


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | THURSDAY | 25 FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 36.0°C
Min: 18.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Clear.
 Max/Min temp.
 36/18 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
 Tithi: Magha Shuddha Trayodasi
 till 5.12 pm
Star: Pushyami till 1.11 pm
Varjyam: 1.37 am to 3.11 am
 (Friday)
Durmuhurtam: 10.32 am to
 11.19 am; 3.11 pm to 3.58 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
HILIRI CALENDAR
 Rajab 12,1442 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 6.23 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.08 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 4.19 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 5.38 AM

COUNTER POINT



It's a lose-lose situation.
We can't afford fuel for our campaign!

SHORT TAKES

India plans social media controls

New Delhi: Chafing from a dispute with Twitter, India plans to oblige social media companies to erase contentious content fast and assist investigations, according to a draft regulation. The Central government's planned "Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code" — a copy of which was seen by *Reuters* — come as various nations around the world try to assert tighter control over powerful Big Tech firms.

President's rule in Puducherry

Puducherry: With the Union Cabinet approving of the proposal to impose President's Rule in Puducherry, days after a Congress-led government in the Union Territory lost power, polls seem imminent. Announcing the Cabinet decision, minister Prakash Javadekar said the decision was taken as no party was coming forward to stake a claim to form the government in UT.

NSE shuts down for three hours

Mumbai: National Stock Exchange faced major technical glitch leading to halt of trading for more than three hours from 11.40 am due to connectivity issues in the stock exchanges server. Surging volumes both in cash and futures and options segment on NSE towards monthly derivatives expiry may also have contributed to the technical glitch, said market experts.

UP okays Bill to curb conversion

Lucknow: Amid protests by the Opposition, the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly on Wednesday passed by voice vote a bill aimed at curbing religious conversions by fraudulent or any other undue means, including through marriage. The UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill seeks to replace the ordinance promulgated in November last year that provides for imprisonment of up to 10 years.

NATION | 4



Mamata calls Modi 'biggest rioter'

WORLD | 5



Hillary to pen state of terror thriller

SPORTS | 8



Tiger Woods in hospital after major car crash

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Narendra Modi cricket stadium



A general view of the newly named Narendra Modi Stadium on the first day of the 3rd cricket test match between India and England, in Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

— PTI


Modi stadium faces Oppn fury

DC CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD, FEB. 24

President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday inaugurated the world's largest cricket arena here, and renamed it from Sardar Patel stadium to Narendra Modi stadium in honour of the Prime Minister who is credited with conceptualising the facility.

Spread over 63 acres, the stadium has been built at an estimated cost of Rs 800 crore and with a seating capacity for 1,32,000 spectators, it has surpassed the hallowed Melbourne Cricket Ground which can accommodate 90,000.


The renaming of the stadium, popular as the Motera Stadium, was kept


The world's largest Ahmedabad-based Sardar Patel Cricket Stadium has been renamed the Narendra Modi Cricket Stadium, is it not an insult to Sardar Patel?

HARDIK PATEL,
Congress leader

under wraps until after it was formally inaugurated. But as soon as its new name was announced, a political slugfest ensued, with the Congress accusing the BJP of hypocrisy, of using Sardar Patel for votes and then disrespecting his memory.

“The world's largest


You can see files and (cricket) commentaries — that stadium is always called the Motera stadium. There is another Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel stadium.

NITIN PATEL,
Gujarat deputy CM

Ahmedabad-based Sardar Patel Cricket Stadium has been renamed the Narendra Modi Cricket Stadium, is it not an insult to Sardar Patel? The BJP, which asked for votes in the name of Sardar Patel, is now insulting Sardar Saheb. The people of Gujarat will not bear the

insult of Sardar Patel,” Congress leader Hardik Patel tweeted in Hindi.

The BJP rebutted the charge saying Congress president Sonia Gandhi and others never visited Sardar Patel's statue in Kevadia and are now talking about insulting Sardar Patel. The BJP also listed names of institutions and tournaments named after the Nehru-Gandhi family.

The state-of-the-art stadium opened with the third Test between India and England, a day-night game from Wednesday. It will also host the fourth and final game of the series from March 4. The Modi stadium in Motera is to be part of the planned Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave in Ahmedabad.

Family denied access to graveyard over politics

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 24

In a shocking incident in Kothapalem village of BN Kandriga mandal in Chittoor district, a family that differed with other villagers during the sarpanch election has denied permission for a deceased's family to hold a funeral procession through their land to the village graveyard on Tuesday.

Photographs and a video of the incident surfaced online on Wednesday.

“Villager Muthyalamma (65) died due to ill-health. The path to the village graveyard starts from a small piece of farm land owned by a family. They did not allow Muthyalamma's relatives to take the body through their land. This led to a protest by the deceased's

THE FAMILY that owned a piece of land on the way to graveyard erected a fencing and blocked the path for the funeral procession.

family, which then kept the body on the road for some time in a protest mode. The issue was sorted out later,” said K. Ganesh, tahsildar.

According to him, there were two graveyards in the village; one for the SCs and other for the general public. While the SC graveyard had good road access, the general graveyard had to be reached by this path, which was being used by the villagers for the past six decades.

The family that owned this piece of land erected a fencing around the farm

land and blocked the path for the funeral procession. They did this because of some differences they developed with the villagers during the recently concluded sarpanch elections.

“On being informed, we (revenue and police officials) rushed to the spot and pacified the protesters. We spoke to the landlords and convinced them to clear the path for Muthyalamma's relatives to continue the funeral procession. The funeral was held peacefully,” the tahsildar said.

“The family agreed to give some land to erect a passage to the graveyard. However, they told us to first convince all the other landlords who have lands along the passage to the graveyard, to also give some land for the purpose,” he added.

FEAR | FACTOR

Officials claim many people and educational institutions are ignoring Covid rules

AP issues Covid protocol as fear of 2nd wave rises

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

At a time when the numbers of coronavirus infections are rising in states like Maharashtra and Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, the state health authorities have issued fresh Standard Operating Procedures to be complied with by all public and private institutions, including educational institutions, to contain spread of the virus.

As the Union ministry of health and family welfare issued fresh SOPs recently, the state health authorities communicated that the same be strictly followed at

all workplaces.

Health principal secretary Anil Kumar Singhal directed the director of health Dr Geetha Prasadini to communicate the SOPs to all district medical and health officers asking them to bring about awareness and ensure their proper implementation at all public and private offices, institutions, organisations and workplaces.

The SOPs specify about generic preventive measures like maintenance of a distance of six feet in public places, use of face masks at all times, practice frequent hand washing with soap, respiratory eti-

MEASURES FOR OFFICES

■ Hand hygiene at entrances, thermal screening;

■ Allowing only asymptomatic staff who were face masks

■ Frequent sanitation of workplaces

■ Drivers to maintain physical distancing and disinfection of vehicles twice a day, and mandating valet parking

quettes, self-monitoring of health and installation and use of Arogya Setu.

Specific preventive measures for offices include hand hygiene at entrances, thermal screening, allowing only asymptomatic

staff, drivers to maintain physical distancing, particularly within rooms/spaces designated to them, disinfection of vehicles twice a day, allowing officers and staff only if they wear face mask, prop-

er crowd management, mandating valet parking, proper cleaning and frequent sanitation of workplaces, and proper disposal of face masks and gloves. Measures to be taken on occurrence of cases like isolating a patient in a room until the doctor examines him or her, informing the nearest medical facility, take risk assessment and manage cases as per the existing protocol.

It was felt that people have started ignoring SOPs that have been issued. A good number of educational institutions are not following the norms making their staff and students

SC SAYS NO FOR GIVING EXTRA CHANCE FOR 10K UPSC ASPIRANTS

New Delhi, Feb. 24: In a setback to over 10,000 UPSC civil service aspirants, the Supreme Court Wednesday dismissed a plea seeking an extra attempt for those who exhausted their last chance in the 2020 preliminary exam amid the Covid-19 pandemic or have got age barred from appearing in future tests.

A bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar, Indu Malhotra and Ajay Rastogi dismissed the petition filed by civil service aspirants and clarified that its decision would not restrict the Centre in exercising its discretion in future to deal with the difficulties as projected to the court.

Consequently, the petition fails and is accordingly dismissed, the bench said.

The top court said that it is not exercising its plenary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution as it would set down a precedent and also have cascading effect on examinations held in other streams during the pandemic.

The bench said: “if this court shows indulgence to few who had participated in the Examination 2020, it will set down a precedent and also have cascading effect on examinations.” — PTI

Centre approves productivity sop for IT, pharma

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, FEB. 24

The Central government on Wednesday approved a Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for pharmaceuticals, a move which will bring investments of ₹15,000 crores into the sector. It will benefit domestic manufacturers, spur job opportunities and make a wider range of affordable medicines available for consumers.

The PLI scheme for pharma is likely to promote the production of high-value products in the country and increase the value addition in exports.

In another decision, the Union Cabinet also approved the PLI scheme for bringing investments in the manufacture of mobile phone (handsets and components).

The target IT hardware segments under the proposed scheme include laptops, tablets, All-in-One Personal Computers (PCs) and servers. The scheme proposes production linked incentive to boost domestic manufacturing and attract large investments in the value chain of these products.

The total cost of the PLI

THE TARGET IT hardware segments under the proposed scheme include laptops, tablets, All-in-One PCs and servers.

APPLE INC may begin the manufacture of iPads in India.

scheme for IT hardware is about ₹7,350 crores over four years. It intends to provide incentives between four to one per cent on net incremental sales of goods manufactured in India.

The PLI push is expected to bolster electronics ecosystem in India, at a time when globally manufacturing is undergoing a shift and companies across the world are looking to diversify their manufacturing base, to mitigate the risk involved in depending on a single location.

At the same time, work and study from home during the pandemic has put the PC market in India on a solid growth trajectory.

Production worth ₹3.26 lakh crore and exports of ₹2.45 lakh crore are estimated over the next four years under the new scheme, which is expected to create 1.80 lakh jobs.

vulnerable to getting infected with the virus. AP Private Colleges Managements Association president N. Ram Kumar said, “It is true some institutions are not following Covid-19 norms assuming that the spread of virus has been effectively contained. We have been informing them to follow all norms.”

Director of health Dr Geeta Prasadini said, “We have communicated the SOPs to all DMHOs and urged them to ensure compliance by all public and private institutions in the districts. Non-compliance of Covid-19 protocols will be strictly dealt with.”

SHORT TAKES

HC SEEKS DETAILS ON PHONES TO WARD VOLUNTEERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

The Andhra Pradesh High Court called for more details in a case pertaining to issue of mobile phones to ward volunteers during conduct of polls in Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation limits.

A single judge bench headed by justice DVSS Somayajulu held the hearing on a petition filed by the Visakhapatnam East MLA (TD) V. Ramakrishna Babu on Wednesday, challenging the issue of mobile phones to ward volunteers during the conduct of polls. Petitioner's counsel argued that there was a chance to mount pressure upon the voters by using such phones. He said that as per State Election Commissions directions, ward volunteers were not to be involved in poll related work.

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

In another case, the single judge bench headed by justice DVSS Somayajulu heard a petition filed by Jana Sena party seeking issue of a fresh notification for conduct of MPTC/ZPTC polls alleging some irregularities.

The court posted the next hearing to March 1.

SESHASAYANA TO HEAD PANEL FOR POLAVARAM PLAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

A six-member committee headed by AP High Court retired judge Justice B. Seshasayana Reddy will prepare an action plan for implementation of environment management plan in Polavaram irrigation project.

The National Green Tribunal in its 25-page order which was uploaded on its official website on Wednesday mentioned the name of the judge to head the panel and also specified the representatives from MoEF, CPCB, Central Soil and Water Conservation Research Institute, IIT-Hyderabad and IIT-Delhi, to be part of the panel.

The NGT in its order said that the panel to visit the project site and may even conduct public hearing based on need and also may conduct proceedings in online mode and is allowed take help from the experts.

The terms of reference given to the panel include: compile information about the extent of generation and disposal of muck at the dumping site, assess the damage caused to the environment and remedial measures, consider the question whether compensation for acquisition of land remains to be paid, get muck audit and to deal with any other issues.

PROF TURNS HIS HOUSE INTO A STUDIO

From Page 1

Dr Jagadeesh said he knew the difficulties of engineering students in understanding the subjects and especially students from a rural background. Such students faced difficulty due to lack of proper internet connectivity to attend online classes for their engineering courses. Hence he started the Parnika tutorials YouTube channel to help them.

He said poor and middle-class students who are preparing for various competitive exams such as GATE, UGC Net are struggling a lot as they are not able to join coaching centres due to hefty fees of Rs 50,000 and above for coaching.

Dr Jagadeesh turned his house into a studio to record lessons. "I would wake up at 5am to record the videos and then upload them. It would take 5-6 hours to make a video and I am doing this to help engineering students understand lessons in a broad manner. Students with a rural background usually hesitate to clear their doubts in classrooms. I have also prepared videos for various competitive exams such as GATE, UGC NET, SLET etc," he said.

Dr Jagadeesh said that he is clearing the doubts of the students in less than ten hours. Questions can be asked on the space provided below the youtube video and he would answer them possibly the same day.

Engineering students viewing the lessons said these were very helpful due to the simple style of narration and clearing of their doubts without fail.



TD leaders along with activists conduct door-to-door campaign for the upcoming municipal corporation election at Vasantharapuram of Guntur city on Wednesday.

