

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

ANANTAPUR | FRIDAY | 26 FEBRUARY 2021

## WEATHER

Max: 34.0°C  
Min: 19°C  
RH: 46%  
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.  
Misty morning. Max/Min  
temp. 34/19 °C

## ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana  
Tithi: Magha Shuddha  
Chaturdasi till 3.44 pm  
Star: Ashlesha till 12.30 pm  
Varjyam: 11.52 pm to 1.23 am  
(Saturday)  
Durmuhurtam: 9 am to 9.46 am;  
12.52 pm to 1.39 pm  
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon  
HIJRI CALENDAR  
Rajab 13,1442 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 04.55 AM  
MOONRISE 05.12 PM

## COUNTER POINT



Not bail papers, he is  
distributing party tickets  
to potential candidates!

## SHORT TAKES

### Moody's projects 13.5% growth

New Delhi: Moody's on Thursday upped India's growth projection for the next financial year beginning April 1, to 13.7 per cent, from 10.8 per cent estimated earlier, on the back of normalisation of activity and growing confidence in the market with the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine. For current fiscal, the US-based rating agency expects the economy to contract 7 per cent, lower than its previous estimate of 10.6 per cent contraction.

### ASI FINDS FIRST INSCRIPTION ON RAYA'S DEATH

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Officials from Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) discovered the first epigraphical reference to the death of Krishnadevaraya, the emperor of Vijayanagara empire during 1509-1529, in an inscription found near Gopalakrishna temple at Honnenahalli of Tumkur district recently. The inscription found in Kannada recorded the demise of Krishnadevaraya, the third ruler from Tuluva dynasty on October 17, 1529 AD. Archaeological Survey of India received a photograph of this inscription from Prof. K.R. Narasimhan. It is engraved on a slab kept to the north of Gopalakrishna temple at Honnenahalli.

■ Full report on Page 3

## RUMOUR | MILL

VADREU SRINIVAS | DC  
KAKINADA, FEB. 25

Donkeys are illegally being slaughtered on the banks of Eluru Canal in West Godavari and the remains are being dumped in the canal, endangering public health.

Donkeys are named in the extinction list. Yet, hundreds of them across the country and in Andhra Pradesh are being slaughtered for meat. Belief is that donkey meat can cure respiratory and breathing

problems and increase the sexual potential of humans. According to sources, many donkey meat shops exist on the sly in Guntur, Cherukupalli, Bapatla, Tadepalli, Vetapalem, Chirala in Guntur, Krishna and Prakasam districts. The sellers are bringing the donkeys from Maharashtra, Karnataka and Rajasthan. For the past two years, animal activists in Maharashtra are lodging complaints on illegal transport of donkeys. Some cases

ILLEGAL SLAUGHTER of animals other than those listed is unlawful practice and is against local municipal acts and rules and against the directions of the Supreme Court.

Donkey meat is sold at ₹600 per kilo. The meat sellers are buying the meat at ₹15,000 to ₹20,000 per donkey. Meat sellers say meat shops in Krishna, Guntur

and Prakasam chose Eluru for selling the meat. Animal rescue organisation secretary Gopal R. Surabathula said donkeys are being carried to Andhra Pradesh from other states. Nobody makes any effort to curb it, though there are so many check-posts along the way of its transportation. He lodged a complaint with the DGP, seeking stoppage of illegal transportation and killing of donkeys. Sale of donkeys is rampant in several districts in the

state, the complaint said. He said that the survival of donkeys is at serious stake. It has almost vanished from the state while donkeys are illegally transported from other states. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India and the ministry of health and family welfare issued a direction that the slaughtering of animals of any species other than the one listed, like Ovine, caprine etc, is not permissible under the FSS Act.

## Short & Sweet



Indian captain Virat Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant and R. Ashwin celebrate the wicket of England's Jack Leach on the second day of the third cricket Test match against England at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday. India registered their second Test win inside two days overhauling a meagre target of 49 against England to take an unassailable 2-1 lead in the four-match series on Thursday. Spin duo Axar Patel and Ashwin swung the match in India's favour. England's previous Test loss inside two days came way back in 1921 against Australia. ■ Reports on Page 7

## Centre tightens rules for social media, OTT

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 25

Weeks after a spat with Twitter and the fracas over the series *Tandav*, the government on Thursday announced the tightening of rules governing social media and streaming companies, requiring them to take down contentious content immediately, appoint grievance redressal officers and assist investigations by revealing the originator of a message or tweet.

The new Code of Ethics and self-regulation mechanism for video streaming services mean that anyone who misuses social media and over-the-top (OTT) platforms will be under the strict vigil of the government and is liable to face punishment.

As part of new rules to regulate online content, the government will ask the platform to reveal the originator of a message or tweet, and WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and other social media firms as well as streaming services such as Netflix, YouTube and Amazon

## CONTENT ONLINE TO BE REGULATED

5 categories OTT platforms are supposed to self-classify content: U (universal), U/A 7+, U/A 13+, U/A 16+, and A (adult).

3-level grievance redressal mechanism established under the rules with two levels of self regulation. Level 1 Publisher themselves Level 2 Self Regulatory Body Level 3 Oversight Mechanism under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

NEWS PUBLISHERS on digital media must implement Norms of Journalistic Conduct of the Press Council of India and the Programme Code under the Cable Television Networks Regulation Act

Prime Video will be required to quickly take down any contentious content flagged by the government or legal order.

They also have to appoint executives to coordinate with law enforcement and remove, within 24 hours, content depicting nudity or morphed pictures of women.

They also have to now appoint a resident grievance officer who shall



PLATFORMS must implement parental locks for content classified as U/A 13+ or higher

RELIABLE age verification mechanisms for content classified as 'A'.

## CM offers land swap with railways

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy has addressed a letter to Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal, offering transfer of some land to the railways in lieu of the land occupied by nearly 800 families within the municipal corporation limits here.

He requested that the railway land in Rajaraj-

eswari Peta be handed over to the AP government so that this could be regularised.

The CM explained that nearly 800 poor families lived in houses they had built on railway land in Raja Rajeswari Peta area here more than 30 years ago and that they had unsuccessfully made several representations to the government to regularise these encroach-

ments. "No meaningful effort had been made in the past to resolve the issue," the CM said.

He said that suitable state government land could be provided to the railways by way of an exchange in lieu of this encroached land.

"It is not out of place here to mention that the Railways had not been able to put this land to any use for more than 30

## YSRC PICKS SIX MLC CANDIDATES IN MLAs QUOTA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

The YSRC on Thursday announced the names of its candidates for the six MLC seats in the MLA quota and decided not to field candidates in the Teacher's constituency MLC election.

Speaking to reporters, adviser to the government (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said that its candidates would Balli Kalyan Chakravarthy (Tirupati), Mohammed Iqbal(Hindupur), Challa Bhageerath Reddy(Kurnool), C. Ramachandrabhai (YSR Kadapa), Mohammed Karim-unneesa (Vijayawada), and Duvvada Srinivas from Srikakulam.

He said YSRC would not be involved in the Teachers quota polls and left the decision to Teachers Unions.

■ Full report on Page 2

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## WORLD | 6

Xi claims victory on poverty reduction



## SPORTS | 7

Prithvi slams record 227 in one-dayer



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## Nirav can be extradited

UK judge says diamantaire must answer Indian courts

London, Feb. 25: In a comprehensive extradition win for the Indian authorities, a UK judge ruled on Thursday that fugitive diamantaire Nirav Modi not only has a case to answer in the Indian courts but that there is no evidence to suggest he would not receive a fair trial in India.

Nirav Modi, wanted in India on charges of fraud and money laundering in the estimated \$2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, lost his legal battle against extradition on all grounds as District Judge Samuel Goode also concluded that there are no human rights concerns that his medical needs would not be addressed as per several Indian government assurances.

The 49-year-old appeared via video link at Westminster Magistrates' Court from Wandsworth Prison



Nirav Modi

in south-west London, dressed in a formal suit and sporting a thick beard, and showed no emotion as excerpts of the judgment were read out in court.

"I am satisfied that there is evidence upon which NDM [Nirav Deepak Modi] could be convicted in relation [to] the conspiracy to defraud the PNB. A prima facie case is established," the judge noted.

He similarly concludes a

prima facie case to have been established on all counts of charges brought by the Central Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement Directorate — money laundering, intimidation of witnesses and disappearance of evidence.

"I am not required to exclude all Mr Modi's various alternative theoretical possibilities and narratives; nor exclude his personal interpretation of the evidence, in order to find a prima facie case has been established," the judge noted, referring to the extradition case of former Kingfisher Airlines boss Vijay Mallya as precedent.

He accepted that while Nirav's mental health had deteriorated due to the lengthy incarceration in a London prison, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, his risk of suicide does not meet the high thresh-

old to satisfy him that his mental state is such that it would be "unjust or oppressive" to extradite him.

Under the UK Extradition Act 2003, the judge will now send his findings to the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, Priti Patel. It is the UK Cabinet minister who is authorised to order an extradition under the India-UK Extradition Treaty and has two months within which to make that decision.

Whatever the ministerial decision, the losing side — Nirav Modi — has up to 14 days within which to approach the High Court and seek leave to appeal after the Home Secretary has made her decision known.

Nirav's legal team did not immediately confirm if he intends to appeal against Thursday's ruling. — PTI

## India, Pak armies agree to observe strict ceasefire

PAWAN BALI and  
SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 25 | DC

The Indian and Pakistan armies on Thursday announced that they would strictly observe a ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) and all other sectors from February 24 midnight in a major de-escalatory move.

The announcement comes after 2020 had seen a 13-year record high of 5,133 truce violations at the LoC and the international border with Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir.

In contrast, there were 3,479 such violations in 2019 and 2,140 in 2018. The

tensions at the LoC had risen after the terror attack on CRPF convoy in Pulwama in February 2019, and the revoking of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019. There have been nearly 600 violations in first two months of 2021.

India's director-general of military operations, Lt. Gen. Paramjit Singh Sangha, and his Pakistani counterpart, Maj. Gen. Nauman Zakaria, held discussions over the hotline, and the two sides reviewed the situation along the LoC and all other sectors in a "free, frank and cordial atmosphere".

A joint statement by both

armies read: "In the interest of achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace along the borders, the two DGMOs agreed to address each other's core issues and concerns which have the propensity to disturb peace."

It said both sides agreed to the strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease firing along the LoC and all other sectors with effect from midnight February 24-25, 2021. "Both sides reiterated the existing mechanisms of hotline contact and border flag meetings will be utilised to resolve any unforeseen situation."



YSRC activists hold flags and placards during a campaign rally for the upcoming GVMC elections at the 34th Ward near Kobbaritotha junction in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

## Lobbying intensifies for Kurnool municipal polls

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC  
KURNOOL, FEB. 25

Kurnool Municipal Corporation (KMC) is on the cusp of development as most of the area under its jurisdiction is covered under Judicial Capital Act.

