

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | TUESDAY | 16 FEBRUARY 2021



**NATION | 4**

**Assam key to Act  
East Policy: EAM**



**WORLD | 5**

**Suu Kyi custody  
to be extended**

**SPORTS | 8**

**FIR against Yuvraj Singh  
over casteist remarks**



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Vol. 25 No. 287 Established 1940 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

**WEATHER**

Max: 34.0°C  
Min: 16.0°C  
RH: 73%  
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Clear.  
Max/Min temp.  
33/16 °C

**COVID-19  
COUNT**

CASES	DEATHS
(+9,447)	(+84)
1,09,25,278	1,55,840

**STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS**

(+99)	(+2)
TS: 2,96,666	1,618
(+30)	(+1)
AP: 8,88,899	7,163

**CASES AROUND THE WORLD**

10,95,45,726

**DEATHS**

24,14,794

**COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES**

219

worldometers.info/  
coronavirus

**ASTROGUIDE**

**Sarvari:** Uttarayana  
**Tithi:** Magha Shuddha Panchami  
till 5.46 am (Wednesday)  
**Star:** Revati till 8.58 pm  
**Varjyam:** 7.44 am to 9.30 am  
**Durmuhurtam:** 9.04 am to  
9.49 am; 11.14 pm to 12.04 am  
**Rahukalam:** 3 pm to 4.30 pm

**HJRI CALENDAR**  
**Rajab** 3,1442 AH  
**PRAYERS**  
**(ROYAL MOSQUE)**  
**Fajar:** 5:40 am  
**Zohar:** 1:30 pm  
**Asar:** 4:30 pm  
**Maghrib:** 5:48 pm  
**Isha:** 8:30 pm

**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6:28 AM**  
**SUNSET TODAY 6:05 PM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 9:28 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 10:47 PM**

**COUNTER POINT**

You can't meet any minister. But don't worry. They will come to your house shortly!

**SHORT TAKES**

**SC notice to  
Centre, WhatsApp**

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Centre and WhatsApp to reply to a fresh plea alleging lower standards of privacy for Indians in comparison to European users saying it is the duty of the judiciary to protect citizens' privacy. People have grave apprehensions and it is our duty to protect them, SC said.

**WPI inflation  
rises to 2.03%**

**New Delhi:** The wholesale price-based inflation rose sharply to 2.03 per cent in January on costlier non-food manufactured items and experts are projecting further uptick in the rate of price rise in the next few months. The wholesale price index inflation was 1.22 per cent in December, 2020 and 3.52 per cent in January last year.

**Kerala scribe gets  
5-day bail from SC**

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Monday granted 5-day interim bail to journalist Siddique Kappan, arrested on his way to Hathras where a young Dalit woman had died after being allegedly gang-raped, to visit his ailing mother. The court, however, said that during his visit he shall not give any interview to the media, including social media.

## Ashwin has a ball with bat



Ravichandran Ashwin plays a shot during the 3rd day of second cricket test match between India and England at M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Monday.

## South Zonal meet in Tirupati

### Shah to chair Council on March 4, southern CMs to attend

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 15

Andhra Pradesh would host the 29th edition of the Southern Zonal Council meet in Tirupati on March 4. The meeting will be chaired by Union home minister Amit Shah.

The SZC comprises Andhra Pradesh, Telangana state, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry

**THE SOUTHERN ZONAL council comprises Andhra Pradesh, Telangana state, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry**

while the Union Territories like Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Lakshadweep would be special invitees. Chief

ministers/Lt. governors, chief secretaries, government advisers and senior officials will attend the meet.

AP chief secretary Adityanath Das reviewed the arrangements for the SZC meet with officials here on Monday. He called for steps to facilitate darshan of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala for about 100 participants through the

good offices of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam.

He called for fool-proof security arrangements, high-speed internet with wi-fi and Lan facilities along with laptops and big-size LEDs at the venue. He advised the health authorities to keep Covid-19 testing kits, masks, sanitizers and other requirements as per Covid-19 protocol for the participants.

## NIGERIAN WOMAN TO LEAD WORLD TRADE BODY

**New Delhi, Feb. 15:** Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has been selected as the next chief of the World Trade Organization (WTO), becoming the first woman and the first African to be chosen to head the Geneva-based body.

Members of WTO on Monday agreed by consensus to select Okonjo-Iweala as the next Director-General of the 164-member body. She will take office on March 1 this year. According to a WTO statement, Okonjo-Iweala said a key priority for her would be to work with members to address the economic and health consequences brought about by the Covid. "WTO members made history with a consensus to select Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala as the organization's seventh director-general," the WTO said. — PTI

## Centre makes accessing local data for maps easier

**New Delhi, Feb. 15:** In sweeping changes in the country's mapping policy, the government on Monday announced liberalisation of norms governing the acquisition and production of geospatial data, a move that will help in boosting innovation in the sector and create a level-playing field for public and private entities.

Under the new guidelines, the sector will be deregulated and aspects such as prior approvals for surveying, mapping and for building applications based on that have been done away with. Department of Science and Technology Secretary Ashutosh Sharma said.

For Indian entities, there will be complete deregulation with no prior approvals, security clearances, licenses, for acquisition and production of geospatial data and

**HARSH VARDHAN** said due to this policy, the whole sector will open up in a big way and geospatial data of value of ₹1 lakh crore can be acquired and used by 2030.

**FOR INDIAN entities,** there will be complete deregulation with no prior approvals, security clearances, licenses, for acquisition and production of geospatial data and geospatial data services

geospatial data services, including maps, he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the liberalisation of policies governing the acquisition and production of geospatial data is a "massive step in government's vision for an Aatmanirbhar

Bharat".

The reform will benefit the country's farmers, start-ups, private sector, public sector and research institutions to drive innovations and build scalable solutions, he said.

Science and Technology Minister Harsh Vardhan in a press conference said the easing of norms will greatly help in several sectors that were suffering because of non-availability of high quality maps.

Under the new guidelines, terrestrial mobile mapping survey, street view survey and surveying in Indian territorial waters will be permitted only to Indian entities irrespective of accuracy.

Vardhan said due to this policy, the whole sector will open up in a big way and geospatial data of value of ₹1 lakh crore can be acquired and used by 2030. — PTI

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 15

The State Election Commission issued notification to resume the paused election process for conducting elections to urban local bodies, including 12 municipal corporations and 75 municipalities/nagar panchayats. Elections would be held from 7 am to 5 pm on March 10.

The SEC, in a statement released here on Monday, stated that though it issued notification for conduct of elections for 12 municipal corporations and 75 municipalities/nagar panchayats on March 9 of last year, and had completed 'scrutiny of nominations' on March 14, the process was stopped because of fears amid Covid-19. The SEC said that it had decided to resume the paused election process from the stage of 'withdrawal of candidature' and issued notification for conduct of polls.

As per election schedule, date of commencement of withdrawal of candidature is from 11 am to 3 pm

on March 2; last date for withdrawal of candidature is March 3; date of publication of the list of candidates after 3 pm on March 3; polling date March 10; re-poll, if any, on March 13 from 7 am to 5 pm while date of counting of votes is from 8 am on March 14.

With the issue of notification, model code of conduct has come into force in the urban areas in the state.

Election will be held in 12 municipal corporations, including Vizianagaram, Greater Visakhapatnam, Eluru, Vijayawada, Machilipatnam, Guntur, Ongole, Chittoor, Tirupati, Kadapa, Kurnool and Anantapur.

Election will be held in 75 municipalities/nagar panchayats including district-wise: Srikakulam-Ichapuram, Palasa-Kasibugga and Palakonda; Vizianagaram-Bobbili, Parvathipuram, Salur and Nellikmarla; Visakhapatnam-Narsipatnam and Yelamanchili; East Godavari-Amalapuram, Tuni, Pithapuram,

Samalkot, Mandapet, Ramachandrapuram, Peddapuram, Yelawaram, Gollaprolu and Mummidiavaram; West Godavari-Narsapur, Nidadavole, Kovvur and Jangareddygudem; Krishna-Nuziveedu, Pedana, Vuyyuru, Nandigama and Tiruvuru; Guntur-Tenali, Chilakaluripet, Repalle, Macherla, Sattenapalli, Vinukonda and Piduguralla; Prakasam-Chirala, Markapur, Addanki, Chimakurthy, Kanigiri and Giddalur; Nellore-Venkatagiri, Atmakur, Sullurpet and Naidupet, Anantapur-Hindupur, Guntakal, Tadipatri, Dharmavaram, Kadiri, Rayadurg, Gooty, Kalyanadurgam, Puttaparthi and Madakasira; Kurnool-Adoni, Nandyal, Yemmaganur, Dhone, Nandikotkur, Gudur (K), Allahabad and Atmakur (K); Kadapa-Proddatur, Pulivendula, Jammalamadugu, Badger, Rayachoti, Mydukur and Yerragunta and Chittoor-Madanapalle, Punganur, Palamaneru, Nagara and Puttur.

## 2 more activists to be arrested over toolkit row

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC**  
**with agency inputs**  
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, FEB. 15

Non-bailable warrants was issued against two more people for allegedly sharing the "toolkit" related to the farmers' protest on the social media, the Delhi police said Monday, two days after it arrested climate activist Disha Ravi over the case. Meanwhile, hitting out at the police and other official agencies, scores of social activists and environmentalists called for the immediate release of Ms Ravi, asking the government to stop targeting India's youth. This Delhi police action also triggered a war of words between the Opposition parties and the ruling BJP.

The Delhi police procured a non-bailable warrant from a local court against lawyer Nikita Jacob and environmental activist Shantanu Muluk over the protest "toolkit" shared by Swedish teen



Nikita Jacob

activist Greta Thunberg to support the Indian farmers' protests.

The police claimed Justice Poetic Foundation, the organisation allegedly behind Ms Thunberg's "toolkit", had contacted Mumbai-based Ms Jacob to organise a "tweet storm" ahead of the farmers' Republic Day protests.

Delhi police joint commissioner Prem Nath said at a press conference on Monday that the two, Ms Jacob and Mr Muluk, had attended a Zoom meeting hosted by Poetic Justice Foundation on January 11 to decide the modalities of creating the toolkit. This organisation is suspected to be working for "Khalistani" separatists.

## HC CLEARS DOOR DELIVERY OF RATION GOODS

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 15

Andhra Pradesh High Court allowed door delivery of essential commodities under public distribution system in rural areas in the state.

A single judge bench, headed by Justice DVSS Somayajulu after a hearing in the case on Monday issued an interim order suspending the State Election Commission's earlier order disallowing door delivery of essential commodities in rural areas as it would amount to violation of poll code in the wake of ongoing gram panchayat polls.

Now the civil supplies authorities can continue supply of essential commodities under PDS at the doorstep of the beneficiaries even in rural areas in the state. The court posted the next hearing to March 15.

**A SINGLE judge bench,** issued an interim order suspending the State Election Commission's earlier order disallowing door delivery of essential commodities

## India plans sustained human presence in space

**Bengaluru, Feb. 15:** India plans to have a sustained human presence in space and is coming out with a policy framework and a long-term roadmap.

The Department of Space (DoS) has envisaged a national effort to meet the goal of successful demonstration of human space-flight capability and to achieve the vision of sustained human presence in space.

India's maiden human space flight module 'Gaganyaan' will be launched after the second unmanned mission planned in 2022-23, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said last week.

In her Budget speech,

finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said the first unmanned launch is slated for December this year.

The DoS has now put up for public consultation on the website of the Indian Space Research Organisation which comes under the former, the draft "Humans in Space Policy for India — 2021" and guidelines and procedures for its implementation.

DoS believes that given the collaborative nature of human spaceflight due to its multi-disciplinary nature, it is essential to have a policy-framework, which not only fosters partnerships but also

addresses proliferation concerns and compliance to existing policies, laws and treaties.

"Human-spaceflight programme needs to be sustained over longer periods to deliver tangible benefits," according to the draft. Hence, it is essential that the policy enables sustained presence in low earth orbit and beyond through reliable, robust, safe and affordable means by undertaking appropriate capacity building measures like collaborations, infrastructure development, facilities modernisation, technology development and human resource development. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## HC APPOINTS AMICUS CURIAE IN NANI GAG ORDER

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 15

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has appointed senior counsel P. Sri Raghuram amicus curiae to assist the court concerning free speech and restrictions imposed on it in a case dealing with gag order served on minister for civil supplies Kodali Sri Vekateswara Rao by the State Election Commission.

A division bench headed by justice D.V.S.S. Somayajulu held hearing here on Monday, on a house motion moved by the minister on Saturday challenging the SEC's gag order on him until completion of gram panchayat polls on February 21.

The court was not satisfied with the video footage and other material placed before it by both the parties with the minister denying any derogatory remarks made on SEC and also on the State Election Commissioner at a recently held press conference while the SEC wanted the court to take the video footage of the entire press conference into consideration instead of specific remarks.

The court adjourned the hearing to February 17 for want of proper video footage to find out who went wrong. It appointed the amicus curiae to help it pursue on free speech and restrictions imposed on it.

## PADMA PRESIDENT OF KAKINADA MAHILA MORCHA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, FEB. 15

Guturu Padma has been appointed president of BJP Mahila Morcha of Kakinada parliamentary district.

BJP Kakinada parliamentary district president Ch. Ramkumar has issued orders appointed her as the mahila morcha president.

In addition, Chodiseti Ramesh Babu has been appointed as treasurer of BJP's Kakinada parliamentary district.

## CORPORATOR'S MURDER ACCUSED ARRESTED

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, FEB. 15

The Sarpavaram police have arrested two persons, accused of murdering 9th Ward Corporator of Kakinada Municipal Corporation (KMC) Kampara Ramesh recently.

Kakinada DSP V. Bhima Rao told the reporters on Tuesday evening that Gurajana Veera Venkata Satyanarayana (Chinna) and his minor brother were arrested in the early hours of Tuesday at Pithapuram.

He said that clashes took place for the past one week between Chinna and the deceased Ramesh. He said that Chinna had decided to kill Ramesh and came to the car washing centre to kill Ramesh on the night of February 11. He quarrelled with Ramesh and killed him by running the car on Ramesh. He said that Chinna's minor brother also assisted him in killing Ramesh. He said Chinna would be produced before Special Judicial First Class Magistrate Court at Kakinada and the minor boy would be sent to Juvenile Court. He said they will make use of the CC footage as important evidence in the case. All evidence would be produced before the court, after thorough investigation.

