

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | WEDNESDAY 10 | FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 16°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Thai 28
Tithi: Chaturtashi
Star: Uthiradam
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
Yamagandam: 7.30 am to 9 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.22 am
Zohar: 12.28 pm
Asar: 3.43 pm
Maghrib: 6.12 pm
Isha: 7.25 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.13 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.34 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 5.20 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 5.00 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+6,563)	(+39)
1,08,54,353	1,55,234

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+469)
TN: 8,42,730 12,391

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

10,71,72,334

DEATHS

23,41,351

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

CM lays foundation stone for medical college hospitals

Chennai: In a major thrust to medical infrastructure, Tamil Nadu chief minister K. Palaniswami has laid the foundation stones for new buildings at various medical college hospitals across the state. He laid the foundation stone for buildings at the Government Kilpauk Medical College Hospital (KMC), Chennai, Government Rajaji Medical College Hospital, Madurai and Coimbatore government medical college hospital at a total cost of ₹368.2 crore, an official release on Tuesday said.

Bengal's rich culture under threat in Mamata's rule: Nadda

Tarapith/Lalgan: BJP president JP Nadda on Tuesday asserted that the rich culture of West Bengal is under threat in Mamata Banerjee's rule, and said she should atone for the "misrule and misgovernance" of her regime as days of TMC ministry are numbered. Nadda slammed the TMC for dividing communities by branding people as "insiders and outsiders".

COUNTER

POINT



Also tweet there is no pressure from anyone. All tweets are my own!

Four of family among five killed as car runs into reversing lorry

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 9

Four members of a family, including three women, and a driver, died after the car they were travelling in collided with a lorry on the Chennai-Tiruchy highway near Madurantakam in the early hours of Tuesday. According to the police, Subramani (85) of Karanchavadi, Poonamallee, his wife Indrani (75), daughter Mahalakshmi (50) and grand-

daughter Shantini (18) had gone to Samayapuram near Tiruchy on Monday morning in a car with their driver Paul Dinakaran (24), a resident of Mangadu. They were returning to the city at around 2 am when the accident happened. Police sources said when the car was near Anthimanan in Madurantakam, the driver of a lorry parked in a roadside yard reversed his vehicle on to the road and the car ran into

the lorry. All five persons in the car were crushed to death on the spot. The lorry driver Thangasami, 31, from Tiruchy is absconding, police said.

Eyewitnesses had alerted the Padalam police, who rushed to the spot along with the Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services personnel.

The bodies of the deceased were removed from the mangled remains of the car and were sent to Government hospital for post-mortem.

STATE | 3

Centre gives ₹1.63 cr to develop Ayush medicine against Covid



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle, google.com/+deccanchronicle

'LAND IS DEARER TO A FARMER THAN HIS SON'

Won't return home till laws are repealed: Tikait

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 9

Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait declared on Tuesday that he will take the ongoing farmers' agitation against the three controversial agricultural laws to the far corners of the country. Addressing thousands of farmers at a mahapan-chayat in Haryana's Kurukshetra, Mr Tikait said: "We will go to the far corners of the country to raise awareness over the farm laws. Ours is a mass movement and we will make it successful. We won't return home till these laws are repealed."

As Kurukshetra is also known as "Dharmakshetra" (holy place) and the "Land of the Bhagavad Gita", Mr Tikait said he was sure farmers will get justice from this land. After Haryana, he said that mahapanchayats will also be held in Rajasthan and Maharashtra.

The BKU leader said tractors from Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh and other states have



Farmers raise slogans at Singhu border during their protest against farm laws, in New Delhi, Tuesday. — PTI

already reached Delhi's borders. He urged the khaps to wholeheartedly support the agitation, saying: "We will have to increase the number of farmers at the borders (protest sites)."

Mr Tikait said the farmers were fighting for their land. "Land is more dear to a farmer than his son. That's why a farmer does not transfer his land to his son when he is alive."

Warning that there will be attempts to break the agitation on caste lines, the farmer leader said:

"When this agitation started, they tried to divide us on the lines of Punjab and Haryana as well as Sardars and non-Sardars (Sikhs). The Sardars cannot be separated from us."

Mr Tikait said: "They will also try to divide us on the basis of khaps but we have to rise above such differences and stand united. We have forged a unity this time and have to keep it intact. I congratulate the 40-member committee of farmers' leaders for speaking in one voice against

the new laws."

Hailing the arrest of Punjabi actor Deep Singh Sindhu over the Republic Day violence, Mr Tikait accused the government of hatching a conspiracy for hoisting a Sikh flag at the Red Fort to defame the protesters. "Let me make it clear we will not allow our bread to become a market item. Nor we will allow our grains to be stored in the lockers (of corporates)."

As the protests against the agricultural laws entered Day 76, a 28-year-old farmer from Haryana's Rohtak district, who was providing voluntary services at the Tikri border protest site, died of serious head injuries as he fell off a tractor trolley. Deepak was hospitalised at PGIMS, Rohtak, where he died during treatment. The accident reportedly took place at the Bahadurgarh bypass road on February 5. Deepak was sitting in the tractor trolley and distributing rations (to the farmers sitting in protest at Tikri). He fell down and sustained serious head injuries.

R-Day violence accused Deep Sidhu traced, arrested

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 9

Punjabi actor-turned-activist Deep Sidhu, who was allegedly involved in the violence and vandalism at Red Fort during the farmers' tractor rally on January 26, was arrested by the Delhi police special cell late Monday night. On Tuesday, a Delhi court remanded Sidhu to seven days' police custody.

Sidhu was produced before metropolitan magistrate Prigya Gupta. The police alleged he was one of the main instigators of the violent incidents at the Red Fort. Sidhu's counsel, however, claimed that he had nothing to do with the violence and was at the wrong place at the wrong time. ■ P4

In RS, PM bids tearful farewell to Oppn leader Ghulam Nabi Azad

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 9

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday bid a tearful farewell to Congress veteran and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, saying that he respects the Congress leader as a "true friend" and will not let him retire, and will continue taking his advice.

Mr Modi said it would be difficult for Azad's suc-



cessor in the Rajya Sabha to match him as he has set very high standards as an MP and as the Leader of the Opposition. Vice-president M. Venkaiah Naidu also described Mr Azad as a "voice of sanity in the nation's public life", and someone who "speaks softly but conveys his point of view effectively".

Calling himself a "proud

Hindustani Muslim" who did not go to Pakistan, Mr Azad recalled how he learnt a lot from Parliament, late PMs Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi and got inspired from former PM Atal Behari Vajpayee, and prayed that militancy should end in the country. Praising the PM, Mr Azad said Mr Modi never mixed personal context and his party's responsibilities and used to be among the first ones to wish him on festivals and birthdays.

WORLD | 5

Supremes singer Mary Wilson dies



SPORT | 8

Barty bagels, Rafael roars



Vol. 11 No. 44 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES | ₹4.00

Sudhakaran, Ilavarasi assets in T'kudi, Thanjavur dts seized

Assets confiscated as per SC order

ARULOLI M & G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THOOTHUKUDI/THANJAVUR FEB. 9

The Thoothukudi district administration on Tuesday confiscated 23 properties owned by V.N. Sudhakaran and J. Ilavarasi, relatives of V. K. Sasikala. The properties included 1,203 acres of land in villages of Cherakulam, Vallakulam, Kaalvai in Srivaikundam taluk and Meerankulam village in Sathankulam taluk, Thoothukudi district.

The properties belonged to Riverway Agro products private limited company owned by Sudhakaran and Ilavarasi, which from today onwards became government properties, said Thoothukudi collector K Senthilraj, who inspected the confiscated properties along with other revenue officials.

23 PROPERTIES

The properties included **1,203 acres** of land in villages of Cherakulam, Kaalvai in Srivaikundam taluk and Meerankulam village in Sathankulam taluk, Thoothukudi district.

The properties belonged to Riverway Agro products private limited company owned by Sudhakaran and Ilavarasi, which from Tuesday onwards became government properties, said Thoothukudi collector K Senthilraj.

In Thanjavur, the government confiscated 26,540 sq. ft. of land belonging to V.N. Sudhakaran and J. Elavarasi, as per an apex court order

These properties were confiscated as per Supreme Court order which upheld the conviction of the duo along with V.K. Sasikala in the disproportionate wealth case on February 14, 2017.

It is to be noted that Ilavarasi, Sudhakaran and Sasikala underwent a four-year jail term as the Supreme Court upheld the

conviction of the three in a disproportionate wealth case in February 2017, in which former chief minister J. Jayalalithaa was the prime accused.

In Thanjavur, the government confiscated 26,540 sq. ft. of land belonging to V.N. Sudhakaran and J. Elavarasi, as per an apex court order dated February 14, 2017. ■ P3

Sasikala reaches home after 23-hour road trip from B'luru

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 9

Expelled AIADMK general secretary VK Sasikala, who returned from Bengaluru to a rousing welcome after four years of incarceration, is said to be planning to tour other parts of State with a view to garnering the support of party cadre and also the common people.

After reaching the house of her niece Krishnapriya at T Nagar in Chennai by daybreak on Tuesday after a nearly 23-hour journey from Bengaluru, marked by repeated stopovers to receive people's bouquets, garlands and other honours, besides visiting a temple, Sasikala had a brief meeting with supporters on Tuesday afternoon.

In the last leg of her return journey, she had visited the erstwhile residence of AIADMK founder MG Ramachandran (MGR) in Ramapuram and paid tributes to the MGR statue in the small hours of Tuesday, perhaps in a bid to send across the message that she was indeed very much in the party.

She has reportedly said that her mission was to defeat the DMK in the coming Assembly elections and ensure that the party did not come to power and that it could be achieved only by the AIADMK cadre putting up a united fight.

Her nephew and AMMK founder TTV Dhinakaran told the media that people concerned would have realised the importance of the call given by Sasikala on Monday for unity in the AIADMK, indirectly



Expelled AIADMK leader Sasikala pays floral tributes to party founder MG Ramachandran in Ramapuram on Tuesday. — E.K. SANJAY

referring to the present party leadership.

He said their common enemy was DMK and not Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami or Deputy CM O Panneerselvam. Sasikala would make efforts to stop the DMK from capturing power in the state, Dhinakaran said.

Replying to a question on Sasikala visiting the party office on Lloyds Road and Jayalalithaa's mausoleum on the Marina, he said she would decide on when to go the party office and that she would pay tributes at the Samadhi once it was reopened after the maintenance work was over.

Dhinakaran reiterated that according to the Constitution of the AIADMK, framed during MGR's time, only the General Secretary had the powers to convene a General Council meeting and also take action against office-bearers. The expulsion of

Sasikala was illegal as per the party Constitution, he claimed and said that the issue was being contested in court. His claim is that Sasikala continued to be the general secretary of AIADMK.

However, leaders in the AIADMK are said to be divided on letting Sasikala back into the party. While Palaniswami and Panneerselvam have not yet reacted to the call for unity, some leaders like Minister D. Jayakumar and C.Ve .Shanmugham and Deputy Coordinator KP Munusamy have spoken against it.

On the other hand, AMMK cadres were also keen on uniting with the parent party as they felt that the DMK could be fought only by putting up an united fight.

BJP sources too want the Sasikala group to merge with the main party as only that would help prevent the division of votes.

England comes up trumps in style at Chepauk

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 9

High-flying Team India have been brought down to earth. Cricket aficionados who hoped for yet another incredible chase like last month's Brisbane heist were left disappointed when India slumped to a 227-run defeat against England in the opening

Test here the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium. It was agonising as the last time India went down

in a Test match at Chepauk was in 1999, against Pakistan. It's a bitter pill to swallow for Virat Kohli & Co. as India lost just one home Test in their last 35 matches before this shocker.

As a consequence, India will now need to win two out of the remaining three matches to seal their qualification for the World Test Championship final.

While left-arm spinner Jack Leach took four wickets, it was a reverse-

swing masterclass from veteran James Anderson that dismantled India rather cheaply before tea. England skipper Joe Root, who won the man of the match award for his double hundred in his 100th Test, said the visitors are wary of the wounded tigers.

"India are a brilliantly good team, especially in these conditions, and a proud nation as well. They will come back hard at us, but to sit here 1-0 up is really good," said Root.



England pacer James Anderson celebrates after dismissing India's Ajinkya Rahane on day five of their opening Test at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium. England won by 227 runs to take a 1-0 lead. — BCCI

■ More on P8

*Syndicate
(Asia Features)*

SHORT TAKES

Farmers demand repeal of farm laws

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, FEB. 9

The farmers of Thanjavur district on Tuesday staged a walk-out from the monthly grievances day meeting, demanding repeal of farm laws enacted by the central government.

The farmers, who later returned to the meeting after lodging protest, demanded repeal of the laws and distributed sweets welcoming the loan waiver announcement made by Chief Minister Edappadi K.Palaniswami.

Farmers demanded steps to waive the loans borrowed by them from nationalised and private banks as has been done in the case of co-operative banks. They also appealed to the government to provide incentives to farmers who have paid their loans properly. They asked the state government to pass a resolution in the Tamil Nadu legislative assembly against the farm laws of the central government.

Opening of more procurement centres, fixing a price of ₹4000 per tonne for sugarcane, curbing collection of ₹40 per bag of paddy as bribe for procurement in the direct purchase centres, preventing weighing of 41 kilos per bag instead of the stipulated 40.580 kilos in the centres are the other demands of the farmers.

M. Govinda Rao, Thanjavur district collector, presided over the meeting.

The collector said that samba cultivation has been taken up on 1, 36,860 hectares and harvest has so far been completed on 42,357 hectares. With respect to fertilizers, there is adequate stock for samba season.

AISMK GC meet on March 3

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 9

The All India Samathuva Makkal Katchi, led by actor R Sarathkumar, has called for its general council meeting on March 3.

In a statement issued by the founder president and general secretary, Sarathkumar, all state office-bearers, general council members, regional secretaries and district secretaries have been asked to attend the meeting. The invitees will be intimated of the general secretary and treasurer nominations, resolutions and programme schedule soon, the statement said. The party is now part of the alliance led by the AIADMK in the state and is planning to field candidates for the coming Assembly elections

Properties now belong to govt

From P1

A press release issued here on Tuesday by the government said that the land belonged to 'Lex property development (p) ltd' in which the above said two persons are partners.

