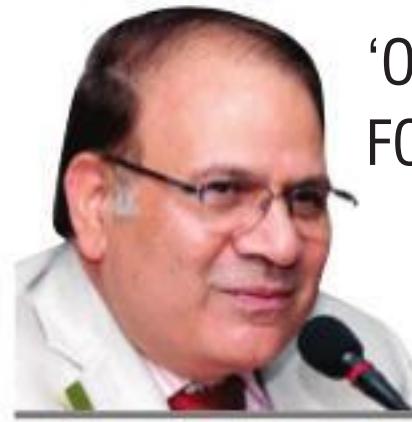




PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



'OIL TAXES EASIEST
FOR REVENUE'

P7



BIDEN READY FOR
TALKS ON 2015 IRAN
NUCLEAR DEAL

P10



HARRY, MEGHAN
WILL NOT RETURN
TO ROYAL DUTIES

P11



MANCUNIANS
OWE IT TO
FERNANDES

P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Shallow to moderate fog in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 28 and 10 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 100% Min: 48%
TEMPERATURE
Max: 26.8°C (+2) Min: 9.9°C (-1)
SUN RISES 06:54 hrs MOON SETS 01:59 hrs

THUMBNAILS



34th Garden Festival organised by Delhi Tourism at the Garden of Five Senses at Saket, in the Capital on Friday. ■ SNS

Two Unnao teen girls buried in village: The last rites of two teenage girls, found dead in an agriculture field in Babhuwala village of Asoha police station area, were performed in Unnao on Friday morning amidst tight security arrangements, officials said. Three girls - aged 16, 15 and 14 - were found in a field by the villagers on Wednesday night when they did not return after leaving their house to take fodder for cattle. A medical bulletin by the Kanpur hospital treating the third girl had noted that it was a suspected case of poisoning. ■ P4

Plane makes emergency landing in T'puram: A flight from Sharjah to Kozhikode with 112 passengers made an emergency landing at the international airport in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday due to a snag in the aircraft. The Air India Express plane developed the snag in the hydraulic system and made the landing at Thiruvananthapuram where the airlines has the base with more technical experts, an airport official said.

Terrorists kill policemen in uptown Srinagar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 19 FEBRUARY



Three policemen were killed and one injured in two separate incidents of terrorism in the Kashmir valley on Friday, while three terrorists of Al-Badr outfit were eliminated in another encounter in south Kashmir's Shopian district.

The valley witnessed three incidents of terrorism back to back within hours after the group of 24 foreign envoys completed their two days visit and returned to Delhi from Jammu and Kashmir.

Two unarmed policemen, Mohammad Yousuf and Suhail Ahmad, died when a terrorist suddenly appeared in the crowded Bagat area of Barzulla on the airport road and opened fire at them, injuring the policemen critically.

Both received bullets in the back. The terrorist escaped from the spot after firing several gun shots. A video of the attack went viral on social media.

IGP (Kashmir) Vijay Kumar said that the critically injured policemen were rushed to the hospital where they succumbed to injuries.

The area has been cordoned by the Army, CRPF and police and search launched for the terrorist

who has been identified.

In a separate encounter in the Beerwah locality of Budgam district, a special police officer (SPO) Mohammad Altaf was killed and constable Manzoor Ahmad injured. The two trapped terrorists managed to escape but a combing operation was given to the terrorists to surrender. The two terrorists, a Pakistani and a local, managed to escape from Budgam.

(SEE P4)

Two AK rifles and other arms and ammunition were recovered from the encounter spot. The encounter began on Thursday night after the security forces cordoned the area following inputs about the hiding terrorists.

Former chief ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti also condemned the killing of policemen. Omar tweeted: "What makes this attack even more reprehensible is that policemen Mohammad Yousuf and Suhail Ahmad were unarmed & shot in the back".

The IGP said that joint teams of Army, CRPF and J&K Police were involved in these encounters during which opportunity was given to the terrorists to surrender. The two terrorists, a Pakistani and a local, managed to escape from Budgam.

(SEE P4)

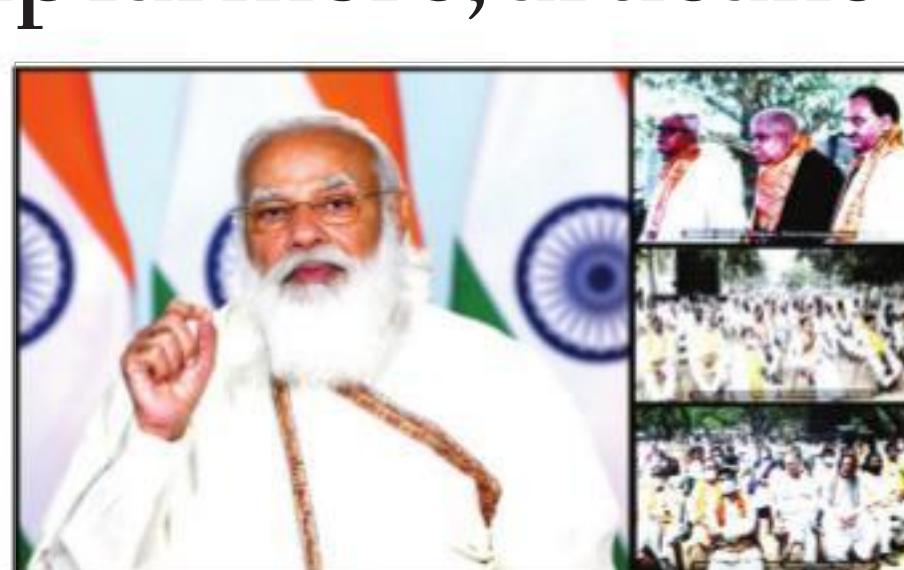
Modi asks VBU to help farmers, artisans access global market

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

Addressing the annual convocation of Visva-Bharati University through video conferencing today, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is the Chancellor of this Central University, said that the new 'National Education Policy' is a significant step towards a self-reliant India.

In order to find solutions to the ongoing problems, Modi appealed to the students' community to adopt a "nation first" approach instead of being a part of the crisis.

Praising the world view of poet-philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, Modi asked Visva-Bharati students to help farmers and artisans of nearby vil-



lages find global markets. He said Guru Rabindranath Tagore had not envisioned the university as a typical educational institution but one that will help Indian culture realise its full potential globally.

He asked the institution's students to prepare a 25-point vision document for the next 25 years that will lead all education establishments in the country to emulate it and enhance India's image globally.

"A starting point could be that the students under mentorship of teachers of this inspirational institution begin helping farmers, artisans living in villages nearby to find global markets for their products. That will be a step towards building an 'Atmanirbhar' (self-reliant) Bharat," he said.

He said Bengal can become an example of how unity can boost national growth and progress. "Bengal is an inspiration for Ek Bharat-Shreshth Bharat campaign. Visva Bharati will

play a big role in the 21st-century knowledge economy, taking Indian knowledge and identity to every corner of the world. Students should prepare a vision document for the next 25 years about the

biggest goals of Visva Bharati in 2047," he said.

He told the gathering that with knowledge comes responsibility and the knowledge attained by the students was not theirs alone but a legacy for future generations.

"Your knowledge is not only yours but society's... it is the heritage of the country. Your knowledge and skill can make a nation proud or push society into the darkness of slander and ruin," he said.

Modi said some highly educated and skilled people were spreading terror and violence in the world, while others were toiling day and night to free people from a global epidemic like Covid-19.

"It is not about ideology but the mindset, whether it is

positive or negative," he said.

Visva-Bharati University, situated at Birbhum's Santiniketan was founded by Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore in 1921. It is one of the oldest Central Universities in the country.

In May 1951, Visva-Bharati University was declared to be a Central University and 'an Institution of National Importance' by an Act of Parliament. The PM is the Chancellor of this university.

More than 2,500 students received their degrees in the convocation.

Bengal Governor and Rector of Visva-Bharati, Jagdeep Dhankar, Union Education Minister Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank and VBU vice-chancellor Bidyut Chakraborty were present on this occasion.

India's next Mars probe likely to be an orbiter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

As NASA's Perseverance rover landed on Mars in the early hours of Friday to look for signs of past life, ISRO's next mission to the Red Planet is likely to be an orbiter.

Perseverance, the biggest and the most advanced rover ever sent by NASA, made its landing at Jezero Crater.

After its successful Mars Orbiter Mission's success, ISRO also decided to explore Venus. However, the immediate priorities of ISRO remain to be Chandrayaan-3 and Gaganyaan-2 both projects have been delayed due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown. Under Chandrayaan-3, ISRO will once again try to land a rover on the Moon. The mission was to be launched late last year. Chandrayaan-2 did not yield expected results as the lander hard-landed, dashing India's hopes to land on the Moon.

Mangalyaan or Mars Orbiter Mission was India's first endeavour to successfully reach another planet.

Rai holds high-level meeting on ways to curb Delhi's pollution

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai today held a high-level review meeting with officials of the Environment Department and the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) on measures for curbing pollution levels in Delhi.

Rai said a seven-member committee had been constituted and that the Arvind Kejriwal government was going to formulate a long-term action plan to control dust pollution.

On March 4, a round-table conference will be held to formulate an action plan on how to go ahead with an anti-pollution campaign from March to September.

Direct action will now be taken against the officials who are found negligent in the timely disposal of complaints regarding pollution. He said a team had been set up to monitor the Smog Tower project at Connaught Place, which will be completed by June. The PWD and the MCD have been instructed to expedite water spraying to reduce the current level of pollution in Delhi.

Rai said that officers of the department have been instructed to prepare action plans and also to work on a

Capital reports 158 new corona cases, 1 fatality

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

Delhi today logged 158 fresh Covid-19 cases and one fatality, even as the positivity rate rose to 0.26 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

These fresh cases were identified out of 60,836 tests conducted across the city. The cumulative number of Covid cases in Delhi rose to 6,37,603 now, the health bulletin said.

With one fresh Covid-linked death, the national capital's coronavirus toll climbed to 10,897.

The count of those patients who recovered during the past 24 hours was 157. The city's cumulative tally of such recoveries thus went up

long-term policy to keep environmental pollution in check.

"We have ordered the MCD and the PWD to increase the number of anti-smog guns and sprinkling tankers to control the spread of dust particles. The monitoring from the Green-War room needs to be strengthened and if the concerned complaint is not disposed of within the stipulated time-frame, action will be taken against the authorities," Rai said.

"Members of the Delhi Pollution Control Committee, IIT, DMRC and other concerned agencies related to construction are part of the (7-member) committee. Based on the suggestions of the committee, the government is going to prepare a long-term action plan to curb pollution from dust particles," he said.

"From October to February, there are several activities planned for controlling pollution. On 4 March, a meeting will be held in the Delhi Secretariat with various environment-related organisations and voluntary institutions, environmental experts and others. The government will work seriously throughout the year by preparing an action plan on the suggestions that come up in this meeting."

Addressing the annual press conference at Delhi Police headquarters, Shrivastava said there were apprehensions, which was why barricades were placed and the farmers were stopped on that day.

He said 152 people have been arrested so far in connection with the Republic Day violence.

Thousands of farmers protesting the Centre's three new farm laws had clashed with the police

I hope that attempts will be made to put an end to the atmosphere of violence so that the people of West Bengal can live in peace.

UNION MINISTER PIYUSH GOYAL

ON THE RECENT BOMB ATTACK ON A BENGAL MINISTER JAKIR HOSSAIN

Capital

R-Day violence not due to intel failure, says Delhi Police chief

Technology has been used extensively to investigate Northeast Delhi riots cases, asserts Shrivastava

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

Delhi Police commissioner S N Shrivastava today said the violence that broke out in the national capital on Republic Day was not due to intelligence failure.

He charged that the farmers protesting against the Centre's controversial agriculture law had betrayed the trust of the city police by not following pre-decided routes during the tractor parade in Delhi on 26 January.

Addressing the annual press conference at Delhi Police headquarters, Shrivastava said there were apprehensions, which was why barricades were placed and the farmers were stopped on that day.

He said 152 people have been arrested so far in connection with the Republic Day violence.

Thousands of farmers protesting the Centre's three new farm laws had clashed with the police



Delhi Police commissioner S N Shrivastava during his press conference in the Capital on Friday.

SUBRATA DUTTA

during their tractor parade.

Many of the protesters, driving tractors, reached the Red Fort and entered the monument. Some protesters even hoisted religious flags on its domes and a flagstaff at the ramparts, where the national flag is unfurled on Independence Day.

Over 500 police personnel were injured and one protester died on that day.

Replying to a question about the possibility of an intelligence

failure on 26 January, Shrivastava claimed that "there was no intelligence failure".

"We had been holding talks with them (farmers). We had permitted them to take out the tractor rally. As per the agreement, certain terms and conditions were laid down and they were given designated routes to take out their tractor parade.

"But they betrayed the trust of Delhi Police and resorted to violence. The police discharged

its duties very well," he claimed. He added that the farmer leaders have also responded to the notices served on them by the city police.

Referring to the devastating February 2020 communal riots in Northeast Delhi — the national capital's worst violence since the 1984 anti-Sikh riots — the Delhi Police chief said technology was used extensively to investigate over 750 cases related to it that led to the arrest of over 200 people.

Shrivastava said 755 FIRs were registered in connection with the Northeast Delhi riots, claiming that his force ensured a "free and fair" investigation.

"It is another matter that a number of city police personnel were alleged to have been hand in glove with the rioters in several cases of violence.

Communal violence had broken out in Northeast Delhi on 24 February last year after clashes between citizenship law supporters and its protesters spiralled, leaving at least 53

people dead and around 200 injured.

"You are aware of the riots which led to 53 deaths and 581 injuries. Riots reached its peak on February 24 and 25 last year. A total of 755 FIRs were registered and we made it a point that no one had a grievance that their complaint was not acknowledged," Shrivastava said.

He said three SITs were formed to investigate the cases. All the important cases (around 60) were transferred to the three SITs under the crime branch.

One of the cases was registered to unearth the conspiracy behind the riots, which was investigated by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police while the remaining cases were investigated by northeast district police, he said.

According to the police, overall 1,818 people have been arrested so far in 400 cases in connection with Northeast Delhi riots.

"For ensuring that the investigation is free and fair, use of technology was made and the evidences which are based on science and technology cannot be refuted," he said.

Elaborating on the use of technology, the Delhi Police chief said 231 accused were arrested on the basis of CCTV footage.

"Of them, 137 were identified through FRS (Facial Recognition System) when matched with criminal records and remaining 94 were through driving license photographs," Shrivastava said.

He said the investigation teams used video analytics and FRS to analyse CCTV footage to identify the accused, retrieved deleted data from electronic devices, used geo-location to ascertain the presence of the accused and drone mapping for crime scene reconstruction.

The use of DNA fingerprinting, e-Vahan database, facial recognition, fund flow analysis and forensic teams comprising physical, chemical, biological and ballistic analysis of videos and photographs through open sources were also used to investigate the cases, he added.

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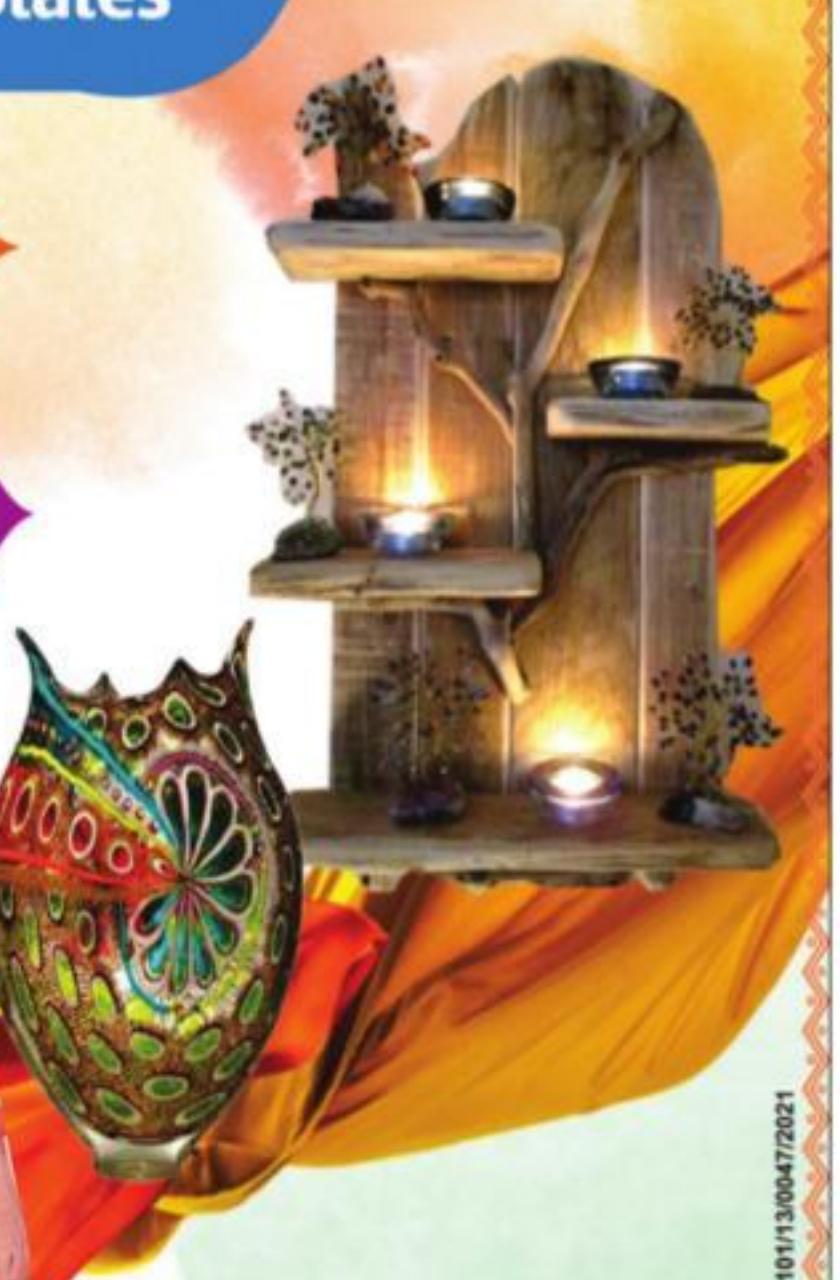
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Ministry of Minority Affairs
Government of India

#Vocal4Local

CISF man saves life of metro commuter

NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

A CISF jawan saved the life of a 45-year-old man, who fell unconscious at a Delhi metro station, by performing the CPR medical procedure on him. The incident took place at the Indraprastha station around 7:40 pm on Thursday. The man fell unconscious at

the platform just after getting off a train (plying between Dwarka-Noida) and CISF constable Anil Gunja noticed this as he was on CCTV feed-monitoring duty. Gunja immediately performed the cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) medical procedure on the passenger, following which he regained consciousness.

