


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
ANANTAPUR | TUESDAY | 9 FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER

 **Max:** 33.0°C
Min: 19°C
RH: 37%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 33/19 °C



COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+8,299)	(+58)
1,08,47,142	1,55,172

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+101)	(+1)
TS: 2,95,682	1,611
(+62)	(+1)
AP: 8,88,485	7,160

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

 **10,68,37,663**
DEATHS
 **23,30,596**
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219
worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Pushya Bahula Trayodasi till 2.06 am (Wednesday)
Star: Purvashada till 2.39 pm
Varjyam: 10.31 pm to 12.05 am (Wednesday)
Durmuhurtam: 9.05 am to 9.51 am; 11.14 pm to 12.04 am
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Jamadi-ul-Akhir 26, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.08 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 4.11 pm
Maghrib: 5.47 pm
Isha: 7.02 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.48 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.13 PM
MOONSET 01.16 PM
MOONRISE 02.36 AM

COUNTER POINT



He is ready to give the best price if the government wants to sell this jail!

SHORT TAKES

2 VOLUNTEERS FIRED FOR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, FEB. 8

Nellore Municipal Corporation on Monday dismissed two volunteers working in 7th Division because of their posts on social media against welfare schemes of the state government.

Civic body's additional commissioner Prasada Rao accused the duo, identified as Nagarjuna and Naveen, of floating a WhatsApp group for volunteers and misguiding them by posting messages against the government's schemes.

Prasada Rao said they have started closely monitoring activities of ward volunteers owing to complaints of indiscipline among them.

DGCA lets BCCI use drone cameras

New Delhi: Indian aviation regulator DGCA and the Civil Aviation Ministry have given conditional permissions to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) for aerial filming of cricket matches this year. "MoCA (Ministry of Civil Aviation) had received requests from BCCI and Quiddich pertaining to granting of request and other correspondences regarding permission to use Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) for live aerial filming," an official said.

NATION | 4

BJP yatra diverted in West Bengal

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In full swing



Polling officers carrying sanitiser, face shield and gloves for safety in local elections 1st phase at Montessori college in Vijayawada on Monday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

People to vote for phase-1 of panchayat polls today

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 8

People will exercise their voting right in the Phase-1 of the gram panchayat polls in the state on Tuesday. The election will be conducted for 2,723 sarpanchs and 20,157 ward members in 12 districts of the state barring Vizianagaram on Tuesday.

While the State Election Commission has notified elections for 3,249 sarpanch posts and also for 32,502 ward members in 3,249 gram panchayats, people have elected their village heads unanimously in 525 gram panchayats. The elections for 12,185 ward members too have been unopposed. With no nominations filed at Velicharla in Nellore district for the sarpanch post, 2,723 gram panchayats are up for grabs in the

Tuesday's elections. With no nominations filed for 160 ward members, the election will be held for 20,157 ward members only.

As many as 7,506 contestants are vying for 2,723 sarpanch posts and 43,601 contestants for 20,157 ward member positions — making the gram panchayat election a two-candidate fight at most places.

The elections will be conducted at 29,732 polling stations. Of these, 3,458 have been considered sensitive and 3,594 hypersensitive.

Polling will be held from 6.30 am to 3.30 pm and the counting of votes will start from 4 pm onwards and the results will be declared by late in the night.

■ **Page 2: Poll staff will get masks, gloves, PPE kits**

179 NO-CONTEST POLLS IN GUNTUR, CHITTOOR OKAYED

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 8

The State Election Commission accepted the unanimous elections of sarpanches and ward members in several gram panchayats in both Chittoor and Guntur districts following reports sent by the district collectors stating that no malpractices were reported.

In Chittoor district, 112 were elected unanimously out of 454 sarpanch polls. Out of 4,142 ward members, 2,637 were elected unanimously. In Guntur district, 67 out of 337 sarpanchs, and 1,337 out of 3,442 ward members were elected unanimously.

The SEC directed the collectors to analyse the ground conditions closely given the number of unanimous elections in excess of state average. After they sent a fair report on the elections, the SEC accepted them.

POLL CHIEF BRIEFS GOV ON ELECTIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 8

State Election Commissioner (SEC) N. Ramesh Kumar on Monday met Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan in Raj Bhavan and briefed him about the arrangements made for the conduct of the first phase of gram panchayat polls.

He apprised about the measures taken to conduct polls in a free and fair manner and also about the apprehensions among a section of polling officials.

WORLD | 5

Korean billionaire to give up half his wealth

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

PM requests farmers to end their agitation

Assures perpetual MSP, warns against 'Andolan Jeevis'

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 8

Prime Minister Narendra Modi came out in strong defence of the three controversial agricultural reform laws brought in by his government and urged the protesting farmers to end their agitation.

Replying to the debate on the motion of thanks on the President's address in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, Mr Modi said: "End your protests and we will all sit together and talk. We are ready for talks and I am inviting you again for a dialogue from this House."

Taking on the Opposition, the PM said the Congress had taken a U-turn on the farm laws, reading out the words of former PM Manmohan



Singh. He added: "Those who are not listening to what we are saying will hopefully listen to Manmohan Ji's words. You should, in fact, be proud of the fact that Modi has to do what Manmohan Singh said long ago." Mr Modi assured farmers that "MSP tha, MSP hai ... aur MSP rahega" (the minimum support price will remain). "No one should

TIKAIT: NO BIZ OVER HUNGER

● **Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait said business over hunger will not be allowed in the country.**

■ **REPORT ON PAGE 4**

spread misinformation," he added.

The PM hinted that there was a "conspiracy" behind the protests and said FDI could be termed "Foreign Destructive Ideology", and that the country should be aware of this. With the protests against the farm laws having gone international, with tweets by pop icon Rihanna and climate activist Greta Thunberg

supporting the farmers, Mr Modi said: "In the last few years, we have witnessed a new category of protesters 'Andolan jeevi', who one can see in every agitation. We must protect India from these 'Andolan Jeevi', who are actually 'parjeevi'."

Talking about the Opposition's protests against the farm laws, the Prime Minister said: "A lot was discussed but mostly it was on the solution... you can oppose the procedure but could have explained to farmers that it is high time for these farm reforms... but now they are saying they were not consulted before, like 'fufaji' uncle who gets angry for not being invited to a wedding... this happens in large families."

CM calls for fast-tracking works in Amaravati region

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 8

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy directed officials to expedite the expansion of Karakatta road to a four-lane one and develop all other roads connected to it as it was crucial for development of Amaravati region.

He reviewed several key projects coming up under Amaravati Metropolitan Region Development Authority and also being taken up in Visakhapatnam with municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana and senior officials at his camp office here on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, he felt the need to take up expansion of Karakatta road and to connect other roads linked to

WITH REGARD to project proposals in Vizag, Jagan reviewed the proposed project on 13.59 acres along the coast line in the steel city as the TD government had given the land to Lulu Group on a lease basis at a nominal price for 33 years.

it in order to facilitate quicker development of Amaravati region. He called for expediting works related to connecting the seed access road to the main road and also completion of the Happy Nest project by an early date. He sought completion of all pending projects and works related to buildings in Amaravati region.

Earlier, officials informed that the Karakatta road expansion involves an expenditure of ₹150 crore.

With regard to project proposals in Visakhapatnam, he reviewed the proposed project on 13.59 acres along the coast line in the steel city as the TD government had given the land to Lulu Group on a lease basis at a nominal price for 33 years. He reviewed some proposals meant to increase sources of revenue.

Officials from National Buildings Construction Corporation Ltd and APIIC detailed about several proposals. NBCC officials said that construction of commercial plazas and residential complexes would fetch at least ₹1,450 crore of net income to the state government.

26 DEAD, 171 MISSING AFTER GLACIER BURST

DC CORRESPONDENT with agencies input NEW DELHI, FEB. 8

Twenty-six bodies have been recovered so far while 171 people remain missing in Uttarakhand where an avalanche triggered glacier burst, causing massive devastation in the Chamoli and neighbouring regions.

The glacier burst on Sunday led to flooding and the heavy flow of water and silt damaged five dams in the downstream areas. Major rescue operations by multiple agencies are underway in the state, particularly in the two tunnels in Tapovan where, according to Uttarakhand DGP Ashok Kumar, 32 persons are trapped in one tunnel and 121 in another are missing.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat said quoted scientists to say that the areas where avalanches struck was not prone to such activities and the calamity might have been caused by an "abrupt sliding down" of millions of tonnes of snow from a hill, rather than due to a glacier burst.

MLA IN DOCK OVER ILLEGAL EXPLOSIVES

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, FEB. 8

Investigations into the sensational blast in Shimoga district in Karnataka on December 23, in which eight persons including three from Rayadurgam area in this district were killed, took a new turn on Monday.

It turned out that the blast was caused by illegal stock and trading of explosives from Rayadurgam-based godowns in this district. At least three big godowns in this area were used for large-scale trading of explosives in AP and Karnataka, it is found in the ongoing investigations by police teams from Karnataka.

Officials said another application was pending with district administration for the setting up of a 50-tonne capacity explosives godown in Rayadurgam area.

■ **Page 2: MLA's aide owns explosive godown**

PSU | SALE

Congress organises round-table meet, TD cycle rally, YSRC hits out at TD's stance

VSP stir intensifies, but politicians fail to unite

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 8

Political parties are yet to unite and intensify the agitation against the Centre's move to privatise Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP).

Although several leaders have called for a non-political joint action committee to spearhead the agitation, Monday witnessed three separate meetings in three different parts of the city.

The District Congress Committee organised a round table meeting,

which was attended by Visakhapatnam North MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao, the only representative from the Telugu Desam, and several from trade unions.

Another meeting was organised at BC Gate of the steel plant that saw the presence of minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, MPs M.V.V. Satyanarayana and Dr K Satyavathi, MLAs Gudivada Amarnath and Tippala Nagireddy and trade union leaders. The Telugu Desam,

■ **MINISTER MUTTAMSETTI Srinivasa Rao said Ganta Srinivasa Rao should also resign from the Telugu Desam and join the main agitation.**

■ **HE ALSO ASKED N. Chandrababu Naidu to take a plunge into direct action on VSP instead of issuing statements against the state government from Hyderabad.**

■ **THE MINISTER ALSO** played the BJP and the Jana Sena for their meek response to the agitation.

which claimed to be the first political party to react, organised a bike rally from the steel plant to Gandhi statue at RTC Complex. The rally was led

by Vizag East MLA Velagapudi Ramakrishna-ababu and former legislator Palla Srinivasa Rao. No prominent trade union leader was present in the

rally, which culminated into a meeting at Gandhi statue.

Addressing the gathering at the gate, Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao (Avanti) said that the steel plant was a national treasure and pride of Andhra people and his government would oppose privatisation tooth and nail.

Lashing out at the TD leadership, Avanti said mere resignation was not sufficient to prove one's apolitical stand. "Ganta Srinivasa Rao

should also resign from the TD and join the main agitation. N. Chandrababu Naidu should plunge into direct action instead of issuing statements against the state government from Hyderabad," he said.

The minister also played the BJP and the Jana Sena for their meek response to the agitation.

Meanwhile, all the trade unions have decided to boycott the steel plant foundation day slated for February 18, which will be observed as a protest day.

SHORT TAKES

CM TO CONVENE
ASSEMBLY FOR
STEEL PLANTDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 8

Former minister and Visakhapatnam North MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao urged Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to convene the Assembly and pass a resolution opposing the total disinvestment of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP).

Addressing an all-party round table meeting here on Monday, he appreciated the Chief Minister for writing to the Prime Minister and suggested that the Cabinet should pass a similar resolution on the issue.

Never in history had people sacrificed their lives for establishing a factory. Around 32 lives were lost and the prolonged agitation forced the then prime minister Indira Gandhi to announce the steel plant, he said.

Warning that a similar agitation would be launched to protect the plant, Srinivasa Rao appealed to leaders to set aside their political agendas and join the agitation along with trade unions. He said that losses were no excuse for privatisation. State joint secretary of CPI, J.V. Satyanarayana Murthy said never in Indian history had a public sector undertaking been totally privatised.

"The employees and their family members constitute more than one lakh people. They all will fight like soldiers and prevent the Union Government from going ahead with the move," Murthy cautioned.

NAGOTHU: VIJAYASAI
NOT QUALIFIED FOR
RAJYASABHADC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, FEB. 8

Bharatiya Janata Party state secretary Nagotu Ramesh Naidu said Vijayasai Reddy, who did not even know how to behave with a person in a constitutional position and had minimal knowledge, was disqualified from the Rajya Sabha. He said that nothing could be expected from those who are constantly trying to throw dirt on constitutional positions, even on the courts. He said that nationalist sentiments were ingrained from a young age in Venkaiah Naidu and he was elected to the post of the most respected Vice President due to his ideology and hard work for the party. Ramesh Naidu said that while the people of the country were proud to see him at the top of the House as a very capable man who was supportive of the Telugu people for the development of the Telugu states, the YSR Congress leaders could not stand it. He demanded Vijayasai Reddy for an immediate apology to Venkaiah Naidu on his comments.

MEDARAMETLA
UNANIMOUS POLL
IN 33 YEARSDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 8

Medarametla gram panchayat in Prakasam district, where polls have been inevitable for the past 33-odd years, was won by the YSR Congress party unanimously.

YSR Congress leaders said that all the 16 candidates fielded in the 16 wards and one Sarpanch nominee of the Medarametla Gram Panchayat were elected unanimously by the people.

They attributed this to the massive development works carried out at the village by senior YSR congress party functionary and TTD Chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy over the last decade and half.

Unanimously elected ward members and the sarpanch B. Yelissamma hailed various initiatives of YV Subba Reddy which helped address the drinking water and sanitation related issues in the village.

"Medarametla has the best road connectivity to the neighbouring villages and towns.

A modern hospital with the best of facilities was grounded by the TTD Chairman's family here. Numerous welfare activities are carried out in memory of Y.V. Subba Reddy's father Yerram Chinnapoli Reddy throughout the year.

It is their commitment towards the comprehensive development of the Gram Panchayat which united people to come onto a common platform to elect all the ward members unanimously this time", echoed the newly elected ward members of the Medarametla Gram Panchayat.



Polling officials taking up formalities at the polling stations ahead of 1st phase of gram panchayat elections at Tenali division in Guntur district on Monday.

— E. TEJO RAO

Election staff will get
masks, gloves, PPE kits

We appeal all the voters to take part in elections, says Gopala Krishna

From Page 1

Panchayat raj and rural development principal secretary Gopala Krishna Dwivedi told media persons that they had completed making all requisite arrangements for the conduct of gram panchayat polls in phase-I on February 9 in the state.

"We appeal to all the voters to take part in the elections by exercising their franchise in a democratic spirit. We have introduced the option of NOTA which means 'None of the Above' to enable the voter to officially register a vote of rejection for all contestants in the fray. However, the number of votes for NOTA will not be counted," he said.

Elaborate arrangements have been made by both the state government and the State Election Commission for the conduct of gram panchayat polls. The elections will be conducted at 29,732 polling stations. Of these, 3,458 have been considered sensitive and 3,594 hypersen-



Panchayat raj, rural development principal secretary Gopala Krishna Dwivedi, commissioner Girija Sankar address the media conference near tadepalli on Monday.

sitive.