He said three teams, headed by the Kakinada Rural Circle Inspector Akula Muralikrishna, Sarpavaram Circle Inspector Nunna Raju and others have succeeded in nabbing the accused in the case. He said Superintendent of Police Adnan Nayeem Asmi appreciated the police officials to trace the accused.

The Sarpavaram police registered a case and investigating.

● Clashes took place for the past one week between Chinna and the deceased Ramesh. He said that Chinna had decided to kill Ramesh and came to the car washing centre to kill Ramesh on the night of February 11. He quarrelled with Ramesh and killed him by running the car on Ramesh. He said that Chinna's minor brother also assisted him in killing Ramesh. He said Chinna would be produced before Magistrate

## Greyhounds, CRPF officials deployed for agency polls

Closure of polling time reduced to 1.30 pm from 3.30 pm

DC CORRESPONDENTS  
VISAKHAPATNAM/  
KAKINADA, FEB. 15

Greyhounds, paramilitary forces and armed state police have been deployed in agency tracts in East Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts following a boycott call given by the outlawed Maoists.

Taking the threat seriously, no candidates filed their nomination papers for Nenjeri gram panchayat in Peda Bayulu mandal of Visakhapatnam district.

Reports said nearly 1,500 personnel from Greyhounds and CRPF have been deployed in Rampachodavaram and Yetapaka divisions for conducting the third phase elections in agency areas in East Godavari district.

Police officials are coordinating with their counterparts from Sukuma (Chhattisgarh) and Malkangiri (Odisha) and other places in the two States and also Visakhapatnam district to prevent any untoward incidents.

## ADDL FORCES DEPLOYED FOR GP ELECTIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, FEB. 15

The Chittoor police authorities have deployed route mobile parties, special striking forces, and enhanced the intelligence network in the villages for the third and fourth phase of elections.

Superintendent of Police S. Senthil Kumar has revealed this while adding that they have also installed CCTV cameras in some places for maintaining law and order.

During an interaction with the media in Chittoor on Monday, he explained that they had conducted first and the second phase of polls held on February 9 and 13 peacefully in Chittoor and Madanapalli divisions.

"District Police had paid special attention to hypersensitive villages and motivated the electorate to ensure free and fair elections. We had coordinated with all other government departments to conduct the Gram Panchayat elections smoothly," the SP said.

He said they had deputed 2,224 personnel for the third phase.

## DEFEATED SEEKS RECOUNTING OF VOTES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, FEB. 15

A candidate of Velanki gram panchayat sarpanch elections, Devara Daveedu of Velanki village in Kirlampudi mandal of East Godavari district, has urged the State Election Commission to re-evaluate the votes held on February 9.

Daveedu said he has contested in the election with "Cot" symbol and another person Rayudu Swamy contested with "small basket" symbol while two others were also in the contest. He said that when the votes were counted, Rayudu Swamy got 1,185 votes and he got 1,180 votes and Swamy got five votes of majority. But, Daveedu said he and his counting agents demanded the polling personnel for recounting and the officials made recounting. In the recounting, Daveedu won by one-vote majority. But due to the strong pressures from the other group, the officials declared Swamy elected. He requested the authorities to re-evaluate the votes and do justice to him.

● Taking the outlawed Maoists threat seriously, no candidates filed their nomination papers for Nenjeri gram panchayat in Peda Bayulu mandal of Visakhapatnam district.

● Polling would be held in 237 gram panchayats and 1,465 wards on Wednesday. Around 4,36,103 people would be participating in the elections. The district administration has deployed 6,029 polling personnel

● The tribal areas in Visakhapatnam remained sensitive in all the elections and in the fresh call, the Maoists termed the local body elections as bogus and appealed to the people to oust the exploitative parties.

East Godavari Superintendent of Police Adnan Nayeem Asmi said that security personnel are taking all steps to ensure peaceful polling in agency areas. He said that all 11 mandals in Rampachodavaram and Yetapaka divisions are being considered as extremist-affected areas but the attention is more on Chinturu, Yetapaka, Kunavaram, Gurthedu and other 25 villages.

He said that the closure time of polling has also been reduced to 1.30 pm from 3.30 pm.

East Godavari District Collector D. Muralidhar Reddy visited Rampachodavaram and reviewed arrangements with ITDA project officer Praveen Adhithya on Monday.

In Visakhapatnam, armed police personnel would be deployed in all the 237 of 244 gram panchayats going to polls in Paderu division. The tribal areas remained sensitive in all the elections and in the fresh call, the Maoists termed the local body elections as bogus and appealed to the people

to oust the exploitative parties.

"We are not taking any chances and deploying armed personnel at every polling station," said Visakhapatnam rural superintendent of police B. Krishna Rao. More attention would be paid to sensitive mandals like Chintapalle, GK Veedhi and Paderu, he said.

Talking to reporters in Visakhapatnam after a review meeting with project officer of ITDA Dr S Venkateswar, joint collector Venu Gopal Reddy and senior revenue officials on poll arrangements,

Vinay Chand said polling would be held in 237 gram panchayats and 1,465 wards on Wednesday. Around 4,36,103 people would be participating in the elections. The district administration has deployed 6,029 polling personnel, 198 micro-level observers and 82 videographers.

Polling hours have been restricted from 6.30 am to 1.30 pm and counting would begin from 2 pm onwards. The collector said 543 vehicles have been deployed.



Minister Velampalli Srinivasa Rao conducting election campaign at One Town after announcement of the Municipal elections in Vijayawada on Monday. — DC

## No civic body polls for Rjy and 4 municipalities

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, FEB. 15

As per notification issued by the State Election Commission, there will be no elections for five civic bodies — Rajamahendravaram Municipal Corporation in East Godavari district and four municipalities of Bhimavaram, Palakole, Tanuku and Tadepalligudem in West Godavari district.

According to sources, this is on account of near-by villages having been merged with these towns. But demarcation of various wards has not been done taking into consideration the merged villages. Notifications for elections to these five civic bodies will be issued only after boundaries of their respective wards are fixed.

As a result, many aspiring candidates of Rajamahendravaram Municipal Corporation (RMC) and four municipalities of West Godavari have been left disappointed.

## MCT officials gear up for Civic polls

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, FEB. 15

Municipal Commissioner of Tirupati, PS Girisha said the civic body election process will resume from where it was halted last year.

Referring to the notification issued by the State Election Commission on Monday for holding the municipal elections, he made it clear that no new nominations will be allowed.

Girisha said that a total of 333 nominations were filed for all the 50 wards of which nine were rejected at the scrutiny stage. As of

now, the number of nominations filed stands at 324. Around 249 polling stations will be set up to enable approximately 2,66,762 voters to exercise their franchise.

Of the total 2,66,762 voters, 1,32,577 are male voters, 1,34,200 female and 55 voters in the others category.

The voters' list which was updated in January 2019 will be followed.

Addressing a press conference at Tirupati, Girisha said that the model code of conduct (MCC) will come into force with immediate effect.

ed. "We had been waiting for the notification to contest elections. We are disappointed that RMC has

not been included in the list," rued an aspiring candidate of Telugu Desam.

ed and developed in united AP.

Andhra Pradesh advocate general Sriram submitted that according to the AP Reorganisation Act, headquarters of Schedule IX institutions should be shared on basis of the population ratio of 58:42 between the two states. He said this applies to all assets of office headquarters located in Hyderabad.

Whereas, Telangana advocate general B.S. Prasad argued that as per Section 53 of the Act, properties situated within the vicinity of the respective state belong to that state, except the administrative office buildings, Prasad submitted that Telangana

## Review meeting



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy conducts review meeting on Urban housing and Solid waste management at the camp office on Monday

## Min ridicules Naidu for false statements

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, FEB. 15

Industries minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy took potshots at TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu for his statement that his party candidate had won the gram panchayat seat in Brahmanapalli village, which is the Minister's native place.

Flashing a certificate issued by the returning officer to showcase that his follower, who was present with the minister, won with 1,088 votes, he demanded the TDP to produce evidence of their candidate's win.

Speaking to media persons here on Monday,

Reddy said that TD had no candidate for the Brahmanapalli seat.

Maintaining that four TD candidates had joined YSRC soon after being elected as sarpanches on Sunday, he said that the four-decade experience of Naidu is only useful to make atrocious claims but not for the development of Andhra Pradesh. He advised media personnel to verify the veracity of Naidu's statements before reporting them.

Reddy said YSRC bagged 24 panchayats in his native Marripadu mandal besides 90 per cent of seats in six mandals falling in Atmakur constituency represented by him.

## Poll officials gear up for 3rd, 4th phase

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, FEB. 15

Officials of Nellore and Prakasam are gearing up for the third and fourth phase of elections in gram panchayats of their respective districts on February 17 and 21.

Senior officers have directed returning officers to take all steps to ensure transparency, apart from free and fair elections. Arrangements should be such that results of elections are declared by 10 p.m. on the election day.

SPSR Nellore district collector K. V. N. Chakradhar Babu instructed returning officers to taking a decision on recounting of votes from applicants within 15 minutes of concluding the counting process. He asked officials to examine reasons for delay in

announcement of results in the first and second phases of elections. This will help them in checking any lapses in the next two phases of gram panchayat elections.

The collector asked returning officers to opt for lottery system and declare results if two candidates in fray receive equal number of votes. He ordered officials to arrange fir webcasting in 100 polling stations of Gudur division and 50 in Naidupeta division during the third phase.

Election observer Basanth Kumar warned action will be taken against polling officers who delay announcement of results with a vested interest. He underlined that State Election Commission will be closely monitoring the election process in every panchayat.

## MLC ELECTION NOTIFICATION FOR TEACHERS' CONSTITUENCY TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, FEB. 15

Election notification for teachers' constituency today:

East Godavari district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy said election notification for Teachers seat in State Legislative Council from East and West Godavari districts will be issued on Tuesday. Nominations will be received till February 23. Scrutiny will be on February 24. Candidates

can withdraw their nominations on February 26. Polling will be held on March 14 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Counting of votes will be on March 17.

The collector said there are total 17,285 voters in the Teachers constituency, 9,560 in East Godavari district and 7,725 in West Godavari. Convening a meeting with political parties here on Monday, Muralidhar Reddy sought their cooperation in ensuring smooth and fair polls.

## MLA ACCUSES YSRC OF TERRORISING HINDUPUR VOTERS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, FEB. 15

Film star and Hindupur MLA Nandamuri Balakrishna has accused YSRC government of unleashing terror before the gram panchayat elections in his Hindupur assembly constituency. "The situation is no different in all parts of the state. People of Hindupur are ready to teach a lesson to YSRC government for large-scale misuse of power", he remarked.

The film star-turned-politician is on a two-day tour of his Hindupur assembly segment, where gram panchayat elections are scheduled to be held in the fourth phase on February 21.

YSRC party leadership has set its eyes on Hindupur assembly segment, which has been a stronghold of Telugu Desam Party ever since the party had been formed.

Balakrishna is touring his constituency to counter any moves the ruling party may make to wean away TD voters. The star has also been holding meetings with Telugu Desam leaders within his constituency in this regard.

Speaking to media, the Hindupur MLA accused YSRC party of terrorising Telugu Desam workers and leaders in all parts of Hindupur area.

Balakrishna, however, asserted that TD cadres will thwart all moves of the ruling party successfully.

## TTD'S PLANS TO WITHDRAW PINK DIAMOND CASE HIT

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, FEB. 15

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Trust Board is in a fix over withdrawing a defamation case filed against former chief priest of TTD Ramana Deekshithulu and Rajya Sabha member Vijaya Sai Reddy for their allegations on the missing pink diamond during the TD regime.

The TTD had filed a defamation case for ₹100 crore each on Vijaya Sai Reddy and Ramana Deekshithulu in 2018 on allegations of tarnishing the organisation's image then.

Against this backdrop, the Tenth Additional District Court dealing with the case in Tirupati admitted two petitions filed by Telangana Hindu Jana Sakti Welfare Association and an advocate, Haribabu, to become parties in the case.

They have been arguing that the proposal to withdraw the case would hurt the Hindu devotees' sentiments all over the world.

Sources in the TTD said that the latest development is a setback to the organisation which is trying to take back the case and resolve the issue through Lok Adalat.

● The TTD had filed a defamation case for ₹100 crore each on Vijaya Sai Reddy and Ramana Deekshithulu in 2018 on allegations of tarnishing the organisation's image then.



## IN BRIEF

THREE CHILDREN  
DROWN IN TANK  
NEAR NH-16DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, FEB. 15

Three children belonging to Bujabuja Nellore went missing when they ventured into a tank for swimming at Chemudugunta located close to NH-16 in the outskirts of Nellore city late on Sunday evening.

Parents of the kids launched a search for the trio when they failed to return home on Sunday night and complained to the police after their efforts failed.

The incident came to light when police deployed swimmers to locate the bodies when they noticed their cycles and dress on the banks of the tank near Nakkala Colony on Monday morning.

The deceased have been identified as SK Aleem, 13, of Samatha Nagar, Parlappalli Venkata Sai, 13, of Vikalangula Nagar and Mopur Rajesh, 13, of Bhaghat Singh Colony at Bujabuja Nellore in Venkatachalam mandal.

27-YEAR-OLD  
WOMAN ENDS  
LIFE BY SUICIDEDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, FEB. 15

A woman identified as Rupa Devi, 27, committed suicide allegedly unable to bear the harassment by her husband and in-laws at Nehru Nagar in Tirupati on Monday.

Based on a complaint of the victim's mother, SI of Tirupati West Police Station, Chalapati filed cases against seven persons including her husband and his kin responsible for the suicide.

In another incident, a worker S. Neelakantiah, 40, was electrocuted during the construction of a building in MR Palli near Tirupati on Monday. MR Palli SI Narasimham booked a case and investigating.

5 PERSONS HELD  
FOR SMUGGLING  
GANJA IN NELLOREDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, FEB. 15

Police arrested five persons for smuggling and marketing ganja in Nellore city and recovered 4.250 kg of the banned substance from the accused on Monday.

According to the Vedayapalem Police, one Bhaskar, a resident of Bujabuja Nellore area, was found trading ganja in the city after obtaining the stocks from Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts.

Following a tip-off, a police team conducted a raid on a secret stock point near Technology Bhavan and seized 4.250 kgs of ganja.

The team apprehended Kudicheti Usha, Kamala Vinay, Arava Sampath, Konda Praveen, and SK Khaleel belonging to various parts of the city while they were shifting the stocks.

