

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | THURSDAY 4 | FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 32°C
Min: 18°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Thai 22
Tithi: Saphthami
Star: Swathi
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
Yamagandam: 6 am to 7.30 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.22 am
Zohar: 12.28 pm
Asar: 3.42 pm
Maghrib: 6.10 pm
Isha: 7.23 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.11 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.35 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 11.58 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 11.31 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+12,916)	(+107)
1,07,91,123	1,54,742

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+514)
TN: 8,39,866 12,371

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

10,46,13,851

DEATHS

22,69,394

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

219

worldometers.info

LIC IPO may hit market in Q4 of next fiscal: DEA Secretary

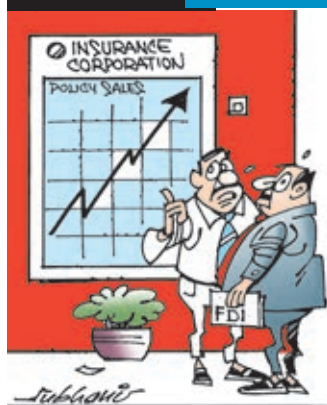
New Delhi: The initial public offering of LIC may hit the market in the fourth quarter of next financial year, and the government has introduced amendments to the Life Insurance Corporation Act 1956 to facilitate this, Economic Affairs Secretary Tarun Bajaj said on Wednesday. As many as 27 amendments have been pushed through the Finance Bill 2021 tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday along with the Union Budget 2021-22.

Low intensity earthquake hits Ladakh

Leh: An earthquake of 4.5 magnitude hit the Union Territory of Ladakh on Wednesday evening, an official of the Meteorological Department said. A police official said there was no report of damage from anywhere. "The earthquake was probably of low intensity and did not cause panic," he said.

COUNTER

POINT



Not public, but our employees are insuring their jobs!

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PMK-AIADMK talks end in stalemate



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Navalny jailed for three years

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My job is easy when Virat is around: Rahane



■ **Centre orders Twitter to remove offending hashtags**

Govt fightbacks global drive in support of protesting farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

Stung by the endorsement of the ongoing farmers' agitation by global pop icon Rihanna, top environmental activist Greta Thunberg and American lawyer Meena Harris, niece of US vice-president Kamala Harris, India on Wednesday defended its three new farm laws, saying it gives "expanded market access and provided greater flexibility to farmers", and blasted "propaganda" by "sensationalist social media hashtags and comments resorted to by celebrities" as being "neither accurate nor responsible".

The government also directed Twitter to comply with its order to remove contents/accounts related to farmer genocide hashtags, and warned that the microblogging platform may face "penal action" for non-compliance of its order.

Meanwhile, a number of Indian celebrities joined politicians to launch a hashtag campaign "#IndiaTogether and #IndiaAgainstPropaganda". Home minister Amit Shah, foreign minister S. Jaishankar, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar and actors Ajay Devgn and Akshay Kumar tweeted protesting against the global campaign. "India's sovereignty cannot be compromised. External forces can be spectators but not participants. Indians know India and should decide for India. Let's remain united as a nation," tweeted Mr Tendulkar.

Saying a "very small section of farmers in parts of India have some reservations about these reforms", the external affairs ministry accused "vested interest groups" of trying to "mobilise international support against India".

The reaction came after pop icon Rihanna referred to a media report on the farmers' stir and tweeted: "Why aren't we talking about this?" Greta Thunberg tweeted: "We stand in solidarity with the farmers' protest in India". Ms Harris, a lawyer and author, was far harsher and



Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait along with other farmer leaders during 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' against the new farm laws, in Jind district, on Wednesday. — PTI

Tikait warns govt of 'gaddi wapsi' demand

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

In a show of strength by protesting farmers, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait on Wednesday warned the government that it could find it difficult to stay in power if the new agri-marketing laws are not repealed.

