

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

SHORT TAKES TOP SEERS MEET IN TN TO DISCUSS TEMPLE ATTACKS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

EX-TTD CHIEF ALLEGES FAKE CHARGES ON TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

MLA alleges the app is developed in Telugu Desam office

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rambabu said TD leader Komareddy Pattabhiram's car had been attacked in the past and the reason could be personal enmity. He criticised Pattabhiram for not filing an official complaint on the attack and accusing the YSRC leaders for no reason.



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

EC SEEKS TRANSFER OF MANDAL PARISHAD OFFICERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

Scrap election app, demands YSRC

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

AP BJP LAUNCHES TOLL-FREE NUMBER FOR POLL PLAINTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

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

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

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

2,598 PAPERS FILED FOR PHASE-II SARPANCH POLLS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

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

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

GIVE PUBLICITY TO NEW APP, SEC ORDERS

From Page 1

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

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

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

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

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

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

TD MPs meet Shah; complain against govt

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

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

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

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

AP SENT SEVERAL REMINDERS FOR CENTRAL FUNDS

From Page 1

Sources said several letters are being written from the Chief Minister's Office to the Union home ministry seeking the release of Central assistance to AP to enable it to provide relief to the affected farmers and to restore damaged infrastructure. Despite no financial assistance being released, the state government has provided input subsidy to all the affected farmers to enable them to take up cultivation of crops for

the next season.

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

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



Vellampalli Srinivas Rao

ainst it, and never questioned the demolitions."

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

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

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

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

Children force parents to shift to Bengaluru

From Page 1

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

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

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

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

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

KURNOOL | POLITICS

Byreddy Siddarth Reddy assaults YSRC office-bearer Raghuramaiah YSRC meeting turns violent in ministers' presence

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

"The attackers hit Raghuramaiah twice while the ministers remained silent

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

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

on the party's office-bearer Raghuramaiah. While the matter was pacified when they took time to proceed to other matters, during the interregnum, Siddarth Reddy again assaulted Raghuramaiah.

Botsa Satyanarayana made repeated pleas to Reddy to control himself, but they fell on deaf ears, he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

SHORT TAKES

MANSAS SIGNS
MoU WITH ACHARYA
RANGA VARSITYDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 3

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

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

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

MADANAPALLI
CASE: ACCUSED
SENT TO VIZAG HOSPDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 3

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

The couple is accused of murdering their daughters Alekhya (27) and Sai Divya (22) in their house at Madanapalle on January 24. They were produced before the Judicial magistrate on January 26 and placed under remand at the Madanapalli sub-jail.

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TTD readies for another
sacred flower garden

Garden in 5 acres area near Bata Gangamma temple

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 3

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

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

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

TTD resumes VIP
break darshanDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SVBC NODS TO
OPEN KANNADA,
HINDI CHANNELS
BY UGADI FESTDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 3

The board of TTD's Sri Venkateswara Bhakthi Channel (SVBC) on Wednesday approved the launch of SVBC's Kannada and Hindi version channels on the auspicious occasion of Ugadi on April 13. At the board meeting held in Tirupati on Wednesday, the SVBC board also endorsed the HR policy of the channel.

Speaking on the occasion, TTD executive officer Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy directed the officials to procure all equipment needed to convert the transmission into a HD channel and provide quality telecast to devotees.

most auspicious will also be grown apart from Tulasi, Darbha, Sampangi, mango, Parijatha etc.

DoS INKS PACT WITH HYD-BASED FIRM

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLURE, FEB. 3

Department of Space has entered into a Non Disclosure Agreement (NDA) with M/s Skyroot Aerospace Pvt. Ltd., a private company in Hyderabad

SRISAILAM TEMPLE LAUNCHES FREE FOOD SERVICE TO PILGRIMS

Kurnool: Srisailam temple will open up free food service to pilgrims (Annadana programme) after a gap of 9

months as it was shut down due to Covid, said executive officer Rama Rao.

With declining of Covid-

19 cases, the authorities of Srisailam temple are all set to resume free food services to devotees from Feb. 4.

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6-year-old gets new lease
of life through AarogyasriDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

treated on an out-patient basis.

