

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
KARIMNAGAR | SATURDAY | 6 FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 31°C
Min: 14.9°C
RH: 28%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Partly cloudy.
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 31/16 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+11,702)	(+108)
1,08,14,656	1,54,954

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+169)	(+1)
TS: 2,95,270	1,607
(+97)	(+1)
AP: 8,88,275	7,158

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

10,56,28,160
DEATHS
23,00,112
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Pushya Bahula Navami till 8.13 am; Dasami till 6.26 am (Sunday)
Star: Anuradha till 5.18 pm
Varjyam: 10.39 pm to 12.11 pm
Durmuhurtam: 6.50 am to 8.21 am
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am
HUIJI CALENDAR
Jamadi-ul-Akhir 23,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.45 am
Zohar: 12.40 pm
Asar: 4.37 pm
Maghrib: 6.19 pm
Isha: 7.28 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.13 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.46 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 1.36 AM
MOONSET TODAY 1.08 PM

COUNTER POINT



Now, the phone is mightier than the pen and the gun!

SHORT TAKES

RBI lets investors buy govt securities

Chennai/Mumbai: In a structural reform that would put India among a group of a select few countries, the RBI has now allowed retail investors easy access to government securities. Projecting 10.5 per cent growth for the next fiscal, the central bank has kept the record low repo and reverse repo rates unchanged while continuing its accommodative stance. "It is proposed to provide retail investors with online access to the government securities market — both primary and secondary — directly through the RBI," governor Shaktikanta Das said Friday.

■ Reports on Page 7

Cong eyes Bengal with ISF alliance

Kolkata: Desperate to reclaim its Muslim votebank from the ruling Trinamul Congress (TMC) in the West Bengal Assembly elections, the state Congress leaders have sought UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi's permission to include a third party in their alliance, Indian Secular Front, floated by influential cleric of Furfura Sharif, Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui. The Congress has an alliance with the Left Front and the two parties are in seat-sharing talks.

■ Reports on Page 4

NATION | 4

SC grants interim bail to Faruqui

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WORLD | 5

Biden calls out Russia, China

SPORTS | 8

Captain Root leads England with a century



Vol. 20 No. 251 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

Concrete border to separate Delhi



Workers construct a concrete barricade as a security person stands guard at Singhu Border, during the ongoing farmers agitation against Centres farm reform laws, in New Delhi on Friday.

— PTI

2 cops held for aiding Bangladeshis

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC NIZAMABAD, FEB. 5

Hyderabad police have taken into custody two Special Branch constables of Nizamabad on Thursday night for allegedly helping illegal Bangladeshis in getting Indian passports.

Special Branch is crucial in allotment of passports. Union ministry of external affairs issues passports

A FEW Special Branch constables allegedly neglected their duties while enquiring about a certain Bangladeshis portrayed themselves as residents of West Bengal for issuing of passports.

IT IS BELIEVED those who succeeded in getting passports may include Rohingyas from Myanmar.

only after Special Branch issues its verification report. A passport enables the bearer to travel internationally. It further serves as his or her proof of Indian citizenship as

per the Passports Act. Allegedly, a few Special Branch constables neglected their duties while enquiring about a certain Bangladeshis portrayed themselves as residents of

West Bengal for issuing of passports. It is believed those who succeeded in getting passports may include Rohingyas from Myanmar.

When contacted, Nizamabad in-charge police commissioner N. Swetha said she is unaware about the illegal passports issue. She also could not confirm shifting of two Special Branch constables to Hyderabad over the illegal passports issue.

KHAMMAM CIVIC BODY DIVISION TO GO UP BY 60

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC KHAMMAM, FEB. 5

Civic corporators here are worried over likely changes in their division profiles as officials have started the process of division delimitations as per the government order — GO 12.

The areas of all the 50 divisions will undergo change. corporators cultivate their divisions with great care to ensure that they get the voters' continued support in the next polls. When their areas change, a part of this build-up is lost.

There are 2.70 lakh voters in Khammam Municipal Corporation limits. The delimitation will also see about ten villages merged with the corporation.

Divisions that have more than 9,000 votes will be divided into two. In the new set-up, the voters range will be from 4,500 to 6,000. There are ten divisions that had voters from 6,000 to 9,000 and the areas of these divisions will see drastic change.

Divisions like 10, 22, 24, 31, 33, 34, 39, 40 and 42 will have more than 7,000 voters.

■ Page 2: Cong worried over delimitation

Cash strapped TS tries to get back Infy's unused land

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, FEB. 5

Is the TRS government firming up its mind to take back unutilised land from Infosys? It seems so because the land allotted to software major Infosys for a second campus by the previous Congress government located on the outskirts of Hyderabad has come under the scanner of the Telangana state government.

The previous Congress government of the undivided Andhra Pradesh, under the chief minister-ship of Dr Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, had sanctioned 447 acres to Infosys in Pocharam in Ghatkesar mandal in 2007 to set up an IT park.

However, the company has utilised only 95 acres,

The Infosys management urged the TSIIIC not to compare Infosys with other companies, which failed to utilise lands on the ground that Infosys has "slew of future expansion plans" for which it needs land.

after nearly 15 years of the allotment of land. Another 352 acres is lying vacant. The land was then allotted at a price of ₹12 lakh per acre. The land price has now shot up to few crores of rupees per acre.

The Telangana state government is facing a land crunch on the city outskirts for allotment to IT industries and other industries. After the introduction of TS-iPASS online approval system through self-certification

for industries within 21 days, demand for setting up industries, especially IT and IT enabled services companies on the city outskirts, has shot up.

Software firms are now concentrated towards the western part of the city, popularly known as the Gachibowli IT corridor. There are no major government land parcels left in the western part of the city at present.

As a consequence, the state government had introduced a 'look east policy' last year to encourage the setting up of IT industries in the eastern part of the city, towards the Warangal highway. The land allotted to Infosys at Pocharam is towards the eastern corridor.

■ Page 2: IT firms ready to Look East for sops

SATAVAHANA VARSITY HOPES FOR REGULAR V-C

PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC KARIMNAGAR, FEB. 5

Following Governor Dr. Tamilisel Soundararajan's letter to the state government to appoint regular Vice-Chancellors for all universities within 10 days, students from

Satavahana University, which has been functioning under an in-charge VC for the past seven years, are hopeful that they will have a regular vice-chancellor soon.

Satavahana University was established in 2008 with 160 degree and PG colleges, offering MA

(English, Telugu, Urdu, Economics and Sociology), M. Sc (Botany, Chemistry, Computer Science, Food Science, Physics and Mathematics), M.Com, M.B.A., M.C.A and B. Pharmacy.

■ Page 2: Varsity failed to get even UGC's B status

KCR calls for key meet tomorrow

Sudden announcement triggers speculations

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 5

In a sudden development, TRS president and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Friday called for an emergency meeting of the party's state executive committee on February 7, triggering widespread speculations within the TRS as well as in wider political circles over a likely announcement, or at least a hint of, a widely anticipated possible change of guard in the state.

The TRS state executive committee meeting will be held at Telangana Bhavan, under the leadership of Chandrashekar Rao.

All party leaders, including ministers, MPs, MLAs and MLCs, state committee members, state-level corporation chairpersons, zilla parishad chairpersons, mayors, municipal chairpersons, DCCB chairpersons and DCMS presidents have been



invited to the meeting.

Although an official release from the TRS said that the meeting will discuss issues related to membership renewal, appointment of party commit-

tees from village to the state level, the election of party president, arrangements for conduct of party's annual plenary on April 27, besides other institutional issues of the party, it failed to douse speculations that the Chief Minister might hint at the elevation of his son and minister K.T. Rama

Rao to the highest post in the state government.

The timing of the meeting being convened at such a short notice, of only two days, triggered speculations, though it is not uncommon for Chandrashekar Rao to convene the party's executive committee meetings earlier too at a short notice. Normally, such executive committee meetings were held earlier during crucial elections like Assembly, Lok Sabha, GHMC polls or during the party's annual conclave in April every year.

The TRS annual plenary is generally held in the last week of April, which is still over three months away. This left party leaders and cadre wondering about the need and urgency to convene an executive meeting to discuss arrangements for plenary in the first week of February itself.

■ Page 2: Agenda includes election of TRS president

Tata, Boeing to make 747 aircraft's rudders in Hyd

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 5

American aircraft maker Boeing on Friday said that its joint venture firm, Tata Boeing Aerospace Ltd, would manufacture complex vertical fin structures for the 737 family of airplanes at its facility in Hyderabad.

Vertical fin, also called the vertical stabiliser, is a structure that projects upwards at the tail-end of the aircraft. It is one of the most important components of the aircraft that reduces aerodynamic side slip and provides it direc-

tional stability.

The Tata Boeing JV's facility already produces aero-structures for Boeing's AH-64 Apache helicopter, including fuselages, secondary structures and vertical spar boxes for customers worldwide.

The manufacturing of the vertical fin structure marks a significant milestone for both the joint venture and for the Narendra Modi government's 'Make-in-India' initiative.

This development would incorporate a 'Made-in-India' component in

Boeing 737 aeroplanes flying around the world and would add to the theft of Hyderabad in the aerospace and defence sectors.

Telangana industries minister K.T. Rama Rao welcomed the development, calling it "a noteworthy step in the growth of India's aerospace and defence manufacturing."

The minister said Telangana is an established hotbed for India's defence and aerospace industry supported by a robust ecosystem.

■ Page 2: TASL teams up with Airbus, Lockheed



RTC employees share sweets to each other to celebrate in Karimnagar on Friday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

DOMINO | EFFECT

Higher price at Sangli doubled turmeric arrivals at Nizamabad

Theatres can have 100% occupancy

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 5

The state government on Friday issued orders permitting single-screen cinema theatres and multiplexes across Telangana to screen movies with 100 per cent occupancy with immediate effect. Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar issued orders to this effect.

With this, Telangana joined other states such as Delhi, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Gujarat and

Karnataka to allow cinema halls to increase occupancy from 50 per cent to 100 per cent.

The government order was issued in compliance with the orders by the Union ministry of home affairs and the standard operating procedures issued by the ministry of information and broadcasting. It comes after a request from the Telugu Film Chambers of Commerce.

■ Full report on Page 2

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC NIZAMABAD, FEB. 5

Commencement of sale of turmeric in Sangli market yard is having its impact on turmeric prices in Telangana state. Sangli is the biggest turmeric market yard in India and it dictates the price structure in markets where turmeric sales are high.

As a result, turmeric arrivals doubled in Nizamabad yard on Friday with farmers hoping better

prices brought the produce.

Sangli market is considered as a cluster for turmeric exports. Major exporters are headquartered in Mumbai and they purchase stock from Sangli. Citing inferior quality and moisture content in turmeric, the traders offered merely ₹4,500 per quintal in the Nizamabad market yard in the current season.

At Sangli, traders offered ₹7,500 per quintal on Thursday and the maxi-

CITING INFERIOR quality and moisture content in turmeric, the traders offered merely ₹4,500 per quintal in the Nizamabad market yard in the current season.

imum price touched ₹7,086 in Nizamabad market yard. The average price of turmeric stands at ₹5,750 per quintal. Turmeric is being cultivated in Nizamabad, Jagtial and Nirmal districts and farm-

ers brought it to the Nizamabad market yard.

In the 2018-19 season, 10.75 lakh quintals was brought to Nizamabad and the maximum price was ₹8,681 and the minimum ₹3,005 per quintal. The average price was ₹6,000. In 2019-20, 10.78 lakh quintals were sold at a maximum price of ₹7,678 and minimum of ₹4,000 per quintal with the average being ₹5,500.

In the present 2020-21 season, 3.27 lakh quintals turmeric reached Nizamabad

market yard till Friday. The highest price of ₹7,086 was recorded on Thursday with the minimum price being ₹4,500 and the average standing at ₹5,750.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Kole Bhumanna, a farmer from Pachalankudla in Velpur mandal, said that they incurred losses in turmeric sales. ₹10,000 per quintal is the remunerative price for farmers, he opined.