Vedayapalem Circle Inspector P. Ramakrishna, SI B. Lakshmana Rao, Nellore rural tahsildar and others participated in the raids.

They registered a case with Crime No. 58/2021 of Vedayapalem police station under sections 272, 273, 328 IPC and Section 8 (C).

MINISTERS VOW  
AID TO KIN OF  
ACCIDENT VICTIMSDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, FEB. 15

Panchayat raj minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister K. Narayana Swamy assured government support to survivors in the ghastly road accident near Kurnool.

They were speaking to media persons after presenting the financial assistance provided by the government to two families who lost their breadwinners at Madanapalle on Monday.

They promised to take care of the children of the deceased who survived in the accident. They consoled the family members of the deceased at Madanapalle, Tarigonda (Gurramkonda mandal) and Thummanamgunta in B.Kottakota (mandal) where the bodies are buried.

Legislators Peddireddy Dwarakanath Reddy, Nawaz Basha, and Chintala Ramachandra Reddy and Madanapalli Sub Collector Jahnavi were present with the ministers among others.

## VSP: TD's dharna on Feb. 18

Naidu asks TD leaders and cadre to hold state-wide protests

DC CORRESPONDENTS  
VIJAYAWADA/VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 15

Telugu Desam chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu has called upon the party leaders and cadre on Monday to hold protests all over the state on February 18, Thursday, against privatisation of the Visakh Steel Plant.

In a statement here on Monday, the former CM stressed on the need for a relentless struggle against the ruling YSR Congress and "its plans" to have a deal with the South Korean steel giant, Posco. He alleged that CM Jagan was trying to save himself from the disproportionate assets case and bent on handing over the steel plant, the pride of AP and the nation, to private entities.

Naidu said Jagan entered into a "secret deal" to grab the surplus land of the steel plant. The land is having a very high value in market, he said, and added that the CM was "prostrating" before the Centre on the steel plant issue.

The TD chief deplored the way the steel plant was being denied the exclusive allotment of mines for raw materials, in the name of privatisation, and called upon the people to raise their voice and "save" the steel plant. Naidu said the steel plant was providing livelihood directly to over 40,000 people and was also indirectly supporting the survival of nearly 50,000 people. He vowed that the stir against the plant privatisation would continue until the Centre abandoned its present plan.

Naidu would arrive in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday to address a huge gathering of party men at the TD office in Gajuwaka where former MLA Palla Srinivasa Rao is on an indefinite fast



GVMC contract employees demonstrate during the Vanta-vaarpu programme in protest against the CPS system by the government outside the District Collectorate in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

Learn from farmers, CPM  
Raghavulu tells agitatorsDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 15

Politburo member of CPM B.V. Raghavulu asked the steel plant agitators to intensify their movement on the lines of farmers agitation which has been going on for last one and half months.

Raghavulu called on the

trade unions who have launched a relay hunger strike at the Kurmannapalem junction close to the steel plant main gate on Monday.

Addressing a huge gathering, Raghavulu said the central leaders remained firm on the farm laws even though 500 farm unions are camping,

cooking, and agitating, which has drawn the world attention.

"I do not think the central leaders will come down so easily. The agitation has to be more intense and should spread all over the state to bring pressure on the NDA government," Raghavulu said.

● Atchannaidu announced that Naidu would give new directions on how to hold the agitation on the steel plant issue.

against the privatisation of VSP.

AP TD chief K. Atchannaidu announced here on Monday that Naidu would give new directions on how to go

hold the agitation on the steel plant issue. Though Rao was earlier infected with coronavirus, he was firm in his determination to stage the hunger strike.

He appealed to the ruling party members to resign from their elected posts if they were serious about stopping the privatisation move, and assured them that that TD would not put up any candidate in the by-elections.

Former home minister N. Chinaraajappa, former mayor and TD leader Sabbam Hari and former minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao also called on fasting Palla Srinivasa Rao.

Another district-level leader Pasarla Prasad offered prayers at Simhachalam temple seeking blessings for the good health of Palla Srinivasa Rao.

## Brahmotsavams at Mopidevi begin

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 15

The annual Brahmotsavams of Sri Valli Devasena Sametha Subrahmanyaswara Swamy began on a grand note in Mopidevi village in Krishna district on Monday.

Lord Subrahmanyaswara was decorated as a groom, and the deity Valli Devasena as a bride amidst chanting of Vedas under the supervision of endowments assistant commissioner G.V.D.N. Leela Kumar and temple chief priest B. Pawan Kumar and special pujas were performed to the couple.

The endowments assistant commissioner offered silk robes to the lord and deity with temple honours amidst chanting of Vedas and



Endowments assistant commissioner G.V.D.N. Leela Kumar presents Silk robes at Subrahmanyaswara Swamy temple at Mopidevi in Krishna district on Monday.

slokas on behalf of the department of endowments. The temple chief priest helped the official

to offer the silk robes ceremonially to the lord and deity. Temple superintendent

VVL JOINS GANTA  
TO INTENSIFY  
RINL AGITATIONDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 15

Former minister and Visakhapatnam north MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao and retired IPS official V.V. Laxminarayana, popularly known had discussions on strategies to intensify the agitation on the privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant and make it a state-wide movement.

Laxminarayana contested 2019 general elections for Visakhapatnam Lok Sabha constituency representing Jana Sena party and came in the third place after YSRC candidate M.V.V. Satyanarayana, who won the election, and TD candidate M. Sri Bharat.

He quit the party in January 2020 after differences arose with the party founder president Pawan Kalyan.

Staying away from active politics, he started Join for Development Foundation and began working in agriculture, rural development, youth innovations and environment and related areas.

Laxminarayana agreed to mobilise intellectuals, students and non-political organisations all over the State while I will deal with the political parties and trade unions," Mr Srinivasa Rao said.

He said Laxminarayana initially would discuss with the students, teachers and intellectuals in Visakhapatnam and later tour other places in the state.

The senior leader said he was worried about the municipal elections' impact on the steel plant agitation.

CM intervention  
sought into polls of  
Kabaddi associationDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 15

The former Andhra Kabaddi Association secretary K.P. Rao sought the intervention of the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to conduct elections to it and also to enable it to hold the prestigious YSR World Cup in Kabaddi in Visakhapatnam.

In a letter addressed to the Chief Minister here on Monday, Rao alleged that two groups were heading the AKA- with one comprising K.E. Prabhakar and Veeranalkaiah while another one led by Y. Srikanth and added that they were not eligible to conduct Kabaddi state-level championships for the reason that the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh did not recognise them.

He alleged that both the groups were using the letterheads with the same registration number 115/2010 against Andhra Pradesh Societies Registration Act norms. He turned critical on the SAAP for failing to implement sports code strictly in the state resulting in the disputes among district-level associations and said that the prevalence of such an unfavourable situation was not paving the way for conducting the elections to the state-level body.

He said that the three men in the two groups were not even qualified to hold any post as per sports code either in AP or India.

Referring to the support

● In a letter addressed to the Chief Minister here on Monday, Rao alleged that two groups were heading the AKA- with one comprising K.E. Prabhakar and Veeranalkaiah while another one led by Y. Srikanth and added that they were not eligible to conduct Kabaddi state-level championships for the reason that the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh did not recognise them.

being extended to these two groups by a section of legislators and leaders, he called it unfortunate because they were doing so without knowing the facts. He said that the players were victimised as the tournaments conducted by these two groups were not authorised.

He added that the groups' medals and recognition were not helping the players get admission in educational institutions and employment under sports quota in addition to denial of awarding cash incentives to them.

Rao requested the CM nominate an administrator, preferably a retired high court judge or a district judge, to conduct elections to the Andhra Kabaddi Association. He added that it would help the body to conduct YSR World Cup in Kabaddi at an estimated cost of ₹25 crore with nearly 30 countries to take part and providing live coverage to more than 250 countries in the world.

AP records 30 new  
Covid cases, 1 deathDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 15

Andhra Pradesh registered 30 fresh cases of Covid-19 and one death in the last 24 hours. On Monday, the state health authorities reported that out of 18,834 samples tested, 30 persons were confirmed with Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,35,65,062 samples tested, 8,88,899 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 8,81,041 recovered while undergoing treatment while 695 are still active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of Covid-19, Kadapa registered seven followed by five in Guntur, four each in

Chittoor and Nellore, three in East Godavari, two each in Anantapur, Krishna and Visakhapatnam, one in West Godavari and zero cases in Kurnool, Prakasam, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram.

With regard to the cumulative active Covid-19 cases,

● Kadapa registered seven followed by five in Guntur, four each in Chittoor and Nellore, three in East Godavari

Chittoor continued to register the highest number of 142 followed by 111 in Krishna, 91 in Kadapa, 78 in East Godavari, 57 in Nellore, 51 in Prakasam, 49 in Guntur, 36 in West Godavari, 28 in Visakhapatnam, 21 in Anantapur, 15 in Kurnool, 11 in Vizianagaram and five in Srikakulam.

Among the daily Covid-19 deaths, only one case was registered at Krishna, raising death toll to 7,163.

The state health authorities discharged 69 Coronaivrus infected patients after recovery in the last 24 hours in the state.

AP conducted Covid-19 tests on 2,54,027 samples per one million population and registered a positive rate of 6.55.

3 of a family drown  
after car falls into  
SRSP canalDC CORRESPONDENT  
JAGTIAL, FEB. 15

In a tragic incident that occurred in the early hours of Monday, three members of a family died and one sustained minor injuries when the car they were travelling in fell in the Sri Ram Sagar Project (SRSP) canal at Medipally.

The deceased were identified as advocate Katkaneni Amerandar Rao (58), resident of Housing board colony here, his wife Shirisha (52) and daughter Shreya (25). Amerander's son Jayanth survived with minor injuries.

According to police, the four were going to their native Joginipally village for taking part in celebrations organised in the village temple.

When the car was near Kattekunta village, the driver failed to control the wheel and fell into the SRSP canal. Jayanth, who was driving the car, managed to open the door and swam to safety in the canal. The remaining three struck in the car were swept away by the heavy flow of water.

Jayanth after coming out of the canal informed the locals who in turn conveyed the

● WHEN THE car was near Kattekunta village, the driver failed to control the wheel and fell into the SRSP canal. Jayanth, who was driving the car, managed to open the door and swam to safety in the canal.

● THE REMAINING three struck in the car were swept away by the heavy flow of water.

information to the officials police and revenue department. They tried to retrieve the car from the canal.

Although a crane did bring out the vehicle, the other three died of suffocation. The police sent the bodies to the government main hospital for post-mortem and started investigation by registering the case.

Amerandar was a relative of TRS party's Jagtial MLA, Dr Sanjay Kumar. Having learnt about the accident, the MLA along with district collector, G. Ravi, district superintendent of police Sindhu Sharma and additional collector B. Rajesham visited the hospital and consoled Jayanth. Shreya was engaged recently.



Fishermen grade the Tuna fish before packing for the exporting at the fishing harbour in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

— DC



## IN BRIEF

FOREIGN  
SECRETARY TO  
VISIT MOSCOWDC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, FEB 15

Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla will visit Moscow on a two-day official visit beginning Wednesday to hold the next round of India-Russia Foreign Office Consultations with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov, during which “the two sides will review the entire gamut of bilateral relations, including the forthcoming high level exchanges”, New Delhi announced on Monday.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was initially expected to visit India last year for the India-Russia Annual Summit but both the visit and Summit could not take place then due to the Covid pandemic. Both India and Russia are time-tested friends and continue to have a strong relationship especially in the defence and civil nuclear sectors.

In a statement on Monday, the MEA said, “Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla will pay an official visit to Moscow on 17-18 February 2021 at the invitation of Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mr. Igor Morgulov. Foreign Secretary will hold the next round of India-Russia Foreign Office Consultations with Deputy Foreign Minister Morgulov, during which the two sides will review the entire gamut of bilateral relations, including the forthcoming high level exchanges.”

COVID: NIGHT  
CURFEW IN 4 GUJ  
CITIES EXTENDEDDC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, FEB 15

Amid a significant decline in the number of active cases of Covid-19 in the country, particularly National Capital Delhi, the government has asked all Central government employees to start attending offices as it was before lockdown.

There will be no exemption to any category of employees, except for those living in the containment zones. Such staff and officers will work from home and come to office only after their containment zone is de-notified. Offices will, however, follow staggered timings to avoid overcrowding in work-places and meetings will be largely conducted through video conferencing. Biometric attendance for the time being will remain suspended. All department canteens too will be opened with safety protocols in place to avoid crowding.

The country on Monday registered 11,649 fresh cases and 90 deaths. While new cases in most of the states are on a decline, in a major worry Maharashtra has once again started reporting high number of cases.

India till now has vaccinated 85.16 lakh persons. Meanwhile, Gujarat announced to extend its 12 am to 6 am curfew in four cities – Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodra, and Rajkot – till February 28.

SPURIOUS LIQUOR  
CLAIMS 4 LIVES IN  
MADHYA PRADESHRABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, FEB 15

Four people died after consuming ‘spurious’ liquor in Chhatrapur district, police said on Monday. The incident took place in the village of Paretha.

According to the police, around 150 people had gathered at the place of one Shital Ahirwar (60) in the village for a party on February 9.

Some of them procured liquor of brand “Dilse” from a liquor contractor hailing from Uttar Pradesh.

Many of them who consumed the liquor were taken ill, according to the police.

While Ahirwar’s son died on Friday, he succumbed on Saturday. Two more people, Tulidsas Brar and Laluram Ahirwar, died on Sunday night.

“Viscera of the four deceased were sent for tests”, Chhatrapur district superintendent of police Sachin Sharma said. A team of district officials and police officers rushed to the village to ensure proper medical treatment of the affected people.

The incident comes in the wake of the death of 24 people caused by spurious liquor in Morena district in Chambal division in the state last month.

SC TELLS FB,  
WA: YOU MAY  
BE \$2-3 TR  
COMPANY, BUT...PARMOD KUMAR | DC  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 15

Holding that people’s privacy is more important than money, the Supreme Court on Monday issued notice to the Centre, WhatsApp and its parent company Facebook on a plea challenging its new privacy policy about which reservations have been voiced in certain sections.

“You may be a \$2-3 trillion company, but people’s privacy is more valuable and it is our duty to protect their privacy,” said a bench headed by Chief Justice Sharad A Bobde, noting that the people have grave concerns about privacy.

The Court was hearing a plea seeking to restrain WhatsApp from implementing its new privacy policy in India. The application has been moved by two college students – Karmanya Singh Sareen and Shreya Sethi in a matter pending before a Constitution bench wherein 2016 policy is under challenge.