The Act is envisaged to come up in the extant area under Kurnool Urban Development Authority (KUDA). The Mayor will have a greater role to play in planning and developing the civic area.

With elections for KMC set in process, the YSRC has taken a head-start as it has selected its nominees for all wards, including for mayoral positions. As the constituency is now being reserved for Backward

Caste-General, the leaders belonging to that community are working with a single-minded objective to have their chosen candidate.

B.Y. Ramaiah, the YSRC Kurnool Parliamentary constituency president, and mayoral candidate is contesting from ward number 19. While going through the neglected Maruti Nagar in the ward, he was appalled at the civic amenities existing there and where drainage facilities are non-existent. KMC has 52 wards spread over the constituencies of Kodumur, Panyam, and Kurnool. The city has been expanding in the past decade. New colonies that had come up on Bellary Road, Nandikotkur Road,

and Nandyal road need infrastructural support as water pipelines, sewage systems, and roads need a makeover, said Vijaya-lakshmi, a resident of C-camp. Shareen Nagar residents say clean water is a perennial problem in this area as the water they get is of dubious quality. They recalled how a sewage pipeline got mixed up with the drinking water pipeline a few months back.

TD Kurnool chief T.H. Bharath has been holding meetings every day with ward councilors. He said his party is focussing on winning the maximum number of council seats. There is a change in people's perception towards TD, he said.



## SHORT TAKES

HC DIRECTS NACO  
DG TO APPEAR  
ON MARCH 9DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Andhra Pradesh High Court directed the additional secretary and director general of National Aids Control Organisation (NACO) to appear before it on March 9 to show cause as to why contempt of court proceedings should not be admitted.

AP State Aids Control Society contractual employees S. Venu. P. Venkata Subbaiah and M. Jaya Kumar moved the High Court seeking contempt of court proceedings against the NACO officials as they failed to concede to their basic demands. The employees submitted a representation to the senior officials earlier, seeking enhancement of remuneration on par with employees working in the same project. However, NACO revised remuneration to only senior medical officers and medical officers.

The employees approached the High Court to direct the additional secretary and director general of NACO Aarti Ahuja to act on the representation and pass an order.

However, the court allowed the NACO official to either appear before the court in person or through an advocate.

TD EX-MLA MOVES  
HC TO PERMIT HIM  
IN CIVIC POLLSDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Former Telugu Desam MLA J.C. Prabhakar Reddy along with four others filed a petition in the High Court to allow them to contest in the ensuing municipal polls in Tadipatri on Thursday.

The petitioner's counsel informed the court that the petitioners were not allowed to file their nomination papers to contest in the civic polls earlier and their nomination papers were torn.

The counsel further informed the court that the State Election Commission issued an order recently asking those who failed to file their nomination papers and also those who were forced to withdraw their nomination papers under duress, to approach the district collectors to seek remedy.

After hearing the parties, the court posted the next hearing to March 1.

KADAPA OFFICIALS  
TOLD TO PAY ₹10K  
TO PETITIONERDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Andhra Pradesh High Court directed the district collector and district educational officer of YSR Kadapa district to pay ₹10,000 to the petitioner, granting leave to file counter affidavit as the duo failed to file it for a long period of 10 years.

A single judge bench headed by justice Battu Devanand held hearing on a petition filed in 2010, seeking appointment on compassionate grounds for untimely death of a teacher on 17-04-1995 in harness, here on Thursday.

The court observed that though both the officials who were the respondents were served notice to file a counter affidavit in the case on 18-10-2010, they failed to do so. The court said that as per Rule 12 of AP Writ Proceedings Rules, 1977, the respondents, who intend not file counter affidavits were to file within six months from the date of receipt of notice. In case they intend to file counter affidavit beyond six months stipulated period, they have to seek leave of the court by filing an appropriate application. However, under Rule 12 (ii), the six months period was reduced to 120 days through an amendment in 2017.

The court observed that the respondents came up with counter affidavit along with a leave application at present, with a reason for failing to file the counter affidavit for 10 years saying that due to oversight. It said that central government and state government and its instrumentalities were the biggest litigants in the country and around 80% of all cases were either contested by the state or appealed by it. The court felt the need on the part of officers to be made accountable for disposal of long pendency of cases.

Accordingly, the court granted leave to the officials (respondents) to file counter affidavit on condition of payment of ₹10,000 to the petitioner within 10 days from Thursday.

Committed to develop  
Amaravati, says Botsa

Govt has clarity on developing of the region as Legislative Capital

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

The state government has a clear-cut clarity on the development of Amaravati region as Legislative Capital towards which it has taken appropriate initiatives, said minister for municipal administration Botsa Satyanarayana.

Speaking to the media here on Thursday, he said a bank guarantee of ₹3,000 crore has been approved from the government side, which includes developing seed access and karakatta roads.

The minister alleged that Telugu Desam was intentionally creating confusion among the people on Amaravati development even though N. Chandrababu Naidu failed to provide a wide access route to the region during his tenure.

He wanted Naidu to explain why seed access roads could not be laid

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● He wanted Naidu to explain why seed access roads could not be laid during the five-year TD term, and whether anyone had obstructed him.

during the five-year TD term, and whether anyone had obstructed him. He stated that Naidu had spent hundreds of crores on temporary structures misusing public money but did not acquire land for a small connecting bridge.

Satyanarayana said that the state government has proposed to construct karakatta road at a cost of ₹150 crore. That apart, the current seed access road would also be completed to

fully connect it to Kaza village on the National Highway. He assured to provide all basic infrastructures like roads, drainage and electricity in the capital area of Amaravati as promised by the previous government.

The minister wanted to know what Naidu had done for Kuppam and why he did not come up with the idea of urbanising Kuppam to elevate it as a municipality or a small city.

He said, "While Naidu

failed miserably in Kuppam, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy enhanced Pulivendula to a model city by taking up developmental activities. People are furious with Naidu and feel betrayed. This anger has been reflected in the recent panchayat elections."

Satyanarayana claimed that people have immense faith in the YSRC government as Jagan Mohan Reddy does not encourage unnecessary graphics to deceive people and public welfare is the priority. He added that Naidu is only concerned about the 29 villages in the Amravati region rather than the overall development of the state.

The minister further added that as per the government policy, Visakhapatnam will be the administrative capital, Amaravati the legislative capital and Kurnool the judicial capital.



Minister Velampalli Srinivas conducts campaign at One Town in Municipal elections for YSRC candidates in Vijayawada on Thursday.

Naidu meets partymen  
to retrieve lost groundDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, FEB. 25

Put on a slippery wicket and shocked to his bones, former chief minister and Telugu Desam supremo Nara Chandrababu Naidu returned with folded hands on Thursday to Kuppam, his assembly segment that has turned its back on him and his party in the Gram Panchayat polls.

Naidu, representing the assembly segment for the seventh consecutive term, has found his Telugu Desam won only 14 of the 89 panchayats, while the ruling YSRC took 74. He is seeking to rejuvenate the party cadre in an effort to retrieve the lost ground.

The former CM started a three-day tour of his constituency on Thursday and was chairing back-to-back meetings with party leaders in the constituency to review the results.

Addressing a gathering at Gudupalli, Kuppam rural, the TD chief indirectly hit out at panchayat raj and rural development minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy.

"The Punganur leader would not have contested from his constituency in previous elections if I had a thought of taking revenge on him. But I have never encouraged revenge politics."

"A minister visited Kuppam constituency more than a dozen times in the last one-and-a-half

TD ACTIVIST ATTEMPTS SELF-IMMOLATION  
NEAR NAIDU'S CONVOY IN KODATHANAPALLIDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, FEB. 25

Tense situation prevailed for a brief while as Telugu Desam chief Chandrababu Naidu's convoy passed through Kodathanapalli in Kuppam assembly segment. A party activist attempted self-immolation by pouring petrol on himself.

The youth was identified as Somu. "He was unable to bear the harassment from YSRC leaders during the panchayat elections,

TD leaders claimed.

When the activist poured petrol on his body and tried to self-immolate, some local leaders prevented him and brought the issue to the notice of Naidu. The TD chief asked these leaders to take Somu to Amaravati where he would speak to him individually.

In the meanwhile, the Chittoor district police tightened security for Naidu. Some YSRC leaders had warned that they would obstruct his visit to Kuppam.

years to do unethical politics and dent the morale of the TD cadre. I have seen many politicians but never anyone as bad as YSRC leaders. They should know that politics is meant to serve people's interests but not to serve personal interests and take revenge," he said.

Alleging that the polling process in panchayat elections was manipulated, Naidu lamented that the polls were held under the influence of money and power, and that the candidates supported by the TD were threatened by the YSRC leaders.

"Candidates supported by the ruling party spent huge amounts of money and distributed liquor brought from Karnataka

to win the present elections in Kuppam. They should feel ashamed about this. Telugu Desam didn't lose in Kuppam, it is the democracy that got defeated," he alleged.

Naidu also alleged that the YSRC leaders who had camped in Kuppam to threaten and influence TD workers had deployed outsiders there to defeat democracy. "Kuppam is known for its peace, reputation and ethical values. But the ruling party had completely polluted the atmosphere here, only to take revenge on me. I'm confident that the Kuppam people will revolt against the YSRC's unethical ruling and teach them a befitting lesson in the coming days," he said.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy congratulates K. Kaivalya Reddy from Nidadavolu, West Godavari, at the camp office on Thursday. Kaivalya Reddy found discovers asteroid between Jupiter and Mars with the help of Pan Stars Telescope.

— DC

CM hails girls on achievement,  
announces cash incentivesDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Kaivalya Reddy of Nidadavolu, accompanied by her parents Srinivasula Reddy and Vijayalakshmi, called on Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at his camp office here on Thursday.

The Chief Minister congratulated her and announced a cash intensive of ₹1 lakh for finding asteroids between Jupiter and Mars using Pawn Stars telescope.

International Astronomical Search Collabor-

● International Astronomical Search Collaboration, which is recognised by NASA, has presented Kaivalya Reddy an award in recognition of her work.

● Kaivalya Reddy took her training from Space Port India Foundation.

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India Foundation.

In a separate programme, the Chief Minister congratulated Jonnadula Lishitha and announced a cash incentive of ₹1 lakh for her record in fire limbo skating. Lishitha created a world record in vajra in the 8-inch low and 20-metre length category.

Lishitha, who hails from Tanuku in West Godavari district, was accompanied by Tanuku MLA Karumuri Nageswara Rao, her parents Anusha and Uma Maheswar and coach Lavanya.

Foolproof arrangements  
instructed for Southern  
Zonal council meetingDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy instructed officials to take foolproof measures for the smooth organization of the 29th Southern Zonal Council meeting scheduled to held at Tirupati on March 4. He conducted a preparatory meeting to discuss about the agenda and arrangements of the meeting at the CM Camp office at Tadepalli on Thursday.