■ Page 2: Higher curcumin won day for Sangli

SHORT TAKES

AGENDA INCLUDES TRS CHIEF ELECTION

From Page 1

Besides, the membership drive and appointment of party committees will also be generally done only at the time of annual conclave in April.

The official release issued by the party fuelled further speculations by mentioning about “election of party president” and discussion on some “internal institutional issues” of the party. Party leaders are hoping and adding fire to the speculation that the party supremo might announce or drop hints about his stepping down from the chief ministerial post, or even as TRS chief post at the state executive committee meeting or formalise the elevation of his son as the Chief Minister and the party president.

Rumours also spread within the TRS on Friday that Chandrashekar Rao might also announce key organisational changes, such as appointing finance minister T. Harish Rao and health minister Etela Rajendar as the party’s working presidents, besides giving a key position to his daughter and MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha, both in the party as well as in the government.

TASL TEAMS UP WITH AIRBUS, LOCKHEED

From Page 1

Commenting on the Boeing-TASL JV’s new production line, Tata Advanced Systems Limited managing director and chief executive officer, Sukaran Singh, said, “This new production line for complex vertical fin structures is another testament for TASL’s commitment towards making India self-reliant in defence manufacturing.”

According to reports, Tata Advanced Systems could also manufacture C-295 transport aircraft for the Indian Air Force in partnership with European aircraft major Airbus.

If the deal gets the government’s approval, it would be the first time that a major military aircraft would be manufactured in India.

On Friday, Tata Advanced Systems has also teamed up with another aviation major, Lockheed Martin of the US, to bid for the Indian Navy’s proposed requirement of naval utility helicopters.

Lockheed Martin vice-president and chief executive Bill Blair and TASL CEO Sukaran Singh signed a deal on Friday in Bengaluru, on the sidelines of biennial defence air show Aero India 2021.

VARSITY FAILED TO GET EVEN UGC’S B STATUS

From Page 1

However, presently there are only 120 colleges, which include 17 degree, five welfare, two aided and 96 private colleges.

In the absence of a regular VC, lack of infrastructure, and a dearth of permanent teaching and non-teaching staff and with no development since inception, it has not been able to secure Grade-B status from University Grants Commission (UGC).

Till date it has had regular V-Cs only twice. When the university was established in 2008, the government-appointed Md. Iqbal Ali as its Vice-Chancellor. He worked from July 28, 2008 to July 27, 2011.

He was succeeded by K. Veera Reddy, who worked from April 19, 2012 to April 21, 2015. At present, Hyderabad Municipal Development Authority (HMDA) Commissioner, T. Chiranjeevulu is the in-charge VC.

The University did not witness any kind of celebrations until Prof. Umesh Kumar took charge as Registrar of the University. Following his initiative, ‘National Youth Festival’ was conducted in the 2018-19 academic year and the first convocation was held in 2019, 11 years after its establishment.

The state government released a notification for appointment of VCs to all universities on July 3, 2019, but the process has never really picked up. Following the special committee’s report to UGC, all hurdles and issues were cleared for recruitment to fill vacant posts in all universities.

Meanwhile, professors of Osmania, Kakatiya and Satavahana universities have applied for the VC post. It is learnt that five professors from English, Telugu, Botany and Management departments of Satavahana university are in the race for the VC post. They are lobbying with key TRS leaders to bolster their prospects.

Gross neglect



Plants placed by the GHMC in huge pots near Nagole Metro station as part of beautification of the city are getting dried up due to lack of water and care.

— GANDHI

State allows full house in cinema theatres

Theatre owners asked to follow SOPs laid by the TS govt

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 5

The state government on Friday issued orders permitting single-screen cinema theatres and multiplexes across Telangana to screen movies with 100 per cent occupancy with immediate effect. Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar issued orders to this effect.

With this, Telangana joined other states such as Delhi, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Gujarat and Karnataka to allow cinema halls to increase occupancy from 50 per cent to 100 per cent.

The government order (GO) was issued in compliance with the orders by the Union ministry of home affairs and the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the ministry of information and broadcasting. It comes after a request from the Telugu Film Chambers of Commerce.

The Centre had on February 1 allowed theatres to operate at 100 per cent capacity but left the decision to the discretion of state governments, depending on the situation in their respective state. The owners of theatres and multiplexes were asked to duly follow SOPs laid by the state government.

Earlier, the state government had on November 23 allowed the state-wide reopening of cinema halls after a nine-month lockdown, with 50 per cent of seating capacity due to Covid-19 pandemic. However, cinema halls and multiplexes in the state started operating with alternate seating on December 4.

Telangana, which has about 600 theatres, was late compared to many other states in allowing the reopening of theatres but authorities justified the move in view of the pandemic situation. They moved ahead with their plans only after a significant drop in Covid cases.

Officials said the improvement in the situation especially in GHMC

Single theatres demand percentage from producers

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 5

In a sudden move, the single theatre owners are demanding a percentage from the producers instead of rentals for their film screenings. On Thursday, nearly 100 exhibitors came to the Telugu Film Chamber and said that they can’t maintain the theatres with the present system of rentals.

Some owners say they would close the theatres if the producers do not accept their demand.

All the multiplex screens are running with the percentage system. “Yes, it’s good for the cinema and the industry. If you look at other states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka, the theatres are running with percentage and not on rentals. With rentals, the single theatres can survive and the maintenance will improve. Otherwise, there is a danger that these single theatres may convert themselves into real

estate,” says Suresh Babu, producer, exhibitor and distributor.

In Telangana state, there are nearly 300 single theatres. “Because of the pandemic, all the cinema theatres were closed. When they opened now, the occupancy was only half. So, it is very difficult to maintain the theatre, so they are asking the percentage. We shall sort out the issue in a few days,” says Rammohan Rao, chairman of the Telangana State Film Development Corporation.

He added that many of the exhibitors are waiting for the G.O from the state government.

In November, before the municipal elections, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao announced sops to the film industry that included the concession on electricity charges to theatres. But, till now, the government has not released GO regarding these sops. “Most of the exhibitors are waiting for the GO,

especially concessions on electricity charges,” says Rammohan Rao.

“For the last five years, the rental charges have been fixed and there is no hike. So, the single theatres are facing some problems and we will solve it,” says Sunil Narang, distributor, producer and exhibitor.

Since March last, many of the single theatres were closed due to financial problems.

“The percentage system is not new. We ran the theatres with this system initially and then changed to rental. Now, they are again asking for percentage,” says Suresh Babu. The exhibitors also want a clarification from producers about the screening of big films on OTT. Recently, big films like ‘Krack’ and ‘Master’ were released on OTT platforms when they were still running in theatres. “They are asking for a six-to-seven weeks gap after release of the film in theatres,” says Rammohan.

limits, which has 175 theatres, including 70 multiplex screens, led to the decision. As per the SOPs issued by the Centre, adequate physical distancing, mandatory face masks and sanitisation of auditorium after every screening are a must. It said digital booking of tickets and staggered show timings to avoid crowding will be encouraged. Telangana Film Exhibitors Association (TFEA) welcomed the state government’s decision to allow 100 per cent occupancy in theatres/multiplexes.

“The orders came into force with immediate effect on Friday. We sold 100 per cent tickets for ‘Zombie Reddy’, which was released on Friday. The response from viewers across the state was

encouraging, with many theatres reporting house full collections,” said Vijayender Reddy, president, TFEA. “This decision will certainly improve box office collections and bring back the past glorious days of cinema experience. Next Friday, we have ‘Uppena’ releasing. This film is carrying massive expectations, being the debut of Panja Vaishnav Tej from the ‘Mega family,’” he said.

This decision is going to be a huge boost for films releasing in coming days, he added. There were a lot of movies that were lined up for release, last year. But, due to the lockdown, theatres were shut and film-makers took to OTT platforms for releasing movies. This had left a lot

of customers and hardcore fanatics in a lurch. However, now that the government has given 100 per cent occupancy permission, it would prove to be good for the industry,” said Devender Reddy, a worker at Sharada theatre, in Kapra. While theatres opening up is good news, the managements said that they would take all the precautions necessary to keep the premises sanitised. “During the lockdown, the Telugu film industry had put on hold high profile releases with big stars. If the movies aren’t released, the producers would start questioning the creative team to bear the losses,” P. Ramakrishna Goud of the Telangana Film Chambers of Commerce told *Deccan Chronicle*.

FILM | REVIEW

The film starts with an interesting point of PM Modi declaring lockdown because of Coronavirus

Telugu zombies fail to live up to the expectations

SURESH KAVIRAYANI | DC

Prashanth Varma made his debut as director with the psychological thriller ‘Awe’. It won the National Award. His second film has also been appreciated and he likes to experiment. Thus, he is introducing zombies to Telugu cinema for the first time with ‘Zombie Reddy’. Teja Sajja, who earlier worked as child artiste, is now the lead actor of this film.

Mario (Teja Sajja) is an online game designer. His latest game gets negative feedback with a wrong bug. To fix it, he needs his friend Kalyan (Mirchi Hemanth’s) help, who is

Film: Zombie Reddy
Cast: Teja Sajja, Anandi, Daksha Nagarikar, Prudhvi, Mirchi Hemanth, Getup Seenu and others
Director: Prashanth Varma
Rating: 2

getting married in Kurnool. So, Mario, along with two of his friends, travels from Hyderabad to Kurnool to fix the bug. On the way near Kurnool, Mario’s vehicle hits an unknown person who bites the hand of Mario’s friend.

Once they reach Kurnool, Mario comes to know that his friend Kalyan has become the scapegoat between two fac-



Teja Sajja is good. He has played his part confidently. zombie. Within a night all villagers too turn zombies. What happens to Mario’s friend and how they escape from zombies is the crux of the story. Director Prashanth

Govt hospitals to offer all pre-Covid services

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, FEB. 5

Fresh Covid-19 cases being reported in TS over the past few days have been below the 200-mark a day.

The lower daily caseload appears to have given hope to the government that the state may just have turned the corner in its battle against Covid-19.

Reflecting this mood, health minister Etela Rajendar on Friday announced that many government-run hospitals that were declared as Covid-19 facilities are being put back into their pre-pandemic roles of addressing all health issues. Those who continue to have Covid-19 symptoms or have breathing related issues, will be treated henceforth at Chest Hospital in the city while those with multi-organ problems will be treated at Gandhi Hospital, Rajendar announced.

HEALTH MINISTER HINTS AT SCRAPPING AAROGYASRI COVER FROM PVT. HOSPS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 5

The state government on Friday hinted that the state-run Aarogyasri health insurance scheme may henceforth be restricted to services provided at government hospitals. Health minister Etela Rajendar, addressing a press conference, said that it was decided during an extensive review of healthcare services that government hospitals will provide Aarogyasri services. While the minister did not specify that Aarogyasri will be formally stopped at private hospitals, his statement indicated that the implementation of the popular health insurance scheme is set for a revamp.

It may be recalled that

over the past few years, the government and private hospitals have repeatedly butted heads over payments of Aarogyasri dues to such hospitals. Many empanelled private hospitals have stopped accepting Aarogyasri insurance for quite some time.

He also said that the old building of Osmania General Hospital, which was evacuated last year after repeated instances of flooding, was in a good shape by itself. The problem, he said, was because of a drain that ran under the building. As it was overflowing, the drain has since been diverted. The government will take a decision on whether to reopen the building and services in it or construct a new building in its place, he said.

Higher curcumin won day for Sangli

From Page 1

“We have traditionally cultivated turmeric and not calculated the price with expenses. Since my childhood, I have been visiting Nizamabad market along with my father Kole Narsimloo,” said the 65-year-old farmer.

Commission agent D. Radhakishan said that turmeric price is decided based on international demand. “If farmers bring dried and processed turmeric, they will definitely get remunerative price”, he opined. Traders prefer to purchase turmeric based on its

quality and demand from exporters, he explained. There is no syndicate of traders in Nizamabad, he said.

Nizamabad agriculture market yard secretary K. Vijay Kishore said that turmeric arrivals had doubled in the last two days.

STATE REPORTS FEWER NEW COVID INFECTIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT Hyderabad, Feb. 5

The number of Covid-19 cases appear to have fallen into a pattern of fewer new infections with the daily totals hovering under 200.