Thousands of people who attended the khap mahapanchayat in Haryana's Jind adopted a five-point resolution which called for repeal of the three laws, constitutional guarantee of minimum support price (MSP), implementation of the Swaminathan Comm-

lashed out at the Indian government by tweeting: "It's no coincidence that the world's oldest democracy was attacked not even a month ago, and as we speak, the most populous democracy is under assault. This is related. We all should be outraged by India's Internet shutdowns and paramilitary violence against farmer protesters. Militant nationalism is just as potent a force in US politics as it is in India or anywhere else. It can only be stopped if people wake up to the reality that fascist dictators aren't

going anywhere." The tweets have angered New Delhi that put out a statement on "recent comments by foreign individuals and entities on the farmers' protests". The MEA said: "The Parliament of India, after a full debate and discussion, passed reformist legislation relating to the agricultural sector. These reforms give expanded market access and provided greater flexibility to farmers. They also pave the way for economically and ecologically sustainable farming." ■ **P4**

Praveen Sinha appointed as acting chief of CBI

New Delhi, Feb. 3: Additional director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Praveen Sinha, a 1988-batch Gujarat cadre IPS officer, has been appointed acting chief of the agency till a decision on a new director is taken to succeed Rishi Kumar Shukla who retired on Wednesday after a two-year fixed stint.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi



chose Sinha. An order issued by the department of personal and training on Wednesday stated that Mr Sinha will look duties of the director with immediate effect till the appointment of a new CBI chief or until further orders, whichever is earlier. — **PTI**

No job to protesters, says Bihar DGP

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, FEB. 3

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

The Opposition slammed the BJP-JD(U) alliance government for the order which it said was "against the Constitution".

"If anyone is found indulging in a criminal act by engaging in any law and order situation, protests or

her at the reception which was held at Pattukottai recently.

The marriage came to limelight with Lakshmi Prabha, the third daughter of Selvam, with bridegroom Kishore of Kumarapalayam touched the feet of a wax statue to get the blessings at the marriage reception. Relatives and friends who attended the reception were not only thrilled to witness the event but were also appreciative of the

● **The Opposition slammed the BJP-JD(U) alliance government for the order which it said was "against the Constitution"**

road blockages and is charged for this, then it should be mentioned in the person's character verification report by the police. Such people should be prepared for serious consequences as they will be barred from getting any government jobs or contracts," director general of police

S.K. Singhal said in the circular.

The development has triggered strong reactions in Bihar. The RJD, which is the main Opposition party in the state, has termed the state government's directive "against the Constitution".

"It seems that Nitish Kumar is trying to compete with Mussolini and Hitler by issuing such a kind of directive. It means that if a person uses his democratic right to protest against the system then he will be denied a job. This also means that they will not give jobs and will not allow

anyone to protest," leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav said in a tweet.

"Why is the chief minister with 40 seats so scared?" he added. Hitting out at Nitish government, RJD leader Shivanand Tiwary said, "The Constitution of India has provided us with the right to protest. The chief minister of Bihar himself had been part of many protests against several ruling regimes. Instead of taking harsh measures against the protesters, he should ask the administration to look into the problems of common people".

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 3

A glass door at the height of about six feet at the Chennai International Airport terminal came crashing down on Wednesday morning, causing panic among passengers and security personnel at the premises.

The incident occurred when passengers from a private airline were walking in at the arrival area of the International terminal. Airport sources said

one of the passengers accidentally rammed against the glass door with his trolley bag and the glass door came off in the impact. The passengers were gripped by panic and even the security personnel on duty near the gate ran away, the sources said. No one was injured in the accident. The spot was later barricaded to avoid further accidents and arrangements have been made to replace the glass. An investigation is underway.

Glassdoor collapses at Chennai Airport



Joe Biden eases immigration laws

Washington, Feb. 3: As part of his efforts to ensure that the legal immigration system operates fairly and efficiently, US President Joe Biden signed an executive order on Tuesday to review the policies of the previous administration, including that of the public charge. The review of the existing policies and the subsequent recommendations coming from 60 to 180 days from various federal agencies are likely to end up in benefitting hundreds and thousands of Indian professionals in realising their dream of citizenship of the United States.