The officials briefed the Chief Minister on the issues to be addressed at the Council regarding the state. Union home minister would chair the meeting to be attended by Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana state, Puducherry and special invitees from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep. Officials said

that 26 issues will be coming up for discussion during meeting.

The Chief Ministers/Lieutenant Governor/Administrators of eight states/UTs in the Southern Zone will participate along with their respective Chief Secretaries, Advisers and other senior officers in keeping with important agenda items. On the whole, approximately 90 to 100 dignitaries/officers are expected to participate in this meeting.

The Union government had requested host state AP to make requisite logistical arrangements for the meeting including reception, security, transport, boarding, lodging, etc., for about 80 dignitaries/officers from state/ UT governments and Central ministries.

All members and advisers of the council from state also asked to attend this meeting.

SEC, DGP APPRECIATE PARA POLICE  
FOR SERVICES DURING GP ELECTIONSDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, FEB. 25

State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar lauded Prakasham collector Poha Bhaskar and SP Siddharth Kaushal for effective use of Para Police, a first of its kind initiative to utilise the services of staff from different departments to prevent any untoward incidents during the recent gram panchayat elections.

The SEC appreciation came after the DGP Goutam Sawang told the Election Commission that the para-police had worked tirelessly to prevent any untoward incidents during the panchayat elections.

Among the 3459 Para Police deployed during

the election, 1024 are those working as Grama Mahila Samrakshana Karyadarsi, 22 are Tribal Welfare staff, 55 are BC Welfare staff, 577 are Welfare Education assistants, 836 are Village surveyors, 205 and 740 are Engineering Assistants. They were given a special uniform at the instance of the SP while performing Para Police role, DGO told the SEC.

According to the DGP, special training programme was conducted on what duties the para-police should perform during the elections. They bravely stayed at the polling stations allotted to them till the end of the elections and carried out their duties with commitment and without any temptations.

## CIVIC | POLLS

Thousands of gas-leak affected people have not received ₹10,000 package, says an electrician

## Styrene affected people may not make it easy for YSRC

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC  
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 25

Styrene gas affected residents in the industrial suburb of Visakhapatnam may give a tough time to the ruling YSRC that is confident of winning ward No. 92 that encompasses six gas-hit villages.

Styrene leak from LG Polymers chemical plant in RR Venkatapuram under Visakhapatnam West assembly constituency on May 7 last year killed

11 people and injured over a thousand people. Many are still complaining of ailments related to the gas and getting treatment from a makeshift clinic.

The state government gave ₹1 crore to the families of the deceased and ₹10,000 to every individual in the affected villages covering a population of 20,000.

"People are happy with both the packages but about thousands of others who have not received the

₹10,000 package?" asked K. Satish, an electrician by profession and whose son was six months old then had a close brush with the death.

A resident of Venkatapuram said people lost more than what the government gave in compensation. The administration forgot about the chronic illness that has been giving traumatic moments to the residents.

His neighbour, Alivelu Mangamma, said most people lost their groceries

stock and had to throw away all the clothes, utensils, and other articles leaving behind a bare minimum. "The gas is etched in our minds, and traces can be still found all over," she said.

Veteran CITU leader P. Venkata Reddy, whose wife P. Seetharatnam is contesting the elections, said the government forgot about the super speciality hospital promised soon after the incident. Experts have said the gas will have its

impact for 30 years on the people, he said.

The high power committee has recommended that compensation be paid to the people living with 2.8 km radius, but the government ignored and paid to only half the affected people, he said.

TD is also making styrene an important issue in campaigning. Visakhapatnam West MLA P.V.G.R. Naidu said compensation was yet to be paid to thousands of people.

TD WILL REDUCE PROPERTY TAX BY  
HALF, SAYS JAGADISWARA RAO

**Visakhapatnam:** Telugu Desam will reduce the property tax amount by half if the party won the majority in the GVMC council, said MLC Buddha Naga Jagadiswara Rao while campaigning for the party candidate Boddada Varalakshmi in ward no 80 in Anakapalle on Thursday.

He said the tax had been hiked by 10 times after YSRC government came to power. Now the tax was being based on the house's capital value, which was earlier based on rental value. If the party won in all the five wards in Anakapalle, he would try to resume Anna canteens in these wards.



## SHORT TAKES

AP RECORDS  
82 NEW CASES OF  
COVID, NO DEATHDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Andhra Pradesh registered 82 fresh Covid-19 cases and no death in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported that out of 35,443 samples tested on Thursday, 83 persons were found infected with the virus. Out of a total number of 1,38,43,190 persons tested for the virus, 8,89,585 were found infected with the virus and of them, 8,81,806 were recovered while undergoing treatment and 611 are still active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of confirmed Covid-19, Chittoor reported 21 cases, followed by eight each in Guntur and Kurnool, seven each in Krishna and Visakhapatnam, six in Nellore, five each in Anantapur, East Godavari, Srikakulam, West Godavari, four Kadapa, one in Prakasam and zero in Vizianagaram.

With regard to cumulative Covid-19 active cases, Krishna continued to top the state with 91, followed by 84 in Chittoor, 67 in East Godavari, 66 in Nellore, 46 in West Godavari, 44 in Kadapa, 43 in Guntur, 38 in Anantapur, 36 in Srikakulam, 35 in Prakasam, 28 in Visakhapatnam, 23 in Kurnool and 10 in Vizianagaram.

STEEL PLANT STIR  
INTENSIFIES,  
ENTERS 14TH DAYDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 25

Former UPSC chairman and well-known academican Prof K.S. Chalam alleged that some vested interest traded with the r Cards, depriving employment to thousands of farmers who gave away their cultivable lands for the construction of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

While speaking at the ongoing agitation against privatisation, which entered 14th day on Thursday, Prof Chalam said many farmers in spite of having a valid R Card, could not get employment in the steel plant. Some cunning elements, with the help of some selfish political leaders, who had migrated from other districts, took advantage of the situation, bought them off for a low price and provided them with menial jobs in unorganised sectors.

According to the recent reports, these elements, with the help of big corporate entities, have drawn a grandiose plan to grab most of the public land, including unused RINL land for their selfish benefits.

Identifying people  
for jabs turns tricky

## AP awaits rules for vaccination to people aged over 60 yrs

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

With the Centres issuing directions to states on administering Covid-19 vaccine to people aged more than 60 years and also to those aged 45 years plus with comorbidities from March 1, and even as Andhra Pradesh gets ready to take up vaccination as per the schedule, they are facing a tough task in identifying the beneficiaries.

State health authorities are awaiting guidelines from the Centre on taking up vaccination for these two categories of people. Though there is an option to register on CoWIN app to undergo vaccination, it remains to be seen as to how many aged persons are able to download such an app on their smartphones and use it. With

● **HEALTH SOURCES** maintain that nearly 60 to 70 per cent of healthcare workers underwent both the first and second dose of vaccine as a good number of them, including doctors, avoided undergoing vaccination for varied reasons, including the fear of health complications.

regard to the 45 years plus people having multiple health complications, they are supposed to get a certificate from their doctor about the kind of health problems they are facing to become eligible for the vaccination.

Health sources maintain that nearly 60 to 70 per cent of healthcare workers underwent both the first and second dose of Covid-19 vaccine as a good number of them, including doctors, avoided undergoing vaccination for varied reasons, including the fear of health complications and also due to death of two such workers after vac-

nation.

At present, the frontline warriors, including police personnel, are undergoing the first dose of vaccination.

Health authorities admit that there is no readily available data on the beneficiaries and they may have to rely on details mentioned in Aadhar cards or any other document, especially with regard to their age.

Meanwhile, the state health authorities are planning to take up training programmes for health personnel on going about the process of identifying beneficiar-

ies and counselling them on the need to undergo vaccination.

A senior health official said, "We are awaiting directions from the Centre on dealing with these two categories of beneficiaries."

On the other hand, as the Centre is also allowing private hospitals to administer vaccine by charging a specified amount, it has to be seen how many will go for such a vaccine as most people prefer government facilities as it is provided for free of cost.

IMA state president Dr S. Vijaya Kumar Prasada Reddy said "When the government intends to administer Covid-19 vaccine free of cost, not all targeted beneficiaries are turning up for varied reasons and if people are asked to pay, very few people will go for the jab."

Officials expedite arrangements  
for March 10 municipal pollsDC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, FEB. 25

Kadapa district authorities are expediting preparations for the March-10 municipal elections in the district. District collector Chevuru Hariikiran is leading the team of officials as per regulations set by the state election commission (SEC). Elections will be held in the district for the Pulivendula, Jammalamadugu, Proddatur, Yerraguntla, Badvel, Rayachoti and Mydukur municipalities as also the Kadapa municipal corporation.

Each returning officer will take care of four wards. While Kadapa Corporation has a total of 50 divisions, there are 41 wards in Proddatur municipality, 33 in Pulivendula, 20 in Jammalamadugu, 20 in Yerraguntla, 35 in Badvel, 34 in Rayachoti and 24 in Mydukur.

Withdrawal of nominations will start from March 2 and end at 3pm the next day. Polling will be held on March 10 from 7am to 5pm.

● **WITHDRAWAL OF** nominations will start from March 2 and end at 3pm the next day.

● **POLLING WILL** be held on March 10 from 7am to 5pm.

Re-polling will be held where necessary on the 13th. The counting will take place on the 14th.

Electoral regulations are in force in the towns. The SEC has decided to give candidates another chance if they show adequate evidence that they were obstructed or threatened during the nominations as ward members in the municipal elections last year. Single nominations were filed for 21 wards each in Pulivendula and Rayachoti.

The SEC has inquired into the details. It has directed the district authorities to inform the reasons for filing single nominations. Several candidates have already complained to the district collector with evi-

dence that they were obstructed from making nominations. Everyone is eagerly awaiting a decision. The Election Commission has given parties an opportunity to re-nominate candidates in place of those who passed away after filing the nominations for polls. Six such nominees died in the district. Nominations must be filed by such candidates before 3pm on February 28.

Mastan Valli, who filed nomination on behalf of the CPI for the 38th division is no more. Ramanjaneyulu, BJP candidate from Ward 1 in Rayachoti, as also Subbarayudu, BJP candidate from the 18th ward in Mydukur, Madhusudan Rao, TD candidate from the 32nd ward in Badvel, S. Krishnaveni, YSRC candidate from the 30th ward in Proddatur and Chinnappareddy, and BJP candidate from the 6th ward in Yerraguntla passed away.

Candidates from the respective parties in these positions will file nominations.

2 PERSONS KILLED  
AS UNIDENTIFIED  
VEHICLE HITS BIKEDC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL FEB. 25

Two persons were killed after an unknown vehicle hit their motorbike near Yemmiganur town, late night of Wednesday. The deceased were identified as Lokesh(21), a native of Belagal village and Veeresh (23), a native of Kadivella village in Yemmiganur mandal.

According to the police, the accident happened while the duo friends returned from Siraladoddi village in the same mandal after attending a function. An unknown four-wheeler vehicle hit their motorbike and skipped from the spot, police said. Yemmiganur police registered a case and the investigation is underway.

