ward member in gram panchayat polls under phase-2 began peacefully on February 2 in AP, 2,598 nominations for sarpanch and 6,421 nominations for ward member, were filed.

The State Election Commission notified 3,327 gram panchayats out of a total number of 3,374 and also 33,562 wards out of 34,150 in all 13 districts in the state, to go for polls.

GIVE PUBLICITY TO NEW APP, SEC ORDERS

From Page 1

He called upon the district collectors to give wide-spread publicity on usage of the newly launched app to enable more number of people to use them. He lauded the district administrations, particularly young officers holding key positions, for making all requisite arrangements for the conduct of polls.

He said, "I appeal to the people living away from their native villages to return on poll day and exercise their franchise."

Earlier, State Election Commission secretary K. Kannababu explained about the functioning of the app by saying that it could be downloaded from Google Play Store and people can register on it.

He said that all the complaints would reach the call centre and after getting segregated based on the nature of the complaint, they would reach the district collectors and the SEC for follow-up action. He said that the identity of the complainants would not be disclosed. He also said that the app is tamper-proof.

BJP failed to initiate CBI probe in chariot burning case: Srinivas

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

Minister for endowments Vellampalli Srinivas Rao has alleged that the Telugu Desam and the BJP were trying to disrupt communal harmony in Andhra Pradesh by creating social rift in the name of religion, for their political gains.

Addressing a press meet here on Wednesday, the minister alleged that BJP Rajya Sabha member G.V.L. Narasimha Rao never tried to speak up for the rights of Andhra Pradesh in Parliament. But, he tried to defame the YSRC government by raising the Antarvedi chariot-burning incident. "The YSRC government has already asked the CBI to conduct an inquiry into this incident. The government constructed a new chariot for Antarvedi. On its part, the BJP government at the Centre failed to order a CBI inquiry into the incident, which shows its double standard," he said.

The minister said the Antarvedi temple Rathotsavam is scheduled for February 26 and the new chariot would be used then. "The SIT investigation into the attacks on temples would unearth involvement of political leaders. TD leaders were clearly involved in these attacks. They were involved in the plucking and shifting of the Nandi idol in Srikakulam district and the police have arrested some TD leaders in this connection," he said.

Minister Srinivas Rao objected to the statement of BJP Rajya Sabha member Narasimha Rao that no action has been taken against the alleged demolition of the 140 temples in AP. He recalled that the BJP was in the TD Cabinet and its leader was the endowments minister when 40 temples were demolished by the Chandrababu Naidu government. "But neither Narasimha Rao nor other BJP leaders protested ag-



Vellampalli Srinivas Rao

ainst it, and never questioned the demolitions."

He said Narasimha Rao was shedding crocodile tears on the temples' issue and trying to provoke people via raising baseless allegations along with the TD. He said in the majority of the temple attack cases, TD leaders "are the main accused" and "they are trying to mislead people when the police arrested them".

Srinivas Rao said the TD and the BJP responsible for the demolition of 40 temples never tried to reconstruct those. Chief Minister Jagan was now reconstructing those demolished temples, he said, and alleged that Chandrababu Naidu as then CM was responsible for the demolition of those temples CM Jagan is now saviour of the Hindu dharma. The government reconstructed Ram idols of the Ramateertham temple but MP Narasimha Rao is unable to acknowledge the good deeds of the YSRC government.

On the returning of cheque former minister and TD leader F. Ashok Gajapati Raju offered to Ramateertham temple, Srinivas Rao said Ashok Gajapati Raju put a condition about using his money for the remaking of the Ram idol. The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams meanwhile offered a Ram idol for free and hence his cheque was returned.

He said that if Ashok Gajapati Raju gives a donation to the temple without any condition then that would be accepted without any hesitation.

TD MPs meet Shah; complain against govt

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

A team of Telugu Desam MPs has complained to Union home minister Amit Shah in Delhi on Wednesday about the ongoing 'attacks and atrocities' from ruling YSRC ministers, MLAs and leaders in AP. "These are done with utter disrespect to all the constitutional systems and institutions," they have complained. The MPs

appealed to Amit Shah for urgent central government intervention to restore law and order so as to also ensure a "free and fair" panchayat poll in the state.

They said that there were non-stop attacks on a constitutional institution like the AP State Election Commission and false cases were being filed against the Opposition leaders and the contesting candidates.

AP SENT SEVERAL REMINDERS FOR CENTRAL FUNDS

From Page 1

Sources said several letters are being written from the Chief Minister's Office to the Union home ministry seeking the release of Central assistance to AP to enable it to provide relief to the affected farmers and to restore damaged infrastructure.

Despite no financial assistance being released, the state government has provided input subsidy to all the affected farmers to enable them to take up cultivation of crops for

the next season.

A senior official from AP State Disaster Management Authority said, "Though it is not unusual for Central assistance to get delayed at times, there is a long delay this time given the enormity of the extent of damage and the assurances given by the Central teams to expedite the release of funds to AP."

Sources say that it has to be seen whether the Centre releases 80 or 50 per cent of the relief sought.

Children force parents to shift to Bengaluru

From Page 1

"We were strictly directed by our children not to indulge in faction rivalry, but they have no problem if we continue with normal politics." Else, migrate Bengaluru, children tell their parents.

"Previously, youngsters forcibly entered into faction rivalry by way of inheritance of a vicious culture from their previous generation, led groups in villages and even eliminated rivals. However, police efforts to check such

● **KAPATRALLA, A faction village, had a drastic change after former SP A. Ravikrishna adopted the village four years ago.**

crimes and undertake awareness programmes helped control factionalism in a majority of the villages," Anantapur SP Satya Esubabu has observed.

Kapatralla, a faction village, had a drastic change after former SP A. Ravikrishna adopted the village four years ago.

KURNOOL | POLITICS

Byreddy Siddarth Reddy assaults YSRC office-bearer Raghuramaiah

YSRC meeting turns violent in ministers' presence

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, FEB. 3

The simmering discontent between Nandikotkur legislator Arthur and Byreddy Siddarth Reddy came out in the open when Siddarth Reddy assaulted office-bearer Raghuramaiah in front of four Cabinet ministers during a meeting here on Wednesday.

Municipal minister Botsa Satyanarayana, finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy, district

in-charge minister Anil Kumar Yadav and labour minister Gummanur Jayaram were in the town to finalise names of candidates for the ensuing gram panchayat polls.

According to an insider, the four ministers were no match to the aggressive stance taken by Siddarth Reddy, who hurled chairs and sharp objects causing injury to Raghuramaiah.

"The attackers hit Raghuramaiah twice while the ministers remained silent

on the party's office-bearer Raghuramaiah. While the matter was pacified when they took time to proceed to other matters, during the interregnum, Siddarth Reddy again assaulted Raghuramaiah. Botsa Satyanarayana made repeated pleas to Reddy to control himself, but they fell on deaf ears, he said.

Siddarth Reddy has become a liability to the party as his behaviour is feudalistic and against democratic practices.

The Nandikotkur MLA Arthur has objected to interferences of Reddy's followers in the constituency.

A YSRC leader said, "I bow my head in shame at the turn of events at Kurnool. Four Cabinet ministers could not do anything to control a person who turned violent. Unless checked now, the rebels would start dictating terms to the party bosses and the YSRC would soon turn into a

Congress party of yore," the leader said while sounding caution.

Nandikotkur constituency was reserved for SCs in 2019. Prior to the reservation, it was represented by Byreddy Rajasekhara Reddy and Gouri Charita Reddy.

To checkmate the influence of Byreddy Rajasekhara Reddy in the region, then chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy reserved the seat for Scheduled Castes.

SHORT TAKES

MANSAS SIGNS MoU WITH ACHARYA RANGA VARSITY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 3

Maharaja Alak Narayan Society of Arts and Science, Vizianagaram, and Acharya NG Ranga Agriculture University signed an MoU in Guntur on Tuesday. The memorandum was signed by the chairperson of MANSAS P. Sanchaita Gajapathi Raju and vice-chancellor of the university Prof. Adala Vishnuvardhan Reddy.

In a release, Sanchaita said the objectives of the MoU were to promote and enhance academic research and training in diversified fields, including biological sciences, agricultural sciences and engineering, humanities and social sciences.

The other features of the MoU were to promote faculty development and active collaboration among the faculty leading to joint research proposals and beneficial engagement with the stakeholders, to foster an eco-system for experiential and collaborative learning to the students leading to honing their skills and making them compatible to contemporary advancements and employability requirements.

She said the need for agriculture to become self sustainable and viable in the Indian context was emphasised. Among other things, the importance of collaborative research with the technical institution in bringing out proper synergies in the design and development of affordable farm implements /equipment.

MADANAPALLI CASE: ACCUSED SENT TO VIZAG HOSP

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 3

The well-educated couple from Chittoor's Madanapalle, Dr Valluru Purushotham Naidu and Valluru Padmaja, who have been remanded at the local sub-jail for allegedly killing their two daughters, were shifted to the government mental care facility in Vizag on Wednesday, for a complete psychiatric evaluation and treatment, if necessary.

The couple is accused of murdering their daughters Alekhya (27) and Sai Divya (22) in their house at Madanapalle on January 24. They were produced before the Judicial magistrate on January 26 and placed under remand at the Madanapalli sub-jail, where the authorities have lodged Padmaja in a special cell and Purushottam Naidu in a common cell.

Padmaja was said to still be in a state of trance and chanting the name of Lord Shiva the whole night. On the request of jail authorities, the couple was evaluated by a team of psychiatrists on January 27. They confirmed that the couple was suffering from delusions and needed a complete psychiatric evaluation in the presence of a psychologist.

The jail authorities presented the recommendation of psychiatrists to the local magistrate and obtained permission to shift the couple to Ruia Hospital Tirupati. There a team of doctors at the psychiatry ward completed basic assessment of the couple's mental state.