"The federal government should develop welcoming strategies that promote integration, inclusion and citizenship, and it should embrace the full participation of the newest Americans in our democracy," Biden said in one of the three executive orders he signed on Tuesday. — **PTI**

TMC-BJP in war of words over defections

Alipurduar/Hooghly (WB), Feb. 3: The TMC and the BJP hit out at each other on Wednesday in poll-bound West Bengal over defections with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee saying it was ironical that the Centre did not have funds to bear the travel expenses of migrant workers but corrupt leaders were flown to Delhi in a chartered plane.

Newly inducted BJP leader Rajib Banerjee, who quit TMC and was among those who took take the chartered flight, slammed her for levelling allegations of corruption against him.

He said if indeed he was corrupt then why did the TMC hold talks with him to retain him in the party after he resigned from the state cabinet last month.

— **PTI**

Daughters make wax statue of dad who died 8 years ago

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, FEB. 3

Daughters are affectionate more towards their fathers than to their mothers, they say.

The three daughters of late Selvam, a businessman of Pattukottai, who passed away eight years ago, proved this true by rekindling his memories through a statue made of wax and silicon on the occasion of the marriage of his third daughter to bless



Lakshmi Prabha and Kishore before the statue of her father at marriage reception at Pattukottai. — **DC**

love of the three daughters for their father.

According to Bhuvaneswari, the elder

sister of Lakshmi Prabha, Selvam was alive for her and her other sister's marriages. Lakshmi Prabha is the last child in the family and Selvam was no more there to bless her at her on the occasion. It was Bhuvaneswari who then suggested that they get a statue of Selvam made for the occasion. She and her husband Karthik, who came from London for the marriage, hired a sculptor Sidhara Murthy from Bengaluru and made an

exact life-like statue of her father using wax and silicon spending ₹6 lakhs. They brought the statue to the marriage reception which became the cynosure of all eyes; many felt his presence at the marriage, too.

Kalavathi, the mother of the three, looked the happiest among the family members, as shared the feeling that her husband was there to bless the newly-wed couple.

Niels Bohr, the Dane who won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1922, said, "An expert is a person who has found out by his own painful experience all the mistakes that one can make in a very narrow field." An expert bridge player learned from each of his errors when less skilled at the game. Now he uses this database to make winning plays and to interpret partner's cards correctly.

OTHER STORIES

Minister recovers from Covid-19

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 3

Food minister R Kamaraj, who was treated for Covid-19 at the MGM Healthcare Hospital and put under ECMO support has recovered well, according to Health Minister C Vijayabaskar.

"I thank the treating team at MGM, Hon'ble CM for the continuous follow up, the Dean and Directors at the RGGGH, and everyone who prayed for his recovery, Vijayabaskar tweeted on Wednesday.

Kamaraj, who tested positive for Coronavirus, was initially admitted to a private hospital and then shifted to the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, where his condition worsened. So he was admitted to MGM hospital.

Assembly adjourns after obituary references

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 3

The state Assembly adjourned for the day after making obituary references to Agriculture Minister R Duraikannu, well-known singer S. P. Balasubrahmanyam, noted cancer specialist Dr V Shanta and 22 former MLAs, who passed away in the recent past.

Duraikannu, who died on October 31, 2020, was elected from Papanasam Assembly constituency in Thanjavur district for three consecutive terms since 2006 and was made Minister in 2016. He hails from a family of agriculturalists and was known for his simplicity.

Having sung over 40,000 songs in 16 languages, Balasubrahmanyam was a playback singer who endeared himself to the people with his melodious voice. He has also been an actor, music director and dubbing artist in his career spanning more than half a century. A resident of Chennai, he passed away on September 25, 2020.

As head of the Adyar Cancer Institute in Chennai, Dr V. Shanta had made cancer treatment affordable to the poor. The internationally renowned oncologist passed away on January 19.