● **THE ACCIDENT** happened while the duo friends returned from Siraladoddi village in the same mandal after attending a function.

## PUNISH STALKER STERNLY: PANEL

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

AP Women Commission chairperson Vasireddy Padma said that the government would be supportive to the family members of Kota Anusha who was murdered by stalker Vishnuvardhan Reddy. She paid floral tributes to the body of Anusha at Gollapadu village and consoled her parents. She stated that CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy reacted seri-

ously to the incident and directed to initiate stern punishment to the culprit.

Ms Padma lamented that she was shocked to know about the murder of Anusha by the stalker. She assured the parents about filing the case in the fast track court to give punishment swiftly to the accused without fail.

She said that already APWC directed the police to take measure for the swift hearing of the case.

First ancient engraving refers  
to Devaraya's death, unearthedDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 25

Officials from Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) discovered the first epigraphical reference to the death of Krishna-devaraya Nayaka, the emperor of Vijayanagara empire during 1509-1529, in an inscription found near Gopalakrishna temple at Honnenahalli of Tumkur district recently.

The inscription found in Kannada recorded the demise of Krishnadevaraya, the third ruler from Tuluva dynasty on October 17, 1529 AD.

The ASI received a photograph of this inscription from Prof. K.R. Narasimhan. It is engraved on a slab kept to the north of Gopalakrishna temple at Honnenahalli. The inscription mentions about Honnenahalli being empowered to provide

offerings to the god Viraprasanna Hanumanta of Tumkur by Timmappanna Nayaka along with some officials and inhabitants of Tumkur village.

Krishnadevaraya was born on January 17, 1471 and died of ill-health on October 17, 1529.

The finding of an inscription dated July 27, 1532 earlier, engraved on the north and west walls of the third prakara of the Kalahastisvara temple at Srikalahasti in Chittoor district, mentioned the coronation of Krishnadevaraya's cousin Achyutaraya as the king on October 21, 1529 AD before Kalahastisvara in Kalahasti.

Historians say that findings from these two inscriptions have confirmed for the first time that Achyutaraya was crowned on the fourth day after the death of Krishnadevaraya.



ASI discovers first epigraphical reference to the death of Krishnadevaraya Nayaka in an inscription found near Gopalakrishna temple at Honnehalli of Tumkur district in Karnataka recently. — DC

SPECIAL TRAIN  
SERVICES  
EXTENDEDDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 25

East Coast Railway decided to extend the special train services between Visakhapatnam-Jagdalpur (via Araku Valley) following demand from the public. The train comprises a Vista dome coach up to Araku Valley. The train will leave Visakhapatnam daily at 6.45 am, with effect from March 1, which will reach Jagdalpur on the same day at 4.25 pm.

In the return direction, the train will leave Jagdalpur daily at 9.55 am with effect from March 2, which will reach Visakhapatnam on the same at 8.20 pm. These pair of trains will have stoppages at Simhachalam, Kottavalasa, Srungavarapukota, Borraguhalu, Araku, Koraput, Jeyapore and Kotpar Road between Visakhapatnam and Jagdalpur.

WOMAN DIES IN  
A WAREHOUSEDC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL FEB. 25

A 55-year-old woman died after a stack of gunny bags packed with red-gram in a warehouse fell over her at the Mahanandi police station limits on Thursday. The deceased was identified as Udmula Neelamma, a native of Gopavaram village in Mahanandi mandal, a daily wage worker. The incident occurred while she was engaged in cleaning works in the godown the bags suddenly fell on her. Mahanandi police registered a case, and an investigation is underway.

Groupism mars  
chances of YSRC in  
Kurnool civic pollsDC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, FEB. 25

Groupism in YSRC causing trouble to the party leaders ahead of Municipal elections. Kurnool Municipal corporation which has 52 wards is divided between MLA Hafeez Khan and former MLA S.V. Mohan Reddy. Same situation is prevailing in Nandikotkur and Gudur Municipalities. Councillor aspirants are in a dilemma in aligning with strong leadership.

Kurnool Assembly constituency law maker Hafeez Khan and S.V. Mohan Reddy have been at loggerheads in establishing their control over the civic body. S.V. Mohan Reddy, who has returned to YSRC fold just before the general elections in 2019 claims that his support base is an asset to the ruling party and wants his candidates to be fielded as official councillors. The tussle to wrest more number of councillors to their fold has taken the issue before a minister who called both the warring factions and tried to work out a solution.

But that did not go through. MLA Hafeez Khan said out of 52 wards in Kurnool city, 33 falls under his constituency and he has all the candidates for the ward councillors. He said it is impossible to provide any place to S.V. Mohan Reddy supporters in the given matrix. He said all the 33 ward councillor aspirants have been doing commendable social work in the past year when the Covid hit the people. They had been reaching out to the needy people and supplying them vegetables,

● **KURNOOL ASSEMBLY** constituency law maker Hafeez Khan and former MLA S.V. Mohan Reddy have been at loggerheads in establishing their control over the civic body.

● **THE TUSSELE** to wrest more number of councillors to their fold has taken the issue before a minister who called both the warring factions and tried to work out a solution.

ration and medicines when the majority of the poor people had no gainful employment. As such all the 33 ward councillor aspirants are well entrenched in the wards and would easily win the contest.

SV Mohan Reddy faction was demanding 16 of the 33 ward councillors and it may be difficult at this point, said Hafeez Khan. On TDP poll preparations, he said they don't have candidates in majority of the wards in Kurnool.

When contacted, TDP Kurnool President TG Bharath said his party cadre is intact and has good support from the public. He said the party has solid candidates in all the wards and would give a tough fight. Bharath said ruling party may have its own advantages but we are pitting strong candidates to have their candidates elected.

In Nandikotkur municipality, MLA Arthar and his challenger within the YSRC, are moving their pawns to have their respective supporters elected.

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**PRESS NOTE** Dated 26-02-2021

**CCA, AP Circle 'Quarterly Pension Adalat 2021' will be held on 19-03-2021(Friday)**

Office of the Controller of Communication Accounts, Department of Telecommunications, Andhra Pradesh Circle's Quarterly Pension Adalat 2021 will be held on 19-03-2021(Friday) from 1100 hrs to 1330 hrs through video conferencing. DoT and BSNL pensioners may submit their grievances, if any, to Accounts Officer (Pension), O/o CCA, Andhra Pradesh Circle, Department of Telecommunications, 2nd Floor, Microwave Building, P&T Gandhi Colony, M.G Road, Vijayawada-520010. Alternatively, the grievances may also be sent to email id: [ccavia.ap-dot@gov.in](mailto:ccavia.ap-dot@gov.in) on or before 12-03-2021. Grievances received thereafter will not be placed before Adalat. The representations received from the pensioners will only be accepted.

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# DECCAN Chronicle

26 FEBRUARY 2021

## Disha bail order should set welcome precedent

The order of the additional sessions judge of Patiala House Courts, Delhi, granting bail to Bengaluru-based climate activist Disha A. Ravi, arrested for her alleged role in the preparation of a “toolkit” that the police claimed led to the violent incidents in the nation’s capital on January 26, has sought to right two wrongs. One, it has made a timely intervention and stopped the state from using legal tools to put dissenting citizens behind the bars for no end. Two, it has reassured the people that Article 19 (1) of the Constitution which guarantees the freedom of speech and expression has the strength to come to the aid of a legitimate dissenter.

The court demolished the Delhi police’s case by pointing out that it was devoid of material evidence to connect the activist with the case slapped on her; and more importantly, whatever she did was protected by the Constitution. The court found that the investigating agency which charged the activist with sedition has produced “not an iota of evidence” to link her with seditious or violent acts; and reminded the police that it cannot resort to “surmises or conjectures” to convince itself of the culpability of an accused. The “scanty and sketchy” pieces of evidence the agency has produced are not enough to send a 22-year-old young woman with absolutely blemish-free criminal antecedents to jail, it said. The strong words on the nature of the evidence were, in fact, a censure of the police, which went overboard picking up a citizen violating the Supreme Court’s guidelines and her basic rights.

The court made a series of observations on the citizen’s rights that a democracy would love the judiciary to assert and protect in the face of state assault. “Citizens are conscience keepers of the government in any democratic nation,” it said. “They cannot be put behind the bars simply because they choose to disagree with the state policies.” In a warning to the self-appointed “patriots” who miss no chance to threaten dissenters with the label “traitor” and the state which has a profligacy to slap sedition charge at the drop of a hat, the court said, “The offence of sedition cannot be invoked to minister to the wounded vanity of the governments.” The court observed that difference of opinion, disagreement, divergence, dissent, or even disapprobation, are recognised legitimate tools to infuse objectivity in state policies. If the Constitution was not enough, the judge referred to the nation’s 5,000-year old civilisation and the Rig Veda to remind everyone that we were “never been averse to ideas from varied quarters”.

It’s an irony that a government manned by people who have participated in the greatest freedom restoration movement in Independent India is resorting to suppressing voices of legitimate dissent. They should not ideally expect the nation to experience the silence of a graveyard when they go about implementing their agenda. They will face, to quote the judge, an “aware and assertive citizenry, in contradistinction with an indifferent or docile citizenry”, which is, “indisputably a sign of a healthy and vibrant democracy”. The refreshing thoughts must set in motion a process to free many more that are languishing in prisons facing similar charges.

## An act of sycophancy

The Gujarat Cricket Association succumbed to the temptation of naming the stadium after the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The cricket arena had many earlier monikers like Gujarat and Motera, besides having borne the name of a famous son of the soil in Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

The baptism does break an unwritten law that no edifice should be named after a living person even if it seemed apt to honour a person who headed GCA in the long running Indian tradition of politicians getting themselves elected as presidents of cricket associations. The concept of a magnificent, cricket arena that cost more than ₹800 crores came from his grand vision and its creation was carried out by the other leading contemporary political personality, Union home minister Amit Shah, and his son who is the BCCI secretary. Donald Trump, as US President, even paid a ceremonial visit there just before the pandemic was declared in 2020.

The honour bestowed spontaneously and sentimentally on Narendra Modi is somewhat akin to India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru being awarded the Bharat Ratna by the first President Rajendra Prasad. But it does rankle considering this is a stadium named like this since the Maharashtra politician and chief minister S.K. Wankhede named one in Churchgate in Mumbai after himself in 1974. A second cricket stadium within a stone’s throw of historic Brabourne was owed to a clash of egos between Maharashtra Cricket Association and Cricket Club of India. The era of building an edifice of homage to members of one political family is thought to be well and truly over. And so the Congress playing the Sardar Patel card in criticism seems hypocritical now. The issue, however, is to do with the need for 21st-century India to evolve from a sycophantic, fetishist and neta-worshipping past.