Doctors at Ruia hospital felt that the couple has to undergo a complete psychiatric evaluation in the presence of a psychologist. They also advised that the couple need custodian care as they are appearing highly delusional. The Ruia Hospital lacks a full-time psychologist, and the psychiatric cell being able to accommodate one patient at a time, the doctors advised the jail authorities to get the couple admitted to the government hospital for mental care at Vizag.

TAHSILDAR, DY TAHSILDAR SUSPENDED

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 3

Tahsildar Madhusudhan Rao and deputy tahsildar Zameer Basha working at the Tahsildar office in Rapur have been placed under suspension for various irregularities on Wednesday. Collector KVN Chakradhar Babu had ordered a probe after he received complaints against the two officials over corruption in providing patta passbooks. Collector has suspended the duo based on a report of Nellore Revenue Division Officer SK Hussein Basha, who probed into the allegations at the instance of the Collector.

TTD readies for another sacred flower garden

Garden in 5 acres area near Bata Gangamma temple

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 3

With an aim to enhance the beauty of the precincts of Tirumala hills and also for the sake of daily worship of Lord Venkateswara, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has developed yet another sacred flower garden atop the hill town.

The sacred garden is coming up in a five acres area near Bata Gangamma temple at Tirumala. The TTD's garden wing took up the project under the directions of its executive officer Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy and under the supervision of additional executive officer A.V. Dharma Reddy and with the help of sponsorships by donors.

The TTD is growing traditional flowers like Marigold, Vrukshi Roja, Lily, Madurai Jasmine, Kanakambaram, Manu Sampangi, Tulasi, paner leaves and other aromatic leaves that are used in daily puja of Lord Balaji. The yield of these flowers and aromatic leaves will be available for pujas at the Srivari temple from the

TTD resumes break darshan

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 3

The TTD has resumed the issuance of VIP break darshan tickets to devotees having Udayasthamana and Vimshati Varsha Darshini sevas.

Those devotees, henceforth, can avail the break darshan facility through the donor management system portal online, which came into force from Wednesday.

It may be noted that the TTD has been providing the VIP break darshan facility to these tickets' holders from September 11 after all Arjitha sevas were cancelled from March 13 last year in

view of Covid-19. On appeal by Udayasthamana seva ticket holders, the TTD is providing VIP break tickets darshan to them along with the Srivani trust donors.

However, from Wednesday these devotees need not have to go to Arjitham office at Tirumala to get their darshan tickets.

Instead, the devotees can directly go for darshan with online tickets in VIP break.

The TTD requested the devotees to contact Arjitham office through landline: 0877-2263589 or e m a i l : arjithamoffice@gmail.com.

months of April and May. In the meanwhile, the TTD is also developing another Sri Venkateswara sacred flower garden at a cost of ₹1.5 crore from donations as depicted in Puranas in a 10-

acre land near Sila Thoranam, located on the way to Dharmagiri hills. In this garden, 25 varieties of aromatic plants like seven leaves banana plantation, which are considered

6-year-old gets new lease of life through Aarogyasri

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

The doctors had successfully treated a six-year-old child suffering from primary refractory Hodgkin Lymphoma under Aarogyasri scheme in Manipal Hospital at Vijayawada. The assessment of PET CT results showed that there was a complete metabolic response post giving her second-line salvage chemotherapy with GDP.

Addressing the media at a press meet here on Wednesday, Dr Madhav Danthala, Consultant Hemato Oncology,

Manipal Hospital, said the child, Neelapati Siri Spandana, visited the hospital with multiple lesions in her body and was in a very critical condition.

Dr G. Krishna Reddy, Consultant Medical Oncology, said once the patient became responsive, BEAM conditioning and Autologous Stem Cell Transplant was given to the patient. He said the patient was discharged in 3 weeks after having achieved complete blood count recovery. He said the doctors are constantly monitoring the patient's health and she is now being

AP RECORDS 95 COVID CASES, 1 DEATH IN 24 HOURS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

Andhra Pradesh registered 95 fresh cases of Covid-19 and one death on Wednesday.

Out of 25,445 samples tested, 95 persons were found infected with Coronavirus. Out of a total number of 1,32,14,548 samples test-

ed so far, 8,88,099 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 8,79,780 recovered while 1,162 are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases, Krishna reported 17 followed by 16 each in Guntur and Visakhapatnam, nine in Chittoor, seven each in East Godavari and Nellore,

treated on an out-patient basis.

The parents of Siri Spandana expressed their gratitude to the doctors for successfully completing the treatment. They also expressed their gratitude to the Government of Andhra Pradesh for making such treatments affordable under Aarogyasri.

Dr Sudhakar Kantipudi, hospital director, Dr Manoj Kumar, chief of clinical services, Dr B. Sravan Kumar, associate consultant, Medical Oncology, and others present in the press meet.

six in Srikakulam, five in Anantapur, four each in Kurnool and West Godavari, three in Vizianagaram, one in Kadapa and no case in Prakasam.

Krishna continued to lead the state in cumulative Coronavirus active cases with 291 followed by 134 in Chittoor, 128 in East Godavari.

Kondapalli toys at national toys fair

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

The Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) has asked world-famous Kondapalli toymakers to participate in the national toys fair without fail with Kondapalli toys to get global attention and market opportunities. He said that 30 male and female toymakers successfully completed the skill development programme

was concluded at Kondapalli on Wednesday and the toymakers received certificates. EPCH India southern states director K. Nagatulasi Rao said the upgrading of skills would give more opportunities to Kondapalli toys in universal markets and asserted on the

need of exporting Kondapalli toys in all possible aspects. He asked the toymakers to participate in the national toys fair without fail with Kondapalli toys to get global attention and market opportunities. He said that 30 male and female toymakers successfully completed the skill development programme

and these skills would be useful to the Kondapalli toymakers community to spread their business in all platforms. Nagatulasi Rao presented certificates to the toymakers on the occasion. EPCH assistant manager, Sateesh, its executive Divakar and designers participated in the programme.

5.6 kg of gold, cash and jewellery seized in Kadapa district

Gold seizures linked to panchayat polls

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, FEB. 3

Kadapa district police seized 5.6kg of gold ornaments in two separate searches on Wednesday. The police in Jammalamadugu seized 2.7 kg and the Proddatur Rural police seized 2.9 kg of ornaments. Those who possessed these did not show any documents about purchase and hence the police handed over the ornaments to the Income Tax authorities.

Jammalamadugu sub-divisional police officer Nallamari Nagaraju said the first seizure was made while cops inspected a car. Two bags were found inside the vehicle at Muddanur Cross Road.



Cash and jewellery seized by Proddatur police.

The driver was detained. He told the cops that the ornaments were being taken to Proddatur to be polished at a gold jewellery shop in Pulivendula area.

According to DSP Prasad Rao, Proddatur Rural Police are conduct-

ing inspections of vehicles in the run-up to the panchayat elections. On the Proddatur-Mydukuru road, a man suspiciously stopped his vehicle for some time. Police did a search and found 2.92kg of gold ornaments and cash of ₹7.32 lakh in his

handbag.

Although he identified himself as a gold trader from Hyderabad, the ornaments were seized and handed over to the Income Tax authorities as he did not have proper documents.

DSP of Karur Karuna-

Villagers threaten to boycott GP poll over teacher posts

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 3

Students of Darakonda primary school in GK Veedhi mandal in Visakhapatnam agency, their parents and villagers staged a dharna for few hours in the school campus demanding appointment of new teachers. The villagers announced that they would boycott the ongoing panchayat elections if no new teachers were appointed immediately.

Rajababu of Girijan Samakhya at Darakonda told DC that the school has 180 students and had nine teachers until recently. Of them six teachers got transferred using the political connections, one is on long leave and another fell ill.

"The lone teacher Prasad is paying the multi-role of teacher as well as headmaster. His is also ill but attending the school regularly keeping in the mind the students interest," Rajababu said.

Parents of students said the teachers always ask them to teach the chil-

dren at home knowing well that the most of the parents were illiterate.

Some said the quality of mid-day meal was also not good and they were advising their children not to consume the food.

When the issue of taken to the notice of mandal education officer K. Nagabhushanam, he assured the village elders that he would take the issue to the notice of senior officials and project officer of ITDA. The villagers said no action was taken up so far.

On inquiry, district educational officer M. Lingeswara Reddy said has had asked the MEO to appoint three teachers urgently drawing from other schools where there were sufficient teachers. The DEO said he had stopped entertaining recommendation letters from political leaders to transfer teachers from far-flung villages to schools of their choice.

Girijan Samakhya members said they would support the villagers if they boycott the elections on this issue.

SRISAILAM TEMPLE TO REOPEN FREE FOOD DRIVE TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, FEB. 3

Srisailam temple will open up free food service to pilgrims (Annadana programme) after a gap of 9 months as it was shut down due to Covid, said executive officer Rama Rao. With declining of Covid-19 cases, the authorities of Srisailam temple are all set to resume free food services to devotees from February 4.

Sri Bramaramba Mallikarjuna Swamy temple of Srisailam temple executive officer K.S. Rama Rao told the media that as per directions, Anna Prasada vitarana programme will kick off on Thursday. Dining tables and seating systems have been rearranged as per Covid-19 guidelines in the Annadana halls of temples, he added.

The free food will be provided to all devotees between 10.30 am and 3 pm every day, he said.

He, however, said that even in the Covid-19 pandemic time the temple provided free food to Saduvulu and deserted people as per norms.

Earlier, the EO inspected the arrangements and facilities at Annadana hall and food cooking rooms and directed the staff to be careful on sanitation and quality matters.

Special squads told to curb distribution of liquor and cash

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 3

Flying squads, statistical surveillance and expenditure teams have been directed to prevent distribution of liquor and money.

Meanwhile, in a review meeting with returning and polling officers at Singarayakonda in Prakasam district, collector Pola Bhaskar urged them to ensure that candidates follow the election code without any deviation.

Reminding that polling would be from 6.30 am to 3.30 pm, he told the officials to start the counting process from 4 pm onwards.

He directed the police to arrest anyone found carrying lethal weapons and pay special attention to maintain law and order in rural areas.