The petition sought a direction to the web service platforms to apply the same privacy policy which is made applicable to the users in the European Union region.

Senior lawyer Shyam Divan, appearing for the petitioner, told the apex court that WhatsApp has in January “come up with a new privacy policy”.

“One set of privacy standards apply to Europe and a different set of standards apply to Indians. This happens when the Personal Data Protection Bill is pending,” Divan said while asserting “there is a huge differentiation between Europeans and Indians”.

Senior counsel Kapil Sibal, who appeared for WhatsApp, denied that the users’ data would be compromised by the new policy.

“This 2021 policy is applicable everywhere apart from Europe as it has a law. If India has a law, we will follow the same,” he said.

At this the CJJ asked him to put that on oath.

WhatsApp had earlier in January renewed its terms of service and privacy policy.

## Covid cases jump in Maha



A Royal Bengal Tiger jumps from a pond inside an enclosure at the Byculla Zoo in Mumbai on Monday. The zoo reopened on Monday after 11 months of closure due to the coronavirus pandemic. The “3T formula” of tracing, testing and treatment will have to be implemented strictly to tackle a rise in Covid-19 cases in some parts of Maharashtra, state health minister Rajesh Tope said in Aurangabad on Monday.

- PTI

BJP, Oppn clash over  
climate activist’s arrest

## Vij calls for ‘extermination of seeds of anti-nationalism’

**Chandigarh, Feb 15:** The action taken by the Delhi Police on an FIR related to a toolkit shared by climate campaigner Greta Thunberg in support of the ongoing farmer protests has triggered a war of words between the Opposition and the ruling BJP.

Accusing the government of “murdering democracy” by using force against a 21-year-old, the Opposition on Monday said the voice of India cannot be silenced even as the BJP defended the action, saying a crime is a crime no matter at what age.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi led the Opposition offensive following the arrest of 21-year-old Disha Ravi in the case and said the country will not be silenced.

“Your lips are free to speak. Say that the truth is still alive. They are scared, not the country,” he said in a tweet in Hindi.

“India will not be silenced,” he added. Delhi Chief Minister

Arvind Kejriwal said, “Arrest of 21 year old Disha Ravi is an unprecedented attack on Democracy. Supporting our farmers is not a crime.”

RJD leader Manoj Jha said democracy is under threat. “I am worried about democracy, as it is passing through the most difficult times,” he said. Union minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Gajendra Singh Shekhawat tweeted: “If age is the criteria then Param Veer Chakra Second Lt Arun Khetarpal, martyred at 21 is who I am proud of. Not some toolkit propagandists.”

BJP general secretary B L Santosh tweeted, “21 year old...environment activist...student...Are these credentials for becoming a part of breaking India forces? How does she get the access for editing tool kit...? Why she is part of anti-national WhatsApp groups...? Many questions...But only one answer...21 year old.”

“Bengaluru, Greta Thunberg, Vegan, sole bread winner, student, 21 year old, passionate activist...so many attempts to white wash a sin...!! Not one anarchist ready to answer the question...How 21 year old student got access to edit Toolkit,” he asked.

Meanwhile, in a comment on the arrest of climate activist Disha Ravi, Haryana Home minister Anil Vij on Monday urged “extermination of the roots” wherever seeds of anti-nationalism found.

The minister’s remarks came two days after Disha Ravi was held by the Delhi Police for allegedly sharing with climate activist Greta Thunberg the toolkit related to the farmers’ protest against the Centre’s farm laws.

The Delhi Police had claimed that the 21-year-old activist was an editor of the “toolkit Google doc” and “key conspirator” in the document’s formulation and dissemination.

In the document, various urgent actions, including

creating a Twitter storm and protesting outside Indian embassies, were listed to support the protest.

“Whoever harbours the seeds of anti-nationalism in their mind, that has to be destroyed from the roots (*samool naash*), be it #Disha Ravi or anyone else, Vij said in a one line tweet in Hindi.

Later, the minister posted a response from the Twitter after a complaint was filed regarding his tweet. The response from Twitter read, We have received a complaint regarding your account, @anilvijminister for the following content (Vij’s particular tweet in Hindi (*Desh virodh ka beej* Whoever harbours the seed...).

We have investigated the reported content and have found that it is not subject to removal under the Twitter Rules or German law. Accordingly, we have not taken any action as a result of this specific report, the response said.

- PTI

Security up along other  
parts of Indo-China borderDC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, FEB 15

Even as Indian and Chinese forces have started the disengagement process in the Ladakh sector, Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), which is the Indo-China border guarding force, is clearly not taking any chances.

It has further increased its deployment along other parts of Indo-China border like North-East, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh to ensure that the Chinese Peoples’ Liberation Army (PLA) “does not open a new front and confrontation zone” in these areas.

Home Ministry sources said that the ITBP has

taken timely action by enhancing deployment along the Indo-China border so that the Chinese security personnel do not try any transgression exercise in other sectors.

“We had some information that in an attempt to deflect attention from the ongoing disengagement process in Ladakh, Chinese PLA could create problem in some other areas along the border. So we have deployed additional ITBP troops in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, higher and remote areas of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. Our security forces are alert and we will not let PLA create any further mis-

chief,” a senior Home Ministry official remarked.

Both Indian and Chinese security forces agreed on a withdrawal formula in the Ladakh region following prolonged negotiation lasting several months. But Indian security forces remain on “very high alert” all along Indo-China border.

Sources said that all sector commanders of the ITBP are taking daily reports from even advance and remote check posts on Chinese activity in their respective zones. These daily reports are then compiled and a detailed analysis is being sent to the Home Ministry.

External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar here on Monday said that Assam is the springboard of India’s Act East Policy which aims at to create connectivity that will make the state more energetic, contributing and employed.

Asserting that all-round development of Assam is central to the success of the policy, the minister told reporters that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is deeply committed to the development of Assam, and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)-aided projects in the state are examples of how international partnerships can contribute to the development of states. The minister, accompanied by Japanese Ambassador Satoshi Suzuki, was here to review JICA-assisted projects.

DYFI worker,  
hurt in police  
lathicharge, diesRAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, FEB. 15

A DYFI worker Moidul Islam Middy (31), who was critically wounded allegedly in the police lathicharge during last week’s Nabanna rally of the Left parties’ youth wings demanding jobs, succumbed to injuries at a private nursing home, prompting the CPI(M), it’s ally Congress and the BJP in the Opposition to accuse the Mamata Banerjee government of his “murder”.

The auto-rickshaw driver from Kotolpur in Bankura was the breadwinner of his family.

On February 11 he participated in the DYFI-SFI march which turned violent as the rallyists and police clashed with each other. With deep injuries Moidul was rescued from Esplanade. He was rushed to a clinic from where he was later shifted to a private nursing home run by CPI(M) leader and doctor Fuad Halim.

Dr Halim said, “On February 13 morning, Moidul was admitted after his medical tests showed development of an acute kidney failure. It happens only when muscles get hit continuously to become wounded and it’s internal protein comes out and blocks the kidney through blood. He had massive muscle injuries from the lathicharge by the police.”

CPI(M) MLA Sujana Chakraborty claimed, “A bright youth was murdered and turned into a corpse.”

Leader of the Opposition Abdul Mannan alleged, “It is a brutal murder which reflects unlimited atrocities of an autocratic government.”

State BJP president Dilip Ghosh said, “This is unfortunate. Trinamul Congress government has lost its control over everything.”

Wondering if Mr Chakraborty talked of getting her call about the DYFI worker’s death first, the chief minister however said, “Any death is sad and unfortunate. Post mortem report will reveal the cause of death. But the police was neither informed nor complained about it. Family of the deceased was not

MAA KITCHEN:  
DIDI LAUNCHES  
MEALS FOR ₹5DC CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA, FEB. 15

In what appears to be yet another attempt by her to outclass the BJP with sops for the voters in poll-bound West Bengal, chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday launched a scheme ‘Maa Kitchen’ offering daily meal at ₹5 to the poor.

The menu includes rice, daal, vegetables and egg (one piece) curry in a plate available on a first come first served basis from 1 pm to 3 pm.

Kickstarting the project from Nabanna, Ms Banerjee informed that her government would bear a subsidy of ₹15 per plate in the initiative which would be run by self-help groups and would expand across the state.

Two outlets have been started in South Kolkata.

“It is a unique idea which was announced in the state budget. I will go to taste the food one day. This programme is aimed for the common people. It will create a business set-up,” Ms Banerjee said about the concept which is the brainchild of election strategist of the ruling Trinamul Congress: Prashant Kishor. The move resembles to Amma Kitchens’ launched by late AIADMK leader J Jayalalithaa in Tamil Nadu.

informed also though the youth was admitted to a hospital two days ago. He might have had a kidney or any other ailment before his death.”

“Any hospital is mandated to share information with the local police station in such cases. But it was not done. I told Mr Chakraborty that I am ready to provide a job and financial assistance to the family of the deceased,” she added. Post-mortem report, however, indicated of assault only on the legs of the deceased, according to the police.

Agitated over his death, some DYFI cadres heckled a cop and torn apart his uniform during a protest in the city.



S Jaishankar

EAM: ASSAM IS  
SPRINGBOARD  
OF ACT EAST  
POLICYMANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, FEB. 15

External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar here on Monday said that Assam is the springboard of India’s Act East Policy which aims at to create connectivity that will make the state more energetic, contributing and employed.

Asserting that all-round development of Assam is central to the success of the policy, the minister told reporters that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is deeply committed to the development of Assam, and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)-aided projects in the state are examples of how international partnerships can contribute to the development of states. The minister, accompanied by Japanese Ambassador Satoshi Suzuki, was here to review JICA-assisted projects.

## U'KHAND | TRAGEDY

## Toll stands at 54 while officials say 150 people are still missing

## Atmosphere in Tapovan village grim as kin lose hope

**Tapovan, Feb 15:** As bodies are being continually pulled out of the muck-filled power project tunnel here, the atmosphere outside is getting grimmer with families of the missing people losing hope of seeing them alive. Every time a body is brought out of the adit tunnel, families waiting outside for over a week, take some time to pluck up the courage to see if the mortal remains are of a loved one or not.

And the temporary relief of not finding a family member among the dead is brief as they are soon gripped by despair when

they see rescue personnel battling through tonnes of sludge choking the tunnel and are reminded that eight days have elapsed since the calamity happened. Nine bodies have so far been recovered from the tunnel at Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel project site taking the toll in the tragedy to 54, while officials say 150 people are still missing.

Out of the three bodies recovered from the tunnel on Monday one is of Satyapal Singh Bartwal from Masoli village in Pokhri area of Chamoli district. “We hoped

Satyapal would return alive. But now we will have to return home with my brother’s body. It’s unbearable,” said his elder brother in a choked voice.

Over a dozen relatives of Bartwal including his brother, who had been camping at Tapovan village since the day the tragedy struck, broke down inconsolably after identifying the body.

The crowd of disheartened relatives at the tunnel site has begun to disperse. Those who remain are found hanging around the mortuary where the bodies are being brought

one after another.

Relatives of Jitendra, a resident of Jammu brought out dead from the tunnel on Sunday are also packing up to leave.

“Seven of us had come from Jammu after we heard of the glacial disaster in Chamoli on February 7 and my brother’s phone was switched off. We had been scouring different areas of Tapovan and Joshimath for four days in search of Jitendra until his body was brought out of the tunnel on Sunday. It’s tragic,” Jitendra’s younger brother Pavan said.

- PTI



Mother Chuttku Devi and other family members of Mithlesh Kumar, who has been missing after flash floods in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, at her village Chokad, in Ramgarh district of Jharkhand on Monday.



## SHORT TAKES

## RUSSIAN CARGO SHIP LAUNCHED TO ISS

Moscow, Feb. 15: An unmanned Russian cargo ship launched successfully Monday with a load of supplies for the International Space Station.

The Progress MS-16 cargo ship blasted off as scheduled at 09:45 am (0445GMT) from the Russia-leased Baikonur launch facility in Kazakhstan and reached a designated orbit en route to the station.

It is carrying water, propellant and other supplies and is set to dock at the space outpost Wednesday.

The space outpost is operated by NASA's Kate Rubins, Michael Hopkins, Victor Glover and Shannon Walker. Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Soichi Noguchi and Russian Space Agency Roscosmos' Sergey Ryzhikov and Sergey Kud-Sverchikov.

## NICKI MINAJ'S FATHER KILLED IN HIT-AND-RUN

New York, Feb. 15: The father of rapper Nicki Minaj has died after being struck by a hit-and-run driver near New York City, police said Sunday.

Robert Maraj, 64, was walking on a road in Mineola, Long Island at 6:15 pm (2315 GMT) on Friday when he was hit, Nassau County Police Department said in a statement.

The driver left the scene of the accident, and Maraj was taken to hospital, where he was pronounced dead on Saturday. "The investigation is ongoing," police added.

The statement did not specify Maraj's relationship to Minaj, but a police spokesman confirmed he was her father.

Minaj, 38, was born in Trinidad and Tobago and raised in the Queens borough of New York City.

The rapper has been nominated for 10 Grammy awards during her career.

## SUSPECT HELD IN NYC SUBWAY STABBINGS

New York, Feb. 15: A 21-year-old Brooklyn man was arrested in the fatal stabbings of two people on New York City subway trains, police said Sunday.

Rigoberto Lopez was taken into custody Saturday night and was formally arrested Sunday on charges of murder and attempted murder, police said. One of the victims was discovered dead on a train in Queens late Friday with several stab wounds to his neck and torso, police said. Two hours later, a 44-year-old woman was found stabbed to death in a subway car in upper Manhattan. Two nonfatal attacks — one involving a 67-year-old man and the other involving a 43-year-old man — also occurred in upper Manhattan.

Authorities believe all four victims were homeless. Police said they believe Lopez may have committed all of the attacks. It wasn't clear if he had an attorney who could speak for him. Police leaders said they would deploy an additional 500 officers into the subway system to guard against future assaults.

## LANDSLIDE IN INDONESIA: 10 DIE, 9 MISSING

Nganjuk (Indonesia), Feb. 15: Torrential rains triggered a landslide on Indonesia's main island of Java that killed at least 10 people, with rescuers digging desperately with their bare hands and farm tools on Monday to locate nine missing people.

Dozens of soldiers, police and volunteers took part in the search in the village of Selopuro in East Java's Nganjuk district, National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesperson Raditya Jati said.