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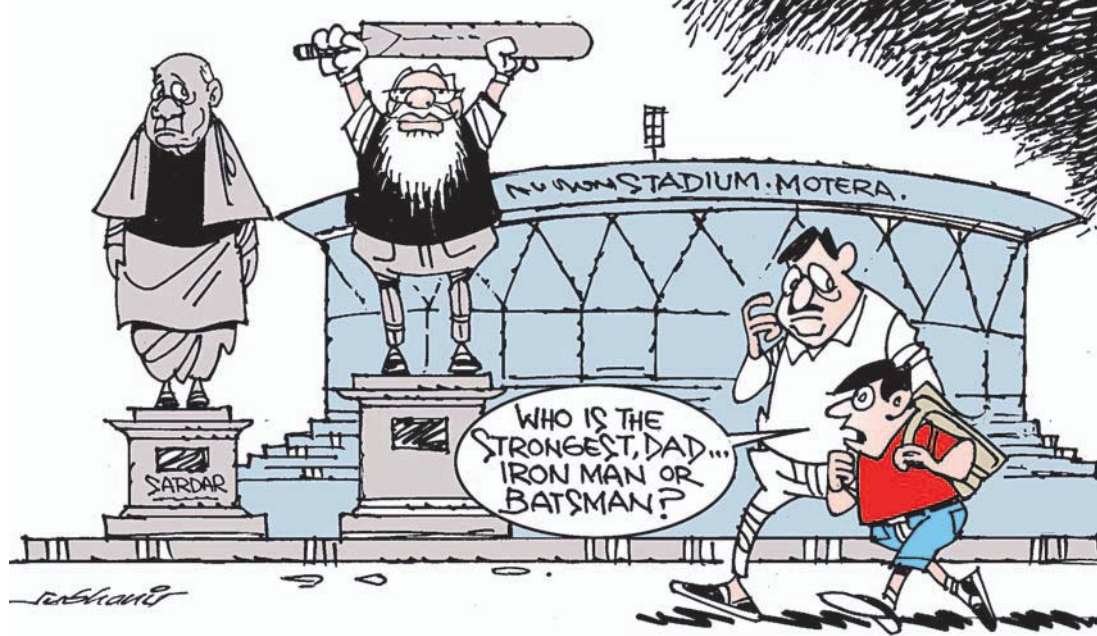
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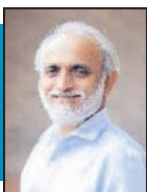
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Subhani



## Arrests on flimsy basis undermine democracy



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

It has been the bad practice and bad habit of the Indian police and criminal investigators to slap a mountain of charges against any accused in the hope that at least some, or even one, of them would stick. This amounts to indulging in slander in more than a legal sense. And this is what the Delhi police and its investigators have tried to do with the violence that erupted on January 26, 2021 when the farmers’ tractor parade went off the rails at some points. Instead of focusing on what went wrong during the tractor parade, the Delhi police went off on a tangent, distracted by the tweets of American pop singer Rihanna and teenage climate protester/warrior Greta Thunberg. Greta Thunberg put out a toolkit, retracted and put it back again. And it is here that Bengaluru climate activist Disha Ravi, 22, entered the picture. The Delhi police saw it as a good opportunity to nail the international linkages of the imagined conspiracy when they found the toolkit linkage between Ms Ravi and Ms Thunberg. The police discovered that Ms Ravi had a hand in the toolkit when she edited it for Ms Thunberg.

In the heightened atmosphere of the exaggerated nature of the petty violence that broke out at Red Fort on January 26, the reckless overreach of the police under the guidance of an authoritative Union home ministry came into play. The Delhi police went off to Bengaluru, arrested Ms Ravi and brought her to Delhi in total violation of all legal norms in a democratic polity. The courts did not

cover themselves in glory when the legal process was short-circuited in bringing Ms Ravi from Bengaluru to New Delhi as though this country was under martial law and no questions could be raised about the way the Delhi police went about hauling up an ordinary citizen in Bengaluru. The pusillanimity of the courts was further underscored when the police custody of Ms Ravi was readily granted for five days by duty judge Dev Saroha on February 14. This was the police riding roughshod over the law and the judge allowing it tamely. It is at the end of five days of the police custody, two

days of judicial custody and another day of police custody, with the police wanting to confront Ms Ravi with the other two accused, Nikita Jacob Shantanu Muluk, that she was finally granted bail and released.

The excesses committed by the cybercrime branch of the Delhi police should have been condemned by additional sessions judge Dharmender Rana. It was easier for him to excoriate the police on the serious charge of sedition that they brought against the young woman from Bengaluru. The judge tore into the flaky evidence on which they based their charge. It was necessary that the judge had said what he had about the innocuous toolkit and the laboured connect that the police wanted to make between the toolkit, Ms Ravi and the Poetic Justice Foundation (PJF). And he rightly pointed out that the PJF was not a banned organisation for

the police to charge Ms Ravi with having associated herself with an illegal entity.

Judge Rana could have avoided the homilies about pluralist Indian civilisation going back to the Rig Veda and rapped the police for creating a faux chargesheet. He did admit that the investigation was on, but the evidence produced by the police so far to oppose bail to Ms Ravi was paper-thin. But in times when the government is keen to spread the pall of fear by invoking demons who are less than paper tigers, Judge Rana seems to have found refuge in pious platitudes about democracy, liberty, and the right of the citizen to dissent. It would however be mistaken to get carried away by Judge Rana’s quiet plaint. Something more serious is amiss in the police’s line of investigation into the violence of January 26. Traces of “Khalistani” elements behind the three-month-old farmers’

agitation against the new laws brought by the Narendra Modi government has been the theme song of the government and the ruling party. It seems that the police just follows the lead of their political masters.

The “Khalistani” elements have been simmering beneath the surface for many years now, but it is quite clear that the farmers have nothing to do with them, and the people, whether Indian or foreign, who sympathise with the farmers’ agitation have nothing to do with them either. The government and the police are fully aware

that showing support for protesting farmers cannot be an offence and it cannot be deemed sedition. It is only by bringing in the “Khalistani” factor that people like Ms Ravi can be charged with a crime, and even if the charge fails, they can be defamed. It is in this diabolical bid to outlaw dissent and protest that the government and the Delhi police are committing the crime of undermining democracy.

The Disha Ravi case goes much beyond the Delhi police’s cyber-crime cell. It is a blatant misuse of the laws of the land. The police can claim that they investigate charges against people in good faith, and they nurse no animus against anyone. We can readily concede the point if they had gone about the investigation in a sober manner. They could have easily built up more evidence, they could have interrogated MsRavi in Bengaluru without the cheap theatrics of arresting her and bringing her to Delhi.

There is a clear need for the courts to rule clearly and loudly that the police have no right to arrest people as long as they are cooperating with the investigation, and there is no danger of the person absconding. In the case of Ms Ravi, it is self-evident that she would have cooperated with the police investigation. Arresting Ms Ravi was an attempt by the police to humiliate and intimidate her and make an example of her to other dissidents. This just cannot be allowed in a democracy. The powers of the police to arrest people and keep them in custody for 24 hours before they are brought before a magistrate for being remanded smacks of a police state. A citizen’s liberty cannot be left to the mercy of a policeman or police-woman.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

### LETTERS

#### INDO-CHINA BIZ

India and China are inter-dependent for heavy machinery, electronics, highways and pharmaceuticals (*Business trumps nationalism, DC, Feb. 25*). Since there is a mutually agreed withdrawal of forces, it is the right time to normalise relations in limbo for some time affecting both economies.

Parthasarathy Mandadi

Tirupati

#### MURDER MOST FOUL

It is disheartening to note the murder of a girl student (*Stalker murders girl, people stage protest, DC, Feb. 25*). Government usually announces compensation. It must find out the root cause for such crimes and take remedial measures. Youth is being misled by movies on love and marriage. Young boys fail to realise that girls can choose whom they want as partner.

K.L. Rao

Visakhapatnam

#### PRIVATISATION COST

The Centre seems determined to divest public sector undertakings, if one goes by the Prime Minister’s statement. Privatisation at full throttle cannot be a panacea for persistent economic problems. Moreover, such strategy will go against the economic and social aspirations of India by potentially deepening the divides between rich and poor and between socially advanced and disadvantaged by leaving the measures of social justice unattended.

Dr D.V.G.Sankararao

Vizianagaram

### 50 YEARS AGO IN

## DECCAN Chronicle

#### Mulki rules cover all TS appointments

HYDERABAD, February. 25 A full bench of the AP High Court today held that the Mulki Rules constitute a Special Law and appointments contrary to it would be invalid, although reservations for Mulki were not specially made in departmental rules. The full bench consisted of the Chief Justice N. Kumaraya, Justice Gopal Rao Ekbote and Justice Sambasiva Rao.

The petitioners, who were all superintendents of the Government departments, filed a writ petition challenging the rules for appointment of Assistant Treasury Officers and to set aside the appointment to that post by departmental recruitment.

Francis Pike



## India, America & China: Can ‘D-10’ forge new relationships?

Is Antony Blinken, US President Joe Biden’s secretary of state, preparing to abandon Barack Obama’s powder-puff Asian foreign policies? It is now widely agreed that Mr Obama, under whom Mr Blinken served as deputy secretary of state, ceded to China uncontested control of the South China Sea. Mr Obama’s so-called “pivot to Asia” was all talk and no trousers. Mr Blinken, who believes diplomacy must be “supplemented by deterrence”, may be about to implement a more aggressive foreign policy in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

In his first speech as general secretary of the Communist Party of China in 2012, Xi Jinping made his intentions clear. He stated his commitment to “accepting the baton of history and continuing to work for realising the great revival of the Chinese nation in order to let the Chinese nation stand more firmly and powerfully among all nations”. President Xi’s international adventurism, under the umbrella of his “Belt and Road Initiative”, has been most evident in his illegal military occupation of the South China Sea, but it is a global strategy for domination which can be observed in Central Asia, the Indian Ocean, the

Middle East, Europe, even the Arctic. How did Mr Obama respond? He did nothing. He issued platitudes. He vacillated over whether the Mutual Defence Treaty with the Philippines included the disputed South China Sea. By the end of his presidency, it was too late. And weakness in the South China Sea was undoubtedly an invitation for Mr Xi to push elsewhere on Mr Obama’s open door.

There are indications that the Biden administration will seek to construct alliances in Europe and Asia to contain the Chinese and Russian threats. As a former deputy secretary of state, Mr Blinken has long been President Biden’s point man on Europe and is known to be a long-time confidant. For a “multi-lateralist” who speaks fluent French, getting Europe onside will be important.

British PM Boris Johnson has been floating the idea of a “D-10” group: G-7 plus India, South Korea and Australia. Having finally decided to ditch Huawei, and persuaded by China’s crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong, the UK has thrown its hat into the “Stop China” camp. D-10 is a grouping that has some logic. By comparison,

Nato is undermined by the continuing membership of Turkey, now closely aligned with China. Even France’s President Emmanuel Macron said Nato was “brain dead”. But is the D-10 a credible base for an anti-Chinese containment strategy?