On Friday, the health department said that the state registered 169 new cases with one more person succumbing to the disease on Thursday. So far, the state has recorded 1,607 deaths and a caseload of 2,95,270.

Cong worried over delimitation

From Page 1

The tenth division stood in the first place with 9,200 voters while there will be 7,900 voters in the 39th division and 7,000 each voters in divisions 22 and 34.

There is an attempt to make all corporate divisions to have an equal number of voters.

The present reservation system in the corporation will be changed fully. Objections, if any, from political parties and cor-

porators will be invited after completion of the division delimitation process. The reservation divisions will be declared through a gazette notification. The mayor post is reserved for general category woman.

Congress corporators are concerned over major changes in their divisions. Corporator Vaddeboina Narasimha Rao said the delimitation exercise in 2005 saw many wrongs. “Officials should not make such mistakes again.

IT companies ready to Look East for sops

From Page 1

Several IT firms have already submitted applications to the industries department seeking land towards the eastern part, under the ‘look east policy’, to claim various exemptions announced by the state government. Subsequently, the state government has focussed on the unused land parcels allotted to IT firms by previous governments.

The TS Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TSIIC), the nodal agency for allotment of lands, had submitted a proposal to the state government to take back the unused land allotted to Infosys.

Official sources in the TSIIC, said, “following the TSIIC proposal, the government has appointed a committee to look into the issue. The committee was

asked to visit the Infosys campus in Pocharam soon to inspect land utilisation and hold consultations with Infosys management over the handing over of unused land back to the government.”

However, the Infosys management is learnt to have written to the TSIIC expressing reservations over the moves to take back the land. The Infosys management urged the TSIIC not to compare Infosys with other companies, which failed to utilise lands on the ground that Infosys has “slew of future expansion plans” for which it needs land, and that all unused land would be kept for utilisation in future.

Official sources in the industries department responded, saying, “The state government will take a call based on the report submitted by the

inspection committee, which was asked to visit the Infosys campus in a week or two.”

Similar attempts to resume unused land from Infosys was made during the Congress government under the chief minister-ship of Kiran Kumar Reddy in 2011. Then, the APIIC had issued notices to Infosys to cancel the land allotment but later backtracked.

In its reply to the notice served by APIIC then, Infosys explained the reasons for its delay by saying the government had notified an SEZ in October 2007 and phase-1 was to be completed by 2008. However, environmental clearance got delayed until May 2009 and the state government could provide water connection to the site only in November 2010. All these factors contributed to the delay, it said.

Prashanth Varma has not been successful introducing zombies to Telugu with his ‘Zombie Reddy’. With clichéd narration, he has depended more on faction film spoofs. The film offers some laughs here and there. If the director could concentrate more on story and engaging narration, it could be a good one.

SHORT TAKES

INTER-STATE GANG NABBED OVER ATM ROBBERY

DC CORRESPONDENT ADILABAD, FEB. 5

Inter-state burglars stole an ATM machine and decamped with ₹7.46 lakh cash by breaking open machine in the Adilabad town in the wee hours on Friday.

Surprisingly, the thieves left behind the machine near Battisavargaon village and managed to escape. The ATM was belonging to SBI and located at Collectorate chowrasta in the Adilabad town.

It is said that even the thieves made futile attempt to rob a jewellery shop on the Adilabad town on the same day night.

Adilabad DSP N.S.V. Venkateshwar Rao visited the ATM centre and expressed doubts that the inter-state gang of thieves might have been involved in the stealing ATM.

Specialbranch inspector Suresh informed that there was ₹7.46 lakh cash in the ATM when the burglars stole the machine.

On Superintendent Vishnu S. Warrior's instructions, then police teams have been formed to nab the thieves involved in the ATM machine robbery.

PD ACT INVOKED AGAINST CRIMINAL FOR ATM THEFT

DC CORRESPONDENT KOTHAGUDEM, FEB. 5

The police of Kothagudem on Friday filed a Prevention of Detention Act case against a criminal, who stole ATMs eleven times. The PD case was filed by the police on the orders given by district collector M.V.Reddy.

Banala Prasanth, a native of Bhupalapalli district, involved in eleven ATM burglaries in Khammam and Bhadradi district. He was also accused in 14 crimes in Jagityala, Warangal, Mulugu, Nalgonda and Bhupalapalli districts and Vijayawada. He did not change his style after being released from jail and involved in the crimes. With this, the police booked him under the PD Act. The police shifted him to Warangal central jail and submitted the PD act orders to the officials there.

Circle inspector Swamy said that the police administration decided to file the PD cases against the criminals who did not change their old path and often resorted to crimes.

SITE ENGINEER IN ACB NET ON BRIBERY CHARGES

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, FEB. 5

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) sleuths caught a site engineer, working at the Telangana State Education Women and Infrastructure Development Corporation (TSEWIDC), while accepting ₹5,000 bribe in Tekumatla mandal in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district on Friday.

According to ACB officials, the site engineer Kathula Kumarswamy demanded bribe from complainant Deshetti Odelu to record the MBs and prepare the bills for the work of water supply to a school in Kundanapally and forward the same bills to the Deputy EE for further processing.

Deshetti Odelu approached ACB officials who hatched a plan and trapped the site engineer while accepting the bribe of ₹5,000 and caught him red-handed in front of the Thirumal Fertilizer shop in Tekumatla village.

ARCHITECTURAL | BLUES

Warangal entrance signs confuse drivers

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC WARANGAL, FEB. 5

Warangal, which was once the Kakatiya kingdom's capital, is known for its giant entrance gates and architectural excellence. Quite ironically, the entrance to the city today has become a confusion to visitors or at times to even residents coming from Hyderabad.

After the four-laning of NH 163, the highway bypassed the city's entrance to pass through the Karimnagar road and merge with Mulugu road. However, the entrance into

Warangal city was not marked properly. After crossing Karunapuram village, a small passage into the service road on the left leads into an underpass to join the original road into the city.

However, many drivers miss the passage, which was supposed to be the highway's exit due to the lack of proper signage. Only a tiny name board indicates the entrance to the city, which often goes unnoticed. Drivers continue to move ahead on the highway and get confused on seeing signboards show-

ing directions to places other than Warangal. Sometimes, confused drivers reverse back after real-

ising directions to places other than Warangal. Sometimes, confused drivers reverse back after real-

TRS to strengthen rural base to checkmate resurgent BJP

KCR likely to chair the state committee meet which will be held tomorrow

DC CORRESPONDENT ADILABAD, FEB. 5

The Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) is likely to streamline its village to state-level committees in order to strengthen the party from the grassroots in time for the next elections.

The party MLAs reportedly asked the high command to allow them to distribute 'Rythu Bandhu' and crop loan waiver amounts in the form of cheques directly to the beneficiaries instead of depositing the money into the latter's bank accounts.

This will help them to directly interact with

farmers and the people and in the process gain political mileage while also highlighting the welfare schemes launched by the state government.

Already, local MLAs are distributing Kalyana Lakshmi, Shaadi Mubarak and CM Relief

Fund cheques directly to the beneficiaries. It is said that the high command is likely to concentrate on strengthening its membership.

A senior leader said, "Our high command is making serious efforts to strengthen the party

from grassroots in the wake of BJP penetrating into rural areas with its religious agenda."

The party leadership hopes to accommodate senior leaders in district and state-level committees as part of the streamlining process. According to sources, the party will focus on its welfare and development schemes in villages to win over the electorate.

It has been observed that some TRS local leaders and youth are slowly participating in religious programmes organised in villages and towns. This is even as the BJP is aggressively attacking the TRS government and

creating an image that it is the only alternative to the ruling party.

News making rounds is that the state committee meeting will be held on Sunday and will be chaired by Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

Already, the TRS party high command is filling up nominated posts with senior leaders in order to strengthen the party.

Some more aspirants will be accommodated in the new district and state committees.

The party high command is also likely to address the differences among the senior leaders and MLAs in the district.

FOUR INCLUDING WIFE HELD FOR KILLING HUSBAND

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, FEB. 5

A woman killed her husband with the help of her paramour and two others in Waddepalli of Hanamkonda. The police who investigated a missing complaint filed by one of the accused Thallapally Pujitha that her husband Thallapally Anil on January 24, found out that it was the woman, who wanted to get rid of her husband to continue her illicit relationship with one Hanamkonda Danny.

According to Commissioner of Police P. Promod Kumar, Hanamkonda Danny of Peddamma gadda, Thallapally Poojitha, Hanamkonda Satish and Kotti Sudhamani plotted to kill Anil on January 22. Danny and Satish who are relatives of Anil, picked him up Waddepalli on the night of the murder and consumed alcohol on the outer ring road.

They later took him near the canal in Ananthasagar. They up Anil who was in an inebriated state and strangled him with his shirt. After he died, they threw him in the canal. On January 29 his dead body was discovered in the Myralam reservoir of Rayaparthy mandal. Relatives of Anil told the police who were investigating his missing case that they suspect his wife Poojitha for his death.

When the police began investigating, it was revealed that Danny's sister Sudhamani helped and encouraged his illicit relationship with Poojitha and that Danny and Satish killed Anil. The four accused were arrested on Friday.

Fiery outbreak



Firefighters try to douse a major fire that broke out in a warehouse at Mankhurd in Mumbai on Friday.

CCTV footage helps cops track murderer

DC CORRESPONDENT KHAMMAM, FEB. 5

A youth killed his wife at Kukkalagutta forest near Kothalankapalli in Penuballi mandal and then lodged a complaint about her going missing. When her body was found, he tried to portray the murder as suicide.

According to the police, B. Nagaseshu Reddy, a resident of Errupalem, married Navya Reddy two months ago. Nagaseshu is working in Mumbai and Navya is doing her BTech second year in a college at Sattupalli.

Nagaseshu came to Errupalem two days ago, went to Sattupalli and picked up Navya on Tuesday, took her to Kukkalagutta and strangled her with her chunni. Later, he sent a message to Navya's father from her phone, "I am disgusted with my backlogs and am committing suicide" to portray the murder as suicide.

Nagaseshu then returned to Errupalem and lodged a complaint that Navya has gone missing. Police, who registered a missing case, started investigating. Soon, they began suspecting the behavior of her husband.

Later, they checked the CC footage of roads near the crime spot and found the accused going along with Navya on his two-wheeler.

Police took him into custody and showed him the footage. On further interrogation, he confessed to killing her as he suspected her character. Navya is daughter of Nagaseshu's maternal uncle.

The accused, who took Navya to the forest area, mixed sleeping pills in cold drinks and forced her to drink the same. Later, he strangled her. He then tied her neck with chunni and tied it to the branch of a tree in the forest. He returned and lodged the complaint of Navya missing.

Farmers give credit to Arvind for hike in turmeric prices

DC CORRESPONDENT NIZAMABAD, FEB. 5

BJP Kisan Morch leaders conducted Palabhisekham (anointing) to the photos of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit

Shah on Friday in Nizamabad agriculture market yard.

They said that turmeric prices increased with the effort of Nizamabad MP D.Arvind. "MP brought turmeric prices issue to the notice of Amit Shah, and the cen-

tral government banned the imports of turmeric", they said. Exports of turmeric have impacted the prices, they said. Kisan Morch district president Nuthula Srinivas Reddy and others were present.

Surve Sangita, new Peddapalli collector

DC CORRESPONDENT PEDDAPALLI, FEB. 5

Bureaucrat Surve Sangitha Satyanarayana, who was the CMRO Project Director of Chief Commissioner of Land Administration (CCLA) on Friday assumed charge as collector of Peddapalli district. She replaces Sikha Patnaik, who was transferred to Adilabad district six months back.

Incidentally, since the bifurcation of Karimnagar district into Karimnagar, Jagtial, Rajanna Sircilla and Peddapalli districts, Sangitha is the fourth woman collector in Peddapalli district. She is the daughter of senior Congress leader, Surve Satyanarayana.

After earlier being a special grade deputy collector in Warangal and other districts and Joint Collector Jogulamba Gadwal district, she was transferred to CCLA as assistant secretary.

Speaking on the occasion, Sangitha said that the district has achieved a good name across the state.