PTI

DAVP 27/01/2021/300472021



We have been discussing with the CM. We have to analyse if trend continues in Maharashtra. Then we will also have to become strict as far as Goa as a state is concerned

VISHWAJIT RANE
GOA HEALTH MINISTER

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2021

Amarinder govt to unveil Punjab budget on 8 March

The Punjab Assembly's Budget Session will commence from 1 March and will continue till 10 March

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 19 FEBRUARY

The Amarinder Singh-led Congress government in Punjab plans to unveil its budget for the state for 2021-22 on 8 March.

A Cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh, on Friday approved summoning of the 14th Session (Budget Session) of the 15th Punjab Assembly from 1 March to 10 March and recommended it to Governor VP Singh Badnore, who is authorised to officially summon the State Legislature as per Article 174(1) of the Constitution.

An official spokesperson said after the Cabinet meeting that the CM has been authorised to approve the Governor's address for 14th Session of the 15th Punjab Assembly.

Besides the Punjab budget estimates for the next fiscal, the upcoming Assembly session will see the presentation of the report of the Comptroller and Auditor



General of India for the year 2018-19 (civil, commercial) and financial accounts of the Government of Punjab for the year 2019-20, as well as Appropriation Accounts for the year 2019-20. Supplementary demands for grants for the year 2020-21 and Appropriation Bill on supplementary demands for grants for the year 2020-21 will also be

laid on the table of the House. Meanwhile, the Punjab government has approved special provisions in the rules to provide government jobs to one of the family members of each of the four minors killed in the Mau Mandi bomb blast of 31 January, 2017.

The decision was taken on

Friday by the Council of Ministers at a meeting chaired by the CM.

It was decided at the Cabinet meeting to grant special provision to provide jobs, on compassionate grounds, as per the educational qualifications of one member each of the families of the deceased, Japsimaran Singh (15), Sourav Singla (14), Ankush (11) and Ripandeep Singh (9).

The existing rules did not provide for employment in state service on compassionate grounds for minor deceased. With the Cabinet decision today, the relevant rules/policy have been relaxed to provide jobs to a member each as per their educational qualification in Bathinda district or adjoining districts against direct quota vacant posts as a special case (without treating it as a precedent).

The jobs provided by the state government are in addition to the financial grant of Rs five lakh each to the families of each of the deceased persons. The injured have got Rs 50,000/- each from the Chief Minister's Relief fund.

Seven persons were killed and 13 injured in the bomb blast incident at Mau Mandi in Bathinda district.

The state government had earlier provided government jobs to the next of kin of two deceased, Harpal Singh and Ashok Kumar Babu Ram, as per the existing policy, since both were the breadwinners of their families.

HP Governor meets Independent India's 'first voter' in Kinnar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 19 FEBRUARY

Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatraya during his visit to tribal district Kinnar met the "first voter" of Independent India, 103 years old Shayam Saran Negi, at Circuit House Kalpa.

The Governor thanked Negi for spreading awareness amongst voters and his contribution in strengthening the democracy.

He honoured Negi and said that even at this age he is an active citizen, which is a motivation for others.

Negi welcomed the Governor on the occasion and said that he is a fan of the Prime



Minister and the Central government was performing well under his leadership.

Later, the Governor performed puja in the ancient temple of Kalpa and took a tour of apple orchards.

He also interacted with the local people and listened to their grievances.

HP CM visits deceased Cong leader's family for condolences

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 19 FEBRUARY

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur at Fatehpur in Kangra district to express his condolences.

Pathania was MLA from Fatehpur in the present Assembly.

The chief minister prayed to the Almighty to give peace to the departed soul and

strength to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss.

Industries Minister Bikram Singh, Forest Minister Rakesh Pathania, former MP Kripal Parmar and other prominent persons were also present on the occasion.

Haryana to connect 600 health centres to e-Upchar system



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 19 FEBRUARY

Haryana health minister, Anil Vij, on Friday said that in order to provide excellent health facilities to the people in rural areas, about 600 health centres, including primary health centres, of the state will be connected to the e-Upchar system.

In the review meeting of the

concerned department today, the minister directed the concerned officers to soon develop a mobile app to help connect with this system, so that any person can take a doctor's appointment while sitting at home.

He said that along with this, it should be ensured that the test reports of patients are sent online or through SMS. Apart from this, records

of medicines and tests advised to patients by the doctor should also be made available online, he added.

Vij said at present, the facility of e-Upchar is available in 56 health centres of the state including 22 district hospitals, eight sub-district hospitals, 11 community health centres, 10 primary health centres, one AYUSH medical college and three medical colleges.

HP Agri varsity reaches out to farmers in villages

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 19 FEBRUARY

CSK Himachal Pradesh Agricultural University, Palampur, has started a new tradition in its 42 years history by organising a Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting in a village among farmers.

Vice-Chancellor Professor HK Chaudhary sat on the ground to chair SAC of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KV), Berthi (Bilaspur) at Fagog village in the Jandhuta block in the house of progressive farmer Bharat Bhushan on Thursday.

He said that scientists can come close to the hearts of farmers by reaching out to them on their farms and not sitting pretty in their offices.

The Vice Chancellor said that to commemorate Golden Jubilee of HP statehood, farmer-scientist interactions have been started in villages from 18 February and it was his dream to discuss all farmer issues sitting with farmers in



their farms or homes. He was committed to provide all technological assistance to each and every farmer of the state.

Prof Chaudhary elaborated on the new initiatives where farmers have become a centre of all plans in his Uni-

versity. He also inaugurated an exhibition of farm produce by the local farmers. Prof Chaudhary also honoured some progressive farmers and called them brand ambassadors of the University for spreading useful farm

knowledge among other farmers of their area.

Director, Agricultural Technology Application Research Institute of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research at Ludhiana Dr. Rajbir Singh assured full technical and

financial support for the transfer of technology among farmers at district level.

Director of Extension Education, Dr Madhumeet Singh told that during Golden Jubilee of statehood, more than 3000 farmers will be trained by the University at Palampur and all KVs. He also asked the farmers to maintain a live link with the scientists and farm officers for timely farm inputs and advice.

Director of Research Dr DK Vatsa, asked farmers to adopt University developed crop varieties and technologies. Dean, College of Agriculture, Dr RK Kataria underlined the importance of farm education.

Programme Coordinator, Dr Suman Kumar detailed about the activities of his KVK and proposed action plan for the ensuing crop seasons. Progressive farmers and officers from the state departments of agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, fishery, banks, etc also actively participated in the meeting.

HP period basis SMC teachers press for contract policy

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 19 FEBRUARY

A delegation of Period Basis SMC (School Management Committee) Teachers Association led by its President Manoj Rongta called on Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur at Dharamshala in Kangra district on Friday and urged him to make a provision of preparing a contract policy for them like the PTA (Parents Teachers Association) in the budget for the year 2021-22.

The chief minister said all the 2555 SMC teachers were rendering a commendable service by imparting quality education to students of the state, particularly in remote and tough areas of the state.

Thakur assured the delegation that the state government would sympathetically consider their demands.

The Association also presented a cheque of Rs 5,55,000



to the Chief Minister as a contribution towards the Chief Minister Relief Fund on the occasion.

The chief minister thanked

the Association for their contribution and said that it would go a long way in providing relief to the people at the time of distress. Later, another delegation of State Home Guards Welfare Association led by its President Joginder Chauhan and Senior Vice President Ashok Kumar Rangra also called on

The chief minister said all the 2555 SMC teachers were rendering a commendable service by imparting quality education to students of the state, particularly in remote and tough areas of the state.

The Chief Minister and urged his to prepare a proper Policy for volunteers of the Home Guards.

The chief minister assured the delegation for sympathetic consideration of their demands. Forest Minister Rakesh Pathania, Chairman State Wool Federation Trilok Kapoor, Chairman of Association Rajesh Bharat, Vice President Pawan Kumar Negi, General Secretary Pitamber Shastri and other office bearers were present on the occasion.

BBMB holds 25th Men & Women Inter CPSU Tournament

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 19 FEBRUARY

The 25th Men and Women Inter CPSU (Central Public Sector Undertaking) Tournament organised by Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) is going on at Indoor Stadium, BBMB, Nangal Township under the aegis of Central Power Sports Control Board.

The tournament was virtually inaugurated by the Union minister for power and new and renewable energy, RK Singh on Thursday from New Delhi in the presence of BBMB chairman, Sanjay Srivastava.

The minister lauded the efforts of BBMB for conducting the tournament during Covid-19 pandemic and said the sports are very important for mental and physical



growth and also can drastically improve the team work.

Singh also appealed to organizers and players to follow all necessary precautions to avoid infection of Coronaviru

s. He further announced increase in prize money to all team members and kit

allowance.

The BBMB chairman Sri-vastava said the board will organise sports events under the aegis of Power Control Board for next two years and will take further steps to enhance the importance of sports amongst all CPSU employees.

3-week annual garden tourism festival begins in Delhi

IANS
NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

The Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC) along with Delhi government's Tourism Department Friday kicked off the annual garden tourism festival at the Garden of Five Senses located near Saket in south Delhi. This annual flower show that used to conclude within one week has been extended to three weeks this year.

The festival would be celebrated with a new theme -- 'Colours of Nature' -- with the objective to create awareness



such as Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), North Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Central Public Works Department (CPWD), North-

ern Railways and many more agencies would be participating in the event.

Another member of the organising committee said, "The festival will showcase a

variety of plants and flowers ranging from dahlia, hanging baskets, foliage plants, cactus, succulents, bonsai plants of different species, bougainvillea, floral animal and tray garden to vegetable flowers in earthware vases and a lot more, including cultural events."

The festival would remain open for the general public from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays and from 11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on weekends. Delhi Tourism would provide e-rickshaws and other modes of transport to take the visitors from the Saket Metro station to the Garden of Five Senses.

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures

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- JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing



What makes this attack even more reprehensible is that policemen were unarmed & shot in the back. Senseless & cowardly at the same time

FORMER J&K CHIEF MINISTER OMAR ABDULLAH

CONDDEMNING THE KILLING OF POLICEMEN IN SRINAGAR BY TERRORIST

J&K: Terrorist guns down cops

Another policeman, three Al-Badr terrorists killed in encounters

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, 19 FEBRUARY

Three policemen were killed and one injured in two separate incidents of terrorism in the Kashmir Valley on Friday, while three terrorists of Al-Badr outfit were eliminated in another encounter in south Kashmir's Shopian district.

The Valley witnessed three incidents of terrorism back to back within hours after the group of 24 foreign envoys completed their two days visit and returned to Delhi from Jammu and Kashmir.

Two unarmed policemen, Mohammad Yusuf and



Relatives and senior police officers carry the coffin of slain policeman Suhail Ahmad during a wreath laying ceremony at the District Police Lines in Srinagar on Friday. ■ SNS

Bagdum area of Shopian. Two AK rifles and other arms and ammunition were recovered from the encounter spot. The encounter began on Thursday night after the security forces cordoned the area following inputs about the hiding terrorists.

Tributes were paid to the martyred policemen in Srinagar's police lines where wreath ceremony was held. The IGP (Kashmir) and IGP of CRPF were among those present in the ceremony.

Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha, paying tributes to the slain

Suhail Ahmad, died when a terrorist suddenly appeared in the crowded Bagdum area of Barzulla on the airport road and opened fire at them, injuring the policemen critically. Both received bullets in the back. The terrorist escaped from the spot after firing several gun shots. A video of the attack went viral on social media.

IGP (Kashmir) Vijay Kumar said that the critically injured policemen were rushed to the hospital where they succumbed to injuries. The area has been cordoned by the Army, CRPF and police and search launched for the terrorist who has been identified.

In a separate encounter in the Beerwah locality of Budgam district, a special police officer (SPO) Mohammad Altaf was killed and constable Manzoor Ahmad injured. The two trapped terrorists managed to escape but a combing operation has been launched in the area.

The IGP said that three terrorists of Al-Badr were killed in an encounter in the

policemen, said such cowardly attacks are being carried out to vitiate the peaceful atmosphere and assured that the perpetrators will be brought to justice.

Former chief ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti also condemned the killing of policemen. Omar tweeted; "What makes this attack even more reprehensible is that policemen Mohammad Yusuf and Suhail Ahmad were unarmed & shot in the back. Senseless & cowardly at the same time".

PDP president Mehbooba condemned the attack saying the cycle of violence only begets misery.

"Condemn the killing of two policemen in the Baghmat attack. My heart goes out to their families & loved ones. This cycle of violence serves no cause & begets only misery," she tweeted.

People's Conference led by Sajad Lone also condemned the killing of the policemen. "We strongly condemn the killing of two policemen in a dastardly and savage act of senseless violence

at Baghmat today. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of Suhail Ahmad and Mohd Yusuf in this hour of grief," the party said. Local leaders of the BJP and the Congress also condemned the killings.

BJP leader Altaf Thakur termed the attack an act of cowardice. "There is no place for such cowardly acts and the attackers must be brought to book," he said.

Giving details of the encounters, the IGP said that joint teams of Army, CRPF and J&K Police were involved in these encounters during which opportunity was given to the terrorists to surrender. The two terrorists, a Pakistani and a local, managed to escape from Budgam but the security forces were following the blood trail of a terrorist injured during the encounter.

The IGP said that three terrorists involved in the killing of a restaurant owner near the Dal Lake on 17 February have been arrested and were being interrogated. It is suspected that they killed the restaurant owner belonging to Jammu with the intention to disturb communal harmony in the UT.

UP: Two teen girls buried in Unnao village under heavy security blanket

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
UNNAO (UP), 19 FEBRUARY



Officials investigate at the site where bodies of two minor Dalit girls were found in a field and another in critical condition on Wednesday evening in Unnao district on Friday.

police said. With regard to performing the last rites, Unnao District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar said talks were held on Thursday with the deceased girls' family, who were not willing to take it up immediately as they were waiting for their son to arrive from another city and had also cited that the funeral can not be done as it was already sunset.

The DM claimed that despite the presence of some outsiders, there was peace in the village. The district unit president of BJP Raj Kishore Rawat and local MLA Anil Singh were present during the funeral on Friday. The security covered about one kilometre on the four paths reaching the village with a magistrate-level official posted at every barricade to check people.

The DM refuted reports of any pressure being exerted on the family and said that the last rites were performed on Friday as per the wishes of the family. When asked if the family has made any demand, the DM said no letter has been given by the family to the administration and state government. However, some out-

PM to visit Assam on 22 February

GUWAHATI, 19 FEBRUARY

As the next legislative assembly elections are knocking at the door for Assam, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is visiting Silapahar in Dhemaji locality on 22 February where he is expected to inaugurate several development schemes and also address a public rally.

State chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal visited the venue to take stock of preparations for the program. Accompanied by Parliamentarian Pradan Barua, legislators Bhupan Pegu and Ranuj Pegu, state police chief Bhaskariyoti Mahanta, Sonowal directed the concerned officials to ensure completion of preparation work on time.

Sonowal revealed that PM will inaugurate Dhemaji Engineering College, construction of an engineering college at Sualkuchi near Guwahati. It will be Modi's third visit to poll-bound Assam within this year, where the assembly poll-dates are supposed to be announced by the end of February. ■ SNS

OVER LOADED



Activists of Shiv Sena Dogra Front raise slogans during a protest against the hike in fuel and LPG prices, in Jammu on Friday. ■ IANS

Opp MLAs turn up at Bihar Assembly with ovens, firewood to protest fuel price hike

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
PATNA, 19 FEBRUARY

Opposition legislators in Bihar turned to some interesting ideas to protest the shooting inflation in the country as the month-long budget session of the state assembly began today.

While some came with clay-made ovens, others reached the assembly with firewood in hand to cook food, creating an interesting scene in the assembly premises.

Everyone got amused when Congress legislator Pratima Kumari reached the assembly with an earthen oven in hand and tried to cook food right in the assembly premises by using fuelwoods which were brought by another Congress legislator Shakeel Ahmed. Although she didn't light the fire but her gesture showed the common cooking methods in every kitchen in the countryside.

The continuing hike in price of LPG cylinders has posed serious problem before the common men. They have no any option rather than



people policies.

RJD legislator Mukesh Raushan, on the other hand, cycled his way to the state assembly to register his protest over the hike in prices of petroleum products which have reached near Rs 100. He said the common men were left with no other option than riding bicycles to reach their destination as buying petroleum products had gone beyond their reach.

The state strangely registered a 10.5 percent growth rate in the last fiscal despite the pandemic, according to the Bihar Economic Survey 2020-21 which was tabled in the state assembly today.

Guj HC okays civic vote counting

AHMEDABAD, 19 FEBRUARY

Ignoring time-tested tradition of counting the votes only after all rounds of polling are over, the Gujarat High Court today rejected a petition challenging the State Election Commission's decision to count the votes of six municipal corporations even before the polling for the municipalities, taluka and district panchayats.

Polling for six municipal corporations is due on Sunday 21 February while voting for the other smaller local civic bodies are due after a week on 28 February. As per tradition, counting of votes for the municipal elections should be taken up only after polling for the other civic bodies are over. But the Gujarat State Election Commission has this time scheduled the counting of municipal corporation polls on 23 February, five days before polling for other levels of local bodies on 28 February.

Apprehending that results of the six big city elections may adversely influence the voting pattern in the municipalities and taluka and district panchayats, the state Congress had challenged the SEC decision on counting the urban votes five days before the polling for the smaller civic bodies.

Banking on earlier SC verdicts favouring single day counting for multiple phase polling, the Congress is planning to challenge the High Court order in the apex court.

Relief operation underway in Chamoli

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, 19 FEBRUARY

The Chamoli district administration has started disbursing ex-gratia amount to affected families of the flash flood. So far 26 families, who lost their family members in the disaster, and eleven injured persons, have received the ex-gratia amount.