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

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

Kondapalli toys at
national toys fairDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

The Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) has asked world-famous Kondapalli toymakers to participate in the national toys fair to be held from February 27 to March 2, organised by the Union government.

EPCH's one-month skill development programme was concluded at Kondapalli on Wednesday and the toymakers received certificates. EPCH India southern states director K. Nagatulasi Rao said the upgrading of skills would give more opportunities to Kondapalli toys in universal markets and asserted on the need of exporting

Kondapalli toys in all possible aspects. He asked the toymakers to participate in the national toys fair without fail with Kondapalli toys to get global attention and market opportunities. He said that 30 male and female toymakers successfully completed the skill development programme and these skills would be useful to the Kondapalli toymakers community to spread their business in all platforms. Nagatulasi Rao presented certificates to the toymakers on the occasion.

EPCH assistant manager, Sateesh, its executive Divakar and designers participated in the programme.

AP RECORDS
95 COVID
CASES, 1 DEATHDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

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

Out of 25,445 samples tested, 95 persons were found infected with Coronavirus. Out of a total number of 1,32,14,548 samples tested so far, 8,88,099 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 8,79,780 recovered while 1,162 are still active with the virus.

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

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Spurious/ Low Quality Accounts Details:- KODADA (AP)(2142)- BTB- 2,

2nd auction date : **18.02.2021, 04:00PM**, Auction Centre : **Muthoot Finance Ltd, D.No.56-11-4,1st Floor,Upstairs Of Andhra Bank, Bundar Road,Vijayawada-Patamata, Krishna -520010 (Krishna District)**

Spurious/ Low Quality Accounts Details:- GUDIWADA(0711)- MSL- 11443, HANUMAN JUNCTION (AP)(1514)- MAL- 4243, MSL- 17766, MACHILIPATNAM(1347)- MSL- 18030, VIJAYAWADA - KRISHNA LANKA(3667)- BTB- 39, MAL- 8697, MSL- 18751, 19752, 19901, 19913, 19970, 20078, 20144, ZIL- 50, VIJAYAWADA- CHITTINAGAR(1910)- MSL- 23852, VIJAYAWADA-BHAVANI PURAM(0751)- MSL- 42674, VIJAYAWADA-KAMAIAH THOPPU(2118)- MHP- 21, VIJAYAWADA-MARUTHI NAGAR(2215)- MSL- 29832, VIJAYAWADA-PATAMATA(1044)- MAL- 5429,

2nd auction date : **18.02.2021, 10:00AM**, Auction Centre : **Muthoot Finance Ltd, D.No: 22-4-23, Lalapet, Old Bus Stand, Beside Nakshatra Fashions, Guntur, -522003 (Guntur District)**

Spurious/ Low Quality Accounts Details:- AMARAVATHI - (AP)(4548)- MSL- 4610, CHERUKUPALLI - (AP)(3353)- MSL- 15025, 15132, 15314, GUNTUR - KOTHAPET(3398)- MSL- 10861, TON- 4, GUNTUR(0526)- MHP- 92, WBS- 70, MANGALAGIRI-(AP)(2366)- MSL- 22809, SATTENPALLI(0714)- MSL- 17914, 18121,

Note: Customers can release the gold ornaments before the auction date (16.02.2021).
Note: Bidders are requested to produce Identity Card / Pan Card No./GST Certificate.
(Incense Registered Dealers) Successful bidders should transfer the full auction amount by RTGS

Place : Vijayawada
Date : 04.02.2021

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DECCAN Chronicle

4 FEBRUARY 2021

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

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

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

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

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

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

Putin bares his fangs

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

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

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

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

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Subhani



No new taxes? Budget's Mahabharata lessons



Mohan Guruswamy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

TEACH TEACHERS

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

K.L. Rao
Visakhapatnam

VACCINE SAFETY

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

Panchakarla Govardhana Rao
Kankipadu

INTRIGUING NTR

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

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

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

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Co-op. officials charge-sheeted

HYDERABAD, FEBRUARY. 3 One Deputy Registrar and a Co-operative Sub-Registrar are among the six persons on whom charge-sheets were filed in connection with the fertiliser scandal.