Elavarasi has been released from Bengaluru prison after serving a four-year term and payment of ₹10 crore as fine, while V. N. Sudhakaran is yet to be released, as he had not yet paid the fine. The release said that the property has now become the property of the government which it has confiscated as per court order. Rent to be collected from the property and rent arrears should be paid to the TN government hereafter, added the press release.

Upload Kudimaramathu info on official site, HC tells govt

DC CORRESPONDENT
MADURAI, FEB. 9

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Tuesday ordered the government to upload details of the Kudimaramathu works within 12 weeks.

A division bench comprising Justice M.M. Sundresh and S. Ananthi, disposing a public interest litigation filed by a Madurai-based

advocate, R.M. Anbunidhi on February 9, said that since the Kudimaramathu works were not a secret, the survey number of the waterbody, the work specification and the fund allocated for the work should be uploaded in the official websites of the respective districts. Further, the judges also added that the photos of the water bodies before the work and after

completion of works should be uploaded in the official websites of the district administrations, so as to maintain transparency to check misappropriation of public money.

Advocate Anbunidhi filed the PIL last year seeking direction to the state government to display the details of the Kudimaramathu scheme launched by it

in 2019 with a total allocation of Rs 1,250 crore, so as to make the general public, local villagers and social activists come to know about the work done under the scheme.

The division bench comprising Justice N. Kirubakaran and B. Pugalendhi on December 15 last year, took the case for hearing and issued notice to the government for its response.

₹5 cr worth drugs hidden in weighing scales seized

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 9

In a major drug haul, officials of air cargo customs at the Chennai airport seized 44 kg of narcotics and arrested two people including a customs agent in this connection.

Chennai air cargo customs intercepted an export consignment suspected to contain narcotic drugs at Air Cargo Export Shed, which was destined for Doha in Qatar, which reportedly mentioned weighing machines on the packages.

All the packages were opened and examined. Fifty-five digital weighing scales, which were unusually heavy were found inside.

It was noticed that there was a specially designed metal box fixed by tape to the bottom of the scale. On opening the box two pieces of dark brown material in cake form wrapped with plastic strips and sheets found concealed inside. The material tested positive for hashish.

Hashish, often called a hash, is a potent form of cannabis (marijuana) produced by collecting and compressing trichomes, the most potent material from cannabis plants.

Total 44 kg of hashish valued at ₹4.4 crore was recovered from 44 machines. In addition to this, 700 grams of Methamphetamine crystals valued at ₹70 lakhs were recovered from two machines. Both

● Total 44 kg of hashish valued at ₹4.4 crore was recovered from 44 machines. Also, 700 grams of Methamphetamine crystals valued at ₹70 lakhs were recovered from two machines. Both Hashish and Meth crystals valued at ₹5.1 crore were seized under the NDPS Act. Also, 1620 grams of Pregabalin capsules, a prescription drug used in anxiety disorder and fibromyalgia were recovered from 6 machines and seized. This drug does not fall in a controlled drug list in India but abroad in many countries it is a controlled drug. The exporter, Sree Aalaya, was sending this consignment to Doha from Chennai. Searches were carried out and the exporter has been arrested. A staffer of the Custom house agent has also been arrested, said the department of customs. Further investigation is in progress.

Hashish and Meth crystals valued at ₹5.1 crore were seized under the NDPS Act.

Also, 1620 grams of Pregabalin capsules, a prescription drug used in anxiety disorder and fibromyalgia were recovered from 6 machines and seized. This drug does not fall in a controlled drug list in India but abroad in many countries it is a controlled drug.

The exporter, Sree Aalaya, was sending this consignment to Doha from Chennai. Searches were carried out and the exporter has been arrested. A staffer of the Custom house agent has also been arrested, said the department of customs. Further investigation is in progress.

CEC visiting TN and Puducherry

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 9

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has begun the work relating to the conduct of the Assembly electionsto Tamil Nadu and Puducherry and has been informed of the State and local holidays with a view to enable them chart the schedule for the polls.

Chief Electoral Officer Satyabrata Sahoo told the media on Tuesday that the Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and other senior officials of the ECI would be visiting Tamil Nadu and Puducherry for three days from Wednesday.

Besides Arora, Election Commissioners Sushil Chandra and Raj Kumar would also be part of the team that would be holding a series of meetings with political party representatives, district collectors and police officers on holding the elections.

The officials of the ECI are scheduled to land at 11.05 in Chennai and go to Puducherry by helicopter after their engagements. They would return to Chennai by helicopter and take a flight to Thiruvananthapuram on February 12.

Talking about the arrangements done in Tamil Nadu for the elections, Sahoo said that the electronic voting machines were ready for use. The number of polling booths has been increased to 93,000 from 67,000 and discussions were on with political parties on it, he said.

He said two lakh applications had been received for inclusion of names in the voters' list after the release of final voters' list.



Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami campaigns in Ranipet on Tuesday.

—DC

46 cybercrime police stations opened in districts

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 9:

The state government has opened 46 separate cybercrime police stations, which will work

independently.

Of them 43 stations are exclusively to deal with cybercrimes in the respective districts and the other three for dealing with economic offences, narcotic

intelligence and crimes against women and children.

Hitherto, the cybercrime wings were attached to the police stations and now would work on their own.

MGR's foster children seek removal of illegal construction

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 9

The foster children of former Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran have approached the High court seeking a direction to the authorities to remove the unauthorised construction (a cement structure in which a flag pole was installed) in front of MGR Gardens at Ramapuram.

The construction was made by the Tiruvallur district secretary of Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK), founded by T.T.V. Dhinakaran.

A division bench comprising justices R. Subbiah and Sathi Kumar Sukumara Kurup, before whom the petition filed by Geetha M. Mohan and Radha Gopalakrishnan, foster children of MGR,

came up for hearing, ordered notice to the state government and L. Murugan, Tiruvallur district secretary of AMMK and posted further hearing of the case on February 11.

According to the petitioners, they were residing at MGR Gardens. They and Nirmala, Janu and Sudha were the foster children of MGR.

As per the will executed by MGR in their favour, a deaf and dumb home was running in the name of MGR Home and Higher Secondary School for speech and hearing impaired on the premises of MGR Gardens. They got the ownership and legal right over the property at MGR Gardens. On January 27, 2021, L.Murugan encroached the platform located near

the MGR Gardens and constructed a cement structure, obstructing the platform and installed a flag pole. They lodged a complaint on the same day to the police and highways authorities. On January 29, 2021, the authorities demolished the unauthorized structure and pole and removed a part of the encroachment, they added.

They said Murugan on February 1, 2021 again encroached the same place and put up the cement structure. By an order dated April 2, 2019, this court had made clear that erection of all unauthorized flag poles would amount to encroachment of public land and directed the administration to initiate appropriate action against such illegality.

CM urged to address farmers' specific issues

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, FEB. 9

The 'Malai Maavatta Siru-vivasayigal Nala Sangam' (MMSNS) here, sought the personal interference of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to address some of the peculiar issues being faced by farmers in the hills.

Making this appeal, Thumbar Bojan, president, MMSNS, said that during the MGR regime in 1980's, a scheme was launched to issue patta passbook for farmers, as that would help them in many ways like availing loans from banks and co-op societies, and also make it easy to deal while selling lands.

Unfortunately, this scheme had not been implemented in the Nilgiris and farmers here are still facing hurdles in dealing with agriculture affairs. Hence, the government should immediately order the launch of the patta passbook scheme in the Nilgiris.

Secondly, in the industrial co-op tea

factories here, farmer members have only 49 percent share while the administration has 51 percent.

This only helps officials to have an upper hand in running the tea factories, resulting in huge expense in salary distribution and other expenses which curtails profits being given to farmer members in these co-op tea factories. So, necessary amendments have to be made to give farmers an upper hand in the co-op tea factories, he added.

Another issue is the lengthy process for taking license for felling of silver oak trees which are being grown as shade trees in tea gardens.

The arduous license process only paves way for corruption.

Since, silver oak trees are part and parcel of the tea plantation, this tree should be included as plantation crop and not the 'tree' category, so as to enable farmers to axe them freely and re-cultivate it according to their convenience, Bojan added.

Trader's federation to boycott assembly poll

R.VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, FEB. 9

The members of the Tamil Nadu Traders Federation and its allied members will boycott the forthcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, if the state government did not give up its move to construct a service road at a distance of 14 km from Old Palpannai to Thuvakkudi, on the Tiruchy-Thanjavur national highway,

as it would badly affect the roadside traders and the residents.

Ve.Govindarajulu, state general secretary of the federation, made this warning at a press conference soon after leading a delegation of affected people due to road extension consisting of president K.Marappan, secretary S.Ragunathan and others to meet district collector S.Sivarasu and presented a memorandum to him at Tiruchy on Tuesday.

Mr. Govindarajulu also said that he had information that Chief Minister K.Palaniswami is going to lay the foundation stone for the proposed service lane, and warned the government against the proposed foundation stone laying ceremony as it may take place on blood shedding as the affected persons will sacrifice their life.

He also requested the collector to expedite the ring road project in between Thuvakkudi and Thiruchendurai and once this ring road is completed service road is not needed. He suggested that instead of sticking to the service road project, the Government can erect the flyover bridge in between Old Palpannai to Thuvakkudi on the Tiruchy-Thanjavur national highway.

He also requested the collector to expedite the ring road project in between Thuvakkudi and Thiruchendurai and once this ring road is completed service road is not needed. He suggested that instead of sticking to the service road project, the Government can erect the flyover bridge in between Old Palpannai to Thuvakkudi on the Tiruchy-Thanjavur national highway.

He also requested the collector to expedite the ring road project in between Thuvakkudi and Thiruchendurai and once this ring road is completed service road is not needed. He suggested that instead of sticking to the service road project, the Government can erect the flyover bridge in between Old Palpannai to Thuvakkudi on the Tiruchy-Thanjavur national highway.

He also requested the collector to expedite the ring road project in between Thuvakkudi and Thiruchendurai and once this ring road is completed service road is not needed. He suggested that instead of sticking to the service road project, the Government can erect the flyover bridge in between Old Palpannai to Thuvakkudi on the Tiruchy-Thanjavur national highway.

He also requested the collector to expedite the ring road project in between Thuvakkudi and Thiruchendurai and once this ring road is completed service road is not needed. He suggested that instead of sticking to the service road project, the Government can erect the flyover bridge in between Old Palpannai to Thuvakkudi on the Tiruchy-Thanjavur national highway.

He also requested the collector to expedite the ring road project in between Thuvakkudi and Thiruchendurai and once this ring road is completed service road is not needed. He suggested that instead of sticking to the service road project, the Government can erect the flyover bridge in between Old Palpannai to Thuvakkudi on the Tiruchy-Thanjavur national highway.

"Social Security Schemes of the Government make people financially strong as they help them face life's uncertainties and support families rise above financial difficulties."

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Your safety, your family's security

21.87 crore people have enrolled for Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and 9.70 crore people have enrolled for Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana



As of now, under both the Social Security Schemes, financial help of around ₹4900 crore has been disbursed to the needy.

Enroll yourself today



Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana

Life Insurance cover of ₹2 Lakh at an annual premium of just ₹330

- Age Group: 18 to 50 years
- Auto Debit of premium from Bank/Post Office Account
- Annual Renewal

Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana

Accident Insurance cover of ₹2 Lakh at an annual premium of just ₹12

- Age Group: 18 to 70 years
- Auto Debit of premium from Bank/Post Office Account
- Annual Renewal

Both the schemes bring security to your family's future

To enroll, contact your nearest Bank Branch/Insurance Office/Post Office

Claims should preferably be intimated within 30 days of the accident/death



Government of India
Ministry of Finance
Department of Financial Services

For more information, call 1800 180 1111 (toll free)

visit @DFS_India | www.jansuraksha.gov.in/www.pmjdy.gov.in

SHORT TAKES

ED RAIDS
PREMISES OF
NEWS PORTAL

New Delhi, Feb. 9: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday conducted searches on the premises of a news portal and its promoters here on charges of alleged money laundering, official sources said. They said the premises of the website — *NewsClick* — and its promoters in South Delhi's Saidulajab and some other areas are being searched.

The action is being undertaken to collect additional information to probe money laundering charges against the news company and its promoters, the sources said.

They said the probe is linked to some suspect foreign funding.

UK PRODUCTION
HOUSE REP
ARRESTED

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, FEB. 9

The Property Cell of Mumbai crime branch on Monday arrested Umesh Kamat, a representative of UK-based production house, Kenrin, in connection with a porn film production racket. With Kamat the number of arrested persons in this case has reached 7.

He was produced before the court on Monday which remanded him to police custody till February 10.

The police on Sunday arrested model and actor Gehena Vasisth for allegedly shooting porn videos. Now Kamat has been arrested for uploading at least seven to eight such porn videos on a social media app.

According to police, during the interrogation Vasisth had told the interrogators that she had sold seven to eight movies to Kamat. The police have come to know that Kamat was working for Vasisth and used to upload pornographic videos sent by her. He used to upload the videos on foreign IP addresses to avoid being detected by Indian agencies.

Legal team representing Vasisth has denied the charges and said that she only made erotic movies. Police have also summoned three more in-house production representatives for questioning in the case.

The case came to light last Thursday, when the Mumbai crime branch's property cell had raided a bungalow, named Green Park, at Madh Island in Mala which resulted in the arrest of five persons.

Those arrested were identified as Yasmin Beg Khan alias Rows, Pratibha Nalawade, Monu Joshi, Bhanusuryam Thakur and Asif alias Saify. Khan was allegedly the producer and director, Saify the cameraman, Nalawade graphic designer, Joshi actor and Thakur an assistant.

R-DAY VIOLENCE
ACCUSED DEEP
SIDHU TRACED

FROM PAGE 1

According to Sanjeev Kumar Yadav, DCP (Special Cell), he was arrested from the Karnal Bypass at 10.40 pm on Monday.

"Sidhu was wanted in connection with the case of instigating the crowd at the Red Fort on Republic Day. The Crime Branch will investigate his role in detail," said the DCP.

Asked where he was hiding after the January 26 violence, Yadav said the investigation was in an initial stage.

A source said Sidhu was waiting for someone on the road when he was nabbed. "Meanwhile, it was also revealed that Sidhu was in contact with a woman friend who lives in California. He used to make videos and send it to her, and she used to upload them on his Facebook account," said the source. Sidhu kept changing his locations to evade arrest, he added.

The police had announced a cash reward of Rs 1 lakh for information leading to Sidhu's arrest. After the Republic Day 26 violence that had left over 500 security personnel injured and one protester dead, Sidhu was posting videos on the social media.