Surve Sangita takes charge as Peddapalli Collector on Friday.

Officials must extend their support to take the administration closer to the people, she urged.

For implementation of sanitation perfectly and to increase the green cover, the government has introduced new village panchayat and municipal acts, which will help comprehensive development. It is the responsibility of officials to involve people in all developmental activities, she added. They should make appropriate use of the funds and complete developmental activities in villages and towns within the time-frame, she said.

DISTRICT COLLECTOR URGES OFFICIALS TO EXPEDITE ROLLAVAGU PROJECT WORKS

DC CORRESPONDENT JAGTIAL, FEB. 5

After inspecting the progress of Rollavagu project at Bhirpur mandal district collector, G. Ravi on Friday urged officials to complete all project works with the time-limit as suggested by Welfare minister, Koppula Eshwar on January 22.

He told the officials to hire

the required machinery and additional work-force in order to excavate soil from 7,500 cubic metres deep instead of 6,200 cubic metres.

"Take necessary steps to prevent the problem of shortage of sand and if the officials face any kind of hurdles, take them to the notice of the higher authorities," Ravi said.

CORRIGENDUM

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All our esteemed customers are hereby informed that the online auction of various accounts of following branches was scheduled on 08.02.2021 through Shriram Automall India Ltd. (SAMIL) on their online platform <https://gold.samil.in> is postponed to 15.02.2021 between 12:30PM to 03:30PM on the same portal due to technical reasons. All other terms and conditions are remaining unchanged.

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Date & Time of opening of Fee stage bid : 05/03/2021 upto 11:30 hrs.

Detailed NIT and tender specification can be downloaded from PSPCL website <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from dated 05/02/2021 onwards.

Note:

1. The prospective bidders can obtain clarification regarding tender specifications from this office. For registration of digital signatures and uploading of tender, information may be sought from <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

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SHORT TAKES

FOREST GUARD
KILLED BY
POACHERS IN MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB. 5

A forest guard took on the poachers in a Madhya Pradesh jungle ‘singlehandedly’ and shot video of his attack by them in his mobile before his death.

Blood-ridden body of Madanlal Verma (52), a forest guard posted in Ratanpur beat of Punjapur forest range in Dewas district, was found on the bank of a water body inside the jungle on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday.

His cell phone, recovered near his body, has led to disclosure of the attack on him by the poachers and his subsequent death.

“We have recovered the footage of the video showing his attack, shot by the slain forest guard himself in his cell phone. The accused were not captured in the video”, Dewas divisional forest officer P.N. Mishra said.

POLICE TOLD TO
FILE REPORT ON
KANGANA’S CASE

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 5

A magistrate court in Mumbai on Friday directed the police to submit a progress report on the inquiry it had ordered into a complaint against actor Kangana Ranaut and her sister for posting alleged hateful messages on social media.

On Friday when the matter came up for hearing, the Amboli police sought further time to file their report on the complaint filed by advocate Ali Kaashif Khan Deshmukh alleging that the sisters tweeted hateful contents against a particular community.

Initially the magistrate in Andheri had ordered an inquiry in October, 2020 and asked the police to file their report by December 5, 2020 into the sisters’ tweets from April 2020, but the police sought more time to complete the inquiry. Even though the magistrate had given a final chance to file their report during the last hearing on January 5.

However, the police sought further time on Friday.

INDIA-U.S. TO
JOINTLY CONDUCT
‘YUDH ABHYAS’

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

Indian and US armies will conduct exercise ‘Yudh Abhyas’ from Monday at Mahajan Field Firing Range (MPFR) in Rajasthan.

Some 500 soldiers (250 from each side) will participate in the exercise to be conducted from February 8 to 21.

This annual training exercise enhances combined interoperability capabilities through training and cultural exchange, which foster enduring partnerships.

“Yudh Abhyas provides excellent opportunities for professional and cultural exchanges that strengthen partnership between Indian and US military through shared learning and training,” said US embassy in a statement.

Training commences with expert academic exchanges and professional development workshops that focus on training at the corps-level and below; combat against conventional, unconventional and hybrid threats; humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Pfizer pulls out of
vaccination race

DC CORRESPONDENT with agencies input NEW DELHI, FEB. 6

Vaccine firm Pfizer on Friday announced its decision to withdraw its application for Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) of its Covid-19 vaccination in India.

Pfizer was the first pharmaceutical firm to seek an emergency use authorisation from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for its Covid-19 vaccine in the country, after it secured such clearance in the UK and Bahrain.

“In pursuance of the Emergency Use Authorisation

Government ready to listen
to protesting farmers: Tomar

Says govt’s offer to amend the farm laws does not mean they are flawed

DC CORRESPONDENTS NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

Asserting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Centre are committed to the welfare of farmers, agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Friday said neither the Opposition members who criticised the three new farm laws, nor the farmers’ unions, which had held more than 10 rounds of discussions with the government, have been able to point out what is “*kaala*” (black) in the laws which they are claiming are “*kaala kanoon*” (black laws).

Intervening in a discussion on the motion of thanks to the President’s address in the Rajya Sabha, Tomar reiterated that the new laws are aimed at boosting farmers’ incomes and the government’s offer to amend them to assuage the farmers’ sentiments does not mean they are flawed. As the government continued its defence of the laws, the Congress, which is supporting the farmers’ unions protests against the laws, sought a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the Republic Day violence, when a protesting mob turned violent and unfurled a Sikh religious flag at the Red Fort.

While the Rajya Sabha saw the agriculture minister strongly defending the laws, the Lok Sabha witnessed sloganeering by Opposition members who demanded the repeal of the laws. The Lower House saw multiple adjournments before it was adjourned for the day till Monday.

“The farmers unions, the Opposition parties have failed to point out a single flaw in three new farm laws. We are not standing on prestige. We have been



Farmers plant flowers near the spikes fixed by the police during their protest against the new farm laws, at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Friday.

asking what is black in this law, and no one is answering,” said Tomar in the Rajya Sabha, where he also attacked the Congress, that is leading the protest in Parliament, as indulging in “*khoon ki kheti*”.

Amid the uproar in Parliament, the Prime Minister held a strategy meeting with Union home minister Amit Shah, parliamentary affairs minister Prahlad Joshi and I&B Minister Prakash Javadekar on how to tackle the ongoing protests by the farmers and the Opposition campaign.

Insisting that the protests over farm laws are limited to only “one state (read Punjab)” and that the farmers are being “instigated”, Tomar said, “I made it clear that the government is ready to

make amendments but it doesn’t mean there is any problem in the farm laws. People in a particular state are misinformed. Farmers are being misled that others would occupy their land if these laws are implemented. Let me know if there is a single provision in the contract farming law which allows any trader to snatch away the land of any farmer,” said the minister.

In an apparent reference to a booklet released by the Congress recently against the laws, the minister hit back, “The world knows water is required for farming. Only the Congress can do farming using blood.”

He also said the government had not “defamed” the farmers, as alleged by the Opposition parties.

Shivraj, Nath hold
closed-door meet

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB. 5

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday held a closed-door meeting with his predecessor and veteran Congress leader Kamal Nath here sparking speculations on ‘track 2 talks’ to end the impasse over the ongoing farmers’ stir.

The one-to-one meeting, held in the Chief Minister’s official residence here, lasted about 20 minutes. Neither the Chief Minister nor Nath spoke to the media to detail what

transpired in the meeting. Congress spokesman here Narendra Saluja, however, indicated that the two leaders discussed the farmers’ issues.

“Farmers’ issues cropped up in the meeting”, Saluja told reporters giving credence to the speculations on track 2 talks to end the impasse over the over 2-month-long farmers’ stir in Delhi.

Incidentally, Nath left for Delhi after the meeting on a week-long visit to the national capital where he was scheduled to meet several senior leaders of Congress.

WB Cong seeks alliance
with ISF to win Muslim
votebank

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, FEB. 5

Desperate to reclaim its Muslim votebank from the ruling Trinamul Congress in the forthcoming West Bengal Assembly elections, the state Congress leaders have sought UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi’s permission to include a third party in their alliance, Indian Secular Front, floated by influential cleric of Furfura Sharif, Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui.

The Congress already has an alliance with the Left Front and the two parties are in the middle of seat-sharing talks. On Thursday, leader of the Opposition in the state, Abdul Mannan, wrote to the Congress president, “Amidst the dialogue process with the Left Front on electoral alliance, I would like to add a possibility of a grand alliance in Bengal to target more winnable seats. You are aware that Congress party in West Bengal stood in the state for the support of minority votes since many years. But the result of the last Lok Sabha election shows

● DR MANNAN’S move came after month-long talks with Siddiqui following AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi’s visit to Siddiqui last month.

that minority vote has shifted from the party. Best example is the district of Murshidabad where Muslim population is not less than 70 per cent, Congress is far behind in every Muslim dominated Assembly segments. The same picture is in Malda and we have been uprooted completely in all Muslim dominated segment of the district of Uttar Dinajpur.”

Dr Mannan’s move came after month-long talks with Siddiqui following AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi’s visit to Siddiqui last month and his pledge to back him, apparently to split the Muslim votes to help the BJP.

Slamming him, BJP IT cell in-charge Amit Malviya tweeted, “The true nature of ‘secular’ politics is nothing but Muslim appeasement and here Abdul Mannan, Congress leader in Bengal, in a letter to Sonia Gandhi,

can’t even hide his desperation to consolidate their Muslim votebank. Reading the letter it seems as if Hindus don’t matter!”

Dr Mannan observed, “Out of 30 per cent Muslim population in Bengal, the percentage of Bengali-speaking Muslim is 90 per cent which had been the traditional votebank of Congress. We have failed to hold that support for various reasons. Introduction of a new political entity in the name of Indian Secular Front (ISF) is a threat for all secular parties. They have made a concept paper (attached) to target Muslims, dalits, tribals and all unprivileged masses within the secular fabric of the country.”

The president of the ISF is a Hindu but the person behind the front is a Muslim religious leader named Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui who belongs to the Eminent Religious Family of Furfura Sharif, Hooghly. He is not only popular for his oratory skill among Muslims but among dalits and rribals also. Lakhs of people gather in his meeting in dalit and tribal areas.”

Centre to give 1
more chance to
UPSC aspirants

New Delhi, Feb. 5: The Centre on Friday told the Supreme Court that it is agreeable to give an extra chance as a one-time relaxation to UPSC civil service aspirants, who had appeared in their last attempt in the 2020 exam amid the Covid-19 pandemic and are otherwise not age-barred.

“Relaxation, only to the extent of providing one extra attempt for Civil Service Examination (CSE), specifically limited to CSE-2021, may be granted to only those candidates who appeared for CSE-2020 as their last permissible attempt and are otherwise not age-barred from appearing in CSE-2021,” the Centre told a bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar.

In a note filed in the apex court, the Centre said that no relaxation shall be granted for CSE-2021 to those candidates who have not exhausted their permissible number of attempts or to those who are otherwise age-barred from appearing in CSE-2021 as per the prescribed age limits of different categories, or to any other candidate for any other reason whatsoever.

“This relaxation for the candidates and to the extent as prescribed above, shall be a one-time relaxation only and shall apply only for appearing in CSE-2021 and shall not be treated as a precedent,” it told the bench, also comprising Justice Dinesh Maheshwari.

The Centre said that the

relaxation “shall not create any vested right whatsoever or any other purported right on ground of parity or otherwise, in favour of any other set/class of candidates at any time in the future.”

“As per the suggestion of this court, the Union of India is agreeable to the following ex-gratia, one-time, restricted relaxation to be granted to the prospective candidates, subject to the same being part of a consent order, disposing off the petition,” the note, filed by Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju, said.

The bench told Raju to circulate the note and asked the petitioners to file their responses to it. The top court said it would hear the matter on February 8.

The bench is hearing a plea seeking grant of one more chance in the UPSC’s civil services exam to those aspirants who could not appear in their last attempt in 2020 due to the pandemic.

On February 1, the Centre had told the top court that it cannot grant an extra chance to civil services aspirants who could not appear or prepare well for their last attempt in the UPSC civil service exam in 2020 due to the pandemic, while reiterating that it would amount to extending “differential treatment” to similarly placed candidates. However, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta had on February 1 sought time to discuss the issue once again.