The authorities have arranged ballot boxes of three sizes — 18,608 big-sized boxes, 8,503 medium-sized and 21,338 small. About 1,130 officials have been appointed as returning officers stage-I, 3,249 officials as returning offi-

cers stage-2, 1,432 officials as assistant returning officers, 33,533 as presiding officers and 44,392 as polling staff for the conduct of polls in a free and fair manner. About 519 zonal officers, 1,121 route officers and 3,047 micro observers have been

appointed.

The authorities have arranged face masks, hand sanitisers and hand gloves at the polling stations as per Covid-19 protocol for the polling staff and the voters. In case any polling staff found to be Covid-19 positive, PPE kits

are also arranged.

The state police have made elaborate security arrangements for the conduct of polling without any untoward incidents. Thirteen officials, one each for a district, from the office of commissioner and panchayat raj department have been sent to be in touch with district officials to help them conduct the polls while a command and control centre is set up at the commissioner's office to keep a close tab on the elections.

Polling to be held in districts and revenue divisions accordingly: Srikakulam-Srikakulam, Tekkali and Palakonda; Visakhapatnam-Anakapalli; East Godavari-Kakinada and Peddapuram; West Godavari-Narasapuram; Krishna-Vijayawada; Guntur-Tenali; Prakasam-Ongole; Nellore-Kavali; Kurnool-Nandyal and Kurnool; Anantapur-Kadiri; Kadapa-Jammalamadugu, Kadapa and Rajampet and Chittoor-Chittoor.

Poll related audio clip goes viral

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 8

Another audio clip, close to the one which landed TDP president Kinjarapu Atchannaidu in trouble, went viral in Srikakulam on Monday. Tekkali in charge of YSRCP Duvvada Srinivas, exhibiting his arrogance, and threatened village secretariat volunteer to dismiss him from service and take away the house site patta

in seconds if he failed to make the people in his jurisdiction vote for the

YSRCP candidates for the grama panchayat elections being held on Tuesday.

In a conversation over mobile phone, Duvvada Srinivas asked the volunteer to get the people in his jurisdiction having 60 families to vote for the YSRCP backed candidate failing which he would lose his job and house patta.

"I am the party in-charge of YSRCP for Tekkali and chief minister gave me

immense powers double the MLA. I can take away your job which was given by me in two minutes and get the house patta cancelled by calling local tahsildar," Srinivas said.

He went on to say that local police officials and tahsildars would continue in their postings as per his whims and fancies.

The audio clip was circulated in social media and in most of the TV channels in the state.

SHIMOGA | BLAST

Cops found explosives were supplied by Manjunath

MLA's aide owns explosive godown

From Page 1

Rayadurgam MLA Kapu Ramachandra Reddy is facing serious embarrassment as his close aide Manjunath Sai was owning the explosives godown and supplying this to other cities. Shimoga police arrested Manjunath Sai, his father Sriramulu of Rayadurgam area, apart from Shankar Gowd Kulakarni and his son Avinash of Kalagangur village where the blast has occurred.

A special team of the Shimoga district police led by women inspectors Abhay Prakash and rural

inspector Sanjeeva Kumar nabbed two men in Mumbai. It turned out that the explosives-laden lorry was sent from Adiguppa in Gummagatta mandal to Shimoga. The Karnataka police found explosives were being supplied by Manjunath Sai and his father from Rayadurgam for "railway works".

Shimoga police said an investigation was on and a police team has visited the Adiguppa godown.

The detonator godown was set up by the licensee at Adiguppa and at Hanumapuram in Raydurgam area and

Jadalur on the AP borders. The godowns carried heavy explosives without permission and these were being sold to firms in several parts of AP and Karnataka for mining and railway line-laying works.

"When the MLA gave ₹1 lakh as financial assistance to the families of each of the three persons from this district who died in the mishap, the legislator's nexus with illicit traders came to light," said former minister and Telugu Desam politburo member Kalava Srinivasulu.

Notably, Manjunath Sai

and his followers had recently celebrated the birthday of the MLA's wife Kapu Bharathi in Rayadurgam constituency.

Meanwhile, a file seeking licence in the name of Supreme Traders for the setting up of a 50-tonne capacity godown in Rayadurgam area was under process with the district administration. The proposal was reportedly backed by YSRC leaders from Rayadurgam. Kalava Srinivasulu sought a detailed probe into the illicit trading of explosives in the state.

Speculation rife
Sharmila to start
TS YSR partyDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 8

Y.S. Sharmila, the younger sister of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, has convened an 'Aatmeeya Sammelanam' (a get-together of well-wishers) here on Tuesday, giving credence to speculations in political circles that she would soon launch a political outfit.

Sharmila's meeting strategically coincides with the 50th wedding anniversary of her father Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy and mother Vijayamma, an "emotional" event, where several politicians close to YSR will be attending. Sharmila reached her Lotus Pond residence on Monday along with her evangelist husband, who is popularly known as Brother Anil, from Bengaluru, to oversee the preparations.

Sources close to the YSR family told *Deccan Chronicle* that her uncle and TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy made a last-minute effort, apparently on behalf of Jagan Mohan Reddy, to persuade Sharmila to call off the meeting but to no avail.

Politicians and people from other walks of life from Nalgonda and neighbouring areas of Hyderabad besides those from Andhra Pradesh were expected to take part in the meeting, which will be held either at Lotus Pond or Brother Anil's church in Gachibowli.

Several theories are being floated on her outfit. According to a section of politicians, it will be a Telangana-based party.

While some see it as an attempt to split the anti-incumbency vote in Telangana, others argue that the outfit was designed to take away from the TRS its loyal vote bank of migrants from Andhra Pradesh and win over YSR's loyalists and

beneficiaries of his schemes. "I find no meaning to the theory that she would confine herself to Telangana politics to avoid a direct confrontation with Jagan because the very political activity launched by the couple is to irritate him. Secondly, YSR's legacy has strong foundations in protecting Andhra and Rayalaseema interests in the combined state and now she has to fight against the same legacy by battling for Telangana," said a veteran politician YSR Congress MLA.

Close family members of YSR who are fully aware of the rift between brother and sister were also of the strong opinion that she would eventually land in Andhra Pradesh politics because it is where she traces her roots to. They attribute the differences to both economic and political factors, including denial of some business opportunities to Brother Anil, and a Rajya Sabha seat to her.

Sources said Jagan Mohan Reddy did not want to court fresh controversies by involving family members in state projects or mining activity. He is said to have promised the Rajya Sabha seat in due course.

Brother Anil's close friends, on the other hand, drew parallel with K.T. Rama Rao and Kavitha — both of whom are accommodative to each other and pursue politics of co-existence — and Rama Rao never considered Kavitha as an alternative power centre in the party.

Union to revise
Polavaram estimatesDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 8

Union minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Monday clarified that the union cabinet will take a final decision on approving the revised cost estimates of Polavaram irrigation project.

Replying to a query raised by MP V. Vijayasai Reddy during question hour in Rajya Sabha, the union minister said that the then AP government had come forward to execute Polavaram project after it was declared a national project. Following this, the union cabinet gave its approval for costs at 2013-14 price level.

Shekhawat said they are yet to discuss the revised cost estimates of the project at 2017-18 price level prepared by the Revised Cost Committee. Once that is over, a proposal on revised cost estimates will be sent to the union cabinet for approval. The cabinet's decision on the revised cost will be final, he stated.

On setting up a revolving fund proposed by Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to avoid delay in release of funds for the Polavaram project, the union minister maintained that have no issues in releasing funds. Funds can be mobilised through Long-Term Irrigation Fund as well as NABARD.

Vijayasai complains
to Venkaiah seeking
action on TD MPsDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 8

YSR Congress MP V. Vijayasai Reddy complained to the Rajya Sabha chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu seeking action against TDP MP Kanakamedala Ravendra Kumar for flouting the norms of the house.

The YSR Congress MP, in his letter, alleged that the TDP MP during a motion of thanks to the President on Feb. 4 in the Rajya Sabha, made unsavoury remarks in violation of the norms of the house and opined that it was unfortunate for not removing such remarks from the records of the house.

The YSR Congress MP said that the remarks made by the TDP MP about the proceedings in AP Assembly and on those in high position in the state government, resulted in the violation

of Rajya Sabha Rule 238 (3) and (5). He asked the chairman to examine the TDP MP's remarks as they were promoting hate politics.

Referring to the recent meeting of TDP MPs with Union home minister Amit Shah, the YSR Congress MP said that they tried to mislead the Centre by showing a video clip recorded in 2016-17 claiming that AP was witnessing communal violence. He said that though the video clipping was recorded by the pastor Praveen Chakravarti during the regime of previous Telugu Desam Party, the TDP MPs deliberately tried to conceal the fact.

The YSR Congress MP sought the chairman of Rajya Sabha to initiate a suitable action on the TDP MP for flouting the norms and trying to mislead the Centre on sensitive issues.

SHORT TAKES

FILM SOCIETY
ASKS GOVT FOR
ARCHIVESDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 8

The Vizag Film Society, affiliated to Federation of Film Societies of India (FFSI) has asked the Andhra Pradesh government to establish Telugu Films Archives for the benefit of film makers, students and the general public.

Secretary of Vizag Film Society Narava Prakasha Rao participating in a special meeting held on Sunday at Visakha Public Library premise to observe Telugu Talkie Cinema Day, said the film *Bhakta Prahalada* released in 1932 created sensation in the Telugu film industry as it was the first Telugu Talkie film screened for the audience directed by H.M. Reddy, the pioneer of the film industry. The 89-year-old hit movie was made with a budget of ₹18,000. Unfortunately, the film print was not available.

Prakasa Rao said it was unfortunate that Telugu film industry had forgotten and ignorant of this important day. "It is our duty to make the young filmmakers know the history of the film industry and its development," he said.

FEMALE TEACHER
KILLED IN ROAD
ACCIDENTDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, FEB. 8

An autorickshaw overturned and a female teacher was killed on Monday morning near monkey grave in the Pulivendula town. The auto overturned when a dog obstructed it on the road while going to Lingala from Pulivendula.

A teacher Vasanthakumari, died of severe injuries in the accident. She works at the Zilla Parishad High School in Lingala village. Four other teachers were injured in the accident. They were rushed to Pulivendula Area Hospital for treatment. The Pulivendula police have registered a case and are investigating.

PRODDUTUR
FORMER MLA
ARRESTEDDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, FEB. 8

Kadapa district Proddatur former MLA Nandyala Varada Rajulu Reddy was arrested by the police on Monday. His followers staged a dharna in front of the Proddatur Three Town Police Station and shouted slogans demanding the immediate release of Varadarajulu Reddy.

Earlier, in the former MLA's home village of Kamanur, a sarpanch candidate backed by the ruling party was distributing money, his followers were obstructed.

The YSRC members complained to the police that Varadarajulu Reddy had interfered in the incident and he had damaged the phone in candidate hand and abused him.

The supporters of sarpanch candidate clarified that there was no money distribution held at that time, only the candidate was campaigning in the village.

However, he was arrested by the police on a sarpanch candidate supporter's complaint and registered a case against him.

Holiday for govt, semi-govt, commercial establishments

Facemasks, gloves, sanitisers were provided to follow Covid-19

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 8

Stage is set for the first phase of election in Nellore, Chittoor and Prakasam districts on Tuesday.

According to Chittoor district Collector M. Hari Narayanan, 324 gram panchayats under 20 mandals are going to polls in the first phase of elections.

Polling process is going to be conducted for 342 sarpanch posts and 1,507 ward member posts. There are 925 members in the contest for sarpanch posts and 2,928 members for ward member posts.

District administration has arranged 2,241 polling stations in Chittoor division. Among them, 355 polling stations are identified as hyper sensitive and 401 are identified as sensitive stations.

The collector said they have deputed 137 micro observers to hyper sensitive stations and arranged webcasting in 117 polling stations.

In Prakasam district, 2,385 polling stations have been arranged for the first phase of election being held in 229 gram panchayats for 229 sarpanch and 2,344 ward member posts. Among the panchayats, 172 are identified as hyper sensitive and 177 as sensitive.

In Nellore district, elections are being held in 137 gram panchayats for sarpanch posts and 1,024 ward member posts in Kavali division on Tuesday.

As many as 377 candidates are in fray for sarpanch posts in these panchayats.

In case of Chittoor district, 324 gram panchayats under 20 mandals are going for polls on Tuesday.

District administrations have completed all arrangements and distributed election material and others to the polling staff at the offices of the MPDO's on Monday.

Senior officials went on a whirlwind tour to monitor the arrangements at many places.

Route officers have been appointed for shifting the material from the distribution centres up to the polling stations.

The District administration in Nellore arranged 1,374 presiding officers, 1,701 polling personnel, 25 zonal officers,

TD SLAMS VIJAYA
SAI FOR REMARKS
AGAINST V-PDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 8

Former minister and TD Politburo member Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy came down heavily against YSR Congress senior leader and Rajya Sabha MP Vijaya Sai Reddy for his remarks against Vice President.



Polling agents counting the ballot papers before going to polling station.

— DC

SEC: You must have your name on the list to vote

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, FEB. 8

The first phase of polling for the gram panchayat elections will be held on Tuesday. While elections are to be held for 206 panchayats in 14 mandals of the Kadapa district, 51 panchayats have already been unanimous. Polling will be held for the remaining seats. The authorities have already made all the arrangements for the free conduct of the elections. The State Election Commission has already issued several instructions on the rules to be followed by polling agents, election agents, officials, and candidates on the day of polling.

The ballot paper of the sarpanch candidates is in pink and the ballot paper of the ward members is in white. There is also a NOTA mark at the end of the ballot paper. A polling station with 200 voters will have a presiding officer and a polling official. The centre, which has 201 to 400 voters, will have

● A polling station with 200 voters will have a presiding officer and a polling official. The centre, which has 201 to 400 voters, will have one presiding officer and two assistant polling officers.

one presiding officer and two assistant polling officers. If the number of voters is more than 400, the district administration has taken steps to appoint three polling officers along with a presiding officer.

Polling officials, contesting candidate, polling and election agents, persons authorised by the State Election Commission, officials involved in election duties, and officials appointed by the State Election Commission are permitted to enter the polling station. A voter with a physical disability can take someone else for help. Also, women with toddlers are allowed to go with them.

The police can go to the

polling station if the presiding officer calls when necessary. The ordinary voter who has security, the candidate who is contesting the election will be allowed into the polling station without security people. Cabinet and deputy ministers with security in the central and state governments are also not allowed to enter the polling station. Those who have security, the persons will not be appointed as election or polling agents. The presiding officer has the power to check the persons who have come into the polling station if they appear suspicious. Information officers are also not allowed into the polling station without the permission of the State Election Commission. To go to the polls and vote, you must have your name on the list and an identity card issued by the government. On the whole, the authorities have made all arrangements for the early polling.

Polling is conducted between 6.30 am and 3.30 pm and only people who are on queue lines will be allowed to cast their vote after 3.30 pm.