Bhaskar instructed them to keep a tab on the movement of suspicious characters in the villages. Sub-collector of Kandukur Bhargava Teja, Tahsildar Usha Rani and MPDO Zamiullah were present.

TWO HELD FOR STEALING EDIBLE OIL WORTH ₹50L

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 3

Muthukuru police arrested two persons including an employee of Gemini Edibles and Fats Pvt Ltd on Wednesday for stealing Palm oil worth ₹50 lakhs from the firm located at Pantapalem in Muthukuru mandal on January 27.

The accused have been identified as Janu Srinivasa Rao 35, an employee of Gemini Edibles and Fats Pvt Ltd living in Nellore and a tanker driver Amaresh 28 of Mudigiri in Kolar of Karnataka.

According to Nellore rural DSP Y. Harinath Reddy, Amersham to the Gemini Edibles factory on January 27 around 11.45 pm and collected 18.5 tonnes of Palm oil in his tank lorry at the loading point.

While the officials were busy in preparing the bills after weighing the quantity in the lorry, Amaresh took the lorry again to the loading point and filled the gap with the connivance of Janu Srinivasa Rao, an employee in Gemini.

A Supervisor of the firm K.Chalapathi alerted the HR manager of the company, P. Balasubrahmanyam about the cheating after he noticed the re-filling in the tanker after filling.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY ANANTAPUR, ANANTHAPURAMU - 515 002 (A.P.) INDIA

XI CONVOCATION NOTIFICATION

The Eleventh Convocation of JNTUA, Ananthapuramu will be held in the month of **March, 2021**. All UG, PG and Ph.D/M.Phil./M.S. Candidates who are qualified for the award of degree during the Academic year up to **2019-20** are hereby informed to send the filled in applications in the prescribed format to the **Controller of Examinations (UG & PG)**, JNTUA on or before **25.02.2021**. Only Ph.D/M.Phil./M.S. Awardees and Gold Medalists will receive the degrees on the date and others will receive their degrees through registered post. Further details can be seen in the website www.jntua.ac.in under Examinations section.

Note: The candidates who have applied in response to our earlier Notification dated **16.12.2019** need not apply again and their applications will be considered for this Convocations.

Date: 01.02.2021 sd/- REGISTRAR

SHORT TAKES



Shashi Tharoor

THAROOR, PANDE, OTHERS MOVE SC TO QUASH FIRS

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

Congress member of parliament Shashi Tharoor, senior journalist Rajdeep Sardesai, Mrinal Pandey, Zafar Agha, Vinod K Jose Pareesh Nath and Anand Nath on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court for the quashing of multiple FIRs registered against them for alleged misreporting of violence relating to farmers agitation in the national capital on Republic Day.

The FIRs have alleged “mis-reporting” and “spreading disharmony” by their tweets and reports on the ongoing farmers’ agitation seeking the repeal of three farm laws which farmers’ are contending aims to corporatise agriculture.

Describing the FIRs as “frivolous”, the petitioners have invoked their right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 and their freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

Several FIRs were filed against the petitioner in Delhi, Gurugram, NOIDA, and Madhya Pradesh.

SIVASANKAR GETS BAIL IN KERALA GOLD SCAM CASE

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC KOCHI, FEB. 3

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan’s former principal secretary M. Sivasankar was granted bail in dollar smuggling case by economic offences court here on Wednesday. He was released from Kakkanaad sub jail in the evening.

The additional chief judicial magistrate court (economic offences) granted bail to the former principal secretary and directed him to furnish a bond of ₹2 lakh, two sureties for the like amount and appear before the investigating officials here every Monday.

With this Sivasankar has secured bail in all the three cases registered against him by the Customs and the Enforcement Directorate.

He was accused by the Customs of smuggling dollars worth ₹1.3 crore.

Sivasankar’s alleged involvement in the gold smuggling and currency smuggling case had triggered a major political controversy in the state with the Opposition Congress-led UDF and the BJP alleging that the Chief Minister’s office had become a den of smugglers and money laundering agents.

Mamata says polls will be announced within a week

Accuses ex-TMC leader Rajib of anomalies in appointments

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, FEB. 3

Triggering speculation of an early Assembly Election in West Bengal, chief minister and Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday indicated that the polls would be announced within a week in the state.

She also accused TMC turncoat Rajib Banerjee of malpractice, during his tenure as the state forest minister, which

has come under a probe of her government. Hitting back at her with in a few hours, Mr Banerjee, however, gave himself a clean chit.

Addressing a TMC rally in Alipurduar of North Bengal, the CM said, “Remember, only seven-eight days are left for the polls to be announced. So time is less in hands.”

Without taking the name of Mr Banerjee she alleged, “The boy who was with us but left us did some anomalies in the appointments of Bon

Sahayak (Forest Assistant). Lot of people gave me this complaint. We are investigating it. One should ask him about his role in such malpractice when he makes tall talks. He joined the BJP after stealing.”

Hitting back at the TMC chief, Mr Banerjee said at a BJP rally in Gurap of Hooghly, “She claimed of anomalies in the recruitment of Bon Sahayak and talked of a probe. But with due respect to her, I can say with

responsibility that I had impartially entrusted a panel for the recruitment with transparency. At around 10 am on October 8, when I sent her a message complaining against a big shot of Birbhum of threatening me to allot all the Bon Sahayak jobs to him, she called me to distribute the jobs proportionately in quota among the Trinamul workers in all the districts.”

He told the Chief Minister, “I remained silent so far. But you

forced me to open my mouth. I still have the messages and copies of recommendations from Kalighat and ministers and leaders. You are only opening a can of worms. You are now in Alipurduar where your district party president was among those who made the recommendations. You rather cancel the panel of recruitment to know the truth. If needed, cancel all the government recruitment for contractual jobs. But can you do it?”

21 per cent drop in BMC’s revenue

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 3

Covid-19 pandemic has affected the revenues of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation very hard as it has seen a whopping 21 per cent fall in the revenue income for the year 2020-21. It has compelled the richest civic body in the country to dip into reserves by taking an internal loan to fund the infrastructure projects in the city for the next fiscal year. The BMC had set a target of ₹28,448 crore from the revenue income for the year 2020-21. However, due to the coronavirus crisis, it had to revise the target down to ₹22,572 crore, facing a loss of ₹5,876 crore.

The BMC on Wednesday presented a budget of ₹39,038.83 crore for the financial year 2021-22. It is the richest municipal corporation in the country and its annual budget is higher than even small states like Kerala, Goa and north-east states.

“In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, the need arose to divert our attention by all means to health activities to face the pandemic. Though we are successful in riding over the pandemic, the outbreak adversely affected the economy overall and there is a considerable downfall in the revenue,” said Iqbal Singh Chahal, BMC chief.

According to civic officials, Covid-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown resulted in closure of the small as well as large commercial units, due to which property tax collection was adversely affected. The slow-down in real estate also led to reduction in assessment of new properties thus decreasing the revenue collection. Many ready possession flats in the city also remained unsold. In addition to that, the lockdown also resulted in restriction on movement of people and migration of labour which adversely affected the construction business in the city.

In Mumbai, the BMC has presently undertaken several major projects like Coastal Road, Goregaon-Mumbai Link Road, Mithi river works, sewage disposal, water tunnels, municipal hospital repairs etc which require large capital expenditure. For this, the civic body has proposed to raise ₹5,876 crore by way of Internal Loan from its reserves.

For the BMC, the major sources of revenue for 2021-22 are grant-in-aid on account of compensation in lieu of Octroi ₹10,583 crore, property tax ₹7,000 crore, DP department ₹2,000 crore, income from interest on investments ₹975 crore and water & sewerage charges ₹1,598 crore.

Farmers dig in their heels



Barbed wires put across a road by Delhi Police at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Wednesday to stop farmers from entering the national capital during their protest against the new farm laws. Blocking of borders is causing inconvenience to residents of Delhi and neighbouring states, besides financial loss to the people and the exchequer, the Rajya Sabha was informed. — PTI

IT’S TIME TO EXTEND HAND OF PEACE IN ALL DIRECTIONS: PAK ARMY CHIEF

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

In what is being seen as a possible outreach to India, Pakistan’s powerful Army chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa has said “it is time” for his country to “extend the hand of peace in all directions”, even as he called on India and Pakistan to resolve the

Kashmir issue in a “peaceful and dignified manner”.

Addressing a graduation ceremony at the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Academy earlier on Tuesday, Gen. Bajwa, however, referred to the Kashmir situation as a “human tragedy” that must be brought to its “logical conclusion” as per the “aspirations” of its people.

Mufti accuses J&K police of torturing govt’s opponents

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, FEB. 3

Former chief minister and People’s Democratic Party (PDP) leader, Mehbooba Mufti, on Wednesday accused the intelligence wing of Jammu and Kashmir Police of joining Central agencies in “terrorising” the people of Kashmir.

In a series of tweets, Mufti alleged that J&K police’s CID wing is also implicating the political opponents of the government in false cases. She claimed that after failing to substantiate charges against PDP’s youth leader Waheed ur Rehman Para, the intelligence wing of the police replaced the head of its Special Investigating Team (SIT) which was probing a case as he refused to be an accomplice in framing innocent charges.

“J&K CID has joined the list of central agencies that work to terrorise Kashmiris & falsely implicate them. After failing to substantiate charges against PDP’s @parawahid CID replaced the SIT head because he refused to be an accomplice in framing innocent charges”, she wrote on micro-blogging site. She also alleged that Parra is being persecuted and tor-

tured to admit the false allegations and that he has been kept under inhuman conditions. “Investigation against him has been fraudulent and politically motivated from day one...he is being persecuted & tortured to admit the false allegations. Since an admission didn’t happen he is being kept under inhuman conditions. This investigation has been fraudulent & politically motivated from day one”, she tweeted.

The former chief minister said that the institutions meant to uphold law and order bring disrepute by getting involved in these deceitful investigations. “The norm dictating such deceitful investigations is ‘Show me the man & I’ll show you the crime’. Shameful & appalling that these actions discredit & bring disrepute to the institutions meant to uphold law & order”, she said in another tweet.