The mud that rolled down from surrounding hills late Sunday struck at least eight houses, injuring 14 people and leaving 21 people buried under tons of mud. Two were rescued on Sunday.

Rescuers on Monday found bodies buried under as much as 6 metres (10 feet) of mud and were searching for the nine people still missing, Nganjuk district chief Novi Rahman Hidayat said. Heavy equipment arrived later to help in the search.

Overnight rains caused rivers to burst their banks in other districts of the province on Monday, sending nearly 1 metre (about 3 feet) of muddy water into some residential areas and forcing hundreds of people to flee from their submerged homes, Jati said.

## Myanmar rattled by army movements, Net shutdown

People around the country flout orders to protest military's seizure of power

Yangon, Feb. 15: Sightings of armored personnel carriers in Myanmar's biggest city and an internet shutdown raised political tensions late Sunday, after vast numbers of people around the country flouted orders against demonstrations to protest the military's seizure of power.

Public concern has already been heightened for the past few nights by what many charge is the military's manipulation of criminals released from prison to carry out nighttime violence and stir up panic. Ambassadors from the United States and Canada and 12 European nations called on Myanmar's security forces to refrain from violence against those protesting the overthrow of their legitimate government. They condemned the arrests of political leaders and activists as well as the military's interference with communications.

"We support the people of Myanmar in their quest for democracy, freedom, peace, and prosperity, they said in a joint statement issued late Sunday night. The world is watching.

The military seized power on Feb. 1, detaining the country's elected leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and members of her government and preventing recently elected lawmakers from opening a new session of Parliament.

The junta, led by Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, said it was forced to step in because the government failed to properly investigate allegations of fraud in last year's election, which Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won in a landslide. The state election commission



Protesters raise their hands with clenched fists during an anti-coup rally in front of the Myanmar Economic Bank in Mandalay, Myanmar on Monday. — AP

found no evidence to support the allegations.

There was no official word about why armored personnel carriers traversed the streets of Yangon in broad daylight Sunday, making their way through busy traffic. As night fell, there were videos and other reports on social media of the movement of trucks packed with soldiers, and in the central city of Mandalay as well.

An order that appears to be from the Ministry of Transport and Communications told mobile phone service providers to shut down internet connections from 1 a.m. to 9 a.m. Monday. — AP

## Suu Kyi detention extended

Yangon, Feb. 15: Myanmar's military leaders have extended their detention of deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi, whose remand was set to expire Monday and whose freedom is a key demand of the crowds of people continuing to protest this month's military coup.

Suu Kyi will now be remanded until February 17, when she will likely appear in court by video-conference, according to Khin Maung Zaw, a lawyer asked by Suu Kyi's party to represent her.

The Nobel laureate remains under house arrest on a minor charge of possessing unregistered imported walkie-talkies.

Suu Kyi's extended detention is likely to further inflame tensions between the military, which seized power during a Feb. 1 coup, and the protesters who have taken to the streets of cities across the Southeast Asian nation seeking the return of the government they elected.

Protesters continued to gather across Myanmar on Monday following a

night in which authorities cut the country's internet access and increased the security presence in major cities seeking to curtail demonstrations.

Thousands of engineers marched on the streets of Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, chanting and holding signs that read: Free our leader, Who stands with justice? and Stop arresting people illegally at midnight.

In Yangon, the country's most populous city, fewer protesters gathered on Monday. — AP



Shah Mahmood Qureshi

## CLASH IN S. ASIA COULD THREATEN STABILITY: SMQ

Islamabad/Karachi, Feb. 15: Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on Monday that any military conflict in South Asia could endanger stability in a region that is critical for global trade flows and security.

Addressing the 9th International Maritime Conference (IMC 21) in Karachi, Qureshi also said that the Indian Ocean offers promising potential for mutual cooperation and collaboration.

"The international community needs to be cognizant of the fact that any military conflict in South Asia could endanger stability in a region that is critical for global trade flows and security," he said.

The foreign minister also alleged that India has nuclearised the Indian Ocean and was continuing to induct advanced weapons systems and naval delivery platforms. He said Pakistan is an important stakeholder in the Indian Ocean security framework. — PTI

## Virus: Tougher travel rules come into force in Britain

## Briton breaks S'pore quarantine order

London, Feb. 15: The UK's tougher new travel rules to contain the spread of Covid-19 variants came into effect from Monday, involving compulsory hotel quarantines for anyone returning to England from one of the 33 high-risk "red list" countries. Those arriving will have to pre-book and pay £1,750 to spend 10 days quarantining in government-sanctioned hotels, covering the cost of the hotel, transport and two separate tests post-arrival.

Extremely serious breaches of the new norms could result in a 10-year jail term and fines of up to £10,000. Those who have not visited a "red list" country, such as India, must still quarantine for 10 days at home and complete two mandatory Covid-19 tests on the second and eighth day after arriving. "With the emergence of new variants, we must go further. The rules coming into force today will bolster the quarantine system and provide another layer of security against new variants at the border," said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

"These new measures are important to protect our vaccination programme, which has now seen 15 million people vaccinated, we all work towards restoring normal life," he said. Starting Monday, any UK or Irish resident

booked. The two spent nine hours together. Most travellers have to stay in an assigned hotel room or at home for 14 days after arriving in Singapore under Coronavirus quarantine rules. They receive meals and regularly record their temperatures.

Nigel arrived at the State Courts on Monday with Agatha Maghesh Eyamalai, whom he has since married. The Briton said he was guilty of two charges for flouting the rules. Four other charges against him were temporarily withdrawn. The prosecution asked that Nigel be jailed for four weeks and fined 1,000 Singapore dollars (\$750). — AP

who has been in a high-risk destination on the UK's red list — comprising 33 hotspots with Covid-19 variants in circulation — will have to enter England through a designated port and have pre-booked a quarantine package to stay at one of the government's "Managed Quarantine Facilities".

Non-residents are currently not part of the essential-only travel rules of

the Coronavirus lockdown. The government said it has tough measures already in place requiring all travellers into the UK, from any location, to provide proof of a negative Covid-19 test taken no more than three days before departure and non-UK residents from the 33 red list countries are already banned from entering Britain. — PTI

## Israeli hit kills 9 fighters in Syria

Beirut, Feb. 15: Israel fired several missiles early on Monday targeting areas near the Syrian capital, Damascus, Syria's state news agency reported. An opposition war-monitoring group said the strikes killed nine Iran-backed fighters.

The SANA news agency claimed that Syrian air defences shot down most of the missiles, which it said were fired from Syria's Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor with a network of activists on the ground, said the strikes hit positions of the Syrian army's Fourth Division in the mountains near the highway that

links Damascus with the Lebanese capital of Beirut. It said another strike hit Syrian army positions in Kisweh, just south of Damascus.

The Observatory said that of the nine Iran-backed fighters killed, seven were near the Damascus-Beirut highway and two in Kisweh. Weapons depots were also struck in both areas, it added.

Syria's foreign ministry filed a complaint with the UN Security Council and called on the international community to condemn Israel and prevent it from carrying out such attacks in the future. Israel has launched hundreds of strikes against Iran-linked military targets in Syria over the years. — AP

## Meghan again in the family way

London, Feb. 15: Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle are expecting their second child, their spokesman said in a Valentine's Day announcement on Sunday. The couple released a black and white image of them under a tree, all smiles, with Markle, 39, showing signs of pregnancy.

"We can confirm that Archie is going to be a big brother," the spokesman said, referring to the couple's son. "The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are overjoyed to be expecting their second child." Meghan and Harry, 36, who is Queen Elizabeth II's grandson, quit frontline royal duties in March last year and now live in California. The news follows Markle's disclosure in *The New York Times* in November that she had suffered a miscarriage in July.

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said: "Her Majesty, Duke of Edinburgh, Prince of Wales and the entire family are delighted and wish them well." Misan Harriman, a friend of the couple who took the photograph they released, wrote on Twitter: "Meg, I was there at your wedding to witness this love story begin, and

my friend, I am honoured to capture it grow." The couple's departure last year — dubbed "Megxit" by the British press — was a far cry from 2018, when they married in a ceremony at Windsor Castle watched around the world. The mood soured as reports circulated about a rift between Harry and his brother Prince William, second in line to the throne.

Since leaving, they have launched several legal cases against news outlets alleging invasion of privacy — including one that ended on Thursday with a victory against Associated Newspapers in the UK. The cases have attracted criticism from some, as the couple are also launching themselves into the public eye with high-profile commercial projects. Last year they launched a non-profit organisation, Archewell, after giving up a "Sussex Royal" brand as part of the terms of their departure from frontline royal duties. They have started other ventures, including signing a deal with Spotify to produce podcasts that tell "uplifting and entertaining stories". — PTI

## Oz: Google near media pay deals

Canberra, Feb. 15: Google and Facebook were close to striking "significant commercial deals" to pay Australian media for news ahead of Australia creating world-first laws that would force the digital giants to finance journalism, a minister said Monday. Parliament is scheduled to consider the draft laws on Tuesday after a Senate committee last week recommended no changes to the proposed regulations that Google and Facebook have condemned as unwelcome.

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, one of ministers responsible for the legislation, said he had discussions at the weekend with Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Sundar Pichai, chief executive of Alphabet Inc. and its subsidiary Google. Frydenberg had also spoken with Australian news media executives. "We've made real progress, I think, in

the last 48 to 72 hours and I think we're going to see some significant commercial deals which could be of real benefit to the domestic media landscape and see journalists rewarded financially for generating original content, as it should be, and this is a world-leading reform," Frydenberg told Nine Network television.

"No other country has stepped in like we have. It's been a difficult process. It's still ongoing, so let's not get ahead of ourselves. But the discussions to date have been very promising indeed," Frydenberg added. Frydenberg later told Australian Broadcasting Corp. deals were "very close." Google and Facebook did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Google has ramped up its campaign against the proposed law, telling the Senate committee that scrutinised the draft. — AP

## 4-LEGGED | INHABITANT

Ex-PM David Cameron recruited the cat to deal with rats seen near his official residence

## UK's chief mouser celebrates 10 years on the prowl

London, Feb. 15: Larry the cat, a four-legged inhabitant of London's 10 Downing St., is marking a decade as Britain's mouse-catcher in chief on Monday. The tabby cat was recruited by then-Prime Minister David Cameron to deal with a pack of rats seen scuttling close to the British leader's official residence, and entered Downing Street on Feb. 15, 2011. The former stray, adopted from London's Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, was given the title Chief Mouser to the Cabinet Office, an unofficial pest control post.

He was the first cat to hold the rat-catching portfolio since the retirement of Humphrey in 1997, and has loyally served three prime ministers. But it seems like yesterday that Larry was just another cat — as opposed to a media superstar — said Lindsey Quinlan, the head of catery of Battersea.

"Throughout his time at Number 10, Larry has proven himself to not only be a brilliant ambassador for Battersea but also demon-

strated to millions of people around the world how incredible rescue cats are," she said. "His rags to riches tale is yet more proof of why all animals deserve a second chance — one minute they may be an overlooked stray on the streets, the next they could become one of the nation's beloved political figures, with fans around the world."

Larry, who has met a number of world leaders, has been largely unfriendly to men but took a liking to former US President Barack Obama. When former President Donald Trump visited in 2019, Larry took a nap under his car. His grip on the public im-

● AFTER THE December 2019 election, rumours swirled that Larry might be headed for retirement with the news that the new prime minister, Boris Johnson, was a dog man. However, despite the prime minister moving Jack Russell cross Dilyn into Downing Street, Larry remained in office.

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Larry, who has met a number of world leaders, has been largely unfriendly to men but took a liking to former US President Barack Obama. When former President Donald Trump visited in 2019, Larry took a nap under his car. His grip on the public im-

agination is clear — and political leaders know better than to ignore that popularity. The tomcat was a sentimental topic of conversation in Cameron's final appearance in Parliament as prime minister when he said he wanted to quash a rumour that — perish the thought — he didn't like Larry. And just to prove it, he whipped out evidence: A picture of Larry lying on his lap. "He belongs to the house and the staff love him very much — as do I," he said at the time, explaining why

he wasn't taking Larry with him after leaving office. After the December 2019 election, rumours swirled that Larry might be headed for retirement with the news that the new prime minister, Boris Johnson, was a dog man.

However, despite the prime minister moving Jack Russell cross Dilyn into Downing Street, Larry remained in office. Reports of his rodent-killing abilities vary. Larry became known for his occasional scraps with neighbouring cats — espe-

cially Palmerston, chief mouser to the Foreign Office across the street — and fondness for sleep. Palmerston has retired to the country, so things have been a bit quieter of late.

These days Larry, now 14, is often seen by photographers patrolling his turf. Visitors to the building can sometimes find him napping on a ledge above a radiator or sleeping on a floor, where dignitaries occasionally have to step over him. At the heart of government, he specialises in power naps. — AP



DECCAN  
Chronicle

16 FEBRUARY 2021

21-year activist's arrest is a blot on India's democracy

While it's in the fitness of things to expect the judicial system to speak up to protect a citizen against the State's over-reach and high-handedness, it is no surprise that civil society across the country should be furious over the arrest of the 21-year-old Bengaluru climate activist Disha Ravi by the Delhi police over the weekend.

In a Kafkaesque act, a Delhi police team swooped on Ms Ravi at her home in the southern metropolis, whisked her to Delhi without even informing her parents, and produced her before a magistrate without the benefit of counsel, a legal requirement. The activist was charged with being part of a conspiracy with "Khalistan" proponents and is being held for sedition and causing disaffection against the State.

Ms Ravi appears to be a supporter of the ongoing farmers' agitation in the country. In support of this and to oppose the high-handed police action over it, global celebrities, including teenaged Swedish environment activist Greta Thunberg, sent out tweets, unleashing a ferocious campaign, much to the discomfort of the government. FIRs were filed against Ms Thunberg and others for sedition. In the government's eyes, she is guilty of spreading the idea of a "toolkit" to back the farmers' agitation.

In order to understand the maliciousness, indeed the enormity, of what the Indian State has done by arresting Ms Ravi (and two others), it is important to be aware that this so-called "toolkit" is not a handbook of terrorism.