The resolutions were moved by the Speaker, after which the members stood in silence for two minutes paying homage for the 25 persons.

The House would meet again on Thursday to discuss on the Governor's address, with which the session began on Tuesday.



Fisheries minister and AIADMK leader D. Jayakumar rides the pillion on the bike holding the party flag to visit his constituency in North Chennai regularly as part of his election campaign.

Sasikala unlikely to cause a tumult in AIADMK

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 3

Going by the latest plans of the supporters of V. K. Sasikala, the arrival of former Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa's confidante in Chennai is unlikely to cause any turbulence within the AIADMK immediately as it has been speculated in some quarters.

To start with, Sasikala's support base among party cadre seems to be confined to the southern districts with very few in other areas coming out with posters welcoming her back and there is very little chance of them storming Chennai.

Even the present leadership of the AIADMK, who have expelled Sasikala from the general secretary post and may hence face her wrath, is unperturbed by the sporadic expressions of loyalty through posters to her as they are cracking the whip on those cadre by dismissing them



from the party itself.

Above all, the plan, unveiled to the media by Sasikala's nephew and AMMK founder T T V Dhinakaran at Madurai, does not envisage any direct confrontation with the present party leadership. Dhinakaran was only talking about taking a legal route to get back what was due to Sasikala.

The government abruptly closing down the newly-opened mausoleum of Jayalalithaa, on the pretext of completing the construction work, ostensibly

to prevent Sasikala from creating a hullabaloo there, something on the lines of what she did while going to Bengaluru in 2017 to undergo her sentence, too, was dismissed lightly by Dhinakaran.

Answering a question on that, he just quoted a Tamil axiom 'a wedding cannot be stopped by hiding the comb' indicating that he or his supporters have no plans to aggressively confront the present leaders and take control of the party by mobilising functionaries.

On the other hand, though the top leaders of the AIADMK like coordinator O. Panneerselvam and co-coordinator Edappadi K. Palaniswami have not reacted to the impending arrival of Sasikala on the scene with only fisheries minister D. Jayakumar consistently but firmly speaking against her.

On Wednesday, too, he reiterated that both Sasikala and Dhinakaran are not members of the

party and that the AIADMK has no plans of letting in anyone from the family. Also a heavy posse of police has been posted in Poes Garden, probably to prevent Sasikala's supporters creating a scene there.

Though Dhinakaran has organized a grandiose reception for Sasikala when she leaves her present place of stay on the outskirts of Bengaluru and enters the state borders at Hosur on February 7, it is unlikely that by mobilising an extravagant line up of vehicles to escort her to Chennai, he could make any political impact.

Otherwise, Dhinakaran himself said in Madurai that they would wait for the verdict on the case, challenging Sasikala's removal from the post of general secretary, which could take a long time and unlikely to impact the functioning of the AIADMK under the present leaders.

Though Dhinakaran

claims that the doing away with the general secretary post on the ground that Jayalalithaa was the 'permanent general secretary' (a slogan during her time) and nobody else would hold the post was not in tune with the party's Constitution, such matters would not be resolved immediately.

For the present leaders of the AIADMK, the task at hand is to form a coalition and give a tough fight in the coming Assembly elections with a view to coming back to power. Sasikala does not seem to have the inclination or wherewithal to stop the party leaders from going ahead with their plans for the elections.

Even if she tries to intervene by mobilizing her supporters within the party, who may be lurking at various levels in the organization, and try to intervene, it would only boomerang on her as the AIADMK would lose its voters and even the elections.

AIADMK to launch WhatsApp campaign

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 3

A new campaign, 'Ammavin Nallatchi Todara' (For Jayalalithaa's Good Rule to Continue), has been launched by the AIADMK to mark the 73rd birth anniversary of Jayalalithaa.

