

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | SATURDAY 20 | FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 26°C
Min: 22°C
Rainfall: 3 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Maasi 8
Tithi: Ashtami/ Navami
Star: Rohini
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am
Yamagandam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.20 am
Zohar: 12.28 pm
Asar: 3.44 pm
Maghrib: 6.15 pm
Isha: 7.27 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.16 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.30 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 12.10 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 1.16 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+13,480)	(+89)
1,09,76,739	1,56,239

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 448)
TN: 8,47,385 12,451

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

11,10,40,682

DEATHS

24,57,011

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES 219

worldometers.info

India crosses 1 crore vaccination milestone

New Delhi: Over one crore Covid-19 vaccine doses have been administered in the country till now with the highest single-day vaccinations of more than 6 lakh jabs given on Thursday, the Union health ministry said on Friday. Of the 1,04,49,942 doses administered, joint secretary in the Union health ministry, Mandeep Bhandari, said 70,52,845 vaccine doses were administered to healthcare workers and 33,97,097 to frontline workers whose vaccination started on February 2. Of the 70,52,845 vaccination doses, 62,95,903 healthcare workers were administered the first dose, while 7,56,942 healthcare workers were given the second dose.

“A total of 6,58,674 vaccinations were done on February 18, which is the highest single-day vaccinations during the ongoing Covid-19 vaccination drive,” Bhandari said. While till 6 pm on Friday, 2,61,935 vaccinations were carried out. He said 41 hospitalisations have been reported till now out of which 25 have been discharged after treatment.

COUNTER POINT



Lift? Sure, but you will have to pay 50% of the petrol cost!

Nasa's rover makes historic Mars landing

Cape Canaveral, Feb. 19: A Nasa rover streaked through the orange Martian sky and landed on the planet Thursday, accomplishing the riskiest step yet in an epic quest to bring back rocks that could answer whether life ever existed on Mars. Ground controllers at the space agency's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, leaped to their feet, thrust their arms in the air and

cheered in both triumph and relief on receiving confirmation that the six-wheeled Perseverance had touched down on the red planet, long a deathtrap for incoming spacecraft

touched down on the red planet, long a deathtrap for incoming spacecraft. “Now the amazing science

starts,” a jubilant Thomas Zurbuchen, NASA's science mission chief, said at a news conference, where he theatrically ripped up the contingency plan in the event of a failure and threw the document over his shoulders.

The landing marks the third visit to Mars in just over a week. Two spacecraft from the United Arab Emirates and China swung into orbit around Mars on successive days last week. — AP ■ P5



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FM interacts with top industry captains of TN



WORLD | 5

Biden admin introduces Citizenship Act

SPORT | 8

Medvedev mauls Tsitsipas, in final



India, China complete pulling troops back

■ Corps commanders of two countries will meet in Moldo today

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 19

Indian and Chinese soldiers have completed their disengagement from the most contentious friction point of Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh after nine months of their eyeball-to-eyeball military standoff. Now the Indian and Chinese corps commanders will meet in Moldo on Saturday morning for the 10th round of talks to discuss disengagement in other friction points in Ladakh -- the Depsang Plains and Gogra-Hot Springs.

China on Friday for the first time officially acknowledged that four of its People's Liberation Army soldiers were killed and one officer seriously injured in the clashes with Indian troops in June last year in the Galwan Valley. The Indian Army had lost 20 soldiers, including Col. B. Santosh Babu, commanding officer of 16 Bihar, during that clash. Earlier this week, the head of the Indian Army's Northern Command, Lt.



In this image taken from video footage run Feb. 19, 2021 by China's CCTV via AP Video, soldiers bandage the head of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) regimental commander Qi Fabao as Indian and Chinese troops face off in the Galwan Valley on the disputed border between China and India, June 15, 2020. China's military said Friday, Feb. 19, 2021 that four of its soldiers were killed in a high-mountain border clash with Indian forces last year, the first time Beijing has publicly conceded its side suffered casualties in the deadliest incident between the Asian giants in nearly 45 years.

Gen. Y.K. Joshi, had said that Indian observers had counted more than 60 Chinese casualties being picked up on stretchers and taken back after the clash. “But whether they were fatal or non-fatal, we can't say with authority so I will not give a figure. But

recently, the Russian (news) agency Tass had put out a figure of 45 (Chinese soldiers killed in the clash) and I think that could be the figure we can look at,” he had said. Both India and China have withdrawn around 200 tanks and armoured

CHINA ADMITS DEATH OF 4 SOLDIERS

- China has vacated the area between Finger 4 and Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso
- China dismantled military infrastructure at Finger 5, including a jetty and a helipad.
- Indian and Chinese soldiers have vacated the Kailash range on the southern bank of Pangong Tso.
- India and China have withdrawn around 200 tanks and armoured vehicles.
- India claims that its territory is up to Finger 8.
- Corps commanders to meet today in Moldo.
- China, for the first time, admits death of four soldiers

Under the India-China agreement, the Chinese troops will move east of Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso while the Indian troops will move to their permanent base at Dhan Singh Thapa Post near Finger 3. There will be a ‘temporary’ freeze in the patrolling by both sides in the area between Finger 4 and Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso till both sides reach an agreement in the diplomatic and military talks.

prise as it looked that they had come in for the long haul. China had built a large number of structures in the Finger area on the north bank of Pangong Tso and had deployed a significant number of its troops. China has now vacated the area between Finger 4 and Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso, which its troops had occupied in May 2020. India claims that its territory is up to Finger 8. The Chinese soldiers have dismantled the military infrastructure they had set up at Finger 5, which includes a jetty and a helipad. Both Indian and Chinese soldiers have also vacated the Kailash range on the southern bank of Pangong Tso.

The Indian Army had on Tuesday released videos which showed Chinese troops dismantling sangars, temporary structures, and loading supplies and provisions onto trucks. The Chinese soldiers were also seen using earth-movers to dismantle shelters and restoring the land-forms as per the agreement.

vehicles and troops from the north and south bank of Pangong Tso.

The speed with which the disengagement, which started on January 10, has been completed by the Chinese PLA has taken many observers by sur-

Doc stabs wife, crushes her under car wheels

SINDHIYA SAMUEL & P.A. JEBARAJ | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 19

A 35-year-old doctor stabbed his wife and crushed her to death under the wheels of his car in broad daylight in full public view on the outskirts of the state capital on Friday, police said.

Originally from Tindivanam, Dr Gokul Kumar (35), who used to work at a private hospital in Potheri, married Keerthana (28), a native of Coimbatore, three years



Gokul Kumar and Keerthana

ago. They had filed for a divorce as disagreement cropped up one year after their marriage.

Reports said Dr Gokul Kumar stabbed Keerthana

on her neck with a kitchen knife following an altercation at round 4.30 pm. She collapsed and fell on the floor. Murahari and Kumari, Keerthana's parents who stay with the couple, tried to stop Dr Gokul Kumar but he stabbed them, too, repeatedly. Mr Murahari suffered serious injuries on his abdomen, while Ms Kumari sustained minor cuts on her hands.

Eyewitnesses told police that after stabbing Keerthana and her parents, Dr Gokul Kumar

allegedly pulled his wife out to the road, and let her bleed. He drove his car from the parking space and crushed her to death under the wheels of his car before fleeing the scene.

Madurantakam police reached the spot after being alerted by the neighbours a few minutes after the incident rushed the severely injured Mr Murahari to Madurantakam Government hospital. The police later shifted the body of Keerthana to Chengalpattu government hospital for post-mortem. ■ P4

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OTHER STORIES



A third year law student of the Vellore government law college, Rahul Ganesh, son of auto driver Somu, a resident of Ariyoor in the district, undertook a 12-km marathon rally to spread awareness among the public about the concept of environmental conservation, global warming, creation of forests for rain and unpolluted air, and the dangers of using plastics. Vellore CEO, Gunasekaran, flagged off the rally, which Rahul commenced from the Chittoor bus stand in Katpadi.

— K. Senthil Nathan

Health dept orders to not use paediatric vaccines

Coimbatore, Feb. 19: The health department here on Friday asked the anganwadis and primary health centres (PHCs) not to use a particular batch of vaccines following the death of two infants a couple of days ago.

Postmortem revealed the death of one infant due to pneumonia and the cause of the other death was yet to be ascertained, sources in the department said.

Since the parents were panicky, the department ordered not to use the particular batch of paediatric vaccines until further orders, even as the condition of nearly 35 babies vaccinated at both the centres was reported normal, they said.

The babies, aged 2.5 months and three months, died after they were given pentavalent, rotavirus and oral polio vaccines at an anganawadi at Masakalipalayam and in a PHC at Sowripalayam in the city on Thursday.

— PTI

BJP will get two digit in TN Assembly: Reddy

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, FEB. 19

The BJP will enter the Tamil Nadu assembly with a two-digit strength of MLAs after the coming state assembly election, said P. Sudhakar Reddy, national co-in charge of BJP for Tamil Nadu elections, here on Friday.

Describing the chances of NDA's victory in the assembly election as bright, he said the party high command will decide on the number of seats to be asked in the NDA alliance for the elections.

He said the response to his tour in Tamil Nadu and enthusiasm shown by people are indications of the growth of BJP in the state.

He said the farmers' agitation at Delhi borders will not have any impact on the state assembly elections. "We got maximum number of seats in Bihar assembly election and Hyderabad corporation election which were held after the agitation was launched by farmers. Only farmers from Punjab and Haryana are participating in the agitation. Some outside elements have also mingled with farmers and are creating problems. Farmers in the rest of the country are happy with the central government. They know that APMC and MSP will continue. In my opinion, farmers associations agitating in Delhi are not interested in finding a solution to the problem. The central government is open for talks and held talks 11 times so far" Reddy said.

He blamed the former UPA government and the DMK for the increasing petroleum prices. "When we wanted to bring petroleum products under GST, many state governments opposed it as they don't want to lose the cess. However, the Centre is trying to find a solution" he said.

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Chennai reservoirs brim ahead of summer

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

Though Chennai is experiencing sunny weather for over a month now, the city reservoirs continue to receive a steady inflow of water, marking the level way ahead of the same period last year. The data on water storage level, provided by Chennai Metro Water, shows at least 1,330 mcft additional water since January 5. Now the total water storage level in the top five reservoirs stands at 11,012 mcft against the capacity of 11,757. This is almost double compared to last year in the same period, ie, 6,275 mcft.

The city reservoirs have received at least 26 mcft additional water since January 5. Now the total water storage level in the top five reservoirs stands

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This is a big relief for the Chennai residents, as the city, which experiences water crisis from mid-March, is gearing up for yet another summer season.

At the 140-ft Poondi reservoir, the biggest in the city, the water level now stands at 3,101 mcft.

This is a dip from 3,135 mcft on January 5. However, it was an increase from 2867 mcft (88 percent) on December 4 against the full capacity of 3,231. The water level on the same day last year was 1,767 mcft. The outflow is 219 cusecs of water while inflow is 30.

The water level in Chembarambakkam reservoir, where the outflow is 163 cusecs while inflow is nil, is 3,325, a fall from 3,364 mcft on January 5 but a rise from 3,137 mcft on December 4 against a total capacity of 3,645. The water level on the same day last year was 1,721.