In fact it's no more than guidelines on ways to propagate the farmers' cause through the social media, and is a common expression among activists of all kinds. Indeed, it's no more than what the Hindutva brigade, including the ruling party, have been doing. The difference is that the causes of the climate activists and the Hindutva group are vastly different, with the latter identifying with vile ones like the so-called "love jihad", false propaganda of cow killing against Muslims and dalits, spreading fabrications against their political opponents, and disseminating hate against all voices that call for social harmony and sanity. Ms Ravi's "crime" is that she edited two lines of Ms Thunberg's "toolkit". It is for this that the Delhi police is calling her an "editor" of the "toolkit". Since an outfit called the Poetic Justice Foundation, which apparently supports the idea of "Khalistan", a woolly-headed thought in the minds of some persons of Indian origin in the West, also backs the farmers' cause, all supporters of Indian farmers are being mischievously sought to be equated with "Khalistan" supporters. The practice of such sleight-of-hand by the government is clearly meant to discredit the farmers' agitation. This is a sign of the government running out of ideas about how to contain it. It is not inconceivable that the ground is also being prepared to play the State violence card against the farmers and their leaders, and Ms Thunberg or Ms Ravi, and others like them, are just collateral damage.

But taking unlawful actions against a young woman barely out of her teens can backfire. To many ordinary people, it seems that the Delhi police, which directly operates under the Union home ministry, is degenerating into becoming the praetorian guard of the government in power.

Trump escapes conviction

Former US President Donald Trump may have escaped conviction by the Senate, but history will judge him culpable for the attack on democracy. Only seven Republican Senators voted to convict, like 10 Congressmen had done in the House of Representatives vote to impeach him for the second time. The action of 43 other Republican senators to vote against his conviction wasn't due just to partisanship. Self-preservation was their primary motive, petrified as they were by the prospect of a backlash by the Trump loyalists of a party that has been hijacked by the far right and swears blind loyalty to a President who subverted hoary democratic norms that embroiders American history.

The impeachment managers had built a compelling narrative in the House and laid before the Senate a body of irrefutable video evidence of the armed insurrection on January 6 that Mr Trump may have helped unleash through his bizarre hold on a highly motivated section of conservatives. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell chastised Mr Trump in a telling comment after the vote but hid behind a fig leaf of technicality in the presumed illegality of putting on trial an ex-President. The law may still get Mr Trump for his big lies on the election result, his overt canvassing of officials to overturn the popular verdict and his open embrace of retaliatory violence in egging on supporters.

Evidence has it that Mr Trump did little to act as legislators in the joint session of Congress at Capitol Hill and his own vice-president, Mike Pence, were scared for their lives. It is a comment on the popular vote in today's America that Mr Trump drew 76 million votes, the most after Joe Biden. Truth may have caught up with Mr Trump already. It is also reflected in the world's highest death toll as the President abdicated his responsibility in dealing with the coronavirus as he stood for re-election. What we have to fear is the Trump legacy of alternative facts, conspiracy theories and brazen thuggery. Democracy may have to face many more battles for survival against Trumpism.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



How PM can win hearts, keep bills, end protests



Sriram Karri

A political stalemate deadlocked in a seeming binary is dangerous. It is erroneous, an optical illusion, which often arises out of a bankruptcy of ideas premised in possibilities, leaves both sides strongly entrenched in a zero-sum game. The binary has left its predictable trail of bitterness on both sides of the current battlelines.

Hail George W. Bush, the modern proponent of the equation: You are with us or against us! But this is actually from a more ancient play-book.

It was the general-aristocrat from Athens who would famously terrorise opponents and convert every debate into a seesaw for testing loyalties as he would thunder: Whose side are you one? Cleon, clearly, in 430 BC, was ready for Twitter trolling.

You are either with the farmers, a monolith, with one voice and demand, or with the government — says the modern commandment — no debate or amendment. This law limiting our positions and possibilities for a resolution to a mere binary isn't going away.

What follows is stereotyped playing the player, not the ball. You are a Khalistani anarchist, anti-Indian, out to destroy India's sovereignty at the behest of a neo-international cabal or a puppet of a fascist Hindutva government, out to pledge the farmers' destiny to a corporate crony club.

Even Arundhati Roy, who famously opposed Mr Bush's binary of having to choose between a "malevolent mullah or a mad Mickey Mouse" in the war against terror early in the new millen-

nium, sees no third option now.

There are several hostages to the etched in stone binary: the first is truth. The second is India's farmers' future. The third is the start of a resolution and solution, which can never be ours unless we set aside the mistaken notion that in the pitched battle on Delhi's borders, only one of the two — protesting farmers or the Narendra Modi government — can win. One must step down, after defeat, to ensure the other side wins.

But there is another possibility — the farmers can ensure Mr Modi wins, and the PM can strive to make the protesting farmers triumph — without either side having to make a moral compromise.

Let's begin with the position of common belief, since we lost sight of it: there is an accumulating agrarian crisis in India, marked by smaller landholdings, an unabatingly steep agflation (inflation of agri inputs like the price of seeds, fertilisers, urea, pesticides), transmission losses and unviable costs of financing (most farmers don't get bank loans, private money rates are backbreaking), self-defeating subsidies (loan waivers not applicable to most small farmers and landless tenant farmers), the impact of climate change in a largely rain-fed agri-sector, and unviable farmers (even rich farmers don't have cash to pay for health, education).

With the acknowledgment of a common problem comes an alignment of purpose — to solve the problem, reducing farmers' costs, reducing overall costs of production, eliminating waste, and increasing farmer incomes without making

food too expensive for a nation of over 1.3 billion.

**A benevolent surgical strike on farmers' hearts**

Enough commentary has flowed through editorials, columns, feisty television debates and vituperous social media exchanges about the transformed nature of the agitation. Not just Sikhs from Punjab but Jats, predominantly BJP voters and building blocks of Hindutva, are now resolved to stay put on the ground till the bills are withdrawn.

After Republic Day and the tearful breakdown of Rakesh Tikait, the bills have been reduced to a backdrop, an excuse. The protests are no longer primarily about fears around the potential reduction or doing away with minimum support prices (MSPs), or ending of the mandi system, or the visceral paranoia around corporates getting legal backing to do contract farming or store grain — it is now about hurt farmers set against the hubris of the government.

If the farmers were not emotionally hurt, their pride not invested in staying put on the ground, they would have been convinced by Narendra Modi's defence in Parliament of the three bills. Mr Modi has put the cart ahead of the horse in trying to logically convince people who are plain angry and see the government as arrogant. The resolution can only begin by appealing to the hearts of the Jat farmer protesters with an act to show that the government is not arrogant.

In the next many days, on any day and at any hour of his choosing, Mr Modi should just walk into a protest site and spend several hours. Let him make some rotis at

**In the next many days, on any day of his choosing, Mr Modi should just walk into a protest site and spend several hours.**

the langar, let him listen and to the ladies cutting vegetables, sit on the ground with the leaders as they pass the hookah. Ask them if they are comfortable, if they have everything they need for now. Let him break bread with them, the ice will break on its own.

Yes, that's all it might end up taking to end these protests. Just that. Mr Modi is capable of magic with some sections of people and the protesting Jat and Sikh farmers are part of that section. Once they are no longer angry, and his humble arrival at the protest site will convince them that neither he nor his government is actually arrogant, the stalemate will lead to a thaw.

It is then that Mr Modi can explain that the existing policies have failed the farmer for 50 years and expecting a different result with the same policies would be an Einsteinian measure of insanity. The BJP can talk about how corporate and cooperative procurement of milk have enriched farmers in the dairy sector; and how this policy wishes to replicate the same success for grain.

Prime Minister Modi in their midst will be a visual story for all farmers, the soothing touch needed, the surgical strike on their hearts. It will calm farmers in all protest sites and those elsewhere simmering with anger with a new belief in his leadership, and that his government cares for farmers everywhere. Before he leaves the protest site, having told the world he was there himself, he can throw in a final gesture of affection by asking for some jalebis and rotis to be packed for his dinner — the entire gamut of security and Covid-19 precautions set aside — and he will leave with their hearts.

A little haggling, a little willingness to give in on an odd thing here or there; and the farmers will be happy to leave, with the optics of victory, their pride intact, and return home, their heads held high.

LETTERS

LPG PRICE HIKE

The LPG price has joined race with petrol and diesel prices that keep increasing. The domestic gas prices rose by nearly ₹200 in just two months. This will upset budget of middle class. People are meekly tolerating the troubles. Their silence cannot be taken as approval.

**P. Ramakrishna**  
Rajahmundry

NOBLE DOCTOR

Kudos to Dr Shankar Ramchandani (*Odisha doctor opens 'One-Rupee' clinic to serve poor, DC, Feb. 15*). One would hope that doctors all over the country emulate him and serve the poor. However, doctors like him are minuscule and not enough to even serve one per cent of population. The government should extend logistical support in this regard so that more doctors can do their bit.

**Govardhana Myneedu**  
Vijayawada

PRIVATISATION WOES

Privatisation is not a panacea for all the ills affecting the economy (*BJP helping its corporate friends: CPM, DC, Feb. 15*). It calls for a serious debate and discussion in Parliament with a road map to be prepared on a case-by-case basis. Unregulated private sector greediness can wipe it out at once.

**Dr C. Ghanshyam**  
Visakhapatnam

FRAGILE DEMOCRACY

Yes, democracy is fragile, undoubtedly. It doesn't need a Biden to say so. It's so obvious these days, looking at what's happening around us. It happened in Capitol Hill and at Red Fort. We must transform fragility into firmness.

**K. Nehru Patnaik**  
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN  
Chronicle

Supplies along Ho Chi Minh trail cut

KHE SANH, February. 15

South Vietnamese forces in Laos have totally stopped the movement of troops and supplies along the Ho Chi Minh trail, the General directing the operating said here today.

Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Lam, commander of the estimated 13,000 troop in Laos told newsmen South Vietnamese soldiers were at the junction of the main road of the trail and had stopped any movement along it.

Aakar Patel



Vital areas in kids' health left ignored in Budget 2021

The Union Budget delivered earlier this month was praised for two things. First, that it was spending money in the right place: capital expenditure, which would create value over the long term. And second, that it was transparent. The deficit is three times what it should be, but at least the government has accepted it. Perhaps these two things are enough to make it a good Budget, though one doesn't know. There has not really been any Budget I can remember that made any difference to most people's lives, except perhaps one, and that was in 1991.

However, it is clear the Budget has ignored something that was really urgent. The National Family Health Survey 2019-20, conducted by the government, revealed some terrible numbers.

On four key metrics which represent the nutritional status of children, states recorded a significant fall in 2019-20 compared to the levels in 2015-16. In states like Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal, the share of anaemic and wasted (low weight for height) children was significantly higher than the levels recorded 15 years earlier in 2005-06.

This indicated a reversal of progress that had been hard to win. Even in states such as Kerala, which continued to lead in these indicators, the levels recorded in 2019-20 were poorer than the 2015-16 figures.

The survey put out data for 22 states and Union territories and an analysis of 10 major states was conducted. Anaemia among children was higher in all the 10 states in 2019-20 compared to 2015-16. In Gujarat, Himachal, Maharashtra and West Bengal, a higher percentage of children were anaemic in 2019-20 than were in 2005-06. The percentage of wasted (low weight for height) children was higher in half of the 10 states. In Assam, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra and West Bengal, a higher percentage of children were wasted in 2019-20 compared to 2005-06. In 7 of the 10 states analysed, a higher percentage of children were underweight (low weight for age) in 2019-20 compared to 2015-16.

Stunting (low height for age) was higher in six out of the 10 states compared to 2015-16. The study also found that the incidence of diarrhoea had increased in half the states, including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and West

Bengal. In Bihar it was up from 10.4 per cent in 2015-16 to 13.7 per cent in 2019-20. This is the reality of the situation. We can debate what has caused this and that can wait for another day. The problem is that the Budget that was presented by Nirmala Sitharaman did not acknowledge and therefore didn't accommodate this problem. The mid-day meal scheme, on which crores of children depended for their one good meal of the day, found its budget cut from ₹13,400 crore in FY 2021 to ₹11,500 crore in 2022. This was lower in nominal terms than what it had been seven years earlier. Inflation adjusted, it was 38 per cent lower. The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), meant to provide pre-school children with food, education, primary health-care, immunisation, health checkups and referral services to children under six and their mothers, was also lower in nominal terms, at ₹16,888 crore in FY 2022 versus ₹18,691 crore in 2014-15. The programme, running rural anganwadis or creches, is meant to improve the nutritional and health status of children "to lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child", to "reduce the incidence of

mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropouts", and "to enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education".

Inflation adjusted, this figure was 36 per cent lower for 2022 than it had been the year Prime Minister Narendra Modi took over.

Poshan Abhiyan, the flagship programme meant to improve nutritional outcomes by 2022, was also damaged. The government had released only 46 per cent of the annual outlay by October 31, and for 2022 the budget was cut by 27 per cent.

The drinking water and sanitation department saw its budget officially rise from ₹21,000 crore to ₹60,030 crore, but of that ₹50,000 crore was for the "Central road and infrastructure fund", suggesting a fudge to avoid embarrassing questions. The numbers seemed deliberately made hard to compare with previous spends. ICDS was clubbed with Poshan Abhiyan, the Scheme for Adolescent Girls and the National Creche Scheme, and the whole thing was called Saksham. Its budget for 2022 was less than the previous year's

budget for ICDS alone. The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, the Centre's maternity benefit programme, was clubbed with the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme for girls' education, the Mahila Shakti Kendra and other general gender budgeting, and the whole thing was called Samarthya. It received ₹2,522 crore for 2022, less than the ₹2,858 crore allocated in 2021.

The allocation for Ayushman Bharat (dubbed "Modicare" by Amit Shah) was the same for 2022, ₹6,400 crore, as it was for the year before. There was no provision for minimum wage and health insurance for the Anganwadi and Accredited Social Health Activist (Asha) workers, the individuals whom Mr Modi had called "Covid warriors".

The numbers are not going to improve themselves. They will need external intervention from the government, but that has not happened in this Budget. Whether it was wise on an issue that concerns crores of our children we will not know till the government conducts the next survey.

*The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist*



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,154.13	1.18
Nifty 50	15,314.70	1.00
S&P 500*	3,934.83	0.47
Dollar (₹)	72.68	0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.02	-0.69
Euro (₹)	88.19	-0.12
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,826▼19	0.04
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	63.13	1.12
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.022	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.210	0.00

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Exports rise 6% in Jan; trade deficit narrows

Growing for the second consecutive month, the country's exports rose 6.16 per cent year-on-year to \$27.45 billion in January following healthy growth in pharma and engineering sectors. Commerce ministry data showed trade deficit narrowed to \$14.54 billion from \$15.3 billion a year ago. The deficit was \$15.44 billion in December. Imports in January 2021 rose 2 per cent to \$42 billion.