After 18 months,
4G back in J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, FEB. 5

High speed 4G internet services were restored in entire Jammu and Kashmir late on Friday evening, exactly after a gap of 18 months.

The authorities said that the decision to this effect was taken after the review of the security situation in the Union Territory and in view of the recommendations of a committee set up by the government to look into the issue some time ago.

The announcement was made by Principal Secretary Information, Rohit Kansal, who is also government spokesperson, through a tweet. It said, “4G mobile internet services being restored in entire J&K @diprjk”

A formal order signed by Shaleen Kabba, principal secretary (home), said that in view of the advice of the special committee constituted on the directive of Supreme Court and upon “careful review” of the overall security scenario the restrictions on mobile data services and fixed line Internet connectivity is revoked “except to the extent that the pre-paid SIM card holders shall be provided excess to the Internet connectivity only after verification as per the norms applicable for post-paid connections”.

In August last year, the J&K authorities had restored high-speed 4G internet service on ‘experimental basis’ in two districts of the erstwhile state-Udhampur and Ganderbal, more than a year after a complete communication blackout was enforced in both Jammu region and Kashmir Valley regions ahead of the Centre’s abrogating Article 370 and bifurcating the state into two Union Territories on August 5, 2019.

Though the landline and mobile phone and 2G bandwidth internet services were restored in a phased manner across what is now called the UT of J&K earlier, 18 out of 20 of its districts continued to be deprived of the high-speed 4G internet.

A series of judgements given and observations made by the Supreme Court in the past had failed to end what the critics called was J&K’s “digital siege”.

Welcoming the government’s decision to end the ban on high speed internet services after 551 days, former chief minister and National Conference leader Omar Abdullah tweeted “4G Mubarak! For the first time since Aug 2019 all of J&K will have 4G mobile data. Better late than never.”

order passed on January 28, had refused to grant him bail noting that to “promote harmony” is one of the constitutional duties. It had also turned down the bail plea of another accused in the case.

In its order, the high court had said it would not comment on merits of the case, but based on the material seized, the witnesses’ statements and considering the fact that probe was going on, no case was made out for grant of bail.

BIG RELIEF Apex court stays MP High Court order, production warrant issued against Faruqui

SC grants bail to comedian
Munawar Faruqui

New Delhi, Feb. 5: In a relief to comedian Munawar Faruqui, arrested in a case for allegedly hurting religious sentiments by passing objectionable remarks about Hindu deities during a show, the Supreme Court on Friday released him on an interim bail.

The top court also stayed the Madhya Pradesh High Court order of January 28, which had refused to grant him bail noting that to “promote harmony” is one of the constitutional duties.

It also stayed the produc-

tion warrant issued against Faruqui by a trial court in Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh in connection with the FIR lodged in the state.

A bench of Justices R.F. Nariman and B.R. Gavai said issued notice on two petitions filed by Faruqui seeking bail in a case lodged in Indore in Madhya Pradesh and clubbing and quashing of FIRs lodged for the same alleged offence in different states.

The top court sought response from Madhya Pradesh government on

both the pleas filed by Faruqui and from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Maharashtra governments on the plea seeking clubbing and quashing of FIRs.

This being the case, we issue notice in both the petitions, and stay the Judgment of the High Court. The petitioner is released on ad-interim bail on conditions to the satisfaction of the trial court. In the meantime, there shall be stay of the production warrants as well, the bench said.

At the outset, advocate Saurabh Kirpal, appearing for Faruqui said, This is a case of victimisation.

He said that allegations made in the FIR are vague in nature and procedure of arrest laid down by the court in its 2014 verdict was not followed.

The bench noted the submission and said, The counsel has pointed out to us that quite apart from the fact that the allegations made in the FIR are vague that the procedure contained in Section 41 CrPC as adumbrated by

our Judgment in Arnesh Kumar Versus State of Bihar and others has not been followed before arresting the petitioner.

Faruqui and four others were arrested on January 1 following a complaint by a BJP MLA’s son that alleged objectionable remarks about Hindu deities and Union home minister Amit Shah were passed by him during a comedy show at a cafe in Indore on New Year’s day. One more person was arrested subsequently.

The high court, in its

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

GAS EXPLOSION IN S. GERMANY, MANY HURT

Berlin, Feb. 5: Several people were injured in a gas explosion on Friday in or near a building in the southern German town of Memmingen. The explosion occurred at about 6 am and damaged the building used by the Bavarian Red Cross, which also had apartments above, authorities told the dpa news agency. Five people were injured, one seriously, police said. The source of the explosion was a defective gas line that ran under the street in front of the building, dpa reported. Authorities warned that other explosions were possible and evacuated the area. The building was seriously damaged, police said.

COPS CHARGE PAIR OVER SEX SLAVE RING

Brisbane, Australia, Feb. 5 : A man and woman in Australia were charged with drugging several women and forcing them into prostitution on Friday, with police alleging girls as young as 17 were tattooed as property and held in "sexual servitude". A 35-year-old Brisbane man is accused of giving at least four victims "stupefying drugs" and along with a suspected female accomplice faces multiple charges relating to unlawful prostitution. Police said raids at two properties in Brisbane's southern suburbs uncovered four female victims and authorities believe more have yet to be found. "The investigation is still ongoing however the women are now safe thanks to the information from members of the public and the diligence of our officers," Queensland Police Service Detective Inspector Juliet Hancock said in a statement. "We believe there are other victims who have been exploited by the man, and I encourage them to come forward and contact police."

2-YR-OLD INDIAN BOY BECOMES YOUNGEST DONOR

Dubai, Feb. 5: A two-year-old Indian boy has become one of the youngest donors of hair in the UAE, as part of a charity drive to help cancer patients, according to a media report. At two years and 10 months, Taksh Jain is one of the youngest children to have enrolled into the Friends of Cancer Patients' (FOCP) hair donation campaign, the Gulf News reported. His mother, Neha Jain, a housewife, said Taksh was inspired by his older sister, who donated her locks for a similar cause in 2019. "My son used to listen to that and started telling us that he too wanted to give his hair like his sister. I was touched and started growing his hair." Jain said they are going to wait for Taksh's hair to grow a little longer, before it is finally donated. The FOCP launched the hair donation drive on Thursday, marking World Cancer Day. As of now, seven schools in the UAE are part of the initiative.

TALIBAN ATTACK KILLS 10 AFGHAN MILITIAMEN

Kunduz, Afghanistan, Feb. 5: At least 10 pro-government Afghan militiamen were killed in fierce overnight fighting after their checkpoint came under attack from Taliban fighters in northern Afghanistan, officials said on Friday. The attack on the local militia, many of which work with overstretched security forces, came as violence surges across the country despite peace talks between the warring Taliban and Afghan government. Insurgents attacked the checkpoint in the restive Kunduz province during the night, provincial governor Abdul Sattar Mirzakwal told reporters. "Their attack was repelled initially but the militiamen were attacked again by Taliban fighters which led to intense fighting," Mirzakwal said. "Unfortunately, 10 uprising forces (pro-government militiamen) were killed." Kunduz provincial council member Amruddin Wali confirmed the attack but said at least 15 militiamen were killed. There was no immediate comment from the Taliban.

Biden ends US role in Yemen war, calls out Russia, China

US Prez also freezes Trump's plans to redeploy troops from Germany

Washington, Feb. 5: President Joe Biden ended US support for Saudi Arabia's devastating war in Yemen and dramatically increased the welcome to refugees, ushering in a major reset in American foreign policy. In his first major speech on foreign affairs as president, Biden also froze former president Donald Trump's plans to redeploy troops from Germany and vowed a tough approach against what he described as a rising authoritarian threat from China and Russia.

Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris traveled together to the State Department in a symbol of a renewed focus on diplomacy after Trump's tumultuous four years. "America is back. Diplomacy is back," Biden told a socially distanced auditorium of diplomats. In a speech shortly afterward, Biden said the United States would end all support including connected arms sales for ally Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, which he said "has created a humanitarian and strategic catastrophe." He appointed a US special envoy for Yemen, veteran diplomat Timothy Lenderking, who Biden said would support UN efforts to reach a ceasefire and revive peace talks between the government and Huthi rebels who control much of the country, including the capital Sanaa. "This war has to end," Biden said. Saudi Arabia reacted to Biden's speech by reasserting its commitment to a political solution in Yemen, according to state media.

US House strips posts of 'QAnon Congresswoman'

Washington, Feb. 5: The Democratic-led US House voted on Thursday to discipline a congresswoman who embraced QAnon conspiracy theories and endorsed violence, capping weeks of mounting turmoil over holding to account a lawmaker whose extremist rhetoric caused a rupture in Republican ranks. Conservative first-term congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, facing bipartisan opprobrium for a series of disturbing comments and support of social media posts advocating the assassination of Democratic lawmakers, was stripped of her two assignments on the House education and budget committees. The punishment was meted out in a modestly bipartisan vote of 230 to 199 which occurred hours after Greene, a fierce supporter of former president Donald Trump, took to the House floor to renounce the conspiracy movement and expressed regret for spreading misinformation. Eleven Republicans defied their party to join all voting Democrats in disciplining Greene, whose alarming actions before she ran for office included posting video of herself harassing a teen school shooting survivor and casting doubt on the September 11, 2001 attacks. "No member ought to be

permitted to engage in the kind of behavior that Representative Greene has and face zero consequences," number two House Democrat Steny Hoyer told the chamber. "This vote can be a first step in correcting the error of those who so far have chosen to do nothing." But Republicans blasted the action against one of their own as shattering congressional precedent, with members of leadership warning of potential political payback should they regain power. Number three Republican Liz Cheney, fresh from surviving a challenge to her leadership after she voted to impeach Trump last month, said that while Greene's comments were reprehensible, Democrats "have no business determining which Republicans sit on committees."

GREEN | PROJECT

Unveils \$43 billion deal, involves 33 different entities Korea plans biggest offshore wind farm

Seoul, Feb. 5: A \$43 billion deal was signed Friday to build what the South Korean government said will be the world's biggest offshore wind power complex, as it seeks to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. South Korea has few energy resources of its own and relies on imported coal — a cheap but dirty fuel — for around 40 percent of its electricity. President Moon Jae-in declared the carbon neutrality goal last year but at the same time is looking to

ON AMERICA
Biden said the United States will welcome up to 1,25,000 refugees in the first fiscal year of his administration — far above the record-low 15,000 last approved by Trump, who was a vociferous critic of non-Western immigration.

ON GERMANY

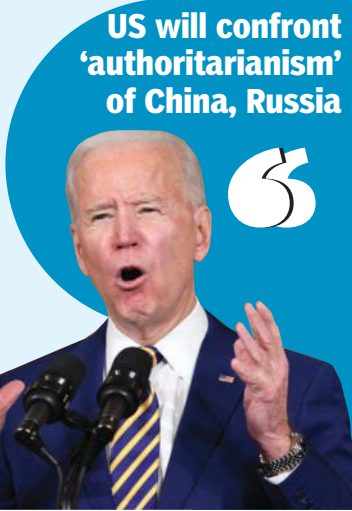
Putting on hold plans set in motion by Trump to reduce the US troop presence in Germany, a cornerstone of NATO security since the start of the Cold War.

ON RUSSIA

Biden said that he had warned Vladimir Putin that the US will no longer be "rolling over in the face of Russia's aggressive actions." "We will not hesitate to raise the cost on Russia and defend our vital interest and our people."

ON YEMEN

US President said that the war in Yemen "has to end", pledging to terminate US support for Saudi-led offensive operations and to halt arms sales. "This war has to end," Biden said.



last-minute designation of the Huthis as a terrorist group. In Yemen, senior political official Hamid Assem voiced hope that Biden's plan will mark the end of a six-year war that has left tens of thousands dead. "The Biden administration saw that the war in Yemen carries a heavy cost and that America's reputation has been tarnished by the killing of the people of Yemen," he said. In another sharp reversal, Biden said the United States will welcome up to 1,25,000 refugees in the first fiscal year of his administration — far above the record-low 15,000 last approved by Trump, who was a vociferous critic of non-Western immigration.