Search and rescue operation is going on in the flash flood hit area since 7 February. The Tapovan tunnel still remains the focal point of the operation. After facing a challenging situation due to debris, slush and boulders, now water logged inside is troubling the rescuers. Submersible slush removing pumps are being used to remove the water.



Swords were used in the battles fought during Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's times but in the fight against the Covid, face mask is the only shield.

MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER UDDHAV THACKERAY
WHILE PAYING HOMAGE TO SHIVAJI MAHARAJ ON HIS BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2021

05

Madhukar's kin held in lawyer couple death case

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD, 19 FEBRUARY

Telangana police made their fourth arrest today in connection with the murder of a lawyer couple in Peddapalli district taking into custody a relative of former TRS MLA Putta Madhukar for supplying the murder weapons and the vehicle used by the assailants.

The couple, Gutta Vaman Rao and his wife PV Nagmani were waylaid by the killers on Wednesday while enroute to Hyderabad from Manthani court and the police had ini-

The couple, Gutta Vaman Rao and his wife PV Nagmani were waylaid by the killers on Wednesday while enroute to Hyderabad from Manthani court and the police had initially arrested three people including Kunta Srinivas, TRS leader of Manthani unit.

tially arrested three people including Kunta Srinivas, TRS leader of Manthani unit.

Police said Bittu Sriniv was taken into custody after his name cropped in the investigation indicating that he had supplied the sickles that were used in the ghastly killing of the lawyer couple two days ago.

On the day of murder Kunta Srinivas had attended a programme organised to celebrate the birthday of chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao along with the former TRS MLA and current Zilla Parishad chairman of Peddapalli Putta Madhukar.

They also attended a religious programme.

The fourth accused Bittu Sriniv, a nephew of the former MLA heads a charitable trust established by Putta Madhukar.

The SUV in which Kunta Srinivas and Chirajeeti had waylaid their victims belonged to Bittu Sriniv and the duo had rammed the vehicle into the car in which Vaman Rao and his wife were travelling.

After the fatal attack the two accused drove off and disposed their blood stained clothes and murder weapons in the Sundila barrage before going towards Maharashtra from where they were picked up by police.

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

COURT NOTICE (Uo 5 Rule 20 CPC)

In the Court of Ms. Sumitra Kadian Civil Judge (Junior Division), Gurugram MS Divyan Estate And Properties Pvt. Ltd. Vs.

Sudhir Budhraja

CNR No. HRGP02-001888-2020

Next Date: 09-04-2021

Publication Issued to:

1. Sudhir Budhraja, S/o Sh. Dinesh Nath Budhraja, 2,Smti Aarti Budhraja W/o Sh. Sudhir Budhraja S/o Sh. Sudhir Budhraja All Residents House, N.R. S-525, New Rajendra Nagar, New Delhi All also at R/o-A-1, IVF Apartment, Ground Floor, Sushant Lok-1, Gurugram Haryana. In above titled case, the defendant(s)/respondent(s) could not be served. It is ordered that defendant (s)/respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 09-04-2021 at 10:00 am. For details logon to https://highcourtcldg.gov.in/7rs-district_notice&district/gurugram Dated, this day of 18.02.2021.

Civil Judge (Junior Division) Gurugram

COURT NOTICE (Uo 5 Rule 20 CPC)

IN THE COURT OF DR. YASHKA Additional District and Sessions Judge, Gurugram MACP/800/2018 CNR No. DHE/01-18481-2021

Next Date: 05-04-2021

Sakeel, s/o Idu through his wife and his Guardian Smt. Farzana, w/o Sakeel, r/o Village - Jaiwant, Tehsil - Puneha, District - Nuh, Haryana, Pin Code -122500.

Versus

Aash Mohd. etc.

Publication Issued to:

Mohd. Aash, s/o Phal. H. No. 753, Sector-21, Pocket-2, Gurugram, H. No. 665, Village - Lath, Tehsil - Gohana, District - Sonipat, Pin Code - 131002.

In above titled case, the defendant(s)/respondent(s) could not be served. It is ordered that defendant(s)/respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 05-04-2021 at 10:00 am.

For details logon to https://highcourtcldg.gov.in/7rs-district_notice&district/gurugram.

Dated, this day of 10-02-2021.

Additional District and Sessions Judge, Gurugram

Seal of the Court

IN THE COURT OF MS. PREETI PAREWA AC/CC/ARC Room No. 03, Patiala House Courts, New Delhi Petition No. SC-36/2020 Raj Kumar Chopra Versus State. (Petitioner) For succession certificate under Indian Succession Act, 1925.

To. All concerned.

Whereas in the abovenoted petition, the applicant/petitioner has applied for Succession Certificate to the Hon'ble Court Under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 in respect of the debt and securities any person having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased Late Om Prakash Chopra, s/o Bhagwan Das Chopra, died on Dt. 01-01-2019 at 11, Naraina Vihar, New Delhi-110028. Are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned Court to be standing in the name of deceased.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court this 12-02-2021.

ACJ/CC/ARC Patiala House Courts New Delhi Seal of the Court

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ACJ/CC/ARC Pat

IT works

The jaw-dropping V-shaped recovery from the Covid-19 induced lows of the first quarter of the current financial year is showing no signs of slowing down. Small and medium enterprises are reporting a steady increase in demand and it is expected to increase exponentially as supply-side disruptions ease. Across the board, corporates have reported the best quarterly earnings in nearly 15 years in Q3 2020-21. The Reserve Bank of India has ensured liquidity, so the stock market is booming. Even the month-on-month macro-economic data is showing a steady improvement, and with the government set for a massive infrastructure push, optimism is in the air. But before optimism turns into over-enthusiasm it needs underlining that while India seems to have embarked on a multi-year virtuous growth cycle, the country's economic transformation if it is to come to pass will expressly not be akin to China's farm to factory great leap forward. Economists have pointed out that the India story is more likely to be powered by a shift from farm to services - whether manual or those requiring specialised skills sets. Underlying all of the above, though, is the word of the year as far as the economy is concerned: Digitisation.

Covid-19 has resulted in what was expected to come to pass by 2030, effectively having to be implemented a decade ahead of the timeline. Proof, if any were needed, is available in the mega-deals across all verticals closed by large, small, and mid-cap IT firms in both the listed and unlisted space, not to mention the stratospheric spike in valuations being accorded to these companies given the opportunities coming their way as businesses seek their services to re-engineer and re-boot themselves. As for the IT sector itself, experts say, the current four million-strong work force is likely to hit the 10-million mark within the next two-three years as opposed to earlier projections of about a decade. It will make the IT sector one of the largest employment-generators in the country. Already, many companies have started hiring aggressively. There is also a clear change in the structure of these tech firms. Most, if not all, are moving from a pyramidal to what's called an Eiffel Tower organisational structure which means a large base of junior employees with specific domain knowledge, virtually no middle management, and a lean leadership team at the top. This is good news for India's young demographic provided it is skilled right.

Crucially, as work-from-home (WFH) becomes the accepted norm, IT companies have been among the first to cut establishment and related costs. But WFH provides an even bigger opportunity - to end the increasing concentration of economic activity, particularly the tech economy, in a few cyber hubs such as Gurgaon, Bangalore, and Hyderabad. Whether it was techies working in big firms or digital entrepreneurs looking to launch start-ups, they all seemingly had to be in these megacities despite rocketing housing costs, terrible pollution, being quarantined in tight places, and generally suffering a poor quality of life. Indian IT needs to emulate the American tech sector where over the past year many coastal techies have been relocating to heartland states as working remotely is proving just as effective. It's time to get the mountain to Mohamad.

Police in spotlight

It is no reflection on the professionalism of Kolkata's new Police Commissioner that the force has egg dripping down its face with two ugly developments since February 1, the day on which Mr Soumen Mitra assumed charge. First, policemen can't be expected to run the other way when they have to counteract the rampant hurling of stones by the defiant Leftist student activists, coupled with the removal of barricades that were put up quite obviously to stall the Nabanna Abhiyan. This is one of the basics that the Left leadership ought to have been aware of when it called a 12-hour Bangla bandh and over which it has now sought a judicial probe. The lathicharge is alleged to have killed a DYFI activist, Maidul Islam Middah; the "unabated offensive" with batons is said to have led to kidney failure eventually causing death. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was remarkably prompt while visiting Middah's family; she has even promised compensation and a job for the next of kin. The plot thickens with the police filing cases against 250 young activists of the Left parties and their leaders. While it shall not be easy to come up with an alibi on the death of Middah, still less to cite cardiac failure, it must just as fairly be admitted that Left leaders should not have allowed matters to reach such a head. Violence has no place in the democratic engagement. While the police is alleged to have gone on overdrive at Dorina Crossing, they were left red-faced when a group of para teachers waded across the historical Tolly's Nullah or Adi Ganga, if you will, that skirts the southern fringes of the city, including the residence of the Chief Minister, there to hand over a memorandum to Miss Banerjee to buttress their demand for timely increments and higher pay. Tuesday's adventurism has brought into focus the imperative of tightened vigil in a high-security zone. As it turned out, even the security personnel, who form a cordon sanitaire around the Chief Minister's home, were quite obviously taken unawares. How could the "intruders" step into the water unnoticed? It required the Police Commissioner and a bevy of senior officers to visit the area and ensure that security was beefed up after the arrest of five people. The question that has virtually stumped Lalbazar, the Divisional Commissioner's office, and also of course Bhowanipore police station is how the para teachers could hoodwink the police on duty around the Chief Minister's residence and the Alipore Correctional Home. As Mr Mitra steps into his new job, there are several aspects of policing he will have to look into.

Bully Pulpit

Many uncompromising votaries of free speech who swear by the US Constitution's First Amendment (and who may not have been Trump supporters) saw ominous portents of corporations acting as 'super governments', moral police, ombudsmen, self-styled censor boards, etc.



Responsible statements and press releases of authorities are typically accompanied by background preparation and vetting of facts; however, the instantaneous in-your-hand platforms of social media are given to immediate and whimsical reactions of unfiltered opinions that may not be factual or even appropriate. Those not bound by the necessities of facts or with disdain for the rigour of veracity invoke these platforms to stitch their own narratives. This makes the domain especially vulnerable in the hands of those whose opinions and 'facts' bear serious national or societal consequences, as presence of forethought is imperative, especially for them.

However, many in such positions of authority, display 'gunslinger' attitudes to vent their political or societal expressions, thereby stoking dangerous passions. The immediacy and reach of the format empower such users to morph a powerful tool of communication, into a veritable Bully Pulpit.

Increasingly these social media platforms are being hauled up for hosting content that is perceived to be malicious, incendiary or containing hate-filled agendas. Policing the realm is not easy as it entails unmanageable traffic e.g. Twitter in 2020 averaged around 6,000 tweets per second, 500 million per day and an estimated 200 billion tweets in the full year!

The challenge gets real when a sitting President of the United States with 88 million followers tweets incendiary and provocative remarks - the entire logic of free speech and enlightened debate gets compromised, not due to contrarian or unpalatable opinions, but due to untruths and dangerously inciting messaging. Following the Capitol Hill incident, Twitter decided to 'de-platform' Donald Trump, initially temporarily and later permanently. The Twitter Chief Executive

echoed the double-edged challenges of ensuring free speech and simultaneously preventing its misuse, when he said, "this was the right decision for Twitter. We faced an extraordinary untenable circumstance, forcing us to focus all of our action on public safety" and added, "I do not celebrate or feel pride in our having to ban @realDonaldTrump because a ban is a failure to promote healthy conversation". Trump had clearly misused the platform to provoke and 'dog-whistle' his supporters with malintention, which went beyond Twitter's stated objective of 'a free and global conversation'. Ironically the unprecedented act of banning a President has only since raised further questions about biases, double-standards and lack of accountability.

Sometimes commercial considerations override the need for better judgement of responsible behaviour from profit-driven corporations who often give the long rope to the powers-that-be and to certain influencers of scale. The fallout of Trump clamping was immediate as Twitter shares fell by 4 per cent within hours and many partisan users threatened quitting the platform.

Besides, many uncompromising votaries of free speech who swear by the US Constitution's First Amendment (and who may not have been Trump supporters) saw ominous portents of corporations acting as 'super governments', moral police, ombudsmen, self-styled censor boards etc.

Ironically the Chief Executive himself admitted that it, "sets a precedent I feel is dangerous: the power an individual or corpora-

tion has over a part of the global conversation". Indeed, the power of the individual in this specific case had got checkmated; however, the answer to the possibilities of unbridled power of the corporation remains unanswered. The solution sought by many who felt unfairly done-in by the actions of Twitter was to shift to alternative platforms. Such partisan alternatives that are amenable to accommodating vitriol of Trump apologists is hardly the solution towards an enabling environment of informed, reasonable and non-violent exchange of communication.

India's polarised environment too is given to inflammatory tendencies, misuse and falsifications that can infuriate or assuage the various sections of society, simultaneously.

Questions about the neutrality, fairness and consistency of the various platforms have resonated for long, with all sides accusing the other of getting treated with kid gloves. Even the Government of India joined the chorus by accusing some on the platform of, "motivated campaign to abuse, inflame and create tension in society on unsubstantiated grounds".

Corporations must comply with the law of the land and cannot posit their own internal guidelines and interpretations to overrule national laws. Certain malicious content was taken down and others, not so. The truth of the situation is often more complex than apparent, as there are mutual troll armies that can unleash a barrage of counter-campaign of information and misinformation at the drop of a hat.

In such a situation, only con-

sistency of action and approach by a corporation can address the long-term concerns. Willful exemptions given to some high-and-mighty, be it in politics or society as valued drivers of traffic on the platform, have led to much suspicion of intent. Corporations seek to curry favour and that is often their ultimate undoing, as in the case of Trump. The fact that the said corporation tolerated Trump's multiple misdemeanours till the very last two weeks of his Presidency raised eyebrows. The infamous dealings of Nazi Germany and the IBM corporation is another historical example of the hazards of bending rules and purported values to suit commercial agendas. Only if accusations of 'selectivity' can be perceptibly addressed by a transparent, formulaic and ruthlessly enforced means of auto-banning certain types of content will the issues of personal/corporate bias abate.

However, the opaque nature of the backroom operations of these corporations have ended up creating shadowy surveillance systems and censorship controls that inherently militate against the avowed principles of transparency. Such unaddressed concerns and erratic conduct by corporations has opened space for vested individuals/entities to accuse the platform of selectivity; whenever the onboarded content has not suited their respective agenda.

Both society and the corporations feed into each other's weaknesses and short-termism, and only cry foul when tables turn, exposing the rot that is prevalent on both sides. The ball is in the court of the corporations to walk the talk of their stated mission statements ruthlessly and fearlessly.

Only then will they stand the test of time and accusations. Else, the Bully Pulpits could just move from one branded platform to the other, with the same level of dissonance and misuse.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES

Key partnership

Seoul's top national security officials agreed during their meeting last week to step up efforts to improve South Korea-Japan relations that have long been strained by disputes over the history of the two countries. Their agreement follows President Moon Jae-in's suggestion last month that his government would handle pending issues with Tokyo in a more flexible manner to forge a forward-looking bilateral partnership.

Ties between the two nations have sunk to one of its lowest ebbs over issues stemming from Japan's 1910-45 colonization of the peninsula, which have spilled over to the economic and military realms in recent years. In the eyes of critics, the Moon administration was negligent in seeking to find diplomatic solutions to historical discord with Tokyo, letting them get complicated by court rulings here. Some of Moon's associates and ruling party lawmakers appeared to attempt to fuel anti-Japanese sentiment in a bid to rally voters ahead of last April's legislative elections.

Seoul's professed shift in its approach to the frayed ties with Tokyo seems prompted partly by Washington's renewed push to strengthen trilateral cooperation with its two key Asian allies to counter nuclear threats from North Korea and keep a rising China in check. US President Joe Biden's administration has named the North as one of the most serious challenges facing the US, while calling China as its largest strategic competitor in the region and world.

In phone talks with his South Korean counterpart Chung Eui-yong

The Korea Herald

on Friday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken stressed the importance of continued cooperation among the US, South Korea and Japan, while pledging full partnership to strengthen the Washington-Seoul alliance.

Seoul appears concerned that estranged ties with Tokyo would hamper smooth consultations with Washington on how to deal with Pyongyang. The Biden administration has said it will closely work with South Korea, Japan and other allies in choosing the best tools to be used against the North through a thorough review of policy approaches to the recalcitrant regime. This stance contrasts with Biden's predecessor Donald Trump's pursuit of a deal with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un on the totalitarian state's denuclearization. Tokyo was sidelined from the process of Trump-Kim talks, which were initially brokered by the Moon administration. North Korea has refused to discuss its denuclearization since the second summit between Trump and Kim in Hanoi in 2019 ended with no deal due to differences over the scope of measures to be taken by Pyongyang to get a significant sanctions relief from Washington.