WPI inflation rises to 2.03%, food prices ease



The wholesale price-based inflation rose sharply to 2.03 per cent in January on costlier non-food manufactured items and experts are projecting further uptick in the rate of price rise in the next few months. The WPI inflation was 1.22 per cent in December 2020 and 3.52 per cent in January last year. Food inflation in January stood at (-) 2.8 per cent, against (-) 1.11 per cent in the previous month.

RBI sets up panel on urban coop banks

The Reserve Bank set up a committee to draw a vision document for strengthening urban cooperative banks and exploring the potential of consolidation in the sector. The committee, to be headed by former RBI deputy governor N. S. Vishwanathan, will suggest effective measures for faster rehabilitation and resolution of UCBs and also assess their potential for consolidation in the sector.

IT industry to grow by 2.3% in FY21: Nasscom

The Indian IT industry revenues are set to grow by 2.3 per cent to \$194 billion in FY21 and the exports will go up by 1.9 per cent to \$150 billion, industry lobby Nasscom said. The industry remained a net hirer in the fiscal year, with 1.38 lakh new jobs added to take overall employment to 44.7 lakh. "We have emerged more resilient and more relevant from the crisis," the body's president Debjani Ghosh said.



JLR to spend \$3.5 bn annually on electrification Jaguar cars to become all-electric from 2025

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, FEB. 15

Tata Motors-owned British luxury car maker Jaguar Land Rover, or JLR, plans to make its coveted Jaguar brand to be an 'all-electric luxury brand' to rival Tesla from 2025.

The move will see Jaguar completely axe the petrol engines that made its name within the next four years.

JLR will invest about 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.5 billion) annually into electrification and related connected technologies, the company said on Monday.

It plans to introduce six fully electric Land Rover variants in the next five years and aims to electrify all its models by 2030, it said.

JLR's new chief executive officer Thierry Bollore made the announcement on Monday, with the new 'Reimagine' strategy also committing to retaining its production facilities in the UK. Bollore said Land Rover will phase out diesel engines from 2026 and invest more heavily in hydrogen fuel cell technology.

JLR said it will have prototypes using hydrogen fuel cells on Britain's roads within the next year, as part of a long-range investment plan.

JLR has introduced plug-in hybrid variants of models, including the Range Rover Sport and new Defender, but its only fully electric vehicle is the I-Pace SUV, which it started selling in 2018.



RENAULT KIGER STARTS AT ₹5.45 L

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, FEB. 15

French car giant Renault has introduced its all-new Kiger, compact SUV at Rs 5.45 lakh at pan-India showroom, disrupting the growing B-SUV segment in Asia's third biggest car market.

Renault's first compact SUV is sold in four trim levels and four engine-gearbox combinations in the Rs 5.45 lakh to Rs 9.55 lakh range.

Renault's aggressive pricing means that the new Kiger undercuts all its compact SUV rivals. Apart from its Nissan sibling, the Magnite, the Renault Kiger rivals

other sub-4m SUVs like the Hyundai Venue, Kia Sonet, Mahindra XUV300, Tata Nexon, Ford EcoSport, Maruti Suzuki Vitara Brezza and Toyota Urban Cruiser.

"With this outstanding pricing, Renault Kiger is surely set to radically alter the dynamics in the B-SUV segment," Venkatram Mamillapalle, country CEO & MD at Renault India, said.

Renault Kiger is designed with collaboration of France and India teams. It is developed and produced in India, for Indian customers first, before it is taken globally.

Car companies the world over are following zero-emission strategies to meet tough carbon dioxide emission targets in Europe and China.

Jaguar Land Rover is one of the hardest hit by the downturn in demand for

diesel vehicles in recent years.

Its range of models across both brands relied heavily on diesel engines, which have seen sales tumble in the years since the German Volkswagen emissions cheating scandal rattled the industry in 2015.

Financials push Sensex above 52K

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, FEB. 15

Resumption of business activity close to the pre-pandemic level and positive global cues, macro data and earnings season triggered more than one per cent gains for market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty-50.

The Sensex crossed 52000 for the first time, closing with 610 points, or 1.18 per cent, higher at 52154.13. The Nifty-50 closed at 15314.70, up 151.40 points, or 1 per cent.

"The Nomura India Business Resumption Index picked up to 98.1 (provisional) for the week ending



14 February from 95.9 the preceding week, which suggests business activity is now only around 2 points below pre-pandemic levels, said the Japanese brokerage. Inflation and IIP data released last week were also encouraging for the market.

"After a brief pause last week, the market resumed upward momentum on the back of global optimism and encouraging macro

GULF EXODUS: S&P WARNS OF RISKS AHEAD

FARAH ELBAHRAWY FEB. 15

S&P Global Ratings said Gulf Arab economies suffered population losses as a result of an "exodus" of expatriate workers, warning the outflow could complicate their diversification in the long run.

The population across the Gulf Cooperation Council may have declined

by 4 per cent last year, according to a report on Monday.

The share of foreigners relative to citizens is set to drop through 2023 "because of subdued non-oil sector growth and workforce nationalisation policies," S&P credit analysts led by Zahabia Gupta said.

"GCC countries' productivity, income levels, and economic diversification

TESLA EYES PLANT NEAR BENGALURU

SARITHA RAI FEB. 15

Tesla Inc is closing in on an agreement to make electric vehicles in India, opening up a new growth front after founder Elon Musk set up plants in the US and China. Tesla has picked Karnataka for its first plant, the state's chief minister said over the weekend. The automaker has been negotiating with local officials for six months and is considering car assembly in the suburbs of Bengaluru, people familiar with the matter said.

Tesla is conducting due diligence for office real estate in the region and plans to set up an R&D facility. Tesla has focused on Bengaluru because it's shaping up to be a hub for electric vehicles and aerospace manufacturing talent, they said. —Bloomberg

Babus out? Govt mulls new panel to speed privatisation

SIDDHARTHA SINGH FEB. 15

India is considering setting up a body comprising independent experts that will take over the role of privatising state-run companies once the government decides to divest, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

The panel will replace bureaucrats, who currently manage privatisation, as well as minority stake sales, the people said asking not to be identified because the discussions

are private. The proposal is at an early stage and a final decision hasn't been taken, they said.

An external panel will help accelerate the asset sale process and bypass red tape, according to the people. India still hasn't manage to find a buyer for debt-ridden Air India Ltd even after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet approved the sale in 2017.

A finance ministry spokesman declined to comment.

The government earlier this month said it will

keep a "bare minimum presence" by running companies in atomic energy, space & defence; transport & telecommunications; power, oil & coal; banking & financial services, according to the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management.

India plans to raise 1.75 lakh crore (\$24 billion) selling stakes in state-run firms next fiscal, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said while presenting the budget.

—Bloomberg

Smartphone sales clock record growth in Q4

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 15

The fourth quarter of year 2020 saw record sales of smartphones in India at 45 million units.

However, for the year as a whole, the smartphone market de-grew 1.7 per cent—the first decline after several years of run-away growth. But the online channel continued to grow even during the pandemic-hit year.

According to global market intelligence firm IDC, the October-December quarter posted record fourth-quarter smartphone shipments of 45 million devices, growing 21 per cent over the same quarter in 2019.

A total of 150 million smartphone units were sold in 2020, which was 1.7 per cent less than what was sold in 2019. Stay-at-home mandates, remote

work, remote education, travel restrictions and manufacturing shutdowns led to a sluggish H120, which saw a 26 per cent decline over the same period in 2019.

However, H2'20 recovered with 19 per cent growth as markets reopened gradually. Lockdowns and restrictions rendered an urgent need for devices supporting activities such as entertainment, work from home, and remote learning, resulting in more devices per household, and leading to a resurgence in demand for consumer devices including smartphones, consumer notebooks, and tablets in 2020.

The online channel outpaced the overall market, growing by 12 per cent annually, with a 48 per cent market share in 2020. The segment clocked a record 51 per cent share in

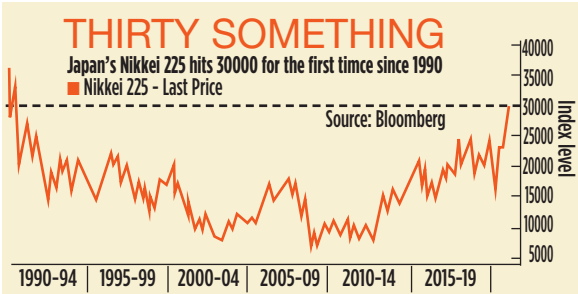
4Q20. Further, the market saw 5G smartphone shipments crossing 3 million in 2020, with Chinese OEMs rolling out aggressively-priced devices. But adoption was limited due to higher prices and the lack of a 5G network.

Xiaomi continued to lead the smartphone market in volume terms with a market share of 27 per cent. But the brand registered a 6 per cent drop in sales.

Samsung held 20 per cent market, but sales declined by 4 per cent. Online channel registered strong 65 per cent growth, while the offline channel shipments declined by 28 per cent.

Vivo in the third slot with 18 per cent market share, recorded growth of 12 per cent. Realme too grew by 19 per cent and held a market share of 13 per cent.

Japan sights recovery, Nikkei at 1990-high



GEOROID REIDY & TASHIRO HASEGAWA FEB. 15

Japan's Nikkei 225 Stock Average touched 30000 for the first time since August 1990 on signs economic recovery is intact at home and on progress with the US stimulus package.

The gauge rose as much as 1.6 per cent on Monday, taking it a step higher on the climb back to its bubble-era levels. While equities globally have hit new heights in recent months, the Nikkei 225 still needs to gain almost another 30 per cent to surpass its record of 38915.87. That was reached in the final trading session of 1989, before the index went on to lose

more than half its value in three years after the economic bubble burst.

The brief breach of the 30,000 shows "all sorts of investors are jumping in to buy Japanese equities with a totally bullish view," said Shoji Hirakawa, chief global strategist at Tokai Tokyo Research Institute.

In data announced Monday, Japan's gross domestic product (GDP) grew an annualised 12.7 per cent from the prior quarter in the three months through December, as exports continued to roar back, businesses started to invest again and government stimulus fuelled consumer spending despite the coronavirus.

—Bloomberg

HUL expects Covid-hit products to rebound



New Delhi, Feb. 15: FMCG major Hindustan Unilever expects its "Covid impacted" product categories, such as ice-cream and vending solutions, to rebound strongly in 2021 with increase in mobility.

In an investor presentation, the company said categories such as skin care and colour cosmetics, which slowed down last year, will also rebound.

"These categories remain structurally attractive for us," HUL said in its presentation.

On the other hand, the company said "Covid obsessive" categories such as hand sanitiser and hand wash, which saw a sharp surge during the pandemic, are expected to normalise this year. The hand sanitiser category surged 16 times in 2020 compared to 2019, while the hand wash category grew 1.5 times.

Categories such as hand, body and face care, classified as "Covid resistant" items are expected "to normalise with increase in mobility in 2021."

From a peak decline of 73 per cent in the second quarter of the calendar year 2020 during the lockdown, these have recovered with the gradual unlocking that the country went through, to a decline of 51 per cent in the third quarter and 30 per cent in the fourth quarter.

Similarly, the company said "Covid impacted" categories, which include ice cream, food solutions business and vending business are also expected "to rebound strongly in 2021 with increase in mobility". —PTI

MILK-FREE CHOCOLATE

Demand for plant-based food growing

Going Vegan: Nestle plans rice-based KitKat

CORINNE GRETLER FEB. 15

Nestle SA is adding its first vegan milk chocolate to its products as the world's biggest food company expands beyond meat alternatives.

The Swiss food giant will start offering plant-based KitKat bars this year, called KitKat V, according to Alexander von Maillot, head of Nestle's confectionery business. The product will be for sale online and at selected stores in a handful of markets including the UK as a test run before a possible wider rollout.

The bar, which uses a rice-based formula as a milk substitute, took about two years to develop.



op. The main challenge in making alternatives to milk chocolate is ensuring it blends well with cocoa and sugar for a creamy texture. Other substitutes, such as soy or almond formulas, can create off-notes, von Maillot said.

While there are quite a few small labels that make vegan milk chocolate, most

announced plans to make plant-based milk chocolate.

"Demand for plant-based food is growing everywhere," von Maillot said in a phone interview. "KitKat was a logical choice, as it's by far the biggest brand and a global brand."

Confectionery is one of Nestle's last categories to join the plant-based trend. Nestle Purina last year introduced a blended pet food line, adding insects and plant protein from fava beans and millet to the meat protein.

Nestle introduced sausage substitutes last year and also makes plant-based mince and non-dairy ice cream and coffee products.

—Bloomberg



SHORT TAKES

Rahul climbs to 2nd spot in T20

**Dubai:** India's K.L. Rahul moved up a place to second, while his captain Virat Kohli retained the seventh spot in the latest ICC men's T20I rankings for batsmen released on Monday. With 816 rating points, Rahul is behind leader Dawid Malan (915) of England, while Kohli has 697 points in his kitty. Australia white-ball skipper Aaron Finch (808) also improved a rung to be placed third while Pakistan captain Babar Azam (801) slipped to fourth place. Rahul and Kohli are the only two Indians to feature in the top-10 among batsmen. No Indian also featured in the top-10 among bowlers and all-rounders in the latest T20I rankings. Among bowlers, South Africa spinner Tabraiz Shamsi grabbed a career-best second position. — *PTI*

Lukaku shines as Inter go atop

**Rome:** Romelu Lukaku scored twice to reach 300 career goals as Inter Milan moved above AC Milan to the top of Serie A with an impressive 3-1 home win over Lazio on Sunday. Lukaku's brace came in the first half as Inter made the most of their city rivals' surprising 2-0 loss at Spezia on Saturday. Inter, bidding for a first Scudetto since winning the treble under Jose Mourinho in 2010, are now one point clear of AC Milan. The stage is set for a mouthwatering Milan derby at the San Siro next Sunday. Earlier, Roma beat Udinese 3-0 to climb back to third. — *AFP*

Siva bags best pole diver award

**Hyderabad:** P. Siva Reddy of Andhra Pradesh was adjudged the best Pole Diver and was awarded with the ₹50,000 for his spectacular show in the KKFI's Super League Kho Kho Tournament at Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi on Monday. Despite Siva's heroics Jaguars went down to Panthers 35-43 in the semifinals. However, Maharashtra's Pratik Waikar continued his phenomenal show at the KKFI 2021 Super League Kho Kho Tournament as Pahadi Billas lifted the trophy with a convincing six points win in the thrilling final against Panthers. KKFI doled out ₹7,85,000 total prize money to players. Also, three Maharashtra players picked the best achievement awards for their fine run in the tournament. Ramji Kashyap of Solapur was adjudged the best chaser and Thane's Mahesh Shinde received the best runner award with each of them receiving ₹50,000. In the women's tournament, Panthers emerged as the winner with a dominating show throughout the tournament.