Parra was last month arrested by the J&K police in connection with a case related to an alleged nexus involving politicians, militants and their Over Ground Workers (OWGs) and sympathisers and illegal money transactions.

The police sources had said that the case in which the J&K police’s Criminal Investigation Kashmir (CIK) wing

rearrested Parra was registered by it under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 sometime ago and has since filed over two dozen FIRs at various police stations across the Union Territory.

The sleuths of the CIK had taken 33-year-old Parra in custody within the premises of a Jammu prison soon after he was released from over six week long detection on January 9. Earlier a special court of National Investigation Agency (NIA) at Jammu had granted him bail, the relief given on a surety bond of ₹1 lakh and a personal bond of the like amount.

The NIA had arrested him on November 25 last year for his alleged “close links” with Kashmiri lawyer Irfan Shafi Mir, who was arrested by the police along with Hizb-ul-Mujahideen commander Syed Naveed Mushtaq alias Naveed Babu, another militant Asif Ahmed Rather and tainted J&K police officer Davinder Singh in January 2020.

Since the arrest had come merely two days after Parra’s filing his nomination papers for J&K’s maiden District Development Council (DDC) elections, the PDP had termed the NIA’s action as a political black-mail of the ruling BJP.

CRPF’S COBRA TO INDUCT WOMEN COMMANDOS

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB. 3

CRPF’s anti-Naxal wing Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA) is soon going to induct women commands in its units. The CRPF authorities have taken decision to induct women commandos in COBRA units, D. Prakash, CRPF inspector general (IG), Chhattisgarh, told this newspaper.

Sources said the process has begun to recruit the woman commandos for COBRA. After training, the women commandos would be deployed in combat duty along with their male counterparts in their respective COBRA battalions in insurgency-hit Bastar in Chhattisgarh. Currently, the COBRA units are all male forces. CRPF has total 10 COBRA battalions.

Of these, 6 battalions have been deployed in south Bastar, comprising districts of Sukma, Bijapur, Dantewada and Narayanpur.

CRPF’s 241 battalion, christened as Bastariya Battalion, was established a year ago.

No govt jobs for protesters blocking roads: Bihar cops

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, FEB. 3

The Bihar government has landed into a controversy after the police headquarter issued a directive stating that people indulging in violent protests and road blockages will not be eligible for government jobs or contracts.

The circular says that the police will issue a verification report about the person’s character and also find out about his past criminal history.

“If anyone found indulging in a criminal act by engaging in any law and order situation, protests or road blockages and is charged for this, then it should be mentioned in the person’s character verification report by the police. Such people should be prepared for serious consequences as they will be barred from getting any government jobs or contracts”, director general of police S.K. Singhal said in the circular.

This comes almost a week after Bihar Economic Offences Unit (EOU) in a circular had said that offensive social media posts against the



● **THIS ORDER** comes almost a week after Bihar Economic Offences Unit in a circular had said that offensive social media posts against the government, ministers and officials will be treated as cybercrime and invite penal action.

government, ministers and officials will be treated as cybercrime and invite penal action.

The unit had also informed all state government departments about the decision and asked them to report about individuals and organisations involved in such posts on social media.

The development has triggered strong reactions in Bihar.

The RJD which is the main opposition party in the state has termed the state government’s directive “against the constitution”.

“It seems that Nitish Kumar is trying to compete with Mussolini and Hitler by issuing such kind of directives. It means that if a person

uses his democratic right to protest against the system then he will be denied a job. This also means that they will not give jobs and will not allow anyone to protest”, Leader of the opposition Tejashwi Yadav said in a tweet.

“Why is the Chief Minister with 40 seats so scared?” he added. Hitting out at Nitish government, RJD leader Shivanand Tiwary said that “The Constitution of India has provided us with the right to protest. The Chief Minister of Bihar himself had been part of many protests against several ruling regimes. Instead of taking harsh measures against the protestors, he should ask the administration to look into the problems of common people”.

PM’s brothers stages sit-in



Prahlaad Modi, brother of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stages sit-in at Chaudhary Charan Singh Airport in Lucknow on Wednesday. Prahlaad Modi alleged that the police did not let his supporters reach there and took them into custody. Police, however, have denied the charge. Prahlaad Modi told reports at the airport that he had come to Uttar Pradesh to take part in some social programmes in Sultanpur, Jaunpur and Pratapgarh. “After reaching here, I came to know that the workers who were coming to receive me were held by the Lucknow police and made to sit in a police station. Efforts are on to lodge cases against them,” he claimed. — PTI

MUM. DCP FILES DEFAMATION PLAINT AGAINST ARNAB GOSWAMI

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 3

Deputy Commissioner of Mumbai Police, Abhishek Trimukhe has filed a criminal defamation complaint against Republic TV’s editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami, his wife and director Samyabrata Goswami and ARG Outlier Media that runs the channel. The complaint filed in the Sessions Court, Mumbai, through the public prosecutor’s office, seeks a “deterrent process of warrant” against the accused and “compensation” for Trimukhe.

The defamation suit has been filed claiming that defamatory statements were made against Trimukhe during a panel discussion in connection with actor Sushant Singh Rajput’s death case.

Terming Arnab a habitual offender Trimukhe demanded stern action against him and mentioned a defamation case where in Arnab and Times Now, where he was earlier employed, were directed to pay ₹100 crore in damages.

The decree late Tuesday made no mention of the reason for the ban, but Zelensky said on Twitter later his country supports freedom of speech, and “not propaganda financed by the aggressor”.

"I knew it would be baby steps all the way," DiMeo said. "You've got to have a lot of motivation, a lot of patience. And you've got to stay strong through everything." Experts say it appears the surgery at

—AFP

—AFP

India has once again pressed for the devolution of power to the provinces under the 13th Amendment (13A) of the Sri Lankan Constitution and the system of provincial councils as a step towards better representation of Tamil minority. —PTI

But simultaneous face and double hand transplants are extremely rare and have only been tried twice before. The first attempt was in 2009 on a patient in Paris who died about a month later from

visits, there was little direct access to team members, who have given scant details of their discussions and visits thus far. Uniformed and plainclothes security guards stood watch along the facility's gated front entrance, but there was no sign of the

Suu Kyi's party has called for non-violent resistance, and people in Yangon honked car horns and banged on pots and pans on Tuesday night. —AP

One of China's top virus research labs, the Wuhan Institute of Virology built an archive of genetic information about bat coronaviruses after the 2003 outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

Given that acute respiratory virus infections caused by different viruses are clinically indistinguishable, an effective broad-spectrum that can target different virus types at the same time could significantly improve clinical management, the researchers said.

Once it became clear conventional surgeries could not help him regain full vision or use of his hands, medical team began preparing for the transplant in early 2019. —AP

The review of the existing policies and the subsequent recommendations coming from 60 to 180 days from various federal agencies are likely to end up in benefitting hundreds and thousands of Indian professionals in realizing their dream of citizenship of the US. "The federal government should

—PTI

The extension doesn't require formal congressional approval in the United States. The Biden administration will also work on control measures for China's smaller but growing arsenal of nuclear warheads, Blinken said. —AP

"Today we are going to work to undo the moral and national shame of the previous administration," he said. —PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

4 FEBRUARY 2021

Farmers aren't hooligans; don't act like a police state

Are India's farmers — who have mounted a full-scale agitation to secure the rollback of three agricultural reform laws passed without consultation with them — hooligans? The narrative built up by the Centre and its supporters, including in the media, has been built assiduously around exactly this idea. It's in the chaotic events of Republic Day in New Delhi that the justification is sought to be excavated to denigrate the community of food-growers thus.

From this springs the presumed validation of the rationale to deny farmers both the physical and moral space, and deny them basic human rights by choking off avenues of water supply, their prospects of securing food by blocking transport channels, and by switching off the Internet that is crucial for them to communicate their voice of protest; in short virtually stamping out their right to free speech.

These moves appear to be a prelude to the unleashing of fierce punishment on the farmer-protesters. Depending on circumstances, such punishment may take the form of brutal executive action. Or it's possible sections of civil society that ruling party outfits control are let loose on protesters. A trailer of this was seen recently when marauding young men in the hundreds, pretending to be "locals" inconvenienced by the agitation, descended on the camps of farmers and their families as the police watched. In the times we live in, it will be a surprise if the government, if it so desires, fails to secure convenient judicial pronouncements.

Now that the hurdles have been cleared for a debate in Parliament on the farmers' protest, it is crucial that the Opposition parties, the ruling party, and those that are prone to sit on the fence seek to define farmers, farm agitators and hooligans. Before any judicial inquiry is instituted — if that is done — it is incumbent on the political class to tell us if they believe the men who indulged in violence and marred the spirit of Republic Day by unfurling religious flags and symbols at the Red Fort were farmers. In this narrative, these criminal elements are being called "farmers". Are they? Or are they fifth columnists tasked with maligning an entirely peaceful agitation that the government wasn't sure how to handle?

It seems extraordinary that the police and the NIA, routinely unleashed on harmless civil society protesters, has not been directed to trace the whereabouts of a loud-mouthed actor who was a BJP MP's election agent in Punjab, and his accomplices who are listed as bad characters. From this person's remarks, it would appear he is a votary of "Khalistan". While that may not be held against him, his actions on Republic Day merit scrutiny. The government is yet to exhibit due diligence. But it has shown alacrity in hammering thousands of nails in the roads, and erecting layers of barricades, presumably to ensure that the farmers don't go on the rampage on their tractors. But have they ever done so in the past? What we see here is a glimpse of Chinese or Russian police state tactics in action, not those of — what we so proudly claim — the world's largest democracy!

Putin bares his fangs

The jailing of Alekesi A. Navalny, the Kremlin's harshest critic and Russia's most visible Opposition leader, must be seen as the biggest move President Vladimir Putin has made in the pursuit of his pet pastime over the past two decades of acting brazenly against critics and oligarchs. The fiercest challenge to Mr Putin has been disposed of in the traditional manner of an authoritarian state after the politician survived an attempt to poison him with military-grade nerve agent Novichok applied to his underwear in August 2020.