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

Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections



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

The pre-dawn coup in Myanmar on Monday recalls the worldwide outrage that Singapore's patriarch Lee Kuan Yew caused in 1966 by questioning Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's ability "to govern if ever she came to power". He said he had told the Americans, who were pressing for democracy to be restored, that they should be around to pick up the broken pieces if the experiment collapsed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the country back under dictatorship.

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

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

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

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

SHORT TAKES



Shashi Tharoor

THAROOR, PANDE, OTHERS MOVE SC TO QUASH FIRS

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

● **THE FIRS** have alleged 'misreporting' and 'spreading disharmony' by their tweets and reports on the ongoing farmers' agitation seeking the repeal of three farm laws which farmers' are contending aims to corporatise agriculture.

Didi says polls will be announced soon

Accuses ex-TMC leader of anomalies in appointments

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, FEB. 3

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

She also accused TMC turncoat Rajib Banerjee of malpractice, during his tenure as the state forest minister, which has come under a probe of her government. Hitting back at her within few hours, Mr Banerjee, however, gave himself a clean chit.

Addressing a TMC rally in Alipurduar of North

● **MAMATA ACCUSED** TMC turncoat Rajib Banerjee of malpractice, during his tenure as the state forest minister, which has come under a probe of her government.

Bengal, the CM said, "Remember, only seven-eight days are left for the polls to be announced. So time is less in hands."

Without taking the name of Mr Banerjee she alleged, "The boy who was with us but left us did some anomalies in the appointments of Bon Sahayak (Forest Assistant). Lot of people gave me this complaint. We are investigating it. One should ask him about

his role in such malpractice when he makes tall talks. He joined the BJP after stealing."

Hitting back at the TMC chief, Mr Banerjee said at a BJP rally in Gurap of Hooghly, "She claimed of anomalies in the recruitment of Bon Sahayak and talked of a probe. But with due respect to her, I can say with responsibility that I had impartially entrusted a panel for the recruitment with transparency. At around 10 am on October 8, when I sent her a message complaining against a big shot of Birbhum of threatening me to allot all the Bon Sahayak jobs to him, she called me to distribute the jobs proportionately in

quota among the Trinamul workers in all the districts."

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

Farmers dig in their heels



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

— PTI

No govt jobs for protesters blocking roads: Bihar cops

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, FEB. 3

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

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

"If anyone found indulging in a criminal act by engaging in any law and order situation, protests or road blockages and is charged for this, then it should be mentioned in the person's character verification report by the police. Such people should be prepared for serious consequences

as they will be barred from getting any government jobs or contracts", director general of police S.K. Singhal said in the circular.

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

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

The RJD which is the main opposition party in the state has termed the directive "against the constitution". "It seems that Nitish Kumar is trying to

compete with Mussolini and Hitler by issuing such kind of directives. It means that if a person uses his democratic right to protest against the system then he will be denied a job. This also means that they will not give jobs and will not allow anyone to protest", Leader of the opposition Tejashwi Yadav said in a tweet.

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

WORLD

SHORT TAKES

SHOOTING IN FLORIDA: 2 FBI AGENTS KILLED

Miami, Feb. 3: Two FBI agents were shot dead and three were wounded on Tuesday while serving a search warrant on a suspect in a child pornography case in the southern US state of Florida, the FBI said.

The suspect is also dead, the Federal Bureau of Investigation said in a statement.

The FBI and media reports said the shooting took place around 6:00 am in Sunrise, Florida, when agents arrived to execute a search warrant at the suspect's home.

FBI Director Christopher Wray identified the two slain FBI special agents as Daniel Alfin and Laura Schwartz-emberger. "The FBI will always honor their ultimate sacrifice and will be forever grateful for their bravery," Wray said in a statement. Two of the wounded agents were taken to hospital and are in stable condition, the FBI said.

NEO-NAZI SONGS: AUSTRIAN RAPPER NABBED

Vienna, Feb. 3: Austrian authorities said Tuesday they have arrested a rapper accused of broadcasting neo-Nazi songs, one of which was used by the man behind a deadly anti-Semitic attack in Germany. "The suspect has been arrested on orders of the Vienna prosecutors" and transferred to prison after a search of his home, said an interior ministry statement.