"The United States' moral leadership on refugee issues was a point of bipartisan consensus for so many decades when I first got here," said Biden, who was elected to the Senate in 1972. "We shine the light, the lamp, of liberty on oppressed people. And our example pushed other countries to open wide their doors as well." Among groups seeking asylum, Biden said his administration would welcome LGBTQ people fleeing persecution over their sexual orientation. Biden also put on hold plans set in motion by Trump to reduce the US troop presence in Germany, a cornerstone of NATO security since the start of the Cold War. Trump's decision was

seen as linked to his tense relationship with German Chancellor Angela Merkel — whose welcome to mostly Syrian migrants he belittled. Defense Secretary Austin Lloyd later said he had ordered a Pentagon review of US military "force posture" around the world in consultation with allies. Biden has pledged to keep up Trump's hard stance on China — but also to toughen the US stance on Russian President Vladimir Putin, for whom the defeated US president voiced admiration. "I made it clear to President Putin — in a manner very different from my predecessor — that the days of the United States rolling over in the face of Russia's aggressive actions, interfering with our elections, cyber attack and poisoning its citizens are over," Biden said. Moments before the speech, the State Department said that Blinken spoke by telephone with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and, among other issues, raised the purported poisoning of opposition leader Alexei Navalny — who was arrested last month on his return to Moscow and has inspired thousands to take to the streets. Biden said the United States "must meet this new moment of advancing authoritarianism including the growing ambitions of China to rival the United States and the determination of Russia to damage and disrupt our democracy." — AFP



The USS John S. McCain (DDG 56) destroyer is moored in a dock at the Yokosuka Naval Base on June 01, 2019 in Yokosuka, Japan. — AFP file photo

Beijing warns off US warship near South China Sea

Beijing, Feb. 5: China on Friday warned off a US warship sailing near contested islands in the South China Sea, Beijing said, the first such encounter made public since the inauguration of President Joe Biden. The USS John S. McCain "broke into China's Xisha territorial waters without the permission of the Chinese government," Beijing's military said in a statement, using its name for the disputed Parcel Islands. The People's Liberation Army "organized naval and air forces to track, monitor and warn off" the warship, the Chinese military said, blasting the US for "seriously violating China's sovereignty" and "harming regional peace." The Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer on Thursday also conducted a routine transit through the waterway separating the Chinese mainland and Taiwan, which Beijing says constitutes part of its territory. Washington has argued that such exercises are in

line with international law and help defend right of passage through the region amid competing claims by China and other governments. China lays claim to nearly all of the South China Sea, including the Paracel Islands. Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam all also claim parts of the region, believed to hold valuable oil and gas deposits. Further angering those countries, and the US, Beijing has moved to build reefs into artificial islands capable of hosting military planes. The US navy in late January sent an aircraft carrier group into the South China Sea on a so-called "freedom of navigation exercise," its first routine operation in the region under the Biden administration. China has stepped up military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan since the 2016 election of President Tsai Ing-wen, who refuses to accept Beijing's stance that the island is part of "one China". — AFP



Indonesian protesters release pigeons during a protest against the military coup in Myanmar, outside the Myanmar Embassy in Jakarta on Friday. — AFP

Key Aung San Suu Kyi aide held

Yangon, Feb. 5: A key aide to ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi was arrested on Friday, days after a coup that has sparked outrage and calls by US President Joe Biden for the generals to relinquish power. The arrest came after the streets of Myanmar's biggest city filled for a third night with people banging pots and honking car horns, voicing their opposition to Monday's coup. On Friday dozens of teachers at Yangon's Dagon University staged a rally where displayed a three-finger salute bor-

● **U.S. PRESIDENT Joe Biden called on Myanmar's generals to "relinquish power" Thursday and demanded they free civilian leaders detained in this week's coup, as his administration said it was considering sanctions.**

rowed from Hong Kong and Thailand's democracy movements, and sang a popular revolution song. The military detained de facto leader Suu Kyi and president Win Myint early Monday, ending the country's 10-year dalliance

with democracy that had followed decades of oppressive junta rule. Win Htein, considered Suu Kyi's right-hand man, was arrested at his daughter's house, said Kyi Toe, a press officer for the National League of Democracy. The 79-year-old NLD stalwart has spent long stretches in and out for detention for campaigning against military rule. Ahead of his arrest, Win Htein told local media that the military putsch was "not wise", and that its leaders had taken the country "in the wrong direction".

"Everyone in the country should oppose as much as they can the actions they are seeking to take us back to zero by destroying our government," he told Frontier Myanmar in the coup's aftermath. Suu Kyi has not been seen in public since Monday. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a Yangon-based group that monitors political arrests in Myanmar, more than 130 officials and lawmakers have been detained in relation to the coup. — AFP

RUSSIA EXPELS EU DIPLOMATS OVER NAVALNY ROW, TIES AT 'LOW POINT'

Moscow, Feb. 5: Moscow said on Friday it was expelling diplomats from Poland, Germany and Sweden for participating in unsanctioned demonstrations last month in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny. The move comes hours after the European Union's top diplomat Josep Borrell met Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow and described the bloc's ties with Russia as at a "low point" over Navalny's jailing. Borrell "strongly condemned" the action, a spokesman said, while Sweden branded it "com-

pletely unfounded". The Russian foreign ministry said in a statement that an unspecified number of diplomats from the three EU countries took part in "illegal demonstrations" on January 23 and had been declared persona non grata. "They were ordered to leave Russia in the near future," the ministry said, adding that Moscow expects diplomats from the countries to "strictly follow the norms of international law" in the future. Russian police have arrested more than 10,000 people at mass demonstrations. — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

6 FEBRUARY 2021

US remarks a wake-up call Delhi can't ignore

The American government's statement on Thursday — in which the right of peaceful protest, free speech, and unhindered access to the Internet were flagged as signs of a "thriving democracy" — is a straightforward response to the egregious steps of the Narendra Modi government in recent days. These are the first substantive public observations on India by the two-week-old Biden administration. The message — in the backdrop of the farmers' agitation in the country, and the comments by journalists and other public figures in that context — accords with the sentiments of millions of Indians, and millions worldwide, who are surprised by the turn of events and processes in India for some time.

President Joe Biden's administration has underlined first principles in a neutral, moderate voice. Also, the US state department's cautionary observations — which was reiterated by the US embassy in India — was in response to a question by the American newspaper *The Wall Street Journal*, not off its own bat. This is a useful device suggestive of an official criticism, but not quite.

The US state department's cautionary observations was in response to a question by the *Wall Street Journal*, not off its own bat. This is a useful device suggestive of an official criticism, but not quite.

The so-called "toolkit" has moved the Indian government, including its normally staid external affairs ministry, and the ruling party, to smell an international "conspiracy", no less, to defame India. This is laughable, of course.

The Delhi Police, frequently a violent and communal force, has filed a FIR against international personalities without naming anyone. This is a fig leaf. It is clear that Ms Rihanna and Ms Thunberg, "and others" (including the US vice-president's lawyer-writer niece Meena Harris), are the principal objects of its ire.

These FIRs — the official call for investigation — by the Delhi police, which is directly controlled by Union home minister Amit Shah, are related to extremely serious criminal offences such as sedition and attempt to cause disharmony as between communities. Before the international celebrities, it had been the turn of journalists in India — last week six well-known editors, in a long string of journalists in recent times, and senior politicians like Shashi Tharoor — to face exactly the same official allegations. The US state department's remarks appear to have this figured.

In its sorry response, the India's external affairs ministry is self-congratulatory, calling India a "vibrant" democracy with "shared values" with the United States. In today's climate, is it? No amount of seeking to falsely equate the January 6 attack on the US Capitol and the January 26 move by infiltrators in the entirely peaceful farmers' movement to create chaos at the Red Fort, hides the ugly reality of our present.

Don't pardon Rajiv killers

Given the embarrassing task of granting clemency to seven life convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, the Tamil Nadu Governor, Banwarilal Purohit, has ducked the responsibility. He has passed the political football back to the President of India saying he is the appropriate authority to take the call though he may find it difficult to explain why he sat on it for two-and-a-half years before declining to decide. The prisoners for life, some of whose sentences were commuted to life and thus got a reprieve from the gallows, have been languishing in Tamil Nadu prisons for close to three decades. The question that arises is whether they deserve any sympathy.

Mercy may be a quality that is twice blessed, as the Bard of Avon put it, but sympathy for the conspirators of a heinous crime aimed at one who had been Prime Minister of India may be totally misplaced even if some of them may have, innocently or otherwise, contributed very little to the plot like buying a 9-volt battery to complete the circuit to blow up the explosives hidden in the body belt worn by the assassin Dhanu. The plot, hatched by LITE's murderous chief Velupillai Prabhakaran, seemed to have come straight out of a Frederick Forsyth novel and was carried out on Indian soil near Chennai, killing 18 including Rajiv Gandhi and the assassin and injuring 43 bystanders on May 21, 1991.

Sympathy on humanitarian grounds for the surviving plotters has been built up in the strange political ambience in a state that once viewed a Tamil Eelam in northern Sri Lanka as a desirable outcome. Rajiv Gandhi, confused by a welter of opinions on the Tamils issue, may have erred in judgment in sending a peace keeping force to the island nation and paid the price. No government at the Centre could be seen as weak in pardoning the killers of a Prime Minister. The ball is back with the President even as the top court will continue to grapple with the legal challenges to lifetimes in prison.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

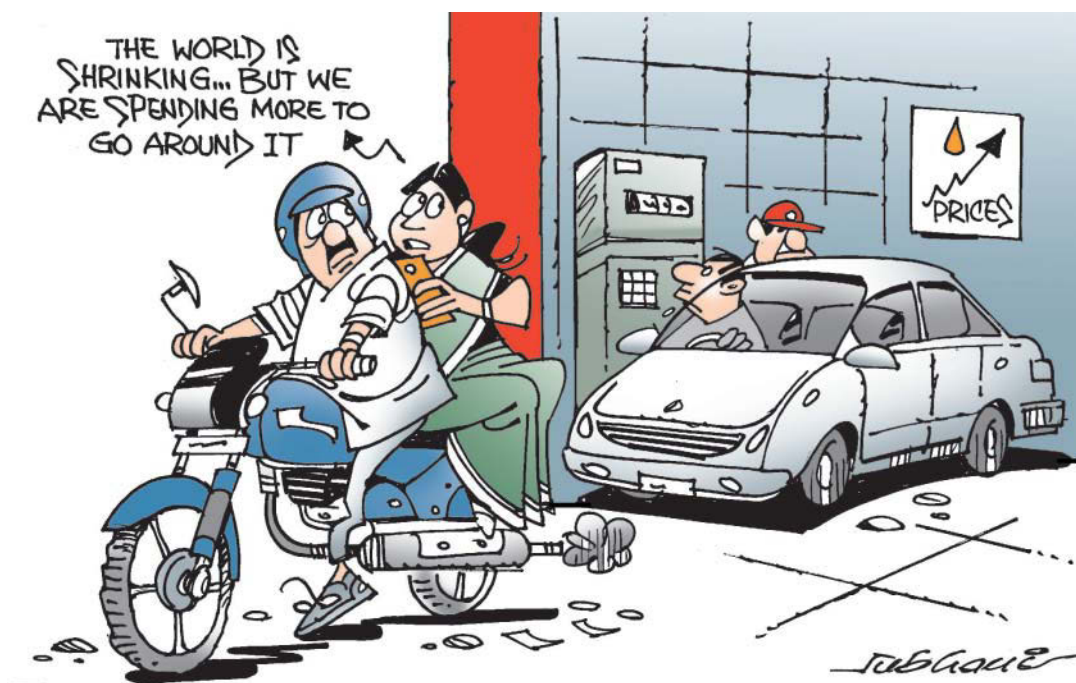
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Subhani



Yeh Rihanna-Wihanna, Greta-Vreta... kaun hai?