Mr Navalny has gained stature as the anti-corruption champion who exposed the President and his cronies with investigative reports followed by six million people on YouTube and another two million on Twitter. Surviving the assassination attempt and recuperating in a German hospital, he returned to Russia to carry on his campaign. Mr Putin's government had tried to muzzle him with typical Kremlin tactics through the spy agencies, short jail terms or orders preventing him from running for President. As Mr Navalny's presence then ballooned into a growing threat, with thousands of Russians taking to the streets now to protest against his arrest and sentencing, Mr Putin may have thought it best to send him away to a far-flung prison in Siberia or thereabouts.

In two decades of Mr Putin's rule in post-Soviet Russia, whatever little resistance was there from critics had been ironed out with brutal state repression tactics. Boris Nemtsov, who spoke up against Russia's military action against Ukraine, was found dead and the oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky was detained for 10 years. The case of Mr Navalny may be no different, though as a lawyer in the field of politics he has become a rallying figure against the State. The Russian economy may struggle in the face of low oil prices, curbs on imports due to Western sanctions and a depreciating rouble, but Mr Putin's popularity as the strong man who takes on the West has not faded. He could come under pressure if the movement for freeing Mr Navalny picks up steam. Not without reason is it said that Mr Putin fears him the most.

Subhani



No new taxes? Budget's Mahabharata lessons



Mohan Guruswamy

While reading out the Budget proposals for 2021-22, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman crowed several times that there were "no new taxes". It reminded me of US vice-president George H.W. Bush, the 1988 Rep-ubli-can presidential candidate, who proclaimed at the nominating convention the famous words: "Read my lips, no new taxes!" These words defined his next three years at the White House, and the US economy, which cried loudly for a spending boost and hence higher taxation, tanked. His 1992 opponent was Bill Clinton whose campaign manager had the words "It's the Economy, Stupid!" printed/pasted on every desk of Mr Clinton's election office. George Bush Senior, whose tenure saw the collapse of the Cold War and a huge military victory in Iraq, lost the presidency to Bill Clinton after just one term.

Even in a much poorer country and smaller economy like India, in the ultimate analysis it's the state of the economy that determines political longevity. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi's hucksters kept repeating all day on Monday and Tuesday this week that even a huge contraction of the economy and despite tens of millions of migrant workers being rendered jobless and homeless in a massive drop of the guillotine with the March 21, 2020, lockdown, Mr Modi won the state elections in Bihar later that year. But did he? The NDA polled 34.86 per cent of the popular vote while the Tejjashwi Yadav-led UPA got 36.20 per cent of the popular vote. The NDA

came to power with a very slim majority in the Assembly and the margins in as many as 11 seats were by just a few hundred votes. So to believe Mr Modi always wears a Teflon suit is quite erroneous. It's always the economy, stupid!

But were there indeed "no new taxes"? Not only are there no new taxes for annual incomes below ₹15 lakh, there are reductions. But for those with incomes above ₹2 lakh per month, the new taxes impose a substantially higher burden. For a person with an annual income of ₹26.50 lakh, the tax burden increases from ₹3.40 lakh to ₹5.30 lakh, or almost 60 per cent. This is not small change. There are taxes beyond I-T, which are borne directly by taxpayers, like those on petrol and diesel. Petrol will now cost ₹2.50 more per litre, while diesel will cost ₹4 more per litre. There will necessarily be a cascading effect on the economy. The transport sector consumes 72 per cent of the diesel refined in India so the five per cent hike in retail prices will have a noticeable ripple effect. Every lower middle class household will have at least a two-wheeler and higher petrol prices will be felt. Think of the consequences to the home delivery gig economy. Amazon, the biggest e-commerce player, pays a flat ₹10 per package, irrespective of weight, distance and volume. The deliveryman uses his own vehicle and pays for the fuel and other costs. We can now expect e-commerce goods to cost more. Individuals will also have to pay more for mobile phones, cars and imported tipples, among other things. So why claim "no new taxes"? As

somebody said, two things are certain to go up. One is us, the other is taxes!

The newspapers and TV have trotted a range of people beholden to the government, for good or bad, from Kumaraman-galam Birla to Ashok Hinduja, a panoply of CII and Fici presidents, and waiting economists to comment. All of them hailed it as a pathbreaking, visionary and breakthrough Budget. What else can they afford to say or dare to say? I saw Prannoy Roy hosting the NDTV Budget show asking these worthies after letting them say their hosannas, if they had anything critical to say? Without exception, they hemmed and hawed, and apart from desiring more for their sectors said that all is great. But, not being professional actors, their mortification could not be fully masked. Decades ago, Lala Charat Ram, then Fici's president, when asked if he favoured the budget, blithely replied: "We favour all budgets, whatever the government!"

But let us take a cursory look at the numbers. Total expenditure in FY20-21 was ₹34.50 lakh crore. The proposed expenditure for FY21-22 is ₹34.83 lakh crore (Page 3 of FinMin's 'Budget at a Glance'), so where is the money for a breakout? The vision painted is a long-term vision. For instance, Tamil Nadu going to the polls in a few months gets a declared appropriation of ₹65,000 crore to build 3,600 km of highways over the next five years, when what matters to people and the economy is what will be

Total expenditure in FY20-21 was ₹34.50 lakh crore. The proposed expenditure for FY21-22 is ₹34.83 lakh crore (Page 3 of FinMin's 'Budget at a Glance'), so where is the money for a breakout?

spent this year. Similarly, Assam and West Bengal, also scheduled for the hustings soon, get ₹23,000 crore and ₹35,000 crore respectively. This is not even sleight of hand, its just political chicanery. The Centre intends to increase capital expenditure by ₹1.14 lakh crore and proposes to spend ₹5.54 lakh crore in FY21-22. This item rose by ₹1.30 lakh crore in FY20-21 over FY19-20, so in effect the rate of climb has fallen. But on the morning after, every major newspaper lauded the increase in capital expenditure. Everybody has his or her own compulsions. Big brother is watching?

Our leading pink newspaper had a banner headline shouting: "82% jump in health outlay". Another newspaper screams: "137% increase in health and well-being spend". But it adds sotto voce that this increase is mostly due to bringing the drinking water and sanitation (₹60,030 crore) and nutrition (₹27,000 crore) outlays, previously under different departments, under one caption of "health and well-being". There is a hike in outlay for health (₹71,269 crore), but it is a more modest nine per cent.

When the Pandavas shouted "Ashvathama is dead", Drona, the commander of the enemy forces, assumed they were referring to his son. Refusing to believe them, he decided to check with Yudhishtira. "Tell me," said Drona to Yudhishtira, "Is my son dead?" Yes, Ashvathama is dead. Maybe it is an elephant? Maybe a man? He knew it was an elephant but had been forced by Krishna to lie or tell a half-truth. In the din of the war, all Drona heard Yudhishtira say was: "Yes, Ashvathama is dead." Clearly, Nirmala Sitharaman knows her Mahabharata well.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

TEACH TEACHERS

The report about JNTU Kakinada (*State cracks whip on JNTUK professors, Feb. 3*) t is high time that motivational sessions are arranged for teaching staff periodically.

K.L. Rao

Visakhapatnam

VACCINE SAFETY

It is a shame on the Modi government for dealing with farmers with multi-layered barricading, iron nails and barbed wire. (*Iron nails, barbed wires turn protest sites into fortresses, Feb. 3*). It is very clear that the BJP will lose its reputation as news of the farmers agitation has spread all over the world.

Panchakarla Govardhana Rao

Kankipadu

INTRIGUING NTR

The two-part interview with the author of 'Maverick Messiah' was riveting and intriguing. N.T. Rama Rao was certainly a regional leader with a national outlook. His bold stand over the historical necessity of regional parties cannot be forgotten and he always worked for the dignity of Telugus.

Dr C. Ghanshyam

Visakhapatnam

Whether NTR was casteist or not is a disputable debate. He was also "against" dynastic politics but he had encouraged his son-in-law to take over the reigns of the TD. The 'talk' in the corridors of powers those days was that only those belonging to "SC (same caste)" were allowed to be entertained by NTR. To top it all, NTR would enquire as to whether the help seeker had met 'Babu garu', referring to N. Chandrababu Naidu.

Govardhana Myneddu

Vijayawada

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Co-op. officials charge-sheeted

HYDERABAD, FEBRUARY. 3

One Deputy Registrar and a Co-operative Sub-Registrar are among the six persons on whom charge-sheets were filed in connection with the fertiliser scandal.

The State Crime Branch which is investigating into the fertiliser scandal involving embezzlement of over Rs. 6.5 lakhs worth of chemical fertilisers in the District Co-operative Marketing Society, Mahbubnagar, has filed the charge-sheets in the First Class Munisiff Magistrate Court at Mahbubnagar on January 28.

Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections



Future unclear in Suu Kyi country: Do generals have a post-coup plan?

The pre-dawn coup in Myanmar on Monday recalls the worldwide outrage that Singapore's patriarch Lee Kuan Yew caused in 1996 by questioning Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's ability "to govern if ever she came to power". He said he had told the Americans, who were pressing for democracy to be restored, that they should be around to pick up the broken pieces if the experiment collapsed.

It is tragically ironic 25 years later that the only way Ms Suu Kyi can prove her mettle may be another prolonged spell of imprisonment by the ruthless military junta. The sufferings of the 1.3 million persecuted Rohingyas will be much greater. But the worst victims of Monday's coup are more than 55 million Myanmar people whose long delayed and hard-won democratic rights have again been brutally suppressed.

The 75-year-old Ms Suu Kyi has been accused of doing nothing to stop the rape, murder and possible genocide of Rohingyas. She was suspected of sharing the deep-seated prejudice of her Buddhist Mongolian compatriots against the darker skinned and largely Muslim, Bengali-speaking Rohingyas of Myanmar's Rakhine

province. Even under British rule, the old Burma was periodically ravaged by massacres of the immigrant Indian, mainly Tamil, community. While those immigrants were evicted at independence, the Rohingyas remained and today bear the brunt of Myanmar's racism.