Further, the district collector announced holidays for government, semi-government and other commercial organisations on February 9, 13, 17 and 21 to enable working people to exercise their franchise.

New idols to Ramateertham

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 8

Faculty members and students of TTD-run SV Sculpture College located near Alipiri in Tirupati have played a key role in preparing new idols to replace the vandalised idols at Ramateertham temple a few days back.

Their contribution came to light when the officials informed them

Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu said they have identified 380 hypersensitive and 148 sensitive villages in the division and webcasting in 75 polling stations and videography arranged in 311 stations.

He said that they have deployed 148 micro observers for monitoring the poll-related issues besides imposing Section 144 in the areas.

ma courses including the Kalamkari painting section. The college faculty informed him that the sculpture college was a one of its kind in both the Telugu states and presently had 125 students. The EO interacted with students and enquired about job opportunities to students after completion of courses.

He directed the officials to probe into the feasibility

of sale of wooden statues made in college through Lepakshi.

He also inspected the granite statue making division and enquired about its process and methodologies.

Later, the EO inspected vacant land between old and new toll gates in Alipiri and directed engineering officials to study the possibility to avoid traffic jams.

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He directed the officials to probe into the feasibility

AP records 62 +ve cases, one death

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 8

Andhra Pradesh registered 62 fresh Covid-19 cases and one death in Visakhapatnam.

The health authorities said that out of 22,094 samples tested, 62 persons were found infected with Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,33,67,616 samples tested so far in the state, 8,88,485 persons were found infected with confirmed Covid-19 and of them, 8,80,363 were recovered while 962 are still active with the virus.

Among daily Covid-19 cases, Krishna registered the highest number of 10 followed by nine in Kadapa, eight each in Chittoor and East Godavari, seven in Guntur, six in Nellore, five each in Kurnool, Visakhapatnam, two in Srikakulam, one each in Anantapur and Prakasam and zero cases in Vizianagaram and West Godavari.

Krishna continued to lead the state with the highest number of Covid-19 cumulative active cases at 212 followed by 135 in Chittoor, 108 in Guntur, 101 in East Godavari, 72 in Nellore, 70

● Vizianagaram and West Godavari districts record zero Covid-19 cases

● Krishna continued to lead the state with the highest number of Covid-19 cumulative active cases at 212 followed by 135 in Chittoor, 108 in Guntur, 101 in East Godavari, 72 in Nellore, 70 in Kadapa, 67 in Visakhapatnam, 56 in West Godavari, 55 in Prakasam, 33 Anantapur, 30 in Kurnool, 12 in Vizianagaram and 11 in Srikakulam.

Among the daily Covid-19 deaths, only one case was registered in Visakhapatnam district, rising toll to 7,160. The state health authorities discharged 102 Covid-19 patients after recovery from several hospitals in the state in the last 24 hours.

AP conducted Covid-19 tests on 2,50,330 samples per one million population and registered a positive rate of 6.65.

Nellore poised for transformation: Anil

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 8

Minister for water resources Dr P. Anil Kumar Yadav claimed that Nellore City is poised for a big leap in development and significant changes in the city environs in the next six to eight months.

Speaking to the media persons after inaugurating a

plastic bottle crushing unit at the Gandhi Statue Centre Monday, he spoke at length on their efforts to make Nellore a plastic-free city.

He hinted that busy areas such as Pogathota and Brindavanam are going to be developed as model places while referring to discussions he had with scores of doctors practicing in both the locations.

EX-SERVICEMEN CONTRIBUTORY HEALTH SCHEME (ECHS) EMPLOYMENT NOTICE				
1. ECHS Telangana and Andhra Sub Area invites applications to engage following Staff on contractual basis for ECHS Polyclinics and Regional Centre Hyderabad for a period of 11 months for Civilians and 12 months for Ex-servicemen and Widows of Ex-servicemen :-				
Sl. No.	Trade	No. of vacancies	Location of ECHS Polyclinics	
(a)	Officer-In-Charge	01	Golconda.	
(b)	Medical Specialist	04	02 x Secunderabad, 01 x Golconda and 01 x Guntur.	
(c)	Gynaecologist	02	Secunderabad & Giddalur.	
(d)	Medical Officer	19	(01 x Secunderabad, 02 x Guntur, 02 x GPSS (Secunderabad), 02 x Golconda, 02 x Golconda, 01 x Regional Centre Hyderabad, 01 x Chittoor, 01 x Eluru, 01 x Khammam, 01 x Kurnool, 01 x Khammam, 01 x Anantapur and 01 x Nellore).	
(e)	Dental Officer	01	Chittoor.	
(f)	Nursing Assistant	01	Chittoor.	
(g)	Pharmacist	10	02 x Secunderabad, 02 x Guntur and 01 x Golconda, 01 x Giddalur, 01 x Chittoor, 01 x Vijayawada, 01 x Khammam and 01 x Nellore.	
(h)	Lab Technician	05	Golconda, Guntur, Khammam, Kadapa and Gulbarga.	
(i)	Lab Assistant	NIL	—	
(j)	Dental Hyg/Tech/Asst	05	Guntur, Chittoor, Khammam, Anantapur and Gulbarga.	
(k)	Physiotherapist	02	Giddalur and Chittoor.	
(l)	Female Attendant	01	Gulbarga.	
(m)	Peon	01	Anantapur.	
(n)	Driver	02	Giddalur and Chittoor.	
(o)	Clerk	12	Regional Centre Hyderabad, Golconda, Eluru, Khammam, Kurnool, Khammam, Kadapa, Anantapur, Mahabubnagar, Gulbarga, Nellore and GPSS (Secunderabad).	
(p)	Data Entry Operator	03	Secunderabad, Regional Centre Hyderabad and Golconda.	
(q)	IT Network Tech	01	Regional Centre Hyderabad.	
(r)	Safawala	11	Secunderabad, Golconda, Giddalur, Chittoor, GPSS (Secunderabad), Eluru, Kadapa, Khammam, Anantapur, Mahabubnagar and Gulbarga.	
(s)	Chowkidar	07	Secunderabad, Kadapa, Anantapur, Mahabubnagar, GPSS (Secunderabad), Khammam and Guntur.	
Total Vacancies		88		
2. Interview will be held as per the details given below :-				
Sl. No.	Trades	Date of Interview	Time	Place of Interview
(a)	OIC, Med Spl & Gynaecologist	12 Mar 2021	To be present by 08:00 hrs	Golden Palm Sainik Bhawan, Near Secunderabad Railway Station, Monda Market, Secunderabad
(b)	Med Offr & Nursing Assistant	13 Mar 2021		
(c)	Dental Offr & Dental Hyg / Tech / Asst	15 Mar 2021		
(d)	Pharmacist, Lab Tech & Physio	16 Mar 2021		
(e)	Female Attendant, Peon & Driver	17 Mar 2021		
(f)	Safawala & Chowkidar	18 Mar 2021		
(g)	Clerk, Data Entry Operator & IT Net Tech	19 Mar 2021		
3. Applicants to clearly indicate all polyclinics of their choice only in one application. (4) No online applications will be accepted. (5) Multi tasking & Computer Knowledge is mandatory. (6) For Terms & Conditions, QR Application Form, Remuneration and Experience visit website www.echs.gov.in . (7) Last date of application is 22 Feb 2021. (8) Place of submission of application: Stn HQ ECHS Cell C/o Bison URC Canteen Complex, Nag Mandir Road, Ward No. 7, Trimulgherry, Secunderabad, Telangana, Pin : 500015. (9) For details contact Tele 040-27792347 (10AM to 2PM) or echsthrsthscebad@gmail.com . (10) All photocopies of documents attached are to be submitted duly attested by Gazetted Offr. (11) Preference will be given to Ex-servicemen / Veer Nars / Widow of ESM meeting desired QR. (12) Candidate will bring all original certificates / documents for verification at the time of interview. (13) OIC & MO will be well versed with policy guidelines related with ECHS. (14) In the event of any such posts falling vacant due to resignation / illness of present employees between date of publication of this notice and date of interview, the same will also be filled up through this interview of which the advertisement shall be given in all ECHS polyclinics, unit run canteens and Army Placement Node.				

Volunteers protest



Ward volunteers protest near Municipal corporation demanding state government hike their salaries in Vijayawada on Monday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

STUDENT KILLS
BUSINESSMAN
FOR MONEYDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 8

A 20-year-old, B Com student killed a businessman and took away ₹18 lakh from him in Visakhapatnam on Monday. The student later confessed to the crime and the police recovered the entire cash from him. The victim was identified as T. Swami Naidu, 25, Chodavaram.

V Madugula police said Upendra, the accused in the crime, also tried to divert the police attention by removing the pant of the deceased and putting a condom in his private parts at the crime scene to depict the murder a result of sexual jealousy.

EDUCATIONAL DISTANCE EDUCATION

CONTACT FOR NCTE-Recognised: B.Ed./M.Ed. No Advance Fee. Only For Educational Consultants. Students Please no call. Contact regarding any Educational Problem/ Guidance, Shiksha Bharti. Varanasi. Email: shikshabharti88@yahoo.com. Mob: 9519759663, 9 9 1 5 1 0 3 7 8 1. (HYMM/2021/C06759)

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CONTRACTS DEPARTMENT

Tender Enquiry No. : HQ/Contracts/NIS/P/O&M/RMHS/A3 Dated : 09-02-2021

NMDC Limited, A "NAVARATNA" Public Sector Company under Ministry of Steel, Govt. of India, invites online bids from experienced domestic bidders for "Providing Assistance in the Operation & Maintenance of Sinter Mix Blending Area (A3) at Raw Material Handling System and Structural Fabrication & Erection Works of RMHS for a period of 2 years for 3.0 MTPA Integrated Steel Plant at Nagarnar near Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh State".

The detailed NIT and Bid documents can be viewed and / or downloaded from NMDC website: <http://www.nmdc.co.in>, Central Public Procurement portal (CPP PORTAL): <http://www.eprocure.gov.in/epublish/app> and MSTC portal: <https://www.mstccommerce.co.in> from 09-02-2021 to 02-03-2021.

For Accessing the Bid document from NMDC website, the bidder has to register as "New User" in Bid section at NMDC's website link - <http://www.nmdc.co.in/nmcdotend/default.aspx>. For accessing the Bid documents from Central Procurement Portal: www.eprocure.gov.in, the Tenderer has to click on "Latest active Tenders".

For accessing the bid document from MSTC, bidders to visit website link - http://www.mstccommerce.co.in/eprocure/nmcdotend/buyer_login.jsp and search Tender No. NMDC/HO/3/20-21/ET/3. Bidders are requested to register as "New Vendor" for downloading the tender document. For further help refer to "vendor guide" given in MSTC website.

The bidders are requested to submit their bids through online mode and details of submission of bid through online are given in NIT. The Bidders on regular basis are required to visit the NMDC's website / CPP Portal / MSTC website for corrigendum, if any, at a future date.

For further clarification, CGM (Contracts), NMDC Limited, Hyderabad can be contacted through Fax No. +91-040-23534746, Tel No. +91-040-23532800, email: steelcontracts@nmdc.co.in Chief General Manager (Contracts)

हर एक काम देश के नाम

SHORT TAKES

₹41 LAKH SPENT ON RAFALE JETS INDUCTION EVENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 8

Government spent ₹41 lakh (including ₹9.18 lakh GST) on the induction ceremony of five Rafale jets in September 2020 at Ambala Air Force Station, Parliament was informed on Monday.

“All new aircraft types in IAF are traditionally inducted through a befitting ceremony,” said defence minister Rajnath Singh in a written reply. He said that the arrangements for this event were made mostly through local resources of IAF.

Singh, French minister of armed forces Florence Parly, CDS Gen Bipin Rawat and Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhaduria were also present during the ceremony. The first five Rafale fighter aircraft were inducted in Squadron No. 17 or Golden Arrows at its first home base Ambala Air Force Station, one of the oldest air bases in the country.

In 2016, India had signed a ₹59,000 crore deal for 36 Rafales which will be based in Ambala and Hasimara (West Bengal) air bases. India has till now received 11 Rafale aircrafts.

On a question related to procurement for defence forces deployed at China border especially in Ladakh area, minister of state for defence Shripad Naik said that on the basis of the threat perception and technology available, the armed forces are procuring terrain and weather-specific equipment.

PAK INTRUDER KILLED BY BSF IN JAMMU

Jammu/New Delhi, Feb. 8: A Pakistani intruder was shot dead by the Border Security Force (BSF) along the India-Pakistan international border in Jammu on Monday, officials said.

The incident took place near the Chak Faquira border post (border pillar no 64) in the Samba sector around 9:45 am, they said.

“Despite repeated warnings, the intruder kept moving towards the border fence and was fired upon by BSF troops. Body of one Pakistani intruder has been recovered,” a BSF spokesperson said.

The spot where the body was found is around 40 metres from the International Border on the Indian side, the officials said.

Another Pakistani intruder was similarly killed here in November 2020, while an underground tunnel was also detected in this region very recently, an officer said.

MAHA TO PROBE CELEBRITY TWEETS ON FARMERS STIR

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, FEB. 8

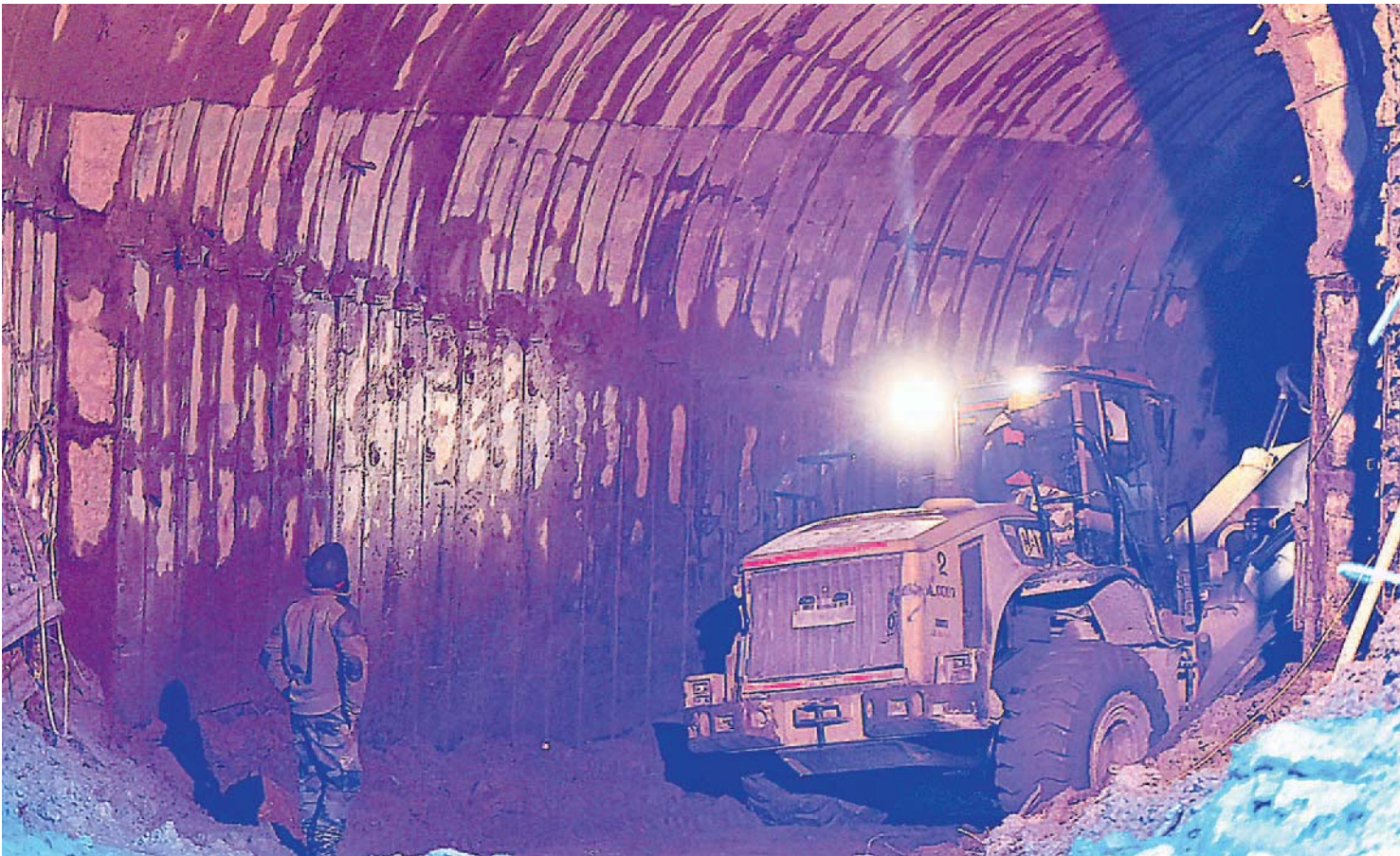
In a new twist to the war of tweets over the farmers’ stir in Delhi, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh has ordered a probe into tweets by celebrities including Sachin Tendulkar and Lata Mangeshkar. Action will be taken in this matter according to the rules, he said.