According to a press release from the party's IT cell, AIADMK plans to create 150 WhatsApp groups per constituency before Jayalalithaa's birth anniversary, falling on February 24. "The groups will apprise the people of the developmental work in their area and enable them to give their valuable inputs and feedback," the release said, adding everyone is

According to a press release from the party's IT cell, AIADMK plans to create 150 WhatsApp groups per constituency before Jayalalithaa's birth anniversary, falling on February 24

encouraged to join this campaign and become a part of the success story. They can join their constituency's group by texting "AMMA" to 8300234234. The WhatsApp groups will also enable the party leadership in understanding the needs and aspirations of party's cadre as well as constituents to create more effective campaigns and programs in the run up to the Assembly polls, the release said.

'Idli jumbo' to be shifted to MTR elephant camp

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, FEB. 3

The idli-loving wild tusker that lost the tip of its trunk in an accident and became a differently-abled jumbo, which *Deccan Chronicle* brought to light in 2013, is set to become a captive pachyderm at the elephant camp in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR). The forest team is taking efforts to guide this jumbo to the elephant camp by foot.

The tip of the trunk was found severed and the tusker was not in a position to pick up its fodder naturally. The jumbo with

■ The forest team is taking efforts to guide this jumbo to the elephant camp by foot

■ The tusker, fed idli by the tourist cottage owners, thus came to be known as "idli" jumbo

its semi-functional trunk was found moving in the human habitations in Mavanallah, now in MTR buffer zone limits, from early 2013.

Some persons running tourist cottages in the private lands around Mavanallah were running shows for tourists by

attracting this wild jumbo, christened Rivaldo by the resort operators, to their premises by providing it fodder.

The tusker, fed idli by the tourist cottage owners, thus came to be known as "idli" jumbo.

When *Deccan Chronicle* brought this to light in March 2013, the forest department took action to move the elephant from the resort vicinities and posted an anti-poaching watcher to track its movements. At times some villagers used to feed this jumbo with fodder and help tourists to click photos with it.

The row over feeding this jumbo ended up in a local man killing an anti-poaching watcher in 2016 in Mavanallah. Though voices began to grow to relocate this jumbo to the elephant camp in MTR, the forest department didn't pay heed. The elephant continued to move around Mavanallah. However, the recent killing of a wild jumbo by unauthorised private resort owners in Mavanallah limits by throwing a fireball at it made the TN forest department shift this idli-loving jumbo to the MTR elephant camp.



100 small satellites designed by 1,000 students are set to be launched in Rameswaram, the birthplace of Abdul Kalam, on February 7. Four such satellites developed by 40 students from 4 government schools in Ranipet district will also be launched. Students along with their science teacher Sathiskumar in their school.

—K. Senthil Nathan

PMK-AIADMK talks end in stalemate

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 3

Talks between leaders of the PMK and the AIADMK to finalise their alliance for the coming Assembly elections ended in a stalemate as the PMK stood its ground on getting some sort of an assurance on acceding to its present demand of 20 per cent reservation for Vanniyars in jobs and education.

Though negotiations have been going on for quite some time on the issue, Wednesday's discussions held at the residence of Electricity Minister P Thangamani for about two hours ended with the AIADMK representatives assuring to get back to the PMK after briefing Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on the reservation demand.

Subsequently, Thangamani, Municipal Administration Minister S P Velumani, Law Minister C Ve Shanmugam, Higher Education Minister K P Anbalagan, party deputy



coordinator K P Munusamy and other AIADMK representatives met the Chief Minister.

The PMK side was represented by its party leaders G K Mani, A K Moorthy and Advocate Balu, who went back to brief their party leader Dr S Ramadoss, who has taken the firm stand on wresting an assurance on the reservation demand.

Though both party members did not brief the media on the negotiations, it is said that the PMK now wants at least an assurance for a 7.5 per cent internal reservation within the 20 per cent quota for Most Backward Classes (MBC).

However, it is said, the AIADMK leaders are

The PMK side was represented by its party leaders G K Mani, A K Moorthy and Advocate Balu, who went back to brief their party leader Dr S Ramadoss, who has taken the firm stand on wresting an assurance on the reservation demand

apprehensive of promising any exclusive quota for the Vanniyar community since rumblings have already begun among the members of other communities that fall under the MBC category over the issue.