Ms Suu Kyi has reason to be grateful to the Rohingyas who supported her 1988 democracy movement. The Rohingya-led National Democratic Party for Human Rights returned four members to Parliament in the 1990 election when her victorious National League for Democracy should have formed the government. But the military suppressed all opposition, placed Ms Suu Kyi under house arrest, banned the NDPR, and jailed and tortured its leaders. Myanmar does not now have a single Rohingya MP. The Rohingyas have no voting rights.

Politically, Ms Suu Kyi was blamed for acquiescing in the 2008 constitution which entitled the Tatmadaw — the military — to choose the vice-president and the home, defence and border affairs ministers, as well as control 25 per cent of parliamentary seats. But she probably knew the limits of her authority. Monday's coup,

the military's declaration of another year-long state of emergency, and the appointment of the commander-in-chief, Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, as the national leader, confirmed that the military insists on obedience.

As the daughter of liberation hero, Gen. Aung San, who was assassinated on the eve of independence in 1948, she may be an iconic figure, and quite popular with Myanmar's majority. But the military wanted her only to bestow legitimacy on their iron grip by letting the government turn a pretty face to the world.

Like all those who stage coups, the Tatmadaw says it will hold a "free and fair general election" after the emergency ends. When that will be and how free the exercise can be is anybody's guess. But if the future is uncertain, there are no prizes for identifying the cause of the present crisis. The timing of this second suppression of civilian government — there were two other coups in 1962 and 1988 — is easily explained.

Myanmar's Parliament was scheduled to meet on Monday to approve of the new government formed as a result of the general election held in November 2020. The Army was determined to prevent this because more

than 70 per cent of voters defied Covid-19 and stringent pandemic restrictions to ensure a landslide victory for Ms Suu Kyi's NLD party. They inflicted a resounding defeat on the military-supported Union Solidarity and Development Party, which has been clamouring ever since for just such action. The military has now obliged the USDP by accusing the country's election commission of failing to address "huge irregularities" in the November election and is trying to justify its action by citing the need to preserve the "stability" of the state.

But it is difficult to understand the Tatmadaw's long-term plans. If the emergency is for only a year, does it intend to restore truly civilian rule in February 2022? Since President Win Myint, the only person authorised under the constitution to declare a state of emergency, has also been detained, Monday morning's coup becomes an illegal operation.

Moreover, Ms Suu Kyi's prompt and instinctive response was to urge her supporters to "not accept this" event and to "protest against the coup". In a letter written in preparation for her impending detention, she said the military's actions had put

the country back under dictatorship.

The armed forces ruled Myanmar until 2011 when democratic reforms spearheaded by Ms Suu Kyi ended military rule. She spent nearly 15 years in detention between 1989 and 2010 and was internationally hailed as a beacon of democracy and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. She is now a global heroine, and Monday morning's widely condemned coup was seen as much as an outrage against her as a national betrayal.

Nevertheless, Lee Kuan Yew had feared that only the military could save Myanmar from civil war. Not for him P.V. Narasimha Rao's faith, expressed in Singapore to thunderous applause, that the answer to the problems of democracy was more, not less, democracy. He even saw Rao's defeat in 1996 as retribution for such colossal naivete. Despite a low opinion of Myanmar's generals, Lee saw the military as the only institution that could avoid civil war.

Perversely, that may be true even now. The military remains the main protagonist in any Myanmarese power struggle, the only one that can crush all other contenders.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50,255.75	0.92
Nifty 50	14,790.00	0.97
S&P 500*	3,837.05	0.28
Dollar (₹)	72.95	0.02
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.59	0.27
Euro (₹)	87.80	0.29
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,387*232	0.48
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	58.75	2.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.084	-0.70
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.124	0.017

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Services sector expands in Jan.; biz optimism up

The services sector expanded for the fourth month in January as business activities quickened and business optimism rose to sustain the growth momentum. The India Services Business Activity Index of IHS Markit rose from 52.3 in December to 52.8 in January. The launch of vaccine boosted optimism towards the 12-month outlook for output. The overall degree of optimism touched an 11-month high.

Christie's Intl. Real Estate enters India



Global real estate consultant Christie's International Real Estate said it has entered India in partnership with Delhi-based Himmat and Rohini Singh LLP to tap opportunities in luxury housing market. Christie's International Real Estate is a global network offering exclusive home and luxury real estate services to buyers and sellers worldwide. The company is part of British auction house Christie's.

Airtel posts Q3 profit of ₹854 cr; revenue highest

Bharti Airtel posted a net profit of Rs 854 crore for Q3, compared to Rs 1,035-crore loss a year ago, on the back of improved realisations and customer addition. Airtel logged its highest-ever consolidated quarterly revenue of Rs 26,518 crore in Q3 FY21, up 24.2 per cent YoY. Its India business saw "highest ever" quarterly revenues of Rs 19,007 crore, up 25.1 per cent YoY. Mobile Arpu rose to Rs 166 from Rs 135 YoY.

Jubilant Food profit rises 22% to ₹124 crore

Jubilant FoodWorks, which operates Domino's Pizza and Dunkin' Donuts chains in India, reported a 21.71 per cent rise in consolidated profit at Rs 123.91 crore in Q3. Revenue from operations stood at Rs 1,069.27 crore compared to Rs 1,071.36 crore a year ago. Chairman Shyam S. Bhartia and co-chairman Hari S. Bhartia said the company has seen complete revenue recovery of the business and strong improvement in margins.



■ Nifty-50 inching towards 15K milestone

Sensex breaks 50000 barrier

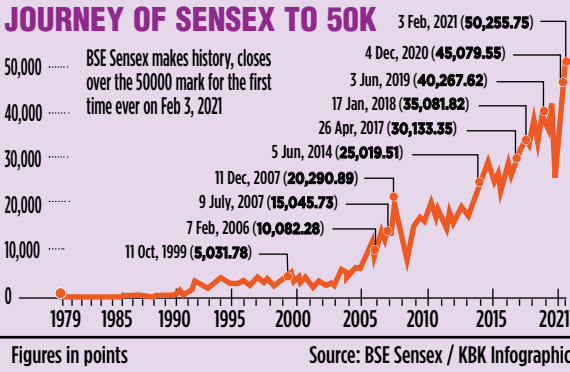
RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, FEB. 3

The Sensex finally closed above 50000 for the first time, as the post Budget rally continued for the third consecutive session, with banks leading the gainers.

The index shot up to a new all-time high of 50526.39 before closing at 50255, gaining over 458 points, or 0.92 per cent. The Nifty-50 Index too clocked a new all-time high of 14868.85 and finally closed at 14789.95, up 142.10 points, or 0.97 per cent.

The broader market outperformed the benchmarks. The BSE Mid-cap Index gained 1.38 per cent while the BSE Small-cap Index gained 1.47 per cent. The all-round rally helped BSE's market capitalisation touch a new all-time high of over Rs 198.43 lakh crore.

The 15000 milestone for the Nifty-50 looks possible with the Budget announcement adding to the upward market momentum right now, said analysts. "We can expect some resistance to set in the Nifty-50 at around 15,000 level. The budget is fueling a rally in all economy-driven sectors, along with banking. The uptick in global markets, resumption of FII flows and strong earnings trend coming from Q3 results are other factors that are taking markets higher," said Jaideep Hansraj, MD



& CEO, Kotak Securities.

"In the last three sessions, almost all sectors have participated with many stocks showing eye popping moves. While the banking space already has rallied sharply in the last couple of sessions, other sectors such as Pharma and the PSE's were seen buzzing on Wednesday. The Nifty continues to clock new records and is now not far from creating a new history of 15000 mark," said Ruchit Jain, senior analyst-technical and derivatives, Angel Broking.

Expectations from third quarter results of telecom

major Bharti Airtel also buoyed market sentiments as the stock touched a new 52-week high of Rs 622.40 on the BSE..

"Bharti Airtel posted the highest ever consolidated quarterly revenues of Rs 26,518 crore—up 24.2 per cent year on year. Overall, numbers were above street expectation in all the fronts," said Keshav Lahoti, analyst, Angel Broking.

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 2,520.92 crore, who returned to the buying side post-Budget topping the more than Rs 6,000-crore buying on Tuesday.

INSIDER DEALS: BIYANI BARRED FROM MARKET FOR A YEAR

New Delhi, Feb. 3: The Sebi on Wednesday barred Kishore Biyani and certain other promoters of Future Retail Ltd from the securities market for one year for indulging in insider trading in the shares of the company.

Apart from Kishore Biyani, who was the CMD and promoter of Future Retail Ltd (FRL), others facing ban are Future Corporate Resources Pvt Ltd, Anil Biyani and the FCRL Employee Welfare Trust.

In addition, the regulator has imposed a fine of Rs 1 crore each on Kishore Biyani, Anil Biyani and Future Corporate Resources. Besides, they have been asked to disgorge Rs 17.78 crore for the wrongful gains made by them.

Future Corporate Resources and FCRL Employee Welfare Trust have been directed to disgorge Rs 2.75 crore for the wrongful gains made by it.

Anil Biyani and Future Corporate Resources are promoters of FRL.

Sebi had conducted an investigation in the scrip of FRL to ascertain whether certain persons and entities had traded during the March 10, 2017 to April 20, 2017 period on the basis of Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI) pertaining to segregation of certain business of the firm.

Trading on the basis of UPSI violates provisions of Prohibition of Insider Trading norms. —PTI

Bezos to move as Amazon quarterly sales hit \$125 bn

JEFFREY DASTIN & AKANKSHA RANA FEB. 3



Jeff Bezos

Amazon.com Inc founder Jeff Bezos will step down as CEO and become executive chairman, naming the head of its lucrative cloud computing division as successor in a sign of the company's transformation from web retailer to internet conglomerate.

This summer, Bezos, 57, will hand the keys of the world's largest online retailer to Andy Jassy, head of its cloud division Amazon Web Services known as AWS. The announcement on Tuesday settles a long-running question about who would replace the world's second-richest person at the company's helm.