Ramu, Syed shine as Khammam win

**Hyderabad:** Ramu, Syed Sajeed and Tarun hogged the second-day's spotlight in the Telangana Cricket Association's U-19 East Zone Inter Districts state championship on Monday. Mulugu's Syed (4/24) bowled well to help his side grab a one-wicket victory over Mahabubabad, who failed to defend 95 runs. Mahabubabad's Tarun also impressed with 5/17 but his effort went in vain. In another match, Ramu (4/18) and Pranay (63) stole the show for Khammam who restricted Warangal Rural to 100 runs and earned a 22-run victory. **BRIEF SCORES** ■ Mahabubabad 94 in 15.2 overs (Sameer 41 n.o., Syed Sajeed 4/24) lost to Mulugu 97/9 in 20.1 overs (**Tarun 5/17**) ■ Khammam 122/9 in 20 overs (Pranay Lendi 63, Laxman 2/15) bt Warangal Rural 100 in 16.5 overs (Ramu Ram 4/18)

Live on TV

TENNIS

Australian Open: Quarterfinals from 5.30 am, from 1.30 pm on on Sony Six, Sony Ten 2, HD

CRICKET

India vs England: Second Test, Day Four, from 9.20 am on Star Sports 1

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Hyderabad FC vs Kerala Blasters from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2021-23

Printed and Published by  
**K. Sudhakar** on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208.  
RNI Registration No. 3081/1957.  
Editor: **Kaushik Mitter**

A-SHHHHH!

Ashwin silences pitch critics with batting masterclass

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 15

It was midway through the morning session. There was a sudden flurry of activity in the India dressing room. Having been reduced to 106 for six, India's second essay was expected to fold soon. When R. Ashwin, at No. 8, walked in to join his skipper Virat Kohli in the middle, the Chepauk crowd greeted their local hero with a rapturous welcome. Over the next few hours, the cheers only grew louder. The roar reached a crescendo when Ashwin celebrated his fifth Test century, punching the air and driving his arms aloft towards the spectators.

It was a carnival at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium, post-tea, with chants of 'Ash-win...Ash-win' reverberating through the stands. His scintillating knock — 106 off 148 balls — not only brought India on the verge of restoring parity in the four-match series against England, but also silenced those who had criticised the pitch.

Set a target of 482, England were in a shambles at 53 for three in 19 overs at stumps. India have two more days to bag the remaining wickets and achieve what will be a roaring comeback. A day after taking a five-for to bowl England out cheaply, Ashwin delivered a masterclass on batting on turning tracks. It was the third time in his career that Ashwin bagged a five-wicket haul and scored a ton in the same match. Only the legendary England all-rounder Ian Botham has done it more (five times).

The intention was clear from the minute Ashwin took the guard. He swept off-spinner Moeen Ali for a boundary towards midwicket in the second ball he faced. After a couple deliveries, he played reverse-sweep for another boundary. He then pulled, cut and even swatted forehand to punish the bowlers. England were also guilty of giving three reprieves to Ashwin, who was dropped on 28, 56 and 70. The partnership between Ashwin and Kohli — 96 runs off 177



R. Ashwin celebrates his century against England on the third day of their second Test in Chennai on Monday. — *BCCI*

balls — pushed India's lead past 400. It was one of those rare days when Kohli's well-compiled half-century — 62 off 149 — became a mere footnote. Kohli fell to Ali for the second time this match. The skipper was not too pleased with Nitin Menon's lbw call even after the third-umpire upheld the decision. The way Ashwin nursed the tail-enders Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Siraj en route to his century was entertaining. A straight punch past mid-on off Stuart Broad and a slog-sweep off Ali had the crowd on its feet.

Earlier in the morning, it took Kohli 20 balls to get off the mark after he walked in following Cheteshwar Pujara's bizarre dismissal in the opening over of the day. Rohit Sharma's departure, after being stumped while stretching to defend a Jack Leach delivery, reduced India to 55 for three. Rishabh Pant who tried to take on Leach perished soon. Ajinkya Rahane's back-to-back boundaries off Ali eased some pressure. But he eventually fell to the off-spinner, giving a simple catch to a short-leg fielder.

SCORECARD

**India 1st Innings:** 329  
**England 1st Innings:** 134  
**India 2nd Innings (overnight 54/1):** Rohit Sharma st Foakes b Leach 26, Shubman Gill lbw b Leach 14, Cheteshwar Pujara run out (Ollie Pope/Foakes) 7, Virat Kohli lbw b Moeen 62, Rishabh Pant st Foakes b Leach 8, Ajinkya Rahane c Ollie Pope b Moeen 10, Axar Patel lbw b Moeen 7, Ravichandran Ashwin b Olly Stone 106, Kuldeep Yadav lbw b Moeen 3, Ishant Sharma c Olly Stone b Jack Leach 7, Mohammed Siraj not out 16. Extras (b-5, lb-15) 20. **Total (all out in 85.5 overs) 286.**  
**FoW:** 1-42, 2-55, 3-55, 4-65, 5-86, 6-106, 7-202, 8-210, 9-237, 10-286.  
**Bowling:** Olly Stone 6.5-1-21-1, Jack Leach 33-6-100-4, Moeen Ali 32-7-98-4, Joe Root 4-0-15-0, Stuart Broad 9-3-25-0, Daniel Lawrence 1-0-7-0.  
**England 2nd Innings:** Rory Burns c Kohli b Ashwin 25, Dom Sibley lbw b Patel 3, Dan Lawrence batting 19, Jack Leach c Rohit Sharma b Patel 0. Joe Root batting 2. Extras (b-4) 4. **Total: (for 3 wickets, in 19 overs) 53.**  
**FoW:** 1-17, 2-49, 3-50.  
**Bowling:** Ishant Sharma 2-1-6-0, Axar Patel 9-3-15-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 8-1-28-1.

When Ashwin was dropped from team for playing sweep

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 15

R. Ashwin who swept his way to a brilliant century in the second Test against England on Monday revealed that he was once dropped from a team for playing that cross-batted shot. "After the last Test, we were thinking of how to counter Jack Leach (left-arm spinner) and bringing sweep to the game. The last time I was sweeping was probably when I was 19 years old. I got dropped from the side for playing a couple sweep shots, and

maybe never played a sweep in the last 13-14 years," informed Ashwin who became the second Indian after Kapil Dev to score a 1,000-plus and 100-plus wicket against England. Ashwin credited India batting coach Vikram Rathour for his recent improvement. "I've been practicing that shot (sweep) for the last 10 days under the supervision of Rathour. I am really thankful that the plan has been really paid off. Rathour has been very helpful in trying to explore new options. He

is someone who has helped me to go out there and express myself." After Kohli's dismissal, Ashwin had to protect his tailenders Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Siraj to complete his century. He forged a 27-run stand with Ishant, while Siraj and Ashwin put on 49 runs for the final wicket. When Ashwin reached his triple-figure score, Siraj was more jubilant at the other end. "It was exciting to see how excited he was when I got my hundred and that says a few things about how the dressing room is."

Man Utd falter, Auba wins it for Arsenal

**London, Feb. 15:** Manchester United's faltering Premier League title challenge suffered another blow in a 1-1 draw at struggling West Brom, while Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang hit a hat-trick in Arsenal's 4-2 win against Leeds on Sunday. United have dropped points in five of their last seven league games to allow Manchester City to pull seven points clear, with a game in hand. A point was enough to nudge Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men back above Leicester into second on goal difference. But that was of little consolation to United against a West Brom side

that had conceded 24 goals in taking just one point from their previous seven home games. At the Emirates Stadium, Aubameyang scored his first ever Premier League hat-trick to get the Gunners back on track after two successive defeats and three games without a win. Aubameyang has endured a difficult season marred by poor form and his mother's illness, which prompted him to take a leave of absence recently. "The hat-trick means a lot. It's been a tough time for me," Aubameyang said. Everton missed the chance to move level with

THE RESULTS			
PREMIER LEAGUE		SPANISH LEAGUE	
Southampton (Ings 25)	1	Getafe	0
Wolves (Nevés 35-pen, Neto 66)	2	Real Sociedad (Isak 30)	1
West Brom (Diagne 2)	1	Real Madrid (Karim Benzema 12, Toni Kroos 42)	2
Manchester United (Fernandes 44)	1	Valencia	0
Arsenal (Aubameyang 13, 41-pen, 47, Bellerin 45)	4	Levante (Gerard 65-pen)	1
Leeds (Struijk 58, Costa 69)	2	Real Betis (Nabil Fekir 45, Emerson Aparecido 52)	2
Everton Fulham (Maja 48, 65)	0 2		

neighbours Liverpool in fourth as they were well beaten 2-0 by Fulham. Wolves moved 12 points clear of the drop zone

after coming from behind for a 2-1 win that extended Southampton's six-game losing streak in the league.

Real Madrid are celebrating another win — and lamenting yet another injury. Real continued their recent good form with a 2-0 win over Valencia in the La Liga, but coach Zinedine Zidane saw his already depleted squad lose another player due to injury. Dani Carvajal got hurt before halftime in what had been his return to action after being sidelined since the beginning of the year. "There are too many injuries. I'm worried because when you lose a player, it upsets you," Zidane said. — *Agencies*

Nadal closes in on Slams record

**Melbourne, Feb. 15:** Rafael Nadal outclassed Fabio Fognini to close in on the all-time Grand Slam titles record on Monday as Ashleigh Barty ramped up hopes of becoming the Australian Open's first home winner in 43 years. Nadal said his lower-back stiffness was continuing to improve after his 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 against the flamboyant Italian, which set up a quarter-final against Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas. Fognini had registered a five-set win over Nadal at the 2015 US Open, but the Spaniard cantered to victory after recovering from 2-4 down in the second set.

Nadal is now into his 43rd Grand Slam quarter-final, staying on course for a title match with eight-time winner Novak Djokovic who battled through an abdominal injury to reach the last eight on Sunday. Next up for Nadal is world number six Tsitsipas, who went through on a walkover after Italy's Matteo Berrettini pulled out with an abdominal strain. As the action continued in front of empty stands, top-ranked Barty beat big-hitting American Shelby Rogers in impressive fashion to reach the last eight. Barty won 6-3, 6-4 to go into the quarter-finals without dropping a set as she bids to become the first Australian champion since Chris O'Neil in 1978. The former French Open champion next plays Karolina Muchova, who came through two tight sets to beat Belgium's Elise Mertens 7-6 (7/5), 7-5.

RESULTS

**Men's singles fourth round:** Andrey Rublev (RUS x7) bt Casper Ruud (NOR x24) 6-2, 7-6 (7/5), 0-0 retired; Daniil Medvedev (RUS x4) bt Mackenzie McDonald (USA) 6-4, 6-2, 6-3; Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x5) bt Matteo Berrettini (ITA x9) walkover; Rafael Nadal (ESP x2) bt Fabio Fognini (ITA x16) 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.  
**Women's singles fourth round:** Ashleigh Barty (AUS x1) bt Shelby Rogers (USA) 6-3, 6-4; Karolina Muchova (CZE x25) bt Elise Mertens (BEL x18) 7-6 (7/5), 7-5; Jennifer Brady (USA x22) bt Donna Vekic (CRO x28) 6-1, 7-5; Jessica Pegula (USA) bt Elina Svitolina (UKR x5) 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

**RUSSIANS ARE COMING** Earlier, unseeded American Jessica Pegula reached her maiden Grand Slam quarter-final with victory over Elina Svitolina, her first over a top-10 player. Pegula, whose billionaire father owns the Buffalo Bills NFL team, overcame fifth seed Svitolina 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 to set up a meeting with fellow American Jennifer Brady, a 6-1, 7-5 winner against Croatia's Donna Vekic. Elsewhere, fourth seed Daniil Medvedev and seventh seed Andrey Rublev both won to ensure an all-Russian quarter-final. Medvedev blew away American world number 192 Mackenzie McDonald 6-4, 6-2, 6-3 to extend his winning streak to 18 matches. Rublev, who is also unbeaten this year, went through when Norway's Casper Ruud retired after losing the first two sets. — *AFP*



Spain's Rafael Nadal en route to his 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 win over Fabio Fognini of Italy in their Australian Open fourth round match in Melbourne on Monday. — *AFP*

FIR against Yuvraj over remarks against Chahal

**Hisar (Haryana), Feb. 15:** The Haryana Police has filed an FIR against former India cricketer Yuvraj Singh over his alleged casteist remarks against Yuzvendra Chahal during an Instagram chat last year, officials said on Monday. It was during one of the Instagram live sessions with Indian vice-captain Rohit Sharma that Singh made the offensive comment about Chahal, while talking about his regular social media posts. Singh (39) had apologised for the remarks, saying he "unintentionally" hurt public sentiments.

"An FIR has been filed against Yuvraj Singh based on a complaint by lawyer Rajat Kalsan at the Hansi Police Station," Hansi Superintendent of Police, Nikita Gahlaut said on Monday. She said the case was lodged on Sunday under various provisions of IPC and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. Kalsan had filed the police complaint last year. Kalsan had alleged that Singh's comment had hurt the sentiments of the Dalit community, stating that a large number of people had watched the video on social media. — *PTI*

TEAM INDIA MAKE SOLID DEBUT AT ASIAN LE MANS

**Dubai, Feb. 15:** Racing Team India took their first step to become the first all-Indian squad at the 24 Hours of Le Mans with a solid debut at the opening weekend of the Asian Le Mans Series in Dubai. The JK Tyres-backed team's ORECA FLM2P car, driven by Narain Karthikeyan, Arjun Maini and Naveen Rao, with technical support from reigning ALMS champions Algarve Pro Racing, finished fifth and fourth in the two four-hour races held at the Dubai Autodrome on Saturday and Sunday respectively. The team's car showed promising pace throughout the weekend. But their challenge was hampered by racing incidents and a penalty. The team had to make an extra precautionary pit-stop in Saturday's opening race which dropped the car down the order. A five-second time penalty for exceeding the speed limit further set it back, forcing the drivers to claw their way back up to fifth, where they had qualified.