YSRC leaders confident of winning VMC polls

Real farmers will ask for returning of their farmlands: Kannababu

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

Ministers Kurasala Kannababu and Vellampalli Srinivas Rao expressed confidence that the YSRC would win the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation elections. They campaigned for the elections on Wednesday and stated that the welfare schemes launched by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy were getting accolades from people.

Kannababu said that YSRC government had not refused to develop Amaravati. He said that TD chief Chandrababu Naidu was "losing his balance" due to humiliating

● Kurasala Kannababu said that YSRC government had not refused to develop Amaravati.

● He said that TD chief Chandrababu Naidu was "losing his balance" due to humiliating defeat in the gram panchayat elections and was levelling baseless allegations against the CM.

defeat in the gram panchayat elections and was levelling baseless allegations against the CM. He refuted allegations of Naidu and other Telugu Desam leaders that assurances were being made about developing Amaravati were being made with an eye on the elections.

Kannababu said that real farmers would ask for returning of their farm-

lands; that is why farmers whose land had been acquired for the Kakinada SEZ had demanded their land back. He stated that Amaravati farmers were not asking for the return of their lands but demanding increase of their land values.

Mentioning Naidu's tour of Kuppam, Kannababu said that he was going to repair the damage done by the YSRC in the gram pan-

chayat elections but it would work possible as the people were with the YSRC government. He said that YSRC would win the municipal elections as well.

Endowment minister Vellampalli Srinivas Rao refuted allegations of the TD that no action was taken against higher officials for anomalies in temple affairs. He said the YSRC government had initiated action against corrupt officials in Guntur, Visakhapatnam and Dwaraka Tirumala temples. He said that action was initiated against 15 corrupt officials and employees of the Durga temple.



Kakani Govardhan Reddy

YSRC RIDICULES NAIDU FOR FALSE CLAIMS ON WINS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 24

YSRC Nellore district convener and Sarvepalli legislator Kakani Govardhan Reddy claimed that their party bagged 86 per cent of the gram panchayats during the recent elections while ridiculing the TD Chief Chandrababu Naidu for false claims over victory without giving the numbers.

Speaking to media persons here on Wednesday, Govardhan Reddy said that TD supremo is not able to provide figures related to the number of panchayats won by his party because they secured only 14 per cent of the panchayats.

He also found fault with Naidu for his outcry over the defeat of democracy in panchayat elections at Kuppam segment.

The legislator alleged that TD attempted to divide people and provoke them for gains in the elections, but in vain as they could not find candidates to enter the fray.

Attributing the victory of YSRC to the welfare programmes introduced by the Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, he said the hard work and efforts of YSRC cadres also helped to secure 86 percent of Panchayats.

Stressing that TD doesn't have the guts to take the elections as a referendum, he predicted landslide victory to the ruling party in the ensuing MPTC and ZPTC elections apart from the by-election to Tirupati Lok Sabha seat.

AP has become a hub of violence, says Naidu

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

Telugu Desam chief N Chandrababu Naidu accused the Jagan Mohan Reddy government of converting Andhra Pradesh into a hub of violence with the ruling party leaders unleashing terror in the panchayat elections. He condemned their brutal attack that led to the death of TD activist Somaiah from Gollamandala village of A Konduru mandal in Tiruvuru assembly segment.

He alleged that Jagan Mohan Reddy and his party leaders were deriving diabolical pleasure by killing opposition activists.

In a statement here on Wednesday, the TD chief said that YSRC leaders attacked TD ward member Palakollu Nagamalleswara Rao's father Somaiah during the counting process and inflicted injuries on February 21. Somaiah succumbed in the hospital where he was rushed to. He said that this was tantamount to State-sponsored murder and the Chief Minister should be held responsible for the heinous act.

Naidu deplored that the TD activist was attacked with sticks and such incidents marked the return

TD DEMANDS OPEN COUNTING OF OFFERINGS AT DURGA TEMPLE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

Telugu Desam MLC Buddha Venkanna on Wednesday slammed the state government and ACB officials for not taking action against the real culprits involved in massive corruption and fraud at the famous Kanaka Durga Temple in Vijayawada city. He said small employees of the temple have been made scapegoats while the real accused have gone scot-free.

The MLC accused endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas Rao of indulging in corruption at the temple as never witnessed before.

Addressing a press conference here, Venkanna demanded that the minister explain why open

counting is not being made of offerings and hundi collections at the temple. He claimed that sarees submitted by devotees to the Goddess are disappearing. These could be traced at the minister's house and shops. "Out of every Rs. 1 crore given by devotees to the temple, half of it is going to the minister," he alleged.

The MLC said the entire scandal of corrupt activities will be out if ACB carries out searches in all temples of the state. He accused the minister of visiting Tirumala temple twice a month only to take devotees along with him, so that he could collect huge amounts from them. He said Vellampalli, in his election affidavit, estimated his assets to be worth ₹10 crore.

He stated that the attack on his party's former legislator Tangirala Sowmya at his residence by YSRC goons was condemnable and the culprits needed to be brought to book.

The TD chief said that the civic polls would be a great opportunity for the urban voters to teach a lesson to the headstrong Chief Minister.

of the 'murder politics' in the State because of Reddy's shortsighted policies and political killings. He demanded the police to take immediate action against the culprits and a case should be registered against them.

Earlier, Naidu said that YSRC leaders had murdered democracy during the panchayat elections.

CSE | STUDY

Hyderabad, Kollam found to be suffering from 2nd worst level of air pollution

Most polluted city in winter was Visakhapatnam

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 24

Hyderabad, along with Kollam in Kerala, was found to be suffering from the second worst level of air pollution in South India during the winter.

The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi, said that after an extensive analysis of real time data from cities across the country, it found, with respect to south India that Visakhap-

atnam in Andhra Pradesh had the highest levels of winter air pollution in 2020-21. The CSE noted that the winter coincided with the unlocking of the economy after the hard lockdown because of the Covid-19 pandemic

Visakhapatnam, the CSE said, recorded a seasonal average of 75 ug/m3 of PM2.5 particulate matter, followed by Hyderabad and Kollam. During 2020-21, though the average level of PM2.5 levels dur-

● Visakhapatnam, the CSE said, recorded a seasonal average of 75 ug/m3 of PM2.5 particulate matter. During 2020-21, though the average level of PM2.5 levels during the summer and monsoon months was considerably lower than the previous year due to the summer lockdown, the winter PM2.5 concentration rose compared to 2019 winter in many cities.

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YSRC rips apart TD citadel with upset wins in Hindupur

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, FEB. 24

The 35-year-old Telugu Desam citadel, Hindupur, suffered major cracks in the recent gram panchayat elections as YSRC-backed nominees bagged more than 80 per cent of gram panchayats in Hindupur Assembly segment.

In a further jolt, former MLA Pamisetty Ranganayakulu quit the party and joined YSRC despite sitting MLA Nandamuri Balakrishna's bid to dissuade him.

Hindupur has been a TD stronghold right from its inception in 1985 as the party founder N.T. Rama Rao chose and won from here thrice.

The people continued to support the party and his sons Hari Krishna and Balakrishna and also other TD candidates while Congress and other par-

● The situation today is dramatically reversed even as TD is facing dissidence, which has had an adverse impact in the gram panchayat polls.

● Even though Balakrishna stayed for a couple of days during elections, YSRC ruled the roost by winning nine of 12 gram panchayats in Lepakshi mandal; six of 13 gram panchayats in Chilamathur mandal and six against 10 in Hindupur rural mandal.

The YSRC leadership focussed its attention on Hindupur municipality and began steps to improve its position in the special grade municipality. Ranganayakulu, a strong leader from the weavers' community, shifted loyalties to YSRC.

"I was attracted by the welfare schemes launched by Jagan Mohan Reddy", he said while making the move.

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GOVT RELEASES WELFARE CALENDAR

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

I&PR minister Purni Venkataramaiah (Nani) on Wednesday released the welfare calendar for financial year 2021-22 under which the first phase of Jagananna Vasati Deevana and Jagananna Vidya Deevana along with zero-interest loans for farmers and women self-help groups will be provided in April.

Phase-1 of YSR Rythu Bharosa, Matsyakara Bharosa, diesel subsidy for the fishermen and crop insurance for Kharif 2020 will be given in May 2021, according to the calendar.

The minister said that in June the YSR Cheyutha and Jagananna Vidya Kanuka will be implemented. In July, second phase of Jaganannna Vidya Deevana, YSR Kapu Nestam and YSR Vahana Mitra will be taken up.

In August 2021, zero-interest loans for farmers for Kharif 2020, Industrial incentives to MSME sector, Nethanna Nestam and compensation for Agrigold victims will be paid. YSR Aasara for 2021 will be issued in September, followed by the second phase of YSR Rythu Bharosa, Jagananna Chedodu and Jagananna Thodu in October 2021.

Venkataramaiah stated that the new scheme EBC Nestam for the women of upper castes will be implemented in November 2021. Second phase of Jagananna Vasati Deevana, third phase of Jagananna Vidya Deevana and YSR Law Nestam will be taking place in December 2021. In January 2022, the third phase of YSR Rythu Bharosa, Jagananna Ammavodi and enhancement of Pension Kanuka will be taking place, where ₹2,500 will be given every month instead of Rs 2250. In February 2022, the final tranche of Jagananna Vidya Deevana will be released, he said.

● YSR AASARA for 2021 will be issued in September, followed by the second phase of YSR Rythu Bharosa, Jagananna Chedodu and Jagananna Thodu in October 2021.

There are 32 candidates from East-West and Krishnaguntur Teachers' constituencies in fray. The office of chief electoral officer in a statement issued here on Wednesday stated that nominations of 12 candidates from East-West constituency and nominations of 20 candidates from Krishna-Guntur constituency were valid as per the reports sent by the concerned returning officers/assistant returning officers.

The contestants from East-West constituency include: Ambedkar Didde (Ind), Illa Satyanarayana (Ind), Ganta Nageswara Rao (Ind), Gandham Narayana Rao (Ind), Cherukuri Subhas Chandra Bose (Ind), Tirre Ravi Deva (Ind), Dr M.B. Nageswara Rao (Ind), Paliavela Vee-rraju (Ind), Badugu Sai-

TD holds crucial meet on GVMC polls

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 24

Top Telugu Desam leaders discussed prospects of their candidates in the ensuing GVMC elections here on Wednesday in the backdrop of several contesting candidates withdrawing their nominations and joining the ruling party.

State president of TD Kinjarapu Atchannaidu, the in-charge for Visakhapatnam political affairs N Chinaraajappa and MLC Buddha Venkanna were present.

Visakhapatnam North MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao, who recently sent his resignation letter to the Speaker quitting the Legislative Assembly, did not attend the meeting and deputised his nephew and in-charge for north constituency, G Vijay.

Initially Peela Srinivasa Rao, younger brother of former Anakapalle MLA Peela Govinda Satyanarayana, was tipped to be the mayor but in the meeting three more names were put forward, including former MLA Gandhi Babji, Kaki Govinda Rao and Mohammed Nazir.

● Party leaders tentatively decided to propose the names of Peela Srinivasa Rao and Gandhi Babji as both of them have wide networks in the city.

But the party leaders tentatively decided to propose the names of Peela Srinivasa Rao and Gandhi Babji as both of them have wide networks in the city. The party high command will announce the mayoral candidate in a day or two, Atchannaidu told the meeting.

He said that he will carry the list of all the candidates and names of two candidates vying for mayoral post to the party headquarters and discuss it with party boss N Chandrababu Naidu.

The coordination committee formed on the occasion found that in many wards where their winning prospects were bright, more than one candidate had filed papers. Names of the final candidates will be announced soon, he said. He said Naidu will campaign twice in Visakhapatnam.

32 candidates in fray for MLC polls from 32 Teachers' segments

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

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The contestants from East-West constituency include: Ambedkar Didde (Ind), Illa Satyanarayana (Ind), Ganta Nageswara Rao (Ind), Gandham Narayana Rao (Ind), Cherukuri Subhas Chandra Bose (Ind), Tirre Ravi Deva (Ind), Dr M.B. Nageswara Rao (Ind), Paliavela Vee-rraju (Ind), Badugu Sai-

baba (Ind), Ramakrishna Prasad Yadavalli (Ind), Dr P. Vamsi Krishna Raja (Ind), Sabjee Shaik (Ind).

The contests from Krishnaguntur constituency include: Kanakam Srinivasa Rao (National Nava Kranthi Party), B. Omkararamiah (Ind), Kanneboyina Vamsi Krishna (Ind), T. Kalapalatha (Ind), Kota Sai Krishna (Ind), Gade Venkateswara Rao (Ind), Chandu Rama Rao (Ind), Chandu Rama Rao (Ind), Chandu Vijaya Lakshmi (Ind), Thulasi-ram Yerrakula (Ind), prof. Dara Vikram (Ind), Nageswaram Narasimham (Ind), P. Panduranga Varaprasada Rao (Ind), Battu Syam Prasad (Ind), Boddu Nageswara Rao (Ind), Mathi Kamalakara Rao (Ind), P.V. Mallikharjuna Rao (Ind), Rambabu Chenakesavulu (Ind), A.S. Ramakrishna (Ind), Dr M. Ramakotaiah (Ind) and Sagar Babu Sure (Ind).

by Visakhapatnam that registered 34 per cent increase from last winter. Other cities that show significant increase were Rajamahendravaram, Amaravati, and Chikkaballapur.