“The Maharashtra Congress delegation through a video conference asked me to probe the misuse of Indian celebrities on the issue of farmers, who are protesting for last 70 days on the Delhi border for the demand of abolition of farm laws. I have promised them to take action as per the rules,” Mr Deshmukh tweeted on Monday.

Many celebrities and sportspersons such as Bharat Ratna awardee Sachin Tendulkar and Lata Mangeshkar, along with Akshay Kumar and Saina Nehwal, have joined together to support the government via social media, using hashtags #IndiaTogether and #IndiaAgainstPropaganda, in response to tweets by foreign celebrities including Rihanna, Mia Khalifa and climate activist Greta Thunberg in support of the farmers’ protest.

Mr Deshmukh said, “We all respect the personalities, who are honoured with the Bharat Ratna award. But the Congress has demanded a probe on whether they were pressurised by the BJP leaders (to support the government).”

The home minister, who is currently in quarantine after testing positive for Covid-19, joined a video conference with the Congress delegation headed by Mumbai Congress leader Sachin Sawant.



Rescue operations underway at Tapovan Tunnel in Chamoli district on Monday, after a glacier broke off in Joshimath causing a massive flood in Dhaulī Ganga river. — PTI

Survivors recount how a phone call saved their lives

ITBP men rescue 12 power project workers from tunnel in Tapovan

Joshimath, Feb. 8: They had lost hope of survival when one of them found his mobile phone network working, helping them contact the authorities who rescued them from an underground tunnel at Tapovan in Uttarakhand’s Chamoli where flash floods wreaked havoc following a glacier burst.

“We heard people screaming at us to come out of the tunnel but before we could react, a sudden gush of water and heavy silt swamped upon us,” rescued Tapovan power project worker Lal Bahadur said.

He, along with 11 of his other colleagues, was rescued by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) from an underground tunnel in Uttarakhand’s Chamoli district on Monday evening.

According to officials, they remained stuck there for about seven hours, from around 10 am to 5 pm, till the last man was evacuated by rescuers.

The ITBP provided their recorded video accounts to the media.

They are now being treated at an ITBP hospital in Joshimath, about 25 km from the incident spot. This is also the base of the ITBP’s Battalion No. 1, tasked with guarding the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China that runs along the state.

ISRO, DRDO helping to ascertain exact cause: CM

New Delhi/Dehradun, Feb. 8: As multi-agency relief operations continue in Chamoli and adjoining areas of Uttarakhand, Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on Monday said a comprehensive analysis of the entire incident is being carried out to avert future tragedies, and asserted the immediate priority was to provide food and other assistance to the affected people.

In an interview, he said the incident appeared to have happened due to the breaking of the glacier

and the chief secretary has been instructed to find out the real reasons. “A DRDO team is already studying the cause of this tragedy and we have also sought the help of ISRO scientists and experts for the same,” he said.

After a comprehensive analysis is undertaken to find the reasons of this incident, “we will build an elaborate plan to avert any potential tragedy going forward,” Rawat said.

Asked about the ongoing relief operations, he said they are continuing in full

swing. “We have made all arrangements needed for the rescue and relief operations along with providing healthcare facilities to the affected people. Most importantly, we are working on re-establishing the connectivity to the affected villages,” he said.

Rawat said while the extent of economic loss will be ascertained in due course, the top most priority for now is to save as many lives as possible and to rehabilitate those who have got displaced from their homes.

— PTI

Daily Covid-19 toll stays below 150

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 8

In a significant achievement, India’s daily death toll due to Covid-19 has been less than 150 continuously for the last 10 days and in the last 24 hours, only 84 deaths were reported.

According to the Union Health Ministry, 17 States and Union Territories have not reported any

death in the last 24 hours. These are Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, Lakshadweep, Ladakh, Sikkim, Raj-asthan, Meghalaya, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu-Kashmir, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Assam.

Besides 33 States/UTs have less than 5,000 active

cases.

Health ministry officials said the effective strategy of containment including prompt tracing and tracking, aggressive and widespread testing, combined with standardized clinical management protocols have ensured the low mortality levels, in addition to consistent low daily positive cases.

“As part of the Covid management and

response policy, there has been a sharp focus of the Centre not only containing the Covid related fatality, but to reduce deaths and to save lives by providing quality clinical care to the critical and severe patients of Covid-19,” officials added.

India has so far vaccinated 60,35,660 persons out of which 54,12,270 are health-care workers and 6,23,390 are frontline workers.

Protests erupt as BJP Rath Yatra diverted in WB

PRANMOY
BRAHMACHARI | DC
BERHAMPORE, FEB. 8

Within two days of its flag-off by Bharatiya Janata Party president J.P. Nadda from Nabadwip in Nadia, the first leg of the saffron party’s Rath Yatra, calling for ‘Pariavartan’ in poll-bound West Bengal, was allegedly stopped by the police at Beldanga in Murshidabad on Monday morning.

The incident took place a day before Nadda, in his second visit to the state in a span of three days, is expected to flag off the second leg of Rath Yatra from Tarapith in Birbhum.

As the ongoing procession came to a halt on its way, angry BJP workers erupted in protest and squatted on the Beldanga-Nowda state highway, putting up a road blockade for around three hours. They also shouted slogans against high handedness by the police.

Bengali TV actor Kaushik Roy, who participated in the rally, said, “Actually the ruling party is anguished by the spontaneous public welcome irrespective of cast, creed and religion to our event. So it is upto to stop our overwhelmed success.”

● THE INCIDENT took place a day before BJP president J.P. Nadda, in his second visit to the state in a span of three days, is expected to flag off the second leg of Rath Yatra from Tarapith in Birbhum.

On Sunday afternoon, Trinamul Congress workers from Mirzapur in Beldanga shouted slogans against the Rath Yatra, objecting its route in the area.

BJP (Murshidabad) president Gouri Shankar Ghosh said, “The Rath Yatra entered the district as the party rank and file made an overnight stay at Bharat Sebashram Sangha in Beldanga. But the police stopped it to bar its passage through the Nowda-Hariharpara police station area, though it was our scheduled route, in apprehension of a communal trouble. Our Rath Yatra remained peaceful however.”

Denying of stopping Rath Yatra, Superintendent of Police (Murshidabad) K. Sabari Rajkumar said, “Its route was diverted to National Highway 34 apprehending some trouble.” Later the Rath Yatra reached Berhampore.

Tribal girl sold 6 times, ends life

RABINDRA NATH
CHODHURY | DC
BHOPAL, FEB. 8

An 18-year-old tribal, a victim of interstate human trafficking, was sold six times in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh over a period of two months before committing suicide in September last year.

Arrest of eight accused including the alleged interstate human trafficking kingpin couple in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh on Monday unraveled the shocking and tragic story of the deceased.

While Pancham Singh Rai and his wife were arrested in Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh, Kallu Raikwar, Harendra Singh Bundela, Rajpal Singh Parmar, Deshraj Kushwaha, Munna Kushwaha and Santosh Kushwaha were arrested in Lalitpur in Uttar Pradesh in connection with the human trafficking incident which ended in tragic death of the girl, hailing from Chhattisgarh.

According to the police, a team of Chhattisgarh police landed in Chhatarpur on February 4 to trace the girl following a complaint lodged by her parents alleging that a couple was threatening to kill her if they did not pay them money.

Later, a joint team of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh police on Monday raided the house of Santosh Kushwaha in Lalitpur in Uttar Pradesh

● A TEAM of Chhattisgarh police landed in Chhatarpur on February 4 to trace the girl following a complaint lodged by her parents alleging that a couple was threatening to kill her if they did not pay them money.

and arrested him. Santosh spilled the beans on the serial human trafficking saga saying that he bought the girl from Munna at a price of ₹70,000.

Police investigation has revealed that the girl was brought to Chhatarpur in July 2020 by the couple allegedly with the assurance of providing her a job.

She was, however, allegedly sold to Kallu Raikwar, a local in Chhatapur, for ₹20,000 in July last year.

She was subsequently allegedly sold to Harendra, Rajapl, Deshraj, Bundela, Munna and Santosh successively. Santosh purchased the girl to marry her off to his mentally challenged son Babloo, police said quoting him.

The girl, however, could not bear it and committed suicide on September 10, 2020, police said.

“We are probing if the couple were involved in trafficking of more girls from tribal areas of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh,” Chhatarpur district superintendent of police Sachin Sharma said.

TN | POLITICS

Supporters line up all along the highway to welcome her with flowers

Sasikala returns to TN to enthusiastic welcome

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 8

Determined to capture the reins of AIADMK and to lead the party to victory in the Assembly elections, V K Sasikala, former aide of J Jayalalithaa, returned to Chennai on Monday after four years of incarceration in Bengaluru with lakhs of supporters lining up to welcome her all along the highway.

Speaking near Vaniyambadi, Sasikala evoked the sentiments of the crowd by quoting an old MGR song to drive home the point that she was a slave to love, a slave to Tamil culture and a

slave to her people but would never be cowed down by oppression.

Calling for unity in the AIADMK, by terming the party cadre as children of one mother, she wanted them to be on a single line as her aim was to ensure that their common enemy was prevented from coming to power.

“We shall not give in to the divide and rule policy of our enemy. Our great organization should not be wrecked for the personal likes and dislikes of some individuals,” she declared, hitting out at both the DMK and also the present AIADMK leadership.

Till her last breath she

would work for the party and strive for its growth, she said adding that the party was her family and her family was her party.

AIADMK had risen like a Phoenix whenever it went through tough times and it would face all odds, she said to the crowds that eagerly gathered to accord a grand reception to her.

All through her journey on the Bengaluru-Chennai Highway, flowers, bouquets, garlands, folk dances, aarthis and poor-nakumbham welcome her with hordes of supporters, waving both the AIADMK and AMMK flags all along.



Expelled AIADMK leader VK Sasikala is welcomed by her supporters as she enters Tamil Nadu via Krishnagiri district on Monday. — PTI

IN BRIEF

Armed men kill 19 in Nigeria

Kano, Nigeria: Nineteen people were killed at the weekend when armed men raided two villages in northwest Nigeria's Kaduna state, the government said, in the latest violence to hit the region. Gunmen from kidnapping and cattle rustling gangs — called bandits by locals — often raid villages in northwest Nigeria, stealing cattle, kidnapping for ransom and burning homes after looting supplies.

Aussie journalist held in China

Sydney: An Australian journalist who worked as an anchor for Chinese state television has been formally arrested for “illegally supplying state secrets overseas”, six months after she was detained in China without explanation, Canberra said on Monday. Australia's foreign minister Marise Payne said Chinese authorities informed her that Cheng Lei was formally arrested on February 5, after disappearing from public view last August.

Iran refuse French mediation in N-deal

Tehran: Iran appeared Monday to dismiss an offer by France to mediate between the United States and the Islamic republic in order to revive the 2015 nuclear deal. “The nuclear deal has no need for a mediator,” foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters without specifically mentioning France, but in response to a question about recent comments by the country's president. Emmanuel Macron said last week he was ready to act as an “honest broker” in talks between the new US administration of President Joe Biden and Tehran after the multilateral deal was torpedoed by ex-president Donald Trump.

Snow in Europe disrupts transport

Berlin: Transport disruption in Germany and the Netherlands persisted into a second day on Monday as heavy snowfall and icy temperatures gripped parts of central and northern Europe. Dutch children's return to school after the Coronavirus lockdown was delayed. Trucks got stuck in snowdrifts overnight on the A4 highway near Gera in eastern Germany, while part of the A7 highway near Goettingen in northern Germany was closed after trucks became stuck on uphill stretches. Railway operator Deutsche Bahn said services remained suspended across parts of central and northern Germany, with no long-distance trains running north-east from Frankfurt, west from Berlin or southwest from Hamburg.

US CAUCUS TO INDIA: MAINTAIN DEMOCRATIC NORMS

Washington, Feb. 8: A powerful India Caucus in the US Congress has urged the Indian government to ensure that the norms of democracy are maintained and protesters allowed to demonstrate peacefully and have access to the Internet as it held a meeting with New Delhi's envoy here. India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu, who regularly interacts with India Caucus members on a number of issues, had a virtual meeting with the top leadership of the Congressional India Caucus last week. The members included congressmen Brad Sherman and Steve Chabot who are the two Co-Chairs of the Congressional India Caucus along with Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna, who is the Vice Chair of the Caucus. “During this discussion, the caucus leadership welcomed reforms in the Indian economy including in agriculture,” sources said. During the meeting, the leadership of the India Caucus, which is the largest country-specific caucus in the House of Representatives, condemned the violence on January 26 in Delhi. Among other things “they were appreciative of the government's perspective on the farm reforms,” according to those familiar with the meeting. Sherman tweeted that they urged India to ensure that the norms of democracy are maintained and the protesters allowed to demonstrate peacefully and have access to the Internet.



People stage a demonstration against the February 1 military coup along a street in the town of Muse in Shan state, near the China-Myanmar border on Monday. — AFP

Myanmar's junta imposes curfew to stop protesters

Yangon, Feb. 8: Myanmar's military government imposed a curfew and bans on gatherings of more than five people in the country's two biggest cities on Monday as protests against last week's coup showed no sign of abating.