Meanwhile, the water level at Redhill stands close to its capacity of 3,208, which is 2 mcft rise from 3,206 on January 5 against the full capacity of

3,300 mcft. The water level here on December 4 was 2,878 (87 percent) while storage was 2,715 in the same period last year. However, the outflow is 146 cusecs and inflow 140.

The water level in Cholavaram, which has an outflow of 10 cusecs with zero inflow, hit way high this year compared to last year. Now the level stands at 880 mcft against 881 on January 5 while the storage in the same period last year was just 69 mcft. Cholavaram has received at least 290 mcft more water within two months.

Meanwhile, in Kannankottai Theruvoykandigal reservoir that gets an inflow of 5 cusecs without outflow, the water storage is 498 mcft on Friday while the level was 396 mcft on December 5.

TN reports 448 new infections, 7 more fatalities

CHENNAI, FEB. 19

Tamil Nadu on Friday logged 448 new Covid-19 cases and seven more fatalities, taking the caseload to 8,47,385 and the toll to 12,451, the health department said.

Recoveries outnumbered new infections with 467 people being discharged, taking the cumulative number to 8,30,787, leaving 4,147 active cases.

Chennai accounted for the maximum number of infections with 136, taking the total to 2,34,072.

The metropolis also accounted for a little over one-third of the Covid fatalities at 4,134 deaths. Among the deceased, five had pre-existing morbidities, while a 52-year-old man did not have any illness or comorbidity, the bulletin said.

—PTI

Scrap to sculpture



Students at a scrap sculpture exhibition opened by Chennai corporation at Tiruvanmiyur government school.

— E.K. Sanjay

58-year-old man's body found in pond

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

The body of a 58-year-old man was recovered from a pond in Chennai's Indira Nagar under Shankar Nagar police limits on Thursday evening.

The deceased has been identified as Ramalingam, a resident of Pozhichalur in Pallavaram. He is survived by wife and two children.

The incident came to light when the family lodged a complaint at Shankar Nagar police station alleging that Ramalingam had gone missing three days ago.

Shankar Nagar police station received information about a man found dead in a pond in Indira Nagar. The police immediately rushed to the spot, seized the body and sent it to Chromepet Government Hospital for autopsy. Following an investigation, the police found that he reportedly used to work as a security guard at actor Trisha Krishnan's house in Virugambakkam and he had left the house after an argument with his wife three days ago. Shankar Nagar police have registered a case.

IUML hails withdrawal of CAA protest cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, FEB. 19

Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) national president Prof. K. M. Kader Mohideen has welcomed the Tamil Nadu Government's decision of withdrawing more than 10 lakh cases filed against those who violated the Covid-19 prevention norms and participated in the agitations against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and also

thanked the government in this regard.

Kader Mohideen, addressing a press conference on the sidelines of the Milad Nabi celebrations at a mosque administered by the prince of Arcot endowment at Tiruchy on Friday, pointed out that a few other state governments have moved a resolution against the union government's NRC, NPA, and CAA and appealed to Chief Minister Edappadi

K. Palaniswami to move a resolution against these three draconian acts, in the ensuing budget session of the state assembly.

Chief executive officer of the prince of Arcot endowment Tiruchy A.Basheer Ahamed, who was present at the press conference, said they have arranged a mass feeding with special prayers as part of the Milad Nabi celebrations.

Traffic SI held for demanding bribe

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

A traffic police sub-inspector from Chromepet has been arrested for allegedly demanding a bribe of Rs 5,000 from the owner of a travels agency for a traffic violation, DVAC sources said on Friday.

The sub-inspector attached to the Chromepet traffic wing, identified as Krishna Kumar (48), had demanded a bribe of Rs 5,000 from the complainant Ezhumalai for releasing his vehicle seized and taken to the

police station for violating the traffic rules.

Ezhumalai, a resident of K.K. Nagar runs a travel agency in the same area. On Thursday, one of his drivers came to pick up a customer in Tambaram. Sources said when the driver took a wrong U-turn on Chromepet-Sanitorium road, the traffic cop Krishna Kumar stopped the car.

He confiscated his car for violating the traffic rules and asked his owner to contact him to release the car.

On being informed by

his driver, Ezhumalai contacted the traffic cop, when the latter demanded a bribe of Rs 10,000 to release the car. As he initially refused to pay the money, Krishna Kumar allegedly insisted on paying Rs 5000.

As Ezhumalai did not want to pay the bribe, he approached the Alandur DVAC and lodged a complaint against the officer. Following the complaint, the DVAC sleuths laid a trap and directed him to give him the chemically treated currency to the officer.

The victim was asked to come to the Chromepet traffic wing office at 2:30 pm on Friday to hand over the cash. On the advice of the DVAC officials, Ezhumalai handed over the chemically treated currency to Krishna Kumar, while the sleuths in plainclothes waited for him to accept the money. When he reportedly accepted the bribe, he was caught red-handed. The DVAC officials further raided the Chromepet traffic wing police station. A search was also conducted at the house of the SI.

Declare Covishield unsafe, volunteer urges HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

A business consultant, aged 41, who claimed to have suffered serious side-effects after he volunteered for phase-III of the clinical trial of Covishield vaccine of the Serum Institute of India and was administered the vaccine on October 1, 2020, has approached the Madras high court seeking to declare that Covishield is not safe.

In his petition, Asif



Riyaz of Anna Nagar submitted that a close reading of the participant information sheet reveals that the vaccine is safe, with mild side-effect. He believed in the "safety" of

the vaccine and decided to volunteer to take the vaccine. He signed the consent form on September 29, 2020. Before being administered the vaccine, his brief medical history was obtained, but no blood, urine or any other diagnostic test, such as pulmonary function test or ECG, were done. Only tests for Covid-19 and antibodies were done, which were negative and the Covishield study vaccine was administered on him on October 1 at SRMC

Hospital.

He said there was no adverse reaction for the first 10 days, but from October 11 he suffered several side-effects and was hospitalised till October 26. The severe trauma he suffered, because of the "acute neuro encephalopathy", was an extreme side-effect of the test vaccine, he claimed.

In the petition, he sought to declare that the severe side-effects and his hospitalisation from October 11 to 26 was a "serious

adverse event" due to the administration of trial vaccine, and as a follow up to declare that Covishield was not safe and consequently direct the Serum Institute of India to pay him a compensation of Rs 5 crore.

Justice Abdul Quddus, before whom the petition came up for hearing on Friday, ordered notice to the union government and the Drugs Controller General of India and posted to March 26 further hearing of the case.

Corrupt officials must be dealt with iron hand: HC to commissioner of labour

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

Pointing out that in the event of any lapses, negligence, dereliction of duty, corrupt activities, the commissioner of labour is expected to initiate action with iron hand and there cannot be any leniency or otherwise, the Madras high court has said all suitable actions are to be initiated against such officials who all are committing such misconducts as well as corrupt activities in the matter of hearing of the cases or signing of the orders or issuance of the Award copies to the parties or their counsels.

Justice S.M.Subramaniam made the observations while directing the commissioner of labour to constitute a special cell in the directorate to monitor these kinds of irregularities and illegalities in the office of the competent authorities across the state. "The special cell must contain a separate telephone number and a website enabling the workmen or the counsels appearing for the parties to register their complaint enabling the commissioner to initiate further actions on such complaints", the judge added.

"The special cell must contain a separate telephone number and a website enabling the workmen or the counsels appearing for the parties to register their complaint enabling the commissioner to initiate further actions on such complaints"

Passing orders on the petition filed by Vanaja and three others, which sought to condone the delay of 460 days in filing the C.M.A. (Civil Miscellaneous Appeal) to the award dated October 22, 2018 and made on the file of the Commissioner for Employee's Compensation Court, Joint Commissioner of Labour-II, Chennai, the judge said this court is of the opinion that the delay is to be condoned, as there is no proof for serving of the award copy to the applicants and the insurance company.

IN BRIEF

DMK's second corruption list

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

The DMK presented a second representation, listing corruption charges against State Ministers, to the Governor Banwarilal Purohit on Friday and sought action against them.

The representation, signed by party president M K Stalin, was handed over by the top leaders of the DMK, including general secretary Duraimurugan and treasurer T R Baalu at the Raj Bhavan. Earlier, Stalin himself had presented a representation listing corruption charges against Chief Minister Edappadi K Palanisami and other Ministers to the Governor on December 22, 2020.

Lankan Tamil refugee ends life

DC CORRESPONDENT
PERAMBALUR, FEB. 19

A 31-year-old Sri Lankan Tamil refugee allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself at his friend's house at Perambalur in the wee hours of Thursday.

Police said the deceased, Indrakumar, residing at Ceylon Colony, went for a movie along with his friends Vinod and Manobalan on Wednesday night and after that he stayed at Vindo's house. On Thursday morning while Manobala went out of the Vinod house, Vinod who went to awaken the deceased found him hanging. Upon information, Perambalur police recovered the body and sent the same for post-mortem. Police are investigating.

PMANE coordinator welcomes move

From P1

Anti-nuke activist and coordinator of People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy (PMANE) S.P. Udayakumar welcomed the announcement. He had yesterday petitioned the Chief Minister seeking withdrawal of 106 cases pending against anti-KKNPP protesters. "Many youths against whom cases were pending in connection with the mass struggle against the nuclear project have lost job opportunities all these years since 2011 as they could not get police verification certificates," said Dr Udayakumar in his petition.

It is to be noted that of the total number of 349 cases registered against about 2,000 protesters, the state government withdrew 213 cases on October 9, 2014 following a Supreme Court direction, while action was dropped in another 31 cases based on a ruling of the Madras High Court on a writ petition filed in 2015.

Among the 105 pending cases against the anti-KKNPP protesters, 68 are still in the FIR stage, while charge sheets were filed in 37 cases at the Valliyoor court.

SBI Chennai Circle's CSR donation

Chennai: As part of its CSR activity SBI Chennai Circle donated Rs 21.83 lakh to SRI PRATYAKSHA CHARITABLE TRUST for purchase of laundry machine and accessories. The trust which was established in 2007 works to make a difference to society by rendering service in the fields of education, healthcare, culture, heritage, rural development, support for the aged and many more.

The cheque was handed over to managing trustee K. Jayaramakrishnan by Dinesh Khara, chairman, in the presence of B. Sankar, Chief General Manager Chennai Circle, and General Managers Shirley Thomas, U N N Maiya and Vinod Jaiswal.

Uncertainty continues in Pondy

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D.SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

Will Puducherry be brought under the President's rule after Monday? Or will the V Narayanasamy-led Congress government survive the trust vote? Or will the BJP be able to install an alternative government till the Union Territory goes to polls?

These were the dominating questions being deliberated in the political grapevine in Puducherry and also in the neighboring state of Tamil Nadu as the local units of the parties concerned went into huddle to decide on their future course of action.

The BJP leaders too were closeted to work out a strategy after three of them returned from New Delhi after reportedly meeting Union home minister Amit Shah.