Police seized a mixing desk, hard discs, weapons, a military flag from the Third Reich era and other Nazi objects during their search. Austrian intelligence officers had been trying for months to unmask the rapper, who went by the pseudonym Mr Bond and had been posting to neo-Nazi forums since 2016.

The suspect, who comes from the southern region of Carinthia, has been detained for allegedly producing and broadcasting Nazi ideas and incitement to hatred. Promoting Nazi ideology is a criminal offence in Austria, which was the birth place of Adolph Hitler.

Navalny jailed for three years

Moscow, Feb. 3: A Moscow court on Tuesday jailed the Kremlin's most prominent critic Alexei Navalny for nearly three years, triggering fierce condemnation from the West and calls for his immediate release.

The court's decision to turn a 2014 suspended sentence into real jail time will see Navalny, a 44-year-old anti-corruption campaigner who accuses the Kremlin of poisoning him last year, serve a lengthy prison term for the first time.

Britain, France, Germany, the United States and the European Union denounced the ruling, as Moscow accused the West of interfering in its affairs. Navalny's supporters called for more demonstrations over the decision, after thousands joined nationwide protests against Navalny's arrest over the last two weekends.

The case is presenting one of the most serious challenges to the Kremlin in years, with some in the West calling for new sanctions against Russia.

Judge Natalya Repnikova ordered a suspended three-and-a-half-year sentence Navalny received on fraud charges in 2014 to be changed to time in a

penal colony, an AFP journalist at the courthouse said. He was accused of violating parole conditions by refusing to check in with prison officials and was arrested when he flew back to Moscow on January 17 from Germany, where he spent months recovering from the poisoning.

Navalny said it was impossible to make the appointments while in Germany, but the judge said he had skipped meetings even prior to the poisoning. Navalny had spent time under house arrest after the 2014 conviction — which was denounced by the European Court of Human Rights — and Repnikova said that would count as time served.

His lawyer Olga Mikhalova told journalists this meant he would now serve around two years and eight months in prison.

His legal team plan to appeal, she said, and Navalny was expected to stay in detention in Moscow during that appeal.

Navalny's Anti-Corruption Fund immediately called for a protest in central Moscow.

Several hundred of his supporters marched through the streets.

— AFP

Iran not to set free ship captain

Tehran, Feb. 3: Iran said Tuesday it has allowed all crew except the captain from a South Korean tanker seized last month for alleged pollution to leave the country in a "humanitarian move".

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps seized the Hankuk Chemi and arrested its multinational crew of 20 sailors near the strategic Strait of Hormuz on January 4, saying it had polluted the waters.

The development came as Tehran urged Seoul to release billions of dollars

of Iranian assets frozen in South Korea due to US sanctions.

"In a humanitarian move by Iran, the crew of the South Korean tanker accused of polluting the environment of the Persian Gulf were allowed to leave the country," foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said in a statement.

Permission had been granted upon "the request of the South Korean government and (with) the cooperation of the judiciary in Iran", he added.

— AFP

Suu Kyi charged, now military gets legal basis to detain her

She can be detained at least till mid-Feb; charge entails three yrs in prison

Yangon, Feb. 3: Police levelled their first formal charge against Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, members of her party said on Wednesday, giving military authorities who staged a coup a legal reason to detain her at least through the middle of the month.

The charge — that Suu Kyi was in possession of illegally imported walkie talkies — came to light two days after she was placed under house arrest and appeared to be an effort to lend a legal veneer to her detention, though the generals have previously kept her and others locked up for years. The military announced on Monday that it would take power for one year — accusing Suu Kyi's government of not investigating allegations of voter fraud in recent elections. Suu Kyi's party swept that vote, and the military-backed party did poorly.

National League for Democracy spokesman Kyi Toe confirmed the charge against Suu Kyi that carries a maximum sentence of three years in prison. He also said the country's ousted president, Win Myint, was charged with violating the natural disaster management law. A leaked charge sheet dated February 1 indicates they can be held until February 15. "It was clear that the military were going to look for some legal cases against the leaders of the National League for Democracy and especially Aung San Suu Kyi to actually legitimise what they've tried to do," said Larry Jagan, an independent analyst of Myanmar affairs. "And that is really a power grab."