A containment strategy needs real military power. Besides the UK and France, the other European nations are largely window dressing. One suspects neither Mr Biden nor Mr Blinken have the cojones to initiate armed conflict to contest China’s already established military control of the South China Sea.

If Southeast Asia is lost, what next? China has already moved on to securing control of the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and Suez Canal trade routes. Burma is in China’s pocket. Bangladesh, with 165 million people, where in 2016 Mr Xi made the first state visit by a Chinese leader in 30 years, is being increasingly suborned by Chinese infrastructure investment and armaments. In the south, where the Bay of Bengal meets the Indian Ocean, China is entrenched. In 2018, China negotiated a 99-year lease for Sri Lanka’s Hambantota port and 15,000 adjacent acres — just off

India’s coast.

There’s the rub. For China’s Southeast Asia strategy is to contain India, which it sees as its long-term geopolitical rival. Although India lags a distant third to America and China in terms of aggregate GDP, it is also likely to overtake the US in 20 to 30 years. India already ranks fourth in the world in terms of aggregate military power.

As the world’s largest democracies, the United States and India should always be the best of friends. Yet US-Indian relations have rarely worked well. India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, rebuffed President Eisenhower; Nehru’s meeting with President Kennedy was a car crash. (Kennedy later admitted it was “the worst head of state visit I have had”.) Henry Kissinger described Indira Gandhi’s meeting with Richard Nixon as a “dialogue of the deaf”; even the normally polite Kissinger described Mrs Gandhi as “a bitch”.

Relations between American and Indian heads of government have later improved, but their substance has not. Mr Obama liked Dr Manmohan Singh but judging from his autobiography they do not seem

to have discussed much more than “progressive politics”. As for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the ultra-nationalist Hindu head of the BJP, he is, like Donald Trump, a populist with a cult following. Mr Biden may well court Mr Modi too. Noticeably Mr Blinken, like Donald Trump, refers to Asia as “the Indo-Pacific” — a term that the Chinese government detests.

While the geopolitical interests of America and India are clearly in alignment, bringing them into a more formal arrangement may be difficult. India is proudly independent. It does things its own way, and its prickly relationship with the West remains.

While India — currently engaged in border skirmishes with China in the remote Himalayas — is fully aware of the Chinese threat, it may be difficult to lasso the country into a formal mutual defence relationship. The D-10 is one of those neat ideas that might look good in a state department or Foreign Office briefing but, given the difficulties of co-opting India and Germany, can it cut the mustard in the real world?

By arrangement with the Spectator



SHORT TAKES

I-T RAIDS OFFICES, RESIDENCES OF HARYANA MLA

Chandigarh, Feb. 25: The Income Tax Department carried out raids on the offices and residences of Haryana's Independent MLA from Meham, Balraj Kundu, in Rohtak on Thursday, officials said here.

A residential building linked to his relatives in Hissar district and another one in Gurgaon which is connected to the legislator himself were searched as well, they said.

Kundu, a vocal supporter of the ongoing farmer's agitation against the new central farm laws, had in February 2020 withdrawn support to the M.L. Khattar dispensation in Haryana, saying he was "deeply hurt" with the government giving "clean chit" to those involved in the alleged corruption in sugar which he had flagged.

In October 2020, the Haryana Police booked him and three other people in a cheating case. The FIR was registered in Gurgaon based on a complaint from a resident of the city, the police had said.

The MLA had then hit back, saying the FIR, like another one lodged against him in January 2020, was due to "political considerations" and that he had been raising his voice against the BJP-led government in Haryana on various issues. The state police had in January 2020 booked Kundu and his brother Shivraj for allegedly cheating a Rohtak resident.

When the case was registered, Kundu had claimed that he was being framed in the case due to political vendetta at the behest of a BJP leader and former minister from the state. Kundu, who runs a construction company along with his brother, was not answering calls.

MUMBAI MAYOR UNVEILS RESTORED TRAM CAR

Mumbai, Feb. 25: Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar on Thursday unveiled a tram car restored by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) in south Mumbai, a civic official said.

The civic body had earlier displayed the tram car on an elevated podium at Bhatia Baug garden next to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, but due to various reasons including the Covid-19 pandemic, it was not open for public viewing.

"The BMC has taken this tram from the BEST and installed it at Bhatia Baug so people could re-experience the past glory of Mumbai," Pednekar said, while unveiling the tram.

The yellow and maroon coloured single-decker tram car is decorated with lights for tourists to enjoy viewing it at night time as well, the mayor said.

Trams were part of Mumbai's public transport system for nearly 90 years and were one of the cheapest and favourite modes of transport for citizens, before they were discontinued from service in 1964.

RSS ACTIVIST'S MURDER: 8 SDPI WORKERS HELD

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 25

The brutal murder of RSS activist in Vayalar in Alappuzha district of Kerala allegedly by SDPI workers, the political arm of PFI, has created tension in many parts of the area.

Nandu N. Krishna, 23, was hacked to death allegedly by SDPI workers on Wednesday night following a political clash between the rival groups. Eight SDPI workers have been arrested in connection with the murder; Suneer, 33, Yasir, 32, Abdul Khader, 52, Mohammed Amaz, 24, Ansil, 33, Riyaz, 38, Nishad, 32, and Shabudeen, 49.

The police said that the murder was well-planned as the assailants had arrived at the spot in a car carrying sharp edged weapons. These weapons were used for hacking the RSS worker.

The BJP and Hindu outfits had called for a dawn to dusk hartal in the district on Thursday against the murder.

The police have clamped prohibitory orders in some areas of Cherthala and Vayalar to check retaliatory attacks by the rival groups.

Nirav: From diamantaire to fugitive

He has been lodged at Wandsworth Prison in south-west London since his arrest in March 2019

London, Feb. 25: Nirav Modi's story up until the UK court verdict on Thursday, just two days before his 50th birthday, is one of stark contrasts. From someone flush with diamonds, quite literally, as a member of a Gujarati family of gem traders who grew up in the European jewellery hub of Antwerp in Belgium, to ending up holed up in a jail cell in one Europe's most overcrowded prisons.

The diamond merchant wanted in India on charges of fraud and money laundering in the estimated USD 2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, lost his legal battle against extradition as a UK judge ruled that he does have a case to answer before the Indian courts.

He has been lodged at Wandsworth Prison in south-west London since his arrest on an extradition warrant in March 2019 at a central London bank branch, where he was trying to set up a new account.

He had been staying nearby at a plush penthouse in Centrepoin in the heart of the UK capital, regularly walking his dog to an apparently new jewellery business nearby.

It later emerged during remand hearings at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London that he had hired Boutique Law LLP in anticipation of the extradition proceedings on charges of fraud and money laundering by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED), trying to strike a voluntary surrender and bail deal.

However, as the CBI and ED evidence was presented in court by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), arguing on behalf of the Indian authorities, his offer of up to GBP 4 million as security to be allowed to be bailed under strict house arrest conditions was repeatedly rejected.

His detention in a shared cell with one other inmate is a far cry from his past billionaire lifestyle, which involved hobnobbing with high-profile celebrities and his diamond designs finding red carpet favour with stars.

"I was totally impressed with the craftsmanship at the workshop [in India]. It was the best quality I could see anywhere in the world, Thierry Fritsch, a high-end French jewellery

● PICTURE PAINTED in court was one of a talented jewellery designer who was only driven by one mission to make the Nirav Modi brand worthy.

expert, told the UK court during the course of the extradition hearing last year.

As someone who had served on the Advisory Board of Nirav Modi's company for three years since 2015, Fritsch was deposed by the defence team to vouch for Nirav's integrity and skills as an entrepreneur and creative person, who was passionate about establishing the first international brand of luxury jewellery out of India.

A gems expert, Dr Richard Taylor, was also fielded to go into the nitty-gritties of the diamond trade and how the Nirav Modi brand had succeeded in making a mark around the world.

"The industry relies on sending out high-value product to companies and to do that they require trust and confidence," said Taylor, in an attempt to establish Modi's credibility in the business.

"India is the largest and most important centre of diamond cutting it was a very significant trend that he [Modi] was part of," he added.

The picture painted in court was one of a talented jewellery designer who was only driven by one mission to make the Nirav Modi brand worthy of competition with the likes of global luxury jewellery brands such as Tiffany or Cartier. And, the accusations associated with the extradition case were painted as nothing more than a commercial dispute.

The CPS, in turn, presented documents and video evidence in an effort to establish a complex web of misuse of a bank credit facility called letters of undertaking (LoUs) and threats issued to so-called dummy directors of front companies to keep them out of the reach of Indian investigative authorities.

Throughout the extradition case in London, Nirav Modi's depression and mental health condition remained at the heart of arguments with his extended incarceration said to have worsened his condition.

Coupled with a severe condition of depression, in my view, he presents a high risk of suicide albeit not immediately, Dr

LONG ROAD TO EXTRADITION

A UK court on Thursday ruled that fugitive diamantaire Nirav Modi can be extradited to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering amounting to an estimated \$2 billion. Following is the chronology of the case and its origin

**JANUARY 29, 2018:** Punjab National Bank (PNB) files police complaint against Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and others accusing fraud to the tune of ₹2.81 billion.

**FEBRUARY 5:** The CBI launches an investigation into the alleged scam.

**FEBRUARY 16:** The ED seizes a cumulative ₹56.74 billion worth of diamonds, gold and jewellery from Nirav Modi's home and offices.

**FEBRUARY 17:** The CBI makes first arrest in the case. Two PNB employees and an executive of Nirav Modi's group were detained.

**FEBRUARY 17:** Government suspends passports of Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi for four weeks in connection with the PNB fraud.

**FEBRUARY 21:** CBI arrests CFO of Nirav Modi's firm and two other senior executives of his firms. It also seals his farmhouse in Alibaug.

**FEBRUARY 22:** The ED seizes nine luxury cars belonging to Nirav Modi and his firms.

**FEBRUARY 27:** A magistrate's court issues a bailable arrest warrant against diamond trader Nirav Modi.

**JUNE 2:** The Interpol issues Red Corner Notice against Nirav Modi for money laundering.

**JUNE 25:** The ED moves a special court in Mumbai seeking Nirav Modi's extradition.

**AUGUST 3:** The Indian Government sends a request for the extradition of Nirav Modi to the UK authorities.

**AUGUST 20:** The CBI officials request Interpol Manchester to detain Nirav Modi after the latter informs about his presence in London to Indian authorities.

**DECEMBER 27:** The UK informs India that Nirav Modi is living in the country.

**MARCH 9, 2019:** British newspaper 'The Telegraph' confronts Nirav Modi on London's streets and confirms his presence in the country.

**MARCH 9:** The ED says the government of the UK has sent an extradition request



Nirav Modi

of fugitive diamantaire Nirav Modi to a UK court for further proceeding.