BJP MLA V Saminathan,

former MLA A Namassivayam who defected from the Congress to the BJP and BJP's Puducherry unit in-charge Nirmal Kumar Surana, had rushed to Delhi when the Congress government was pushed to the precipice following the resignation of two of its MLAs.

Since the two MLAs quit, the obvious arithmetic points to the trust vote throwing up a 14-14 tie leading to the government losing the majority. Yet the Chief Minister V Narayanasamy had exuded confidence in winning the vote.

He has made a claim that nominated members of the House were not eligible for voting, which would mean that the three BJP MLAs appointed by former Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi, do not take part in the voting and thus the government would survive.

But the present Lieutenant Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan has treated the three nominated members and proper MLAs, particularly since their nomination had been subsequently approved by the Supreme Court.

In such a backdrop, how would Narayanasamy manage to get an additional vote in his favour on Monday when the Territorial Assembly convenes? The possibility is that some MLAs from the opposition would help out the government.

In view of the BJP's sudden entry into the opposition camp, many leaders of AIADMK and NR Congress are reportedly feeling threatened. One, the BJP might take away some of their seats that they had nurtured for years.

Two, the demography of some of the constituencies is such that some MLAs of

AIADMK and NR Congress might not be able to win their seats again if they are seen to be in the alliance of BJP.

So, even if not taking the risk of disqualification by cross voting, there is a chance of some MLAs not turning up for the trust vote on Monday and thus saving the Congress government.

Also Speaker V. P. Sivakolunthu could disallow the nominated members from casting their vote. But that could create a ruckus in the House followed by litigations, which could also lead to the promulgation of Presidents' rule.

Apart from that, the BJP, which has managed to bring the Congress government to the brink through a series of machinations, carried out through Kiran Bedi, may also spring a surprise, particularly in view of the

meeting the three local leaders had reportedly with Amit Shah.

The DMK, however, is unlikely to pull the rug from under the Congress feet, since the alliance between the two parties was indeed intact and DMK letting down the Congress at this juncture was not going to be beneficial to it.

With Tamilisai Soundararajan presiding over the entire drama that is to unfold on Monday, the final outcome is unlikely to be favourable to the Congress. But such a development could also be detrimental to the BJP's future growth as it could earn the people's wrath for pulling down an elected government. The Congress party, if it is pulled down, is more likely to earn some sympathy among the voters and romp home in the next elections, which are anyway coming soon.



Man gets lifer for sex abuse of daughter

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, FEB. 19

The Mahila court here sentenced a man to life imprisonment under the PcoSO act for sexually harassing his daughter.

Police sources in Gudalur said that one Abdullah Nasser (44), a textile trader from Kottharvayal village limits on the Nilgiris border, is alleged to have repeatedly sexually harassed his 11-year-old daughter for three years whenever his wife was away from home. He is also alleged to have threatened his daughter that he would kill her mother and relatives if she informed them about his misadventure, and the frightened child kept quiet.

Once, she happened to visit her maternal grandfather's house in Kerala, when she revealed to them the cruelty she suffered at the hands of her father, and refused to return to Gudalur to her house. Shocked, her grandfather's family took her to a hospital in Kerala, where medical examination confirmed sexual assault.

Following this, the girl was taken to the All women's police station at Gudalur, where a complaint was lodged in September 2017. Police registered a case and arrested Abdulla Nasser and filed a case in the Mahila Court in Ooty under PcoSO Act. Malini Prabhakar, special public prosecutor (Mahila Court) here, said that the Mahila court which pronounced the judgment in this case on Friday, sentenced Abdulla Nasser to life imprisonment and slapped a fine of ₹10 lakh on him.

■ Police sources in Gudalur said that one Abdullah Nasser (44), a textile trader from Kottharvayal village limits on the Nilgiris border, is alleged to have repeatedly sexually harassed his 11-year-old daughter for three years whenever his wife was away from home.

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Tamilisai holds video meet with Telangana officials

Hyderabad, Feb. 19: Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, given additional charge of Lt Governor of Puducherry, on Friday reviewed developments and other issues related to the state through video conferencing from Raj Nivas in the union territory capital.

She said she always gave top priority to the well-being of Telangana people wherever she was.

"Wherever I am, I give top priority to the welfare and well-being of the Telangana people as the Governor of the state. Though I am in Puducherry now, I am constantly monitoring the affairs of the Telangana state," she said in the video conference with officials of the Raj Bhavan here.

She directed the officials to constantly update her about the developments in Telangana, according to a

Raj Bhavan press communique. "I am always thinking about the people of Telangana as the first citizen of the State. My additional charge as the Lt Governor of Puducherry does not affect my concern and care towards Telangana. I am with the people of Telangana always," she said. Secretary K. Surendra Mohan joined the meet. —PTI

Pandiarajan is Nilgiris SP

DC CORRESPONDENT
OOTY, FEB. 19

R. Pandiarajan, on Friday assumed charge as Superintendent of Police, the Nilgiris. While the district witnessed frequent transfers of SPs in the recent years, Pandiarajan is the fourth top cop to assume charge as SP of the Nilgiris in a span of three years.

Speaking to media persons Pandiarajan said that his priority was to maintain law and order. Traffic management was an equally important task. With the fast approaching summer season, focus would be more on traffic management, involving studies on traffic management issues, to evolve effective traffic management plans for the hills.

Man can't abdicate responsibility of paying maintenance to estranged wife: SC

New Delhi, Feb. 19: The Supreme Court Friday said a husband cannot abdicate the responsibility of paying maintenance to his estranged wife and gave a last opportunity to a man to clear entire outstanding of Rs 2.60 crore along with monthly payout of Rs 1.75 lakh to his wife, failing which he would be imprisoned.

The man, who claimed to

have been working on a project of national security in the telecom sector, said that he had no money and sought two years to pay the money. The top court said however that he has lost credibility by failing repeatedly to follow the court's order and wondered how a person with this kind of case was associated with a project of national security.

A bench of Chief Justice Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian told the man, a Tamil Nadu resident, "Husband cannot abdicate from his responsibility to provide maintenance to his wife and it is his duty to provide the maintenance". It ordered, "Accordingly by way of last chance, we permit the respondent (man) to make

payment of the entire outstanding amount along with the monthly maintenance regularly to his wife...within a period of four weeks from today, failing which, the respondent may have to be punished and sent to civil prison".

The bench, however, on the request of the husband's counsel gave him four weeks to pay the outstanding amount. The wife

had filed a case under Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act before the metropolitan magistrate court in Chennai in 2009. The court allowed the wife to share the house, until the husband made alternative arrangements for her permanent residence. It directed the husband, to pay Rs 2 crore as maintenance to the wife; Rs 50

lakh compensation for deserting her for 12 years; Rs 50 lakh for living in extra marital life; Rs 50 lakh for leaving his wife to face the court cases; Rs 50 lakh to force to take a job in a media company; Rs 50 lakh for mental torture and agony by openly living with foreign women and Rs 50 lakh for not paying rent to the shared household. —PTI

FM interacts with top industry captains of TN

Chennai, Feb. 19: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday held an informal meeting with top industrialists of Tamil Nadu to elicit their views on the budget she presented on February 1.

TVS Motor chairman Venu Srinivasan, MRF Ltd Chairman M Mammen, India Cements Ltd Vice Chairman N Srinivasan, former Ashok Leyland Chairman R Seshasayee and Apollo Hospitals MD Sunita Reddy were among those who took part in the meeting, sources said.

This is the first time she is meeting industry cap-

tain in Tamil Nadu after presenting the budget. However, the meeting was out of bounds for the media and the points discussed were not known. Industry sources said the FM listened to the views put forth by the industrialists during the interaction.

The India Cements Ltd Managing Director N Srinivasan said he thanked the FM for presenting an 'outstanding' budget that would spur growth.

"The budget will spur growth. I told her that during this calendar year itself, all the industries, including manufacturing,

will be running towards full capacity", Srinivasan told PTI.

The official twitter handle of the FM's office shared images of the Minister interacting with the industrialists. Earlier in the day, BJP Tamil Nadu unit president L Murugan received Sitharaman and presented a 'Vel' to her as part of welcoming her to the state.

"Vel" refers to a spear-like weapon that is traditionally associated with Lord Muruga. "Presented 'Vel' to Nirmala Sitharaman on her arrival to Chennai" Murugan said in a tweet. —PTI



Union finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman meets industrialists at a private hotel in Chennai on Friday. —DC

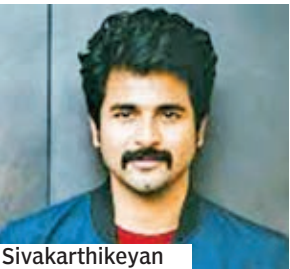
Sivakarthiyan, Anil Srinivasan among 124 Kalaimamani awardees

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

Film actor Sivakarthikeyan and Ramarajan, director Gautam Vasudeva Menon, actress Aishwariya Rajesh, comedian Yogi Babu, comedienne Devadarshini, producers Kalaipuli Thanu and Ishwari Ganesh and stunt master Jaguar Thangam were among the popular personalities named to receive the Kalaimamani awards for the years 2019 and 2020.

Some of the other well-known persons in the award list were Anil Srinivasan (piano), Sikkil S Gurucharan (vocal), Jolly Abraham (light music) and film director Liquat Ali Khan.

The State government announced the names of the



Sivakarthikeyan



Aishwariya Rajesh



Anil Srinivasan

winners of a plethora of awards in arts and culture, which include Kalaimamani, a special Kalaimamani named after J Jayalithaa, awards in the names of Bharati, M S Subbulakshmi and Balasaraswati and awards for impoverished aged Kalaimamani awardees of the past on Friday.

The announcement said eight old and impoverished

Kalaimamani awardees would get a silver parrot and an amount of ₹50,000 and the Kalaimamani gold medal would now weigh five sovereigns.

While the 59 persons have won the Kalaimamani for 2019, 65 artistes have won it for 2020.

The 'Puratchi Thalaivi Dr J Jayalalithaa Special Kalaimamani' has been

awarded to Saroja Devi (films), P Susheela (music) and Ambika Kameshwaran (dance) for 2019.

For 2020, the award goes to Sowkar Janaki (films), Jamuna Rani (music) and Parvathi Ravi Ghantasala (dance).

Awards have also been announced for the best art organization and the best drama troupe.



SHORT TAKES

CONG LEADER IN MP HITS OUT AT KANGANA

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB 19

Senior Congress leader and former minister Sukhdev Panse has called Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut a 'naachney gaane wali' (a professional singer and dancer), sparking a row here.

The BJP termed his 'unchartable' remarks against the actress as reflection of 'narrow mindset' of the Congress.

"What do you expect from a leader of a party whose leader Rahul Gandhi re-tweets comments on farmers' stir by (pop star) Rihanna and (former pornographic actress) Mia Khalifa", BJP spokesman Rajneesh Agrawal said here on Friday.

While protesting the purported comment by Ranaut calling protesting farmers in Delhi as terrorists, Panse on Thursday said the Bollywood actress was hardly aware of farmers' plights since she was a 'naachney gaane wali'.

Senior Congress leader and former minister Sajjan Singh Verma came to the rescue of his colleague when the latter's comment on Ms Ranaut snowballed into a controversy.