On January 26, thousands of protesting farmers who reached ITO from the Ghaziपुर border clashed with the police. Many of them driving tractors reached the Red Fort and entered the monument, where a religious flag was also hoisted. In the FIR registered in connection with the Red Fort violence, the police said two magazines with 20 live cartridges were snatched from two constables by protesters who also damaged vehicles and robbed anti-riot gear.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during a public rally at Kalna in Burdwan district on Tuesday.

- PTI

BJP has turned the country
into crematorium: Mamata

2 more rath yatras flagged off, Nadda calls Didi's nephew a 'spoilt child'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI &
PRANMOY
BRAHMACHARI | DC
KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE,
FEB. 9

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday mocked the BJP's rath yatra in the poll-bound state as "outsiders' tour in a vehicle, housing a hotel, for five-star babus" hours before saf-ron party president J.P. Nadda flagged off two more rath yatras, slammed the Trinamul Congress supremo's rule and called her MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee a *bigirail beta* (spoilt child).

At a TMC rally in Kalna of Burdwan East, Ms Banerjee alleged, "Some outsiders and goonda, who do not live here, think that they will spread lies to the poor and click photos of having lunch at their home in exchange of money. They tour in a vehicle which houses a hotel for five-star babus.

Former top cop Kabir joins
TMC ahead of elections

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, FEB. 9

Close on the heels of taking voluntary retirement from the Indian Police Service as inspector general, former Chanda-nagar police commissioner Humayun Kabir on Tuesday joined the ruling Trinamul Congress in presence of party supremo Mamata Banerjee during her rally at Kalna in Burdwan East.

Ms Banerjee has plans to field Mr Kabir, who took

the VRS on January 29 though his superannuation was due in April, as a TMC candidate from a minority dominated seat in the polls to woo the Muslim votebank, according to sources.

Hailing the CM, Mr Kabir said, "In the last ten years, development has ushered in the state under the leadership of Ms Banerjee as the CM. While in service, I have seen her tireless work with dedication to many projects for the people apart from pan-

dem or natural disaster like Amphan or flood."

He added, "My experience of working with her is very good. I am overwhelmed by her inspiration. Today a party from outside is trying to create a division among the cultural people of Bengal to grab power. But the people of Bengal will give them a reply soon. It is our firm belief that our Chief Minister will return to power. We are taking a pledge to be with Ms Banerjee."

"The BJP has turned the country into a crematorium. But we will not let that happen in Bengal." At her rally in Berhampore in Murshidabad, Ms Ban-

erjee accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of lying on the payment of salary to the state government employees during his last state visit. Seeking

India to build 1 more dam in Afghanistan

SRIDHAR
KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 9

India will build a second Dam in Afghanistan—the Lalandar (Shatoot) Dam—to meet the drinking water needs of Kabul, it was announced on Tuesday, even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed concern over the increasing violence in the war-torn nation.

Speaking on the occasion of the inking of an MoU between the two countries for construction of the dam, Modi called for a ceasefire and an immediate end to violence in Afghanistan, adding that both nations wanted the region to be free from the menace of terrorism

and that peace and violence cannot co-exist. He reiterated New Delhi's stand in favour of a peace process that is Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled, while pointing out how innocent citizens, journalists and activists are being targeted in a cowardly manner in the strife-torn nation.

He added, "It is very important to strengthen internal solidarity among the people of Afghanistan. I believe that a united Afghanistan is capable of facing any challenge."

The MoU for the construction of the Lalandar Dam was inked in the virtual format by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Afghan Foreign Minister Hanif

Atmar in the presence of Modi and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. As Modi put it, "Its foundation will not be built only on bricks and mortar, but hinges on the strength of Indo-Afghan friendship. Kabul city is etched in the hearts and minds of the people of India."

"This is the second major dam being built by India in Afghanistan, after the India-Afghanistan Friendship Dam (Salma Dam), which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister and the (Afghan) President in June 2016," New Delhi stated.

In a statement, the MEA said, "The (Lalandar) project is a part of the New Development Partnership

between India and Afghanistan. The Lalandar (Shatoot) Dam would meet the safe drinking water needs of Kabul city, provide irrigation water to nearby areas, rehabilitate the existing irrigation and drainage network, aid in flood protection and management efforts in the area, and also provide electricity to the region."

Modi also recounted the previous development works carried out by India including in the fields of power transmission lines and road connectivity projects. It may be noted that Tuesday's pact comes soon after India gifted five lakh doses of India-manufactured Covid vaccine to Afghanistan.

BJP's Shahnawaz
inducted as min
in Nitish govt

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, FEB. 9

The Nitish Kumar-led Bihar cabinet was expanded on Tuesday with the induction of 17 ministers, of these nine are from the BJP and eight from the JD(U).

Prominent among them is senior BJP leader and former union minister Shahnawaz Hussain. He took oath in Urdu. He has been given the industry portfolio.

Shahnawaz Hussain has been three-time Lok Sabha MP from Bhagalpur and is considered a popular Muslim face in Bihar especially in the Seemanchal region. He couldn't contest the 2019 Lok Sabha polls as his constituency went to the JD(U). Last month he was elected to the Bihar legislative council.

Others from the BJP who were inducted into the Bihar cabinet are Nitin Navin, from Bankipur constituency in Patna, MLC Samrat Chaudhury, Neeraj Singh Babloo a close relative of deceased Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, Saharsa MLA Alok Ranjan Jha and Subhash Singh from Gopalganj constituency.

On the other hand, the JD(U) has retained sever-

al of its experienced faces like Shrivastava Kumar, Sanjay Kumar Jha, Madan Sahani and Lessi Singh.

Among the new faces, the JD(U) has included first-timers like Jayant Raj who won from Amarpur constituency in Banka district, former IPS officer Sunil Kumar, JD(U) MLA Sumit Singh and Jama Khan who had won the assembly elections on BSP ticket from Champur constituency in Kaimur district but later joined the JD(U).

While several new faces especially from the BJP were inducted into the cabinet. Senior leaders like Nand Kishore Yadav and Prem Kumar have not found a place this time. Both the leaders have been part of all previous NDA governments in the state.

As per an assessment both the parties JD(U) and BJP took caste and regional representation into consideration in the selection of ministers.

"Whenever there is cabinet expansion we try and consider the representation of every section of the society. I would urge all the ministers to work for the development of Bihar", Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said in a statement.

THAROOR AND 6 JOURNOS
NOT TO BE ARRESTED: SC

FROM PAGE 1

Sibal objected and said Solicitor General Tuhsar Mehta is appearing for Delhi Police and the cops of other states might "knock at my doors and arrest me in the meantime". "Kindly protect us in the meanwhile," Sibal said, prompting the bench to ask the law officer whether the police was planning to arrest Tharoor and others. Mehta, seeking to argue the case on Wednesday, alleged: "Horrendous tweets have been made," the law officer said,

adding, "I can show you what horrendous effect these tweets have with such lakhs of followers". The bench asked Mehta, "Are you going to arrest them?"

The solicitor general said, "I am before your lordships. Please hear it tomorrow". The bench then asked Mehta whether he was appearing for all the concerned states. "I will appear for all," he said. Sibal, while arguing that petitioners should be protected, said, "What prejudice will it cause if this protection is given?"

TWO FROM U.P.
BOOKED UNDER
'LOVE JIHAD' LAW

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, FEB. 9

Two people hailing from Uttar Pradesh have been booked under anti-conversion law in Mandsaur district for luring two local Dalit girls by posing as Hindus.

According to the police, Irfan alias Chote Khan and his nephew Sahil Hassan of Fani Colony under Bijnor district in Uttar Pradesh posed as Akash and Vikas respectively and lured the two girls of Suvasra in Mandsaur on the pretext of marriage and allegedly raped them in captivity.

According to Suvasra police station in-charge Rakesh Choudhury, a wrong call to the mobile phone of one of the two girls, aged 15 and 16, by one of the two accused had established their relations. While one of the two girls is a school dropout, the other is a student of Class IX.

"The two teenage girls were lured into a marriage trap by the two men after they became friends. The girls boarded a train to Delhi from Mandsaur and were later taken to Bijnor", he said.

The girls were confined in a house in Bijnor and allegedly raped by the two men. Parents of one of the two girls later filed a missing complaint with the police.

Acting on a tip off, a police team from Mandsaur reached Bijnor and with the help of the local police rescued the girls on February 6. They were brought to Mandsaur early on Monday morning.

ITBP deploys drones, dogs to detect 170 people missing since disaster struck the Chamoli region

In Uttarakhand, it's a race against time

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency input
NEW DELHI/LAKHIMPUR
KHERI (UP), FEB. 9

Ten years back, Nathu Lal's elder son Subhash drowned. Now, he is waiting for news on the fate of his younger son, missing since Sunday after the deluge in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district.

Dharamendra, a labourer at the Tapovan power project, had called their home in Bhulanpur village here last Friday, just two days before the flash flood that was possibly triggered by a glacial burst or an avalanche.

The death toll in Uttarakhand's glacier burst tragedy reached 31 as security agencies were racing against time to pull out more people from slush and two blocked tunnels where construction workers are trapped. ITBP has deployed drones and

IN-DEPTH SAFETY AUDIT OF MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS ON CARDS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 9

In view of the Uttarakhand glacier tragedy home ministry's National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) will conduct a fresh "safety and security audit" of all major infrastructure projects in high altitude and hilly areas and suggest corrective measures.

Home ministry sources said there was considerable concern in the government regarding the safety of infrastructure being carried in hilly terrain particularly after the

dogs to detect about 170 people still missing since the disaster struck the Chamoli region on Sunday. "A joint team of ITBP, NDRF, SDRF and other agencies conducting res-

● **HOME MINISTRY** sources said there was considerable concern in the government regarding the safety of infrastructure being carried in hilly terrain particularly after the Uttarakhand glacier burst.

● **EXPERTS FROM NDRF** and even external agencies like IIT, Indian Institute of Science and others would be roped in for this exercise.

Uttarakhand glacier burst. So this incident is being used as an opportunity to do an in-depth safety audit.

Officials said all projects being carried in Uttarkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and the North-Eastern states would be

thoroughly reviewed. A detailed report and analysis would be submitted within the next two months.

"As of now this survey would be conducted in hilly states as they are more vulnerable to such disasters as was witnessed in Uttarakhand," a senior

deployed to clear slush," an ITBP official said.

Uttar Pradesh relief commissioner Sanjay Goyal said about 70 of the total missing people are from the state, most of

ministry official said.

Experts from NDRF and even external agencies like IIT, Indian Institute of Science and others would be roped in for this exercise.

A number of power projects, dams, roads and bridges are being constructed in these states which would be examined. Ministry sources said NDRF teams with assistance from the SDRF would be deployed close to these infrastructure projects so that immediate relief and rescue operations can be carried out in case of any future disasters.

them from Lakhimpur Kheri district.

This includes 34 from Lakhimpur Kheri, nine from Saharanpur followed by five from Shravasti," he said on Tuesday.

SHORT TAKES

MILITANT ATTACK
KILLS FOUR GOVT
STAFF IN AFGHAN

Kabul, Feb. 9: Militants shot dead four government employees in central Kabul on Tuesday, police said, in the latest rush-hour violence to rock the capital as Afghanistan's spy agency said it had busted a "terrorist cell" involved in targeted killings.

The Afghan capital has seen near-daily attacks during the busy morning commute, targeting prominent figures including politicians, journalists, activists, judges, and religious scholars.

Kabul police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz told reporters that gunmen had opened fire on a vehicle carrying staff from the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, killing four.

SUPREMES
SINGER MARY
WILSON DIES

Washington, Feb. 9: Motown singer and the Supremes co-founder Mary Wilson has died, US media reported on Tuesday. She was 76.

She founded the US group aged 15 while living in a Detroit housing project, according to Variety, and continued with the band long after lead singer Diana Ross' departure, eventually going on to be inducted into the 1968 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

"Mary Wilson was extremely special to me. She was a trail-blazer, a diva and will be deeply missed," said Berry Gordy, founder of Motown records who were behind many of the band's hits.

She died at her Las Vegas home on February 8, her publicist Jay Schwartz told ET News.

Only two days ago Wilson uploaded a short clip to YouTube celebrating Black history month and announcing: "exciting news about The Supremes, Florence Ballard and unreleased materials." The circumstances around her death have not been released, her publicist said.

UK'S WINCHESTER
COLLEGE TO ADMIT
GIRLS FOR 1st TIME

London, Feb. 9: Winchester College, one of Britain's oldest and most prestigious private schools, will open its ancient doors to girls for the first time in its six-century history, it announced on Tuesday.

The school, founded in 1382 in Hampshire, southern England, said the move was part of "a new vision and significant programme of change".

Britain's other famous top fee-paying schools such as Eton and Harrow still only admit boys and have faced calls to change the policy.

Winchester, which counts finance minister Rishi Sunak among its former students, currently educates around 700 students who are so-called "boarders" living on-site.

Girls will only be admitted to the sixth form — the final two years of school, for 16 to 18-year-olds. They will be able to choose between sleeping on site or attending as day pupils.

The first female day pupils will arrive by September 2022, with boarders following by 2024.

NAVALNY AIDES
PUSH EU FOR NEW
RUSSIA SANCTIONS

Moscow, Feb. 9: Aides of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny said they have pushed the EU to sanction prominent members of President Vladimir Putin's circle including business tycoons to ramp up pressure on Russia.

The move comes after the tit-for-tat expulsion of several European and Russian diplomats as tensions run high over the Navalny affair.

The head of Navalny's regional network Leonid Volkov and another associate, Vladimir Ashurkov, made the calls on Monday during a video conference with EU states dedicated to the bloc's "next steps" on Russia.

The call was hosted by Poland and included envoys from the United States, Canada, Britain and Ukraine, Poland's mission in the EU wrote on Twitter.

Volkov wrote on the Telegram messenger late Monday that he and Ashurkov had discussed "personal sanctions" against billionaires Roman Abramovich, the owner of Chelsea football club, and Alisher Usmanov.

WHO fails to find source of Covid-19

Mission rules out Donald Trump's propagated Wuhan lab-leak theory

AstraZeneca shot should not be dismissed: WHO

Wuhan, Feb. 9: The WHO mission to China to uncover the origins of the coronavirus has failed to identify the source of the pandemic but the team on on Tuesday ruled out the Wuhan lab-leak theory propagated by Donald Trump.