Bezos is ending his role as CEO on a high note: the business he began as an internet bookseller 27 years ago is now one of the world's most valuable companies and posted three consecutive record profits after losses in decades prior. On Tuesday, Amazon reported quarterly sales above \$100 billion for the first time at \$125.6 billion.

Jassy, 53, joined Amazon in 1997 after Harvard Business School, founding AWS and growing it to a cloud platform used by millions of customers, the company's website said. He had been a clear contender for the top job since Amazon created two CEO roles years ago, the other held by recently retired consumer CEO Jeff Wilke.

Jassy has aimed to bestow a rock-star aura to keynotes at AWS's annual

ANDY JASSY USHERED IN CLOUD COMPUTING BOOM

MATT DAY FEB. 3

Incoming Amazon.com Inc CEO Andy Jassy cuts a low profile outside of the wonky world of cloud computing. But for much of the last decade he's been arguably the most important person in the tech industry.

The unit he leads, Amazon Web Services, has reshaped how companies buy technology, by simplifying computing services into their component pieces and offering them essentially for rent over the internet.

In the same earnings report in which Amazon said Jassy, 53, would succeed Jeff Bezos later this year, the company reported that AWS pulled in \$12.7 billion in sales in the fourth quar-

ter, making the unit a \$50 billion business on an annual basis. "Andy brings the first principles thinking that has always been a part of what's made Amazon successful - deeply trying to understand the end customer, creating building blocks by which other people can build and than being good at rapidly iterating," said Matt McIlwain, a managing director with Madrona Venture Group in Seattle, who has closely tracked Amazon's rise. "He watched how Jeff approached problems. That's very important because there a lot of things that are deeply embedded in the culture of Amazon." Jassy has led AWS since the launch of its first major services in 2006. —Bloomberg

COAL INDIA TO BUY ₹2.9K CR DUMPERS FROM BELARUS

New Delhi, Feb. 3: State-owned CIL on Wednesday said it has entered into a pact worth Rs 2,900 crore with a Belarus-based mining equipment manufacturer for purchase of dumpers. The pact is for purchase of 96 dumpers of 240 tonne capacity each, Coal India Ltd (CIL) said in a statement.

"CIL on Saturday last formally signed a major procurement pact worth Rs 2,900 crore, for purchase of 96 dumpers of 240 tonne capacity each with Belaz, the Belarus-based mining equipment manufacturer," it said. In August last year, the CIL board had given its nod for the procurement of these dumpers.

The Rs 2,900 crore investment would be funded through CIL's own finances and includes the cost of equipment and spares and consumables for eight years. —PTI

STARTUP THAT LINKS GLOBAL, LOCAL FIRMS RAISES \$120 MILLION

SARITHA RAI FEB. 3

Zetwerk, a startup that connects global companies with manufacturing facilities in India, raised \$120 million to bolster its technology and expand its customer base.

The funding round consists of existing investors including Lightspeed Venture Partners, Sequoia Capital India and Greenoaks Capital, it said on Wednesday. The Series D round values the firm at more than \$600 million.

The Bengaluru-based startup more than tripled its sales last year as the pandemic exposed the fragile nature of global supply chains, prompting companies to diversify their manufacturing and sourcing to avoid disruptions. Zetwerk offers its technology platform and project-management help to customers seeking manufacturers for everything from electric-vehicle and aerospace components to luxury apparel. —Bloomberg

Over half of India's GVA comes from unorganised sector: IMF

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 3

Agriculture, forestry and fishing have 97 per cent of their economic activity in the unorganised sector followed by accommodation, food services and trade at 86 per cent. Over 52 per cent of India's gross value added (GVA) at basic prices comes from the unorganised sector, finds a report by the International Monetary Fund.

Over a decade, the organised sector share of agriculture, forestry and

fishing has come down to 2.9 per cent, from 3.2 per cent in 2011-12, as these activities have moved more into the unorganised sector in recent years. Unorganised agriculture activity is calculated using data on land use estimates, area under cultivation for main crops, and estimates of inputs used in agriculture.

However, the share of accommodation, food services and trade has remained static at 86 per cent in the unorganised sector.

In the construction sector, 74.5 per cent activity happens in the unorganised sector and real estate and ownership of dwellings too has a higher share of unorganised activity at 62.8 per cent, though this has reduced from 63.1 per cent in 2011-12.

While public administration and defence are the only sectors fully under the organised segment, electricity, gas and water has 94.7 per cent organised activity and financial services, 88 per cent.

China share in Indian exim rises

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 3

China has improved its share in both exports to India and imports from India in recent months, regardless of the border stand-off.

China's share of imports into India moved up from 13.7 per cent in 2019-20 to 17.7 per cent till November in FY21.

Chinese share in India's exports too has gone up in the current fiscal. Its share was 5.3 per cent in 2019-20. But this share has moved up to 7.8 per cent in the eight-month period between April and November, as per government data.

Among the various export items to China, iron and steel saw a growth of 480 per cent between April and November this fiscal to

\$2,263 million against \$390 million in the year-ago period. Aluminum and aluminum articles registered a growth of 1124 per cent to \$233 million.

In the case of imports from China, articles of apparel and clothing accessories grew by 46 per cent during April-November, other made-up articles by 37 per cent and pharma products by 18 per cent.

BLOOMBERG INDEX India climbs back into top 50; US drops out of top 10 ranking

South Korea leads world in innovation

MICHELLE JAMRISKO, WEI LU & ALEX TANZI FEB. 3

South Korea returned to first place in the latest Bloomberg Innovation Index, while the US dropped out of a top 10 that features a cluster of European countries. Korea regained the crown from Germany, which dropped to fourth place. The Asian nation has now topped the index for seven of the nine years that it's been published. Singapore and Switzerland each moved up one spot to rank second and third.

India climbed back into the top 50 for the first time since 2016.

The Bloomberg index analyses dozens of criteria using seven equally weighted metrics, including research and development



spending, manufacturing capability and concentration of high-tech public companies.

The 2021 rankings reflect a world

where the fight against Covid-19 has brought innovation to the fore—from government efforts to contain the pandemic, to the digital infrastructure that's allowed economies to work through it, and the race to develop vaccines. "Innovation is often measured by new ideas, new products and new services," Cath-erine Mann, global chief economist at Citigroup, said, but it's their "diffusion and adoption" that is the real metric of success.

Much of the Bloomberg data comes from before the virus crisis. Still, it's notable that many countries high on the index - like Korea, Germany and Israel - have been world leaders in some areas of fighting the pandemic, whether it's contact-tracing or speedy vaccination. American names like

Zoom Video Communications Inc or vaccine-maker Pfizer Inc are among the past year's emblems of innovation, reflecting the US's top ranking for density of high-tech firms.

Korea's return to the top spot is due to an increase in patent activity, where it ranks top, alongside a strong performance in R&D and manufacturing.

There's near-total agreement in South Korea that "R&D is essential to have a future," said Lee Kyung-mook, a professor of business management at Seoul National University. "It's sandwiched between more developed nations, which still outperform them in technology, and China that is catching up fast relying on lower labour costs." —Bloomberg

KIA MOTORS TO MAKE E-VEHICLES FOR APPLE?

Seoul, Feb. 3: South Korea's Kia Corp shares surged to their highest in over two decades on Wednesday after a local media report said the car-maker will sign a 4 trillion won (\$3.59 billion) deal with Apple Inc to build electric vehicles.

Shares in Kia, an affiliate of Hyundai Motor Co, jumped as much as 14.5 per cent to hit its highest since 1997 at 102,000 won on Wednesday.

The rally came after South Korea's online news outlet DongA.com reported that Apple would invest \$3.6 billion in Kia as they collaborate to produce Apple's electric vehicles in Kia's Georgia plant, without citing any sources. The report said the deal would be signed on February 17.

Apple will aim to produce 100,000 vehicles annually by 2024 at the Kia plant, the report said, aiming to expand that annual capacity to 400,000 at a later stage.

Apple and Hyundai declined to comment.

Kia shares surged nearly 20 per cent on January 20 after a media report said Hyundai Motor Group had decided Kia would be in charge of proposed cooperation with Apple on electric cars. —Reuters

75% PROFESSIONALS ON LOOKOUT FOR JOB

New Delhi, Feb. 3: The job market is set to become more competitive this year as three in four Indian professionals are likely to consider changing jobs or actively look for a new roles in the next 12 months, according to LinkedIn Job Seeker research.

The survey, based on 1,016 responses, shows that three out of four Indian professionals will actively look for a new job in 2021.

India remains resilient towards career growth as two in three (64 per cent) professionals say they are confident about their future progression while two in five think attending networking events (38 per cent), and investing in online learning (37 per cent) will be critical to landing a job. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Ajay re-elected as BFI president

New Delhi: Incumbent Ajay Singh was on Wednesday re-elected President of the Boxing Federation of India, comfortably defeating challenger Ashish Shelar in the polls which had an International Boxing Association (AIBA) observer in attendance.

Singh, also the chairman of Spicejet airlines, prevailed 37-27 in the elections held at a Gurugram hotel for a fresh four-year term. He will have a new secretary general by his side in Assam's Hemanta Kumar Kalita.

Kalita would be succeeding Maharashtra's Jay Kowli, who had decided against contesting for the post after extending his support to Shelar ahead of the elections. "I don't want to comment on the margin, I am happy that the BFI has reposed faith in me. I hope to live up to the expectations and take boxing forward," Singh said. — PTI

Serena sizzles; Osaka, Barty toil

Melbourne: Serena Williams continued her impressive Australian Open preparations with a straight-sets thrashing of Tsvetana Pironkova Wednesday, as world number three Naomi Osaka and top-ranked Ashleigh Barty struggled.