The decrees covering Yangon and Mandalay were issued on a township-by-township basis, and those which have become public so far have the same restrictions. At least seven have been issued, and more are expected for other areas. Rallies and gather-

ings of more than five people, along with motorized processions, are banned, and a 8 pm to 4 am curfew is imposed. The measures are effective until further notice. The decrees say they were issued in response to people carrying out unlawful actions that harm the rule of law.

The generals issued a stern warning Monday against further protests as an uprising against their coup gathered pace, with hundreds of thousands on the streets demanding the release of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The junta has so far refrained from using deadly force to quell the demonstrations sweeping most of the country, but with pressure building riot police fired water cannon in an attempt to disperse thousands gathered in Naypyidaw.

The military last week detained Suu Kyi and dozens of other members of her National League for Democracy party, ending a decade of civilian rule and triggering international condemnation. In the face of an increasingly bold wave of defiance, state

broadcaster MRTV warned that opposition to the junta was unlawful and signalled a potential crackdown.

“Action must be taken according to the law with effective steps against offences which disturb, prevent and destroy the state's stability, public safety and the rule of law,” said a statement read by an announcer on the channel.

Tens of thousands of people overcame a nationwide internet blockade to rally over the weekend in the first major outpourings of opposition to the coup.

— AP/AFP



Benjamin Netanyahu

NETANYAHU'S CORRUPTION TRIAL RESUMES

Jerusalem, Feb. 8: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu briefly appeared in a Jerusalem courtroom on Monday to respond formally to corruption charges just weeks before national elections in which he hopes to extend his 12-year rule.

Netanyahu was indicted last year for fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate cases. In recent months, Israelis have held weekly protests calling on him to resign over the charges and criticising his government's response to the Coronavirus crisis.

He stands accused of accepting lavish gifts from wealthy friends and offering to grant favours to powerful media moguls in exchange for favourable coverage of him and his family. The latest hearing was postponed last month due to lockdown restrictions on public gatherings. — AP

S. Africa to try new vaccine after stopping AstraZeneca WHO holds virtual meet over vaccine

Johannesburg, Feb. 8: South Africa is considering giving a Covid-19 vaccine that is still in the testing phase to health workers, after suspending the rollout of another shot that preliminary data indicated may be only minimally effective against the mutated form of the virus dominating the country.

The country was scrambling Monday to come up with a new vaccination strategy after it halted use of the AstraZeneca vaccine — which is cheaper and easier to handle than some others and which many had hoped would be crucial to combatting the pandemic in developing countries.

Among the possibilities being considered: mixing the AstraZeneca vaccine with another one or giving Johnson & Johnson's single-dose vaccine, which has not yet been authorised for use anywhere, to 100,000 health care workers while monitoring its efficacy against the variant.

The abrupt change in strategy was prompted by preliminary results in a small study that showed the AstraZeneca vaccine was only minimally effective against mild to moderate cases of the disease caused by the variant.

There is reason to hope the Johnson & Johnson vaccine may fare better in the country. — AP

Geneva, Feb. 8: The World Health Organisation's vaccine experts were deciding on Monday on their usage recommendations for the AstraZeneca-Oxford Covid-19 vaccine — including for older adults. The 15-member Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) was spending the day in a virtual extraordinary

meeting discussing the two-shot vaccine.

The WHO said the recommendations on who it should and should not be used for would be made public later this week.

The regulatory authorities in several European nations have not authorised the vaccine for use among the over-65s — by far the most vulnerable age group for serious Covid-19 disease. — AFP

Tanzanian prayers fail to prevent virus

Dar es Salaam, Feb. 8: Tanzania has spent more than six months trying to convince the world it has been cured of the coronavirus through prayer, while refusing to take measures to curb its spread.

However, dissent is mounting, along with deaths attributed to “pneumonia”, with even a politician in semi-autonomous Zanzibar admitting he has the virus.

“Covid-19 is killing peo-

ple and we see a lot of cases but we cannot talk about the disease,” said a doctor in a public hospital in Tanzania's biggest city Dar es Salaam, who like many asked not to be named for fear of reprisals.

Tanzanian President John Magufuli has continually played down the seriousness of the virus even as neighbouring countries shut borders and implemented curfews and lockdowns. — AFP

US plans re-entry in UN rights panel

Finds authoritarian rulers leading UNHRC

Washington, Feb. 8: Announcing the new approach from Washington, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the pullout in June 2018 “did nothing to encourage meaningful change, but instead created a vacuum of US leadership, which countries with authoritarian agendas have used to their advantage.”

“The Biden administration has recommitted the United States to a foreign policy centered on democracy, human rights, and equality,” he said in a statement. “Effective use of multilateral tools is an important element of that vision.”

The decision is likely to draw criticism from conservative lawmakers and many in the pro-Israel community, who have derided the council and echoed Trump administration complaints that it was too quick to overlook abuses by autocratic regimes and governments and even accept them as members.

Blinken said President Joe Biden had instructed the State Department to “reengage immediately and robustly” with the council, but he acknowledged it still needs work.

“We recognise that the Human Rights Council is a flawed body, in need of reform to its agenda, membership, and focus, including its disproportionate focus on Israel,” he said.

Blinken said the council, when it works well, “shines a spotlight on

Impeachment trial of Don from today

Washington, Feb. 8: Donald Trump's historic second impeachment trial is opening this week with a sense of urgency — by Democrats who want to hold the former president accountable for the violent US Capitol siege and Republicans who want it over as fast as possible.

Scheduled to begin on Tuesday, just over a month since the deadly riot, the proceedings are expected to diverge from the lengthy, complicated trial that resulted in Trump's acquittal a year ago on charges that he privately pressured Ukraine to dig up dirt on a Democratic rival, Joe Biden, now the president. This time, Trump's Jan. 6 rally cry to “fight like hell” and the storming of the Capitol played out for the world to see. While Trump very well could be acquitted again, the trial could be over in half the time.

Details of the proceedings are still being negotiated by the Senate leaders, with the duration of opening arguments, senators' questions and deliberations all up for debate.

So far, it appears there will be few witnesses called, as the prosecutors and defense attorneys speak directly to senators who have been sworn to deliver “impartial justice” as jurors. Most are also witnesses to the siege, having fled for safety that day as the rioters broke into the Capitol and temporarily halted the electoral count certifying Biden's victory.

Defense attorneys for Trump declined a request for him to testify. Holed up at his Mar-a-Lago club, Florida, the former president was silenced on Twitter without comments since leaving the White House. — AP

countries with the worst human rights records and can serve as an important forum for those fighting injustice and tyranny.”

“To address the council's deficiencies and ensure it lives up to its mandate, the United States must be at the table using the full weight of our diplomatic leadership,” he added.

Trump pulled out of the council due to its disproportionate focus on Israel, which has received by far the largest number of critical council resolutions against any country, and because it failed to meet an extensive list of reforms demanded by then-US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley. — AP

No jury in Hong Kong's 1st national security trial

Hong Kong, Feb. 8: Hong Kong has decided against using a jury for the first trial under a sweeping national security law imposed by Beijing, a legal source with direct knowledge of the case said on Monday.

Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng informed the defendant's legal team in early February, citing “the personal safety of jurors and their family members”, the source said.

Instead the trial will be heard by three judges who have been appointed to try national security cases.

A Department of Justice spokesperson declined to comment when asked because proceedings were ongoing.

The spokesperson for the judiciary also declined to comment “on individual cases”.

Trial by jury has been used by Hong Kong's common law legal system for 176 years and is described by the city's own justice department as one of the judiciary's “most important features”.

But the new national security law — which was imposed by fiat last June — allows for trials to be heard by dedicated national security judges in some circumstances.

The first person to face trial is Tong Ying-kit, a 23-year old man arrested the day after the law came in to effect for allegedly driving his motorbike into a crowd of police officers while flying a protest flag.

Currently on remand, he is charged with terrorism and inciting secession — two new national security crimes — and faces up to life in prison if convicted. His case is being handled by the High Court's Court of First Instance, where trials are usually heard by a judge alongside seven to nine jurors.

According to the legal source, the Secretary for Justice invoked Article 46 of the national security law, which states three instances where juries can be scrapped for national security crimes.

They are protecting state secrets, cases involving foreign forces and protecting the personal safety of jurors and their families.

Hong Kong's Bar Association had previously raised concerns about that provision.

“The right to trial by jury can be taken away by the Secretary for Justice on certain grounds without any residual discretion in this regard being left with the courts,” the association said shortly after the law was published. The legal source said Tong's defence team were considering their next step.

“The only possible way to fight is via judicial review,” the source said.

Hong Kong's internationally respected legal system has come under sustained pressure in the politically charged wake of 2019's huge pro-democracy protests and Beijing's subsequent crackdown. — AFP

CHINA BLOCKS UNCENSORED CLUBHOUSE APP

Beijing, Feb. 8: A rare uncensored app that had attracted Chinese internet users to freely discuss taboo topics, including the mass detention of Uighurs, democracy protests in Hong Kong and the concept of Taiwanese independence appeared to have been blocked on Monday night.

Authoritarian China deploys a vast and sophisticated surveillance state to scrub the internet of dissent and prevent citizens from accessing international social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter in what is often known as the “Great Firewall”.

But the Clubhouse app had for a brief while sidestepped the censors and drawn crowds of Chinese internet users — but appeared to quickly fall foul of the censors. The American invite-only audio app allows users to listen and participate in loosely moderated live conversations in digital “rooms”.

And in recent days, Chinese online users have filled those rooms discussing highly censored subjects — such as Beijing's sweeping incarceration of mostly Muslim minority Uighur communities in the far western Xinjiang region. — AFP

SOCIAL | CONNECTION

Kim Beom-su, worth \$9.4 billion is founder of KakaoTalk

Korean billionaire to donate his wealth

Seoul, Feb. 8: One of South Korea's wealthiest people, the billionaire founder of the country's biggest mobile messenger operator KakaoTalk, promised on Monday to give away more than half his wealth.

The decision by self-made Kim Beom-su, worth around \$9.4 billion, is an unusual one for the world's 12th-largest economy, where business is dominated by sprawling family-controlled conglomerates.

“I have pledged to donate more than half of my assets throughout my life

to solve social issues,” Kim said in a message sent to all of Kakao's employees.

Kakao, founded in 2010, has a range of mobile offerings and its flagship messaging application is installed on more than 90 per cent of phones in South Korea.

Forbes described Kim the nation's “biggest gainers” during the Coronavirus pandemic last year.

His firm benefited from social distancing measures that saw more use of its messaging app, e-commerce platform, and



Kim Beom-su

online games.

The promise to donate more than half of a billion-dollar fortune is at the core of the Giving Pledge, the philanthropic initiative set up by Bill and

● **THE PROMISE** to donate more than half of a billion-dollar fortune is at the core of the Giving Pledge, the philanthropic initiative set up by Bill and Melinda Gates, as well as Warren Buffett.

Melinda Gates, as well as Warren Buffett.

More 200 super-wealthy have signed the pledge, according to its website, but it has struggled to make headway in East Asia, listing only a hand-

ful of donors from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan — and none from Japan or South Korea.

Kim said he was looking to make his pledge official, adding discussions on the details of his donation were “at the early stage”.

“I plan to find and help people that Kakao has difficulty approaching to solve social problems,” he added.

Kakao reported 120 billion won in operating profit in the third quarter, up 103 percent from a year earlier, and is expected to report record yearly profits for 2020. — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

9 FEBRUARY 2021

An ecological tragedy of Himalayan proportions

A tragedy of gargantuan proportions washed away close to 200 people, destroyed or damaged two hydroelectric dams and five bridges as the Nanda Devi glacier burst in Uttarakhand. The GLOF (glacier lake outburst flood) event that created a deluge of frightening proportions downstream in rivers was said to have been triggered by an avalanche on Sunday morning. The rescue efforts by over 2,000 members of the Army, police and paramilitary forces, and state and national disaster response teams have been heroic as the Himalayan state grappled with yet another tragedy like the 2013 monsoon floods in the wake of cloudbursts that killed nearly 6,000 people, which was the worst ever toll as muddy water poured down the gorges and drowned entire villages.

Ecologically fragile regions around the world are fraught with danger and the pace of development in sustaining a rising population trend, and man's co-existence with nature has been threatened in the most basic ways. The fallout from deforestation is clear even as the more populated stretches of the Himalayas show how precariously man is perched on mountainous terrain. It is obvious that lessons have not been learnt from years of having to deal with floods from the monsoon or melting glaciers. It is against this background that the foolishness of building hydroelectric dams too close to glaciers must be viewed when global warming is seen to create havoc in the icy Himalayan upper reaches.

Melting glaciers are the clearest signs of climate change, and since this event took place outside the monsoon period, it is safe to assume human intervention was a causative factor.

It is a specious argument that a state which has to purchase power in the region of ₹1,000 crore a year must build dams in ecologically sensitive regions in order to save money. So long as the consumer pays for the power purchased, there should be no need for Uttarakhand to spend thousands of crores in building dams to generate electricity. They have been warned about this, including in scientific advice tendered to ruling party politicians. The era of building dams is truly over as man has learnt from experience that Nature is a force that can be overpowering when it is taken on or teased.

Himalayan efforts by a tiny state like Uttarakhand can't by themselves reverse global warming but man can learn from the simple principle that Nature cannot be toyed with, particularly in fragile zones. Melting glaciers are the clearest signs of climate change, and since this event took place outside the monsoon period, it is safe to assume human intervention was a causative factor. It will be up to scientists to study the event and render an opinion on what may have caused it and it is entirely up to the administration in hilly areas to enforce laws strictly to ensure that ecological preservation rules are always followed lest such events recur.

Quick communication of the impending water flow may have saved hundreds of lives downstream of the Ganga's several tributaries as many villagers were evacuated in time. The standard announcement of relief to the families of the dead followed a pattern which points to the government's utter helplessness in dealing with calamities and in stopping human contribution to climate change. The bursting of a glacier in the Garhwal Himalayas is a chilling warning of what we may be up against if we continue to recklessly exploit our planet's finite resources.

‘Gilt’ option for citizens

The Reserve Bank of India, during its latest monetary policy review, proposed to allow retail investors to park their money in government securities (G-Secs) — also called “gilt bonds” — by opening gilt securities accounts or “retail direct”. This is one of a series of steps that the Reserve Bank has been taking since January 2002 to increase the participation of a larger number of people in the purchase of government securities.

G-Secs are tradeable investment instruments issued by the Central or state governments and are the most risk-free sovereign-backed bonds available in the country. These securities are available in both short-term and long-term tenures — ranging from three months to 30 years — with an annual yield starting from 3.37 per cent. Though commercial banks and asset management companies dominate the G-Secs market now, the RBI's decision would provide a new risk-free investment option for retail investors.

This decision could also provide elbow room for the Central government to reduce its presence in the banking sector. A couple of years back, former RBI governor Yaga Venugopal Reddy had said that an “average citizen of India is most comfortable banking with PSU banks”. Sixty-five per cent of total deposits in the banking sector are with the public sector banks for the mere reason that they are owned by the government. If most risk-averse depositors could be persuaded to shift to the G-Secs, the government could go ahead with the denationalisation of banks at a faster pace.