With the elections just three months away, giving in to the PMK's demand could lead to the AIADMK losing out on the votes of other communities that are seen as their principal vote bank, the leaders fear.

On the other hand, the AIADMK is not willing to let the PMK go as it might need its support in many constituencies in northern Tamil Nadu to win seats, particularly in the context of the DMK-led coalition possibly remaining intact.

Vaiko tells partymen to not aspire for MLA, MP posts

Chennai, Feb. 3: AIADMK chief Vaiko on Wednesday told partymen to give up dreams of becoming a legislator; a Member of Parliament or a minister and instead focus on working for the party ideology so that the next generation could carry on the fight.

Addressing a meeting of high level panels of the party here, Vaiko, who is also the Rajya Sabha MP, said the party has to face the Assembly elections in April or May. Lauding office-bearers, he said MDMK survived only in view of the work of selfless cadres and functionaries, who slogged without expectations.

Pointing to initiatives in the United Kingdom for a referendum on the independence for Scotland, Vaiko said similar efforts should be taken in Sri Lanka to elicit the views of the Tamil people.

Though MDMK had switched alliances with parties, it had never oscillated when it came to ideology, he said, adding his party had always fought for the rights of the minority Tamils in the island nation.



Visitors admire the handcrafted textiles at the jewellery expo and sales in Poompuhar showroom, Anna Salai, Chennai on Wednesday.

— DC

SRMU protests against privatisation of railways


DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, FEB. 3

Members of the Southern Railway Mazdoor Union (SRMU), led by their deputy general secretary Veerasekaran, staged a demonstration in front of the divisional railway manager's office at Tiruchy on Tuesday. They protested against the union government's anti-labour attitude. Mr. Veerasekaran, who is also the SRMU's Tiruchy division secretary, told the media that Tuesday's demonstration was to


The SRMU will intensify the agitation further by calling for an all-India strike

draw the union government's attention towards not to privatise railways, railway workshops, ordinance factories, and also to stop the implementation of compulsory retirement of the employees, to give up the new pension scheme and to implement the old pension scheme. He also appealed to the union government


to give up its move to disburse sale of operations of 252 trains to private parties, and also to give up its move to reduce seven lakh staff strength from the year 2023. He said the privatisation of railways will not only affect the railway employees but also the traders and other sections of society who travel on trains. He said the SRMU is going to form a committee consisting of railway staff, doctors, advocates, NGOs, students etc and to stage a demonstration in front of all railway stations across the country.



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SHORT TAKES



Shashi Tharoor

THAROOR, PANDE, OTHERS MOVE SC TO QUASH FIRS

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

SIVASANKAR GETS BAIL IN KERALA GOLD SCAM CASE

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
KOCHI, FEB. 3

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's former principal secretary M. Sivasankar was granted bail in dollar smuggling case by economic offences court here on Wednesday. He was released from Kakkanad sub jail in the evening.

The additional chief judicial magistrate court (economic offences) granted bail to the former principal secretary and directed him to furnish a bond of ₹2 lakh, two sureties for the like amount and appear before the investigating officials here every Monday.

With this Sivasankar has secured bail in all the three cases registered against him by the Customs and the Enforcement Directorate.

He was accused by the Customs of smuggling dollars worth ₹1.3 crore.

Sivasankar's alleged involvement in the gold smuggling and currency smuggling case had triggered a major political controversy in the state with the Opposition Congress-led UDF and the BJP alleging that the Chief Minister's office had become a den of smugglers and money laundering agents.

Mamata says polls will be announced within a week

Accuses ex-TMC leader Rajib of anomalies in appointments

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, FEB. 3

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

She also accused TMC turncoat Rajib Banerjee of malpractice, during his tenure as the state forest minister, which

has come under a probe of her government. Hitting back at her within few hours, Mr Banerjee, however, gave himself a clean chit.