In a reflection of their wishful thinking, Moon and his aides have expressed hope the Biden administration will start from Trump's legacy to reach an agreement with the North, which is needed to carry forward their peace agenda for the peninsula. It has yet to be seen how serious the Moon administration will be in turning its rhetoric on improving ties with Tokyo into substantial action.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Implications of acquittal

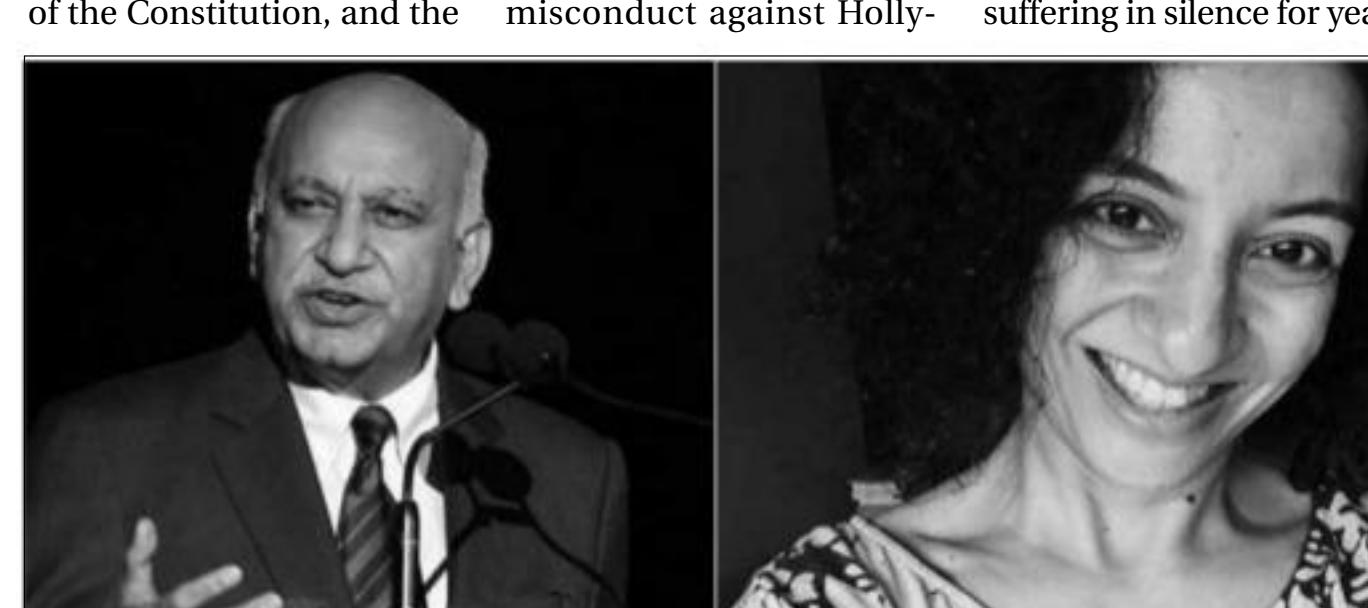
SIR, This refers to yesterday's report "#MeToo: Ramani acquitted". A Delhi court's order acquitting journalist Priya Ramani in a defamation case filed by former Union Minister MJ Akbar, whom she had named and shamed in a tweet in October 2018, will undoubtedly have far-reaching implications for countless victims of sexual misconduct, especially at the workplace. The court has rightly observed that the 'right to reputation' cannot be protected at the cost of the right to life and dignity of a woman, guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution, and the

right to equality and equal protection before the law, enshrined in Article 14. Ironically, it was the victim, not the perpetrator, who was made to stand up in the court as an accused in this high-profile case.

The verdict is expected to embolden many other women to come forward and identify predators who misuse their positions of power to leave them scared and scarred for life. It has given fresh impetus to the #MeToo movement, which seemed to be losing momentum of late. It brings recall that the allegations of sexual misconduct against Holly-

wood movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, levelled by no less than 80 women, had unleashed the worldwide #MeToo storm in October 2017. In February-March last year, Weinstein was convicted and sentenced to 23 years in prison for sexually assaulting two women.

The Delhi court's observation that a woman has the right to put forward her grievances before any platform of her choice even after decades is also of great import. It's the fear of infamy, besides retaliation from the influential offender, that forces many victims to keep suffering in silence for years.



Ms Priya's acquittal, however, is only half the battle won. The victory will be conclusive only when all the Harvey Weinsteins get their comeuppance. For that to happen, we have to start with creating an enabling

environment for women to speak about their ordeal.

Also, there is a need to raise awareness about the legal weapon at their disposal - the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and

Redressal) Act, 2013. Implementation of the law in letter and spirit can not only curb miscarriage of justice but also act as a strong deterrent.

Yours, etc., Khokan Das, Kolkata, 19 February.

FARMERS AND OUTDATED LAWS

SIR, Some still argue the recently passed farm laws will free farmers from outdated laws, remove the barriers on inter-state and intra-state trade and encourage healthy competition. The government holds, the agricultural laws will facilitate the creation of an ecosystem where farmers and traders enjoy the freedom of choice and alternative trading channels. They will promote efficient, transparent and barrier-free inter-State and intra-State trade and commerce of agricultural produce as well. These repetitive assertions are to create the "illusion of truth" effect. However, farmers have found no merit in the arguments for the envisioned ecosystem.

The model APMC Act 2003 allowed the private sector and cooperatives to set up markets. But it failed to persuade the private sector or cooperatives to set up agricultural marketing infrastructure as an alternative to the state-regulated mandi system. In her budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman claimed, Modi government had paid the farmers 62,802 crores for wheat, 1,41,930 crores for paddy, and 8,285 crores for pulses in 2019-2020. In comparison, she said, the amounts spent for the procurement of wheat, paddy and pulses were 33,874 crores, 63,928 crores and 236 crores in 2013-2014. It was a tacit admission of the fact that the dependence on APMC mandis for sale of agricultural produce has increased. It is here, the exclusion of the APMC mandis, the "competitive alternative trading channels," from the proposed "trade area" for the "sponsors" - who could be individuals, partnership firms, companies, limited liability groups or societies - raise doubts and come under criticism. Further, if the idea was to facilitate "remunerative prices," wouldn't the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) assured by law as an alternative ensure remunerative prices for produce in the new ecosystem. An argument advanced against giving legal status to the MSP is that it would put a heavy burden on the national exchequer. But wouldn't the envisioned higher prices for agricultural produce in the markets - being 'opened up' now - reduce the dependence on the MSP and lessen the burden on the budget? The agricultural sector is in troubled waters.

Yours, etc., Haridasan Rajan, Kozhikode, 19 February.

'Oil taxes easiest for revenue'

RSSHARMA, former Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of ONGC, has over four decades of experience in banking, finance and treasury operations in India and abroad. Though primarily a banker, he joined ONGC — a leading upstream Navaratna company engaged in oil production and exploration in India and abroad — in 1988 and handled various key positions. He was appointed as Director-Finance of ONGC in 2002 and also handled the additional position of Director-Finance of ONGC Videsh Ltd before he was appointed as CMD of ONGC in 2006. He is also a member of the Institute of Cost Accountants of India and an associate member of the Indian Institute of Bankers. He had been a member of various high-level committees like the Search Committee for Selection of Chairman & Members of Competition Commission of India. Sharma spoke to VIJAYTHAKUR on volatility in the oil sector, its challenges and future. Excerpts:

Q. The oil sector world over appears to be volatile and is facing tough challenges, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. How do you see the future of oil and gas sector in India?

A. The oil sector has been like this only. I have seen much volatility when crude oil was hovering at over USD 100 a barrel. Life goes on and I am not concerned over the recent volatility. The unprecedented situation we faced in the wake of the Covid pandemic seems to be over and the entire world is returning to normalcy except a few countries in the West. India and China are two high oil consuming nations. In 2020, oil demand in China has gone up by 7 per cent. Situation in India has also improved. Another country where oil demand is high is USA. So I see no worry for the oil sector — we are finding new oil reserves. In India, work is in progress for the 50 million tonne West Coast refinery. I can foresee that the oil industry would continue to prosper for at least another 20-30 years. There was some fear a decade ago that oil demand would surpass its production, but now we do not see this happening in the near future. Global oil demand was at its peak in 2019, almost 100 million barrels a day. In 2020, it went down by 10 per cent apparently due to Covid. But I am sure oil demand would never touch the 2019 level.



Q. Why do you think oil demand would not touch 2019 level again? Vehicles world over are increasing and so is demand.

A. There are many reasons for it. One, new alternate source of energy is coming up. Two, there is more emphasis on gas consumption. Certainly the oil demand would increase marginally but not like what we saw in 2019. And there is one good comfort for a country like India — we may not see any major hike in crude oil prices. It might not cross \$100 a barrel again in the coming 20-30 years. There would not be any supply problem in the coming years. The US has already become the largest producer of crude oil, and new discoveries in the Middle East are also coming up. Lastly, as I said, oil demand is not going to be very high. Though OPEC tried to artificially reduce the crude oil production, it hardly had any impact.

Q. Government has increased its target for strategic crude oil reserves. You think it is enough for a country like India where nearly 70 per cent of our crude oil demand is met through imported oil?

A. Presently we have 11-12 days strategic reserve, which we are doubling. It is a good step but not

enough, especially when we have to depend upon imported oil. Let's look at China, it has a strategic reserve of 90 days, which they are increasing further. China took advantage of the crude oil drop last year and stacked up their reserves at a very low price. India too has an ambitious plan to increase strategic reserves to 90 days but that will take a long time.

Q. India as a whole has been benefited in the recent past due to drop in crude oil prices in the international market. But the benefit has not been passed on to consumers. They are paying higher than what they were paying when the crude oil price was \$120 barrel a day in the international market. Do you think it is the right policy not to pass on the benefit of crude oil drop to end consumers?

A. Oil sector is the highest and easiest way to generate revenue for the Centre as well as state governments. No government — irrespective of its political affiliation — would like to lose this opportunity. The only reason why petroleum products were kept out of GST was to generate revenues for states as well as for the central government. When they are collecting around 60 per cent tax on petroleum products, why will they opt

for 28 per cent tax through GST? Petroleum products would continue to generate the largest revenue for governments. We are facing an unprecedented situation in the wake of the Covid pandemic. At a time when government revenues have reduced drastically, tax on petroleum products is the easiest way to generate revenue. It also needs to spend money to revive the economy and help people. In the present circumstances, I do not think the government has the luxury to reduce tax on petroleum products. Further no government would think of bringing petroleum products under GST in near future.

In future it may try to bring it under GST by adding a new slab of 40 to 50 per cent through the GST council and by amending the existing GST Act. But GST on petrol and diesel at 28 per cent is unthinkable. However, gas can be brought under GST at the existing 28 per cent. Union Petroleum Ministry has already recommended twice to the Finance Ministry to bring gas under GST, but Finance Ministry has turned it down for obvious reasons.

Q. The Government of India is

targeting electric vehicles. Do you think it will impact the Indian oil industry?

A. This is a correct policy. But still the growth of the electric vehicles (EV) sector is very slow. Presently internal combustion (IC) engine numbers are so high that EVs cannot even meet the incremental demands of IC engines. I am of the view that demand for IC engines would continue to rise and petrol and diesel vehicles would be ruling the road for another 20-30 years until some transformational change happens. There are several issues with the growth of EVs. For EVs we need cobalt, lithium, nickel and cadmium, which are in short supply globally. It is not easy to meet the global demands of batteries for EVs. Then there are serious environmental concerns with batteries. Though EVs do not emit any pollutant, disposing of batteries is a serious concern and battery vehicles are not a 100 per cent solution for pollution. India might be able to meet the incremental demands of vehicles through EVs by 2030. But right now it is hard to predict. Technology makes things happen which were difficult to imagine 10 years ago. Let's hope we will find some new technology for electric vehicles, which is easily available, more economical and environmentally-friendly.

Q. For a developing country like India, going for a private four-wheel electric vehicle may not be economical. You think instead of private EV cars, the government should stress on promoting short range commercial EVs like e-rickshaw and two wheelers, which offer value for money and are economical?

A. You are right. EVs are value for money for two wheelers, and short range commercial vehicles. For long range vehicles, whether it is a bus or private cars, EVs cannot replace the internal combustion engine in the coming years. Certainly the government must encourage short range commercial EVs and EV two wheelers. E-rickshaw is an example. Despite no major support from the government, EV rickshaws have already revolutionised the market. Though I am a bitter critic of Arvind Kejriwal, he has taken very courageous steps and came out with an encouraging EV policy. He announced no-registration charges for electric vehicles in Delhi, other states should follow the same.

Road safety needs greater focus

K K KAPILA

Road safety, though extremely important has still not been able to attract enough attention in India despite the fact that there have been higher fatalities year on year on account of road accidents than due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. In India, more than 150,000 people die every year while 500,000 get injured. A significant point to be noted here is that while over 70 per cent of the fatalities due to road accidents are in the most productive age group of 18 to 45 years, over 70 per cent of the fatalities due to Covid were in the age group of over 65 years.

Globally, road accidents account for 1.3 million deaths and 50 million injuries, with many losing their lives with permanent disabilities. Of this, India's contribution to the fatalities is at 11 per cent. In 2010, leaders from 100 countries gathered together and resolved to reduce road fatalities and accidents by 50 per cent by the end of 2020. Though we did not achieve the target, there is now an increased sensitivity and awareness towards road safety. Having failed to achieve the target, a new target has been set to achieve reduction in road accidents by 50 per cent by 2030.

To achieve it, an action plan was



contemplated to be prepared in 2020 but because of Covid, this has got delayed and we have only now embarked upon it. In this effort we have the whole hearted support of a number of International and National organisations including Federation Internationale De Automobile (FIA), Road Safety Organisation of Prince

Michael Duke of Kent, International Road Assessment Program (IRAP), International Road Federation (IRF) - Geneva, UNECE and Ministry of Road Transport And Highways (MoRTH) amongst others.

The hard facts of Indian road safety include that the Ministry of Road Transport had issued a circular

to build Forgiving Roads, which forgive engineering mistakes made on the roads. Thereafter National Highway Authority of India issued two circulars on the subject - in 2010 and 2012 respectively. In spite of explicit instructions, these have not been adhered to, primarily on the plea of cost increase as well as a casual attitude of the people involved. This is indeed unfortunate.

Moving to vehicular safety, the Union government has initiated provisioning of safety measures in vehicles, aligning them with UNECE standards for both two wheelers and four wheelers. The government must be complimented for mandating crash test standards, identical to Europe. Similarly the provisioning of ABS in two wheelers is a very welcome gesture.

The government's move to encourage use of CNG is welcome. However, if we are retrofitting CNG kits in the market, it is important that these vehicles meet the same crash test safety standards as mandated for all cars. Secondly, many of these kits are imported from China and do not meet basic safety standards. Under Atma Nirbhari Bharat, we need to develop and manufacture these in India so that they meet all test standards, stop

their import, and generate local employment.

The amended MV Act 2019 implemented in September 2019 is expected to bring a remarkable change in the road safety scenario in the country when it is adopted in entirety by the States and Union Territories. What is needed is to remove the human interface from enforcement. Extensive use of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technologies to capture violations is the way forward.

Our Vision is that Bystander Training Programme should be undertaken in a time bound manner along all National and State Highways to begin with. The tea stall, dhaba and petrol pump staff on main highways in the country should be taught first-aid to help accident victims.

The latest intervention in trauma care is by the DRDO Scientists who have created a Motorbike Ambulance called "Rakshita". The government must promote manufacture of these Motorbike Ambulances in a populated country like ours with massive road network and disproportionately large accidents in order to save human lives. This effort should be launched in the same manner as we have taken up the vaccine drive for Covid 19.

The writer is President emeritus, International Road Federation, a global body working for better and safer roads world wide.

NO 28831

ACROSS

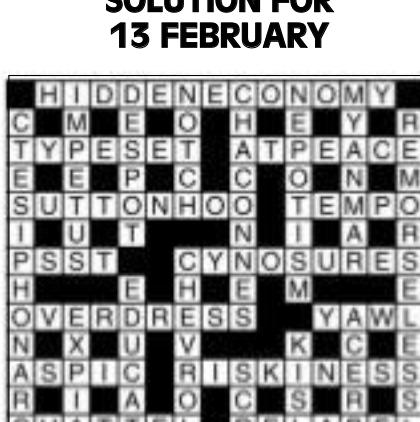
- 7 See 11
- 8 Boycott Government opponent over a little bit of flak (5)
- 10 Market always has salmon (4)
- 11/7 Fathead Soon deduce a timeless quality, unfortunately, that's shared by Johnson and his cohorts (8,2,8)
- 12 Tired of being rudely assaulted (6)
- 14 Double bed artist in attendance (8)
- 15 Look, talent and ability ultimately deficient (6)
- 17 Keen smallholder originally keeping old ducks (6)
- 20 Undistinguished salesmen getting sacked (8)
- 22 Drink in clubs — may attempt to return (6)
- 23 Very discontented — a 9.10 spelt out regardless (2,3,5)
- 24 Stroke ram turning on ewe's neighbour, reportedly (4)
- 25 12 taking time off (3,2)
- 26 Confidence expressed before 24A in a nasty spot (8)
- 28 Stop slightly twisted rule? (10)
- 6 Labour stronghold supports left wingers quitting (6)
- 9 Writer like me alternatively picked up over 5 (6)
- 13 Pretend over a long period — solvers, it's disgraceful (5,2,3)
- 16 Old city getting top people? Not quite (6)
- 18 Small matters worried fashionable types (5,3)
- 19 Led country to present day (7)
- 21 Embryonic protection in largely nominal form (6)
- 22 Lowers expectations from the start having left PM - see above (6)
- 24 Housework mounted for children's favourite (4)

DOWN

- 1 Wolfish? That's a nervous reaction! (8)
- 2 Fire in Notre-Dame upset American Football people (4)
- 3 19's good for Sunday Post Journalist (6)
- 4 Top in English, fifth in History, German unknown, with pass in Science (7)
- 5 Telling Dracula maybe to

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

SOLUTION FOR 13 FEBRUARY



NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

OCCASIONAL NOTE

Mr. Gandhi's fantastic proposals for the promotion of cotton spinning in schools may bring those establishments within the terms of the Indian Government's amendments to the Factory Act. Mr. Gandhi proposes that the children shall slave four hours a day (to be followed by two hours of literary instruction) at the spinning wheel. Under the new Factory Act all assemblies of more than twenty workers will become "factories," and in such factories it will be illegal ultimately to employ children below the age of twelve. Unfortunately no clause enjoining a minimum wage will be comprised in the Act or Mr. Gandhi might come under its operations. If it is a scandal that Mr. Gandhi should be allowed to ruin the children's constitutions in pursuit of his mad chimera it is still more outrageous that he should be permitted to do so without giving the children an anna of reward. By working twelve hours a day, Mr. Gandhi discovers, a child can earn three annas with a hand spinning-wheel (he omits the cost of raw material). By spinning only four hours a day for 26 days a child, Mr. Gandhi calculates, can earn no less a sum than Rs 1-10 a month. If the Government of India fails to do its duty in connection with this absurd scheme it is to be hoped that the parents will do theirs.