Experts believe the disease — which has killed more than 2.3 million people worldwide — originated in bats and could have been transmitted to humans via another mammal.

World Health Organisation foreign expert Peter Ben Embarek said identifying the animal pathway remains a "work in progress", and the absence of bats in the Wuhan area dimmed the likelihood of direct transmission.

It was "most likely" to have come from an intermediary species, he said. He also backed up China's position that there was no evidence of "large outbreaks" in Wuhan before December when the first official cases were recorded.

Animals such as rabbits, ferrets and bamboo rats could be the intermediary,

Geneva, Feb. 9: The World Health Organisation insisted that the AstraZeneca vaccine was still a vital tool in the global fight against the coronavirus pandemic, after South Africa delayed the start of its inoculation program over concerns about the drug's efficacy against a virus variant.

As concerns rose over the AstraZeneca shot, the United States said it had lost its first sitting member of Congress to the virus, 67-year-old Texas Republican Ron Wright, who had also been battling cancer.

President Joe Biden called Wright a "fighter who battled bravely against both cancer and Covid-19." His death came after a 41-year-old Republican House member-elect lost his life to the disease in December, just days before he was to be sworn in.

In South Africa, alarm was raised when a trial at Johannesburg's University of Witwatersrand concluded the AstraZeneca vaccine provided only "minimal" protection against mild to moderate Covid-19 caused

by the variant first detected in South Africa.

That was bad news for many poorer nations counting on the logistical advantages offered by the AstraZeneca shot.

But Richard Hatchett, head of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), said it was "vastly too early to be dismissing this vaccine." "It is absolutely crucial to use the tools that we have as effectively as we possibly can," he said, speaking back with a warning not to "politicise" the investigation.

The WHO experts spent a month in China including two weeks in quarantine.

Liang said studies showed the virus could be "carried long-distance on cold chain products", appearing to nudge towards the theory the virus was imported — an idea that has abounded in China in recent months.

Ben Embarek said "the virus can persist and survive in conditions that are found in these cold and frozen environments".

"But we don't really

another team member Marion Koopmans added, saying they might be an "entry point" for further investigations.

Liang Wannian, head of the China side of the joint mission, said animal

transmission remained the likely route, but "the reservoir hosts remain to be identified".

Ben Embarek quashed the theory that a leak from a virology lab in Wuhan could have caused the pan-

demie.

"The laboratory incident hypothesis is extremely unlikely," he said. "It is not in the hypotheses that we will suggest for future studies". The mission was a diplomatically knotty

Iran 'may pursue nuclear weapon if sanctions persist'

Tehran, Feb. 9: Iran's intelligence minister warned the West that his country could push for a nuclear weapon if crippling international sanctions on Tehran remain in place, state television reported on Tuesday.

The remarks by Mahmoud Alavi mark a rare occasion that a government official says Iran could reverse its course

on the nuclear programme. Tehran has long insisted that the programme is for peaceful purposes only, such as power generation and medical research. A 1990s fatwa, or religious edict, by the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei states that nuclear weapons are forbidden. "Our nuclear programme is peaceful and

the fatwa by the supreme leader has forbidden nuclear weapons, but if they push Iran in that direction, then it wouldn't be Iran's fault but those who pushed it," Alavi was quoted as saying.

"If a cat is cornered, it may show a kind of behaviour that a free cat would not," he said and added that Iran has no plans to move toward a

nuclear weapon under current circumstances.

Israel insists Iran maintains the ambition of developing nuclear weapons, pointing to Tehran's ballistic missile program and research into other technologies.

The 81-year-old Khamenei, who has the final say on all matters of state in Iran, on Sunday urged the United States to lift all

sanctions if it wants Iran to live up to commitments under its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

However, President Joe Biden has said the US won't be making the first move. Iran President Hassan Rouhani in comments aired on state TV on Tuesday reiterated the US must first take steps to honour nuclear deal agreements.

Trump's impeachment trial begins



Donald Trump

■ DEMOCRATS HOLD 50 of the 100 Senate seats and Vice President Kamala Harris is able to cast votes to end tiebreaks. But it would take a two-thirds majority for a conviction, meaning at least 17 Republican senators would have to join.

able viewing for senators, including the many Republicans making clear they will not convict Trump, but who had to flee to safety when the violent crowd surged through the Capitol that day.

Outside, thousands of National Guard troops deployed in the aftermath of the January 6 debacle

continue to patrol, while hastily thrown up fences barricade the area from ordinary Americans — visible proof that the aftershocks of the Trump era continue to rumble.

Trump becomes the first president ever to face two impeachment trials — he was acquitted in 2020 of abuse of office — as well as the first in history to be tried after leaving office.

For Democrats leading the case against the pop-

ulist real estate tycoon, Trump's crime is also a first — the "most grievous constitutional crime" in US history.

But his legal team is resting its case largely on the procedural argument that a former president cannot be tried, calling the Senate trial "absurd."

A second acquittal is all but certain for Trump, who is holed up in his luxury Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida and, after being barred from Twitter, has spent the weeks since leaving office in near silence.

Democrats hold 50 of the 100 Senate seats and Vice President Kamala Harris is able to cast votes to end tiebreaks. But it would take a two-thirds majority for a conviction, meaning at least 17 Republican senators would have to join.

— AFP

Fossil fuel causes one in five deaths globally

Paris, Feb. 9: Fossil fuel pollution caused more than eight million premature deaths in 2018, accounting for nearly 20 percent of adult mortality worldwide, researchers reported Tuesday.

Half of that grim tally was split across China and India, with another million deaths equally distributed among Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan and the United States, they reported in the journal Environmental Research.

The toxic cocktail of tiny particles cast off by burning oil, gas and especially coal was responsible for a quarter or more of the mortality in half a dozen nations, all in Asia.

"We often discuss the dangers of fossil fuel combustion in the context of CO2 and climate change and overlook the potential health

impacts," co-author Joel Schwartz, a professor of environmental epidemiology at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, said in a statement.

The potential to avoid millions of premature deaths should be a powerful additional incentive for policymakers to drive down greenhouse gas emissions and hasten the global shift from brown to green energy, he said.

Worldwide, air pollution shortens lives by more than two years on average, earlier research has shown. Worst-hit is Asia, where average lifespan is cut 4.1 years in China, 3.9 years in India, and 3.8 years in Pakistan. In some regions of these countries, life expectancy is reduced by twice as much.

In Europe, it is shortened by eight months on average.

The new study nearly doubles previous estimates of the number of people killed by fossil fuel pollution.

The World Health Organisation says that air pollution — including indoors — kills seven million people per year, with 4.2 million of those deaths due to ambient, or outdoor, pollution.

The most recent Global Burden of Disease study — the most comprehensive catalogue of why people die — advances roughly the same numbers.

Both of these estimates relied on satellite data and surface observations to determine concentrations of the smallest — and most deadly — calibre of pollution, known as PM2.5.

But they cannot determine whether these microparticles come from burning fos-

sil fuels or, say, dust and wildfire smoke, according to co-author Loretta Mickley, an expert in chemistry-climate interactions at Harvard.

"With satellite data, you're seeing only pieces of the puzzle," she said.

To get a more fine-grained picture of where particle pollution comes from and its health impacts, Mickley and colleagues used a 3-D model of atmospheric chemistry, known as GEOS-Chem, that divides Earth's surface into 50-by-60-kilometre (30-by-36-mile) blocks.

— AFP

understand if the virus can then transmit to humans and under which conditions this could happen," he said.

Beijing is desperate to defang criticism of its handling of the chaotic early stages of the outbreak. It has tried to refocus attention on its handling and recovery while floating the theory that the virus emerged abroad and was brought into China possibly via frozen foods.

FRANCE PATROLS
SCS, LIKELY TO
ANGER BEIJING

Paris, Feb. 9: A French nuclear attack submarine was among two navy ships that recently conducted a patrol through the South China Sea, its defence minister announced, in a move likely to anger Beijing, which claims most of the strategic waters as its territory.

The SNA Emeraude was accompanied by support ship BSAM Seine for the passage, Defence Minister Florence Parly said on Twitter.

TAMILNADU POLICE HOUSING CORPORATION LTD
(A Government of Tamil Nadu Undertaking)
No.132, EVR Salai, Kilpauk, Chennai-10

e-TENDER-INVITATION FOR BIDS NO.58/2020-21 Dated: 09.02.2021

Sl. No.	Name of Work	App. Value Rs. in Lakhs	Sale period	Opening
1	Construction of New Building for Fire and Rescue Service Station and 2 Nos. of Station Fire Officer Quarters at Vepery in Chennai city. (SE/CC/DB/887/2020)	216.06	24.02.2021 to 10.03.2021	12.03.2021
2	Construction of IDOL Wing Police Station building in PTC Campus at Ashok Nagar in Chennai City (SE/CC/DB/048/2021)	108.75	16.02.2021 to 23.02.2021	25.02.2021

For other details, visit: www.tntenders.gov.in and TNPHC website - www.tnphc.com

Superintending Engineer/CC TNPHC Ltd., Chennai.

DIPR/860/TENDER/2021

GREATER CHENNAI CORPORATION
Storm Water Drain Department

S.W.D.C.No.82/0241/2021

E-Short Tenders are invited for the following work as per details furnished below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Package Value of work (with GST)	EMD Rs.	Eligible Class
1	Demolition & Re-Construction of Storm Water Drain of size 900 x 900 mm and 1200x1200mm in various location in Zone-10 (6 Packages)	Rs.101.70 Lakhs to Rs.186.18 Lakhs	1% of work value	Class-I

1. Tender last date and time of submission: **18.02.2021 upto 3.00 pm.**
2. Bid document will be available in website <https://tntenders.gov.in>
3. Tender open date and time: **19.02.2021 at 3.30 pm.**

DIPR/919/Tender/2021 Superintending Engineer /SWDD i/c.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU / PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
PARAMBIKULAM ALIYAR BASIN CIRCLE, POLLACHI-642 003.
TENDER NOTICE (LUMP SUM CONTRACT - Item wise rate Tender system)

Tender Notice No. TS/JDOO/I.F.T.10 /2020-2021 NIT No.:10/2020-2021 PAB Circle, Pollachi, Dated:08.02.2021

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu sealed tenders are invited for the following work from the Registered Contractors in PWD, (Registered as a SSI Unit in Government of Tamilnadu) by the Superintending Engineer, P.W.D., W.R.D., Parambikulam Aliyar Basin Circle, Pollachi upto **3.00 PM on 19.02.2021** in person or by registered post and the received tenders will be opened on the same day at **3.30 PM** in the presence of contractors (or) their authorised agents.

Name of Work: Renewal of the Emergency Shutter and Repairs to the Service Shutter of the Parambikulam Dam Tunnel Entry at Parambikulam in Chittur Taluk of Palghat District. (Approximate Value of Work Rs.1.50 Crore including GST) E.M.D Rs.85,000/-

1. Last date for receipt of application for Tender Schedule	: 18.02.2021 upto 5.45 p.m
2. Period of tender Schedules to be sold	: 11.02.2021 to 18.02.2021 upto 5.45 p.m

The Tender documents with other forms can be downloaded from the following Web Sites at free of cost.
i) <http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in> ii) <http://www.tn.tenders.gov.in>. All other general conditions can be seen from the above website in which the tender notice is published.

Superintending Engineer, P.W.D., W.R.D., Parambikulam Aliyar Basin Circle, Pollachi-3.

DIPR/945/Tender/2021

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU - PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
TENDER NOTICE NO.30 / 2020-2021/ BCM/ MW/ ITEM WISE RATE TENDER
FORM OF CONTRACT : LUMP SUM / ITEM WISE RATE TENDER

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamilnadu, sealed tenders are invited from the PWD Registered contractors in the field, for the following work and the same will be received upto **3.00 PM** on the respective date mentioned (column 6) and will be opened on the same day at **3.30 PM** in the presence of those tenderers or their representatives who choose to be present:

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Approx value of work (in Lakhs)	EMD (in Rs.)	Schedule available Date	Tender Date
1	ERODE DISTRICT Construction of Additional Building to Government Hospital at Bhavani in Erode District.	Rs.137.60	Rs.78,800/-	11.02.2021 to 25.02.2021 upto 5.45 PM	26.02.2021
2	THIRUVARUR DISTRICT Construction of Additional building for Geriatric ward at Government Medical College Hospital Thiruvavur in Thiruvavur District.	Rs.71.15	Rs.45,600/-	11.02.2021 to 25.02.2021 upto 5.45 PM	26.02.2021

Note : Period of Contract, Eligibility of Contractors and other details can be seen & downloaded from the website www.tenders.tn.gov.in

Superintending Engineer, P.W.D., Buildings (C & M) Circle, Medical Works, Trichy.

DIPR/ 933 TENDER/2021

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
Periyar Vaigai Basin Circle, Madurai - 625 001.
Tender Notice No.14/D2/C.135/2020/Date 08.02.2021

For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu, tenders are invited and the sealed Tenders will be received by the Superintending Engineer, W.R.D., Periyar Vaigai Basin Circle, Madurai for the following works from the eligible contractors registered in P.W.D. in the appropriate class mentioned below.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Work Value + GST 12%	E.M.D.	Eligibility class of contractor with monetary limit	E.M.D. to be drawn in favour of
1.	Reclamation of Vandiyur Tank to its original standards existing within the corporation limit in Madurai North Taluk of Madurai District.	Rs. 69,37,001/- Rs. 7,12,450/- Rs. 86,49,451/-	Rs.44,000/-	Class I upto Rs. 75,00 Lakhs and above	The Executive Engineer, W.R.D. PWD, Periyar Main Canal Division, Madurai
2.	Reclamation of the Andaneri tank to its original standards existing within the corporation limit in Madurai North Taluk of Madurai District.	Rs. 67,58,562/- Rs. 5,91,027/- Rs. 64,69,589/-	Rs.43,000/-	Class II upto Rs. 75,00 Lakhs and above	
3.	Reclamation of Kodikulam tank existing within the Corporation limit in Madurai North Taluk of Madurai District.	Rs. 71,42,520/- Rs. 6,29,384/- Rs. 79,99,286/-	Rs.50,000/-	Class I upto Rs. 75,00 Lakhs and above	
4.	Desilting, Strengthening of Banks, Restoration of Supply channel and Formation of Footpath in Thalleikulam Puthukulam Tank in Madurai North Taluk of Madurai District.	Rs. 85,87,402/- Rs. 10,30,458/- Rs. 96,17,860/-	Rs.59,000/-	Class I upto Rs. 75,00 Lakhs and above	The Executive Engineer, W.R.D. PWD, Periyar Vaigai Basin Division, Madurai

Cost of Tender Document + G.S.T. (Each works) : Rs.15,000/- * Rs.1,800/- Tender document can be downloaded freely from www.tenders.tn.gov.in. Date and Time of Tender document available : 11.02.2021 to 25.02.2021 upto 5.45 PM. Submission of Tenders : 26.02.2021 upto 3.00 PM. Date and Time of Opening : 26.02.2021 at 3.30 PM. Place of Opening of Tenders : O/o The Superintending Engineer, W.R.D., Periyar Vaigai Basin Circle, Madurai - 1. In the event of specified date for submission of tender is declared as a holiday, tender will be received and opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. Other details can be obtained from the above office.