Police and court officials in the capital Naypyitaw could not immediately be contacted. At the same time that authorities were working to keep Suu Kyi in detention, hundreds of lawmakers who had been forced to stay at government housing after the



Burmese living in Japan and supporters chant during a protest in front of the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo Wednesday. Myanmar's new leader said the military government installed after Monday's coup plans an investigation into alleged fraud in last year's elections and will also prioritise the Covid-19 outbreak and the economy.

— AP

● **THE COUP** was a dramatic backslide for Myanmar, which had been making progress toward democracy.

Washington in touch with India and Japan on coup

Washington, Feb. 3: Terming the detention of Myanmar's top civilian leaders by the military "a coup", a senior State Department official has said that the United States is in constant touch with regional allies like India and Japan on the latest developments in Naypyitaw as the two countries have better contact with the military in the Southeast Asian nation.

Myanmar's military on Monday took control of the country for one year and detained all the top political figures, including de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

"We have certainly been in frequent contact with

our like-minded allies and partners in the region. You mentioned Japan and India. We're having daily ongoing conversations with them, and we certainly appreciate that some other countries have better contact with the Burmese military than we do, so we're continuing those conversations," a senior State Department official told reporters during a conference call on Tuesday.

The United States categorically said the military action in Burma is a coup. "After a careful review of the facts and circumstances, we have assessed that Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Burma's ruling party, and Win Myint, the

duly elected head of government, were deposed in a military coup on February 1," the State Department official said.

Myanmar was called Burma before 1989 when the ruling junta, backed by the armed forces, changed its name. This was done to maintain the country's global image after a total crackdown on a pro-democracy movement.

"We continue to call on the Burmese military leadership to release them (the elected leaders) and all other detained civil society and political leaders immediately and unconditionally," the State Department official said.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Ajay re-elected as BFI president

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

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

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

Serena sizzles; Osaka, Barty toil

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

Williams has been in belligerent form at the Yarra Valley Classic and overpowered the Bulgarian with a 6-1, 6-4 victory in 74 minutes. The American will play world number six Karolina Pliskova or compatriot Danielle Collins in the quarter-finals.

Osaka and Barty, however, were pushed to the brink, but both avoided early exits at Melbourne Park. Japan's Osaka was made to work hard against in-form Katie Boulter, but fought back for a 3-6, 6-3, 6-1 victory to reach the quarter-finals in the Gipsland Trophy. Meanwhile, Barty also had a fright in her match against Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic, but recovered from a second-set stutter to win 6-0, 4-6, 6-3. — AFP

Zverev, Tsitsipas open with wins

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

Seventh-ranked Zverev had to dig deep to overcome Canadian danager Denis Shapovalov 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) and seal the tie for Germany.

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

Irving punches big to pip Clippers

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

Live on TV

CRICKET

Pakistan vs South Africa: Second Test, Day 1 from 10.30 am on Sony Ten 2, HD

Big Bash League: Challenger from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

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



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

— PTI

WISE CAPTAIN

My job is easy when Virat is around: Rahane

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 3

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

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

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



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

— PTI

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

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

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

The curator for the opening test has said the

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

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

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

POPE ADDED TO ENGLAND SQUAD

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

Important to post big 1st innings total: Trott

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 3

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

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



Jonathan Trott

who played 52 Tests.

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

of the Year award in 2011. England skipper Root has been leading from the front by scoring a truckload of runs. Trott said captaincy in subcontinental conditions is a skill in itself. "Handling the conditions and rotating the bowlers accordingly is a big challenge for a skipper. But, captaincy comes naturally to Root. He is a good decision-maker and has a great presence around the guys as well. I have full confidence in his ability," he added.

Man Utd wreak havoc on Saints

London, Feb. 3: Manchester United equalled the biggest win in Premier League history as they crushed nine-man Southampton 9-0, while Arsenal had two players sent off in their 1-2 defeat at Wolves on Tuesday.

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

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

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

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

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

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

United's first victory in three league games means

THE RESULTS

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

they are behind leaders Manchester City only on goal difference.

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

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

— AFP



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

— AP

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