"He (Panse) should have said Ranaut knows how to dance, but is not aware of farmers' issues", he said.

The Bollywood actress was currently shooting for her upcoming film *Dhaakad* in Sarni in Betul district.

COURT REJECTS LALU YADAV'S BAIL PLEA

DC CORRESPONDENT PATNA, FEB. 19

The Jharkhand High Court on Friday rejected Lalu Yadav's bail plea in the fodder scam case pertaining to the illegal withdrawal of ₹3.97 crore from the Dumka treasury in the 1990s when he was the Chief Minister of Bihar.

Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh dismissed the bail petition of Mr. Yadav on the ground that he has not completed half of his prison term and asked his lawyer to file another application after two months.

"The court's observation was that he has to serve two more months in jail to complete half of the term of his total sentence in the case. We will file another application after two months", Lalu Yadav's lawyer Prabhat Kumar told reporters in Ranchi after the court's verdict on Friday.

Sources in the RJD said that the court's order came as a setback for Lalu Yadav's family and the party as they were expecting a favourable decision in the case.

He is already on bail in three out of four fodder scam cases pertaining to fraudulent withdrawal of ₹900 crore from Deoghar, Chaibasa and Dumka treasury. He was convicted in the Dumka case in March 2018.

The money was withdrawn through fake vouchers and bills on the pretext of purchasing fodder and other livestock. Fraudulent withdrawal from government treasuries and the use of fake bills and vouchers took place between 1991 and 1996 when Lalu Yadav was the Chief Minister of Bihar.

TERRORIST GUNS DOWN TWO POLICEMEN

FROM PAGE 1

He identified the slain cops as Mohammad Yusuf and Suhail Ahmad. "They had received critical gunshot injuries," he said. He, however, also said that preliminary investigation on the basis of CCTV footage and other evidence indicate the involvement of two militants in the attack. He claimed that one of them was a local and the other a foreigner affiliated with proscribed outfit Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and said that a manhunt has been launched to arrest them.

Earlier during the day, a Special Police Officer (SPO) Altaf Ahmed was killed and a selection-grade constable Manzoor Ahmed were critically injured in a gunfight with militants in Beeru area of Budgam district. The police sources said that the gunfight broke out during a cordon-and-search operation launched by a joint team of J&K police, the Army's 53 Rashtriya Rifles and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)'s 79th Battalion in Beeru's Zanigam hamlet to flush out militants. However, after the initial exchange of fire the militants managed to break the security dragnet and escape.

Some media coverage on Disha sensational, prejudicial, says HC

Court asks media houses to ensure that no leaked investigation material is broadcast

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 19

The Delhi High Court on Friday said certain media coverage of investigation into the FIR against climate activist Disha Ravi for her alleged involvement in sharing a toolkit backing farmers' protest indicates "sensationalism and prejudicial reporting", but declined to order removal of any such content at this stage.

Justice Prathiba M Singh said the interim plea for removal of such news content and tweets by Delhi Police would be considered at a later stage.

The court, however, asked media houses to ensure that no leaked investigation material is broadcast as it could affect the probe and directed Delhi Police to abide by its stand on affidavit that it has not leaked nor intends to leak any probe details to the press.

The court also said that police would be entitled to hold press briefings in the matter in accordance with the law and the agency's 2010 office memorandum with regard to media coverage of cases.

To media houses, the court said they should ensure the information received from their sources is authentic and only verified content ought to be publicised as also that the investigation is not hampered.

The court was hearing Ravi's plea to restrain police from leaking to the media any probe material in relation to the FIR lodged against her.

The petition also sought to restrain the media from publishing the content or extract of any private chats, including those on WhatsApp, between her and third parties.



Police officers in plain clothes escort environment activist Disha Ravi (C) to a local court in New Delhi on on Friday. — AFP

The police, represented by Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, placed an affidavit before the court categorically denying leaking of any information to the media.

It also assured the court that it has no intention of leaking any information to the media.

The ASG during the hearing said that the possibility of leakage by some officer of the agency cannot be ruled out entirely.

The court, however, directed that the police has to abide by its affidavit.

The media houses, one of them represented by advocate Mrinal Bharti, told the court that the source of information in the present case was the Delhi Police and its tweets.

ASG Chetan Sharma and central government standing counsel Ajay Dignapaul, appearing for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, told the court that the petition was not maintainable as no complaint was first made to it for taking action against any TV channel or media house for any

alleged incorrect reporting of the case.

The News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) told the court that it can take any action only if a complaint is made to it regarding the media houses named in the plea.

It further told the court that media houses named in the plea were members of the News Broadcasters Association (NBA).

Ravi, in her plea, has said she is "severely aggrieved and prejudiced by the media trial surrounding her arrest and

the ongoing investigation, where she is being viscerally attacked by the respondent 1 (police) and several media houses".

She has claimed that her arrest from Bengaluru on February 13 by a Cyber Cell team of Delhi Police was "wholly unlawfully and without basis".

She has also contended that in the present circumstances, it was "highly likely" that the general public will perceive the news items "as being conclusive as to the guilt of the petitioner (Ravi)".

"In these circumstances, and to restrain the respondents from further violating her privacy, her reputation, and her right to a fair trial, the petitioner is moving the present petition," the plea has said.

Her petition has alleged that investigative matters have been leaked to the media and the press briefings by the police are "prejudicial" and "grossly violative of her right to a fair trial and presumption of innocence".

It has claimed that the police first "leaked investigative material" - like alleged WhatsApp chats - the substance and details of which were only in the possession of the investigating agency.

Thereafter, the "private alleged WhatsApp chats" were published and disseminated by various media houses which was a violation of the provisions of the Cable Televisions Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 (CTN Act), the Programme Code and the Uplinking and Downlinking Guidelines, the petition has contended.

Meanwhile, a Delhi court on Friday sent climate activist Disha Ravi, arrested for allegedly being involved in sharing a "toolkit" on social media related to the farmers' protest, to three-day judicial custody. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Akash Jain sent Ravi, 21, to jail after Delhi Police produced her before the court on expiry of her five-day custodial interrogation. Police said that her custodial interrogation was not required for the time being and the agency may seek her further interrogation once her co-accused - Shantanu Mukul and Nikita Jacob - join the interrogation.



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

MP CM'S SLEEP DISTURBED, ENGINEER FACES MUSIC

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, FEB. 19

An engineer of state public works department (PWD) has been placed under suspension for the inconvenience caused to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan owing to mosquito bites during his night stay in a government rest house in Sidhi on February 17.

In-charge of the Sidhi circuit house Babulal Gupta was suspended for the poor maintenance of the rest house which caused inconvenience to the 'special guest' (Chief Minister) during his night stay, a notice served to him by the Rewa revenue division commissioner (RDC) Rajesh Kumar Jain said.

The notice dated February 18 went viral on Friday.

The notice said assistant engineer of PWD Babulal Gupta who was in-charge of the circuit house had been intimidated of chief minister's stay in the facility much in advance.

The notice said lack of maintenance of the rest house has been found and complaints of mosquito menace in the rooms have been received.

Doc stabs wife, crush her under car wheels

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, Dr Gokul Kumar, who was speeding in his car, met with an accident near Athur toll plaza under Acharapakkam police limits on Chennai-Trichy National highway. His car overturned due to rash driving and he sustained injuries. Acharapakkam police rescued him from the car and admitted him to a hospital nearby.

He was later handed over to the Maduran-takam police, which is investigating the case.

Keerthana was working in the human resource department in a private company in Melmaruvathur, the police said. After the marriage, the couple moved to Krishnapriya Colony in Maduran-takam in Chengalpet district near Chennai.

Police sources said that Dr Gokul Kumar and Keerthana have had a disagreement on several issues from just a year after their marriage. However, during the COVID-19 lockdown, the couple began arguing with each other very often which pushed them to apply for a divorce.

Political climate hots up in Kerala ahead of state assembly elections

Open for chief ministership if BJP wins, says Sreedharan

GILVESTER ASSARAY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 19

With Kerala currently witnessing the 'ceremonial' yatras of political parties crisscrossing 140 Assembly segments in the state, rival Fronts have started vying with each other to woo the voters besides galvanising their cadre for the forthcoming elections.

After the recent two day visit of the Election Commission team to Kerala, there are speculations that the Assembly polls might be held in the second week of April or first week of May. Quite understandably then, the political parties are leaving no chance to prepare for the crucial electoral battle.

The ruling CPM-led LDF has launched two yatras — Vikasana Munnetta Yatra (Development yatra), one from Kasargod to cover the northern districts and another from Kochi to cover the southern districts. The Congress-led UDF's Aishwarya Kerala Yatra led by opposition

leader Ramesh Chennithala is almost on its last leg covering southern districts.

The BJP's yatra is set to be flagged off by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on

February 23 in Kasargod. Prime Minister Narendra Modi who was in Kochi on Sunday to launch projects worth ₹1,600 crore took time to attend the BJP state unit's core committee meeting in which he

pleting big infrastructure projects, Sreedharan said that he will contest the Assembly elections if the party wants and will also be open to chief ministership if the party asks.

The 88-year-old technocrat also made it clear that he will not be interested in governorship, saying that it is purely a "constitutional position and no powers at all" and that he won't be able to make any positive contribution to the state in such a position.

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FIGHTING | COVID

While the US took 31 days to achieve this, UK crossed the mark in 56 days

Over 1 cr vaccinated against Covid so far

SANJAY KAW | DC with agency inputs NEW DELHI, FEB. 19

A little over a month after starting its Covid-19 inoculation drive, India on Friday achieved the landmark feat of vaccinating over one crore people against the deadly virus. The health ministry said Friday India was the second-fastest after the United States to achieve this milestone.

While the US had taken 31 days to achieve this, Britain had crossed the one-crore vaccination mark in 56 days. India achieved it in 34 days. Till 8 am Friday, the total number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered to

healthcare workers and frontline workers in India was 1,01,88,007.

The ministry data, however, showed an uneven pattern, with several states and Union territories injecting doses to less than 50 per cent of their target frontline workers. Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Punjab are among the larger states yet to reach 50 per cent vaccine coverage.

Among eight states that accounted for 57.47 per cent of total inoculations in the country, Uttar Pradesh accounted for 10.5 per cent doses. Seven states administered 60.85 per cent of the second dose vaccine.

In this, Telangana led the

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SHORT TAKES

31 DEAD IN DR CONGO PLAGUE OUTBREAK

Bunia , Dr Congo, Feb. 19: Thirty-one people have died in an outbreak of plague that erupted in northeastern DR Congo three months ago, health officials and experts said on Friday.

"We have more than 520 cases... of which more than 31 have been fatal," Patrick Karamura, health minister in Ituri province, where plague is endemic,said.

The cases are the bubonic form of the disease, except for five cases of pneumonic plague and two of septicaemic plague, he said.

Anne Laudisoit, an epidemiologist with a New York-based NGO called Ecohealth Alliance, said the cases had surfaced between November 15 and December 13 in Biringi, in Ituri's Aru Territory.

The average age of patients was 13, but this varied between three months and 73 years, she said.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) issued an alert in July of a plague outbreak in Rethy, also in Ituri.