Among the cities that showed less than 8 per cent rise compared to 2019 winter were Bengaluru, Thiruvananthapuram, and Hyderabad, while Mysuru, Kozhikode, Chennai, and Kochi showed a decline.

SHORT TAKES

AP RECORDS 94 FRESH CASES OF COVID, NO DEATH

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

Andhra Pradesh registered 94 fresh cases of Coronavirus infection and no death in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported here on Wednesday that out of 32,494 samples tested, 94 persons were found infected with the virus. Out of a total number of 1,38,07,747 samples tested so far in the state, 8,89,503 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 8,81,732 were recovered while 603 are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of confirmed Corona virus, Chittoor reported 21 followed by 15 in Visakhapatnam, 11 in Anantapur, nine in Srikakulam, eight each in East Godavari, Guntur, five each in Kadapa, Nellore, four each in Krishna and Vizianagaram, two each in Kurnool and West Godavari and zero cases in Prakasam.

With regard to cumulative Coronavirus active cases, Krishna topped the state with 94 followed by 86 in Chittoor; 66 in Nellore, 63 in East Godavari, 46 in Guntur, 44 in West Godavari, 43 in Kadapa, 38 in Prakasam, 37 in Anantapur, 31 in Srikakulam, 29 in Visakhapatnam, 15 in Kurnool and 11 in Vizianagaram.

Among daily cases of death of Coronavirus infected patients, no death was reported.

THREE ACCUSED ARRESTED IN MURDER CASE

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, FEB. 24

Mydukuru Sub division police on Sunday arrested three accused in the murder case of YSSR Congress leader Bhaskara Reddy of Mudamala village in Kadapa district's Brahmangari matham mandal.

The Mydukur DSP Bangi Vijayakumar revealed the details of the incident. He said Bhaskar Reddy, 55, was allegedly beaten to death with steel rods on 21st of this month in connection with a scuffle over MPPTC and ZPTC nominations last year.

The accused, who has been on the run since then, was arrested on Sunday morning by Mydukuru Rural Police Inspector T.V. Kondareddy and B. Matham sub-inspector S. Srinivas at Siddhaya-gari-math cross on Porumamilla-Maldukuru road.

The accused Basireddy Duggireddy, 48, Basireddy Ramireddy, 46, and Basireddy Ramana Reddy, 40, were arrested and sent to judicial remand. SP Karur Karunapati Nagendra Kumar Anburajan congratulated the police.

29 VACCINATION CENTERS TO PROVIDE JABS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 24

Prakasam SP Siddharth Kaushal said that the Central and State Governments have made the Covid vaccine available to all police personnel who stood as front warriors for the eradication of the coronavirus.

He was addressing police officers after taking Covid vaccination at the Police Unit Hospital setup in District Police Office at Ongole on Wednesday.

He said that they have arranged 29 Vaccination centers across the district to provide the jab to the entire police department personnel working in all the police stations.

Referring to the possible subtle changes in the human body during the development of antibodies for about 28 days after the vaccination, the SP advised that special precautions must be taken after the Covid vaccination.

The SP told policemen to follow the guidelines issued by the state medical and health department on the precautions regarding Covid vaccination.

Additional SP (Admin) B. Ravindra I. OSD K. Chowdeswari, AR Additional SP T.Sivareddy, RIs, and other officials got vaccinated on Wednesday and advised all the staff not to believe rumours about the vaccine.

SB -2 CI N.Srikanth Babu, MCH Superintendent Dr Rama Devi, Medical Officer Dr Praveen Kumar and others have participated in this program.

Stalker murders girl, people stage protest

Accused surrenders at the Narasaraopet police station

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

Murder of a girl student by her lover led to a protest and demonstration in the streets at Narasaraopet in Guntur district on Wednesday. The protesters demanded that the government do "justice" to the girl's family by providing it with financial support.

According to the police, 18-year-old Kota Anusha from Gollapadu of Mupplla mandal was doing a degree course in a private college at Narasaraopet. Another student Vishnuvardhan Reddy belonging to Pamidipadu of Bollapalli mandal and studying in the same college fell in love with her. They were close for some time but the girl distanced from him recently.

"Vishnuvardhan suspected Anusha was in love with another youth. He met her on Wednesday and took her to the outskirts of Ravipadu for a chat. During the conversation, he got angry and strangled Anusha. She died on

CM ANNOUNCES `10 LAKH EX GRATIA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

Expressing anguish over the Narasaraopet incident, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy announced ₹10 lakh ex gratia to Anusha's family

● The boy and girl were close for some time but the girl distanced from him recently. The boy suspected she was in love with another youth.

the spot," police said.

The accused surrendered at the Narasaraopet police station.

The police shifted the body to the Narasaraopet government hospital for autopsy.

Later, the body was handed over to the parents who, with locals, rushed to Narasaraopet. Angry people staged a protest march with the body from the government hospital to the Palnadu bus stand. They squatted on the road with

ly and assured stern action against those responsible for the murder.

He directed officials to expedite the investigation and ensure strict action against the culprit under the Disha Act.

the body and demanded stern punishment to the accused and financial help to the girl's family from the government. A group of students pelted stones at the college alleging negligence of the management in averting the incident. The students were backed by Telugu Desam leaders.

CPI state assistant secretary Muppalla Nageswara Rao, former TD MLA G.V. Aanjaneyulu and other leaders urged the police to register a case against the accused under the Nirbhaya Act and requested the government to announce an assistance of ₹1 crore to the girl's family.

LOKESH DEMANDS DETERRENT PUNISHMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

Telugu Desam general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Wednesday condemned the murder of degree girl student Kota Anusha in Narasaraopet and demanded deterrent punishment to the persons responsible for her death.

He asked why the Chief Minister and his party leaders could not prevent this atrocity even though the girl was facing harassment from the accused for long.

Lokesh said that before the elections YSRC leaders had boasted that Jagan Mohan Reddy would prevent atrocities on women. Despite this, the government had failed to come to the aid of Anusha. He demanded that the YSRC leaders explain to the parents.



Thanga Durai hands over the golden Shanku and Chakra icons to Srivari temple DyEO P. Harindranath at the Ranganayakula mandapam inside the temple Tirumala on Wednesday.

— BY ARRANGEMENT

Conch, disc donated to Tirumala temple

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 24

A devotee of Lord Venkateswara from Tamil Nadu has donated a pair of golden 'Shanku and Chakra' icons worth ₹2 crore to Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams here on Wednesday.

According to the officials, the devotee identified as Thanga Durai from Teyna-

mpet district of Tamil Nadu handed over the ornaments to Srivari temple DyEO P. Harindranath at the Ranganayakula mandapam inside the temple.

Speaking to media persons, Than Durai said, "Last year after darshan for devotees was suspended at Tirumala temple due to the Covid-19 induced lockdown, I fell sick and was bedrid-

den for quite a while. At that time, I prayed Lord Venkateswara to bless me with good health and vowed to donate a pair of golden Shanku-Chakra to the Tirumala temple once I regained my health. And, today I'm here to fulfil my vow by donating a conch and a holy disc weighing 3.5 kgs of gold, worth ₹2 crore", the devotee said.

MAN, MOTHER GET 7-YEAR JAIL IN DOWRY CASE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 24

First additional district court judge K. Sudharani sentenced a man and his mother to seven years' imprisonment in a dowry harassment and death case, here on Wednesday.

According to the prosecution, Pentapati Chandrasekhar and his mother P. Indravathi were found guilty of harassing P. Ramanamma, following which she ended her life in December 2016.

The Vizianagaram police said Chandrasekhar, a resident of YSR Nagar, married Ramanamma, a native of Putimadaka under Atchuta-puram mandal in Vizag district in February 2016.

As per the case, Chandrasekhar and his mother physically and mentally harassed Ramanamma for additional dowry and later drove the woman to her parents' house. Ramanamma set herself on fire on December 22, 2016. Though she was admitted to a hospital, her life could not be saved.

Based on the dying declaration of the victim, the then sub-inspector of Two-Town police station, Ravi, registered a case against Chandrasekhar and his mother. The police filed the charge-sheet saying Ramanamma ended her life as she was unable to bear the harassment after her marriage.

Judge Sudharani sentenced both Chandrasekhar and Indravathi to seven years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of ₹60,000 each.

● Pentapati Chandrasekhar and his mother P. Indravathi were found guilty of harassing P. Ramanamma, following which she ended her life in December 2016.

● Chandrasekhar and his mother physically and mentally harassed Ramanamma for additional dowry

Roadshow for Maritime India

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEBRUARY 24

Visakhapatnam Port Trust and Dredging Corporation of India conducted a road show in connection with the ensuing Maritime India Summit 2021 at Port Kalavani Auditorium on Wednesday.

Chairman of VPT K. Rama Mohana Rao inaugurated the event.

Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways is organising Maritime India Summit 2021 during 2nd - 4th March 2021 in virtual mode.

Addressing the participants, Rama Mohana Rao called upon the youth to make use of the opportunity where abundant employment opportunities were

available during the upcoming Maritime India Summit-2021

Chairman informed that due to Covid-19, the Summit was being conducted in a virtual mode and the youth to register in more numbers for availing the facilities extended.

He further stated that the port users and other stakeholders and the general public to register in large number in view of the developments taking place in the Indian Maritime Sector and availability of large scale employment opportunities.

Dredging Corporation of India, one among the top 10 dredging companies in the world that own, operate and maintain dredgers in major, non-major, minor, naval ports and harbors.

BJP demands arrest of Amaravati JAC leader for attack on Vishnu

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 24

Senior BJP leaders K. Anjaneya Reddy, P. Surendra Reddy and G. Bharatkumar Yadav condemned the attack on BJP senior leader and state general secretary Vishnuvardhan Reddy by Amaravati JAC leader Srinivasa Rao during a TV debate two days back.

The leaders took part in a protest held before the Collectorate in Nellore on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, Mr Anjaneya Reddy slammed Srinivasa for assaulting Vishnuvardhan Reddy

unable to reply to the questions of the latter.

He appealed to the media to ban Srinivasa Rao and avoid inviting him for any TV debates in the future.

Demanding for the arrest of Srinivasa Rao after filing criminal cases, the leaders submitted a representation to the District Revenue Officer Nageswar Rao after the protest.

Meanwhile Akhila Bharata Vidyarthi Parishat members along with students of various degree colleges organised a rally at Podalakur demanding the immediate release of fee reimbursement.

Fun time



Tourists enjoy kayaking at the waters of Rushikonda beach in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

— DC

Politics of intimidation will not last long: TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, FEB. 24

Telugu Desam Kadapa constituency in-charge V.S. Ameer Babu advised YSR Congress leaders to take consensus on public welfare and not threaten people with denial of development schemes if they do not vote for the ruling party.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday in Kadapa city,

he accused YSRC government of using police officers to intimidate opposition candidates while nominations were being filed for the Kadapa Municipal Corporation elections last March.

Ameer Babu said in a democracy, politics of intimidation will not last long and the government that has come to power will get blown away.



Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu receiving PM Kisan award at New Delhi on Wednesday.

Chakradhar receives PM Kisan nat'l award

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 24

Nellore district bagged the prestigious Prime Minister Kisan Award on the occasion of the second anniversary of the PM Kisan Scheme for resolving as many as 5,000 grievances of the farmers.

District collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu received the award from the Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar at a programme held in New Delhi on Wednesday.

The district administration had started a grievance day exclusively to deal with the issues affecting farmers and arranged a special system and a portal for resolving them on a war

footing. The initiative had received huge response from the poor farmers and helped the district to secure first place in the country.

Commissioner of Agriculture Arun Kumar, Joint Director of Agriculture C Ananda Kumari and Assistant Director Anitha was also present.

Gov: NEP has potential to transform edu system

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 24

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan stated that the National Educational Policy-2020 was having the potential to transform the Indian higher education system to meet the needs of the 21st century.

The Governor took part as a chief guest in the 'South Zone Vice Chanc-

ellors' Meet 2020-21' held under the aegis of Association of Indian Universities in virtual mode on Wednesday.

The Governor opined that the NEP was an innovating and learner centric and said that it would help knowledge, skills, values and help realise sustainable development and fulfil the commitment to safeguard human rights.

Appreciating the youth who were ambitious and eager to pursue higher education and upgrade their skills in pursuit of better employment opportunities, he said that the young population would provide a unique demographic advantage for investment in human capital development.

He released a special issue of the 'University News' magazine.

CLUB | CLASS

It is now all set to host global events

Vizag golf club gets 'A' status

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 24

After years of wait, the East Point Golf Club (EPGC) here has achieved the Category-A championship golf course status.

It is now all set to host national and international events.

The EPGC's stunning new 6,800-yard championship course was inaugurated recently, in the presence of prominent

● Vizag will be soon on the global golf tourism map, EPGC members said.

golfers and former cricketers Roger Binny and Syed Kirmani.

The EPGC has now become the city's jewel in the crown. It will attract visitors to enjoy a round of golf, said vice-president of EPGC, Uday Shirname.

The golf club was start-

ed over 45 acres around 1884 as Golf Links with a nine-hole course for the British officials to relax. Originally, the course was located near VUDA Park and in 1964 it was moved to its present location at Mudasarlova, largely because of great efforts by Raja P.V. Gajapathi Raju of Vizianagaram and other avid golfers.