However, there still remain a few challenges. Since G-Secs offer lower yields than fixed deposits, many people might not find it an attractive investment option. Banks' fixed deposits and small saving schemes have become a safety net for vulnerable sections of society and unless the government creates a decent social security net, they cannot be wished away by any government without facing the consequences in election season.

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Subhani



Does India want to be a Tier-2 UNSC member?



Mohan Guruswamy

Sometime recently, Mr T.S. Tirumurti, our permanent representative at the United Nations in New York, once again pleaded for the expansion of the UN Security Council permanent membership (P-5) to make it more broad-based. Addressing the UN General Assembly by video on September 26 in the landmark 75th General Debate, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also raised the issue of India's entry into the Security Council as a permanent member. He posed the question: “How long will India, the world's largest democracy and home to 1.3 billion people, be kept out of the decision-making structures of the United Nations?” He also asserted that reform in the responses, processes and very character of the global body was the “need of the hour”.

This is interesting, because for the first time India has asked for more than just a mere expansion of the UNSC by accommodating it as a permanent member. India has asked for a greater and comprehensive reform in “the responses, processes and character of the UN”.

The United States, Russia and China have already unveiled their visions of an expanded UN Security Council. During his visit to New Delhi as chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations in 2015, then US President Barack Obama categorically said he supported a reformed UNSC with India as a permanent member. But no sooner Mr Obama had returned to the US after his New Delhi visit, then US ambassador to the UN Samantha Powers said:

“It is very critical that any reform proposal enjoy broad consensus among member states”. This position takes it very close to the proposal of nations under the banner “Uniting for Consensus Group”, which is opposed to the UNSC's expansion by adding the G-4 of India, Germany, Japan and Brazil to it.

This group, led by Canada, Italy, Colombia and Pakistan, has made a counter proposal that envisages an enlargement of the number of non-permanent members from 10 to 20. The non-permanent members would be elected by the General Assembly for a two-year term and would be eligible for immediate re-election, subject to the decision of their respective geographical blocs.

The Chinese want “small and medium-sized countries to take turns to serve on the UNSC”. Russia, while not opposed to any expansion, has taken the position that the powers of the members of present UNSC should remain the same with full veto powers, meaning there could be two or three classes of UNSC members. The G-5 with veto powers, G-4 permanent members without the veto, and whoever else may be elected by the General Assembly.

The creation of the United Nations to preserve world peace began in October 30, 1943 when Britain, China, the Soviet Union and the US signed the Moscow Declaration on General Security. The signatories then met continuously from August to October 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington D.C. and fashioned a basic plan for the UN. The center-

piece of this plan was a Security Council in which the US, the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China would be permanent members.

Fifty nations then met in San Francisco on April 25, 1945, less than a fortnight before Germany surrendered and four months before Japan was defeated, to consider this plan. After much deliberation the differences, mostly over the veto power demanded by the then Big Three — the US, USSR and Britain — were papered over and on June 26, 1945 the 50 nations present signed the UN Charter and the world body formally came into being.

As an immediate response to a destructive world war, the UN reflected the reality and ethos of that age. Nothing reflected this more than the composition of the permanent members of the Security Council. Four out of the five were “white” nations. Two, China and France, were defeated nations. Two, Britain and France, were colonial powers. The other 10 members of the Security Council are elected members from the various regions. These are members without the veto and with little voice or clout.

While it can be argued that a Security Council of a smaller number of countries is desirable to make the UN effective, it must also reflect world realities and be more representative of its diversity. For instance, Africa and Latin America are not represented in the P-5. Likewise, the Islamic world does not find a place. India, which has a fifth of the world's population, does not find a place. The biggest economy in Europe, Germany,

does not find a place. On the other hand, with two members, Britain and France, Western Europe is clearly over-represented. With Russia added, Europe has three members. Clearly this is not a satisfactory arrangement. The UN Security Council, as it is now, does not reflect the world order or its diversity.

In the Cold War era, veto powers ensured that one bloc could not override the interests of the other one. The veto thus came to be used 252 times since 1946. Since 1996, Russia has not exercised the veto even once whereas the United States has used it six times and China twice. This presumably reflects the settled shape of the world order now.

Clearly, the use of the veto itself must be reviewed. One nation alone must no longer be allowed to block the consensus of the UNSC. It is time that a threshold of members to collectively enforce the veto be discussed.

The times have also changed. The United States is no longer the dominant economic and political power it was in the latter half of the twentieth century. The G-4 nations are all bigger economies than Russia, France and Britain. They possibly have bigger global footprints than the three. How can the power to veto be justified for these three and denied to the G-4?

In the past few years, India's diplomacy has centered around a craving to just become a member of the UN Security Council. It seems a second-class membership is still feasible. The big question then is whether this is what India really wants? Or do we want a greater democratisation of the UNSC to reflect the status and size of the G-4?

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

India has asked for a greater and comprehensive reform in “the responses, processes and character of the United Nations”.

LETTERS

FARM LAWS

During the past seven years or so, all the major decisions taken in a hurry by the NDA government have been without taking into account the repercussions. It seems the NDA can pass rules which are only beneficial to capitalists. As the country belongs to every citizen, it is duty of the government to at least find out the opinions of stake holders from respective fields.

N.S. Sharma
Visakhapatnam

Rakesh Tikait must not wait for Gandhi Jayanti to go for a meeting with the Centre and his 'new ideas' as Mahatma Gandhi did during the Raj days.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

4G IN J&K

Even though there has been an inordinate delay in the restoration of 4G services in Jammu & Kashmir, it is indeed a welcome move (4G in J&K: Long overdue, DC, Feb. 8). The renewal of services is bound to make life better and act as a confidence-building measure. Further, let us not forget that Internet access being part of the fundamental right of freedom of speech was stressed by the Supreme Court.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

BEGGING MENACE

Apart from Kurnool, there are many towns in India where beggars are a menace. They spoil bus stops and enter bus stations. Governments must do something to save people from them and professional or organised begging must be controlled.

P. Govardhana Rao
Kankipadu, Krishna district

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

K.M. Munshi passes away

BOMBAY, February. 8 Dr. K.M. Munshi, (84), the elder statesman, an acknowledged constitutional authority and “Kulapati” (founder president) of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, the nation's single biggest educational and cultural complex died suddenly today at his residence at the Bhavan headquarters here today. Dr. Munshi was also former Bombay Presidency's first Home Minister.

Aakar Patel



Democracy Index: Why India's rank now falling

The Economist is a magazine through it refers to itself as a newspaper. It is over 175 years old and sells about 10 lakh copies a week. Its readers are mostly professionals, highly educated and with higher incomes. It is one of the very few magazines in the world, and possibly the only one of its size, which makes more money from subscriptions than it does from advertising. That means that its readers purchase it for its content. One year's subscription costs ₹15,000 in the United States, meaning that each issue is ₹300.

The magazine promotes free market policies of the sort generally associated with conservative, meaning right-leaning, parties. The Economist Intelligence Unit is its research and analysis division. Each year it compiles a “Democracy Index”, which shows the state of democracy around the world. This month, it gave its results for 2020. It would be instructive to see what it has said about India.

We have fallen from a global ranking of 27 in 2015 to 53. This is mainly, the Economist Intelligence Unit says, because “democratic norms have been under pressure since 2015”, and

as a result India's “global ranking slipped from 27th to 53rd as a result of democratic backsliding under the leadership of Narendra Modi”.

The slippage has not come due to electoral processes and political participation where, as most of us will accept, India continues to do well. The problem is on the side of political culture and civil liberties, where since Narendra Modi took over in 2014 India has declined. In January 2014, in the UPA's last days, the EIU gave India its highest rating of 7.92. This slid to 7.74 in 2015 and then 7.23 in 2017 and then dipped to 6.9 in 2019 and 6.61 in 2020. The EIU classifies India as a “flawed democracy”.

It describes flawed democracies as countries that have free and fair elections and, even if there are problems (such as infringements on media freedom), basic civil liberties are respected. “However, there are significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation.”

In the last few years, India has seen “the increasing influence of religion under the Modi premiership, whose policies have fomented anti-Muslim

feeling and religious strife, has damaged the political fabric of the country”. Remember, this is the magazine the world's topmost corporate executives and decision makers read. While our government responded strongly to Rihanna and Greta Thunberg, with the external affairs ministry issuing a statement, it hasn't said anything on this downgrade, which more people will read and take seriously than someone's tweet.

The EIU says that the enactment in December 2019 of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 “continued to fuel riots in 2020, with several left dead following clashes in February in the capital city, New Delhi. The act introduces a religious element to the conceptualisation of Indian citizenship, a step that many critics see as undermining the secular basis of the Indian State”.

The Magazine does not deny Mr Modi's popularity but says that it comes from the same aspects it finds concerning. It says that he participated in the ground-breaking ceremony at the site of the destroyed Babri Masjid, and notes “the temple's construction will further endear Mr Modi to his Hindu nationalist base”.

Unfortunately for us, this is not a

popularity contest. The EIU says: “On top of these issues, the authorities' handling of the pandemic has also led to a further erosion of civil liberties in 2020.” And finally, it notes “by contrast, the scores for some of India's regional neighbours, such as Bangladesh, Bhutan and Pakistan, improved marginally in 2020”.

For those who think India's democracy is just fine and there has been no change in the past few years, perhaps it would be instructive to see what has happened on a few issues. The first is the introduction of electoral bonds. This is a mechanism whereby corporates and even foreign entities can donate money anonymously to political parties. Readers may not know that over 90 per cent of the total value of the bonds donated since the scheme began two years ago are bought in ₹1 crore denominations. Meaning it's not the common man giving money secretly to parties.

Second, that the Modi government has changed the RTI law to make its commissioners dependent on the government for their term and salary. Third, that the Constitution was repeatedly violated through bypassing the Rajya Sabha by illegally calling pieces of legislation

“money bills”. The manner of the passing of the farm laws, where the Rajya Sabha was not even allowed to vote despite it not being a money bill, will tell us where things stand today in democratic India.

The Economist also ran a story on India in this week's edition headlined “India's government is censoring people before they comment”. It quotes Idi Amin, late Ugandan dictator, who once declared he respected freedom of speech, but could not guarantee freedom after speech. The magazine says “India's government seems to be taking this concept one step further. Despite running what is often hailed as the world's biggest democracy, it has gained a taste for curtailing freedom before speech.” This is what the world made of issues like the jailing of Siddique Kappan by UP and Munagar Faruqui by MP.

If you were angered, like Sachin Tendulkar, Lata Mangeshkar, Virat Kohli, Ajay Devgan and Akshay Kumar, by six-word tweets from Western celebrities, you should consider what their most respectable and respected voices are also saying.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

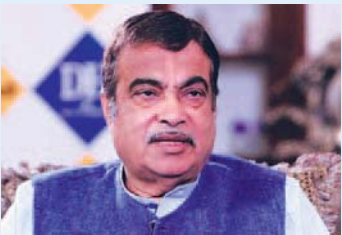
INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51348.77	1.22
Nifty 50	15115.80	1.28
S&P 500*	3,902.36	0.40
Dollar (₹)	72.96	-0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.04	-0.20
Euro (₹)	87.71	-0.41
Gold (10gm) (₹)	46,877.94	0.20
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	60.34	1.69
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.040	-0.51
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.181	0.011

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Hyundai, Kia say Apple car deal now off

Hyundai Motor Co said it is not now in talks with Apple Inc on autonomous electric cars, just a month after it confirmed early-stage talks with the tech giant, sending the automaker's shares skidding. Wiping \$3 billion off its market value, Hyundai's stock slid 6.2 per cent. Shares in its affiliate Kia Corp, which had been tipped to be the likely operational partner for Apple, tumbled 15 per cent—a \$5.5 billion hit.

NH construction pace in Apr-Dec was 28 km/day



The pace of highway construction during April-December 2020, on an average, was 28 km a day. Total highways constructed across India during the period was 7,767 km, road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari told Rajya Sabha. Of the total 7,767 km, the highest 1,662 km was constructed in Maharashtra at a cost of Rs 6,858 crore followed by 552 km in UP (Rs 1,351 crore) and 495 km in MP (Rs 1,446 crore).

Indian pharma market may hit \$130 bn by 2030

India's pharma industry has proved to be a dependable supplier of quality drugs and is expected to reach a size of \$130 billion by 2030, chemical and fertiliser minister D. V. Sadananda Gowda said at an industry event. "The total market size of the Indian pharma industry is expected to reach \$130 bn by 2030. The medical devices industry has the potential to grow at 28 per cent per annum to reach \$50 bn by 2025," he said.

NMDC Q3 net profit jumps 53% to ₹2,108 crore

NMDC said its consolidated net profit jumped 53 per cent to Rs 2,108 crore for the December quarter against Rs 1,375 crore in the year-ago quarter. Total income rose to Rs 4,461 crore from Rs 3,137 crore. Total expenses during the third quarter stood at Rs 1,650 crore against Rs 1,491 crore. NMDC, India's largest iron ore miner, is also involved in the exploration of minerals like copper, limestone, dolomite and gypsum.



HCL Tech celebrates \$10-bn revenue with ₹700-cr bonus to staff

New Delhi, Feb. 8: HCL Technologies on Monday announced a special one-time bonus worth over Rs 700 crore for its employees, as the IT giant marked the \$10-billion (about Rs 72,800 crore) revenue milestone. The special bonus will be paid to employees this month—amounting to nearly \$90 million-plus

payroll taxes in some countries, the impact of which is excluded from FY21 Ebit (earnings before interest and taxes) guidance provided by the company last month, HCL Tech said in a statement. HCL Tech said it is "issuing a one-time special bonus to employees around the world" worth over Rs 700 crore in recog-

nition of its recent milestone of crossing the \$10-billion mark in revenue for 2020. "In celebration and gratitude all employees with one year of service or greater will receive a bonus, the equivalent of ten days' salary," the statement said. Despite an unrelenting pandemic, each and every

member of HCL family demonstrated strong commitment and passion, contributing to the growth of the organisation, HCL Technologies' chief human resources officer Apparao V. V. said. "The \$10 billion revenue milestone is a testament of our remarkable resilience as an organisation and the entrepre-

neurial spirit of our 1,59,000 plus employees," Apparao added. HCL Tech said achieving this historic milestone in technology, business and engineering services and software, in just 20 years since its IPO, reflects efforts and consistent achievements of employees, deep relationships with leading compa-

nies across industries and a strong network of partners and stakeholders. The IT services company had posted a 31.1 per cent rise in its December quarter net profit at Rs 3,982 crore, riding on strong momentum in its digital, products and platform segments. It had exuded confidence of clocking further accelera-

tion in bookings in the coming quarters. HCL Tech's revenue grew 6.4 per cent to Rs 19,302 crore in the December quarter from Rs 18,135 crore in the year-ago period, as per US GAAP. The company had recorded revenue growth at 3.5 per cent quarter-on-quarter in constant currency.