NEWS ITEMS

DISCOVERIES IN GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

The excavations at Ascalon, undertaken by the recently formed Department of Antiquities in Palestine have yielded some satisfactory finds in the form of gigantic marble pillars and statues. An interesting discovery was made in the Garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The garden is in the hands of the Franciscans, who, in the course of digging the foundations for a new chapel, came across the remains of a mediaeval church and later on of a fourth century church, of which it has been possible to make out the whole of the original design. As the foundations of this fourth century church extended beyond the Garden, the interests of other communities came into question, but the Department of Antiquities has been able satisfactorily to settle whatever difficulties might have arisen.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION IN INDIA

Madras, Feb 19

The most interesting item on today's agenda of the Legislative Council was a Resolution moved by Mr. M.D. Devadoss recommending that a Bill providing for workmen's compensation on the lines of the English Act be introduced in the near future. The member said that in India there was no law with regard to workmen's compensation like the English enactment. The workman who received an injury could only have what was known as a common law remedy. There was a great difference between common law actions and the Workmen's Compensation Act. The Law Member opposed the motion on the ground that it would be impossible to frame an enactment for this country on the lines of the English Act.

BOMBAY'S NEW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

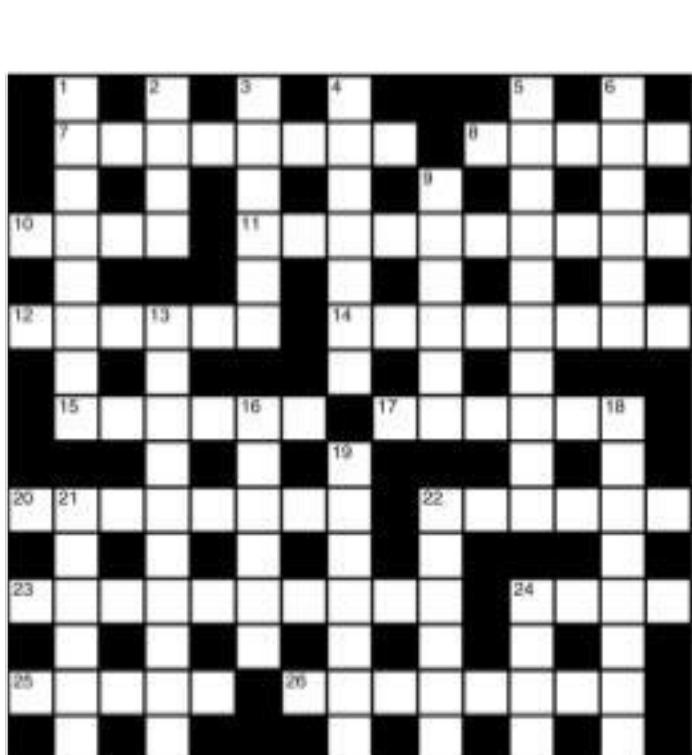
Bombay, Feb 19

The reformed Bombay Legislative Council assembled for the first time in the Town Hall at noon today for the purpose of members taking the oath of allegiance to the King-Emperor preparatory to the inauguration of the Council by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught on Wednesday next. The Town Hall has been completely renewed for the housing of the legislature temporarily till a more spacious and permanent house can be provided. The hall, which is painted white and gold, has fairly good accommodation for members in the centre, with a wing on either side, the one adjoining the public road being screened off by curtains. In the centre of the hall is erected a dais for the President, while on both sides there are seats for the executive councillors, ministers, and members.

MYSTERIOUS DISEASE IN PARIS

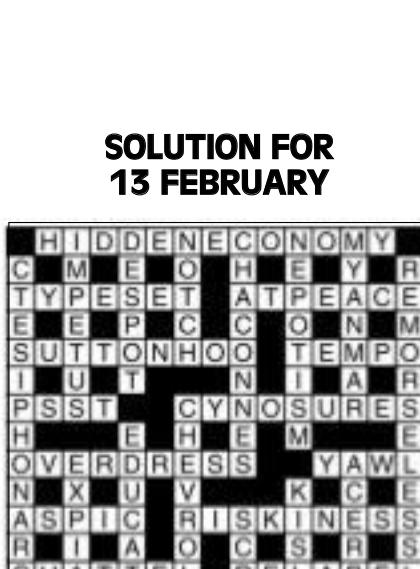
A mysterious disease called "Sleepy hiccoughs" appeared in Paris a few weeks ago, and is probably connected with "Encephalitis lethargic." It is reminiscent of the beginning of the Spanish influenza epidemic. Cases are cropping up in England, Switzerland and Montreal. There have been fifty cases, one fatal, in the Bernese Alps. There were four fatal cases in Manchester during the week end, and there have been sixteen cases in London during the past few weeks. Medical men recognise the seriousness of the disease for which no cure has been discovered, but do not think that the situation at present is alarming, in consequence of the comparative scarcity of cases.

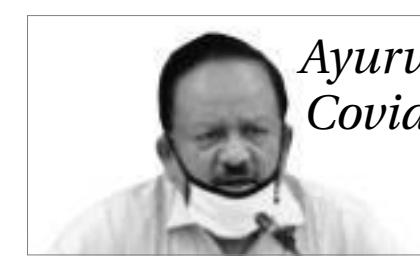
CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

SOLUTION FOR 13 FEBRUARY





Ayurveda economy has witnessed up to 90 per cent growth after the Covid-19 pandemic, as Ayurveda has gained global acceptance

HARSH VARDHAN
UNION HEALTH MINISTER

THUMBNAILS

Boat CEO: Consumer tech products brand Boat on Friday said it has appointed former Godrej Consumer Products executive Vivek Gambhir as its chief executive officer. At Boat, Gambhir will be closely working with co-founders Aman Gupta and Sameer Mehta to drive the company's vision and accelerate the overall growth, a statement said. Previously, Gambhir served as the CEO and managing director of Godrej Consumer Products (GCPL) where he spearheaded the transformation and global expansion of the organisation, it added.

PTI

Airbus-FlyBlade tie-up: Airbus has signed an initial pact with the US-based helicopter transport services provider BLADE's Indian subsidiary, FlyBlade India, to help develop the on-demand helicopter services market in South Asia. Under the memorandum of understanding, Airbus and BLADE will collaborate to create awareness about on-demand helicopter services, among helicopter operators, customers and other stakeholders in the region, a statement said.

PTI

K'taka Bank fraud: Karnataka Bank on Friday said it has reported to the RBI a fraud of about Rs 34.16 crore in credit facilities extended to IL&FS Transportation Networks, which is a dud account now. "The bank has reported to RBI a fraud in the credit facilities extended earlier to IL&FS Transportation Networks Ltd with an outstanding balance of Rs 34.16 crore (defaulted entity)," Karnataka Bank said in a regulatory filing.

PTI

Samsung phone: Samsung has announced the launch of Galaxy F62 with flag-ship 7nm Exynos 9825 processor to provide blazing fast performance and power efficiency for young customers. The phone comes with 7000 mAh battery and 64 MP quad camera, making it the most powerful smartphone offering from Samsung below Rs 25,000, the company said in a Press statement.

SNS

Magma initiative: Magma Fincorp Ltd has resumed its flagship CSR programme ~ Magma Highway Heroes ~ after a halt due to the Covid pandemic. Between February and March, over 30 camps will be held and about 5,000 truckers will get road safety training, the company said. Magma has been running the programme since 2015 and has already offered road safety and fuel efficiency training to over 1.85 lakh truckers, it added.

SNS

Muthoot cash chase: Muthoot Finance said its board has approved a proposal to raise up to Rs 6,000 crore by issuing non-convertible debentures. The funds would be raised by way of private placement of redeemable NCDs to be issued in one or more tranches.

PTI

Govt likely to appeal against Cairn arbitration award

Issue did not figure during two days of talks finance secretary held with company officials: Sources

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

TAX DISPUTE

The government is likely to file an appeal against the \$1.4-billion international arbitration award won by Cairn Energy in a tax dispute, even as the issue did not figure during two days of talks the finance secretary held with the company officials to look for a resolution, sources with knowledge of the matter said.



It has initiated with an aim to avert the company having to take legal recourse to recover the amount, including through seizure of Indian assets overseas. "Constructive dialogue is continuing," Thomson said after the meeting on Friday.

► Cairn on its part remained tight-lipped on the parleys

Soon after the second meeting in as many days between Cairn chief executive officer Simon Thomson and finance secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey ended, a person informed of the development said the government intends to defend its sovereign right in taxation and will file an appeal against an international tribunal ordering India to return \$1.4 billion to the British firm.

However, another person briefed on the discussions between Cairn and finance ministry said the option of India appealing against the verdict did not figure in talks either on Thursday or today.

Cairn, in a letter to the Indian government last month,

indicated it could seize overseas assets such as airplanes and ships if New Delhi fails to comply with the arbitration award and return the value of the shares sold, dividend seized and tax refund withheld by the income tax department to recover part of the tax demand it had raised using retrospective legislation.

The firm has already started identifying assets it could seize in the event of Indian gov-

ernment does not comply with the tribunal order.

The first person said the government, however, has kept open the possibility of a resolution within existing Indian laws.

The options under the existing provisions, the person said, include Cairn opting for the direct tax dispute settlement scheme Vivad se Vishwas, which gives relief on interest and penalty if the principal tax demand is paid.

The tax department had in March 2015 slapped a tax demand of Rs 10,247 crore on Cairn for the alleged capital gains it made on reorganising its India business prior to an initial public offer in 2006-07.

It levied short-term capital gains tax in raising the demand even though Cairn had over several years built the India business that included developing the Ravva oil and gas field in the KG Basin and discovering the nation's biggest onshore oilfield in Rajasthan.

Cairn at that time stated that its internal reorganisation was in compliance with the law and had been approved by var-

ious regulatory bodies, including the Securities and Exchange Board of India. It denied evading any taxes prevalent at that time and challenged the tax demand through international arbitration.

After coming to power in 2014, the Modi government had promised not to use a 2012 legislation that gave the government power to levy taxes retrospectively, to raise any fresh demand.

The Cairn assessment was opened in January 2014. The then finance minister Arun Jaitley had promised to abide by arbitration awards on retro tax cases. The first source said the government welcomes Cairn's move to reach out for a resolution, but any dispute resolution sought by the company will have to be within already existing laws.

The government, he said, will file an appeal against the Cairn arbitration award soon and will contest its sovereign rights to tax.

It will also strongly contest other suits brought by Cairn Energy at various other international courts, he added.

Thereafter, 10 lakh employees and officers of the banks will observe two days of continuous strike on 15-16 March

Gadkari for converting govt vehicles into EVs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

Road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari today pledged to convert all vehicles in his ministry to electric vehicles (EVs) and urged other departments to follow suit in a bid to cut India's oil import dependence.

The minister has also suggested providing subsidy to buy electric cooking appliances rather than giving support to buy expensive imported gas for cooking.

Back of envelop calculation by the minister indicates that using 10,000 electric vehicles in Delhi alone can save Rs 30 crore every month. Besides, he stressed on electric cooking which is also cheaper than imported gas.

Gadkari said: "Why don't we provide subsidy on elec-

tric cooking appliances. We already provide subsidy on cooking gas." He was of the view that electricity cooking is clean and will also reduce import dependence on gas.

Gadkari suggested that use of electric vehicles should be made mandatory for all government officials.

He informed that one electric vehicle saves almost Rs 30,000 per month on fuel cost which comes to around Rs 30 crore a month for 10,000 vehicles.

He further urged power minister R K Singh to make it mandatory to use electric vehicles for officials in his department, saying he will do so for his departments.

On this occasion, Singh also announced that a fuel-cell bus service will be launched from Delhi to Agra and Delhi to Jaipur soon.

Ikea to set up first retail outlet in UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 19 FEBRUARY

Ikea was today handed over a land parcel measuring nearly 50,000 sq metres in Noida where the Swedish furniture giant is set to start its first retail outlet in Uttar Pradesh, according to officials.

The allotment, which has been made in Sector 51, was transferred by the Noida Authority that received Rs 850 crore from Ikea for the commercial land, they said.

The transfer was made during a programme held here in the presence of top Noida Authority and IKEA officials, while Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath and UP Cabinet minister Satish Mahana joined the event virtually from Lucknow.

PTI

Inox Air lines up ₹2K cr for expansion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 19 FEBRUARY

Uttar Pradesh. And, the first plant is expected to be up and running in Tamil Nadu or Gujarat over the next 12 months, said Siddharth Jain, a director at the company.

Began as industrial oxygen company in Pune in 1963, in 1999, Air Products & Chemicals Inc of the US acquired 50 per cent stake in the company and renamed it as Inox Air Products.

It is the country's largest industrial gases manufacturer with an installed capacity of 3,330 tons per day which will go up to 4,800 tons per day by 2024 on completion of these new units.

Jain said that in the medical gases (oxygen), Inox is the leader with around 60 per cent market share. In industrial gases, it claims around 40 per cent market share, he said while refusing to share a revenue target with the expansion.

PTI

Conveyed to govt our commitment to protect privacy, says WhatsApp

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

Hours after announcing the decision to go ahead with its controversial privacy policy update, WhatsApp today said it has conveyed to the Indian government that it remains committed to protection of privacy of personal conversations across the country.

Last month, the messaging app had faced a volley of questions from the Indian government after it informed users that it was updating its privacy policy under which it could share limited user data with Facebook and its group firms.

The backlash and users opting for rival apps Telegram and Signal, prompted WhatsApp to delay the roll-out to May but today, the company said the policy will be rolled

out but the platform will allow users to read it at "their own pace".

WhatsApp will also provide a banner offering additional information on the update.

"Due to misinformation and based on feedback from our users, we have pushed back the timeline of acceptance of WhatsApp's terms of service and privacy policy to the 15th of May. In the meantime, we continue to engage with the government and are grateful for the opportunity to answer questions that we received from them," WhatsApp said in an e-mailed statement.

It added that the company has conveyed that it continues to protect the privacy of personal conversations across India and ensure that the platform remains safe and secure for everyone to engage on.

WhatsApp also said the new in-app notification looks different from the one users saw in January and that has been redesigned based on feedback from users.

"...but the terms of service and privacy policy remain the same. As a reminder, this update does not change the privacy of people's personal conversations and does not expand our ability to share data

with Facebook," WhatsApp said. Amid concerns raised by users on the issue, the Indian government had in January asked WhatsApp to withdraw the changes, saying unilateral changes are unfair and unacceptable.

The government had contended that not giving users an option to opt out raised "grave concerns regarding the implications for the choice and autonomy of Indian citizens".

It had also questioned why Indian users are being subjected to differential treatment when compared to their European counterparts where the changes do not apply.

WhatsApp has clarified that people who won't accept the privacy policy after 15 May can still receive calls and get notifications, but they'll need to agree to the update to send messages.

Five more states undertake partial power sector reforms

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 19 JANUARY

Reforms linked additional borrowing permissions are stimulating reforms in the power sector in states. In a

Press statement today, finance ministry said as a part of reform process, five more states - Bihar, Goa, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand - have successfully met the target set by the ministry of power for reduction in aggregate technical & commercial (AT&C) losses or achieved the targeted reduction in average cost of supply and average revenue realisation (ACS-ARR) gap.

"Reduction in AT&C losses and ACS-ARR gap are two of the three reforms in the power sector stipulated by the department of expenditure, ministry of finance. A part of

additional borrowing ceiling to the states is linked to undertaking reforms in the power sector," reads the Press release.

With these reforms, the states get permission to borrow and amount equivalent of 0.05 per cent of the gross state domestic product (GSDP) for meeting the target set for the state for reduction in AT&C losses and additional 0.05 percent of GSDP for crossing the ACS-ARR gap target.

Uttarakhand has achieved the targets for reduction in both AT&C losses and ACS-ARR gap. AT&C losses in the state have reduced to 19.01 per cent against the target of 19.35 per cent. ACS-ARR gap in the state has been reduced to Rs 0.36 per unit against the target of Rs 0.40 per unit. Goa has brought down the AT&C losses to 11.21 per cent

against the target of 13.53 per cent. Karnataka has surpassed the ACS-ARR gap target of Rs 0.50 per unit by reducing the gap to Rs 0.44 per unit.

Rajasthan has also achieved the ACS-ARR gap reduction target. Against the target of Rs 1.40 per unit, the state has abridged the gap to Rs 1.16 per unit. Similarly, Bihar has also achieved the ACS-ARR gap reduction target by 10 per cent reductions in the ACS-ARR gap.

"Successful implementation of the reform has made these five states eligible to mobilise additional financial resources of Rs 2,094 crore. This has provided the much-needed additional financial resources to the states to fight Covid-19 pandemic, enhance capital expenditure to stimulate demand," reads the statement.

Policy envisages 4 PSUs in strategic sectors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

The new public sector enterprises policy envisages that the strategic sectors have limited number of players restricting it to maximum four public sector enterprises of the holding nature, a top official said today. Department of public enterprises (DPE) secretary Sailesh said the remaining enterprises will be rationalised in terms of mergers, amalgamations and privatisation if feasible.

As part of the "Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan" package, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had in May announced that there will be a maximum of four pub-

Profit-booking hits equity benchmarks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 19 FEBRUARY

The Sensex tumbled 433 points while the Nifty slumped below the 15,000-mark today as markets buckled under selling pressure for the fourth session on the trot amid a lacklustre trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 434.93 points or 0.85 per cent lower at 50,889.76 points, pressured by robust selling in banking and auto counters.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty gave up the 15,000-level, dropping 137.20 points or 0.91 per cent to 14,981.75 points.

During the week ended 19 February, the Sensex declined 654.54 points or 1.26 per cent, and the Nifty fell 181.55 points or 1.19 per cent.

SENSEX FALLS 435 POINTS

► The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 434.93 points or 0.85 per cent lower at 50,889.76 points, pressured by robust selling in banking and auto counters.

► Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty gave up the 15,000-level, dropping 137.20 points or 0.91 per cent to 14,981.75 points.

The broader markets that is NSE mid-cap 100 index and BSE small-cap index are both

per cent, building in economic impact of the \$1.9-trillion stimulus package.

"In India too, the 10-year bond yields have moved up from recently low of 5.76 percent to 6.13 percent, which could mainly be linked to the higher fiscal deficit estimates... Almost 37 stocks from the Nifty-50 lost ground this week with pharma and select consumers having lost the most," said Rusmik Oza, executive vice-president, head of fundamental research at Kotak Securities.

Sectorally, BSE auto, metal, banking, healthcare and finance indices lost as much as 2.59 per cent, while energy index was the sole gainer. Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices fell up to 1.67 per

cent. Global markets were mixed amid weak macroeconomic data from the US and Europe, casting a cloud over expectations of a swift economic recovery.

Elsewhere in Asia, markets in Tokyo ended on a negative note, while Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul closed with gains.

Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading in the positive terrain in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude slipped 1.24 percent to \$63.14 per barrel. Domestic currency markets were closed today on account of Chhatrapati

Culture Ministry puts NMA draft heritage bylaws for Odisha on hold

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 19 FEBRUARY:

The Union Culture Ministry has decided to put the 'contentious' National Monument Authority's (NMA) draft heritage bylaws for Odisha on hold after the notification banning any developmental work within 100 metres of an archeological site had sparked outrage across the state.

The Centre had promptly put the notification for Puri temple on hold but retained the one relating to temples in Bhubaneswar resulting in continued protests.

The Union Minister of State for Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Pratap Chandra Sarangi on 9 February had also sought for the withdrawal of draft bylaw for larger interest of the state.

Servitors had also opposed the draft bylaw. Sensing trouble, the state BJP as well as Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan, Pratap Sarangi had also echoed the demand.

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The Union Minister of State for Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Pratap Chandra Sarangi on 9 February had also sought for the withdrawal of draft bylaw for larger interest of the state.

Union Culture Minister Prahlad Singh Patel responding to a letter from his ministerial colleague informed him of the ministry's decision to put the bylaw on hold for Odisha archaeological sites.

"I have asked the concerned officers to keep the proposal on hold. The final decision on the same would be

taken only after the matter is discussed and deliberated with all the stakeholders and considering their views on their own," Patel stated in his letter to Sarangi.

State Law Minister Pratap Jena today said the centre should withdraw the proposed bylaws. Putting it on hold does not satisfy us, we want its withdrawal, he said.

It may be noted here that the Odisha government has drawn up grand plans for development of heritage corridors, tourist amenities etc in and around Puri Jagannath temple, Lingaraj Temple

Bhubaneswar, Samaleswari Temple, Sambalpur and other such places.

Work on the projects in Puri and Bhubaneswar have started.

The ASI, on its part, has repeatedly stated that it has not received any draft plan for the Emakra Kshetra (around Lingaraj Temple) hence any work within the regulated zone is contentious. It has in fact stopped work that was on near the Lingaraj Temple after remains of two ancient temples were found while digging was on by the government agencies.

High school students to get certificates online

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 19 FEBRUARY:

The students of Odisha government-run high school will now be provided certificates through online mode instead of physically turning up at schools.

"The Odisha Government has decided to provide various certificates and documents to students online", stated the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) in a tweet on Friday.

The online initiative has been jointly developed by the School and Mass Education department, Odisha Computer Application Centre (OCAC), the Technical Directorate of E& IT Department and National Informatics Centre (NIC), Government of India, the Chief Minister's Office informed through the tweet.

Students can get the online facilities at Jan Seva Kendras in their respective panchayats from March next, said Board of Secondary Education officials.

Entry fees waived for Puri Gundicha temple

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 19 FEBRUARY:

The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) has decided to waive the entry fee for devotees to pay to visit the Gundicha Temple here where Lord Jagannath, his elder brother Lord Balabhadra and sister Devi Subhadra stay during the annual Rath Yatra.

It has been decided to make it free for all devotees to visit Gundicha Temple where the trinities stay during the annual Rath Yatra.

Earlier, each devotee was charged Rs 20 as a registration fee to get entry into Sri Gundicha Temple where the trinities stay during the annual Rath Yatra.

The decision was taken at the SJTA management committee meeting on Thursday.

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The sub-collector responded to prayers and petition of Premlata who met him in his grievance cell yesterday. He warned the three sons of punishment if they failed to do so or ill treated Premlata.

The Sub-Collector also called the secretary Promod Kumar Sahai of the Sahara Family Counselling Centre

and directed him to submit a detailed report regarding the complaint of the old woman.

Premlata Sahai (92) had stated that she had been deserted by her sons - Raghu Nath, a retired police inspector, Rajendra an employee in the PWD department and Rammata a daily wager.

They did not take care of her, did not allow her space in the house and she lamented.

Her plight moved the sub-collector who summoned all three sons and took them to task.

Several people in the area urged upon the sub collector to punish the three sons.

She noted that the AMSAR Act 1958 stands and prevails over

contending that AP had violated the status quo order and contempt of court proceedings may be drawn.

The court had asked AP government to respond and on submission of its affidavit, it asked the Odisha government to file a counter within four weeks, informed Vikash Singh and Sibashankar Mishra counsel of the Odisha government.

Andhra Pradesh has claimed that three villages Ganjbadra, Pattuchennuru and Paguluchennuru fall under Araku Parliamentary Constituency and Saluru Assembly Constituency of Andhra Pradesh. Lok Sabha and Assembly elections have been conducted by Andhra

Pradesh in the villages since 1952 while Panchayat Polls by the AP Government were held in the villages in 2006 and 2013.

The Odisha government has contested this claim.

It may be noted here that the Opposition BJP and Congress have raised the issue both inside and outside the Assembly alleging that the BJD government has failed to safeguard the boundaries of the state.

The Congress, while blaming both, the BJD and BJP has pointed out that the BJP has no moral right to raise the matter since it was a partner of the BJD government and had held the revenue department portfolio till 2009.

Kotia village dispute: Odisha to file counter in 4 wks time

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 19 FEBRUARY:

The Supreme Court granted four week time to the Odisha government to file a rejoinder to the affidavit of Andhra Pradesh government over a dispute relating to conduct of panchayat elections in Kotia village of Koraput district.

The inter-state border village dispute has been a long-standing one and status quo had been ordered by the apex court.

Earlier this month, Andhra Pradesh held panchayat elections in three villages triggering protests among political parties here and the state government moved the apex court



Protests against fuel price hike by AIDWA in Bhubaneswar.

Oppn stalls Odisha Assembly over paddy procurement

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 19 FEBRUARY:

Opposition Congress and BJP members stalled proceedings of the Odisha Assembly for the entire day today over the chaos in paddy procurement and farmers distress across the state.

Repeated adjournment of the House by Speaker Surya Narayan Patro failed to calm the angry Opposition members who raised slogans, carried placards and at one point in time even pulled down the fibre shield in front of the Speaker's podium.

As soon as the Assembly session commenced, Congress members marched to the Well of the House demanding discussion on the paddy procurement issue. They had submitted a notice for adjournment in this regard.

Soon the BJD members too followed to the centre with placards creating a ruckus.

After several adjournments, the Speaker convened an all party meeting to resolve the deadlock.

He then informed that house that the Minister will make a statement on paddy procurement in the Assem-

Distressed farmer attempts suicide

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHAWANIPATNA, 19 FEBRUARY:

A 33 year old distressed farmer, Romandhana Dasdasa said to have attempted suicide by consuming pesticide in his paddy field in a village under Sinapalli block today.

Krishna, wife of the farmer, told media persons that he had consumed pesticides and was lying in the field. He has been admitted

to the sub-divisional hospital. She insisted that her husband was distressed as his paddy crop over three acres had been partially damaged due to disconnection of power supply to the lift point.

He had 85 bags of paddy lying unsold in the market yard and the token that he had received to sell the paddy had lapsed.

Efforts to contact officials failed as they did not pick up the phone.

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Efforts to contact officials failed as they did not pick up the phone.

It may be noted here that the Congress and BJP have been alleging gross irregularities in the procurement process and that paddy stocks had piled up at market yards without being procured by the state agencies.

The tokens issued to farmers entitling them to sell the paddy at the market yard had lapsed. Farmers had taken to the streets and were in distress, they had charged.

The Food Minister had earlier claimed that the procurement had exceeded the target.

Odisha govt has failed to protect land, water & resources: OPCC chief

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 19 FEBRUARY:

Coming down heavily on the BJD government in the state, OPCC chief Niranjan Patnaik said due to lack of timely intervention and sheer callousness Odisha had lost its riparian right on waters of Mahanadi to Chhattisgarh which now it is Andhra Pradesh which has held panchayat elections in Kotia villages of Odisha.

The OPCC chief went on to note that the BJD government had failed to protect

water, land and even natural resources as illegal sand mining is rampant in several parts and the sand is transported to neighboring states.

When the government is unable to provide basic amenities in these far flung villages, others take advantage and lure the people, he remarked.

There are over 200 schools in such bordering areas which do not have an Odia teacher, he alleged.

Odisha reports 53 new COVID cases

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 19 FEBRUARY:

Odisha on Friday reported 53 fresh COVID-19 cases and one fatality in the past 24 hours, according to the State's COVID dashboard data updated at 12 am today.

Thirteen of the state's 30 districts did not report any fresh cases while 17 districts reported single-digit cases.

Sambalpur registered the highest of 11 cases while the remaining 16 districts recorded single-digit infections in last 24 hours.

Currently the Gajapati and Kandhamal districts in the State has become COVID-free with no active case under medication.

Of the COVID-infected persons in the State, 66% are men while the remaining 34% are women.

The State's recovery rate has shot up to 99.19% with as many as 33,788 patients cured of the disease so far.

Odisha currently has 658 active cases. A total of 81,23,235 sample tests have been conducted in the state so far.

Meanwhile, over 5 lakh healthcare and frontline workers have received vaccine shots in the State.

Teacher held for polygamy

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CUTTACK, 19 FEBRUARY:

including two Union Ministers had discussed the 'withdrawal' and agreed to put the bylaw on hold. And still worse is the fact that all this was happening at least a week before Ms Sarangi held her press conference to rubbish the demand.

She had claimed to have prepared herself in Delhi, met officials of the ministry etc before speaking to the media on 15 February.

It is pertinent to note that Union Minister Prahlad Singh Patel's letter to Pratap Sarangi is dated 9 February.

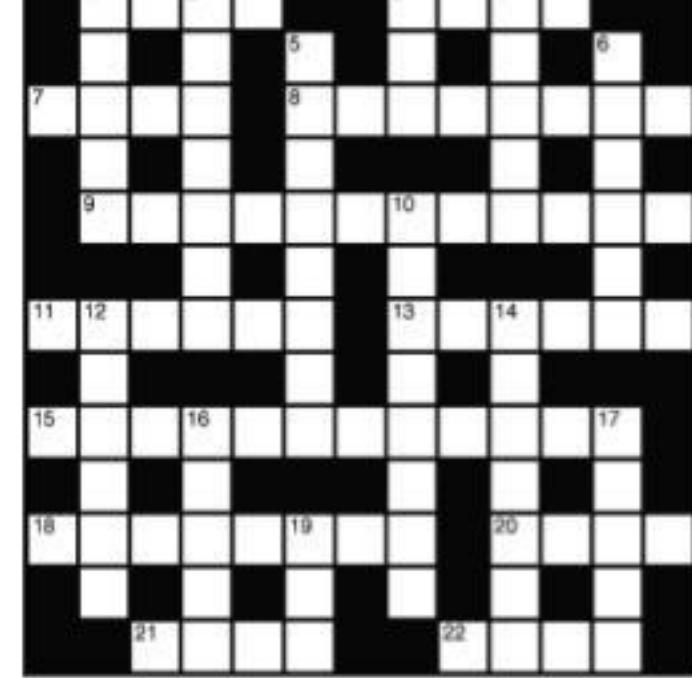
in Silipur police station area had married for the first time in 2001. Nayak, now 45 years of age, ditched his wife to remarry another young woman two years later.

Interestingly, the accused concealing his marital status had managed to marry twice during the unlock phase of COVID outbreak in the past six months.

The accused was arrested following separate complaints lodged by two women whom he had married in the past.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Near (Archaic) (4)
3 Large town (4)
7 Bill of fare (4)
8 Desire to achieve something (8)
9 Barbiturate, for example (8,4)
11 Part of speech (6)
13 Male relative (6)
15 Unruly (12)
18 People in authority (Informal) (3,5)
20 Reference line (4)
21 Cadaver (4)
22 Unable to hear (4)

DOWN
1 Requirements (5)
2 Swiss cheese (7)
3 Taxi (3)
4 Tally (3,2)
5 Obvious (8)
6 Sheepdog (6)
10 Drivel (8)
12 Person owing money (6)
14 Bottled fuel (7)
16 Forbidden (5)
17 Rigid (5)
19 Some (3)

DOWN
1 Requirements (5)
2 Control, 14 Control,
3 Echow, 15 Discretion,
4 Reversible, 20 Root,
5 Nose, 21 Torso,
6 Glut, 22 Glut.

ACROSS
12 Welder, 13 Fudge,
14 Control, 15 Discretion,
16 Cheese, 17 Loin,
19 Boo.

By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

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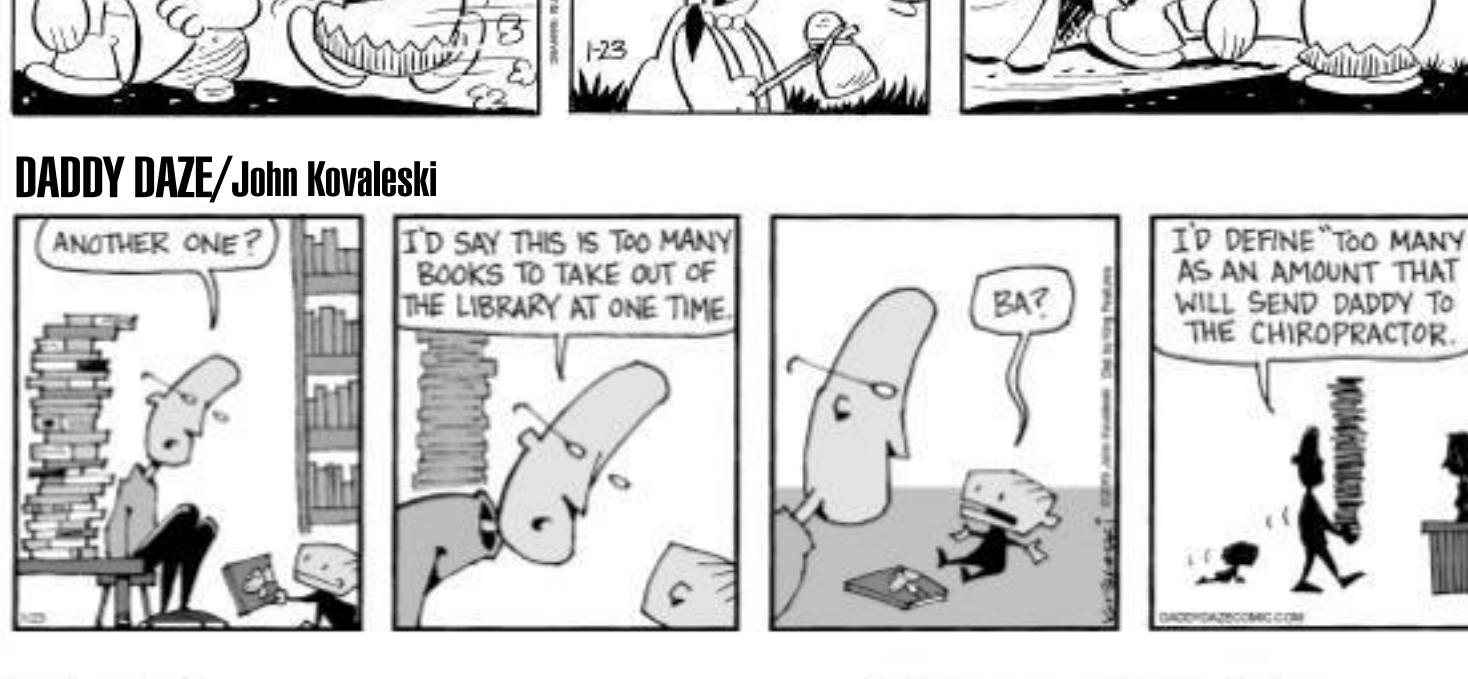
BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

2286262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800112511

SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886,

54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):



Today's historic landing embodies our nation's spirit of perseverance

US VICE-PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	24 H
HONG KONG	21	15 H
TOKYO	12	1 CL
LONDON	12	6 H
DUBAI	26	21 H
SAN FRANCISCO	13	9 H
NEW YORK	1	-3 H
MOSCOW	-12	-20 H

S= sunny, CL= clear, H= hazy, R= rainy...

THUMBNAILS



Residents sit on the carcass of a pilot whale stranded on a beach in Bangkalan, on Madura Island in Indonesia on Friday. A number of short-finned pilot whales stranded in shallow waters on the island, officials said.

AGENCIES

Somalia unrest: Security forces in Somalia's capital fired on hundreds of people protesting the delay of the country's election on Friday as at least one explosion was reported at the international airport and armoured personnel carriers blocked major streets. A protest leader said some have died. The chaos in Mogadishu occurred after Somalia's government and opposition leaders said gunfire erupted overnight near the presidential palace PTI

World leaders applaud US: The United States is back in the Paris climate accord, just 107 days after it left. While Friday's return is heavily symbolic, world leaders say they expect America to prove its seriousness after four years of being pretty much absent.

AP

Prince Philip in hospital for third night: Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, remains in a London hospital where he was admitted as a precautionary measure for a few days of observation. His hospital admission is not said to be related to coronavirus. PTI

Uber loses legal fight, must classify drivers as workers

LONDON, 19 FEBRUARY

Taxi ride-hailing giant Uber must classify its drivers as workers with minimum wage, holiday and sick pay rights, rather than be categorised as self-employed, the UK Supreme Court ruled on Friday.

The decision follows a long-running legal dispute which the American company had taken right up to the highest court in Britain.

A group of drivers had launched the claim to contest that they should be classified as workers, rather than independent third-party contractors, which means they are entitled to all the basic employment protections under the UK law.

A key point in the Supreme Court's ruling is that Uber has to consider its drivers "workers" from the time they log on to the app, until they log off.

"Our clients have been fighting for workers' rights for many years, so we are delighted that the end is finally in sight," said Nigel Mackay, a partner in the employment team at law firm Leigh Day, which represented some of the Uber drivers involved in the case.

The ruling could mean hefty compensation claims for drivers as he said that the firm would pursue compensation.

Following Friday's ruling, the employment tribunal will now have to decide how much compensation to award the 25 drivers in the initial case dating back to 2016.

Biden 'ready' for talks on 2015 nuke deal

Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu's office expressed worry, saying that going back to the old agreement will pave Iran's path to a nuclear arsenal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 19 FEBRUARY

The Biden administration says it's ready to join talks with Iran and world powers to discuss a return to the 2015 nuclear deal, in a sharp repudiation of former President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure campaign" that sought to isolate the Islamic Republic.