DIPR/508/TENDER/2021 Superintending Engineer, W.R.D., PWD., Periyar Vaigai Basin Circle, Madurai-1.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE
DISTRICT HEALTH SOCIETY, TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT
NOTIFICATION

Ref : 1. G.O.(Ms)No.530, H&FW (N2) Dept., Dated : 05.12.2020
2. G.O.(Ms)No.588, H&FW (N2) Dept., Dated : 30.12.2020
3. W.P.(MD)No.19565 of 2020 and W.M.P.(MD)Nos.16296 & 16297 of 2020 Before the Madurai Bench of Madras High Court Order Dated : 22.01.2021.
4. Health and Family Welfare (N2) Department letter No.396/ N2/2021-2 Dated : 02.02.2021
5. R.No.66143/UHC/S2/2020 Dated: 03.02.2021 of the Director of Public Health and Preventive, Medicine, Chennai -6.
6. R.No.66143/UHC/S2/2020 Dated : 06.02.2021 of the Director of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Chennai-6.

In Tirunelveli District 48 Mini Clinics are going to be operationalised. Hence application for the post of **Medical Officers** temporarily on contract basis, are being welcomed on or before **16.02.2021, 5.00 PM**

Sl. No	Name of the Post	No. of Vacancy	Qualification	Age
1	Medical Officer	48	1.MBBS Degree from Government or Government approved Private Medical Colleges which are recognized by Medical Council of India. 2.Shoud have been registered with the Tamil Nadu Medical Council.	Below 55 Years

Conditions:-

1. The above mentioned posts are temporary only
2. Regularisation won't be done at any point of time and they will not be permanently absorbed.
3. The candidate should submit their undertaking to this effect before joining the duty.

Applications to be sent to:
Secretary/ District Health Society, Deputy Director Health Services, O/o the Deputy Director Health Services
16/22, Old Police Hospital Street, Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli-2

Note:

1. Application can be sent via Speed Post / Email or in person to above mentioned address only.
2. Application forms are available for issuing in office of the Deputy Director of Health Services, Tirunelveli and all Block Primary Health Centres.
3. **E-mail ID: dphtny@nic.in**
4. The above mentioned number of posts is liable to change.

District Collector
The Chairman, District Health Society
Tirunelveli District.

DIPR/233/DISPLAY/2021

CHENNAI METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed Tenders are invited from the eligible tenderers for the following works as per the procedure of CMWSB under single cover system conforming to the Tamil Nadu Transparency in Tenders Act, 1998 and Rules 2000.

1.	Outsourcing the Drivers, Cleaners and Field Workers for Operation and Maintenance of sewer system using the following machines for a period of one year
a)	Jet Rodding Machine / Jet cum Suction Machine – 4 Nos., Super sucker – 1 No., 4 Wheeler (4 Nos.) 3 Wheeler (3 Nos.) Desilting Machine in Area IX – Depot 116 to 119- CNT/SEW/MWB/3381/2020-21 – EMD – Rs. 52,900/- Eligibility: Class IA/IB
b)	Jet Rodding Machine / Jet cum Suction Machine – 4 Nos., Super Sucker – 2 Nos., 4 Wheeler (2 Nos.) 3 Wheeler (3 Nos.) Desilting Machine in Area X – Depot 127 to 128 - CNT/SEW/MWB/3382/2020-21 – EMD – Rs. 51,700/- Eligibility: Class IA/IB
c)	Jet Rodding Machine / Jet cum Suction Machine – 5 Nos., Super Sucker – 1 No., 4 Wheeler (2 Nos.) 3 Wheeler (5 Nos.) Desilting Machine in Area X – Depot 129,130 to 131&133- CNT/SEW/MWB/3383/2020-21 – EMD – Rs.57,100/- Eligibility: Class IA/IB
d)	Jet Rodding Machine / Jet cum Suction Machine – 4 Nos., Super Sucker – 1 No., 4 Wheeler (1 No.) 3 Wheeler (4 Nos.) Desilting Machine in Area X – Depot 132,134&135 - CNT/SEW/MWB/3384/2020-21 – EMD – Rs.47,700/- Eligibility: Class IA/IB
e)	Jet Rodding Machine / Jet cum Suction Machine – 4 Nos., Super Sucker – 2 Nos., 4 Wheeler (3 Nos.) 3 Wheeler (3 Nos.) Desilting Machine in Area X – Depot 136,137,138 - CNT/SEW/MWB/3385/2020-21 – EMD – Rs. 53,900/- Eligibility: Class IA/IB

2. Tenders will be received upto 03.00 PM and opened after 3.00 PM on :05.03.2021

3. Availability of tender documents- website: www.tenders.tn.gov.in and e-bid submission is permitted through portal www.tntenders.gov.in. For all other details refer tender schedule in the website from 11.02.2021

DIPR/977/Tender/2021 SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (CONTRACTS & MONITORING)

DECCAN Chronicle

10 FEBRUARY 2021

Sasikala the ‘X’ factor in TN’s soap opera politics

The red carpet reception was more like those given to pop singers in star-struck declarations of adulation. Ex-convict V.K. Sasikala, who came home after serving a four-year jail sentence under the Prevention of Corruption Act, was elevated to demigod status in a 22-hour car journey that was more a procession pandering to the blind loyalty of lumpen political party elements. As a social phenomenon, it defies decoding; as a person convicted of stealing from the government treasury is elevated to the status of a neta who can bring deliverance to the people. This is not restricted to cinema-obsessed Tamil Nadu as the phenomenon encompasses Lalu Prasad Yadav and many a charismatic netas suspected of being as corrupt.

Ms Sasikala’s impact on Tamil Nadu politics is not to be dismissed though she is ineligible to stand for election. Her nephew T.T.V. Dhinakaran’s disinformation campaign cannot change the law. Her role as a backroom manipulator in Jayalalithaa’s regime when she virtually picked people for plum Cabinet posts and even made or unmade chief ministers had made her a force to be reckoned within the ruling AIADMK party. It is a sign of these strange times that a political outlier is being glorified in projecting her as the regent who sacrificed her life for the queen (Jayalalithaa). The fact that it seems to touch a chord in a fawning public reflects the wide gap between perception and the reality that it often puts in the shade.

The Dravidian major AIADMK, which has alternated in power after breaking away from the DMK in 1972, is feeling anxious about the return of the power of Poes Garden, which had housed two misanthropes who manoeuvred adroitly in a domain that was a distinctly male preserve before Jayalalithaa broke the chain. The party MGR founded and Jayalalithaa nurtured may face the biggest threat with Ms Sasikala claiming it as her own despite having been summarily removed on her going to jail in Bengaluru. Lengthy legal challenges to her being stripped of the post of general secretary may be in the offing but that does not change the electoral scene except that an AIADMK split by loyalty calls may be playing right into the hands of DMK, which pollsters are favouring to emerge victorious in the summer of 2021.

The people of a state, who were in such a thrall of cinema that they allowed it to play a larger-than-life role in the making of netas, are far more forgiving of corruption, which has historically been rampant in the 54 years of Dravidian regimes. Ms Sasikala, who has never been in electoral politics, can be expected to play only the role of a disruptor as she seeks the Jayalalithaa legacy and her party. Time is not on her side in her emergence too close to the Assembly polls to build anew her nephew’s breakaway AMMK party. Her journey to Chennai that occupied nearly 24 hours was stretched out to play to a television gallery in the highest traditions of the state’s soap opera politics. What happens from here is in the people’s court.

Pay heed to ex-judge’s plea

Justice Madan Lokur, who retired as a judge of the Supreme Court just over two years ago, has in public remarks expressed his “disappointment” with the manner the top court has conducted itself in the discharge of its constitutional functions, and has recently even called upon the apex court to adopt an “interventionist” approach to check the “rampant misuse (even abuse) of the country’s criminal justice system.

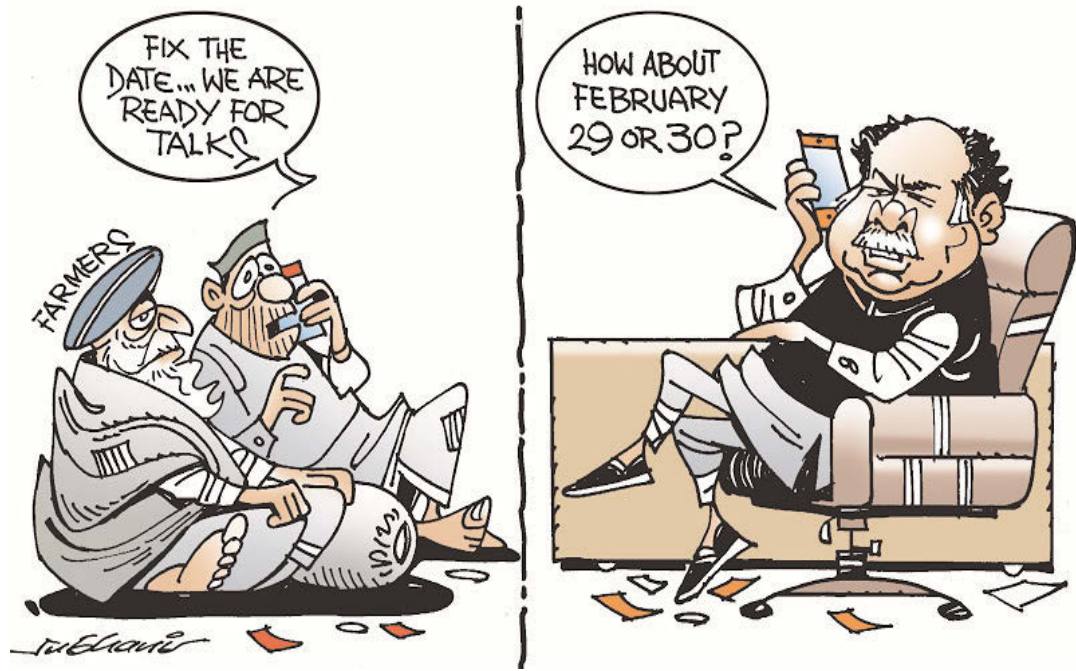
A hands-off approach by the Supreme Court in the matter of a spate of FIRs for the same presumed violation encourages those who take advantage of the law to trouble fellow citizens, the retired judge observed.

Making a direct reference in this regard to the growing tendency on the part of some to file multiple FIRs, Justice Lokur drew attention to the case of prominent journalists, including several well-regarded editors, and an MP, Shashi Tharoor, being subjected to harassment through the filing of near-identical FIRs in several states, accusing them of sedition and causing social harmony. In the case of Mr Tharoor and the journalists, their initial tweets on the cause of the death of a farmer in the course of the recent agitation had led to the spate of FIRs being lodged — clearly by the people of the same motivation or persuasion.

Justice Lokur contrasted the above case with those of two television anchors — Arnab Goswami and Amish Devgan. The case of the first was heard within 15 hours of the top court being approached. His prayer to club the FIRs was instantly heeded. The other anchor was also given some relief. But the senior journalists charged with sedition, and Mr Tharoor, have not had the same luck. The former judge has, therefore, urged the Supreme Court to be “interventionist” and “lay down the law” in the case of multiple FIRs with the same content.

Criticisms of Supreme Court judgments by retired members of the top judiciary are not unknown. Nor is the failure of the top court to take action, as in constitutional matters concerning Kashmir, CAA, and habeas corpus — issues on which Justice Lokur has also expressed himself. But urgings to be “interventionist” from a retired member of the top court bench do appear novel. In this lies their freshness and historical value.

Subhani



Playing with God’s world: ‘Growth’ has a high price



Sanjeev Ahluwalia

Senior BJP leader Uma Bharati’s first reaction to the terrible news of the Chamoli glacier break/avalanche disaster on Sunday — “I told you so” — fully aligns with the reservations of all those who put a higher value on conservation than on the development of natural resources for economic growth.

On Sunday, a part of the Nanda Devi glacier broke off and avalanched down, causing a flash flood in the Rishiganga and Dhauliganga — the upper riverine stretches of the Alakananda, which feeds into the mighty Ganga — washing away back-to-back dams diverting water into a privately-owned hydro project on the Rishiganga stretch and seriously damaging an under-construction government-owned power generation project at Tapovan.

As minister for water resources in the first BJP government of Narendra Modi, Ms Bharati had dragged her feet on the development of the upper reaches of the Ganga in Uttarakhand — much to the dismay of gung-ho advocates of development and growth. Conservationists cite the “fragile” structure of the Himalayas to caution against over-exploitation of the riverine system for electricity generation.

Others go so far as to blame the recent much-publicised widening of the highways connecting the Char Dham — the four pilgrimage shrines in Garhwal — Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamotri. Construction of roads is still done the old way, by simply carving additional road width out from the mountain side, causing significant soil erosion both above and below the road. Measures to bind the exposed mountainside using nets or by planting fast-growing

ground cover are only a sideshow, rarely given prominence, in already overloaded road construction budgets.

But then, isn’t it always “the growth-wallahs” who stick their necks out by measuring risk versus rewards, even in the playground of the gods — as the Himalayas are believed to be. On the other hand, it is “safe” to be a conservationist, simply because there are so few downsides to the belief that only the sparing use of natural resources is sustainable. Multiple alternative sources of growth do remain unexploited, like higher productivity in the use of existing resources or the use of alternative “clean” technologies for power generation, like solar or offshore wind.

At times like the present one, in the immediate aftermath of a human tragedy, calculating the trade-off between lives cruelly snatched away from loved ones and the potential economic gains from development seems particularly pointless.