Nestled amid lush hills with a green carpet of grass all around, EPGC is

the only major 18-hole course in AP.

Initially, the EPGC was categorized as a Class-B category golf course as the course measured 6,041 yards. The EPGC has spent crores of rupees to make 6,800 yards that is essential for getting a Championship Course (Category-A) golf course status.

Vizag will be soon on the global golf tourism map, EPGC members said.

SHORT TAKES

TWO JAWANS
KILLED, 1 HURT IN
NAXAL ATTACKS

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, FEB. 24

In three separate incidents on Wednesday, Maoists killed two jawans and injured another in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar district of Narayanpur.

According to Bastar range inspector general of police P. Sunderraj, a jawan of district reserve group (DRG), identified as Kaner Usendi, was killed in an encounter with Maoists in the forested village of Kukur under Sonepur police station at around 10 am.

In another incident, a jawan of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), L. Balchandra, was killed in a pipe bomb explosion, triggered by Maoists, near a bridge around one km from Sonepur at around 11 am.

Similarly, a jawan of Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF), identified as Bankeswar Paikra, was injured when he stepped on an IED, planted by Maoists at Karel Ghati under Kukrajhar police station.

He was airlifted to Raipur for treatment. His condition was stated to be stable.

POLICE OFFICER
KILLED BY LIQUOR
SMUGGLERS

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, FEB. 24

A sub-inspector was killed and a police guard was injured in an encounter with liquor smugglers in Bihar's Sitamarhi district on Wednesday.

The incident occurred when a police team led by Sub Inspector Dinesh Ram reached village Kunwari under Majorganj police station to arrest Mukul, Ranjan and their associates in connection with an extortion case. Sources said that as soon as the police team started cordoning off the area, criminals opened fire in which the Sub Inspector was killed and a police guard sustained injuries.

According to the police, Mukul, Ranjan and others have also been involved in liquor smuggling from Nepal and other neighbouring states.

Later, Mukul was arrested while he was fleeing to Nepal after the firing incident and one of the smugglers was killed by the police.

"Manhunt has been launched and raids are being conducted to nab all those who have been involved in the incident", ADG (law and order) Amit Kumar told reporters in Patna.

The incident has triggered sharp reactions from across the political spectrum in Bihar. While the ruling JD(U) termed the incident as "an act of frustration" by the liquor mafia, opposition blamed the state government for its failure to check liquor smuggling from outside the state.

"The incident shows that there is no fear of law in Bihar. The state government should order a high-level probe and act against all those who are behind the entire liquor trade racket in the state. There are many big people who have close links with liquor mafias", RJD leader Subodh Rai told reporters. A total ban on liquor was imposed in April 2016. Liquor prohibition was the first major announcement by Nitish Kumar after he was sworn in as CM in 2015 following an emphatic victory.

Recently after the opposition raised questions on the success of liquor prohibition following eight hooch deaths in two separate incidents, Bihar CM Nitish Kumar defended the decision saying that "people were in favour of the act and if government employees are found consuming it will be dismissed from the service".

Scenes in Kashmir reminiscent of early '90s

Securitymen abruptly and unexpectedly set up makeshift checkpoints and conduct random searches

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, FEB. 24

Security across Jammu and Kashmir has been stepped up exceptionally with local cops and members of Central armed police forces conducting surprise cordon-and-search and frisking operations in cities and towns particularly summer capital Srinagar at intervals. The Army is also launching sensitisation and area domination operations in select Valley areas quietly.

The scenes witnessed particularly in some crowded areas of the Valley's main town including at and around historic Lal Chowk over the past few days are reminiscent of the early 1990s when the Kashmiri separatist campaign was at its peak. The adequately equipped uniformed men, abruptly and unexpectedly, arrive in an area, choose a location, set up makeshift checkpoints and roadblocks and conduct random searches which include frisking of pedestrians after making them wait in lines. They also stop vehicles and then subject passengers to body search and check their



Security personnel check identity card of a youth during a search operation at Kawdara in downtown of Srinagar on Wednesday.

— PTI

belongings thoroughly.

The authorities said that such random operations have been necessitated by the recent spurt in militant attacks and in view of the reports that the separatists are planning more violence in coming weeks.

Last week, two policemen were targeted by a pheran-clad shooter with

an AK assault rifle concealed under the traditional Kashmiri outfit in Srinagar's Barzulla area resulting in their instant death. Against the backdrop of this incident and the demand of banning pheran raised by some Jammu-based Bharatiya Janata Party leaders and likeminded outfits, the

security forces deployed along the streets and other public places in the Valley have in several instances forced people to take off the outfit. There have also been reports of visitors being allowed to enter certain government offices and other sensitive premises only after removal of pheran by them. This has

evoked sharp criticism by political activities and netizens.

Counter-militancy strategists and policing experts also disagree with such actions and call for tactical changes towards dealing with the emerging situation by the security forces effectively.

Former Director General of Police, Shesh Paul Vaid, said, "In 1990s also several incidents took place wherein militants used weapons hidden beneath their pheran to target security forces yet the garment was not banned. I don't think banning a particular dress is a solution."

He added, "Pheran and Kangri (traditional firepot) are part and parcel of the Kashmiri culture and lifestyle rather centuries' old wisdom to beat the biting cold in winters. As said, banning pheran is not the way out. The solution is, be alert, stop the person you suspect, subject him to frisking and if you find him hiding an illegal weapon beneath his garment take action as per law. That is what we would do during the heyday of militancy to minimise such gory acts".

Search on



Search for missing people continues in the disaster-hit areas of Tapovan in Chamoli district on Wednesday. So far, 70 bodies and 29 human body parts have been recovered from different places in the avalanche-hit areas, out of which 40 bodies and one human body part have been identified. DNA samples of bodies and 28 body parts have been sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory, Dehradun for matching.

— PTI

Phase-2 Covid jabs to begin from March 1

VINEETA
PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 24

After the vaccination of healthcare and frontline workers in the first phase, it is now time for the general public to get the Covid-19 jab. From March 1, people over the age of 60 years and those over 45 years having comorbidities will be able to get vaccinated at 10,000 government facilities and over 20,000 private hospitals, the government said on Wednesday while announcing its plan to roll out the second phase of immunisation against the Coronavirus.

The President, Prime Minister, several Cabinet minister and state Chief Ministers are expected to take the

jab from March 1.

The number of beneficiaries in this category is expected to be over 10 crore. The vaccine shots will be given free of cost in government hospitals but they will be charged for in private hospitals. Announcing the decision taken by the Union cabinet on Wednesday, Union minister for information and broadcasting, Prakash Javadekar, said that vaccine rates in the private sector are still being worked out by the health ministry in consultation with the private hospitals and manufacturers and will be announced in a couple of days.

"The second phase of the world's largest vaccination drive will begin from Monday in which anybody

above 60 years and 45 years plus with co-morbidities will be given vaccines in 10,000 government and over 20,000 private hospitals. Whoever goes to the government centre will be administered a vaccine free of cost. The Indian government will pay for them. Those who want to get vaccination from private hospitals will have to pay," Javadekar said. The minister, however, did not elaborate if people will have a choice of vaccines. Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said most of the ministers are thinking of paying for the vaccines.

Meanwhile, with Covid-19 cases surging in several states, the Centre on Wednesday deputed high-level, multi-disciplinary

teams to Maharashtra, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir for supporting them in public health measures for targeted Covid response and management, and effectively tackling the pandemic.

These teams will work closely with state and UT administrations to ascertain reasons for the recent surge in the number of Covid-19 cases. They will also coordinate with health authorities of the states and UT for requisite Covid-19 control measures to break the chain of transmission. States and UTs have been advised to regularly review the emer-

ging situation with the concerned district officials to ensure that gains made so far in Covid management are not lost, Union health ministry officials said.

Union health secretary has also written to Maharashtra, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir which have been witnessing a rise in daily Covid cases, along with decreasing proportion of RT-PCR tests.

The health secretary has urged states/UT to focus on undertaking aggressive measures to break the chain of transmission and to ensure that RT-PCR testing is amplified to flush out undetected cases.

2 militants killed in Anantnag

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, FEB. 24

Two militants believed to be associated with a proscribed outfit — possibly Jaish-e-Muhammad — were killed in a fierce gunfight raging in woods of southern Anantnag district since Wednesday morning. However, the authorities said that the identities of the slain men are being ascertained. The internet services in Anantnag have been suspended "as a precautionary measure," they said.

The Army said that the operation to flush out militants from Shalgul forest area of Srigufwara belt of Anantnag was launched following an input from the J&K police. The police sources said that its counterinsurgency Special Operations Group along with the Army's 3 Rashtriya Rifles moved in the woods on learning

about the presence of four militants including an IED expert.

Initial reports quoting unnamed local police officials had said that all the four militants have been killed but later the police officially clarified that only two of them have been "neutralised" and that the operation was still underway. Local sources said that the Army also used a helicopter and drones for the surveillance of the area during the operation.

A statement issued by the police here said when, during the jointly launched cordon-and-search operation, the presence of militants was established they were given an opportunity to surrender.

"However, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retaliated leading to an encounter."

Didi: Modi is the 'biggest rioter'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, FEB. 24

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday branded Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the "biggest rioter" of the world who is waiting to face even a "worse fate" than that of former US president Donald Trump. The Trinamul Congress supremo cast aspersions on Mr Modi at her party rally on Dunlop Ground at Chinsurah in Hooghly to counter his attack on her at a BJP rally on the same venue only two days ago.

"Mr Modi is the biggest rioter, liar, cheat and the most vindictive. There is no parallel of him in the whole world. You saw what happened to Mr Trump. But Mr Modi went to ensure his victory. How could he dare to do that when he himself does not have any capability? His fate will be even worse than Trump. Violence never gifts anything good," she said.

Without taking the names of Mr Modi and his deputy Amit Shah, Ms Banerjee also taunted them in Bengali. She mocked that only two leaders *Kimb-hootki-makar* (grotesque) and *Hodolkootkoot* (pot bellied man) have been calling all the shots in the country.

"There are only two leaders in the country. One of them is *Hodolkootkoot*. I do not what it is called in English or Hindi because it is a typical Bengali classical word. Another

leader is *Kimbhoot-kimakar*," she claimed.

A wise BJP IT cell in-charge Amit Malviya later attributed her jibe to the PM and the union home minister respectively. "Sensing an inevitable saffron surge across West Bengal, Pishi is clearly jittery and resorting to name calling, something culturally evolved people of WB had never witnessed in public discourse," he tweeted.

A day after the Central Bureau of Investigation grilled her MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee's wife Rujira Banerjee Narula at her home for her suspected link to overseas financial transactions in the high profile coal smuggling case, Ms Banerjee also asked the PM, "How can you, after entering my house, call a Bachcha Meye of 22-23 years who is also Ghoror Bou a coal thief when you are roaming with coal thieves in your lap? Don't you feel ashamed of yourself to call our daughters and sisters at home coal thieves? You have dirt all over you."

Film producer Raj Chakraborty, actress Shayoni Ghosh, actor Kanchan Chakraborty and cricketer Manoj Tiwari joined the TMC in front of Ms Banerjee at the rally. Later the CM urged the PM to help her government to purchase the vaccines from designated points on top priority basis and offer them to the common people as part of a rapid drive in the poll-bound state.

President's Rule imposed in Puducherry

DC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUCHERRY, FEB. 24

With the Union Cabinet approving of the proposal to impose President's Rule in Puducherry, days after a Congress-led government in the union territory lost power during a vote of confidence, polls seem imminent.

Announcing the Cabinet decision in New Delhi, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar had told reporters that the decision was taken as no party was coming forward to stake a claim to form the government in the UT.

He also noted that the model code of conduct was expected to come into effect soon after the Election Commission announces the dates for elections in the UT, along with the four states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and West Bengal.

The Lt Governor in charge of Puducherry, Tamilisai Soundararajan, had no choice but to recommend President's Rule as the opposition group led by N. Rangasamy of the NR Congress with seven MLAs and having the support of four AIADMK MLAs besides the three (nominated) BJP MLAs who too have a vote was not keen on taking the reins of a government that might be in place for just about two months as polls are likely to be held in mid April itself.

With the Prime Minister visiting Puducherry on Thursday, it would have been embarrassing not to have resolved the situation arising after chief minister V. Narayanasamy put in his papers on Monday on walking out of the Assembly before the trust vote was taken.

TOUGH | WORDS

India has showed to China its salami-slicing strategy will not work with us: Naravane

Naravane: Strategy in place for talks with China

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 24

Indian Army Chief General M.M. Naravane said on Wednesday that India has strategy in place for further negotiations with China to resolve other pending issues in Ladakh and "again come out with a favourable outcome." Gen Naravane said that India has showed to China that its salami-slicing strategy "will not work with us" and "every move will be met resolutely".

He said that there was no overt signs of any collusion between China and Pakistan against India dur-

ing current stand-off at the LAC. He said that there were no large scale mobilisations by Pakistan or any kind of activity which would be suggestive of any kind of help being given by one to the other.

The Army Chief said that on disengagement with China there is a long way to go. "Now we have to move on to the stage of de-escalation and ofcourse after that moving back of the troops and deinduction of troops which went to the higher reaches," Gen Naravane said during an online interaction by Vivekananda International Foundation.

He said that there is a trust deficit with China and India will be cautious and watching whatever movement happens at the LAC.