Shobhaa De



I was in salubrious Goa, desperately trying to dodge zillions of Dilliwallas who have as good as taken over this gorgeous state and established their own "klonies" across favoured villages and hamlets. Poor Goans, I thought to myself. First came the Israelis, then the Russians — and now these! Arpora has become a mini-Gurgaon, and the locals aren't amused. In such a surrealist setting, it was a bit tough for me to focus on a single tweet posted by a Barbados-born singer and the havoc it generated across India. Well, I'm getting carried away — it was Dilli netas and assorted celebrities/influencers who jumped in, and boom! Rihanna went viral. Be honest — how many of you reading this column had even heard of Rihanna before this *hungama*? Okay — maybe, you had heard her. And even danced to her tracks, but did Rihanna and what she tweeted impact your life even remotely? No, *na*? I recall enjoying *Under my umbrella*, which brought Rihanna into the global stage way back in 2007. After that, I totally forgot all about her.

Now, I am unlikely to forget! The 32-year-old singer with a staggering 100 million followers on Instagram. No wonder our *netas* got sufficiently *hilaaoed* and obviously rattled, when she had the gumption to tweet in support of our protesting farmers. More than 226.3K retweets followed, with 490.3K users "liking" the tweet. Whoa! What was going on?

Uske baad, that opinionated Greta what's-her- face, got into the act and *lagaaoed* her own

tweet. Mayhem followed as all *desi* patriots scrambled to counterattack these impudent folks who had dared to question our official stand on the farmers' protests. People who had absolutely nothing to do with either the farmers or the government, jumped in feet first to damn and attack the global "influencers", accusing them of generating an international conspiracy designed to break up our vast country and hand it over to China! Stumped? So was I ... as it is, the sultry Goan weather had started to play tricks with my mood and thinking (without feni, let me hastily clarify), *upar se...* I was going through *zabardast* tweets posted by super-patriotic Indians, basically asking Rihanna and Co to butt out of India's affairs. Someone brilliant called Sambit Patra (know him?) thundered on a bigoted/compromised television channel: "Why doesn't Rihanna tweet about the 1984 riots?" Excellent question, Shri Patra. But the singer was born in 1988 and Twitter started only in 2006. *Koi baat nahi* — loyalty game fully on, even if the goof-ups are totally embarrassing. So much for credibility. Hot air has its uses when the audience itself is grossly uninformed.

Confession: I am pretty clueless myself. But when I read accounts of two elderly *fauji* farmers (Jeet Singh, 70, and Gurmukh Singh, 80) being picked up by the Delhi police as suspects, charged with an act of violence (FIR No. 31) they were allegedly a part of ... nothing makes sense! Lodged in Tihar Jail, the two men who had served the Army for over two decades in the

same Sikh Regiment, dealing with this strange situation that their traumatised families can do little about. Jeet Singh's son Veer works as a guard. He said: "Our fathers fought for India in their youth. The government has disrespected them by putting such veterans in jail." The two farmers own an acre of farmland each, on which they grow wheat. Today, they are languishing in jail and being called "Khalistanis" and "terrorists". Rihanna sang *Unapologetic* in 2012. You go figure who deserves an apology in this case.

Soon, everybody had jumped in to express their two bits' worth. I saved my *gyaan* and stayed out — savouring grilled calamari at a beach shack seemed a far more worthwhile pursuit. I thought lazily and idly to myself, trying hard not to get distracted by the over-dressed Gurgaon crowd swigging beer at the next table: "Why is everybody frothing at the mouth and dissing Rihanna?" Then I remembered. If VVIP *Bharatwaasis* did not step up publicly and lecture us on our duty as citizens ("call out Rihanna, tell her not to meddle in India's affairs, let the world know we can handle our own internal matters..."), their bag of *sarkari* goodies would be snatched away. The more relevant counter question to all those big names who have passed the patriotic test with flying colours — did

even one of them understand the highly complex farmers' problem? Frankly, it beats most analysts. Without getting to the bottom of what is nothing short of an unfortunate impasse at the moment, why ignite more fires? Who is Rihanna to us? Had her tweet been ignored, we would not have attracted even more global scrutiny — it was as if the entire government machinery at the time was busy dealing with a famous foreign entertainer's tweet!

Most super celebrities hire PR teams to manage social media accounts and project a finely calibrated public image. Perhaps Rihanna does indeed possess remarkable understanding of complicated political, social and cultural issues in distant lands she may never ever set foot in (unless the money is good, of course). But the chances are, she goes along with whatever her alert and socially aware PR team places before her. In simple words, it is shrewd brand building. It shows her as a thinking star concerned with humanity. That's it! Yes, a tweet from such an individual does snowball into a bigger controversy, if it catches on — like it did this time. These are the expected repercussions in the age of celebrity — deal with them wisely, as a government. By falling into the trap, we fed the monster and kept the story alive. *Mogambo* is very *naraaz*, okay? Get smart, you guys. Focus on *asli* matters. Rihanna's other hit was titled: "*Bitch, better have my money...*" She has made hers. The "bitch" has delivered. Where does that leave us? Still roping in celebrities to counter Rihanna! Hello! She has moved on, okay? She is probably tweeting about saving endangered dolphins in some remote bay. Such *bewakoofi*, I tell you!

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

Perhaps Rihanna does indeed possess remarkable understanding of complicated political, social and cultural issues in distant lands she may never ever set foot in. But the chances are, she goes along with what her PR team places before her.

LETTERS

FARMERS' AGITATION

Your editorial on the farmers' agitation is welcome (*Govt's anti-Twitter rage betrays own uncertainty, DC, Feb. 5*). The Centre must not lose time in resolving the issue. The only mystery is why are only farmers from a few states protesting? Government representatives should meet them and redress their grievances.

R.K. Sarma
Secunderabad

AADHAAR FOR WATER

After the waiver of charges for 20,000 litres of water a month was announced, a franchise of water department called to link Aadhaar number of the president of the RWA with the CAN. However, every flat was to be considered as an individual household. So the rebate must be 20,000 litres per apartment. Linking Aadhaar of the president of the apartments association will lead to the benefit being cornered by an individual. It is unfair. Those are temporary posts and liable to change.

Ranga Seshu
Hyderabad

DRIVING LICENCE

If character certificates are mandatory for a driving licence, why not lawmakers get one? (*MP makes character certificate must for DL, DC, Feb. 5*). They are in a way driving the nation, irrespective of whether it is in the right or wrong direction. We are short of lawmakers with character and its they who need character certificates from people before they can file nominations.

N. Nagarajan
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Astronauts land on moon

HOUSTON, FEBRUARY. 5 Alan Shepard and Edgar Mitchell today landed in the stark highlands of Fra Mauro on man's third expedition to the surface of the moon.

"We're on the surface. We made a good landing", said Ed Mitchell. The astronauts left lunar orbit at 1435 IST with a firing of their adjustable descent engine, and slid on their backs and feet first past hipparcos and ptolemaus crater and over the rim of the sea of clouds.

Then, at a point called "high gate" they rolled over rightside up.

Farrukh Dhondy
Of Cabbages & Kings



"Gratitude is an angel
With a very short memory.
Jealousy, a demon
With a stimulated long one
Indifference shrugs its shoulders
In dismissal whenever he
Encounters a strong emotion
Condemning it as the wrong one."
— From the *Opera Bheeda Pareeda*
Translated from Hungarian by
Bachchoo

To ensure safety in a globalised world, all must get the vaccine...

It was a Greek called Aristarchus who in 200 BC first said that the earth was a globe. Galileo was certain of it and in later centuries the Portuguese Magellan added the decisive circumnavigating proof. An early definition of "globalisation" was born.

Today "globalisation" means an exchange of culture and trade amongst most if not all nations of the world and it would certainly include the phenomenon of the spread of the Internet to every crook and nanny of the world.

A Marxist definition would concentrate on the international flow and exchange of capital and of labour — with American motor car manufacturing relocating to the Far East and Coca Cola being concocted, bottled and sold

from the Uighar districts of western China.

Its inevitability hasn't led to popularity. There are Canutes who wish to turn back the tide. The most boastful and vociferous of these in recent times was one Donald Trump, whose opposition to globalisation may not have included the conviction that the world was flat (though one can never be sure what neo-trogodytes believe). It certainly included a political programme that attempted to reverse the flow of capital out, and labour into, the United States of America. It negated international treaties designed to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons and was opposed to global action on climate change.

Britain's political position was paradoxical. On the one hand, Brexit caused the UK to leave one of the planet's largest trading blocs to go it alone, and on the other hand it trumpeted intentions to open Little England to an ambitious programme of international trade, an invitation to capital to come here with the promise of low taxes and Rishi Sunak's free ports, while at the same time stopping the import of even necessary labour. Welcome to "Free port and deport

England" — both policies perpetrated, ironically, by British ministers whose origins are Indian and Indo-African.

Yet now, gentle reader, the most dreadful reminder that the tide of globalisation is upon us is not the rush of refugees from Africa to Europe or the determination of Japanese car manufacturers to relocate to countries where the promise of profit is the greatest. Independent of the will of capital and labour, nature has shown its near-apocalyptic hand. There have been plagues before, and Sars and Ebola did spread from one country to another, but Covid-19 and its menacingly developing variants is, after the very early spread of the ancestors of homo sapiens to all corners of the globe, the first truly fast-moving inhabitant of everywhere.

Earlier plagues hit single countries. Daniel Defoe wrote his *Journal of the Plague Year* as a novel covering events in London 1665. Then Shakespeare, it is said, wrote *Macbeth* and *King Lear* under lockdown in the early years of the seventeenth century. The Internet has alerted me to several literary efforts attempting to capture the ennui, isolation, change in shopping arrangements, etc during today's

Covid lockdowns. No doubt there will be whole novels about what Netflix programmes some scribbler watched, with photographs of the meals they cooked in these dreadful months. I myself have found time to complete two books which have nothing to do with how I spend my time or what I cook but are brilliant fictional... (*I've repeatedly told you that this space is not for your idiotic self-advertisements — Ed. Sorry yaar, iss mushkil vakhth mey thhodde si publicity sey kya farak padtha? — fd*).

The globalist way of looking at these times is to see them as a battle between two species of evolved life — the mutating, deadly coronavirus strains and the scientifically analytical and creative genius of scientists and the ingenuity of political ordering.

The scientific effort of the geneticists, doctors, epidemiologists and others who have not only invented and deployed five developed vaccines, and with many more to come, but have found treatments to alleviate the symptoms of the infected.

The political efforts, subject to all manner of constraints and forces, including crass cronyism — as in Britain where jobs and public funds

are given to Tory friends and supporters — profiteering and fraud are confused and less laudable.

Here, gentle reader, are a couple of shameful statistics:

First: The International Labour Organisation estimates that the plague has cost the workers of the world a loss in earnings of \$3.7 trillion. According to Oxfam, the increase in wealth of the world's top billionaires in ten months of the plague has been \$3.9 trillion.

Next: As of January 23, 39 million people in the so-called "first world" had received an anti-Covid vaccination. The number of people who have been vaccinated in the continent of Africa, excluding South Africa, was 29. Yes, you read that correctly. No, I haven't missed out the words "thousand" or "million". There are reports, since that grim statistic, saying that subsequently other nations have allocated funds to get the vaccines across to Africa.

This isn't about generosity, it's self-preservation in a globalised world in which the enemy species has to be fought and subdued, if not annihilated altogether — through... err... globalisation?

quick BITES

INDICATORS

		%
Sensex	50,731.63	0.23
Nifty 50	14,924.30	0.19
S&P 500*	3,886.96	0.39
Dollar (₹)	72.92	0.06
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.84	0.72
Euro (₹)	87.35	0.14
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,738*163	0.34
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	59.57	1.24
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.071	-0.05
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.153	0.014

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Forex reserves jump to record \$590.18 billion

Foreign exchange reserves rose \$4.85 billion to touch a record high of \$590.18 billion in the week ended January 29, according to RBI data. In the previous week ended January 22, the reserves rose by \$1.09 billion to \$585.33 billion. Foreign currency assets rose by \$5.03 billion to \$547.22 billion. The gold reserves declined \$164 million to \$36.29 billion. The SDRs with the IMF were down \$4 million to \$1.51 billion.