The administration also took two steps at the United Nations aimed at restoring policy to what it was before Trump withdrew from the deal in 2018. The combined actions were immediately criticised by Iran hawks and drew concern from Israel, which said it was committed to keeping Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Besides signalling Thursday a willingness to talk with Iran, the administration also reversed Trump's determina-



tion that all UN sanctions against Iran had been restored. And, it eased stringent restrictions on the domestic travel of Iranian diplomats posted to the United Nations.

The State Department announced the moves following discussions between Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his British, French and German counterparts and as Biden prepares to participate, albeit virtually, in his first major international events with world leaders.

The announcement came a day before Biden is to speak to leaders of the Group of

Seven industrialised democracies and later in the day address the annual Munich Security Conference. At both Friday, Biden is expected to discuss his commitment to multilateral diplomacy and his desire to undo damage that Trump's positions may have caused over the previous four years. He's expected to address the US stance on the 2015 multilateral Iran nuclear deal, the war in Afghanistan and the economic and national security challenges posed by Russia and China.

In a statement, State Department spokesman Ned Price said the US would accept an invitation from the European Union to attend a meeting of the participants, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany, along with Iran, in the original nuclear agreement.

"The United States would accept an invitation from the European Union High Rep-

resentative to attend a meeting of the P5+1 and Iran to discuss a diplomatic way forward on Iran's nuclear program," he said. The US has not participated in a meeting of those participants since Trump withdrew from the deal and began steadily ramping up sanctions on Iran.

Such an invitation has not yet been issued but one is expected shortly, following Blinken's talks with the British, French and German foreign ministers.

In Iran, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Friday the Biden administration action meant that the US had acknowledged moves made under Trump "had no legal validity."

"We agree," he added, urging the Biden administration to lift US sanctions "imposed, reimposed or re-labeled by Trump. We will then immediately reverse all remedial measures."

Immigration Bill introduced

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, 19 FEBRUARY

In a major move that will benefit hundreds and thousands of Indian IT professionals in America, the Biden administration has introduced an ambitious immigration bill in Congress which among other things proposes to eliminate the per-country cap for employment-based green cards.

The US Citizenship Act of 2021 proposes a pathway to citizenship to 11 million undocumented workers, elimination of per country quota for employment-

based green cards and work authorisation for dependents of H-1B foreign workers.

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

The US Citizenship Act of 2021 proposes a pathway to citizenship to 11 million undocumented workers, elimination of per country quota for employment-based green cards.

In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office expressed worry, saying it believes that "going back to the

old agreement will pave Iran's path to a nuclear arsenal" and was in close contact with the United States on the matter.

Meanwhile, at the United Nations, the Biden administration notified the Security Council that it had withdrawn Trump's September 2020 invocation of the so-called snap-back mechanism under which it maintained that all UN sanctions against Iran had been reimposed.

Those sanctions included a conventional arms embargo against Iran that had been set to expire.

Trump's determination had been vigorously disputed by nearly all other UN members and had left the US isolated at the world body.

Thus, the reversal is unlikely to have any immediate practical effect other than to bring the US back in line with the position of the vast majority of UN members, including some of its closest allies.

PERSEVERANCE IN SEARCH OF LIFE

► NASA's largest and most advanced Mars rover, *Perseverance*, successfully touched down on the Martian surface on Friday, in a nail-biting landing that marks its first step in the search for signs of ancient microbial life on the Red Planet.

► The Mars 2020 mission was launched on 30 July, last year, from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida, US.

► The rover streaked through the Martian atmosphere and

landed safely inside the vast Jezero Crater on Mars, after travelling for 203 days and traversing 472 million kilometres

► The touchdown of the rover marks an ambitious first step in the effort to collect Mars samples and return them to Earth

► While the rover will investigate the rock and sediment of Jezero's ancient lakebed and river delta to characterise the region's geology and past climate, a fundamental part of its mission is astrobiology, including the search for signs of ancient microbial life,

► Equipped with seven primary science instruments, the most cameras ever sent to Mars, and its exquisitely complex sample caching system, Perseverance will scour the Jezero region for fossilised remains of ancient microscopic Martian life, taking samples along the way,

WHY THE JEZERO CRATER?

► Some 45 kilometers wide, Jezero Crater sits on the western edge of Isidis Planitia, a giant impact basin just north of the Martian equator.

► Scientists have determined

that 3.5 billion years ago the crater had its own river delta and was filled with water.



WOMAN BEHIND THE SCENES

► Indian-American scientist Swati Mohan, who leads the guidance, navigation, and control operations of NASA's Mars 2020 mission played a pivotal role in landing the US space agency's historic Perseverance rover on the Martian surface

► Commenting on her team's role in the current mission, Mohan said during the cruise phase heading towards Mars, their job was to figure out how the spacecraft is oriented, and make sure it is pointed correctly in space ~ "solar arrays to sun, antenna to Earth, and maneuver the spacecraft to get it where we want to go".

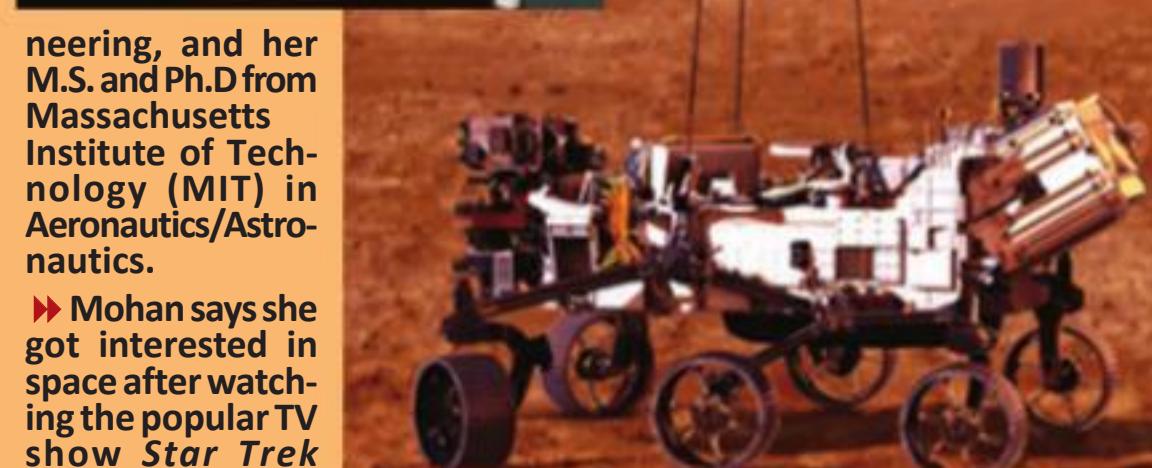
► Raised in Northern Virginia-Washington DC metro area, she completed her bachelor's degree from Cornell University in Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering, and her M.S. and Ph.D. from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Aeronautics/Astro-nautics.

► Mohan says she got interested in space after watching the popular TV show Star Trek when she was 9.

Touchdown confirmed! Perseverance safely on the surface of Mars, ready to begin seeking signs of past life

This landing is one of those pivotal moments for NASA, the US, and space exploration globally – when we know we are on the cusp of discovery and sharpening our pencils, so to speak, to rewrite the textbooks

STEVE JURCZYK
ACTING NASA ADMINISTRATOR



Congratulations to NASA and everyone whose hard work made Perseverance's historic landing possible

JOE BIDEN
US PRESIDENT



Massive breach fuels calls for US action on cybersecurity

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 19 FEBRUARY



intended to address security gaps exposed by the hack. The administration has also proposed expanding by 30 percent the budget of the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency, or CISA, a little-known entity now under intense scrutiny because of the SolarWinds breach.

Republicans and Democrats in Congress have called for expanding the size and role of the agency, a component of the Department of Homeland Security. It was created in November 2018 amid a sense that US adversaries were increasingly targeting civilian government and corporate networks as well as the critical infrastructure, such as the energy grid that is increasingly vulnerable in a wired world.

The reaction reflects the severity of a hack that was disclosed only in December. The hackers, as yet unidentified but described by officials as likely Russian, had unfettered access to the data and email of at least nine US government agencies and about 100 private companies, with the full extent of the compromise still unknown. And while this incident appeared to be aimed at stealing information, it heightened fears that future hackers could damage critical infrastructure, like electrical grids or water systems.

President Joe Biden plans to release an executive order soon that Neuberger said will include about eight measures

Speaking at a recent hearing on cybersecurity, Republican John Katko, a Republican from New York, urged his colleagues to quickly "find a legislative vehicle to give CISA the resources it needs to fully respond and protect us."

In the Houston area, a family died from carbon

monoxide as their car idled in their garage. A woman and her three grandchildren were killed in a fire that authorities said might have been caused by a fireplace they were using.

The storms also left more than 450,000 from West Virginia to Louisiana without power and 100,000 in Oregon were still enduring a weeklong outage following a massive ice and snow storm.

The snow and ice moved into the Appalachians, northern Maryland and southern Pennsylvania, and later the Northeast as the extreme weather was blamed for the deaths of at least 56 people, with a growing toll of those who perished trying to keep warm.

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family died from carbon monoxide as their car idled in their garage. A woman and her three grandchildren were killed in a fire that authorities said might have been caused by a fireplace they were using.

Utilities from Minnesota to Texas used rolling blackouts to ease strained power grids.

But the remaining Texas outages were mostly weather-related, according to the state's grid manager, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas.

Rotating outages for Texas could return if electricity demand rises as people get power and heating back, said Dan Woodfin, the council's senior director of system operations.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott

said Toby Baker, executive director of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Abbott urged residents to shut off water to prevent more busted pipes and preserve municipal system pressure.

President Joe Biden said he called Abbott on Thursday evening and offered additional support from the federal government to state and local agencies.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said residents will probably have to boil tap water in the fourth-largest US city until Sunday or Monday.

Federal emergency officials sent generators to support water treatment plants, hospitals and nursing homes in Texas, along with thousands of blankets and ready-to-eat meals, officials said.

The Texas Restaurant Association was coordinating food donations to hospitals. As of Thursday, more than 1,000 Texas public water systems and 177 of the state's 254 counties had reported weather-related operational disruptions.

Lights back on in Texas; south faces water woes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN (TEXAS), 19 FEBRUARY



Many of the millions of Texans who lost power for days after a deadly winter blast overwhelmed the electric grid now have it back, but the crisis was far from over in parts of the South with many people lacking safe drinking water.

About 325,000 homes and businesses remained without power in Texas on Thursday, down from about 3 million a day earlier, though utility officials said limited rolling blackouts were still possible.

The storms also left more than 450,000 from West Virginia to Louisiana without power and 100,000 in Oregon were still enduring a weeklong outage following a massive ice and snow storm.

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The idea of shutting down the sites as some sort of threat, I thought that was not a good move on their part

AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER SCOTT MORRISON

URGING FACEBOOK TO LIFT ITS BAN ON NEWS ACCESS FOR AUSTRALIAN USERS

THUMBNAILS

Fukushima nuclear plant: Cooling water levels have fallen in two reactors at the wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant since a powerful earthquake hit the area last weekend, indicating possible additional damage, its operator said Friday. New damage could further complicate the plant's already difficult decommissioning process, which is expected to take decades. AP

German hospital attack: Police in Germany said Friday that two people have died and three others were injured in an attack at a psychiatric hospital in Lueneburg. A 21-year-old man who admitted himself to the hospital on Thursday is suspected of attacking two male patients during the night and killing them. He also injured two female nurses. The man has been arrested. AP

Infections across UK falling: A closely monitored survey has found that new coronavirus infections across the UK have fallen sharply, just days before Prime Minister Boris Johnson outlines a roadmap as to how lockdown restrictions in England can be eased in the weeks and months to come. The Office for National Statistics said in its weekly infection survey that rates of transmission have fallen across all four UK nations. AP

Four soldiers killed in Pak: Unidentified armed men opened fire on Zaman Khan check-post in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, killing at least four paramilitary soldiers. The attack took place on Thursday in Kahan area of Kohlu district. One soldier was injured in the attack, sources said. PTI

Prince Harry and Meghan will not return to royal duties

LONDON, 19 FEBRUARY

Prince Harry and wife Meghan Markle, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, will not be returning as working members of Britain's royal family, Buckingham Palace announced on Friday.

In a statement on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II, Harry's grandmother, the palace said that the Duke and Duchess had informed the monarch of their decision as a one-year so-called cooling off period since their initial announcement to step back as frontline royals comes to an end next month.

As a result, the 94-year-old monarch wrote to them of the decision and also said that all their honorary military appointments and royal patronages will be redistributed among other working members of the royal family.

"The Duke and Duchess of Sussex have confirmed to Her Majesty The Queen that they will not be returning as working members of The Royal Family," reads the Buckingham Palace statement.

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

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

While all are saddened by their decision, The Duke and Duchess remain much loved members of the family, the statement concludes.

Harry, 36, and Meghan, 39, had made a formal exit as frontline royals to work towards a more financially independent future in March 2020.

It had been agreed at the time that the arrangement would be reviewed at the end of a 12-month period.

The couple have since relocated to the US with one-year-old son Archie. PTI

Myanmar: Woman shot in protest dies

Mya Thwet Thwet Khine was shot during a demonstration in the capital, Naypyitaw, on 9 February and was put on life support in a hospital

ASSOCIATED PRESS
YANGON, 19 FEBRUARY

A young woman who was shot in the head by police last week during a protest against the military coup in Myanmar died Friday, her family said.

It was the first confirmed death among thousands of protesters who have faced off against security forces since the junta took power on 1 February, detained the country's elected leaders and prevented Parliament from convening.

Mya Thwet Thwet Khine was shot during a demonstration in the capital, Naypyitaw, on 9 February, two days before her 20th birthday. Video showed her sheltering from water cannons and suddenly dropping to the ground after a bullet penetrated the motorcycle helmet she was wearing. She had been on life

support in a hospital with what doctors said was no chance of recovery.

Hersister, speaking from the hospital's mortuary, urged people not to give up their struggle to restore democracy.

"Please participate and continue fighting until we achieve our goal," said Mya Thatoe Nwe. She said the funeral will be held Sunday.

Protesters have hailed Mya



Anti-coup protesters hold images of deposed Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi as they gather outside the Hledan Centre in Yangon on Friday. AP

ment from the authorities, confirmed the death.

A spokesman for the ruling military did not deny that she had been shot by security forces, but said at a news conference this week that she was in a crowd that had thrown rocks at police and the case was under investigation.

There were no independent accounts of her taking part in any violence.

Human Rights Watch accused the police in Naypyitaw of having "blood on their hands."

"The officer who pulled the trigger must be investigated, arrested, and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director of the New York-based group. "That's the only suitable way to honor the memory of this brave young

woman."

Demonstrations continued Friday in Yangon, the country's biggest city, and elsewhere. Security forces have been relatively restrained so far in confronting protesters in Yangon, but appeared to be toughening their stance in areas where there is less media presence.

Police used force for a second day to arrest pro-

esters in Myitkyina, the capital of the remote northern state of Kachin. The Kachin ethnic minority has long been in conflict with the central government, and there has been intermittent armed struggle against the army there for decades.

On Thursday night in the southeastern city of Dawei, several people were wounded by rubber bullets when police staged nighttime raids to try to arrest activists, local media reported. Large but peaceful protest marches have taken place in the city, with negotiations between the demonstrators and the authorities to avoid confrontations.

Tom Andrews, the independent UN human rights expert on Myanmar, told The Associated Press this week that the initial restraint of police in dealing with "robust citizen opposition to the coup" has moved in some instances to use

of rubber bullets, real ammunition and water cannons.

Speaking from the United States, he also said "hardened" troops were being deployed from border areas to some cities, raising the possibility of bloodshed and a tragic loss of life."

The junta says it took power after detaining nation-al leader Aung San Suu Kyi and preventing Parliament from convening because elections last November were tainted by voting irregularities. The election outcome, in which Suu Kyi's party won by a landslide, was affirmed by an election commission that has since been replaced by the military. The junta says it will hold new elections in a year's time.

The US, Britain and Canadian governments have imposed sanctions on the new military leaders, and they and other governments have called for Suu Kyi's administration to be restored.

UK vows to share vaccines, but details thin as G-7 meets

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 19 FEBRUARY



Leaders of the Group of Seven economic powers are holding their first meeting of 2021 on Friday, and vowing to share coronavirus vaccines with the world's poorest countries though details of how soon and how much they will give remain scarce.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain, which holds the G-7 presidency this year, is meeting virtually with the leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Canada, Japan and the United States to discuss international challenges - chief among them the pandemic that has killed almost 2.5 million people around the world.

Wealthy nations have snapped up hundreds of millions of doses of vaccines against the virus, while some countries in the developing world have little or none.

Johnson, whose country has had almost 120,000 coronavirus deaths, will promise to give the majority of any future surplus vaccines to the UN-backed COVAX effort to vaccinate the world's most vulnerable people, and will encourage other G-7 countries to do the same, the British government said.

But foreign office minister James Cleverly said it was difficult to say with any kind of certainty when or how much Britain could donate.

The French president's office said France was ready to hand over 5 per cent of its doses but would not give exact numbers or a date.

European governments are under pressure to speed up their domestic vaccination campaigns after being outpaced by Britain and the US

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman, Steffen Seibert, signaled broad support for Macron's proposal but said details still have to be thrashed out. Seibert told that there is an understanding in principle with the French president that European countries will hand over some of their stock to poorer countries on other continents that so far have not been supplied." When that will happen, in what steps, certainly still has to be discussed," he said.

In an interview with the Financial Times, Macron noted that Russia and China have been quick to offer doses of their own products to some African nations.

As the African continent awaits delivery of doses through COVAX, an African

Biden to announce \$ 4 billion vaccine sharing campaign

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 19 FEBRUARY

US President Joe Biden will on Friday announce a massive USD 4 billion commitment to the global Covid-19 vaccine alliance with the goal of inoculating vulnerable populations and reach those without other options, the White House said.

A formal announcement in this regard would be made by Biden during his address to the virtual meeting of G-7 leaders.

He will also call on G-7 partners to prioritise a sustainable health security financing mechanism aimed at catalysing countries to build the needed capacity to end the pandemic and prevent the next one, the White House said.