Plague has persisted in the province since it was first confirmed there in 1926.

A long-feared disease with biblical connotations, but treatable today with antibiotics, the plague is caused by a bacterium called Yersinia pestis.

Nasa's rover touches down on Mars

After 7 months in space, overcomes tense landing phase called 'seven minutes of terror'

Washington, Feb. 19: After seven months in space, Nasa's Perseverance rover overcame a tense landing phase with a series of perfectly executed maneuvers to gently float down to the Martian soil on Thursday and embark on its mission to search for signs of past life.

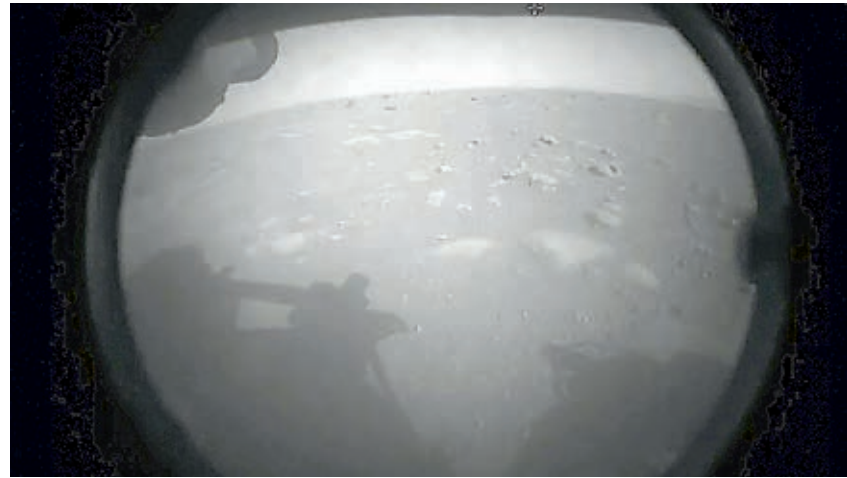
"Touchdown confirmed," said operations lead Swati Mohan at 3:55 pm Eastern Time (2055 GMT), as mission control at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena erupted in cheers.

The autonomously guided procedure was in fact completed more than 11 minutes earlier, the length of time it took for radio signals to return to Earth.

Shortly after landing, the rover sent back its first black-and-white images, revealing a rocky field at the landing site in the Jezero Crater, just north of the Red Planet's equator.

More images, video of the descent and perhaps the first sounds of Mars ever recorded by microphones are expected in the coming hours as the rover relays data to overhead satellites.

US President Joe Biden



This Nasa photo shows the first images from Nasa's Perseverance rover as it landed on the surface of Mars. Nasa said that the Perseverance rover has touched down on the surface of Mars after successfully overcoming a risky landing phase known as the 'seven minutes of terror'. — AFP

hailed the "historic" event.

"Today proved once again that with the power of science and American ingenuity, nothing is beyond the realm of possibility," he tweeted.

Perseverance's prime mission will last just over two years but it is likely to remain operational well beyond that, with its predecessor Curiosity still functioning eight years after landing on the plan-

et, said Nasa acting administrator Steve Jurczyk.

"It'll be on Mars for its entire life," he said, adding "these robots tend to be really reliable." Over the coming years, Perseverance will attempt to collect 30 rock and soil samples in sealed tubes, to be eventually sent back to Earth sometime in the 2030s for lab analysis.

About the size of an SUV, the craft weighs a ton, is

equipped with a seven foot- (two meter)- long robotic arm, has 19 cameras, two microphones and a suite of cutting-edge instruments to assist in its scientific goals.

Before it could set out on its lofty quest, it first had to overcome the dreaded "seven minutes of terror"—the risky entry, descent and landing phase that has scup-

pered nearly half of all missions to Mars.

The spacecraft carrying Perseverance careened into the Martian atmosphere at 12,500 miles (20,000 kilometers) per hour, protected by its heat shield, then deployed a supersonic parachute the size of a Little League field, before firing up an eight-engined jetpack.

Finally, it lowered the rover carefully to the ground on a set of cables.

Allen Chen, lead engineer for the landing stage, said a new guidance system called "Terrain Relative Navigation," which uses a special camera to identify surface features and compare them to an

onboard map, was key to landing in a rugged region of scientific interest.

"We are in a nice flat spot, the vehicle is only tilted by about 1.2 degrees," he said. "We did successfully find that parking lot, and have a safe rover on the ground."

Scientists believe that around 3.5 billion years ago the crater was home to a river that flowed into a deep lake, depositing sediment in a fan-shaped delta.

Perseverance ended up landing about two kilometers (a mile) southeast of the delta, NASA scientist Ken Farley said, in a geologically significant area.

— AFP

BREACH FUELS CALLS FOR U.S. ACTION ON CYBERSECURITY

Washington, Feb. 19: Jolted by a sweeping hack that may have revealed government and corporate secrets to Russia, US officials are scrambling to reinforce the nation's cyber defenses and recognising that an agency created two years ago to protect America's networks and infrastructure lacks the money, tools and authority to counter such sophisticated threats.

The breach, which hijacked widely used software from Texas-based SolarWinds Inc., has exposed the profound vulnerability of civilian government networks and the limitations of efforts to detect threats.

Biden admin introduces Citizenship Act Bill to create an earned roadmap to 11 million undocumented immigrants

Washington, Feb. 19: A bicameral US Citizenship Act of 2021 proposing a pathway to citizenship to 11 million undocumented workers, elimination of per country quota for employment-based green cards and work authorisation for dependents of H-1B foreign workers, was introduced in the Congress.

The bill, if passed by both the chambers of the Congress — House of Representatives and the Senate — and signed into law by President Joe Biden would bring citizenship to millions of foreign nationals, including undocumented and those who came to the country legally.

The legislation would also benefit hundreds and thousands of Indian IT professionals and their families. Authors of the bill — Senator Bob Menendez and Congresswoman Linda Sánchez — told reporters that the US Citizenship Act of 2021 establishes a moral and economic imperative and a vision of immigration reform that is expansive and inclusive.

It grows the economy by making changes to the employment-based immigration system, eliminating per-country caps, making it easier for STEM advanced degree holders

US ends Trump policy, lets in refugees stuck in Mexico

San Diego, Feb. 19: After waiting months and sometimes years in Mexico, people seeking asylum in the United States are being allowed into the country starting from Friday as they wait for courts to decide on their cases, unwinding one of the Trump administration's signature immigration policies that President Joe Biden vowed to end.

The number of asylum-seekers coming in initially will be very limited, beginning on Friday at a border crossing in San Diego and expanding to Brownsville, Texas, on Monday and El Paso,

Texas, next Friday.

US officials are warning people not to come to the US-Mexico border, saying an estimated 25,000 people with active cases in the "Remain in Mexico" program and several hundred who are appealing decisions should register on a website that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees is launching early next week.

The International Organisation for Migration, the UN migration agency, plans to test asylum-seekers for Covid-19 and will quarantine anyone who tests positive for 10 days before they enter the

United States.

Friday marks a key milestone in unraveling one of former President Donald Trump's cornerstone policies to deter people from seeking protection from persecution and returns the US asylum system to the way it worked for decades.

But there are unanswered questions, including how Central Americans who returned home will get back to the US-Mexico border. It's also unclear how long it will take to work through more than 25,000 active Remain in Mexico cases, with the oldest going first. — AP

the House and Senate. However, in the upper chamber, they need support of 10 Republicans to get the legislation through the Congress before it can be signed into law.

The Democratic leadership and the White House hope that they will get the necessary support in the interest of millions of non-citizens living in the country. Supported by the White House, the bill creates an earned roadmap to citizenship for all 11 million undocumented immigrants, with an expedited three-year path to citizenship, and giving all other undocumented immigrants who pass background checks and pay taxes with an eight-year path to citizenship without fear of deportation.

It reforms family-based immigration system to keep families together by recapturing visas from previous years to clear backlogs, including spouses and children of green card holders as immediate family members. It also eliminates discrimination facing LGBTQ+ families, provides protection for orphans, widows and children, allows immigrants with approved family-sponsorship petitions to join family in the US on a temporary basis while they wait for green cards to become available. — PTI

ROYALTY | STRIPPED

Harry still 6th in line to the throne, with no change in the line of succession

Prince Harry to lose all honorary titles

London, Feb. 19: Britain's Prince Harry will relinquish his honorary military appointments and patronages after confirming to Queen Elizabeth II that he and his wife Meghan Markle will not return as working royals, Buckingham Palace announced on Friday.

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, as they are officially known, rocked the British monarchy when they quit frontline royal duties a year ago and relocated to the United States, where they have embarked on several commercial ventures.

Under the terms of their departure, thrashed out at an emergency summit



Britain's Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex attend the 91st Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey in London. — AP FILE PHOTO

with the queen in early 2020, Harry agreed the couple would stop using the "Royal Highness" title and no longer carry out duties

on behalf of the monarch, but vowed to review the moves a year on.

"The Duke and Duchess of Sussex have confirmed

to Her Majesty The Queen that they will not be returning as working members of The Royal Family," Buckingham Palace said.

"The Queen has written confirming that in stepping away from the work of The Royal Family it is not possible to continue with the responsibilities and duties that come with a life of public service.

"The honorary military appointments and Royal patronages held by The Duke and Duchess will therefore be returned to Her Majesty, before being redistributed among working members of The Royal Family." — AFP

IRAN CALLS FOR U.S. TO SCRAP ALL SANCTIONS SET BY TRUMP

Tehran, Feb. 19: Iran on Friday renewed its call for the US to lift all sanctions imposed by former president Donald Trump, after an offer for talks from new President Joe Biden's administration.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted that Iran would "immediately reverse" its retaliatory measures if the US lifts "all sanctions

imposed, re-imposed or re-labelled by Trump".

The Biden administration on Thursday offered talks with Iran led by European allies and reversed two largely symbolic steps against Tehran imposed by Trump, as it sought to salvage a nuclear deal on the brink of collapse.

Ahead of a Sunday deadline set by Iran for it to

restrict some access to UN nuclear inspectors unless sanctions are lifted, new US Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned jointly with European powers that the move would be "dangerous".

Hours after Blinken's videoconference with his French, British and German counterparts, the European Union political director, Enrique Mora,

proposed via Twitter an "informal meeting" involving Iran — and the US accepted.

"The United States would accept an invitation from the European Union High Representative to attend a meeting of the P5+1 and Iran to discuss a diplomatic way forward," said State Department spokesman Ned Price.

— AFP

Notice Under Order V Rule-20(1A) of C.P.C., 1908
IN THE COURT OF THE CIVIL JUDGE, JUNIOR DIVISION AT MARCAO Regular Execution Application No: 7/2019/E IN Reg.Civil Suit No.226/2017/E
Shri Jaiprakash Sinal Kunde, Proprietor of M/S Kunde Associates
... Decree Holder
vs
The Chairman, M/S Noni Bio Tech Pvt. Ltd & anr
... Judgment Debtor

To, 1. The Chairman, M/S Noni Bio-Tech Pvt Ltd, Life Success Academy, Elite Palace, 4E Road, Opp. Flower Market, Koyambedu, Chennai- 600107.