Last week Indian and Chinese troops completed disengagement from Pangong Tso in Eastern Ladakh after nine months of stand-off. India and China are now discussing modalities of the second phase of disengagement in Depsang, Gogra, Hotsprings and Demchok.

Gen Naravane said that the disengagement which has happened with China is a good end result. "It is a win win situation and I

think for any agreement to last both sides should feel that they have achieved something. To that end, this I think is a good outcome that has resulted out of this 10 rounds of (Corps Commanders) talks which have taken place," said army chief. He said that going forward there are some issues which remain including in the area of Depsang.

"There are pending issues in the area of Eastern Ladakh. Also pending issues in other areas along Northern border. But we have our strategy in place for that. As Ambassador Satish mentioned that do we

have anything to negotiate in future? Yes definitely we have but I would not — of course for the obvious reasons — like to say what those strategies would be to further and progress negotiations and again to come out with a favourable outcome," said Gen Naravane.

He said that at the end of the day India has achieved a lot more. "China has been in the habit of creeping forward and making small incremental changes where-in each change by itself was not very big or worthy of a very strong reaction. And because of small incremental moves, which were never

contested, it has been able to achieve its aims without firing a shot or without any loss of lives. What has happened in South China Sea is a very glaring example of that. I think more than anything else what we have achieved is to show that this strategy will not work with us and every move will be met resolutely," said Gen Naravane.

Army Chief said there was a "whole of government approach" to deal with the crisis with China from the beginning where everyone be it political, diplomatic or military were "all in it together".

SHORT TAKES

SEDITION: THAI COURT OUSTS 3 CABINET MINS

Bangkok, Feb. 24: Three Cabinet ministers in Thailand were forced to leave their posts Wednesday after a court found them guilty of sedition for taking part in sometimes-violent protests in 2013-2014 against the government then in power. The Criminal Court in Bangkok found Digital Economy Minister Buddhpongse Punnakanta, Education Minister Nataphol Teepsuwan and Deputy Transport Minister Thaworn Seneam guilty along with about two dozen other defendants in a case that was launched in 2018.

JAPAN PM SON SCAM: OFFICIALS FACE MUSIC

Tokyo, Feb. 24: Japan's communications ministry punished 11 senior officials on Wednesday for accepting lavish dinners paid for by Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's eldest son and his fellow executives at a satellite broadcaster, the latest embarrassment for Suga's already scandal-laden government.

Imran, Gotabaya discuss trade

Productive talks with Khan: Rajapaksa wrote on his Twitter handle

Reject UN rights body resolution: Lankan FM

Colombo, Feb. 24: A top Sri Lankan minister has made a fervent appeal to the member states of the UNHRC to reject the impending resolution on the island nation's human rights accountability and reconciliation, terming it a "pure political move" against the country.

Addressing a UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) session virtually on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena urged that the resolution be rejected by the council and brought to a closure. The minister described the impending resolution

as unsubstantiated and a pure political move against Sri Lanka.

Gunawardena's remarks followed the country's rejection of the UN rights Commissioner Michelle Bachelet's report which had called for drastic measures such as targeted sanctions and international criminal court procedure against those allegedly responsible for rights violations during the last phase of the armed conflict with the LTTE in 2009. A draft of the resolution is expected to be tabled at the UNHRC sessions on Wednesday,

officials here said.

The officials said they believe that the nature of the resolution would be identical to the 30/1 resolution passed in 2015 which the then Sri Lanka government had co-sponsored. The current government elected in November 2019 withdrew from co-sponsorship of the resolution last year. The draft resolution is expected to include moves by the Office of the High Commissioner to enhance its monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation in Sri Lanka.

— PTI

LEASE REPORT ON PORT FALSE, SAYS CHINA

Beijing, Feb. 24: China on Wednesday said a report quoting Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena that the controversial deal to take over the Hambantota port on a 99-year lease has a provision for its extension for the same number of years "runs counter to the facts". Gunawardena has revealed that the previous Maithripala Sirisena government had awarded the Hambantota port to China not only for a 99-year lease but also provided a provision for extension for another 99-years.

When asked whether the clause is mentioned in the MoU, Gunawardena said: Yes. It says the 99-year lease can extend for a further period. Which means it can go on for any number of years after 99 years or for another 99 years.

— PTI

At UNHRC, India slams Pak**GREENFIELD IS U.S. ENVOY TO UNITED NATIONS**

Geneva, Feb. 24: India on Wednesday slammed Pakistan for misusing international platforms for "baseless and malicious propaganda" against it and said Islamabad would do well to put its own house in order, before venturing to point a finger at New Delhi.

Using its Right of Reply under the High-Level Session of the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council in response to a statement by Pakistan's representative, India said it was not surprised that Islamabad's representative misused the UN forum yet again. "Pakistan's continued misuse of various platforms to engage in baseless and malicious propaganda against India is not new," Second Secretary of India's Permanent Mission in Geneva, Seema Pujani, said.

She asserted that the entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are an "integral and inalienable part of India".

"The steps taken by the Government to ensure good governance and development in these Union Territories are our internal matters," Pujani said.

Washington, Feb. 24: Linda Thomas-Greenfield, a veteran diplomat and Joe Biden's nominee, has been confirmed as America's next ambassador to the United Nations by the US Senate, adding a key member to the President's national security team as it seeks to reengage with the world body. The 100-member Senate on Tuesday backed Thomas-Greenfield by 78 to 20 votes to be US' representative at the world body and a member of Biden's Cabinet. Vice President Kamala Harris is scheduled to administer her the oath of office at the White House on Wednesday.

— PTI

As a country with one of the world's worst human rights records, Pakistan would do well to put its own house in order, before venturing to point a finger at India, the diplomat said.

— PTI

Officials: Engine explosion, fire kill 10 Afghan citizens

Kabul, Feb. 24: A minivan carrying civilians caught fire Wednesday after its engine exploded in southern Afghanistan killing 10 family members, including three children, an official said.

Southern Urozgan provincial police spokesman Ahmad Shah Sahel said the family was returning from a wedding when their minivan became partially submerged in the Helmand River. Sahel said the family wasn't able to exit the vehicle as it was half in the water.

High pressure and water finding its way into the engine caused an explosion and fire inside the car, killing all the family members, Sahel said. The bride and groom were riding in a separate car and were not among the casualties. A police spokesman said the incident happened in an area where militants and Afghan forces are active and police were not able

to provide assistance immediately.

Meanwhile, a media advocacy organisation called Nai said in a statement that unknown gunmen shot and killed Dr Khalil Narmgo, former head of a Baghlan journalists association in northern Afghanistan. A Baghlan police official who wanted to remain anonymous as he was not authorised to speak to the media said Narmgo was returning to the capital of Baghlan province late Tuesday when unknown gunmen stopped his car, took him out, and opened fire at him. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Afghanistan has seen a nationwide spike in bombings, targeted killings, and violence as peace negotiations in Qatar between the Taliban and the Afghan government resumed this week after over a month's delay.

— AP

Germany prepares way for its troops to stay in Afghanistan

Berlin, Feb. 24: The German government is preparing the way for the country's troops in Afghanistan — the second-biggest contingent in a NATO force — to stay in place until next year if needed.

Chancellor Angela Merkel's Cabinet on Wednesday approved a new draft mandate that would enable German troops to stay until Jan. 31, government spokesman Steffen Seibert said. German troop deployments overseas require parliamentary approval, which is typically granted on an

annual basis. The current mandate for Afghanistan expires at the end of March. NATO has just under 10,000 troops in the war-ravaged country, helping to train and advise Afghan security forces.

Germany's contingent of nearly 1,100 is the second-biggest in the Resolute Support mission after the United States. President Joe Biden is reviewing his predecessor's 2020 deal with the Taliban, which includes a May 1 deadline for a final U.S. troop withdrawal.

— AP

UK judge to rule on Nirav today

London, Feb. 24: Wanted diamond merchant Nirav Modi, who remains behind bars in a London prison as he contests his extradition to India on charges of fraud and money laundering in the estimated USD 2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, will find out the UK court's ruling in the nearly two-year-long legal battle on Thursday.

The 49-year-old is expected to appear via

videolink from Wandsworth Prison in south-west London at Westminster Magistrates' Court, where District Judge Samuel Goozee is set to hand down his judgment on whether the jeweller has a case to answer before the Indian courts. The magistrates' court ruling will then be sent back to UK Home Secretary Priti Patel for a sign off, with the possibility of appeals in the High Court.

— PTI

IN LOVING MEMORY

Physical nature is known to be endlessly mutable. The universe is the cosmic form of the Supreme Lord, and I am that Lord represented as the Supersoul, dwelling in the heart of every embodied being.

- Bhagwad Gita Chapter 8, Verse 4 -



Smt. Tikkavarapu Urmila Chandrasekhar Reddy

W/o Late Shri. Tikkavarapu Chandrasekhar Reddy

18/03/1936 – 25/02/2016

Remembered by

T Venkatram Reddy & Manjula Reddy
T Vinayak Ravi Reddy & Shanthi Reddy
& Grand Children

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25 FEBRUARY 2021

Renew thrust on tests, speed up vaccinations

The Union government's directive to states which witness a spurt in the daily case load of Covid-19 to tighten the testing procedures and the announcement that it will soon start the vaccination programme for people other than frontline workers have come not one day late. The pandemic shows no sign of going; in fact, it continues to make lives difficult in nations across the globe. The number of deaths due to the virus in the United States has crossed 5 lakhs; Britain, another hard-hit nation, which has already vaccinated one third of its adult population, sees a return to normal life only by June. Both France and Germany are worried about the turn the pandemic has taken. France has not yet announced a national lockdown, but there is night-time curfew. As many as 14 of the 16 states in Germany report higher than the target level of infections.

Back home in India, the scene is far from comfortable. As many as 16 of the 36 states and Union territories have reported a rise in the Covid numbers last week while seven states — Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and Haryana — have reported a dramatic hike. Several districts in Maharashtra are under lockdown. India at present hosts all the important variants of the virus and scientists are afraid that some of them could frustrate vaccination drive by mutation. This situation leaves the Union government with little option other than taking a serious look at the way the pandemic is fought at the ground. The nation has now practically done away with every restriction that was part of the lockdown announced last year. Life has returned to near normal in most parts of the nation.

This is incompatible with the reality, and hence the government must take a relook at the restrictions before it is too late, including those on social, political and religious congregations. Educational institutions have started functioning in most states and now some states are opening even the primary classes. The government must seek expert advice on the opening of educational institutions and share it with the states.

India has targeted to vaccinate three crore frontline workers in the first phase and is at present close to half the target. It must speed up the process and soon announce the roll-out of the programme for the next target group — people who are aged above 50 years. The government has announced that it will rope in the private sector in the next phase. At present, only 0.8 vaccine doses, the lowest, have been given to 100 people in countries with highest total vaccinations. Hence the government should waste no time and come up with a transparent policy to co-opt private hospitals for the massive programme. The renewed thrust on RT-PCR tests is also welcome; the Union government should think of incentivising such tests by the states. There has to be a concerted effort by the Centre and the states to stop another wave of the pandemic.

Business trumps nationalism

Irrespective of whether it is viable strategy or not, the Narendra Modi government gives the impression of wanting to get back to business as usual with China as early as possible. Some Chinese investment proposals stuck in the pipeline since the time last summer when India woke up to sour northern neighbour's incursion into Indian territory have thus been cleared expeditiously.

These clearances appear to have been accorded no sooner than the disengagement of troops and military hardware were completed in the north and the south banks of Pangong Lake last Friday, and while the Chinese side is being difficult about vacating the strategically vital Depsang Plains where China's military presence cuts us off from our airfield at Daulat Beg Oldie and access to the Karakoram pass.

When the People's Liberation Army (PLA) moved into Indian territory there was much to-do about applying a squeeze on Chinese economic interests as a form of retaliation. Hundreds of Chinese apps doing brisk business in India were choked. The "Atmanirbhar Bharat" slogan was sought to be made routine from the highest levels of government. That phase appears to be behind us.

Perhaps the business end of things is trumping nationalism for the Modi government. It turns out that in 2020 China remained India's biggest trading partner, and more was imported from China than from the US and the UAE — the second and the third biggest trading partners — put together.

It also became evident that at a time when India's exports were suffering on account of Covid and other factors, its exports to China were in steady shape. Perhaps the Modi regime does not want this compromised. India also uses Chinese heavy equipment, electronics and household appliances in a big way. On the whole, the Indian economy seems as difficult to disengage from the Chinese as Chinese soldiers from eastern Ladakh. Perhaps this is a reason why officially India is yet to acknowledge that China intruded into Indian territories.