**MARCH 18:** Westminster Court in London issues arrest warrant against fugitive Nirav Modi after the Indian government request was forwarded to the court by the UK Home Office

**MARCH 20:** Nirav Modi arrested in London and produced in Westminster Court, which denies him bail.

**MARCH 20:** Nirav Modi sent to Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Wandsworth till March 29

**MARCH 29:** A Westminster Magistrates Court in London rejects Nirav Modi's second bail application, saying there are "substantial grounds" to believe that he will fail to surrender. The judge fixes April 26 as the next date of hearing when he will appear via video link from jail.

**MAY 8:** Nirav Modi denied bail for a third time, to remain in UK jail.

**JUNE 12:** UK court rejects Nirav Modi's bail for fourth time over fears he would abscond.

**AUGUST 22:** Nirav Modi's remand extended till September 19, UK extradition trial expected in May 2020.

**NOVEMBER 6:** UK court rejects Nirav Modi's new bail application

**MAY 11, 2020:** Nirav Modi's five-day extradition trial in PNB fraud case begins in UK

**MAY 13:** Indian govt submits more proof against Nirav Modi in money laundering case

**SEPTEMBER 7, 2020:** UK court given fresh video tour of Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail

**DECEMBER 1:** Nirav Modi's remand extended, final hearings in 2021

**JANUARY 8, 2021:** UK court decides to pronounce judgement in Nirav Modi's extradition case on February 25

**FEBRUARY 25, 2021:** UK court rules Nirav Modi can be extradited to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering.

— PTI



Journalists report the verdict to allow the extradition of Nirav Modi, outside Westminster Magistrates Court in London on Thursday.

— AP

MEA: Govt will liaise with UK for Nirav's early extradition

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 25

India on Thursday evening said that "since the Westminster Magistrate's Court has recommended Nirav Modi's extradition to the UK home secretary, the Government of India would liaise with the UK authorities for his early extradition to India"

On Thursday, the Ministry of External Affairs said, "Nirav Modi is wanted in India in connection with the multi-million dollar Punjab National Bank Fraud case. On the request of CBI and ED, his extradition from UK was sought in August 2018. He was arrested and produced before the Senior District Judge at Westminster Magistrate's court on 20.03.2019. Since then he is facing extradition proceedings while in judicial custody. The final hearing in this case was held on 7-8 January 2021. On Thursday, the Westminster Magistrate's Court in London has pronounced that Nirav Modi be extradited to India to stand trial."

The MEA added, "Dismissing the mental health concerns raised by Nirav Modi, the judge observed that Nirav Modi conspired to destroy evidence and intimidate witnesses. Since the Court has recommended his extradition to the UK

CBI SAYS VERDICT IS REMINDER TO ALL FUGITIVES

New Delhi, Feb. 25: The CBI on Thursday termed the judgement of a UK court in the Nirav Modi's case as "significant" and said it should serve as a reminder to all fugitives, who have indulged in large value frauds, that they cannot escape the law merely by changing their countries of residence.

The CBI said the court order vindicated the painstaking probe carried out by the agency especially since Modi had raised various issues on admissibility of evidence, fairness of investigation, trial, prison conditions, availability of health facilities in India and extraneous consideration, with a view to divert attention from his own acts.

— PTI

Home Secretary, India would liaise with the UK authorities for his early extradition to India."

A senior diplomat at India House said the judgment paves the way for the government of India and the high commission officials to liaise with the UK authorities on the next stages of the procedural matters for extradition.

Electrifying protest



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee rides an electric scooter during a protest against the hike in fuel price in Kolkata on Thursday. She slammed the BJP-led government at the Centre, "We are protesting against the fuel price hike. The Modi government only makes false promises. They have done nothing to bring down fuel prices. You can see the difference in petrol prices when the Modi government came to power and now."

— PTI

NEW | MEMBER

Chaurasia had earlier pledged to spread Godse's last court statement to 1L people

Godse 'devotee' inducted in MP Congress

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB. 25

A 'devotee' of Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse has been inducted in Congress here, much to the chagrin of a strong section of the party. Babulal Chaurasia who had a few years ago pledged to spread Godse's last court statement to one lakh people was welcomed into the party by MP Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) presi-

dent and former chief minister Kamal Nath here on Wednesday.

The official Twitter handle of MP Congress on Wednesday evening broke the news of Chaurasia being admitted to Congress by sharing the picture of the event in the party HQ here.

Former PCC president of MP Arun Yadav reacted to the development with a one-liner, "Bapu hum sharminda hai" (Bapu, we are ashamed). He tagged the photo-

graph showing Nath welcoming Chaurasia into the party in his Twitter account, while posting his comment.

Sources in the party said the decision to induct Godse's "follower" in the party has left many senior leaders in Congress flabbergasted.

Chaurasia had quit Congress and joined Hindu Mahasabha in 2014 to contest the local civic body elections in Gwalior.

He was said to be one of the brain behind the tem-

ple built for Godse in Gwalior in 2017.

He was also reportedly present at the 'consecration' ceremony held to install Godse's statue in the temple.

Later, the Gwalior district administration had removed the idol.

Talking to reporters in Gwalior on Thursday, Chaurasia described his joining in Congress as his "homecoming".

"I was not aware then that the idol I was worshipping was that of Godse.

Vehicle with explosives found near Mukesh Ambani's house

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 25

An abandoned vehicle with 20 gelatin sticks was found just metres away from business tycoon Mukesh Ambani's house in Mumbai on Thursday.

The SUV was noticed at around 3 pm after which some people from the vicinity alerted the local police, who rushed to the spot and cordoned off the entire area, sending the state government and the police into a tizzy.

A Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) team reached the spot immediately, he said. It was not an assembled explosive device, he said, adding that further investigation was on.

"A Scorpio with 20 gela-

● THE SUV was noticed at around 3 pm after which some people from the vicinity alerted the local police, who rushed to the spot.

● CCTV FOOTAGE of the area revealed the SUV was parked beside a tree on the Carmichael Road at around 1 am.

tin sticks was found near Mukesh Ambani's Mumbai residence. The crime branch of Mumbai Police is investigating the entire matter and the truth will emerge soon," Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh said.

According to reports, CCTV footage of the area revealed the SUV was

parked beside a tree on the Carmichael Road at around 1 am. More than one person was seen alighting from the car.

Deshmukh said that the car was parked some distance away from Ambani's palatial house.

Mumbai Police spokesperson, DCP S. Chaitanya, said, "The gelatin sticks recovered in the SUV were not an assembled explosive device. But details of the risks they posed would be known only after a thorough probe."

Efforts are on to trace the persons who parked the vehicle there, from where they came, what were their diabolic motives, who or what were the exact targets etc., officials said.

KEJRIWAL'S SECURITY COVER REDUCED: AAP

New Delhi, Feb. 25: A day before Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's roadshow in Gujarat's Surat, sources in the AAP government alleged on Thursday that his security cover has been scaled down, a charge denied by the Union Home Ministry. Joint Commissioner (Security) of Delhi Police ID Shukla said Kejriwal has a Z+ security cover and his "complete Z+ security" is being maintained.

— PTI



## SHORT TAKES

GERMAN POLICE  
RAID ISLAMIC  
EXTREMISTS

Berlin, Feb. 25: Hundreds of German police officers conducted coordinated raids early Thursday in Berlin and the surrounding state of Brandenburg in the investigation of an organisation banned over allegations of Islamic extremism.

Some 800 police, including SWAT teams, were involved in the raids of apartments linked to members of the organisation, authorities told the *DPA* news agency. The raids were carried out with the primary focus of obtaining evidence. No arrests were immediately reported.

DRONE HIT ON  
SAUDI PALACE  
WAS FROM IRAQ

Baghdad, Feb. 25: Explosive-laden drones that targeted Saudi Arabia's royal palace in the kingdom's capital last month were launched from inside Iraq, a senior Iran-backed militia official in Baghdad and a US official said. Speaking to *The Associated Press* this week, the militia official said three drones were launched from Iraqi-Saudi border areas by a relatively unknown Iran-backed faction in Iraq and crashed into the royal complex in Riyadh on Jan. 23.

Biden revokes  
Green Card ban

## Lawyers: Was blocking legal immigration

San Diego, Feb. 25: President Joe Biden has lifted a freeze on green cards issued by his predecessor during the pandemic that lawyers said was blocking most legal immigration to the United States. Former President Donald Trump last spring halted the issuance of green cards until the end of 2020 in the name of protecting the coronavirus-wracked job market — a reason that Trump gave to achieve many of the cuts to legal immigration that had eluded him before the pandemic. Trump on December 31 extended those orders until the end of March. Trump had deemed immigrants a “risk to the US labour market” and blocked their entry to the United States in issuing Proclamation 10014 and Proclamation 10052.

Biden stated in his proclamation on Wednesday that shutting the door on legal immigrants “does not advance the interests of the United States”. “To the contrary, it harms the United States, including by preventing certain family members of United States

citizens and lawful permanent residents from joining their families here. It also harms industries in the United States that utilize talent from around the world,” Biden stated in his proclamation.

Most immigrant visas were blocked by the orders. As many as 120,000 family-based preference visas were lost largely because of the pandemic-related freeze in the 2020 budget year, according to the American Immigrant Lawyers Association. Immigrants could not bring over family members unless they were US citizens applying for visas for their spouses or children under the age of 21.

It also barred entry to immigrants with employment-based visas unless they were considered beneficial to the national interest such as health care professionals. And it slammed the door on thousands of visa lottery winners who were randomly chosen from a pool of about 14 million applicants to be given green cards that would let them live permanently in the United States. The

blocked visas add to a growing backlog that has reached 437,000 for family-based visas alone, said California immigration lawyer Curtis Morrison, who represented thousands of people blocked by the freeze. “I’m thrilled for my clients who are now in a position that they can now enter the US,” he said.

“But that backlog will take years if the administration does not take ambitious measures.” A federal judge last year issued a ruling that all but lifted Proclamation 10052 by allowing temporary foreign workers to enter the United States if their employers are members of the US Chamber of Commerce or several other large organisations that represent much of the US economy. But Proclamation 10014 continued to block thousands of immigrants. Immigration lawyers said they were surprised Biden did not immediately lift the freeze like he did with Trump’s travel ban imposed against people from mostly Muslim-majority countries. — *AP*

## Coup attempt: Armenia PM

Yerevan, Feb. 25: Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan accused the military of an attempted coup and brought supporters to the streets on Thursday, as months of tensions over its defeat in last year’s war with Azerbaijan came to a head.

Thousands marched through the streets of the capital Yerevan in support of Pashinyan, with the opposition urging him to step down to avoid bloodshed or even civil war.

President Armen Sarkisian, whose role is largely symbolic, said he was taking

urgent steps to try to defuse the crisis, calling on all involved to “show restraint and common sense.” Under pressure for his handling of the conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Pashinyan has ignored repeated calls to resign for losing swathes of territory to Azerbaijan in the war.