Bull run takes Sensex above 51000 Nifty crosses 15000-mark

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, FEB. 8



The market continues to make heavy gains post-the Union Budget and closed at new all-time highs on Monday, with the Nifty-50 Index closing above the 15000-mark at 15115.80 with 191 points gain. The Nifty-50, launched on April 22, 1996, hit the 5000-mark in 2007 and 10000-mark in 2017. The Sensex also, for the first time, closed above 51000 with a 617-points gain at 51348.77. Global cues were also positive with US market closing in the positive territory on Friday, as US treasury secretary Janet Yellen pushed for the Congress to pass \$1.9 billion stimulus package, and the Asian markets opening in the green, Japan's Nikkei Index closed 2.12 per cent and China's

Shanghai Composite closed 1.03 per cent up. Investors are taking comfort from the world's biggest-ever vaccination campaign. More than 124 million doses have been administered across 73 countries so far. While the vaccination programme in countries like India has just begun, countries like Israel have already inoculated more than one-third of their population with at least one of the two doses, according to a report.

"Indian equity markets continued their positive streak for the 6th day post Union Budget, amidst positive global cues," said Siddhartha Khemka, head -retail research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services. IT, metal and auto sector stocks were top gainers, driven by heavy foreign portfolio investors buying after a strong earnings season. FPIs were net buyers of equities worth Rs 1,876.60 crore, as per provisional data.

INDIAMART CEO BOOKED FOR GOVARDHAN HILL ROCK SALES

Mathura (UP), Feb. 8: Three men, including the CEO of e-commerce site Indiamart, were booked on Sunday for allegedly putting up for sale rocks taken from the Govardhan Hill here, at Rs 5,175 apiece, police said. Govardhan Hill in Mathura is considered a sacred site for Hindus, as it is the setting for many legends relating to the life of Lord Krishna, who is believed to be embodied in the earth of the hill. SP (rural) Shirish Chandra said an FIR has been filed under Section 265 of the IPC and Section 66 of the Information Technology Act against Indiamart founder-CEO Dinesh Agarwal, co-founder Brajesh Agrawal and Mathura-based supplier Ankur Agrawal. The FIR was lodged based on a complaint by Mathura-based social worker. — PTI

HC stays status quo order in Future-Reliance deal

SANGEETHA G with agency inputs CHENNAI, FEB. 8

The Delhi High Court on Monday stayed an earlier order by a single judge asking Future Group to maintain status quo with respect to its Rs 24,713-crore deal with Reliance Retail till the pronouncement of its final order.

A bench of chief justice D. N. Patel and justice Jyoti Singh passed the interim direction on Future Retail's appeal challenging the February 2 order of the single judge. In the February 2 order, Future Retail and all the concerned authorities were directed to maintain status quo with respect to all matters in violation of the order dated October 25, 2020. The single-judge is hearing Amazon's plea seeking enforcement of the October 25, 2020 Emergency Award given by Singapore International Arbitration Centre, restraining Future Group from going ahead with the deal with Reliance Retail.

"Statutory authorities should not be restrained from proceeding in accordance with law on Future-Reliance deal," said the division bench on Monday, referring to bodies like NCLT, CCI and Sebi. It also turned down Amazon's request to suspend Monday's order for a week.

However, the bench clarified that it will not come in the way of the final order to be pronounced by the single judge. While asking the respondents to maintain status quo, the single judge also wanted to file the status report within 10 days of the receipt of the order.

The court issued notice to Amazon and sought its stand on FRL's appeal by February 26 when it will commence day-to-day hearing of the matter.

In the interim order, the division bench said it was staying the single judge order as firstly, FRL was not a party to the share subscription agreement (SSA) between Amazon and Future Coupons Pvt Ltd (FCPL) and the US e-commerce giant was not a party to the deal between FRL and Reliance Retail.

The bench further said it was of the prima facie view that the share holding agreement (SHA) between FRL and FCPL, the SSA between FCPL and Amazon and the deal between FRL and Reliance Retail "are different" and "therefore, the group of companies doctrine cannot be invoked."

BIG BAZAAR

Foreign arrival figures fox tourism industry

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 8

Official data shows India received 2.1 lakh foreign tourists in the nine-month period since the lockdown was imposed. Though this is less than 3 per cent of the arrivals in the year-ago period, the industry is still sceptical of the number presented by the government. The country hardly received tourists during the period and the industry assumes that the arrivals could have been for purposes other than tourism. Between April and December this year, 2,13,853 foreigners had arrived in India. The arrivals had picked up from August when 11,619 people arrived. Since then, arrivals have been steadily growing, going up to 79,910 in December, minister of state for tourism Prahlad Singh Patel replied to a question on foreign tourist arrivals in Parliament. Though the arrivals are 97.2 per cent less than the figure of 77,50,563 during the same period in 2019, the industry believes that

these many foreigners would not have come into the country for travel and tourism. "Except for the Vande Bharat Mission, flights were not operating normally all these months. Monuments and religious places were closed, transportation facilities were not properly available and hotels too were not functioning normally. I don't see any reason to think that these many foreign tourists arrived. Probably, these could be NRIs arriving for religious or family functions like weddings, or foreigners coming for medical or business purposes. Most of these purposes are combined under tourism arrivals," said Iqbal Mulla, chief consul, Global Tourism Council. The government has also initiated a study to understand the job losses and economic losses of the sector. The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) was engaged by the government in January 2021 to conduct the study: "India and the Coronavirus Pandemic: Economic Losses for

Households Engaged in Tourism and Policies for Recovery". "The closure of the travel and tourism industry has had a cascading effect on the livelihood of people dependent on tourism... Since the situation is still evolving, the final impact can only be ascertained in due course," the minister said. The NCAER study will quantify sector-wise and overall loss in income of the economy and of the household sector and also the loss in jobs due to the impact of the pandemic on the tourism sector. It will also propose policy measures to provide relief to the tourism sector, in general, and households involved in tourism related activities, in particular, based on feedback received from various stakeholders. "I am glad that the government has initiated an assessment of the industry situation. Whatever measures are being taken to mitigate the losses have to be done on a war footing. Procedural delays have to be avoided," said Mulla.

Upstart Dixon surges 824% as CEO bets on phone-making

SARITHA RAI FEB. 8

Almost three decades ago, Sunil Vachani borrowed \$35,000 so he could start making 14-inch television sets in a rented shed outside New Delhi. It was an unconventional choice given India, though renowned for software and services, had long lagged behind in manufacturing. Today, Vachani's startup has grown into a sprawling electronics empire. His Dixon Technologies boasts a market value of more than \$2.5 billion and the capacity to produce about 50 million smartphones this year. It's an early indicator of the country's opportunities in building a sophisticated manufacturing sector, a top priority for PM Narendra Modi. While Vachani, 52, struggled in his early days, his company's shares have surged 824 per cent since a 2017 initial public offering. Sales and profits have boomed with domestic demand for smartphones, along with India's ambitious plans to develop its own local industry. "This is only a start," Vachani said in a telephone interview. "We are



Sunil Vachani

bringing about a mindset change that global manufacturing can happen in India." The founder and his siblings are now in the league of India's billionaire families. Vachani controls a one-third stake worth about \$900 million. Dixon is an example of how quickly India is changing: It has ramped up production capacity from about 2 million smartphones a month last year to about 4 million after a government incentive programme began. "India is well qualified to be the world's alternative to the China supply chain," said P.N. Sudarshan, partner at Deloitte India. "Once component makers move, vibrant manufacturing clusters will form." India lags behind China, making about 330 million

smartphones annually compared with 1.5 billion in China, data from the Indian Cellular Association shows. Vachani comes from an entrepreneurial family. His father and siblings started a business that produced electronics and appliances under the Weston brand. They made the country's first colour televisions and video recorders—and operated a string of video game parlours on the side. After studying business in London, Sunil opted to go his own way in 1993. He started making colour TVs and later added Sega game consoles, Philips video recorders and push-button mobile phones for Bharti Airtel to the portfolio. Dixon's fortunes began to improve in the 2000s, when a regional political party gave the company a contract to make televisions for free distribution. Dixon now makes televisions for Xiaomi Corp, washing machines for LG Electronics Inc and lighting products for Philips. It began producing mobile phones in 2016 for brands like Panasonic Corp and Samsung Electronics Co. —Bloomberg

MADRAS HIGH COURT QUASHES CHARGES AGAINST EX-CFO OF BHARAT FINANCIAL



S. Dilli Raj

S. UMAMAHESHWAR HYDERABAD, FEB. 8

Five years after his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) during its probe into financial irregularities at First Leasing Company of India, the Madras High Court has quashed the prosecution of S. Dilli Raj, a former chief financial officer of Hyderabad-based micro-lender Bharat Financial Inclusion Ltd, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. Commenting on the charges levelled against Mr Dilli Raj, a bench of the Madras High Court, comprising Justice P.N. Prakash and Justice V. Sivagnanam, opined that, "We are unable to persuade ourselves to agree with the Enforcement Directorate that the salaries and perquisites that were paid to Dilli Raj while he was in employment with FLCI would amount to proceeds of crime and any property purchased with that would stand tainted." In its charges against Dilli Raj, the ED claimed that "the salaries, performance bonus and other perquisites paid to S. Dilli Raj, as a vice-president of FLCI during his tenure from 1996-2007, were out of bank borrowings fraudulently obtained by FLCI, which are nothing but proceeds of crime. Accordingly, it is found that the above said property is involved in money laundering." Dilli Raj had quit Bharat Financial Inclusion Ltd, formerly SKS Microfinance, after he was arrested by the ED in 2016. He was a key member of the transition team at SKS Microfinance, which reoriented it away from its founder and microfinance sector's erstwhile poster boy Vikram Akula.

CARBON | NEGATIVE DRIVE Teams will have to show a method for capturing 1 tonne CO2 per day

Musk offers \$100 mn prize for removing CO2 from air

AKSHAT RATHI FEB. 8

Elon Musk became the richest person in the world by dramatically improving electric vehicles, pushing forward a technology that reduces carbon-dioxide emissions and slows global warming. Now he's putting \$100 million of that fortune into prizes for technologies to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere itself. The carbon-removal contest will be administered by the Xprize Foundation, a non-profit group that's held competitions to spur technology development to improve space travel, food and health. The new prize,

the largest of its kind, will be backed by a donation from the Musk Foundation, a non-profit founded by the chief executive officer of Tesla Inc and Space Exploration Technologies Corp. "Carbon negativity, not neutrality," Musk said in a statement. "This is not a theoretical competition... Whatever it takes. Time is of the essence." Details of the \$100 million prize for innovators who aid the development of carbon dioxide removal (CDR) technologies were released on Monday, following an initial announcement by Musk on Twitter on January 21. Entries for the prize will



open on Earth Day, celebrated on April 22. Three winners will be named for three separate prizes—\$50 million, \$20 million and \$10 million—on the same day in 2025. Conventional carbon capture focuses on removing CO2 from the exhaust

of power plants or factories, then burying the greenhouse gas deep underground to eliminate its contribution to global warming. Today this technology captures about 0.1 per cent of global emissions and it is used in most cases by oil producers or

heavy industry to, in effect, achieve carbon neutrality at a limited number of facilities. But overall reductions in worldwide emissions have been delayed for so long that climate scientists are now convinced of the need for newer technologies that remove CO2 from the air. That's what Musk means by "carbon negativity." Scientists are clear that the world needs to first reduce emissions. But if climate change is to be limited to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, as proposed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's special report published in 2018, then the world may

also need to capture and store as much as 20 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide from the air. That's as much as half of current global CO2 emissions. The 1.5°C threshold is the more ambitious goal under the Paris Agreement, which all countries in the world signed five years ago. Teams entering the Xprize competition to win a portion of Musk's \$100 million will have to demonstrate a method for capturing as much as 1 tonne of CO2 per day as cheaply as possible, while proving to judges that the technology can be scaled up to remove as much as 1 billion tonnes a year. —Bloomberg



Agasara Nandini shows the gold medal won in the 100m hurdles on Monday.

Nandini hurdles to second gold

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 8

Agasara Nandini secured her second gold as Telangana's medal tally swelled to four on the third day of the 36th National Junior Athletics Championships being held in Guwahati, Assam, on Monday. Nandini, who won the Girls Under 18 long jump event on the opening day, finished first in the Girls U-18 100 metres hurdles with a time of 13.83 seconds at the Sarusajai Stadium on Monday. Pooja of Haryana took silver in 15.45 seconds while Akschida S of Tamil Nadu was third with a time of 15.54 seconds. Kothuri Pranay of Telangana leapt a distance of 6.68 metres to bag a bronze in the Boys U-16 long jump event. Chandrashaker of Uttar Pradesh took gold with an effort of 6.84m while Dadan Kumar of Delhi was second in 6.81m.



Pranay with the Boys U-16 long jump bronze.

City thrash Reds black and blue

London: Manchester City left Liverpool's title defence in tatters as Ilkay Gundogan's double and two costly mistakes from Alisson Becker inspired the Premier League leaders' dazzling 4-1 win, while Harry Kane starred in Tottenham's 2-0 victory against West Bromwich Albion on Sunday. Inspired by Gundogan's goals and Phil Foden's stylish display, City moved 10 points clear of fourth-placed Liverpool after their first win at Anfield since 2003. The troubled champions were blown away by Pep Guardiola's side, who became the first team to score four times in a league game away to Liverpool in 12 years. City hold a five-point lead over second placed Manchester United and have a game in hand on their local rivals as they eye a third title in four seasons. — AFP

Hasan leads Pak to series victory

Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Medium pacer Hasan Ali took a maiden ten-wicket haul to help Pakistan win their first series against South Africa since 2003 with a 95-run victory in the second Test on the fifth and final day here on Monday. Hasan finished with 5/60 to record his best match figures of 11/114 and help dismiss South Africa — who were set a daunting 370 to chase — for 274 before the tea break. — AFP
Brief scores (Day 5): Pakistan 272 & 298 beat South Africa 201 & 274 (Markram 108, Bavuma 61, Hasan 5-60, Afridi 4-51).

Live on TV

TENNIS
Australian Open: First round matches from 5.30 am on Sony Six, from 1.30 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD
CRICKET
India vs England: First Test, Day 5 from 9.20 am on Star Sports 1, HD
FOOTBALL
Indian Super League: Bengaluru FC vs Mohun Bagan from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3
FA Cup: Fifth round — Burnley vs Bournemouth from 11 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD; Manchester United vs West Ham United from 1 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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ASH-TONISHING

Offie Ashwin takes 6/61 as India stage fight back

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 8

The ebbs and flows of Test cricket make it an intriguing spectacle. The fourth day of the opening Test between India and England was high on drama. The hosts who had begun the penultimate morning with the laborious task of saving the Test worked their way into contention. Chasing 420, India now need 381 runs in 90 overs with nine wickets in hand to cap off one of the greatest comeback wins in Test cricket. It's not going to be as simple as the equation suggests though. The red-soil surface is expected to deteriorate further on day five and Virat Kohli & Co. would also be mindful of the fact that the highest successful chase on Indian soil was 387, incidentally against the same opposition at the same venue. Can India do it again?