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KAUSHIK MITTER
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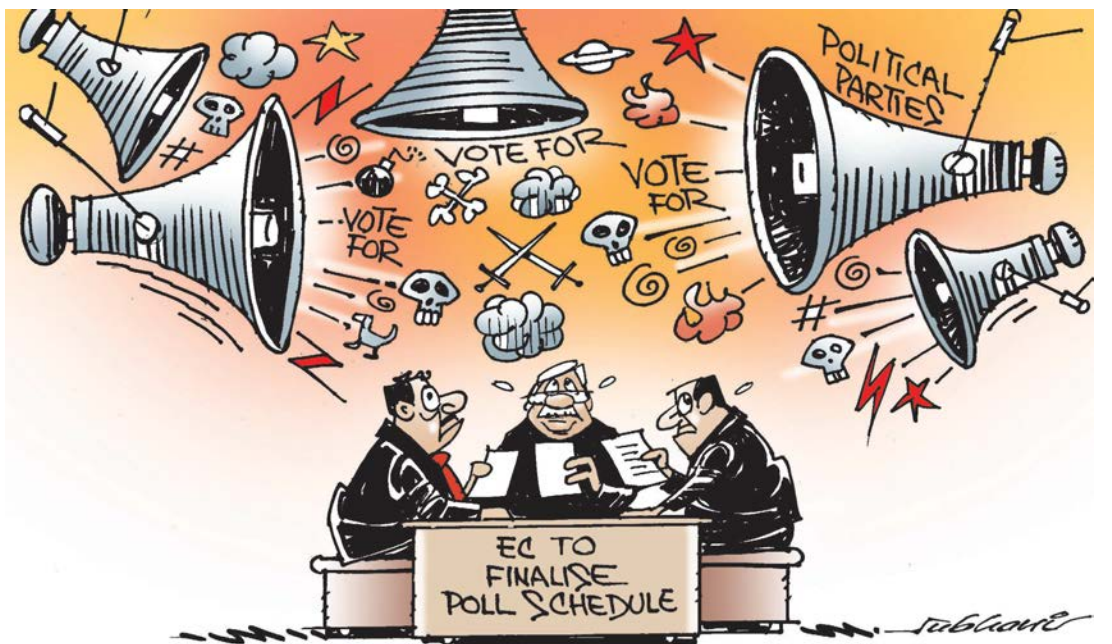
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Subhani



Ignoring Biden mantra may be costly for India



K.C. Singh

Three events have been shaping India's geopolitical environment since the Galwan Valley stand-off between India and China since May-June last year. One is the trajectory of the Covid-19 pandemic and the pace of vaccination. Two, the ascendancy of US President Joe Biden and his swift moves to establish his domestic and international agenda. Finally, the farmers' agitation against the three agricultural reform laws, passed hurriedly by Parliament without a proper examination by a select committee or a division and vote. Consequently, the normal boundaries between domestic politics and international relations have shattered, as the local and global factors impinge on each other.

A classic case was how a "toolkit" developed for environmental activists to be more effective, tweeted by global youth icon Greta Thunberg, became the locus of the police arrests of Indian activists recommending it to protesting farmers. From there it is being sought to be linked to pro-Khalistan proponents abroad. Almost 100 British parliamentarians threw their weight behind the Indian farmers, whose protest has gradually widened as the lead passed from mainly Punjabi and Sikh farm union leaders to the redoubtable Tikait brothers of western Uttar Pradesh and the family of late Prime Minister Charan Singh. Besides rumblings in the US Congress, the state department urged respect for the protesters' rights. American farm unions also lent their weight to the Indian protests.

In the brouhaha, not enough attention has been paid to the repeated message from President Joe Biden, as he told the Munich Conference that "we

are at an inflection point". From that assumption, he argues how the US plans to regenerate economically and reassert strategically. The main challenges are climate change, the global pandemic, Chinese assertiveness combined with Russian obduracy, reform of multilateralism and defence of the democratic way of life.

Between President Biden's Munich address on February 19 and his remarks at the G-7 meeting a day earlier, the most striking was his plea over the role of democracy and rule of law. Critics maintain that historically US actions in this regard have often been differed from America's words. For decades, during the Cold War, the Americans not only happily worked with autocrats and dictators as allies but overthrew with alacrity democratic governments, for instance in Iran and Chile, if seen as unfriendly to US interests. Therefore, the Indian government has so far ignored subtle hints from the US that freedom of expression includes the freedom to protest peacefully and tweet or support those protests on social media platforms. The spat between the government and Twitter over which handles to block underscored the divergence between the Indian approach and that adopted in the West by and large.

President Biden's words need closer attention to understand that this is a new America, traumatised by four years of Trumpian undermining of US institutions, including the former President denying his electoral defeat and repeatedly rejecting the orderly transfer of power. That wound is still open as despite the impeachment of Mr Trump having failed, the US Congress is in the process of setting-up a 9/11-type commission of inquiry into the Capital violence and Mr

Trump's role in it.

President Biden's Munich address began by recommitting America to its trans-Atlantic alliance, which his predecessor had contemptuously shredded. Then he developed at some length his defence of democracy. He argued that the alliance was rooted in the "richness of our shared values", including the need to protect the rights of all and the rule of law. He warned that in both the US and Europe "democratic progress is under assault". He added: "We are in the midst of a fundamental debate about the future and direction of our world". Despite the pandemic and the so-called fourth industrial revolution, he continued, democracy was essential and must prevail. He concluded this part with the telling sentence that "democracy does not happen by accident", nor is Western liberal democracy a "relic of history".

The same message emanated from the Australia-India-Japan-US Quad ministerial meeting, held a day before Mr Biden's Munich address. The statement notes the four nations share values as "political democracies, market economies and pluralistic societies". They seek a rules-based international order and respect for the territorial integrity of other nations. The second is aimed at both the maritime claims of China in South and East China seas, as indeed resolving Chinese intrusions across the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh. But India too had to accept in exchange the criticism of the military coup in Myanmar by joining the demand for the rule of law and democratic transition.

To assume that the US is just posturing against China and India's strategic value as a counterweight to China, economi-

cally and militarily, would keep any serious criticism of heavy-handed and majoritarian governance of the Indian government in check might be a mistake. Mr Biden has seen power exercised both from the White House as vice-president for eight years and from the Senate, where he chaired the foreign relations committee. Hillary Clinton recounts in her book *Hard Choices* that she and Mr Biden opposed President Barack Obama cutting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak loose as the protests developed at Tahrir Square during the Arab Spring. That was Mr Biden as the traditional pragmatist. But the new Biden has emerged triumphant from Donald Trump almost bringing US democracy to its knees. Democracy for him is no longer some asinine prescription for the Third World, used selectively, but a living organism that needs defending if China and Russia have to be countered.

Sources in the BJP say Prime Minister Narendra Modi is unwilling to roll back the farm laws. As chief minister, he apparently browbeat protesting Gujarat farmers over the installation of electricity meters. He is trying to extrapolate that success in dealings with the farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The BJP's Haryana government hangs by a thread. The UP Assembly election is just a year away. The Covid-19 pandemic is starting to respite as the vaccination pace is slow, with the calls for private sector involvement ignored. As Harold Wilson once said, a week is a long time in politics. Exactly a year ago, a cocky President Donald Trump said before he travelled to India that the US was on top of Covid-19. With him gone and half a million Americans dead, the conclusion is unavoidable that political arrogance can be costly. India may discover just that, caught between Prime Minister Modi's obduracy, the BJP's reflexive majoritarianism and President Biden's evangelistic defence of liberal democracy.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambksingh.

LETTERS

COVID COUNT

Though the fall of the Congress-led government in Puducherry is imminent, the way in which the political events took place crossed all the limits of constitutional provisions (*Puducherry: Democracy on back foot, holds poll on time (DC, Feb. 24)*). The episode exposes the failure of the anti-defection law to stop defections and cause a downfall of a government. Ironically, PM Narendra Modi in his *Mann Ki Baat* in May 2019, said: "Beyond laws and rules, democracy is embedded in our sanskaar; democracy is our culture. Democracy is our heritage."

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

CIVIC POLLS

The civic polls in Gujarat gave a resounding victory to the ruling BJP by thrashing hapless Congress (*DC, Feb. 24*). In AP village panchayat elections, the ruling YSR romped home easily beating the Telugu Desam. In Punjab, the ruling Congress won civic polls easily defeating the SAD. In West Bengal also the Trinamul succeeded in civic polls trouncing the BJP and the Congress parties. These results cannot be yardstick for Assembly and Parliament elections for all political parties.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

5 Naxalites die in clash with jail wardens

KRISHNAGAR, February. 24

Five Naxalites were killed and 40 others injured in Berhampur jail in a clash with jail wardens this morning, according to District Magistrate of Murshidabad Ashok Chatterjee. The trouble started when Naxalite prisoners stabbed the head warden, who had to be removed to hospital in a critical condition.

After this the Naxalites rioted and began dragging away another employee of the jail. To save him, the wardens made a lathi-charge in which five were killed and 40 others injured.

Naxalites similarly rioted in Midnapore Central Jail twice in recent weeks. About 20 Naxalites escaped from prison in Filguri on February 21.

— UNI

Mahir Ali



Keats' immortal poetry can be found on shelves all across world

The headstone above a final resting place dug in Rome's non-Catholic cemetery 200 years ago today bears the indelible inscription: "This grave contains all that was mortal of a young English poet who, on his death bed, in the bitterness of his heart at the malicious power of his enemies, desired these words to be engraven on his tomb stone: 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water.'"

There is a harp above the inscription, but no name. As some readers might have guessed, the mortal remains are those of John Keats, the bicentenary of whose distressingly premature demise was commemorated yesterday with readings, lectures, virtual tours and the like. His immortal remains can be found in bookshelves all around the world.

Contrary to what the gravestone suggests, it wasn't bad reviews that killed the poet. The villain was tuberculosis, commonly known back then as consumption. After a night out in London in February 1820, Keats coughed up blood and recognised its

colour. "That drop of blood is my death warrant," he told his housemate. "I must die."

A couple of years earlier, he had watched his younger brother, Tom, succumb to the ailment. As a teenager, he had seen his mother die of the same disease. Besides, he was a qualified apothecary and an apprentice surgeon who eventually chose poetry over medicine, but not before working at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals in London.

Orphaned at a tender age, Keats was a belligerent schoolboy, more interested in brawls than in scholastic pursuits. But he became a voracious reader in his later teens and soon began spouting verse. Hardly any of his juvenile poetry has stood the test of time, although the emotions expressed therein ought to be familiar to men — yes, it's the male gaze, although Keats was later to be commended (or criticised) for his feminine sensibility, too.

The sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" is generally seen as his first significant poem, signalling a lifelong fascination with

Greek mythology, which didn't always serve him well. It was followed not long afterwards by a far lesser known sonnet, *Written in Disgust at Vulgar Superstition*, an exhortation of organised religion. Some of the early poems also hint at political engagement, but it never came anywhere close to that of his contemporary (and admirer) Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Keats' first volume of verse, published in 1817, may not have been particularly impressive, but it did not deserve the derision it received from a Tory literary establishment almost genetically inclined to be dismissive of "Cockney poets". The criticism became even more vicious when Keats published his first long poem, *Endymion*; he himself was far from satisfied with this extended excursion into Greek mythology, but had decided that he couldn't countenance any further revisions.

What's particularly extraordinary, though, is that his genius wasn't widely recognised even after he published *Lamia*, *Isabella*, *The Eve of St*

Agnes and *Other Poems* in 1820. The "other poems" included, mind you, some of the most exquisite verses committed to paper in the English language — the odes "To a Nightingale", "On a Grecian Urn" and "To Autumn", alongside the odes "To Psyche" and "On Melancholy". The only notable poem that followed was the sonnet *Bright Star*.

Yet by the mid-19th century Keats was yet to be recognised as a gift to posterity, unlike older contemporaries such as Wordsworth and Coleridge (both of whom he had met). Perhaps it was only in the 20th century that Keats' stature (he stood 5ft 11in) was deservedly elevated to that of a literary giant, but his star was already shining bright in the late 19th century.

On a visit in 1877 to the cemetery where the poet's remains are interred, Oscar Wilde prostrated himself upon the grave and declared it to be "the holiest place in Rome". He marked the occasion with a sonnet that includes the lines: "Thy name was writ in water — it shall

stand/ And tears like mine will keep thy memory green."

The original manuscript can be found in the Keats-Shelley House adjacent to the Spanish Steps in Rome, where Keats grew pallid and spectre-thin and died just months after he arrived in Italy, having survived a tumultuous sea voyage that included quarantine off the coast of Naples because of a cholera outbreak in London.

Keats stepped ashore on his 25th birthday, fully aware that his fears that "I may cease to be/ before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain" were about to come true. His possible future shall eternally remain a mystery and matter of conjecture. But given his core body of work, it's hard not to conclude that the opening lines of *Endymion* would have served as a far more appropriate epitaph than a name "writ in water": "A thing of beauty is a joy forever/ Its loveliness increases; it will never/ Fade into nothingness..."

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quick BITES

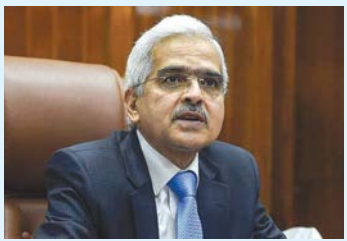
INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50781.69	2.07
Nifty 50	14982.00	1.86
S&P 500*	3,901.34	0.51
Dollar (₹)	72.33	0.16
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.44	0.33
Euro (₹)	87.98	0.03
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,307.148	0.31
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	67.17	2.75
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.147	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.425	0.061

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Common infra for govt, corp bonds mull'd

Unification of government bond and corporate bond markets will enable the trading of such securities on the same platform, thereby utilising common infrastructure for trading, clearing, settlement and holding of securities, said Sebi chairman Ajay Tyagi. "Unification of government bond and corporate bond markets is an idea whose time has come," Tyagi said. This would lead to seamless transmission of pricing info, he said.