After largely backing the prime minister for months, the military’s general staff on Thursday joined calls for him to step down, saying in a statement that he and his cabinet “are not capable of taking ade-

quate decisions”.

Pashinyan hit back with an accusation that top brass were mounting an “attempted military coup” and fired the chief of the general staff Onik Gasparyan. Hundreds of supporters then joined Pashinyan to march through central Yerevan, chanting “Nikol Prime Minister!”

Speaking to supporters through a megaphone, Pashinyan called for calm, as dozens of police deployed outside the main government offices. “The situation is tense, but we must agree that there cannot be

clashes,” said Pashinyan, who was joined by his wife, daughters, ministers and security detail.

He said the situation in the country was under control and that the military’s call had been an “emotional reaction” to his firing the previous day of the deputy chief of the general staff Tigran Khachatryan. Khachatryan had ridiculed claims by Pashinyan that Iskander missiles supplied by Russia — Armenia’s main military ally — had failed to hit targets during the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. — *AFP*

Eradicated poverty  
in China, says Xi

Beijing, Feb. 25: President Xi Jinping on Thursday declared that China has scored a “complete victory” in its fight against poverty by lifting over 770 million people out of it in the last four decades, calling it another “miracle” created by the country that will go down in history. Absolute poverty has been eradicated in the world’s most populous country, Xi announced while addressing a gathering held here to mark the country’s accomplishments in poverty alleviation and honour its model poverty fighters.

China has a population of around 1.4 billion. “No country has been able to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in such a short time,” Xi said. Xi said that all poor people in rural areas have been lifted out of poverty. With this, China has achieved the UN goal of poverty eradication 10 years ahead of the 2030 deadline, he said.

Over the past eight years, the final 98.99 million impoverished rural residents living under the current poverty line have all been lifted out of poverty. All the 832 impoverished counties and 128,000 impoverished villages have been removed from the poverty list, he said. Since the launch of the reform and opening up in the late 1970s, 770 million impoverished rural residents have shaken off poverty when calculated according to China’s current poverty line, he said. China has contributed to more than 70 per cent of global poverty reduction over the same period, Xi, also General Secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), said.

With such achievements,

China has created another “miracle” that will “go down in history,” he said. Xi said since he assumed power, China has invested accumulative fiscal funds of nearly 1.6 trillion yuan into poverty alleviation over the past eight years. He said according to the World Bank’s international poverty line, the number of Chinese people lifted out of poverty over the past 40 years accounts for more than 70 per cent of the global total.

China considers extreme rural poor are those with annual per capita income of less than \$620, or about \$1.69 a day at current exchange rates, which compared closely with the World Bank’s minimum standard of \$1.90 a day.

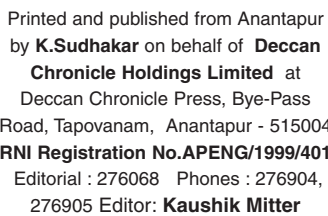
Complete eradication of poverty in China was the main goal announced by Xi when he came to power in 2012. At that time, China had about 100 million poor people, mostly living in remote areas. He has made effective use of targeted eradication of extreme poverty besides crackdown against corruption as the main political goals to consolidate his power: in the ruling CPC emerging as its most powerful leader after Mao heading the party, the presidency and the powerful military. With the removal of the two-five-year term rule, Xi, 67, like Mao now has a lifelong tenure in power instead of retiring next year.

His claim of poverty eradication came ahead of the CPC’s centenary celebrations this year.

The CPC also boasts of being the world’s only Communist Party with longest tenure in power in the one-party state since 1949. — *PTI*







— S. PERVEZ QAISER

**Sao Paulo, Feb. 25:** Two Brazilian clubs have expressed condolences following the sudden death of the father of Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker.

Fluminense posted on social media Thursday that it's deeply sorry for the death of Jos Agostinho Becker.

Alisson's brother, Muriel, is a goalkeeper at Fluminense. Internacional, where both Alisson and Muriel played, also offered condolences.

Brazilian media reported that 57-year-old Jos Agostinho Becker had drowned after going for a swim on his property in the city of Lavras do Sul, in the south of the country. Local police confirmed the body of man was found on Wednesday night.

The 28-year-old Alisson played at Internacional between 2013 and 2016 before he joined Roma. He left Roma after two seasons to join Liverpool. —AP

Benjamin Thomas batted and bowled brilliantly to emerge the top performer in the Hyderabad Cricket Association's A-1 Division three-day league matches played on Thursday.

Benjamin hit 115 in 106 balls with 10 fours and two sixes in Sportive CC's second innings and then took five wickets with his off-spin while conceding 25 runs to help his side beat Secunderabad Nawabs.

In another match, G. Vikram Naik (111) and Rahul Boddhi (108) scripted Evergreen's win.

The A-2 Division two-day games threw up some top notch performances. M. Sai Pratheek of Acrylic and C. Siddharth Rao of SK Blues hit a double century each while Sahith of Swastik Union took seven wickets.

Pratheek's 206 that contained 28 boundaries and a six propelled Acrylic to 499 for 4 in 90 overs against Adams XI. Siddharth slammed 200 which came off 156 balls and included 36 boundaries as SK Blues piled 540 for 9 against Mayura.

Sahith's 7/34 meant Lords CC crashed to a humiliating 109 against Swastik Union.



Acrylic CC 499/4 in 90 ovals (M. Sai Pratheek 206 = 159b, 28x44, 1x6, M. Jashwant 95, M. Vasu Deva Raju 101 = 89b, 10x4, Sai Aravind Gona 57) = Adams XI.

◀ SK Blues 540/9 (all out) 80.2 overs (Ibrahim 91, C. Siddharth Rao 200 = 156b, 36x4, K. Srikar 84, Md Ali 48, K. Anil 30 n.o., Sunil 3/99) = Mayura 14/2 in 7 overs

◀ Vijaypuri Willowmen 406 = 72.3 overs (Aashish Vaman 176 = 72b, 36x4, M. S. Saketh Reddy 46, Md. Ayub Khaz 37, Md. Yaseenuddin 44, K. Kiran Paul 3/53) = Eleven Masters 42/2 in 9 overs.

◀ Swastik Union Club 238 in 66.3 overs (Govardhan 41, Karthik 61, Hasan 4/48) bt Lords CC 109 in 44.3 overs (Jasper 36, Sahil 7/34 = 18-6-34-7).

◀ Noble CC 104 in 30 overs (B. Ambarish 43, Sachit Naidu 6/17 = 9-0-17-6) lost to Abhinav Colts 106/2 in 16.3 overs (Varun Tej 51 n.o. **Points:** Colts 5, Noble 0).

◀ Adilabad District 123 in 34.5 overs (L. Mahesh 35, B. Srinivas 34, D. Harsha

10-6-55. **Points:** Adilabab 5, Rakesh 0.  
 • **Saint Sai 55** in 23.3 overs (**B. Suresh**  
 5/14 – 9-3-14-5, N. Pavan Reddy 4/5)  
 lost to Warangal District 59/1 in 5.3  
 overs (B. Kumar 36 n.o.). **Points:**  
 • Warangal 5, Saint Sai 0.  
 • **HUCC 66** in 25.5 overs (**Advaith 5/23**  
 – 9-5-3-25-5, TNR Mohit 3/24) lost to  
 • **Cherluru Chums 68/1** in 12.5 overs  
 (Yash Sathulewalekar 30 n.o.). **Points:**  
 • Cherluru Chums 5, HUCC 0.  
 • **Hyderabad Panthers 179** in 32.4  
 overs (Rahul Adwala 34 n.o., **P. Suraj**  
 18/59, Rahul Karthikeya 4/75) lost to  
 • **Bharat 181** in 18.4 overs (S. A. 4/0).  
 • **Rahul 33**, Adithya Verma 32 n.o./Rahul  
 A 4/26, Ananya Raj Shekar 3 n.o./Rahul  
 • **Points:** Bharat 5, Panthers 0.  
 • **Elegant CC 229** in 64.2 overs (**Y.**  
**Raghavendra Sree 123** – 166b, 18/4,  
 Yughavendra 3/36) vs WMCC.  
 • **Ours CC 312/9** in 90 overs (**V.**  
**Gautam 105** – 191b, 14/4, **Kausik**  
**Chendrevu 96**) vs Nizamabad District  
 2/1 in 2 overs.  
 • **Hyderabad Cricket Academy 389** in  
 86.3 overs (**Pranav 97**, Rishi 38, Zaheer

38, Tejveer 55, Praveen 3/37) vs Manikumar.

■ HBCC 31 in 88.5 overs (Vara Prasad 65, Rryan Rodrigues 67, Vishesh Anand 65, Md Baheeruddin 3/58) vs COOB.

■ Crown CC 254 in 57 overs (V. Venkatesh 85, K. Surender 42, Anand Prakash 4/56) vs Mega City 141/2 in 33 overs (A. Bhargav 57).

■ Team Speed 201 in 73.1 overs (Rohan 36, S. Deekshit 43, Sujan Kumar 4/35) vs PKMCC 3/1 in 5 overs (R. Praneeth 63, S. K. Karthikeya 3/29, N. Charan 3/11) lost to Venus Cybercheth 127/2 in 31 overs (M. S. Karthikeya 9, Shrunroth Rao 33). **Points:** Venus Cybercheth 5, National 0.

■ Secunderabad Gymkhana 113 in 32.1 overs (Anish Chandra 32, Md Adil 38, M. Manikanta Charan 4/44, Abhinav 4/4) lost to Vijayanand CC 117/1 in 23.1 overs (S. Aryan Raj 62 n.o., M. Abhinav 31 n.o.). **Points:** Vijayanand 5, Gymkhana 0.

■ Karimnagar District 130 in 43.3 overs (Thuniki Raju 51, Mehul Dayani 3/37, Shashank 2/21) lost to Shanti 113/37 in 45 overs (S. Venkatesh 62). **Points:** Shanti 5, Karimnagar 0.

■ Superstar 327 in 66.3 overs lost to Time CC 358/6 in 78 overs (Vivek Gagan 94, Vishakh K 58, Vaidh Reddy 3/25). **Points:** Time CC 5, Superstar 0.

■ Greenland 297/5 in 80 overs (Prabhat Gupta 77, Sai Charan 74, Suraj 31, Prudhvi 4/72) vs Victoria.

■ Sri Shyam 234 in 66.5 overs (Md Afzal Ali 57, Shaikh Khaleel 36, Srinath Naik 39, Syed Haji 43, K. Sri Harsha 4/28) vs Classic 140/4 in 19.4 overs (S. Ravghendra Rao 45, K. Jagdeesh Reddy 73).




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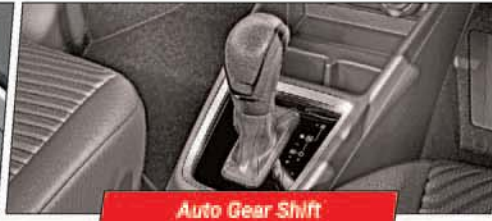

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