It is also unclear to what extent the disaster is the outcome of over-exploitation of resources in the back-to-back construction of dams to divert water into tunnels to run turbines for electricity generation. The shearing-off of glaciers, causing an avalanche and a flash flood in downstream riverine systems, is a natural calamity. After all, avalanches do happen, and lives are lost.

Doubtless, lessons must and will be learnt, with respect to continuous monitoring of the higher reaches for signs of fragility. Assessing the geological safety of hill development — extending road access, urban sprawl and related projects — is no longer a choice. Coupled with the depredations of climate change, already fragile ecosystems could tumble over the edge much faster if the rate and style of

intrusive development is not carefully regulated.

How much of a say should local communities have in large projects being created in their midst is another vexed question — on which there are no clear answers. The “wisdom and public interest orientation” of NIMBY (not in my backyard) communities varies and is often romanticised. In comparison, centralised planning is easy to vilify as representing the cruel, uncaring impositions of rules made by “outsiders”. Ultimately, help must come from science in guiding the government on project site selection and regulations for risk minimisation and occupational safety for project workers.

In 2013, PM Narendra Modi made history as chief minister of Gujarat by arranging transport for Gujarati pilgrims stranded in the Kedarnath flash floods. In a similar vein, within a day of the incident, R.K. Singh, Union minister for power, visited the damaged NTPC-owned Tapovan hydro generation project.

VIP visits are a tradition, albeit a much-reviled, device for speeding up the release of funds for relief work and energising those engaged in the onerous on-site task of rescue, relief distribution and rehabilitation. But it is a tradition that a politician ignores only at his peril — after all “we are like that only”. Happily, the minister, previously a civil servant who retired as India’s home secretary — did more than just that. He was on the button when he commented that the structural safety of glacier formations around large project construction sites in mountainous regions should be monitored for geological stress, much more so than they are done now. Early advance warnings of incipient

trouble can enable the evacuation of workers, at the very least.

Adroit operational steps to minimise the downstream damage also mitigated the scale of the disaster. Reportedly, emergency measures to release water stored in downstream dams at Rishikesh and Srinagar helped create the required space to absorb the upstream water shock. All these actions speak to our improving capacity for the safe operation of large water systems. To the credit of the civil administration, households along the affected stretch of the river, potentially under threat from flood waters, were reportedly evacuated as a precaution, though the waters subsided subsequently.

National Disaster Management Authority personnel were also visibly in attendance, although it is unclear whether more boots on the ground, in an area chock-a-block with the security forces, is of additional value. The NDMA, sadly, remains a neglected cousin of the military and the police in terms of their technical capacity, rescue equipment and surge capacity for assisting the local civil authorities.

The bulk of the casualties are of on-site contract workers — mostly migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Hopefully, once these two hydro projects are completed, the memories of those who laid down their lives during their completion will be commemorated in a suitable manner.

The CM of Uttarakhand announced ₹4 lakhs as relief for the families of each of the victims. An additional ₹2 lakhs each would be given from the Prime Minister’s Relief Fund.

The question which remains unanswered, however, goes far beyond the welfare of the families of the deceased. The jury is still out on what is an acceptable societal trade-off between the risk of mortality and morbidity and the compulsions of economic development.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

LETTERS

SASIKALA FACTOR

It was really shocking to see a sea of humanity to catch a glimpse of V.K. Sasikala on her return to Chennai from Bengaluru on Monday. In fact, it’s very difficult to read the pulse of the people in this part of the country, as far as politics is concerned. This grand reception to a person who in my opinion was never loyal to Jayalalithaa, leave alone the disproportionate asset case in which she was convicted and incarcerated for four years, was quite unexpected. Be that as it may, the AIADMK of Edappadi K.Palaniswami has a great task cut out to keep its unit together and fight two enemies — Stalin and Sasikala — successfully in the coming elections. .

S.Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

PRIVATISATION OF STEEL PLANT

THE VIZAG steel plant was established under the Congress regime after a massive agitation and a few sacrificed their lives. Regrettably, after five decades, the NDA government is now trying to privatise or sell it to the rich industrialists. Till recently it was making profits but suddenly it turned into a loss making unit! How and why? The produced steel is not sold since the construction works in the entire state had suffered due to deliberate non-supply of sand controlled by the mafias! In Amaravati as well as in Polavaram construction works which would have consumed lakhs of tons of steel were stopped courtesy the Centre and state governments. And neither new industry nor much-touted FDI entered AP. Could it be not construed that the NDA in its privatisation spree had conspired with the wily state government, killed construction activity sans sand and made the plant ‘a white elephant’ only to privatise or sell it?

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

ENGLAND’S EMPHATIC WIN

ENGLAND’S EMPHATIC 227-run win over India in the Chennai Test on Tuesday has quite clearly exposed some obvious weaknesses in the Indian batting including an apparent lack of proper application and approach. While skipper Root virtually pulverised the Indian bowling with his titanic, superlative double century, most of our batsmen except perhaps Pujara and Pant did not appear to be playing to their full potential. The English pacers and spinners were appreciably more penetrative and effective despite bowling on a docile pitch while our bowlers except Ashwin could not get any notable purchase from the wicket. Overall, we were totally outplayed in all departments of the game.

A. Mohan, Chennai

DECCAN CHRONICLE
KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor
R. MOHAN
Resident Editor
K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher
DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:
Chennai: SP 3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Phones: (044) 22254747, 22254748
Coimbatore: 77 Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore 641009. Phone: (0422) 2231255, 2231256
Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad 500 003. Phone: (040) 27803930-4. Fax: (040) 27805256
Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Ft. Road, Koramangala, Bangalore-560095. Ph: 08043460500; Fax: 080-22960551/52/55
Visakhapatnam: Survey No. 1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Roadway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017. Phones: (0891) 2552333/2552334. Fax: (0891) 2755285
Vijayawada: No. C 3 & 4, Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.). Phones: (0866) 2555284/ 2555287, Fax: (0866) 2555234
Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd. Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618
Anantapur: Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904
Nellore: Survey No. 527/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/ 82, Telefax (0861) 2348580
Karimnagar: Survey No. 1341, Vavilapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar 505 001. Phone: (0878) 2228908; Telefax (0878) 2220433
Kochi: No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408
Kozhikode: No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001 Fax : 0495 4019018
Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph Press Thycaud post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/6/7, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08ss

Skand Tayal



US-Russia ties, already rocky, get worse after Navalny jailing

The fraught relationship between the United States and Russia has come under further strain after the alleged poisoning and recent sentencing of prominent Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny. On Feb. 4, US President Joe Biden, in his first articulation of foreign policy after assuming office, had some harsh words for President Vladimir Putin. Mr Biden “made it clear that the days of the US rolling over in the face of Russia’s aggressive actions — interfering with our elections, cyberattacks, poisoning its citizens — are over”. Castigating Russia for “the politically motivated jailing of Alexei Navalny”, President Biden cautioned Moscow that the US “will not hesitate to raise the cost on Russia”, alluding to possible additional sanctions.

Ignoring diplomatic niceties, President Biden said: “The politically motivated jailing of Alexei Navalny and the Russian efforts to suppress freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are a matter of deep concern. He should be released immediately and without conditions.”

On February 2, after Mr Navalny was sentenced to more than two years in prison on rather flimsy charges, new US secretary of state Anthony Blinken tweeted: “We reiterate our

call for the Russian government to immediately and unconditionally release Mr Navalny, as well as hundreds of other Russian citizens wrongfully detained in recent weeks for exercising the rights.”

Such public criticism is likely to deeply offend Mr Putin, the strong leader of a proud country. Russia would be loath to taking any action under outside pressure and the chances of the Russian State showing any leniency towards a high-profile dissident may have simply vanished.

Besides the persecution of Mr Navalny, the Biden administration takes office with a deep-rooted suspicion towards Mr Putin’s Russia. The Democratic Party holds Russia’s involvement in the leaking of presidential candidate Hillary Clinton’s emails responsible for her defeat in 2016 by Donald Trump. In a signed *Foreign Affairs* article in March 2020, Joe Biden had declared solidarity with “Russian civil society, that has stood up against President Vladimir Putin’s kleptocratic authoritarian system”. Laying down his future policy, candidate Biden wrote that “to counter Russian aggression, we must keep (Nato’s) military capabilities sharp”, and threatened to “impose real costs on Russia for its violation of interna-

tional norms”.

Incoming national security adviser Jake Sullivan added to the chorus by declaring that “unlike the previous administration, we will be taking steps to hold Russia accountable for the range of malign actions Russia has taken”.

America’s penchant for conducting critical bilateral relations in the full glare of media publicity may win the Biden establishment accolades from internal constituencies but are unlikely to lead to effective outcomes.

The United States is no longer the world’s undisputed economic and military power, with China snapping at its heels. Its grip on alliances like Nato has also weakened. In the backdrop of the Covid-linked economic downturn, much of the democratic world puts national interests first. In this dynamic and uncertain international environment, it is doubtful that other key powers will stand by the US if it tries to impose more punitive sanctions on Russia. The US, however, certainly has the capacity to impose unilateral sanctions isolating Russia from the global financial and banking network, that would adversely hit the Russian economy.

In his February 4 address at the state department, Mr Biden assured a wary

world that the US will act “not to meet yesterday’s challenges, but today’s and tomorrow’s” and to “take on directly the challenges posed... by our most serious competitor China”. Mr Biden declared that “we will confront China’s economic abuses; counter its aggressive, coercive actions; to push back on China’s attack on human rights, intellectual property and global governance.”

At his confirmation hearing, Mr Blinken had also clearly identified China as “posing the most significant challenge of any nation-state in the world for the United States”.

The Biden administration would be well advised to take a hard look at America’s declining influence in the world and prioritise adversaries and challenges. Russia now has a shrinking footprint on the global strategic map. It’s no longer an expansionist power. In 2008, Russia was severely provoked by Nato’s offer of membership to Ukraine and Georgia. Mr Putin had clearly warned at that time that Nato’s expansion towards Russia “would be taken in Russia as a direct threat to the security of our country”. Russia’s annexation of Crimea and action in Donbas, South Ossetia and Abkhazia were a riposte to the aggressive intentions of Nato.

President Putin had a career in the KGB in the days of the Soviet empire. He has firm control over all the levers of power in Russia and is popular among citizens. With Mr Putin at the helm, Russia is not an ideology-driven country, like the erstwhile Soviet Union. Russia is now obsessed with internal stability and external security. Outside support to vocal Opposition leaders is seen by the Kremlin as a West-inspired attempt to destabilise the country.

Russia poses no future challenge to the United States or the West, be it economic or technological. The West lacks any levers to soften the harsh internal system in Russia. Public criticism of a proud nation will only harden positions and genuine concerns are best conveyed behind closed doors.

For America’s own future primacy, the real challenge is from China and its demonising of Russia will only push the Kremlin into the Dragon’s embrace, immeasurably adding to China’s clout and aggression. The Biden administration needs a pragmatic foreign policy, overcome its prejudices and arrest the slide of US-Russia ties on this slippery slope.

The writer is a retired Indian diplomat and a former ambassador

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,329.08	-0.04
Nifty 50	15,109.30	-0.04
S&P 500*	3,915.38	-0.01
Dollar (₹)	72.89	0.10
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.41	-0.39
Euro (₹)	87.99	-0.26
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,559,495	0.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	61.11	0.91
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.074	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.146	-0.013

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Gross NPAs of PSBs decline to ₹6.09 L cr in Sept.

Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of public sector banks declined from Rs 8.96 lakh crore in March 2018 to Rs 6.09 lakh crore in Sept. 2020 due to various government measures, minister of state for finance Anurag Singh Thakur informed the Rajya Sabha. There was record recovery of Rs 2.54 lakh crore during March 2018-Sept. 2020 and 11 out of 12 PSBs reported profit in the first half FY21 amounting to Rs 14,688 crore.

IOB posts net profit of ₹213cr in Dec. quarter



Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) reported a net profit of Rs 212.87 crore for the December 2020 quarter as provisions for bad loans declined. IOB had posted a net loss of Rs 6,075.49 crore in the year-ago quarter. It had posted a net profit of Rs 148.14 crore in the Sept. quarter. Total income rose to Rs 5,786.51 crore from Rs 5,197.94 crore YoY. Gross NPAs fell to 12.19 per cent of gross advances from 17.12 per cent.

Govt to close two pharma PSUs, disinvest in three

The Centre has decided to close two pharma sector undertakings and disinvest in the other three. "The Department of Pharmaceuticals has five public sector undertakings. Out of the five PSUs, the government has taken a decision to close two pharma PSUs, namely Indian Drugs & Pharmaceuticals Ltd and Rajasthan Drugs & Pharmaceuticals Ltd," minister of chemicals and fertilisers D. V. Sadananda Gowda said.

German exports see biggest dip since 2009

Germany's exports plunged by 9.3 per cent last year as the pandemic dragged down demand, the biggest drop since the financial crisis in 2009. Imports dropped 7.1 per cent. That also was the steepest decline since 2009, when exports fell by 18.4 per cent and imports by 17.5 per cent. The US remained the single biggest destination for German exports despite a 12.5 per cent drop, at 103.8 bn euros (\$125 bn).