2. M/S Noni Bio-Tech Pvt Ltd, Life Success Academy, Elite Palace, 4E Road, Opp. Flower Market, Koyambedu, Chennai- 600107. (Judgment Debtors)

Whereas the above named Decree-holders have instituted an Execution Application in this Court against you for execution of Decree in Regular Civil Suit No. 226/2017/C dated 31.07.2018. (Copy of the execution along with annexures may be collected from the office on any working days during office hours).

AND WHEREAS Show Cause Notice was sent to you at the last known address has been returned unserved with the postal endorsement, "Left" and whereas the Decree- holders has filed an application before this Court praying that you be served by publication in the English daily newspaper and this Court is satisfied that this is a fit case for ordering such a service.

Now, Therefore, you are hereby Show cause under order V rule 20(1A) of the code of Civil Procedure 1908 to appear before this Court either in person or by a pleader duly instructed and able to answer all the allegation as stated in the decree that has been transferred to him by assignment or without assignment. This is to give you notice that you are to appear before this Court on 31st March 2021 at 10.00 a.m. to show cause why this execution should not be granted. Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 05th day of February 2021

S/d (Arvind Redkar)
Superintendent
By Order of the Court.

 THE TIRUVANNAMALAI DISTRICT CO.OP. MILK PRODUCERS' UNION LTD., TSD-550 VENGAIKKAL, TIRUVANNAMALAI -4 CIVIL TENDER NOTICE			
Sealed tenders are invited in Two Part systems from civil contractors for Construction of Administrative Office building at Tiruvannamalai District co.op. Milk Producers, Union, Ltd., Tiruvannamalai			
1. Sale of tender form- Date & Time	From 20.02.2021 to 26.02.2021 From 10.00AM to 3.00PM in Office working days		
2. Last date and Time for sale of tender form	26.02.2021 Upto 3.00 PM		
3. Last date and Time for receipt of filled in Tender form	27.02.2021 Upto 2.00 PM		
4. Place, Date and Time of opening Part I Technical Bid Part II Commercial Bid	O/o. General Manager, Tiruvannamalai -4 27.02.2021 Evening at 2.30 P.M. -----		
5. The cost of tender form Rs. 1180/- (including Tax) By post each Rs 100/- extra, EMD, Rs. 1,90,000/- Tender conditions and other details can be seen in the tender documents or it can be downloaded through www.tenders.tn.gov.in			
Place : Tiruvannamalai-4	Date : 19.02.2021	DIPR/ 1256 /TENDER/2021	GENERAL MANAGER

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-Tender Notice

S. Tender No.	Name of work	Date & Time of Opening	Approx. Cost Rs.	Earnest MoneyRs.	Completion Period
2 OT-32/ 20-21	Signalling Work involving trenching, cable laying, termination, fixing of point machine and part supply of material in c/w TTR (TWS-50 Set) and TTR 99 set over Ambala Division.	17.03.2021 at 15:00 hrs.	34536176/-	Nil	Nine month
3 OT-33/ 20-21	Signalling work in c/w Construction of LHS/ROB at B-40H, BXC, UKN, RPHR, MOT, ANDABS station over Ambala Division.	17.03.2021 at 15:00 hrs.	8170559/-	Nil	Nine month

Note :-

1. Open tenders through E-tendering are invited by Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecom. Engineer/N. Railway, DRM Office, Rail Vihar, Ambala Cantt from the willing contractors for above noted work up to 15 HRS on due date shown against the work and will be opened soon thereafter. Tenderer(s) are required to upload scanned copies of all related eligibility documents including PANTAN/TIN as per conditions.

2. Please refer to the Website www.ireps.gov.in for detailed notice and tender documents.

3. Tenderer should have class-III Digital Signature Certificate and registered themselves on website stated above to participate in E-Tendering and they are requested to read all the instructions contained in the tender notice and tender documents carefully before submitting their offer so as to comply with all the requisite provision/special conditions.

No. SW-Sig/UMB/NIT-12/2020-21 Dated : 17.02.2021

372/2021

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY QUOTATION NOTICE

File No. CID/TENDER(SLRs)/TEMPORARY/2021 Date: 19 February, 2021
The Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/Freight, Northern Railway, New Delhi invites sealed Quotations from Registered Railway leaseholders (Registered in Delhi division) for the contract of temporary leasing of SLR/SLRD space in the following trains originating from various stations over Delhi Division for 30 days, to be opened on 26.02.2021. The details are as under:-

S.No.	Train No.	From	To	Comptt	CC	Freq	RP (in Rs.)	Contractual value for 30 days (in Rs.)
1	02872	New Delhi	Islampur	FSLR	3.9	Daily	17003	510090
2	02398	New Delhi	Gaya	FSLR	3.9	Daily	16055	481650
3	02582	New Delhi	Manduadih	FSLR	3.9	Daily	12672	380150
4	02452	New Delhi	Kanpur	FSLR	3.9	Daily	8205	248150
5	02622	New Delhi	Chennai	FSLR	3.9	Daily	29456	883680
6	02228	Delhi	Ajmergarh	FSLR	3.9	Daily	13506	405190
7	02302	New Delhi	Howrah	FSLR	3.9	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday & Sunday	27981	839430

* Applicable due Taxes will be extra.

In addition to above Reserve price, GST as applicable on date (presently @ 5%) and TDC @ 2% or as applicable over the Railway Freight has to be paid by the successful bidders.

Date and Time for submission of Quotation:- From 11:00 hrs. to 15:00 hrs. on 26.02.2021 & to be opened immediately after 15:00 hrs.

For the information and obtaining Quotation forms, interested bidders may kindly contact to the office of Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/Freight, DRM Office, State Envtl Road, New Delhi from 19.02.2021 to 25.02.2021 on any working day between 09:30 hrs. to 18:00 hrs. and on 26.02.2021 up to 11:00 hrs. The drafts submitted for Earnest Money deposit and Quotation cost, both should be in favour of "Sr. Divisional Finance Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi" and must be prepared from the bidders own bank account and in case found false/otherwise, Railway Administration shall be at liberty to initiate any penal action, including termination as deemed fit at a later date also. All interested bidders shall read and follow & abide by all the terms and condition of the bid documents. Relevant information/documents are also available and can be downloaded from the official website of Railway i.e. www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

386/21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

DECCAN Chronicle

20 FEBRUARY 2021

Cong's Punjab lesson: Set store by the local stalwarts

The spectacular sweep by the Congress in the civic polls in all three regions of Punjab earlier this week presents an object lesson to the Narendra Modi government as well as the Congress Party itself. The poll results have pushed the otherwise powerful Akali Dal, which derives its authority from Sikh religious forums, and the BJP into a narrow corner.

The lesson for India's oldest party, which now appears to be in a semi-solent state in many parts of the country — is that the road to revival is not closed. But there is a proviso: in the states the party must be led by local stalwarts who have come up the political ladder in the normal course of elections and manoeuvring, and not by lightweight flunkies accidentally selected by the central leadership and its nominated committees on a whim or to bestow personal favours.

In Punjab, chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh, in spite of his advanced years, proved his mettle. He gave mature political leadership. He could instinctively pick issues to highlight that matter. He also dealt with upstarts favoured by the Centre in a manner that did not raise any dust and he did not throw tantrums, although he is a maharaja. Attempts by his opponents to throw barbs of a personal nature at him cut no ice.

No doubt, the farmers' agitation helped the Congress greatly. Former party chief Rahul Gandhi's initiative in the Lok Sabha in holding two minutes silence — by treading into the Speaker's domain — in memory of the farmers who have died in the agitation could hardly have gone unnoticed in Punjab or anywhere else.

But these meaningful acts of symbolism may not have gone far enough and been translated into votes, were it not for the astute leadership of the state by Captain Amarinder and the tending of the state party organisation by PCC chief Sunil Jakhar in a sober manner. The Congress high command, such as it is, will doubtless realise that the party could have swept the Assembly election in neighbouring Haryana if only it had handed over charge of the party to Bhupinder Hooda early enough.

The Modi government and the ruling BJP cannot but have noticed that the day after the Punjab civic poll results came out, Rakesh Tikait, who has by now emerged as a famous farmers' leader from western Uttar Pradesh, called on the community of farmers to intensify their agitation and not return home until the controversial farm laws are rolled back. It is not unlikely that the farmers will show up in poll-bound West Bengal to queer the pitch for the BJP, which is trying hard to challenge CM Mamata Banerjee.

The Punjab results also point to the fact that the dissatisfaction with the Centre's policies that have fuelled unemployment, shutting down of micro, small and medium industries, and the relentless climb in diesel and petrol prices, are hurting the urban voter badly. The government leadership and the ruling party leadership need to look sharp and make wise choices.

Prince's ransom for cricketers

A couple of IPL teams seem to have gone overboard in splashing crores on cricketers who are looking to rediscover their mojo after very poor outings in the last edition of the league played in the UAE. Considering that 130 countries around the globe are yet to lay their hands on vaccine supply in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, such splurging seems a tad extravagant. But then chasing sporting success is an expensive but far from scientific pursuit. Perhaps, the extravagance has to be seen as part of a larger sport bubble that comes more as an entertainment package and is not to be equated with normal pay for work rewards in common men's lives and livelihoods. The 2020 records of Chris Morris of South Africa, who at ₹16.25 crores has become the cash-rich league's most expensive player at an auction and Glenn Maxwell of Australia who gets close to US \$2 million (the approximate procurement cost of 5.7 lakh vaccines) bear no relation to the prince's ransom being paid as salaries.

The teams seemed so overenthusiastic about foreign T20 all-rounders that they could not show the same largesse to homegrown talent. The riches showered on some youngsters in this annual auction like K. Gowtham, bought by Chennai Super Kings for US \$9.25 crores and M.Shahrukh Khan, picked up by the renamed Punjab Kings for ₹1.2 crores, may have been heartwarming as their potential to shine in the T20 format is being recognised. The champions Mumbai Indians, who were parsimonious compared to the likes of Royal Challengers, Bangalore who broke their bank at the auction on a couple of expensive buys, also chose to take on the cricketer with the famous surname — Arjun Tendulkar — at the modest starting price of ₹20 lakhs. In cricketing terms, the hunt for impact players who can be expected to swing games with bat and/or ball seemed logical enough. The timing of the commitment of millions seems a bit awkward when the world is vaccinating against the existential crisis posed by the virus.