Bidders of PSBs should have deep pockets: RBI



The potential owners of privatised public sector banks must be financially strong to ensure that the lenders have robust risk buffers, the RBI governor said. While the government has the final say in deciding the buyers, from the regulator's perspective, the bidders should meet RBI's fit and proper criteria and have enough financial strength to capitalise the banks significantly, governor Shaktikanta Das said in an interview.

Bosch to invest ₹800 cr to upgrade B'loru campus

Bosch Group, a German technology and services major, is investing Rs 800 crore to upgrade its existing campus in Bengaluru to a fully artificial intelligence of things (AIoT)-enabled 'smart campus.' The 75-acre campus is likely to house the second-highest number of Bosch employees in the world, said Soumitra Bhattacharya, MD of Bosch Ltd and regional president of Bosch Group in India.

Maruti drives in new Swift from ₹5.73 L onwards

Maruti Suzuki launched an updated version of its premium hatchback Swift priced between Rs 5.73 lakh and Rs 8.41 lakh, ex-showroom Delhi. It comes with manual and automatic gear shift (AGS) transmissions. The manual trims are priced between Rs 5.73 lakh and Rs 7.91 lakh, while the AGS variants cost Rs 6.86 lakh to Rs 8.41 lakh. The 1.2 litre petrol model with manual transmission has fuel efficiency of 23.2 km.



Bourses trade till 5 pm; indices soar

Glitch gives stocks an extended run

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 24

The National Stock Exchange on Wednesday faced a major technical glitch, leading to a halt in trading for more than three hours from 11.40 am, as the bourse had faced connectivity issues with its server.

Surging volumes both in cash and futures & options segments before the monthly derivatives expiry on Thursday might also have contributed to the technical glitch, said market experts.

On Tuesday, the traded value of NSE's cash segment was Rs 75,979 crore against rival BSE's Rs 4,520 crore.

As traders had several open positions a day before the monthly equity derivatives expiry, the halting of trading led to a panic situation among the market participants as there was no communication either from the NSE or the market regulator as to when trading would be resumed while the BSE was functioning normally.

Around 1 pm the NSE spokesperson stated that the exchange's multiple telecom links with two service providers were having issues with their links, due to which there was an impact on NSE systems and that they were working on restoring the systems.

Finally, the market hours had to be extended till 5 pm to close the open positions in the market. The NSE finally

SEBI SEEKS NSE'S EXPLANATION FOR NOT MIGRATING TO DISASTER RECOVERY SITE

Mumbai, Feb. 24: Regulator Sebi on Wednesday asked the National Stock Exchange to explain why trading on the bourse did not migrate to a disaster recovery site after facing connectivity issues.

It also advised the NSE to carry out a detailed root cause analysis of the "trading halt" witnessed at the exchange.

The NSE should "explain the reasons for

trading not migrating to the disaster recovery site" and asked it to submit a report at the earliest, according to an official statement.

A disaster recovery system helps as a plan-B in times of distress to ensure that activity is not affected. The bourse said it depends on two telecom service providers for connectivity, and both failed simultaneously. —PTI

reopened for trade at 3.30 pm after ironing out the glitches and trade continued till 5 pm uninterrupted.

The extended trading hours resulted in sharp gains for the market ahead of the futures & options contracts expiry.

The Nifty-50 closed 274 points, or 1.86 per cent, higher at 14,982 while the Sensex gained 1,030 points to close at 50,781.

"Due to technical glitch, the option buyers (especially 'put' option buyers) had to pay the price because we witnessed premiums falling drastically due to the loss of time. For call buyers (as well as put writers), it may not have impacted much because once the market resumed trading for a short period, market had a sharp upsurge which could have definitely benefitted them. But for other counter

party, prices just diminished rapidly," said Sameet Chavan, technical and derivatives analyst, Angel Broking.

Marketmen questioned the bourse's decision to halt trade, as only index feeds were not updating.

"The biggest question in this whole issue is why was the entire market shut just because index feeds were not refreshing? Feeds for underlying contracts were fine and so was order matching, so why shut down the entire market?" asked Jimet Modi, CEO & founder, Samco Ventures.

"A similar issue in index feeds had happened a few months ago, but trading was not completely halted. Instead, trading went on with the glitch in index prices that day. Sebi and NSE need to quickly look at alternatives here," Modi said.

All pvt banks can now offer pension, other govt biz

New Delhi, Feb. 24:

The finance ministry on Wednesday allowed all private sector banks to participate in government-related business like collection of taxes, pension payments and small savings schemes.

Currently, only a few large private sector banks are allowed to conduct government-related business. "Embargo lifted on grant of Govt business to private banks. All banks can now participate. Private banks can now be equal partners in development of the Indian economy, furthering Govt's social sector initiatives, and enhancing customer convenience," finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a tweet.

An official statement said, "with the lifting of the embargo, there is now no bar on RBI for authorisation of private sector banks (in addition to public sector banks) for government business, including government agency business. The government has conveyed its decision to RBI."

The government has already announced its intent to privatise two public sector lenders, other than IDBI Bank, in the Budget 2021-22. —PTI



Nirmala Sitharaman

ReNew Power gets \$8 bn valuation in merger deal

New Delhi, Feb. 24: ReNew Power has agreed to merge with blank-cheque company RMG Acquisition Corporation II, giving India's biggest renewable power producer an enterprise value of \$8 billion and a listing on the Nasdaq.

The biggest deal in the fast-growing clean energy sector is expected to close in the second quarter, a company statement said on Wednesday.

The deal will be financed with cash proceeds of \$1.2 billion, including \$855 million in investments from serial blank-check dealmaker Chamath Palihapitiya, funds managed by BlackRock and Sylebra Capital.

A blank-cheque company is a developmental stage firm that does not have established business plan.

"The transaction would further bolster ReNew's leading position in solar and wind energy generation for the Indian market, by funding medium-term growth opportunities, as well as paying down debt," it said.

This is the first major overseas listing of an Indian company via the Spac (special purpose acquisition company) route, which is a big hit currently on Wall Street.

A Spac is a shell or blank-cheque company and its sole aim is to raise capital via an initial public offering to acquire a private business at a later date and then take it public without going through the traditional route of IPOs.



In this transaction, RMG Acquisition Corporation II is the blank-cheque company. It raised \$345 million in its December 2020 IPO. Founded in 2011, ReNew Power counts Goldman Sachs and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) among its prominent investors. It owns and operates 5 GW of solar and wind energy projects.

The merger comes at a time when India is targeting 450 GW renewable energy capacity by 2030.

"The Indian renewable energy sector has grown rapidly over the last decade," said Sumant Sinha, founder chairman and CEO of ReNew. "During this time, ReNew has been a driving force in making sure that the sources of this growth are sustainable, and also economically competitive."

"Over the next decade, ReNew plans to maintain its track record of market share growth. Over time, we will expand our capabilities even further, with utility-scale battery storage, and customer-focused intelligent ener-

gy solutions," he said. RMG II CEO Bob Mancini said the firm was looking to partner with a company driving change on a global scale, with a proven track record, and best-in-class management. "We found that company in ReNew," he said.

The pro forma consolidated and fully diluted market capitalization of the combined company would be \$4.4 billion.

"Proceeds (from the deal) will be used to support ReNew's growth strategy, including the buildout of its contracted, utility-scale renewable power generation capacity, as well as to reduce debt," the statement said.

ReNew's management, and its current group of stockholders, including Goldman Sachs, CPPIB, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, and Jera Co, among others, who together own 100 per cent of ReNew today, will be rolling a majority of their equity into the new company, and are expected to represent 70 per cent of the effective company ownership. —PTI

India, China reduced global income inequality: ILO

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

Economic convergence, driven mainly by China and India, has caused global labour income inequality to decline over the past 13 years, finds the International Labour Organisation.

According to the ILO, the global labour income distribution is lopsided. A worker in the top decile earns \$7,475 per month and one in the bottom decile earns \$7,475 per month and one in the bottom decile, just \$22. The highest-earning 10 per cent of workers worldwide received almost half, or 48.9 per cent, of total pay, the next decile received 20.1 per cent while the remaining 80 per cent workers received just 31 per cent.

Although global pay inequality levels are very high, it is important to note that they have decreased between 2004 and 2017. However, if India and China are excluded, a much slower reduction in labour income inequality over that period has been observed. Interestingly, these findings do not reflect a decrease in

DIFFERENT STROKES

- ▶ Global labour income distribution is lopsided. A worker in the top decile earns \$7,475 per month and one in the bottom decile, just \$22
- ▶ The highest-earning 10% of workers worldwide received 48.9% of

total pay while 80% workers got just 31%
▶ Neither India nor China registered a dip in inequality, rather their growth along with initial low income 'mechanically' reduced global inequality

inequality within India or China—indeed, the data suggest that neither country registered such a decline during 2004-17. Instead, the two countries have enjoyed very high growth rates, which, together with their initially low level of average labour income, have contributed "mechanically" via economic convergence to a global decrease in inequality.

The report also finds that despite the economic progress made in past decades, the number of people not in employment, education or training and workers in poverty are likely to increase in Asia-Pac, including India, due to the recent deceleration of GDP.

The share of youth who are not in employment, education or training in the region reached 24.3 per cent in 2019 compared with 23.9 per cent in 2018. The high rate is driven by South Asia, where opportunities for young women to go to university or work is limited. In South Asia nearly 161 million youth, including 81 million young women, have this status.

Further, the labour productivity growth rate, measured as output per worker, dropped from 4.3 per cent in 2018 to 3.9 per cent in 2019. This drop was driven mainly by countries in South-East Asia, the Pacific and

South Asia, including India and some of the Asean countries where GDP growth decelerated. Poor job quality and high rates of informality remain a challenge to be tackled by governments and employers' organisations. As many as 79.1 million workers in Asia and the Pacific, or 4.2 per cent, remained in extreme poverty in 2019, and 277 million workers or 14.6 per cent were still living in moderate poverty. While working poverty continues to decline, those who have escaped poverty remain highly vulnerable to adverse economic shocks and therefore face a significant risk of becoming poor again.

The report also found that the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) of India is not in line with international best practice. The main difference between the ILO modelled estimates of November 2019 and those of November 2018 is the revision of historical unemployment rates for India. There are considerable methodological differences here, it said.

91-year-old Suzuki chairman to bow out

RIVER DAVIS
FEB. 24

Suzuki Motor Corporation's 91-year-old chairman Osamu Suzuki is stepping down after leading an automaker for longer than anyone else in the industry.

Suzuki, who served as the Japanese carmaker's chief executive for 22 years and then as chairman for another two decades, will step down from his current role following a shareholders meeting in June, the company said in a statement on Wednesday. He will remain as a senior adviser.

With almost half a century at the helm, Suzuki is widely credited with turning the carmaker into what it is today: one of the largest small-vehicle manufacturers in the world. Instead of taking Japan's biggest auto giants like Toyota Motor Corp head on, Suzuki worked to grow the company by finding new markets around the world for its compact automobiles, building a dominant share in India during his first of two terms as



Osamu Suzuki

president from 1978 to 2000.

The nonagenarian also steered Suzuki into alliances with two of the world's biggest automakers, Volkswagen AG and General Motors Co, though those ultimately failed.

His departure comes one week after Honda Motor Co's chief executive Takahiro Hachigo said he would resign effective June, underscoring the churn the Japanese auto industry is currently undergoing. Japanese carmakers are beginning to recover from a tough pandemic-marred year, but even as demand revives, they're struggling to meet sales targets amid a global chip shortage.

—Bloomberg

ITALIAN GROUP TO ACQUIRE MODERN FOODS

Mumbai, Feb. 24: Private equity player Everstone Capital has sold Modern Foods, which it had taken over in early 2016 from Hindustan Unilever, to Italian baking major Grupo Bimbo for an undisclosed sum.

Everstone in a statement on Wednesday said that Modern Food Enterprises, which was held by its bread and bakery platform Everfoods Asia, was sold to Ready Roti India, the domestic subsidiary of the Italian major.

Grupo Bimbo is the largest baking company in the world, operating in 33 countries, including in India, and has a diversified portfolio of over 13,000 prod-



ucts and more than 100 brands.

Everfoods acquired Modern Foods from Hindustan Unilever in April 2016 and successfully relaunched the iconic bread brand in June 2017 nationwide.

HUL had bought Modern Foods from the government in 2000 as part of the divestment process and later decided to exit as part of its strategy to leave non-core sectors.

Modern Food Industries was set up by the government 1965 as Modern Bakeries in Madras and was renamed as Modern Food in 1982. When sold off to HUL it had 13 bread manufacturing units apart from fruit juice concentrates under brand name Rasika in New Delhi and aerated soft drinks Double Seven.

HUL took over 74 per cent of its equity in January 2000 for Rs 10.5 crore. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Murray knocked out by Gerasimov

Montpellier: Andy Murray was dumped out of the ATP event in Montpellier on Tuesday after suffering a straight-sets defeat in the opening round against Belarusian Egor Gerasimov.