Williams has been in belligerent form at the Yarra Valley Classic and overpowered the Bulgarian with a 6-1, 6-4 victory in 74 minutes. The American will play world number six Karolina Pliskova or compatriot Danielle Collins in the quarter-finals. Osaka and Barty, however, were pushed to the brink, but both avoided early exits at Melbourne Park. Japan's Osaka was made to work hard against in-form Katie Boulter, but fought back for a 3-6, 6-3, 6-1 victory to reach the quarter-finals in the Gipsland Trophy. Meanwhile, Barty also had a fright in her match against Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic, but recovered from a second-set stutter to win 6-0, 4-6, 6-3. — AFP

Zverev, Tsitsipas open with wins

Melbourne: Alexander Zverev and Stefanos Tsitsipas opened their seasons with fighting wins in the ATP Cup Wednesday as they warm up for the Australian Open, while Italy and Russia became the first teams into the semifinals.

Seventh-ranked Zverev had to dig deep to overcome Canadian dangerman Denis Shapovalov 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) and seal the tie for Germany. But he gained valuable court time ahead of another crack at a first Grand Slam trophy at the Australian Open starting next week. Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff upset Milos Raonic 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/2) in the opening match and Canada are now out after a second narrow loss for Shapovalov, who pushed Novak Djokovic hard in their Group 'A' clash on Tuesday. Greece's world number six Tsitsipas was also forced to work hard by Australian Alex de Minaur, who won the season-opening Antalya Open last month, eventually triumphing 6-3, 7-5. — AFP

Irving punches big to pip Clippers

Los Angeles: Kyrie Irving rattled in 39 points and James Harden bagged the 50th regular season triple double of his career as the Brooklyn Nets outgunned the Los Angeles Clippers 124-120 on Tuesday. The potential NBA finals sneak preview at the Barclays Center saw the Nets' big three of Irving, Harden and Kevin Durant combine for a total of 90 points to halt the Clippers' three-game unbeaten streak. Kawhi Leonard led the Clippers scoring with 33 points while Paul George added 26 and French international Nicolas Batum chipping in with 21. The Nets were given a scare late in the game when a 118-108 advantage shrank to a single point with five seconds remaining. Elsewhere on Tuesday, Fred VanVleet exploded for a franchise record 54 points as the Toronto Raptors demolished the Orlando Magic 123-108. — AFP

Live on TV

CRICKET
Pakistan vs South Africa: Second Test, Day 1 from 10.30 am on Sony Ten 2, HD
Big Bash League: Challenger from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

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



Members of the Indian cricket team jog during a training session at M. A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Tuesday.

— PTI

WISE CAPTAIN

My job is easy when Virat is around: Rahane

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 3

After punching above their weight against Australia, India are bracing for another mouth-watering heavyweight clash. But vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane made it clear that the team will not lower their guard when they take on England in a four-match Test series starting here on Friday.

Not one to rest on his laurels, Rahane said there was no room for complacency against England, who were the last team to win a Test series in India. "We know what happened in Australia was special. We did enjoy and celebrate the victory. But it's in the past now. We have a lot of respect for our opponents, England. We will not take them lightly. They are a balanced side. We have to play good cricket and back our strengths. It's all about staying in the moment," said Rahane.

Rahane had led India admirably in the absence of regular skipper Virat



Virat Kohli (right) catches a ball during a training session at MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Tuesday.

— PTI

Kohli. Now that Kohli is back from paternity leave, Rahane is happy to hand over captaincy to him.

"Virat is back and that's a big positive. With him around, my job is really easy as I can take a back-seat and only need to help him. The captain has too

many things on his mind. As his deputy, my job is to visualise situations and give inputs to him whenever he needs them. It helps us a lot. We always think about playing as a unit," he added.

The curator for the opening test has said the

wait and see," he added. In Ravindra Jadeja's absence, Axar Patel is tipped to make his Test debut. Asked about the bowling combination for the opening Test, Rahane chose to keep his cards close to his chest. "The team management will decide the combination only on the match eve, after the final training session," he said.

As New Zealand have already qualified for the World Test championship, the India-England series will decide the other finalist. Rahane said India are not thinking that far ahead. "Right now, we are focussed on only the Chennai Test. The championship is still three-four months away. We deserve to be there though," he added.

Being in a bio-bubble with a lot of restrictions can be overbearing for athletes. But Rahane said Indian cricketers are mentally tough and know how to cope with it. "We are not mentally tired at all. We are a family. We are enjoying time in the team room," he said

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Man Utd wreak havoc on Saints

London, Feb. 3:

Manchester United equalled the biggest win in Premier League history as they crushed nine-man Southampton 9-0, while Arsenal had two players sent off in their 1-2 defeat at Wolves on Tuesday.

Rampant United scored four times in the first half after Southampton's teenage midfielder Alexandre Jankewitz was dismissed in the second minute at Old Trafford.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side hit five more after the break, tying them with Leicester's 9-0 win at Southampton in 2019 and United's own 9-0 victory against Ipswich in 1995.

Aaron Wan-Bissaka's goal opened the floodgates and Marcus Rashford bagged United's second.

Jan Bednarek's own goal made it three for the hosts before Edinson Cavani added the fourth.

The goals kept coming as Anthony Martial and Scott McTominay netted before Bruno Fernandes' penalty after Bednarek was sent off.

Martial and Daniel James scored in stoppage-time to complete an incredible display by United.

United's first victory in three league games means

THE RESULTS

Manchester United (Wan-Bissaka 18, Rashford 25, Bednarek 34-og, Cavani 39, Martial 69, 90, McTominay 71, Fernandes 87-pen, James 90+2)	9
Southampton	0
Wolverhampton (Nunes 45-pen, Moutinho 49)	2
Arsenal (Pepe 32)	1

they are behind leaders Manchester City only on goal difference.

Meanwhile in another match, Arsenal had defender David Luiz and goalkeeper Bernd Leno sent off either side of a stunning 30-metre strike by Joo Moutinho that sealed a 2-1 emphatic win for Wolverhampton.

Leading 1-0 thanks to Nicolas Pepe's 32nd-minute goal, Arsenal started its implosion when Luiz was given a straight red card for pulling back William Jos as the Wolves striker burst into the penalty area. Ruben Neves converted into the top corner from the spot in the fifth minute of first-half stoppage time. — AFP



Victor Lindelof (front left) of Manchester United and teammate Mason Greenwood jump for the ball during the English Premier League match Southampton at the Old Trafford stadium in Manchester on Tuesday.

— AP

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2021-23

Printed and Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208. RNI Registration No. 3081/1957. Editor: Kaushik Mitter

ROOT WANTS TO BE PART OF T20 WC SQUAD

New Delhi, Feb. 3: England's Test captain Joe Root wants to be in the squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup though he understands it is not going to be a cakewalk for one of the country's finest batsmen in the game's traditional format.

Root will be appearing in his 100 Test when he leads England in the series opening match against India from Friday. The focus, for now, is the four-match Test series but the technically sound Root has not given up on his T20 ambitions.

"For me, the most important thing is that England go into that World Cup with the strongest squad and give ourselves the best chance of winning there, and hopefully, I can be a part of that squad," Root said. "And if no then I will be backing those guys because it would be a huge achievement on the back of what we have achieved in 50 over world cup," the England Test captain added. — PTI

Important to post big 1st innings total: Trott

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 3

Having played a crucial role in England's historic Test triumph in 2012, Jonathan Trott knows a thing or two about what it takes to achieve success in India. It was Trott's gutsy hundred and his century stand with Ian Bell in the second innings that earned England a hard-fought draw in Nagpur and then a 2-1 series win.

Back in India, this time as England's batting consultant, the former middle-order batsman is helping Joe Root & Co. by sharing his expertise. "My message varies from player to player, but the fundamentals of playing in India are the same. It's really important to post a big first innings total. Otherwise, it's difficult to catch up. So, whether it's with the bat or ball, you have to start well. Playing spinners and executing your strategy against them are the most important things," said Trott



Jonathan Trott

who played 52 Tests.

Trott said India's bowling attack is not just about spinners as England are leaving no stone unturned in preparation for the much-awaited series. "We certainly saw that India's pace attack did really well in Australia. It's important to prepare for everything; confronting the new ball attack, the reverse swing and spin in the middle. To be able to play well in Chennai's humid conditions is not easy. You have to be fit and switched on all the time," added Trott, winner of the ICC Player

of the Year award in 2011.

England skipper Root has been leading from the front by scoring a truck-load of runs. Trott said captaining in subcontinental conditions is a skill in itself. "Handling the conditions and rotating the bowlers accordingly is a big challenge for a skipper. But, captaincy comes naturally to Root. He is a good decision-maker and has a great presence around the guys as well. I have full confidence in his ability," he added.

POPE ADDED TO ENGLAND SQUAD

Surrey batsman Ollie Pope has been added to the England Test squad. Pope has fully recovered from a left shoulder injury sustained in August 2020. "The England medical team are satisfied with his progress and he is available for selection. He has trained with the full squad over the past two days," said an ECB release.

CA pull out, a dark time: Pietersen

New Delhi, Feb. 3: Michael Vaughan and Kevin Pietersen on Wednesday questioned Australia's decision to postpone their tour of South Africa and expressed doubts if they would have done the same with a powerful cricket nation like India.

Cricketer Australia announced their decision to postpone the trip to South Africa, citing

"unacceptable health and safety risk" in that country because of a fresh Covid-19 outbreak.

Vaughan said it was not a good precedent set by Australia. "The Aussies pulling out of the tour of SA is a huge worry for the game ... Would they have pulled out of a tour to India is the question ?? !," Vaughan tweeted. He said the three big

cricket nations — India, England and Australia — should instead help the cricket boards, who are feeling the heat of the pandemic.

Kevin Pietersen too slammed Australia's decision to withdraw from the tour.

"No way @CricketAus would have not played India in a Test tour: It's a really dark time in the world of cricket with CA

cancelling their tour of @OfficialCSA. @englandcricket also pulled out of SA due to Covid issues, but players test positive in SL and tour goes on?!" Pietersen tweeted.

On Tuesday, Cricket South Africa (CSA) had slammed its Australian counterpart for postponing the Test tour, saying it is "extremely" disappointing and will lead to "serious financial loss". — PTI