Brookfield India Reit gets 8 times subscription



The IPO of Brookfield India Real Estate Investment Trust (Reit) got subscribed 8 times on the final day of subscription on Friday. It received bids for 60,59,44,400 units against 7,62,78,200 units on offer. The category meant for institutional investors was subscribed 4.80 times and those of other investors 11.78 times. Brookfield India hit the capital market with its Reit public issue on Wednesday to raise up to Rs 3,800 crore.

Hero MotoCorp Q3 consolidated PAT rises 14%

The country's largest two-wheeler maker Hero MotoCorp has posted 13.7 per cent rise in its consolidated profit after tax at Rs 1,029.17 crore for the third quarter against Rs 905.13 crore in the year-ago quarter. Revenue from operations rose to Rs 9,827.05 crore from Rs 7,074.86 crore. On a standalone basis, the company reported a 23.17 per cent increase in its PAT at Rs 1,084.47 crore against Rs 880.41 crore.

Paypal to shut payment services within India

Digital payment solutions provider Paypal said it will stop offering domestic payment services within India from April 1. The US-based firm will instead focus on enabling more international sales for Indian businesses. "We will continue to invest in product development that enables Indian businesses to reach nearly 350 million PayPal consumers worldwide, increase their sales internationally," a PayPal spokesperson said.



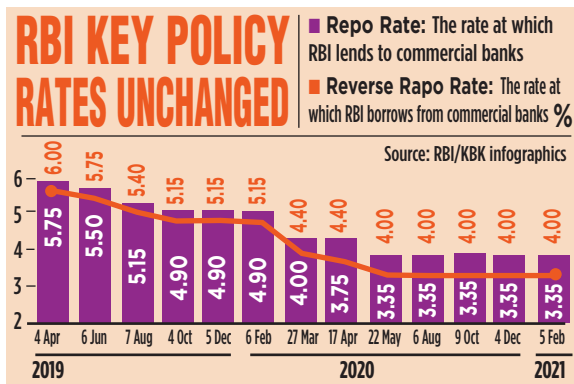
RBI sees growth at 10.5% in FY22, inflation in 5-5.2% range in H1 Rate cut cycle seems over

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 5

In order to revive "durable" growth in the economy, the Reserve Bank of India kept the record low repo and reverse repo rate unchanged while continuing its accommodative stance to ensure enough liquidity in the system. The RBI has also projected a real GDP growth of 10.5 per cent for the next fiscal.

The six members of monetary policy committee (MPC), which ended its three-day deliberations on Friday, unanimously voted to leave the policy repo rate unchanged at 4 per cent. The repo rate had been slashed by 115 basis points since late March last year when the pandemic hit the economy.

The reverse repo rate stands unchanged at 3.35 per cent. This is the fourth time in a row that the MPC



has decided to keep the policy rate unchanged.

"MPC also decided to continue its accommodative stance of monetary policy as long as necessary—at least through the current financial year and into the next year to revive growth on a durable basis and mitigate the impact of Covid-19, while ensuring that inflation remains within

the target going forward," RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said.

Finding inflation within the tolerance band, the RBI projected 10.5 per cent real GDP growth for 2021-22 in the range of 26.2 to 8.3 per cent in the first half (H1) and 6 per cent in Q3. Consumer Price Index inflation has been revised to 5.2 per cent for January-

March (Q4) of FY21 from 5.8 per cent predicted earlier. CPI inflation could be 5.2 per cent to 5.0 per cent in H1 of FY22 and 4.3 per cent for Q3 of FY22.

"After breaching the upper tolerance threshold continuously since June 2020, CPI inflation moved below 6 per cent in December for the first time in the post-lockdown period, supported by favourable base effects and a sharp fall in key vegetable prices," the RBI said.

"Today's upbeat policy statements on growth and inflation restate our view that the rate cut cycle is over. Even as headline inflation trends lower, with economic recovery being underway, services gradually starting to open up, and pricing power coming back in some segments, core inflation will likely see some upside pressure

through the year," said Suvodeep Rakshit, vice president and senior economist at Kotak Institutional Equities.

Ensuring liquidity, the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the bank rate were left unchanged at 4.25 per cent. Further, signalling a rollback of pandemic-era policies, the RBI said it would gradually restore the cash reserve ratio (CRR) in two phases in a non-disruptive manner to 3.5 per cent from March 27 and 4 per cent from May 22, 2021.

"CRR normalisation will open up space for a variety of market operations of the RBI to inject additional liquidity," Das said. CRR—the amount of deposits banks must set aside as reserves—of all banks was reduced by 100 basis points to 3 per cent for a period of one year ending on March 26, 2021.

DEMAND NOW ACTUAL, NOT PENT-UP: DAS

Mumbai, Feb. 5: RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said demand in the economy has moved from being of pent-up nature to actual one, and the momentum is likely to sustain.

"Demand has now moved beyond pent-up demand to actual demand coming up. I think the demand curve is expected to be now much more sustained," Das told reporters during the post-policy conference call. He said high-speed indicators are pointing towards a growth in demand. —PTI

Easier credit for micro units

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 5

Pandemic-hit micro units, which largely rely on informal channels for funds, have something to cheer, as the RBI has incentivised credit flow to new borrowers. In order to reach out to the stressed sectors, banks can now provide funds under the on-tap targeted long-term repo operation (TLTRO) scheme to NBFCs. The Reserve Bank of India also wants to come out with a regulatory framework for the micro lenders.

"In order to incentivise new credit flow to the

micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) borrowers, scheduled commercial banks will be allowed to deduct credit disbursed to 'new MSME borrowers' from their net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) for calculation of Cash Reserve Ratio. New MSME borrowers' are those who have not availed any credit facilities from the banking system as on January 1, 2021. This exemption will be available for exposures up to Rs 25 lakh per borrower for credit extended up to the fortnight ending October 1, 2021, RBI said.

"Banks can deduct credit disbursed to new MSME borrowers from NDTL, for CRR calculation. This should give a boost to further lending to the MSME sector," said Padmaja Chunduru, MD and CEO, Indian Bank.

However, Rs 25 lakh loans are largely meant for micro units and very few of such units have exposure to formal credit system. "The RBI could have been bolder by raising the borrowing limit to Rs 1 crore. This would have helped a lot of small and medium enterprises as well. There are several small and medium enter-

prises which are not eligible for ECLGS scheme as that is meant for only those who have a loan outstanding," said Anil Bhargava, secretary general, Federation of Indian MSMEs (Fisime).

RBI further finds that supporting revival of activity in specific stressed sectors that have both backward and forward linkages have multiplier effects on growth. For this it has proposed to provide funds from banks under the TLTRO on-tap scheme to non-banking finance companies for incremental lending to the specified stressed sectors.

Oil nears \$60 on growth hopes and Opec+ cuts

ALEX LAWLER
LONDON, FEB. 5

Oil hit its highest in a year on Friday, closing in on \$60 a barrel, supported by economic revival hopes and supply curbs by producer group Opec and its allies.

New orders for US-made goods rose more than expected in December, pointing to continued strength in manufacturing. President Joe Biden's drive to enact a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus aid bill also gained momentum on Friday.

Brent crude was up 85 cents, or 1.4 per cent, at \$59.69 by 1438 GMT after hitting its highest since February 20 last year at \$59.79. US crude was up \$1.02, or 1.8 per cent, at \$57.25.

"The conditions still remain supportive for oil markets," said Jeffrey Halley, an analyst at brokerage Oanda. "Oil should find plenty of willing buyers on any material dip."

Brent is on track to rise more than 6 per cent this week. The last time it traded at \$60 a barrel, the

pandemic had yet to take hold, economies were open and people were free to travel, meaning demand for gasoline, diesel and jet fuel was much higher.

The rollout of Covid-19 vaccines, however, is fuelling hopes of lockdowns being eased, boosting fuel demand. But even demand optimists such as Opec do not expect oil consumption to return to pre-pandemic levels until 2022.

Oil also gained support from supply curbs by producers. Opec and its allies, collectively known as Opec+, stuck to their supply tightening policy at a meeting on Wednesday. Record Opec+ cuts have helped to lift prices from historic lows last year.

"Opec+ discipline has been a real positive," said Michael McCarthy, chief market strategist at CMC Markets.

Further boosting the market, a weekly supply report showed a drop in US crude inventories to their lowest since March.

—Reuters

KOREAN MINISTER DROPS WTO BID, CLEARS WAY FOR NIGERIAN CANDIDATE

SAM KIM
FEB. 5

South Korean Trade Minister Yoo Myung-hee withdrew her bid to lead the World Trade Organization, leaving former Nigerian Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala as the only remaining candidate for the job.

Yoo made the decision after discussions with the US and other major nations, and took various issues into account "comprehensively" including the need to revitalise the multilateral organisation, according to a statement from Korea's trade ministry on Friday.

The withdrawal comes after dozens of former US government officials urged President Joe Biden to endorse Okonjo-Iweala after the Trump administration blocked her selection. The opposition halted the selection process because WTO decisions are made on the basis of a consensus of its members.

—Bloomberg

Centre to induct more pvt sector specialists in depts

New Delhi, Feb. 5: In a major move, the Centre has decided to induct more private sector specialists into different government departments at the crucial decision-making level of joint secretaries and directors.

As per the requisitions received from the Department of Personnel & Training (DoP&T), talented and motivated Indian nationals willing to contribute towards nation building are being invited to join the government at the level of joint secretary on contract basis in the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance and

Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, a statement issued by the Personnel Ministry said.

Private sector individuals would be appointed at the level of director on a contract basis in the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Department of Financial Services, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Law & Justice, Department of School Education & Literacy, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Ministry of Road

Transport & Highways, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Ministry of Civil Aviation and in the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, it said.

The detailed advertisement and instructions to the candidates will be uploaded on the Union Public Service Commission's website on 6th February, the statement said.

Interested candidates can apply from 6th February to 22nd March, it said.

Candidates will be short-listed for interview on the basis of the information provided in their online application, the statement said. —PTI

PNB clocks ₹506 cr profit in Q3

New Delhi, Feb. 5: Punjab National Bank (PNB) reported a standalone net profit of Rs 506.03 crore for December quarter 2020-21. It had posted a net loss of Rs 492.28 crore in the year-ago period.

Total income during the

quarter rose to Rs 23,298.53 crore as against Rs 15,967.49 crore a year ago.

On a consolidated basis, there was a profit of Rs 585.77 crore during the latest quarter. The lender had posted a net loss of Rs 501.93 crore in same period

of 2019-20.

Consolidated income rose to Rs 23,639.41 crore from Rs 16,211.24 crore. PNB said the current results are not comparable with the year-ago period since the previous figures are of pre-amalgamated period. —PTI

TAXPAYERS TO BE INFORMED OF REVIEWS

New Delhi, Feb. 5: Taxpayers will be informed upfront about the reasons their I-T returns are getting reopened for scrutiny and only in case of non-satisfactory reply would the case get opened up again, CBDT chief P. C. Mody said on Friday.

The 2021-22 Budget has lowered the time limit for reopening of tax cases to three years from six years. For serious tax fraud cases involving income concealment of Rs 50 lakh and above, 10-year old cases can be reopened.

The chairman of Central Board of Direct Taxes said the rationalisation of reopening of cases announced in Budget would bring in more certainty to taxpayers. "What was a heavily litigated area, we have tried to rationalise it to the extent that it is no longer left to the discretion of assessing officer. It would be more of information-based attempt to reopen the cases," he said at a CII event. —PTI

MAHINDRA Q3 CONSOLIDATED PAT DOWN 6%

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, FEB. 5

Mahindra & Mahindra on Friday reported 6 per cent drop in its consolidated profit after tax from continuing and discontinued operations at Rs 159.60 crore for the third quarter ended in December. It had posted a consolidated PAT of Rs 170.69 crore in the same period last year, the automaker said.

The maker of Scorpio and Bolero models' consolidated revenue from operations stood at Rs 21,625.95 crore during the quarter against Rs 19,430.29 crore a year ago.

Out of the net loss, M&M said Rs 563.84 crore is attributable to its bankrupt arm Ssangyong Motor Company.