Workers to be briefed on rights, concerns Wistron to restart riot-hit iPhone unit

SARITHA RAI
FEB. 9

Apple Inc's manufacturing partner Wistron Corp will hire workers and restart operations in its Narasapura factory outside Bengaluru after a violent protest shut the iPhone-manufacturing facility last December. Apple's teams and independent auditors have been working with Wistron over the past eight weeks to put the necessary systems and processes in place, the Cupertino-based iPhone maker said in an emailed statement on Tuesday. However, the Taiwanese contractor will continue to face scrutiny. "A comprehensive set of corrective actions has now been completed and Wistron has restructured their recruiting team and



enhanced training and support for workers," Apple said in the statement. "Wistron remains on probation and we will monitor their progress closely." Apple had suspended new orders to Wistron in December after workers who had been hired on monthly pay of about \$200 stormed the factory and rioted over unpaid salaries, destroying furni-

ture and equipment leading to losses worth millions of dollars. All workers in the facility will undergo a new training programme to ensure they understand their rights and how to raise concerns, Apple said in the statement. Its representatives will remain on site to validate that the new processes are effective. —Bloomberg

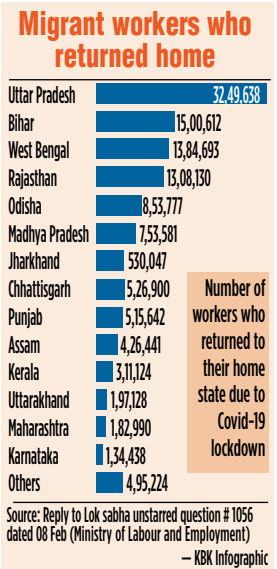
Pak to seek debt relief from China

FASEEH MANGI
FEB. 9

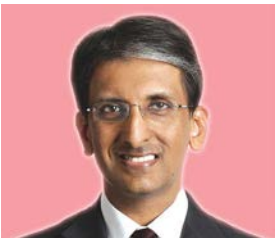
Pakistan plans to ask China for relief on payments for power projects Beijing financed over the past eight years, the latest developing nation that's struggling to repay debt under President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative. In informal talks, Pakistan and China have discussed easing terms on the repayment of debt on about a dozen power

plants, according to a person with knowledge of the matter, who said Islamabad hasn't made a formal request yet. The parties have canvassed Beijing's willingness to stagger debt payments, as opposed to lowering equity returns, the person said, requesting anonymity as the plan is private. An enormous build-out of Chinese-financed power plants in Pakistan, which was originally intended to solve its electricity shortages, has

resulted in a surplus that Islamabad isn't able to afford. Infrastructure projects funded by China's initiative in other developing nations, such as Sri Lanka and Malaysia, have suffered issues ranging from heavy debt loads to corruption. China has denied US criticism that the initiative leads to debt traps, while acknowledging that countries have had difficulties repaying loans due to the pandemic-induced global recession. —Bloomberg



INDIAN-ORIGIN LAWYER TO BE TEMASEK CEO



Dilhan Pillay Sandrasegara
GURDIP SINGH
SINGAPORE, FEB. 9

Indian-origin corporate lawyer Dilhan Pillay Sandrasegara will succeed Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's wife as the chief executive officer and executive director of a state-owned wealth management group. Sandrasegara will take over from Ho Ching—who has been serving in leadership roles at the wealth management group Temasek Holdings since 2004—on October 1. "Leadership succession is a strategic responsibility of the board," said Temasek Holdings chairman Lim Hood Heng. Lim described Sandrasegara as an established leading corporate lawyer, who joined Temasek 10 years ago "with a sense of mission and purpose". Sandrasegara has since played "several critical roles" in Temasek, including a two-year stint as head of the Americas, based out of New York. —PTI

Teens drive civil behaviour online

FC BUREAU
HYDERABAD, FEB. 9

Microsoft said on Tuesday fewer people in India experienced negative online interactions or encountered online risks in 2020 compared to the previous year, thanks largely to positive interactions by India's teens. Unveiling results from its annual study, "Civility, Safety, and Interactions Online - 2020" along with findings from its 2020 Digital Civility Index (DCI), Microsoft said India's score in online civility had improved to 68 this year from 71 in 2019. The DCI survey covered 16,000 respondents. The survey found that the improvement in online experience was contributed by the positive approach of teenagers aged 13-16. The online experience among adults in 16 and above age group remained relatively poor. The measure of online civility among teenagers is 67 compared to a lower rank of 69 for adults. "It's heartening to see our next generation take the lead in driving posi-

- Dos for safer internet**
- Act with empathy, compassion and kindness. Treat everyone with dignity & respect
 - Appreciate cultural differences. Engage thoughtfully & avoid personal attacks
 - To pause and think before responding. Do not post anything that could hurt others
 - Tell someone when feeling unsafe. Offer support to those who are targets of online abuse or cruelty

tive interactions online, and to witness digital citizens come together to uplift online communities during the pandemic," said Keshav Dhakad, group head & general counsel, Microsoft India. "Nonetheless, threats such as hate speech, together with other uncivil behaviours, continue to pervade society." Online risks such as hate speech doubled from 2016.

AGGREGATORS ON PROWL Mom-and-pop sellers being aided to scale up business

Wall St. investing billions to scale up Amazon sellers

SPENCER SOPER
FEB. 9

Some of the biggest names on Wall Street and in Silicon Valley-JPMorgan Chase, Advent International, Khosla Ventures among them—are pumping billions of dollars into mom-and-pops selling everything from tea kettles to jock itch remedies on Amazon.com Inc. Investment banks, venture firms and private equity shops are backing so-called Amazon aggregators—often led by e-commerce veterans—that are betting they can take up-and-coming sellers, who often operate out of their garages, and transform them into global brands.

The aggregators say they have the expertise to select strong products and avoid faddish ones that flame out before they have a chance to grow. The latest entrant, Branded Group, said on Tuesday it had purchased 20 houseware and leisure brands. Formed last summer and flush with \$150 million raised by venture firm Target Global, Branded will be run by Pierre Poignant, who previously led the southeast Asian online marketplace Lazada, and Michael Ronen, who spent almost 20 years in mergers and acquisitions at Goldman Sachs and also worked for SoftBank's Silicon Valley venture division.

INDIA ENERGY DEMAND TO SEE FASTEST GROWTH, TO OVERTAKE EU

New Delhi, Feb. 9: India's energy demand will increase more than that of any other country over the next two decades, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Tuesday, forecasting that India would overtake the European Union as the world's third-largest energy consumer by 2030. An expanding economy, population, urbanisation and industrialisation will result in India's energy needs growing at three times the global average under today's policies, said the IEA's India Energy Outlook 2021. "India has arrived at the centre of the world energy stage," said Fatih Birol, the IEA's executive director. Energy use has doubled since 2000, with most of that demand met by coal and oil. This is set to grow about 35 per cent until 2030, down from 50 per cent before the coronavirus pandemic. India will see the addition of 13 new Mumbais in urban population, boosting demand for cement, steel, electricity, he said. IEA saw primary energy consumption almost doubling to 1.123 million tonnes of oil equivalent as the GDP expands to \$8.6 trillion by 2040. India at present is the fourth-largest global energy consumer behind China, the United States and the European Union. —PTI

LIC IPO to reserve 10% shares for policyholders

New Delhi, Feb. 9: Up to 10 per cent of the LIC IPO issue size would be reserved for policyholders, minister of state for finance Anurag Thakur said on Tuesday.



The government will remain the majority shareholder and will continue to retain management control, safeguarding the interest of policyholders, he said. "In the Finance Bill 2021-22, it has been proposed to have a reservation on a competitive basis, to an extent of up to 10 per cent of the issue size, in favour of life insurance policyholders of LIC," Thakur said in a written reply to a query in the Rajya Sabha. In her Budget Speech 2021, finance minister

Nirmala Sitharaman said the initial public offering (IPO) of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) would be launched in the next financial year, beginning April 1. The LIC Amendment Act has been made part of the Finance Bill, thereby bringing the required legislative amendment for launching IPO of the country's largest life insurer. The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam), which manages the government's equity in state-owned companies, has already selected actuarial firm Milliman Advisors for ascertaining the embedded value of LIC. Deloitte and SBI Caps have been appointed as pre-IPO transaction advisors. The Budget 2021-22 has set a disinvestment target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore, higher than the Rs 32,000 crore estimated to be garnered in the current fiscal. Of the Rs 1.75 lakh crore, Rs 1 lakh crore is to come from selling government stake in public sector banks and financial institutions, and Rs 75,000 crore would come as CPSE disinvestment receipts. —PTI

Market received Budget well: FM

New Delhi, Feb. 9: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the stock market has received the Union Budget 2021-22 with "positivity" with an 11 per cent increase in equity indices over the past week. She said the Budget, which was presented in Parliament on February 1, has set the tone for greater play of the private sector, gave space for entrepreneurship, has come clean on the spending intent and unveiled a policy highlighting areas the government wants to stay away from. "We have now come over to the 10th day after the Budget was read out. Markets for the first time, I



understand, have completely for a whole full week kept the pace up with a sense of positivity. "Earlier markets being positive and going up for a few hours, would itself be a good message," Sitharaman said an Indian Chamber of Commerce

event. She said the government has taken steps to instill confidence in taxpayers. It has not put any additional burden on taxpayers by way of increasing taxes to fund the stimulus, Sitharaman said. "We are staying away from burdening the taxpayer any further, while simultaneously easing compliance, record keeping," the minister added. The minister said the time bar for reopening of past assessments has been cut down to three years in the Budget, from six years earlier, because the intent of the tax department is not to bother a regular taxpayer. —PTI

EQUITY MF REDEMPTIONS UNABATED IN JANUARY

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 9

The mutual fund industry's average assets under management (AUM) hit an all-time high of Rs 31.84 lakh crore in January. However, the net AUM fell to Rs 30.50 lakh crore in January on profit booking from Rs 31.02 lakh crore in December, monthly data released by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed. Equity mutual funds continue to witness outflows as record gains in the equity market in January led retail investors to book profit, with equity-oriented schemes seeing outflows worth Rs 9,253.22 crore. Equity-linked savings schemes and other equity schemes also witnessed outflows worth Rs 2,940.96 crore. The hybrid schemes witnessed net inflows worth Rs 2,141.3 crore while the debt fund category witnessed outflows worth Rs 33,408.76 crore. Equity ETFs, index funds, gold ETFs and fund of funds investing overseas in total witnessed combined inflows worth Rs 7,966.82 crore. "Equity-oriented mutual funds continued to witness net outflows for the seventh month in a row. The continuation of net outflows from equity funds could be attributed to profit booking/portfolio rebalancing as markets continue to touch new highs," said Himanshu Srivastava, associate director-manager research, Morningstar India. "Though on an overall basis, the net outflow was lower than the previous month, yet in terms of absolute quantum, it continues to be on the higher side," he said.



Uday Shankar



James Murdoch

Murdoch Jr., Uday Shankar plan venture to acquire media firms

BAIJU KALESH & ANTO ANTONY
FEB. 9

James Murdoch's investment company Lupa Systems and Uday Shankar, former president of Walt Disney Asia Pacific unit, are weighing a plan to raise funds through a special purpose acquisition company (Spac), people familiar with the matter said. Murdoch, former CEO of 21st Century Fox Inc, and Shankar are seeking a blank-cheque vehicle to acquire Asian companies in sectors, including media and technology, the people said. The joint venture is sounding out advisers as well as potential investors in the Spac. They are considering listing the vehicle in the US, one of the people said. Deliberations are at an early stage, and details of the potential Spac, including venue may change, the people said. Shankar and a representative for Lupa declined to comment. Lupa and Shankar announced a partnership in January to look for growth avenues across

emerging markets. The 48-year-old son of billionaire Rupert Murdoch resigned from the board of News Corp in July last year, citing differences of opinion with the publishing company. Lupa entered India less than two years ago and has built a portfolio of technology investments, according to the statement. Murdoch and Shankar previously worked together at Star India, which became the country's largest media company before Walt Disney's takeover of a swathe of 21st Century Fox's assets, including Star, in 2019. Shankar worked for the Asia-Pacific unit of Disney after the deal, but left in December last year.



About 40 Amazon aggregators have emerged in the past few years, according to people following the trend, with most of them still quietly seeking deals behind the scenes. Eight have announced fundraising rounds totalling more than \$2.5 billion since 2019. Thrasio, launched in 2018, has the deepest pockets and has already purchased 90 companies with

\$1.75 billion in funding and debt from backers that include the PE firm Advent International. Perch, founded in 2020, has raised \$130 million and gobbled up almost 30 brands. Several PE firms have launched websites to court Amazon sellers. The demand for Amazon mom-and-pops reflects the maturation of the e-commerce giant's third-party marketplace, which accounts for more than half of all products sold on the site. The web store has grown so large that deep-pocketed investors can prospect for tomorrow's big hit among the millions of merchants competing on the site. "The emergence of these companies

reflects how selling with Amazon offers small businesses powerful opportunities to build their brands and reach millions of customers," an Amazon spokesperson said. Aggregators look for consistent money-makers with annual sales up to about \$10 million; they generally offer three to four times a target's annual profit, including the salary the owners pay themselves. The buyers don't focus on specific categories and are content to jam together a potpourri of brands. Perch, for example, sells maternity belts, auto upholstery tools, peppermint-based athlete's foot cures and virtual-reality headsets. —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Olympic qualifying marathon in Delhi

New Delhi: The New Delhi National Marathon 2021, a qualification event for the Tokyo Olympics and recognised by Athletics Federation of India, will be held here on March 7. Rashpal Singh and Jyoti Gawte won the men's and women's titles respectively in the 2020 edition with timings of 2:23:29s and 2:50:37s. "The New Delhi National Marathon 2021 stands recognised by Athletics Federation of India and it will be held on 7th March 2021 in New Delhi," the AFI said. "The performance of athletes of Full Marathons in this Marathon will be considered for selection/participation in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games provided they achieve the qualifying standard as fixed by World Athletics." The Tokyo Olympics marathon qualifying timings for men and women are 2:11:30s and 2:29:30s respectively. — *PTI*

Bamford stars as Leeds sink Palace

Leeds: Patrick Bamford scored his 100th career goal as Leeds United cruised to a 2-0 win against Crystal Palace on Monday. Marcelo Bielsa's side took the lead through Jack Harrison's early strike at Elland Road. Bamford reached his century after the interval to seal Leeds' third win in their last four Premier League games. His 12th goal of the season was a sweet moment for Bamford, who had a miserable loan spell at Palace in 2015-16 while on the books at Chelsea. Leeds are up to 10th place and their impressive first season back in the top-flight could yet feature a late push for a Europa League berth. A first clean-sheet since December 29 was another welcome boost for Bielsa after six games without keeping the opposition at bay. — *AFP*

Suarez scores but Atletico stumble

Madrid: Atletico Madrid slipped up in La Liga for the first time in nine games on Monday as Celta Vigo snatched a late equaliser to deliver a ray of hope to Barcelona and Real Madrid. Luis Suarez scored twice to overturn Santi Mina's opener for Celta, with Atletico on course to restore their 10-point lead at the top of the table. — *AFP*

No hugs, high-5s at Tokyo Games

Tokyo: No socialising, no handshakes and definitely no hugs — that's what athletes at the coronavirus-postponed Tokyo Olympics can expect this summer, according to a virus rulebook released on Tuesday by organisers. The 33-page document — the last in a series of "playbooks" drawn up in a bid to ensure the Games can go ahead safely — also warns athletes they could be kicked out of their events if they break strict anti-virus rules. Under the guidelines, athletes will be tested for the virus at least once every four days, and will be barred from competing if they return a confirmed positive test. Their time in Japan will be "minimised to reduce the risk of infection," and those staying at the Olympic Village will be expected to "avoid unnecessary forms of physical contact." — *AFP*

Live on TV

TENNIS

Australian Open: First round matches from 5.30 am on Sony Six, from 1.30 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Chennaiyin vs Jamshedpur from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

FA Cup: Fifth round — Swansea vs Manchester City from 11 pm; Leicester City vs Brighton from 1 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, HD; Everton vs Tottenham Hotspur from 1.45 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

WWE

NXT: Bouts from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

Regd. No.
TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by
K. Sudhakar on behalf of
Deccan Chronicle Holdings
Limited and Printed at
Deccan Chronicle Press situated at
No 2/22, Sengalipalayam Road,
N.G.G.O Colony Post,
Kurudampalayam Village,
Coimbatore - 641 022. RNI
Registration No: TNENG/2010/35692
Ph No : 2231252, 253, 255, 257 & 358
Editor: KAUSHIK MITTER

CHECKMATE

Warhorse Anderson hands a rare home defeat to king Kohli's India

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, FEB. 9

What started as an ambitious chase of 420 turned into mere survival in just about an hour. And the faintest of hopes to save the Test was dashed much before tea. The inevitable was delayed a little by a near-flawless innings from skipper Virat Kohli (72). A clinical bowling performance earned England a thumping 227-run win over India for a 1-0 lead in the four-match series. While it dented India's prolific home run — only their second defeat since 2013 — England continued their brilliant 'away' streak by making it six on the trot. Within a month of the dizzying high of breaching the Gabbatour, India slumped to their first defeat in the new millennium at fortress Chepauk.