Having lost Rohit Sharma (12) early, India, who were 39 for one at stumps, will resume the proceedings with Shubman Gill (15 not out) and Cheteshwar Pujara (12 not out) in the middle. An enthralling day's play is on the cards with fans hoping for yet another incredible chase much like the recent Brisbane heist.

The day, however, belonged to Chennai boys Washington Sundar and R. Ashwin. An elegant left-handed batsman, Washington showed a lot of maturity, scoring an unbeaten 85 that helped India cut down their first innings deficit to 241. The two TN players put on 80 runs for the seventh wicket. For Washington, it was his second successive Test half-century.

Washington's senior state-mate Ashwin then took on the mantle to put England's second innings plans in disarray. Ashwin's 6/61 — his 28th five-wicket haul and third in as many matches at Chepauk — dismantled Joe Root & Co. for 178. England's second essay fizzled out especially after



R. Ashwin celebrates taking the wicket of England's Dom Bess on Day Four of the first Test in Chennai on Monday. — BCCI

going through the motions post-tea. In the morning session, left-arm spinner Jack Leach and pacer James Anderson grabbed two wickets each as England bowled India out for 337, to take a lead of 241 runs. India made their intentions clear when Kohli tossed the new ball to Ashwin who struck off the innings' first ball to remove Rory Burns with a beauty. Ishant Sharma

completed his landmark 300th when he trapped Dan Lawrence. As wickets fell at regular intervals, England found it difficult to accelerate.

Ashwin who had to slog for 55 overs to take three wickets in first innings on a flat surface bowled with venom. All-rounder Ben Stokes came a cropper by edging one to the wicket-keeper off Ashwin. Joe Root again top-scored for

England with a brisk knock of 40 (32 balls) before falling prey to the reverse swing of Jasprit Bumrah.

Ollie Pope's wicket at 130 for six — holed out to Rohit Sharma in a bid to reverse sweep Shahbaz Nadeem — changed England's approach on its head. They were in an attacking mindset until Pope departed. By cleaning up Jofra Archer, Ashwin claimed his fifth.

Ashwin believes India can pull off a comeback win

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 8

Off-spinner R. Ashwin who inspired India's fightback on day four of the opening Test against England believes the hosts can pull off a comeback victory.

"If we can have a good fifth day, we will be quite happy to win this Test match. I thought we fought back really well through the course of last two days. Personally when I saw the wicket, I believed it will be a good one to bat but I thought it might go a little more than what happened on the first day. It was really flat and it was like a crucial toss for us, I would say," said Ashwin, who removed England opener Rory Burns off the first ball of the second

NUMBERS GAME

● Ishant Sharma became the sixth Indian and the 35th bowler overall to pick up 300 Test wickets, when he trapped England batsman Dan Lawrence in the second innings of the First Test in Chennai on Monday.

● Former leg-spinner Anil Kumble heads the list with 619 wickets in 132 Tests ahead of Kapil Dev (434 wickets in 131 Tests), Harbhajan Singh (417 wickets in 103 Tests), Ravichandran Ashwin (386 wickets in 75), Zaheer Khan (311 wickets in 92 Tests) and Ishant Sharma (300 wickets in 98 Tests).

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

innings.

Ashwin, who bowled his heart out for his three-wicket haul in the first and added six in the

second, said he enjoyed his outing. "I see quite a few interesting observations on what people think might happen or not but as a cricketer that's the last thing that you have on your mind," he said.

England skipper Joe Root who swept his way to double hundred was cautious against Ashwin in the first innings.

The Tamil Nadu spinner said he had plans against Root. "In the first innings, the number of sweeps he played off me was very minimal. He was very careful in how he was going to sweep, because we had plans in place and we had lines in place. When good players play, you can make your plan, sometimes it work, sometimes it doesn't," Ashwin added.

SCORECARD

England 1st Innings: 578
India 1st Innings (overnight 257/6): Rohit Sharma c Buttler b Archer 6, Shubman Gill c Anderson b Archer 29, Cheteshwar Pujara c Rory Burns b Dom Bess 73, Virat Kohli c Ollie Pope b Dom Bess 11, Ajinkya Rahane c Root b Dom Bess 1, Rishabh Pant c Jack Leach b Dom Bess 91, Washington Sundar not out 85, Ravichandran Ashwin c Buttler b Leach 31, Shahbaz Nadeem c Stokes b Leach 0, Ishant Sharma c Pope b Anderson 4, Jasprit Bumrah c Stokes b Anderson 0. Extras (b-4, lb-1, nb-1) 6. **Total (all out in 95.5 overs) 337.**
FoW: 1-19, 2-44, 3-71, 4-73, 5-192, 6-225, 7-305, 8-312, 9-323.
Bowling: James Anderson 16.5-5-46-2, Jofra Archer 21-3-75-2, Ben Stokes 6-1-16-0, Jack Leach 24-5-105-2, Dominic Bess 26-5-76-4, Joe Root 2-0-14-0.

England 2nd Innings: Rory Burns c Rahane b Ashwin 0, Dominic Sibley c Pujara b Ashwin 16, Daniel Lawrence lbw b Ishant 18, Joe Root lbw b Bumrah 40, Ben Stokes c Pant b Ashwin 7, Ollie Pope c Rohit b Nadeem 28, Jos Buttler st Pant b Nadeem 24, Dominic Bess lbw b Ashwin 25, Jofra Archer b Ashwin 5, Jack Leach not out 8, James Anderson c and b Ashwin 0. Extras (nb-7) 7. **Total (all out in 46.3 overs) 178.**
FoW: 1-0, 2-32, 3-58, 4-71, 5-101, 6-130, 7-165, 8-167, 9-178.
Bowling: Ravichandran Ashwin 17.3-2-61-6, Shahbaz Nadeem 15-2-66-2, Ishant Sharma 7-1-24-1, Jasprit Bumrah 6-0-26-1, Washington Sundar 1-0-1-0.

India 2nd Innings: Rohit Sharma b Jack Leach 12, Shubman Gill batting 15, Cheteshwar Pujara batting 12. **Total (for 1 wkt in 13 overs) 39.**
FoW: 1-25.
Bowling: Jofra Archer 3-2-13-0, Jack Leach 6-1-21-1, James Anderson 2-1-2-0, Dominic Bess 2-0-3-0.

COACH CONFIDENT ENGLAND WOULD BOWL INDIA OUT

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 8

England have let India crawl back into the game with their inexplicable approach post-tea, but the visiting team's bowling coach Jon Lewis said "they are very much in control of the proceedings."

Set a target of 420, India require 381 runs on final day. Lewis is confident that England would bowl them out. "We are really happy with where we are at and with that many runs on the board, we are ahead of the game. We played some really good cricket and we are confident that we can create enough chances to win the game tomorrow," Lewis said.

When was asked about England's failure to accelerate the run-rate, Lewis said: "I think the guys were positive in the way they played and I do not think it is a straightforward pitch to just go and be reckless... So, in terms of the position in the game, we are really comfortable with where we are at."

Lewis tipped spinner Jack Leach to trouble the Indians and prove to be a match-winner. "He's bowled an absolutely beauty to get Rohit Sharma out. He could walk away with four or five wickets tomorrow and we could win a Test match — I'm pretty sure people won't be talking about Rishabh Pant's first-innings runs if he does that."



Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady kisses wife and supermodel Gisele Bündchen after defeating the Kansas City Chiefs in the NFL Super Bowl 55 football game in Tampa, USA, on Sunday. The Buccaneers beat the Chiefs 31-9 to win the Super Bowl. — AP

Brady's 'special' 7 in Super Bowl

Tampa (USA), Feb. 8: Tom Brady refused to rank his record seventh Super Bowl crown on Sunday after the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' stunning upset of the Kansas City Chiefs.

The 43-year-old Buccaneers quarterback confounded the odds once more by leading Tampa Bay to a 31-9 victory less than a year after ending his two-decade career with the New England Patriots.

The win, which came 19 years after Brady's first Super Bowl triumph with the Patriots in 2002, has been hailed as the quarterback's greatest achievement. But Brady was mere-

ly content to look back on what he called an "amazing" season.

"They're all special in their own way," Brady said of his Super Bowl wins.

"It's been an amazing year. Just really proud of all the guys, all the coaches, the effort we put in. We knew we were playing a great football team tonight and we got the job done. If you get this far you've got to get the job done," he added.

The Bucs' victory capped a remarkable run through the playoffs which saw the team account for three of the game's greatest quarterbacks in consecutive games. — AFP

Smooth take off for Djoker in Oz

Melbourne, Feb. 8: Novak Djokovic served a reminder of why he's the greatest Australian Open champion in history as he demolished France's Jeremy Chardy in straight sets on Monday.

The eight-time winner's 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 win showed that normal service had resumed after the year's first Grand Slam was delayed three weeks over the Coronavirus.

Serena Williams, Naomi Osaka and Bianca Andreescu also enjoyed convincing wins as the tournament got underway in front of limited crowds. "It feels great, so great to see people back in the stadium. This is the most I've seen on a tennis court in 12 months," Djokovic said.

Form and fitness are highly unpredictable at the Australian Open after the coronavirus wiped out five months of last season and badly disrupted preparations for the first Grand Slam of 2021.

After the tortuous build-up, third seed Osaka struck the first serve on the centre court against Russia's

SELECTED RESULTS

Men's singles first round:
Stanislav Wavrinka (SUI x17) bt Pedro Sousa (POR) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4;
Milos Raonic (CAN x14) bt Federico Coria (ARG) 6-3, 6-3, 6-2; Emil Ruusuvuori (FIN) bt Gael Monfils (FRA x10) 3-6, 6-4, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3; Alexander Zverev (GER x6) bt Marcos Giron (USA) 6-7 (8/10), 7-6 (7/5), 6-3, 6-2; Dominic Thiem (AUT x3) bt Mikhail Kukushkin (KAZ) 7-6 (7/2), 6-2, 6-3; Grigor Dimitrov (BUL x18) bt Marin Cilic (CRO) 6-4, 6-2, 7-6 (7/5).
Women's singles first round:
Bianca Andreescu (CAN x8) bt Mihaela Buzarnescu (ROM) 6-2, 4-6, 6-3; Venus Williams (USA) bt Kirsten Flipkens (BEL) 7-5, 6-2; Naomi Osaka (JPN x3) bt Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUS) 6-1, 6-2; Serena Williams (USA x10) bt Laura Siegemund (GER) 6-1, 6-1; Simona Halep (ROM x2) bt Lizette Cabrera (AUS) 6-2, 6-1.

Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova and strode just 68 minutes later as a 6-1, 6-2 winner.

Serena started her quest for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title with a 6-1, 6-1 romp past Germany's Laura Siegemund. Later, Andreescu won her first match after 15 months out, against Mihaela Buzarnescu of Romania 6-2, 4-6, 6-3. — AFP

Max Power



Telangana Finance Minister and Siddipet MLA T. Harish Rao felicitates Maxwell Trevor, Hyderabad's international cyclist, selector and administrator, at the 5th Inter-district Road Cycling Championship being held at Ranganayaka Sagar in Siddipet, on Monday.

Abhirath, Tilak continue century spree

Geeta, Yudhvir, Sandeep and Shashi also come up with good performances

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 8

M. Abhirath Reddy, Thakur Tilak Varma, E. Geeta Krishna, Yudhvir, B. Sandeep and Shashi Shekar Naidu hogged the limelight with splendid performances in the Hyderabad Cricket Association's A-1 Division one-day knockout tournament on Monday.

Openers Abhirath (109) and Tilak (101) continued their run-scoring spree as they walloped cracking centuries to make light of the 216-run target set by Jai Hanuman and propel Gemini Friends to a thumping 10-wicket victory.

Geeta was the next best on the show. He belted 106 to help Balaaji CC stifle Zinda Tilismath, who failed to chase down a target of 317. H. K. Simha played second fiddle but fell just one run short of century.

In another match, Budding Star's Yudhvir (5/20) punched big to skittle out Khalsa for a paltry 164 while chasing 286. Akash also contributed a modest 92 for the victorious side. B. Sandeep of Income Tax had Sri Chakra in



Abhirath

Tilak Varma

Geeta Krishna

a spin. First he scalped a fiffer to restrict Chakra to a lowly 179 and then followed it up with a brilliant 51 as the Taxmen overhauled the target with seven wickets in hand.

In another match, Secunderabad Nawabs rode on Shashi's fine 5/26 to stop BDL at 189, just one short of their total for a thrilling win.

Brief scores:

A-1 DIVISION ONE-DAY KNOCKOUT TOURNAMENT
● Jai Hanuman 215 in 47.5 overs (N. Anirudh Reddy 65, Anurag Vittal 63, Rathana Teja 3/45) lost to Gemini Friends 217 for no loss in 37.3 overs (M. Abhirath Reddy 109 n.o — 110b, 12x4, Thakur Tilak Varma 101 n.o — 116b, 6x4, 4x6)
● Budding Star 286 in 46.5 overs (Akash 92, Yudhvir Singh 36, Shazaib 3/57, Abuzar 3/61) bt Khalsa 164 in 38 overs (Sarath 76, Harshit 47, Yudhvir 5/20 — 9-2-20-

5, Tanay Tyagarajan 3/26)

● Sri Chakra 179 in 44.2 overs (K. Vikas Rao 34, S. Nishant Yadav 32, M. Mukesh 38, B. Sandeep 5/24 — 9-1-24-5) lost to Income Tax 185/3 in 31.3 overs (B. Sandeep 51 n.o, D. Harshavardhan 76, Shiv Charan Singh 36)

● Secunderabad Nawabs 190/9 in 50 overs (Shujan Bandaru 52, Harish Singh 62) bt BDL 189 in 48.2 overs (B. Revant 54, K. Hima Teja 34, Shashi Shekar Naidu 5/26 — 6-0-26-5)

● Balaaji CC 316 in 48.5 overs (E. Geeta Krishna 106 — 70b, 10x4, 8x6, H. K. Simha 99, G. Ganesh 54, Neel Chakravarthy 3/63) bt Zinda Tilismath 173 in 43.4 overs (Kiran Reddy 30, S. Balaji Reddy 36, Pabba Nilesh 3/43, Achyut 3/11)

● Cambridge XI 179 in 40.3 overs (Vinay Yadav 84, C. Hitesh Yadav 4/37, Bhagath Varma 4/38) lost to R. Dayanand 182/8 in 44.5 overs (M. A. Shanmukha 31, Bhagath Varma 54, Nitesh Reddy 35 n.o, M. Shashank 3/11)

● Charninar CC 173 in 44.1 overs (Ali Diamond Kacchi 62, Ronald R. Rodrigues 4/40) lost to Union Bank of India 174/4 in 33.2 overs (Abhinav Kumar 64 n.o, Amol Shinde 30)

A-2 DIVISION (TWO-DAY)

● New Star 366/9 in 90 overs (Muddassir 89, Yash Raj 79, Vivek 4/60) vs Superstar.

● Hyderabad Patriots vs Greenlands (Greenlands did not turn up for the match). **Points:** Hyderabad Patriots 5, Greenlands 0.