Using money appropriated by a bipartisan Congressional vote in December 2020, the US will provide an initial USD 2 billion contribution to Gavi, the vaccine alliance for COVAX Advance Market Commitment-the innovative financ-

ing instrument of COVAX Facility which supports access to safe and effective vaccines for 92 low- and middle-income economies.

The Biden administration will also take a leadership role in galvanising further global contributions to COVAX by releasing an additional USD 2 billion through 2021 and 2022, of which the first USD 500 million will be made available when existing donor pledges are fulfilled and initial doses are delivered to AMC countries.

In close cooperation with Gavi, this additional USD 2 billion in funding will serve to expand COVAX's reach.

We also call on our G7 and other partners to work alongside Gavi, to bring in billions more in resources to support global Covid-19 vaccination, and to target urgent vaccine manufacturing, supply and delivery needs, the White House said.

Finally, President Biden will reaffirm the US commitment to global health security and advancing the Global Health Security Agenda.

He is hopeful that US re-engagement with the world following the America first years under Donald Trump will mean a more coordinated response on issues including Covid-19 and climate change.

Biden has pledged to join the COVAX initiative, which Trump refused to support, and to distribute USD 4 billion in US funding to the program.

Friday's G-7 meeting and a speech by Biden at the Munich Security Conference the same day comes the day the United States officially

rejoins the Paris climate agreement, the largest international effort to curb global warming. Trump pulled the US out of the landmark accord in 2017.

The Biden administration also said it was ready to join talks with Iran and world powers to discuss a return to the 2015 deal to curb Tehran's nuclear ambitions, which was repudiated by Trump.

For Johnson, the G-7 presidency is a chance to demonstrate Britain is still a key global player following its exit from the EU, which became complete at the end of 2020.

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JAB FOR ALL SEASONS



Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison (left) watches as Sarah Fletcher (second from left) is taken through procedure of receiving a vaccine at the Sydney local health district vaccination hub in Sydney on Friday. Vaccinations for Covid-19 are scheduled to begin nationwide in Australia on Monday. AP

Africa reaches 1,00,000 known Covid-19 deaths as danger grows

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NAIROBI (KENYA), 19 FEBRUARY

Africa has surpassed 100,000 confirmed deaths from Covid-19 as the continent praised for its early response to the pandemic now struggles with a dangerous resurgence and medical oxygen often runs desperately short.

We are more vulnerable than we thought, the director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, John Nkengasong, told The Associated Press in an interview reflecting on the pandemic and a milestone he called remarkably painful.

Health officials who breathed a sigh of relief last year when African countries did not see a huge number of Covid-19 deaths are now reporting a jump in fatalities. The Africa CDC on Friday said overall deaths are at 3 May and 23 January. While it is not clear how many were from the virus, there was a close correspondence of the time of the excess deaths with the increases in confirmed Covid-19 cases in each province, the South African Medical Research Council said.

Deaths from Covid-19 increased by 40 percent in Africa in the past month compared to the previous month, the World Health Organization's Africa chief, Matshidiso Moeti, told reporters last week. That's more than 22,000 people dying in the past four weeks.

Since most countries in Africa lack the means to track mortality data, it is not clear how many excess deaths have occurred across the continent since the pandemic began.

We are definitely not counting all the deaths, especially in the second wave, the Africa CDC's Nkengasong told reporters last week.

While the continent is not seeing a massive number of deaths, he asserted that most people in Africa now know someone who has died of Covid-19.

China considers new actions to lift flagging birthrate

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING, 19 FEBRUARY

China's plunging birthrate is now seen as a major threat to economic progress and social stability

seen a major population decline as young people and families depart for better opportunities elsewhere.

The region comprising the three provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang saw its total population decline for the seventh straight year by 427,300 in 2019 over 2018.

Authorities said last week that registered new births fell 15.3 per cent last year to just 10 million.

China abandoned its one-child policy in 2016 to allow families to have an additional child.

However, the move had only a temporary effect on the birthrate, with many couples citing the high cost of raising children and other economic and social barriers in deciding not to have more children.

Experts have been calling for further reforms because of economic concerns and the problem of an aging population.

China had a population of 1.34 billion in 2010 with an annual growth rate of 0.57 per cent, down from 1.07 per cent a decade earlier, statistics bureau data show.

The latest census was conducted in the second half of last year and the results have not yet been released.

A UN report says India is projected to overtake China as the world's most populous country by 2027.

Old habits imperil Iraq as doctors warn of second virus wave

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BAGHDAD, 19 FEBRUARY

In the busy emergency room of Baghdad's main public hospital, Ali Abbas stood face uncovered, waiting for his sickly father. Dozens of other patients and their relatives mingled without masks.

It's a scene that confounds health workers in Iraq, who warn that the country is entering a new wave of coronavirus cases, in part because many shirk precautions.

I don't believe in the corona-virus, I believe in God, the 21-year-old Abbas said in the middle of the hospital floor, defying the facility's rules requiring masks.



BLASPHEMOUS BUFFON

Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon (photo, left) has been fined 5,000 euros by the Italian football federation for blasphemy. The 43-year-old Italian World Cup-winner, who escaped a ban for the offence, was overheard using a "blasphemous expression" towards team-mate Manolo Portanova during Juve's 4-0 league win over Parma on 19 December.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Joyful tears: A net bowler with the Indian team right now, Karnataka's K Gowtham is still trying to get a grip on his emotions after landing a mind-boggling Rs 9.25 crore deal with Chennai Super Kings which left his parents and wife shedding tears of joy.

'Excited, exhausted': Australia fast bowler Jhye Richardson, successful in the Big Bash, was left "excited as well as exhausted" after inspiring a "life-changing" bid of Rs 14 crore from Punjab Kings at the Indian Premier League's mini-auction in Chennai on Thursday.



Choice accepted: Shakib Al Hasan has decided to skip a tour of Sri Lanka in April to play in the Indian Premier League and the Bangladesh Cricket Board has granted him the permission to do so, Bangladesh Cricket Board official Akram Khan told the media.

Pak league: Spectators will return to stadiums in Pakistan for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic began when the sixth edition of the Pakistani Super League begins in the city of Karachi on Saturday. Attendance will be put down to 20 per cent of the capacity.

Badminton decision: The Badminton World Federation on Friday announced it had extended the Olympic qualification period to 15 June. This came after the postponement of the Malaysia Open and the Singapore Open tournaments, listed in the process.

Juve's plight: Andrea Pirlo's Juventus were branded clueless and devoid of ideas as their Champions League last-16 campaign stumbled midweek with a blundering 2-1 first-leg defeat at Porto. Two goals at the start of each half punished the Italian champions.

Key factor: Borussia Dortmund's Erling Haaland said his brace against Sevilla in the Champions League on Wednesday was inspired by watching Paris St Germain's Kylian Mbappe net a hat-trick against Barca. Mbappe set the elite competition alight on Tuesday.



More matches: Arsene Wenger said proposed changes to the Champions League did not respect its "sporting merit," planning a "single table" with 36 teams to replace the current format, with eight groups of four. The number of matches will rise thereby by 100.

Brazil win: Marta scored on a penalty kick in the 30th minute and Brazil went on to defeat Argentina 4-1 in the opening match of the SheBelieves Cup. Marta now has 109 career goals for Brazil. Debinha and Adriana added early second-half goals for Brazil.

Lloris backed: Tottenham Hotspur manager Jose Mourinho said goalkeeper Hugo Lloris still had "all my trust and confidence" despite a number of costly errors in recent matches. Lloris had an impressive start but was at fault for a number of goals lately.

THE INDEPENDENT

Kohli reveals his battle depression; bats for professionals to deal with it

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

India captain Virat Kohli has revealed that he battled depression during a harrowing tour of England in 2014 where he felt like the "loneliest guy in the world" after a string of failures in the Test series.

"You just don't understand how to get over it. That was a phase when I literally couldn't do anything to overturn things... I felt like I was the loneliest guy in the world," he said of the England tour.

Kohli remembered feeling alone despite the fact that there were supportive people in his life. He said professional help was what he needed.

"Personally, for me that was a revelation that you could feel that lonely even though you a part of a big group. I won't say I didn't have people who I could speak to but not having a professional to speak to



who could understand what I am going through completely. I think it is a huge factor."

"I think I would like to see it change."

The India captain, considered one of the best batsmen in modern cricket, believes mental health issues cannot be overlooked as they can destroy a person's career.

"Someone whom you can go to at any stage, have a conversation around and say 'Listen this is what I am feeling, I am finding it hard to even go

to sleep, I feel like I don't want to wake up in the morning. I have no confidence in myself, what do I do?'

"Lot of people suffer with that feeling for longer periods of time, it carries on for months, it carries on for a whole cricket season, people are not able to get out of it," Kohli said.

"I strongly feel the need for professional help there to be very honest," he added.

Kohli is currently in Ahmedabad for ongoing home Test series against England. The two teams have won a game each and will compete in the third Test from February 24.

Fondly remembering his growing up days, Kohli said the Indian team of '90s had really inspired him to take up the sport.

"The Indian team of '90s really opened up my imagination about what could be done with the sport because

it is so different from anything else I had seen before. It just instilled a lot of faith and belief in me that magical things can be done if an individual believes or decides," he said.

"That's where the spark started... the dream of wanting to play for the country really started."

Kohli lost his biggest supporter, his father Premchand, at the age of 18 and he considers it as the "most impactful" incident of his life.

"...that incident really put things in proper perspective for me. My father did work very hard in initial days to make sure that I get the best cricket gear or I continue with my cricket practice."

"From there on it made my belief even stronger that come what may, I am definitely going to realise my dream to play at the highest level and represent my country," he said.

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Medvedev's streak at 20; faces Djokovic in Oz final

AGENCIES

MELBOURNE, 19 FEBRUARY

Daniil Medvedev simply does not lose right now. Not to Top 10 opponents. Not to anyone, really. Certainly not to a drained Stefanos Tsitsipas in the Australian Open semifinals.

Now let's see what happens against Novak Djokovic in Rod Laver Arena.

Medvedev made it to his second Grand Slam final as he pursues his first major championship, overwhelming fifth-seeded Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-2, 7-5 on Friday at Melbourne Park to run his winning streak to 20 matches. That includes a dozen victories against members of the Top 10.

"He's a player," Tsitsipas said, "who has unlocked pretty much everything in the game."

Tsitsipas, a 22-year-old from Greece, came out flat, looking drained after an epic four-hour victory over Rafael Nadal in the quarterfinals Wednesday, coming back from a two-set deficit.

Still, Medvedev was terrific, getting broken just once and accruing 17 aces among his 46 winners.



of 20 shared by Nadal and Roger Federer.

Djokovic, who won his semifinal against 114th-ranked qualifier Aslan Karatsev on Thursday, is a combined 17-0 in semifinals and finals at Melbourne Park.

"It's him that has all the pressure, getting (closer) to Roger or Rafa in the Grand Slams, Medvedev said. So I just hope that I'm going to get out here, show my best tennis. As we see, I can win (against) some big names if I play good. That's the main part. He has, for sure, more experience, but more things to lose than me. Medvedev was the runner-up to Nadal at the 2019 U.S.

Open.

"It was my first Grand Slam final against one of the greatest, said Medvedev, a 25-year-old from Russia. Sunday, I'm going to come (up) against one of the other greatest.

It took just 75 minutes for Medvedev to grab a two-set lead against Tsitsipas. He went up 3-1 in the third before Tsitsipas made things a tad more interesting, if only briefly, by taking three games in a row, including his only break of the match.

But Medvedev, his baseline defense exquisite, proved too tough. "I'm happy that I managed to change my focus and change the momentum, Medvedev said.

Earlier, down a set and a break in the second, Tsitsipas sat down at a changeover and cracked an open water bottle, causing a splash on the court that forced ball kids to scramble for towels to wipe up the mess. The petulant scene drew a side-eye from Medvedev.

Early in the third set, Medvedev told chair umpire James Keothavong that Tsitsipas' father, who also coaches him, is talking way too much from the stands.

Tsitsipas and Medvedev

already have a bit of an uncomfortable history, dating to their first meeting on tour at the 2018 Miami Open. Medvedev won that one he started their rivalry with a 5-0 edge, although Tsitsipas claimed the most recent matchup before Friday's and it ended with some verbal volleys.

They tried to smooth things over through the media in recent days, including Tsitsipas backtracking from denigrating Medvedev's style of play. "Might have said in the past that he plays boring, but I don't really think he plays boring," Tsitsipas said this week. He just plays extremely smart and outplays you. A pretty good summation of what happened in the semifinal.

Melbourne has a sizable Greek population, and Tsitsipas got a much warmer greeting, replete with flapping blue-and-white flags, when he arrived at the court; Medvedev actually heard some jeers.

Attendance at the stadium was capped at 50% capacity about 7,500 when fans were allowed to return to the tournament after being barred for five days during a lockdown due to a rise in COVID-19 cases.



Ankita wins maiden WTA title, assured of doubles top-100 entry for first time

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MELBOURNE, 19 FEBRUARY

India's Ankita Raina (in photo) on Friday claimed her maiden WTA title by lifting the Phillip Island Trophy along with Russian partner Kamilla Rakhimova, afeat which will catapult her into the top-100 in the doubles for the first time in her career.

Ankita and Kamilla erased a one-set deficit to beat the Russian combination of Anna Blinkova and Anastasia Potapova 2-6 6-4 10-7 in the summit clash here.

The 28-year-old Indian shared the \$8000 prize money with her partner and earned 280 ranking points, which will take her to 94 from the current 115 when the WTA doubles chart is updated next week.

Ankita will become only the second player to crack the doubles top-100 since Sania Mirza, who is a six-time Grand Slam champion.

The past two weeks have been extremely memorable for the gritty Indian, who made her Grand Slam debut at the Australian Open in the doubles, and also won a round in the main draw of a WTA singles tournament.

Elevated at her performance and the result, Ankita says the singles top-100 is also just around the corner.

"It's been a great week. Kamilla and I played together for the first time. We signed up just 20 minutes before the draw because there was a lot of confusion with the entry list.

"Kamilla plays very aggressive, has good strokes and I just had to ask her to be aggressive at the net, which she did," Ankita told PTI.

"It was not that draw was easy, we beat some good players who were tough not only in doubles but in singles, too. Kamilla has great fighting spirit. It's great... first WTA titles and doubles top-100, too. I am looking forward to crack singles top-100," she added.

"We were 7-9 down by two match points in the semis. I had some great volleys. I was working on that and when I could do that (execute) in match nothing is more exciting."

ATK Mohun Bagan crush rivals SC East Bengal

AGENCIES

FATORDA, 19 FEBRUARY

went five points clear of second-placed Mumbai FC, brightening their chance to walk away with the League Winners' Shield and sealing the AFC Champions League slot.

Having seen their ultra defensive approach break in by Roy Krishna's incisive raids, the Red-and-Gold started looking dangerous with set-pieces but were completely outplayed by the Antonio Lopez Habas-coached side.

Roy Krishna's strong control and finishing skill was on offer early into the start when he sprinted towards goal, dribbled past the goalkeeper Subrata Paul and found the back of the net from the night for his sixth goal in as many matches.

After the cooling break, the Red and Gold Brigade suddenly looked dangerous with their set-pieces and it was Tiri who became the culprit to a goal to their rivals.

It seemed Tiri was blocked by their central defender Sandesh Jhingan as he could not view ball properly to get the deflection into his own net.

But it did not matter much as Roy Krishna toyed with SC East Bengal's fragile defence and set up the two goals for Williams and Tiri.

"We knew how dangerous they could be from set-pieces, but we're glad that we bounced back after the own goal. We showed the character in the second half," Roy Krishna said.

It also meant that they

NEROCAFC down Sudeva Delhi FC

KOLKATA, 19 FEBRUARY

NEROCA FC gave themselves a chance to finish in the top six by blanking Sudeva Delhi FC 2-0 in the I-League here on Friday.

Goals by Judah Garcia (45th minute) and super-sub Songpu Singsit (72nd) ensured a victory for Gift Raikhan's side in a hard-fought game against the newcomers.

NEROCA had the first sight of goal in the seventh minute, as Garcia disposed of Naorem Tondombaba and his long-distance attempt hit the side-netting of Rakshit Dagar's goal.

Sudeva's Naorem Mahesh threaded a through pass for Shubho Paul, but NEROCA's custodian Bishorjit Singh came off his line to collect it.

Sudeva's Shaiborg Kharpan was brought down just outside the area by Bishorjit Singh in a one-on-one on the 37th minute. Luckily for the keeper, the young striker's touch was heavy and he earned just a yellow card for his tackle.

Mahesh's shot from the following free-kick looped into the hands of Bishorjit Singh for a goal. He then finished off a quick counter-attack to make it 2-0 in the 57th. Fernandes let Marcus Rashford's pass go behind him to Daniel James, then received the ball back and fired inside the right post. Rashford added the third in the 64th and James completed the scoring in the last minute.

United are playing in the Europa League for the third time in five seasons, a drop for a club once regarded as continental heavyweights.

Ajax left it late to beat Lille 2-1 in France, where US forward Timothy Weah opened the scoring for Lille in the 72nd. It was Weah's second goal in the competition. The 20-year-old forward is the son of former Milan great George Weah, the current president of Liberia.

Renato Sanchez gave away a penalty for a foul on Nicols Tagliafico, and Duan Tadic equalised from the spot in the 87th, two minutes before he illustrated why Madrid had paid Tottenham a record transfer fee for his services in 2013.

Alastair's Matt Doherdy exactly where he wanted the ball, outpaced Jonathan Scherzer to reach it, then stopped to leave the Wolfsberg defender sprawling, before curling a powerful shot past goalkeeper Alexander Koller with his left boot.

Bale showed Matt Doherdy exactly where he wanted the ball, outpaced Jonathan Scherzer to reach it, then stopped to leave the Wolfsberg defender sprawling, before curling a powerful shot past goalkeeper Alexander Koller with his left boot.

Bale has been struggling in his second spell at Tottenham, making just seven Premier League appearances. He recently irked Jos Mourinho for posting "Good session today" on Instagram with the Tottenham coach saying there was "a contradiction between the post and the reality."

Lucas Moura eluded a number of defenders to make it 3-0 in the 34th. A penalty from Michael Liendl gave the Austrians some hope in the second half, but Vinicius, who had come on during the break for Son, scored from close range in the 88th.

Wolfsberg is playing for the first time in the knockout stages of a European competition.

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