Now, India need at least two wins and a draw in the remaining three matches to qualify for the World Test Championship final to be held at Lord's in July. Left-arm spinner Jack Leach, who had a forgettable outing in the first innings, broke open India's fancied batting line-up by removing Cheteshwar Pujara.

On a deteriorating fifth day pitch, where spinners were expected to pose the bigger threat, James Anderson produced an outstanding spell of fast bowling in the morning. Old warhorse Anderson is one of the finest exponents of swing bowling. He dug deep into his repertoire and used the reverse swing to his advantage to strike twice in a span of four balls. India were left reeling at 92 for four.

The way Anderson breached the defence of both Shubman Gill and Ajinkya Rahane seemed like an action replay. The cartwheeling off-stump, on both occasions, made for a spectacular sight. Before India could recover from the double blow, Anderson sent Rishabh Pant packing with a soft dismissal. Joe Root, at short cover, pounced a simple catch off a leading edge. Anderson's



England's James Anderson celebrates a wicket on Day Five of the first Test in Chennai on Tuesday. — *BCCI*

SCORECARD

England 1st Innings: 578
India 1st Innings: 337
England 2nd Innings: 178
India 2nd Innings (overnight 39/1): Rohit Sharma b J. Leach 12, Shubman Gill b J. Anderson 50, Cheteshwar Pujara c Stokes b J. Leach 15, Virat Kohli b B. Stokes 72, Ajinkya Rahane b J. Anderson 0, Rishabh Pant c Root b J. Anderson 11, Washington Sundar c Buttler b D. Bess 0, R. Ashwin c Buttler b J. Leach 9, Shahbaz Nadeem c Burns b J. Leach 0, Ishant Sharma (not out) 5, Jasprit Bumrah c Buttler b J. Archer 4. Extras (b-8, lb-5, nb-1) 14. **Total (all out in 58.1 overs) 192.**
FOW: 1-25, 2-58, 3-92, 4-92, 5-110, 6-117, 7-171, 8-179, 9-179.
Bowling: Jofra Archer 9.1-4-23-1, Jack Leach 26-4-76-4, James Anderson 11-4-17-3, Dominic Bess 8-0-50-1, Ben Stokes 4-1-13-1.

astonishing spell read 5-3-6-3.

As Washington Sundar, caught behind off Dom Bess, followed suit for a five-ball duck, India were reduced to 117 for six inside the first session. Jofra Archer steamed in and unleashed a barrage of bouncers. R. Ashwin had to take blows on his head, fingers and body to see India through to lunch.

Kohli, who hasn't scored a Test century since November 2019, looked set to end the

drought. He smashed erring off-spinner Bess for three consecutive boundaries. Against Ben Stokes, Kohli punched through the covers elegantly and pulled with authority. However, a probing delivery from Stokes kept low and crashed into Kohli's off-stump.

England bowling coach Jon Lewis' prediction came true when Leach roared back from his first-innings thrashing to end with figures of 4 for 76.

Root all praise for 'GOAT' Anderson

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 9

England skipper Joe Root was all praise for his bowling unit who helped the visitors take a 1-0 lead against India in the four-match series. Pacer James Anderson took three wickets in an impressive spell on the final morning to trigger India's collapse.

Describing Anderson as "England's greatest of all time", Root said the swing bowler has set high standards. "He seems to get better all the time. His skill level keeps improving, his work-rate is as good as anyone's I have ever seen and his fitness levels are probably the best they have ever been."

India suffered their first defeat at Chepauk since 1999 and Root knows Virat Kohli & Co. would come back hard in the second Test, starting here on February 13. "It's certainly a good victory but in the scheme of the series we know it's just a start. India are a brilliant team, especially in these conditions and a proud nation as well. They will 'come back hard at us but to be sat here 1-0 up is really good. We have 'set a benchmark now and have something to work from and compare ourselves to. There is 'still areas we can improve and that excites me, to play as well as we have and still be able to get better," Root said.

NUMBERS GAME

● India's 227 runs defeat against England in the first Test was their first after eight successive wins at home.

● The last time India lost a Test in Chennai was in 1999. It was an epic encounter, which Pakistan won by 12 runs. Since then, India won five out of eight Tests here before this defeat to England.

● India had lost just one home Test in their last 35 games before this one, going back to the beginning of 2013. They had won 28 games during this period.

● James Anderson took 343 wickets after turning 30, which is the most for a fast bowler. He went past West Indian Courtney Walsh, who has 341. Among all bowlers, only three have more wickets after turning 30 — Sri Lanka's Rangana Herath (398) and Muttiah Muralitharan (388), and Australia's Shane Warne (386), while India's Anil Kumble has 343 as well.

— *S. PERVEZ QAISAR*

Kohli vows to bounce back

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 9

The heat is on Virat Kohli. The Indian skipper has now lost four consecutive Test matches, but he is confident of bouncing back. The second Test begins at the same venue in just three days.

Excerpts from post-match press conference:

On India's batting performance: I think the Test probably shifted in their favour when we batted in the first innings because we were looking to bat long and we were not able to do that and I don't think there was enough application shown by us as a batting unit. It (showing application) is something that we take a lot of pride in. We don't think about batting milestones. We think

about partnerships and putting the team into good positions.

On England coming with better preparation: They said the same thing when Australia won the first Test in 2017 as well. It's important we don't jump the gun and we don't come to conclusions too early. As a side, our focus is the next Test and bouncing back into the series. What is being perceived is something that doesn't bother us at all. You could say they are well prepared but to say they are better prepared than us in our own conditions is not an accurate assessment.

On the decision to pick Shahbaz Nadeem ahead of Kuldeep Yadav: When you are playing two off spinners, Kuldeep



more or less becomes a similar kind of spinner taking the ball away (from the left hander) so you need variety in the bowling attack. We were quite clear on what combination we wanted to play and there are no regrets. Moving forward we will think of combinations which brings us variety as a bowling attack and not one dimensional.

On Ajinkya Rahane's

Jaffer resigns as U'khand coach due to interference in selection

New Delhi, Feb. 9: Former India opener Wasim Jaffer has resigned as Uttarakhand's head coach due to "interference in team selection", days before they were to compete in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, beginning on February 20.

Cricket Association of Uttarakhand (CAU) has accepted his resignation. "I feel really sad for the players as I genuinely think that they have lots of potential and can learn so much from me but are denied this

opportunity because of so much interference and bias of selectors and secretary in the selection matters for non-deserving players," Jaffer wrote in an e-mail to the association.

Cricket Association of Uttarakhand's secretary Mahim Verma rejected Jaffer's claims and said he was given everything he had asked for since being appointed as the state team's coach.

"We gave him whatever he asked for, had a pre season camp for a month, let him choose

his outstation players, trainer and bowling coach but his interference in selection matters was getting too much," Verma said.

POWAR IS NEW MUMBAI COACH

Former India off-spinner Ramesh Powar has been appointed as Mumbai team's coach for the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Powar got the charge after Amit Pagnis quit from his post following the team's dismal show in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. — *PTI*

AUSTRALIAN | OPEN

Barty bagels, Rafael roars

Melbourne, Feb. 9: Rafael Nadal's injured back didn't slow his bid for a record 21st Grand Slam title on Tuesday, as women's world number one Ashleigh Barty romped to a 6-0, 6-0 'double bagel' at the Australian Open.

On a day when women's champion Sofia Kenin also reached round two, but two-time winner Victoria Azarenka lost after breathing problems, Nadal and Barty were the headline acts at the coronavirus-delayed Slam.

Spanish great Nadal, who pulled out of last week's ATP Cup with back problems, beat Serbia's Laslo Djere 6-3, 6-4, 6-1 in one hour and 52 minutes on a sun-kissed Rod Laver Arena.

"It's been a tough 15 days for me," said the 2009 champion, whose back stiffness first flared during an exhibition match last month.

"I needed to survive today and that's what I did. I'm happy to be through and I think I did a good job today. Straight sets is what I needed."

After world number one Novak Djokovic eased through late on Monday, Russia's Daniil Medvedev extended his winning streak to 15 matches with

an emphatic 6-2, 6-2, 6-4 victory over Canada's Vasek Pospisil.

Russian seventh seed Andrey Rublev also continued his winning start to the year with a straight-sets victory over German Yannick Hanfmann 6-3, 6-3, 6-4.

And Greek fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas made short work of French veteran Gilles Simon, winning 6-1, 6-2, 6-1 in 92 minutes.

ASHLEIGH'S PARTY ON

Barty also outclassed Montenegro's Danka Kovinic, losing only 10 points as she raced into round two in just 44 minutes.

With the win Barty, last year's semi-finalist who sat out most of the 2020 season, ramped up hopes of a first Australian women's winner in 43 years.

Women's champion Kenin was less convincing and she audibly vented her frustrations during her 7-5, 6-4 win against Australian Maddison Inglis, who is ranked outside the top 100.

Two-time major-winner Garbine Muguruza, who was stunned by Kenin in last year's final, had little trouble beating Russia's Margarita Gasparyan 6-4, 6-0. — *AFP*

SELECTED RESULTS

Men's singles first round: Andrey Rublev (RUS x7) bt Yannick Hanfmann (GER) 6-3, 6-3, 6-4; Lorenzo Sonego (ITA x31) bt Sam Querrey (USA) 7-5, 6-4, 6-4; Radu Albot (MDA) bt Roberto Bautista (ESP x12) 6-7 (1/7), 6-0, 6-4, 7-6 (7/5); Alexei Popyrin (AUS) bt David Goffin (BEL x13) 3-6, 6-4, 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (8/6), 6-3; Daniil Medvedev (RUS x4) bt Vasek Pospisil (CAN) 6-2, 6-2, 6-4; Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x5) bt Gilles Simon (FRA) 6-1, 6-2, 6-1; Karen Khachanov (RUS x19) bt Aleksandar Vukic (AUS) 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/2), 6-4; Ricardas Berankis (LTU) bt Sumit Nagal (IND) 6-2, 7-5, 6-3; Rafael Nadal (ESP x2) bt Laslo Djere (SRB) 6-3, 6-4, 6-1; Matteo Berrettini (ITA x9) bt Kevin Anderson (RSA) 7-6 (11/9), 7-5, 6-3; Fabio Fognini (ITA x16) bt Pierre-Hugues Herbert (FRA) 6-4, 6-2, 6-3.

Women's singles first round: Ashleigh Barty (AUS x1) bt Danka Kovinic (MNE) 6-0, 6-0; Olga Danilovic (SRB) bt Petra Martic (CRO x16) 7-5, 3-6, 6-4; Belinda Bencic (SUI x11) bt Lauren Davis (USA) 6-3, 4-6, 6-1; Elise Mertens (BEL x18) bt Leylah Fernandez (CAN) 6-1, 6-3; Karolina Muchova (CZE x25) bt Jelena Ostapenko (LAT) 7-5, 6-2; Karolina Pliskova (CZE x6) bt Jasmine Paolini (ITA) 6-0, 6-2; Sofia Kenin (USA x4) bt Maddison Inglis (AUS) 7-5, 6-4; Jessica Pegula (USA) bt Victoria Azarenka (BLR x12) 7-5, 6-4; Samantha Stosur (AUS) bt Destanee Aiava (AUS) 6-4, 6-4; Coco Gauff (USA) bt Jill Teichmann (SUI) 6-3, 6-2; Elina Svitolina (UKR x5) bt Marie Bouzkova (CZE) 6-3, 7-6 (7/5); Garbine Muguruza (ESP x14) bt Margarita Gasparyan (RUS) 6-4, 6-0; Ann Li (USA) bt Shuai Zhang (CHN x31) 6-2, 6-0.



Ashleigh Barty of Australia celebrates after defeating Danka Kovinic of Montenegro 6-0, 6-0 in their Australian Open first round match in Melbourne on Tuesday. — *AP*

THAPA FIT AND AVAILABLE, SAYS CHENNAIYN COACH

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 9

When Anirudh Thapa returned to the starting XI for the Bengaluru FC clash after recovering from an injury, Chennaiyin FC fans jumped in joy. But the celebration didn't last long as the 22-year-old midfielder was replaced by Germanpreet Singh in the second half.

CFC head coach Csaba Laszlo said Thapa was a bit tired. "But he is okay now and is available for the game against Jamshedpur. We will be replacing the

suspended (Lalrinzuala) Jerry (Chhuantea Fanai. Isma (Goncalves) is in better form and the rest of the team is fit," said Laszlo.

Chennaiyin are languishing at the bottom half of the table with 17 points in 16 matches. But Laszlo is still hoping for a turnaround. "We are not giving up our target to be in the top four. We have the possibility and we have to fight for it. The four upcoming games are very crucial but I am only focused on winning the game against Jamshedpur," said Laszlo.