Addressing a TMC rally in Alipurduar of North Bengal, the CM said, "Remember, only seven-eight days are left for the polls to be announced. So time is less in hands."

Without taking the name of Mr Banerjee she alleged, "The boy who was with us but left us did some anomalies in the appointments of Bon

Sahayak (Forest Assistant). Lot of people gave me this complaint. We are investigating it. One should ask him about his role in such malpractice when he makes tall talks. He joined the BJP after stealing."

Hitting back at the TMC chief, Mr Banerjee said at a BJP rally in Gurap of Hooghly, "She claimed of anomalies in the recruitment of Bon Sahayak and talked of a probe. But with due respect to her, I can say with

responsibility that I had impartially entrusted a panel for the recruitment with transparency. At around 10 am on October 8, when I sent her a message complaining against a big shot of Birbhum of threatening me to allot all the Bon Sahayak jobs to him, she called me to distribute the jobs proportionately in quota among the Trinamul workers in all the districts."

He told the Chief Minister, "I remained silent so far. But you

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

IT'S TIME TO EXTEND HAND OF PEACE IN ALL DIRECTIONS: PAK ARMY CHIEF

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

In what is being seen as a possible outreach to India, Pakistan's powerful Army chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa has said "it is time" for his country to "extend the hand of peace in all directions", even as he called on India and Pakistan to resolve the

Kashmir issue in a "peaceful and dignified manner".

Addressing a graduation ceremony at the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Academy earlier on Tuesday, Gen. Bajwa, however, referred to the Kashmir situation as a "human tragedy" that must be brought to its "logical conclusion" as per the "aspirations" of its people.

Farmers dig in their heels



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

— PTI

Girl raped, killed, her 2 relatives also murdered

Korba, Feb. 3: A 16-year-old girl was allegedly raped and smashed to death with stones in Korba district of Chhattisgarh, police said on Wednesday.

The accused allegedly also killed the girl's father and his four-year-old granddaughter, who were along with her, they said.

The incident occurred near Gadhpurda village under Lemru police station area on January 29, but came to light on Tuesday, following which six accused were arrested in this connection, Korba Superintendent of Police Abhishek Meena said.

The accused were identified as Santram Majhwar (45), Abdul Jabbar (29), Anil Kumar Sarthi (20), Pardeshi Ram Panika

(35), Anand Ram Panika (25) and Uamshankar Yadav (21), all natives of Satrenga village in the district, they said.

"The deceased man, a resident of Barpani village, had been working as a cattle grazer at the house of prime accused Manjhar since July last year," he said.

As per preliminary information, Manjhar was going to drop the man, his daughter (16) and granddaughter (4) to their village on his motorcycle on January 29. On the way, they stopped at Korai village and Manjhar consumed liquor, following which other accused also joined him, he said. The accused took the three victims to the foot of a hill surrounded by forest near Gadhpurda, where

Manjhar and another accused allegedly raped the teenage girl.

They smashed all the victims with stones and sticks and dumped them in the forest before fleeing from the spot, he said.

"When the deceased man's son lodged their missing report at Lemru police station on Tuesday, police swung into action and rounded up six accused following their interrogation," he said.

Based on the statement of the accused, police reached the crime spot, where they found the injured rape victim alive and two others dead.

She was immediately rushed to a local hospital, but succumbed to her injuries before reaching there, he said.

— PTI

Govt fightbacks global drive in support of protesting farmers

FROM PAGE 1

Criticising celebrity endorsements of the farmers' stir, the MHA added: "Before rushing to comment on such matters, we would urge that the facts be ascertained, and a proper understanding of the issues at hand be undertaken. The temptation of sensationalist social media hashtags and comments, especially when resorted to by celebrities and others, is neither accurate nor responsible."

New Delhi further said: "A very small section of farmers in parts of India have some reservations about these reforms.

Respecting the sentiments of the protesters, the Government of India initiated a series of talks with their representatives. Union ministers have been a part of the negotiations, and eleven rounds of talks have already been held. The government has even offered to keep the laws on hold, an offer iterated by no less than the Prime Minister of India."