Murray, who missed the Australian Open after testing positive for Covid-19, was playing his first ATP Tour event since last October. The 33-year-old Briton lost in the final of a second-tier Challenger tournament in Italy to Ilya Marchenko earlier this month. Murray fell a break behind in the seventh game against Gerasimov on Tuesday, but fought back to force a tie-break. He missed one opportunity to take the set in the breaker, but his opponent clinched it on his fourth set point. It was all one-way traffic in the second set, though, as Murray had to save a match point to avoid being on the wrong end of a bagel. The three-time Grand Slam champion is currently 121st in the world, having been beset by hip and groin injuries. — *AFP*

Jyoti stuns world champ, in Last 8

New Delhi: Jyoti Gulia (51kg) upstaged two-time world champion Nazym Kyzaibay of Kazakhstan to enter the quarterfinals along with two others but three Indians bowed out after second-round losses in the 72nd Strandja Memorial Boxing Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria. Gulia, a 2017 world youth champion, prevailed 3-2 over Kyzaibay, a gold-winner from the 2014 and 2016 senior world championships. The Haryana boxer is also a 2019 national champion. She will take on Romania's Perijoc Lacramioara in her quarterfinal bout on Thursday. Another Indian to enter the quarter-finals on the second day was Bhagyabati Kachari, who outclassed Russian opponent Anna Galimova 5-0 in the 75kg category. — *PTI*

Doncic clinches thriller for Dallas

Los Angeles: Luka Doncic nailed two clutch three-pointers, including the game winner with one second left, to lift the Dallas Mavericks to a thrilling 110-107 victory over the Boston Celtics on Tuesday in Texas. Doncic hit consecutive go-ahead three-pointers in the final 30 seconds, draining a step-back three with 15 seconds left to make it 107-105. He repeated the feat by shooting a high arching 28-footer over two Celtics defenders with less than a second left to win it. The 21-year-old Slovenian finished with 31 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists as the Mavs earned their sixth win in seven games. — *AFP*

Bamford fires Leeds to 3-0 win

Leeds: Patrick Bamford strengthened his case for an England call-up ahead of the European Championship by scoring his 13th goal of the season in Leeds' 3-0 win over struggling Southampton in the Premier League on Tuesday. Bamford squeezed a low, angled shot into the corner from the edge of the area in the 47th minute to put Leeds ahead and move level with Harry Kane and Dominic Calvert-Lewin as the leading English scorers this campaign. Only Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah and Manchester United midfielder Bruno Fernandes have scored more. Left back Stuart Dallas provided an outside-of-the-foot finish at the end of a breakaway in the 78th for Leeds' second goal and Brazilian winger Raphinha wrapped up the victory with a curling free kick from 20 meters as Southampton's winless run extended to eight games. The margin of victory flattered Leeds. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

India vs England: Third Test, Day 2 from 2.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

South Africa T20 Challenge: Warriors vs Knights from 5.55 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Jamshedpur vs Bengaluru from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Europa League: Arsenal vs Benfica from 11.25 pm on Sony Ten 2; Napoli vs Granada from 11.25 pm on Sony Six; Villarreal vs Salzburg on Sony Ten 1; Leicester vs Slavia Praha from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Six; Milan vs Crvena Zvezda from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 1; Manchester United vs Real Sociedad from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2

AXAR'S SIXER!

Patel takes 6/38 as India bowl England out for 112

Ahmedabad, Feb. 24: Axar Patel's devastating six-wicket haul bundled England out for 112 before Rohit Sharma's languid elegance shone through in an unbeaten half century that handed India the edge on the opening day of the day-night third Test here on Wednesday.

The combination of left-arm Patel and off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin exploited the turning Motera pitch at the newly-inaugurated Narendra Modi stadium to the full and England's first innings folded in just 48.4 overs after the visitors opted to bat.

Patel (21.4-6-38-6) grabbed his second five-for in his second Test while Ashwin (16-6-26-3) took three.

At stumps, India were 99 for 3 from 33 overs with Rohit batting on 57 off 82 balls. Ajinkya Rahane (1) was giving him company following skipper Virat Kohli's dismissal in the second last over of the day.

Kohli was dismissed for 27 off 58 balls by left-arm spinner Jack Leach (10-1-27-2).

India trailed by just 13 runs with seven first innings wickets in hand. Before this, it was a nightmare that unfolded for England with the 47-run stand for the third wicket being their best.

They lost their last six wickets in the second session. The last seven wickets yielded just 38 runs.

This was after Ishant Sharma, only the second Indian fast bowler after Kapil Dev to play in 100 Tests, fittingly took India's first wicket in the third over to open the floodgates for the hosts.

He was accorded a guard of honour by his teammates after being felicitated by President Ram Nath Kovind and Home Minister Amit Shah ahead of his landmark game. In reply to a below par score, India negotiated the opening spells of much-vaunted England seamers James Anderson and Stuart Broad without any damage in the tricky twilight period. — *PTI*



India's Axar Patel celebrates an England wicket on the opening day of the third Test in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. — *BCCI*

SCORECARD

England (1st innings): Zak Crawley lbw b Patel 53, Dom Sibley c RG Sharma b 1 Sharma 0, Bairstow lbw b Patel 0, Root lbw b Ashwin 17, Ben Stokes lbw b Patel 6, Olly Pope b Ashwin 1, Ben Foakes b Patel 12, Jofra Archer b Patel 11, Jack Leach c Pujara b Ashwin 3, Broad c Bumrah b Patel 3, Anderson (not out) 5. Extras (b 1, lb 2, nb 3) 6. Total (In 48.4 overs) 112.

FoW: 1-2, 2-27, 3-74, 4-80, 5-81, 6-81, 7-93, 8-98, 9-105.

Bowling: Ishant 5-1-26-1, Bumrah 6-3-19-0, Axar 21.4-6-38-6, Ashwin 16-6-26-3.

India: Rohit Sharma (batting) 57, Shubman c Crawley b Archer 11, Cheteshwar Pujara lbw b Leach 0, Virat Kohli b Leach 27, Ajinkya Rahane (batting) 1. Extras (b 2, w 1) 3. Total (for three wickets in 33 overs) 99.

FoW: 1-33, 2-34, 3-98.

Bowling: Anderson 9-6-11-0, Broad 6-1-16-0, Archer 5-2-24-1, Leach 10-1-27-2, Stokes 3-0-19-0.

Players will need to adapt quickly to lights, says Kohli

Ahmedabad, Feb. 24: Indian skipper Virat Kohli is worried that the lights at the Narendra Modi Stadium here could potentially impact visibility and said the players will need to adapt quickly.

The refurbished stadium, the largest cricketing arena in the world, doesn't have the traditional flood-light towers but a ring of LED lights around the perimeter of its roof. It is similar to the 'ring of fire' at the Dubai International Stadium, which often poses a challenge to the fielding

It is such an exciting atmosphere here at the largest cricket stadium. I'm a bit more worried about the lights than the colour of the seats.

— **VIRAT KOHLI**
India cricket captain

side. "It is such an exciting atmosphere here at the largest cricket stadium. I'm a bit more worried about the lights than the colour of the seats," Kohli said at the toss ahead of the day/night Test against

NUMBERS GAME

● Ishant Sharma became the 11th Indian and 70th player overall to complete a century of Test matches after appearing in the Ahmedabad Test on Wednesday

● The pacer, who made his debut against Bangladesh at Dhaka in 2007, has taken 13 years and 275 days to reach this milestone. He is only the second Indian after Kapil Dev (131 Tests) to play 100 Tests.

● Axar Patel recorded his best bowling performance in an innings by taking 6/38. His previous best was 5/60 on debut in the previous Test.

● England slumped to their second lowest total in India by making 112 in 48.4 overs. It was England's fourth lowest total against India. Their lowest total against India is 101 in 45.1 overs at The Oval in 1971 while 102 in 26.2 overs at Mumbai in 1981-82 is the lowest on Indian soil.

● The Ahmedabad Test is the second day/night Test on Indian soil. The first one was played between India and Bangladesh at Kolkata in November 2019.

— *S. PERVEZ QAISER*



A vehicle rests on its side after a rollover accident involving golfer Tiger Woods in Rancho Palos Verdes, a suburb of Los Angeles. Woods suffered leg injuries. — *AP*

Tiger in hospital after major crash

Washington, Feb. 24: The amazing golf career of Tiger Woods, from two-year-old prodigy to his epic comeback 2019 Masters victory, was in jeopardy Tuesday after injuries suffered in a serious solo car crash.

The 45-year-old American, among the world's most famous athletes for the past quarter-century, underwent surgery for multiple leg injuries following the early morning wreck near Los Angeles.

It could mean the end of a groundbreaking career that has seen Woods win 15 major titles, three shy of the all-time record set by Jack Nicklaus, and 82 US PGA crowns, level with Sam Snead for the all-time mark.

Woods has faced plenty of prior troubles off the course, including multiple back and knee surgeries, the 2009 revelation of multiple affairs that led to an emotional public apology and divorce from wife Elin Nordegren plus a 2017 reckless driving incident.

Woods was recovering from 2017 back surgery when he was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, his mug shot drawing worldwide attention. He said he had not realized how prescription drugs he was taking might interact and later pleaded guilty to reckless driving.

In the 1990s, Woods put



Tiger Woods

himself alongside pal and NBA star Michael Jordan as two of the world's most iconic sports stars and richest endorsement pitchmen, his fame going beyond golf lovers or sports fans.

Woods thrilled audiences with his skill as well as a winning charm and personality, global audiences inviting him into their homes through television every week, while at the same time keeping private details about his life.

Woods was the first black winner of the Masters in 1997, hugging his father Earl after his historic victory in course record fashion.

In 2019, Woods would come off the same green at Augusta National after winning his first major title since 2008 and hug his children, Sam and Charlie, in a booked moment to signal a completed return from back surgery Woods hoped would allow him a normal life. It also gave him another chance at golfing glory.

— *AFP*

Andhra go down to Punjab

Indore, Feb. 24: Punjab bounced back from back-to-back defeats to beat Andhra by seven wickets in a Group 'B' match to register their first win in the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Wednesday.

Punjab skipper Mandeep Singh won the toss and sent Andhra in to bat and Siddarth Kaul (4/27) was bang on target from the word go. Kaul got Ashwin Hebbur, centurion in the previous match against Tamil Nadu, for 1 in the fourth over.

Kaul then struck a huge blow by getting the wicket of Andhra captain Hanuma Vihari (2).

A disciplined bowling effort from Punjab meant Andhra innings never had the momentum. Kaul

picked up four wickets while left-arm medium-pacer Barinder Sran took three as Andhra were bowled out for 175 in the 49th over.

Chasing the target, Mandeep starred with an unbeaten 64 (81 balls, 8 fours) to take Punjab home in 36 overs and register their first win in the tournament.

Meanwhile in Surat, Baroda beat Hyderabad by 110 runs, courtesy Kedar Devdhar's hundred and impressive show by the bowlers.

Put into bat, Baroda rode on Devdhar's stroke-filled 131 to post a competitive 316/7 on the board, and then bundled out the opposition for 206, with Babashafi Pathan (3/37) doing the bulk of the damage.

Devdhar was back among the runs as he tore apart the Hyderabad attack with his 139-ball innings, hammering 14 boundaries and two maximums. He and Smit Patel (35) added 79 runs for the first wicket. But Patel perished after being caught by B. Sandeep off right-arm medium pacer Ajay Dev Goud (2/68).

Hyderabad could not capitalise on a 75-run strong start given by openers Tanmay Agarwal (34) and Tilak Varma (47) and suffered a middle-order collapse. Both the openers perished in quick succession as Hyderabad slipped to 83/2.

Baroda rattled Hyderabad by striking twice, first Ninad Rathwa ran out Himalay Agarwal (17) and Babashafi Pathan

then sent back Mickil Jaiswal (5). B. Sandeep (18) and T. Ravi Teja (19) weren't able to convert their starts as Hyderabad found themselves reeling at 143/6. Hyderabad were eventually bundled out for 202.

BRIEF SCORES

■ Andhra 175 in 48.1 overs (Nitish Kumar Reddy 30, Siddarth Kaul 4/27, Barinder Sran 3/29) lost to Punjab 176 for 3 in 36 overs (Mandeep Singh 64 n.o., Abhishek Sharma 32, Prabhshinran Singh 32).

■ Baroda 316/7 in 50 overs (Kedar Devdhar 131, Krupal Pandya 55, Ajay Dev Goud 2/68, C. V. Milind 2/74) bt Hyderabad 206 in 42.2 overs (Tilak Varma 47, Tanmay Agarwal 34, Babashafi Pathan 3/37, Lukman Meriwala 2/39).

Giroud's gem earns victory for Chelsea

Bucharest, Feb. 24: Olivier Giroud's magnificent bicycle kick broke Atletico Madrid's resistance and earned Chelsea a crucial away goal on Tuesday, a 1-0 victory giving Thomas Tuchel's side a slender advantage in the Champions League last 16.

Giroud's acrobatic strike was initially ruled out for offside but stood after VAR showed Mario Hermoso had got the final touch, delivering a huge blow to Atletico's hopes of reaching the quarterfinals.

Atletico Madrid had put on a typically disciplined defensive performance until that point but Giroud's moment of

genius means they will have to score in London on March 17 if they are to avoid an early exit.

It also continues a worrying dip for Atletico, whose lead in La Liga is also under threat after one win in four matches. Meanwhile at Rome, Holders Bayern Munich brushed off their recent poor domestic form by throwing down a Champions League marker with an emphatic 4-1 win at Lazio to take a "huge step" towards the quarter-finals.

Robert Lewandowski gave Bayern an early lead before Jamal Musiala scored his first Champions League goal. — *AFP*

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bhavya creations

GRAND RELEASE TOMORROW

3E

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ANNE RAVI KALYANI MALIK RAHUL SHRIVATSAV
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