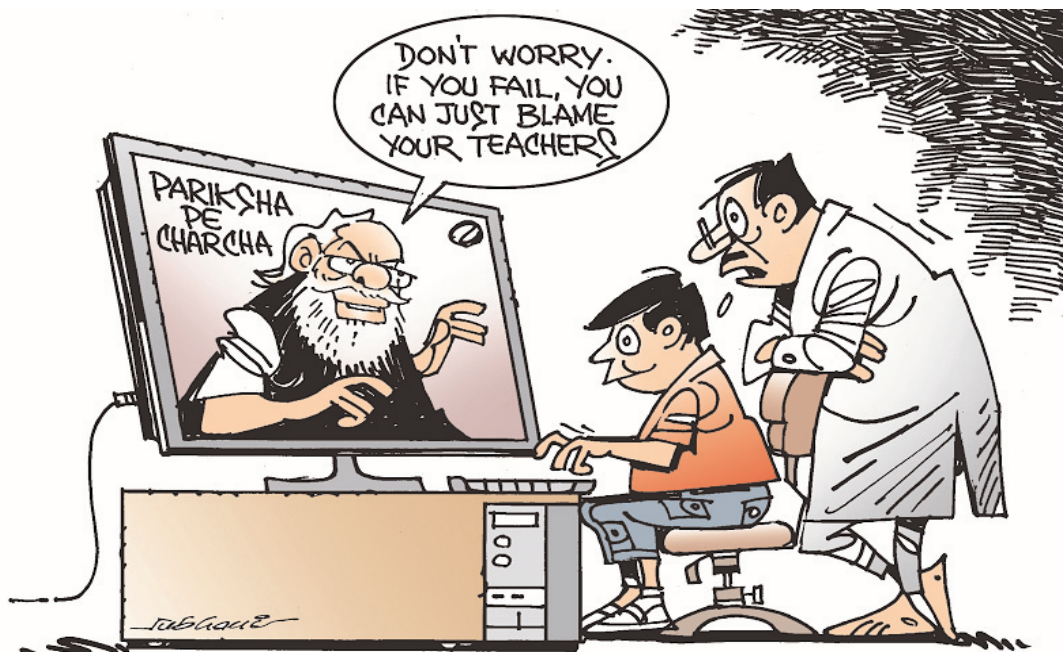
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Kozhikode: No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001 Fax : 0495 4019018
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Subhani



Women walk taller... But what if Ramani had lost?

Shobhaa De

The temptation to gloat at this very moment is pretty darn overwhelming. I'm sure millions of women across India (and possibly the world) are viewing journalist Priya Ramani's acquittal by a Delhi court in a criminal defamation case filed by former Union minister/journalist/author M.J. Akbar as a personal victory. It was a goose-bumps-inducing historic few minutes for those present at Delhi's Rouse Avenue courts on Wednesday as Ravindra Dubey, additional chief metropolitan magistrate, pointed out what should have been obvious to everybody all along — that even a person of high social standing can be a sexual harasser and a woman cannot be punished for raising instances of abuse decades later. The irony of that significant observation is not lost on anyone, given that Priya Ramani was the accused in this case, and had to fight valiantly for her truth to be established in court! And yes — as in most such cases, it is men (and more infrequently, women) “of high social standing” who are guilty of misusing this very “social standing”, secure and complacent in the belief that nothing and no one can touch them because of it.

Well, a plucky woman, Priya Ramani, and her equally plucky lawyer, Rebecca John, just threw that smug self-assurance into the dustbin. Good on you, ladies! What I appreciated the most was the sobriety and restraint displayed by both women as soon as the verdict was delivered (M.J. Akbar was surrounded by dozens of policemen, while Priya had all the

to bully and browbeat women — no questions asked.

Often it is the unalloyed arrogance of men in power (I refuse to call them “powerful men” — they are anything but!) that makes them believe in their own invincibility. Here's my theory for what it's worth: M.J. Akbar overplayed his card. Plus, he was badly advised by his mighty legal team. He probably thought he could turn the tables on Priya Ramani and crush her with formidable money power and political clout. Who was she, after all? That's the way mediocre minds function. One expected M.J. Akbar to be a shrewder strategist. Like some of his contemporaries, who ducked under the radar, and waited for the #MeToo storm to blow over. Today, hardly anybody remembers who they were — and nobody cares! The momentum is long over. People have moved on. And those very same men are carrying on with their lives like nothing ever happened. A few are still lying low, perhaps hoping their accusers have “forgotten”, preferably “forgiven”. Dream on! No Sir... Women do not forget. Never! Some are unable to fight back, others too emotionally drained to rage on. But no woman forgets the face of her abuser or his despicable abuse, till her last breath.

The court in this remarkable verdict has emphasised that there is no time bar for speaking out. A woman is entitled to do so decades later, if she so chooses. In no way

Priya and Rebecca must know what this victory and acquittal signifies for women — it is like the biggest validation of all times! It shows one thing unequivocally — women matter. Their voices matter.

does that diminish her truth.

“A woman cannot be punished for raising her voice,” the court said. But she is! Often, with extreme punishment — rape and murder. Then comes the question of her “rights” — what rights? Those are enshrined in our Constitution — but does anybody bother with these rights when women across the board face the worst form of torment? Priya Ramani spoke for working women everywhere when she outed M.J. Akbar — her boss in the 1990s. I wrote four impassioned columns at the time, and was asked to “calm down”, mostly by men of his generation, some of whom had faced similar charges in the media and had denied them. Most of the Bollywood men accused during the height of the #MeToo movement are back in the studios, chastened for now, but certainly not sensitised. It's just that they don't want to be caught with their pants down — not that they see anything wrong with sexual harassment per se. It's the same power trip as the one M.J. Akbar imagined would insulate him when he tried to put Priya Ramani on the back foot by suing her for defamation. The point is: A man's reputation has to be impeccable to have the guts to sue a woman for tarnishing it. That's really rich, in this case, considering the court accepted advocate Rebecca Jacob's argument that M.J. Akbar's reputation was far from “stellar”. Bravo!

“Right of reputation can't be protected at the cost of life and dignity of the woman...” Yessssss!

So ... all the “powerful” men cowering at the moment at the thought of the repercussions of this verdict — cower away. It's your turn next!

“... But what if Priya Ramani had lost?”

Readers can send feedback to www.shobhaade.blogspot.com

LETTERS

COVID-19 VARIANTS

This refers to your editorial *Covid-19 variants: India not out of woods yet* (Feb. 19). The fear of experts and scientists cannot be ignored as variants have a tendency to spread faster than the original one. In our country, the number of people exposed to the pandemic is not small and are vulnerable to attack and new variants are knocking on the door. The best solution is reinvigoration of the awareness programmes on appropriate methods stringently as usual, and very particularly avoiding of social gatherings for next six months. The caution is not excessive to fight with pandemic.

Suresh V.V., Vellore

WOMEN'S WOES

THE RECENT judgment by a Delhi court absolving journalist Priya Ramani in a criminal defamation case filed by former Union minister M.J. Akbar is really welcome. It will give more strength to women who are afraid of raising their voice against those who sexually harass or molest them. The victims often keep quiet fearing stigmatisation by society, which still looks down upon women and holds them responsible for such crimes, instead of targeting the wrong-doers. Many people who are of orthodox and patriarchal mindset question the victim over her choice of dress and what-not. There are many villages where people don't allow girls to go to school as soon as they reach puberty. They also look at girls as some sort of liability and try to marry them off at an early age.

C.K. Subramaniam, Chennai

OIL PRICE HIKE

APROPOS REPORT PM blames previous govts for not cutting import dependence (Feb. 18). The PM does not want to criticise but blames the previous governments for not cutting import dependence. But did the NDA government cut the same? The BJP-led NDA government is in power for almost seven years but the petrol, diesel and domestic gas cylinder prices are progressively sky-rocketing, burdening the commoner who is cursing himself and the government of the day. According to Dr. Swamy's recent tweet the petrol price is ₹93 in Rama's India, ₹53 in Sita's Nepal and ₹51 in Ravana's Lanka. This proves that the government has failed to control the petrol, diesel and domestic gas cylinder prices despite its tall claim that stupendous progress has been made on all fronts. As the common man is ignorant of economics, import dependence etc., the government which is earning average ₹1 lakh crores GST should divert one quarter of the amount, share the burden and supply petrol, diesel and domestic gas cylinders at half the cost, emulating Ravana's Lanka.

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



“There is time always, Bachchoo, To talk of many things As the Walrus did expound On cabbages and kings

And yet this global fear Clips conversation's wings The only news we hear Is of Covid's mutations!”

— From **O For a Sip of Bepsi Kohla** by Bachchoo

Why it's crucial to stand up for views you may not agree with...

Without freedom of speech and opinion, there is no democracy. The system of counting votes and giving the majority the privilege of governing in fairness to the minority — is only the first requirement. The rule of unoppressive, uncoercive law, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of speech — yes, even on Twitter — are some of the rest.

Twitter has now banned Donald Trump's outpourings, not because they're left-wing or supportive of some mythical religious bias, but because very many of them amount to hate speech and incitement to break the law.

In Britain, there are laws against hate speech. Though difficult to define, the law trusts judges and

juries to identify speech which calls for any sort of attack on the minorities — or even a majority of the population. It's a law that upholds decency, but “hate crime” shouldn't stretch to expressing a questioning or dissenting opinion about, say, a religion. I am free to publicly proclaim that I don't believe in virgin births, or that God engraves, by lightning, laws on stone tablets or indeed dictates books to prophets. I won't have, I hope, crossed the line between a theological or scientific belief and incitement to attack any religious group or the buildings they pray in.

The definition of hate crime in any democracy should not deteriorate or ever be interpreted as “Disagree Crime”. Dictatorships and fascist regimes, some, as in Turkey, based on religion and others on a mafiocracy, are universally known for their intolerance of dissent. Turkey locks up its journalists and Russia arrests and imprisons 11,000 of the protesters who took to the streets in favour of the release of a dissident politician. Other nations disgracefully encourage and allow curtailment of the freedom of speech or even fiction, on the grounds of dubious interpretations of religious sanctity.

In recent years, American and British universities have entertained insidious attacks on the principle of freedom of speech. Cambridge University, for instance, backpedalled in recent months on an edict they issued to “respect” all opinions. Several senior and junior members of the university interpreted this injunction as a “shut-up” call to all dissidence. They wanted the diktat to be modified to “tolerate” all opinions, while reserving the right to contradict and oppose them. The dissidents won.

Several prominent writers and academics, among them J.K. Rowling of the Harry Potter books, Germaine Greer, widely recognised as a pioneer of contemporary feminism and, most recently, Prof. Selina Todd of Oxford University, have been variously “no-platformed” by university student organisations because they've argued, in the media or through social media outlets, that transgender women were not really women and shouldn't be afforded the reserved rights and spaces that belonged to the gender. They had rational and scientific arguments on their side and each one, and others on the side of these three, strongly aver that they are not denying social or political rights to

transgender people, but insist on their own freedom, without censure and abuse from trolls, to hold scientific and biological arguments which deny that humans or animals can change gender because they want to.

In a recent case, brought by a young woman who was, when she was underage, subject to what she called pressure and “mind control” at the Tavistock Institute, the court ruled that influencing or indulging minors to change their gender and undergo medicinal, surgical and psychological therapy to do so, was unlawful.

This censorship, the denial of platforms to people whose opinions, politics or stances on any issues which the banning and debarring bodies disagree with, has been confined to supporters of what has come to be known as the “woke” agenda. People with doubts or dissenting opinions on race, gender, sexual orientation — and politicians who have acted in favour of right-wing policies — have been the targets of this denial of appearance on university platforms, sometimes being informed of the banning only hours before they were invited to appear.

The phenomenon has been taken up by right-wing commentators, who argue that this is an anti-demo-

cratic assault on free speech in the very institutions, the universities, where opposing arguments should be debated. Britain's Conservative government, with an ear wide open to these commentators, has now resolved to legislate for “free speech” and appoint a sort of supreme to see that this law is enforced. Prof. Todd has expressed her support for such a law. She says it's necessary as the atmosphere on campus, perpetrated by self-appointed activists and attitude-enforcers, inhibits the expression of dissenting opinions — about history, science, politics, sociology and even literature.

The National Union of Students' representatives argue that there is no need for such a law and that it has constantly been vigilant about absolute freedom of speech in universities. A good cellar of salt should flavour this assertion.

Time will tell if this law and its enforcement have any effect. Perhaps every country with a claim to being democratic should pass such a law and appoint a manifestly independent “neyta” with powers to dismiss frivolous and outrageous attacks on the freedom of opinion and creativity from politicians and charlatans.

SHORT TAKES

Pugilists Chanu, Vinka make semis

New Delhi: Asian youth gold medalists Babyrojisana Chanu (51kg) and Vinka (60kg) advanced to the semifinals of the 30th Adriatic Pearl tournament in Budva, Montenegro, assuring themselves of at least a bronze medal each with dominating first-round wins. Manipur's Chanu, who trains at MC Mary Kom's academy, did not put a foot wrong and dominated her opponent Georgieva Blagovesta of Bulgaria from the word go and as a result, the referee had to stop the contest in the first round itself. She will face Uzbekistan's Feruza Kazakova in the semifinals. Vinka, who was up against Uzbekistan's Sevara Ashurova in a quarterfinal bout, produced a flawless display of her attacking prowess.

Companions CC beat Singam Puli

Chennai: Companions CC beat Singam Puli CC in the TNCA's fifth division 'D' league match. **V-Division 'D':** Companions Cricket Club 150 in 45.2 overs (D. Dharmaraj 46; C. Gajendra Perumal 5/22, Ajith Kumar Rajamanickam 5/36) bt Singam Puli Cricket Club 138 in 37 overs (C. Gajendra Perumal 36; S. Rajesh 3/38, G. Bala 3/33); Chatnath Recreation Club 146 in 43.1 overs (N. Muneeswaran 39; N.K. Sounderamani 3/16, P. Sakthivel 3/31) lost to Kumbhat Cricket Club 147/4 in 38.3 overs (Prathosh Ravindhran 43 (not out), G. Siddharth 30); Egmore Excelsiors 216 in 33.4 overs (S. Neelamarayanan 58, R. Javed Mohammed 51, V. Anbu 49; Sagar Sharma 3/56) bt IAF (Tambaram) 201 in 38.4 overs (A. Mostafa Darik 67, Anurag Jadaun 34; R. Javed Mohammed 6/50); Lusuraj Cricket Club 236 in 45.4 overs (T. Parthiban 68, S. Thiagarajan 31; D. Dineshn Antony 5/39) bt Chennai Corporation Official Association 192/6 in 50 overs (J. Sanjay Prakash 51 (not out), D. Aravind 46, K.D. Dineshn Antony 232; Grand Prix Cricket Club 423 in 49.3 overs (S. Gohulmoorthi 52, S. Karthik Shankar 45, R. Chandramouli 40; Sanjay Siva Kumar 3/146) bt Air India Sports Club 172 in 40.5 overs (Sanjay Siva Kumar 42, S.R. Balaji 31; R. Chandramouli 6/37).

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Money, Money, Money

Jamieson didn't know how much ₹15 crore was

Christchurch, Feb. 19: Waking up at around midnight in New Zealand, Kyle Jamieson wondered how much ₹15 crore would be in his country's currency, after having watched an intense three-way bid for him in the IPL auction. The 6'8" pacer eventually ended up with Royal Challengers Bangalore for \$2 million approximately, making him the highest paid New Zealander and fourth highest in the IPL's 14-year history.

"I woke up around midnight and decided to check the phone. Rather than trying to avoid the situation, (I thought) I'll sit back and enjoy it. It was certainly a weird hour and a half waiting for my name to be called up," Jamieson was quoted as saying by *stuff.co.nz*.

"I had a message from Shane Bond (former New Zealand pacer and Mumbai Indians bowling coach) as it was going and he said, 'How good is this'. "I didn't actually know what the amount of money, how that translated to New Zealand dollars. It was quite cool to share that moment with him and ride that two or three minutes with him," he added.

Also showing interest in him were Delhi Capitals and the Punjab Kings in the auction on Thursday.

Former Black Caps coach Mike Hesson, RCB's director of cricket operations, led the charge to win the three-way bidding for Jamieson, who made his Test debut against India at home last year.

His retainer fee for the Black Caps, according to the report, is between \$100,000 to \$150,000, which makes RCB's winning bid amount 20 times more.

It completed a rapid rise for Jamieson, who is known for extracting awkward bounce. The right-arm quick, playing in the 2019 Super Smash, picked up 6 for 7 in four overs, a New Zealand T20 record.

He has so far played in six Tests, two ODIs and four T20Is. He took two five-wicket hauls in his first four Tests and has also shown a lot of competence with the bat as well.

Asked what would he buy if his New Zealand teammates asked for a treat, Jamieson said, "Probably a few coffees I would have thought."

— PTI



New Zealand bowler Kyle Jamieson in this file photo.

₹9.25 crore IPL contract is nerve-wracking: Gowtham

Ahmedabad, Feb. 19: A net bowler with the Indian team right now, uncapped Karnataka all-rounder Krishnappa Gowtham is still trying to get a grip on his emotions after fetching a mind-boggling ₹9.25 crore deal with Chennai Super Kings which left his parents and wife overwhelmed by tears of joy.

After a bidding war at the IPL auction in Chennai on Thursday, Gowtham was bought by CSK, his price surpassing that of Krunal Pandya's then record of ₹8.8 crore by the Mumbai Indians in 2018 for an uncapped player. "It was nerve-wracking, I was very anxious, watching on TV," Gowtham, who is currently with the Indian Test team here as a net bowler for the series against England, told *ESPNews*.

"We'd just landed in Ahmedabad and I'd just switched on TV and my name came up. Emotions were changing every minute. Then, Rohit Sharma and Hardik Pandya knocked on my door and gave me a big hug and they asked for a big



It was nerve-wracking, I was very anxious, watching on TV. My parents had tears, happy tears. They were all so happy for me.

— KRISHNAPPA GOWTHAM

after fetching a mind-boggling deal with Chennai Super Kings

treat," he added.

His base price was ₹20 lakh, and he was quickly the focus of a fierce bidding war between the Kolkata Knight Riders and the Sunrisers Hyderabad, before CSK swooped in with a late bid.

Krishnappa has modest IPL statistics. He has played just 24 matches in three seasons since 2018 and has scored 186 runs and taken 13 wickets.

He was a part of RR for two seasons — 2018 and 2019 playing 15 and 7 matches respectively — and was with Kings XI Punjab (now Punjab Kings) in 2020 where he featured in just two games

before being released.

Gowtham's parents and wife in Bengaluru were in tears when they came to know of the good news.

"My parents had tears, happy tears. They were all so happy for me," Gowtham said.

"It's hard to describe that feeling. It's all just sinking in. Obviously this isn't the first time I've been part of the auction but every time your name comes up, the kind of butterflies in your tummy is unimaginable," he added.

Gowtham will be playing under M. S. Dhoni and he remembers queuing up to get his bat signed by the him.

— PTI

ARJUN CAN'T WAIT TO WEAR MI'S JERSEY

New Delhi, Feb. 19: Pacer Arjun Tendulkar cannot wait for his maiden IPL stint to start with Mumbai Indians and thanked the coaches for having faith in him after being picked by the five-time champions at the players' auction. The 21-year-old, son of iconic former captain Sachin Tendulkar, got a major fillip on Thursday when he was bought by Mumbai Indians at his base price of ₹20 lakh.

His celebrated father hasn't just played for the franchise but is also the mentor of the side, which is the most successful team in the IPL.

"Since childhood I have always been a die hard fan of Mumbai Indians. I would like to thank the coaches and support staff who showed faith in me."

"I am excited to join the MI Paltan and can't wait to wear the blue and gold," Arjun said in a video message posted on MI's *Twitter* handle.

Arjun has been a net bowler for the franchise for the past two-three seasons. He recently made his senior Mumbai team debut when he played in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, the national T20 championship, against Haryana.

— PTI

MORRIS ROLE IS TO SUPPORT ARCHER: SANGA

Mumbai, Feb. 19: Rajasthan Royals' director of cricket Kumar Sangakkara on Friday said that allrounder Chris Morris, who was brought by the franchise for ₹16.25 crore in the IPL auction, will have a "very specific role of supporting" pace spearhead Jofra Archer.

"Morris was significantly high in terms of auction price. Morris has a very specific role for us to play in supporting (Jofra) Archer. It gives us a lot more flexibility in the way we use Archer," Sangakkara said. — PTI

TN meet Punjab in Hazare opener

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

After their stupendous triumph in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament, Tamil Nadu would be looking to continue their impressive run into the domestic one-day tournament, Vijay Hazare trophy. Tamil Nadu will open their campaign against Punjab on Saturday.

Tamil Nadu coach D. Vasu said the focus is to develop a solid team for the future. "Obviously we will try to win the Vijay Hazare, but our main focus is to develop a proper side for next season's Ranji. Winning the Ranji Trophy remains our top priority," said Vasu.

Tamil Nadu have won the Ranji Trophy only twice — the last title came in 1987-88 season — and have finished runners-up nine times. However, TN have done well in the Vijay Hazare one-day tournament over the years. Vasu said it's important for players to perform in all domestic tournaments.

"It is the only available standard to measure the quality of domestic players. As we all saw at the auction, players who did well in the Syed Mushtaq



Tamil Nadu begin their Vijay Hazare campaign on Saturday.

were rewarded with the IPL contracts," he said.

While Shahrukh Khan, M. Siddharth and Hari Nishaant were lapped up by IPL franchises, a bunch of TN players went unsold at Thursday's auction.

"They just have to keep their hopes alive and work hard," said Vasu. Having remained unbeaten en route the Syed Mushtaq Ali title, TN are one of the favourites to win the Vijay Hazare as well. Vasu said there is no room for complacency now.

"We have watched videos of our opponents and analysed everything. The boys have been assigned certain roles, they know what to do. And there are no injury concerns," he said.

Medvedev mauls Tsitsipas, in final

THE RESULTS

Men's singles semifinal: Daniil Medvedev (RUS x4) bt Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x5) 6-4, 6-2, 7-5.

Women's doubles final: Elise Mertens (BEL)/ Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x2) bt Barbora Krejickova (CZE)/ Katerina Siniakova (CZE x3) 6-2, 6-3.

game has stymied all opponents since November, and he has won three of his last four against the 17-time Grand Slam-winning Serb. "It definitely wasn't easy," said Medvedev, only the third Russian after Yevgeny Kafelnikov and Marat Safin to reach the Australian Open final.

ELISE-SABALENKA DUO CLINCHES DOUBLES TITLE

Elise Mertens and Aryna Sabalenka won the Australian Open women's doubles final Friday to collect their second Grand Slam trophy as a team.

— Agencies

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