Government sources said Twitter had unilaterally unblocked accounts and tweets despite specific order for blocking. Twitter is an 'intermediary' and is obliged to obey direction of the government, sources said, adding that the plat-

form may face penal action for not complying with government orders.

Government notice quoted more than half a dozen Supreme Court judgments including of constitutional benches as to what is public order and what the rights of authorities are.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) had recent directed Twitter to block around 250 tweets/Twitter accounts that were making "fake, intimidatory and provocative tweets" on January 30 with hashtags accusing the Modi government of planning farmers "genocide" without any further substantiation.

heart of Lutyens' Delhi. No one was injured.

Some cars were damaged in the explosion that occurred about 150 metres away from the embassy on the Dr A P J Abdul Kalam Road in the very high-security bungalow zone.

The Improvised Explosive Device (IED) was fabricated with cocktail of ammonium nitrate-fuel oil having cycle ball bearings as shrapnel.

A letter was also received by the embassy

which was shared with the police and now is part of the NIA investigation.

Cyber footprints before and after the blast have indicated that some individual claiming to be part of a little known terror group claimed responsibility for the attack. The trail of Internet Protocol address was indicative of a southern city of Afghanistan, sharing borders with Iran, but the investigators believed that it could be to mislead the probe.

PM's brother stages sit-in



Prahlaad Modi, brother of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stages sit-in at Chaudhary Charan Singh Airport in Lucknow on Wednesday. Prahlaad Modi alleged that the police did not let his supporters reach there and took them into custody. Police, however, have denied the charge. Prahlaad Modi told reports at the airport that he had come to Uttar Pradesh to take part in some social programmes in Sultanpur, Jaunpur and Pratapgarh. "After reaching here, I came to know that the workers who were coming to receive me were held by the Lucknow police and made to sit in a police station. Efforts are on to lodge cases against them," he claimed.

— PTI

21 per cent drop in BMC's revenue

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, FEB. 3

Covid-19 pandemic has affected the revenues of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation very hard as it has seen a whopping 21 per cent fall in the revenue income for the year 2020-21. It has compelled the richest civic body in the country to dip into reserves by taking an internal loan to fund the infrastructure projects in the city for the next fiscal year. The BMC had set a target of ₹28,448 crore from the revenue income for the year 2020-21. However, due to the coronavirus crisis, it had to revise the target down to ₹22,572 crore, facing a loss of ₹5,876 crore.

The BMC on Wednesday presented a budget of ₹39,038.83 crore for the financial year 2021-22. It is the richest municipal corporation in the country and its annual budget is higher than even small states like Kerala, Goa and north-east states.

"In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, the need arose to divert our attention by all means to health activities to face the pandemic. Though we are successful in riding over the pandemic, the outbreak adversely affected the economy overall and there is a considerable downfall in the revenue," said Iqbal Singh Chahal, BMC chief.

According to civic officials, Covid-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown resulted in closure of the small as well as large commercial units, due to which property tax collection was adversely affected. The slow-down in real estate also led to reduction in assessment of new properties thus decreasing the revenue collection. Many ready possession flats in the city also remained unsold. In addition to that, the lockdown also resulted in restriction on movement of people and migration of labour which adversely affected the construction business in the city.

In Mumbai, the BMC has presently undertaken several major projects like Coastal Road, Goregaon-Mumbai Link Road, Mithi river works, sewage disposal, water tunnels, municipal hospital repairs etc which require large capital expenditure. For this, the civic body has proposed to raise ₹5,876 crore by way of Internal Loan from its reserves.

For the BMC, the major sources of revenue for 2021-22 are grant-in-aid on account of compensation in lieu of Octroi ₹10,583 crore, property tax ₹7,000 crore, DP department ₹2,000 crore, income from interest on investments ₹975 crore and water & sewerage charges ₹1,598 crore.

CRPF'S COBRA TO INDUCT WOMEN COMMANDOS

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, FEB. 3

CRPF's anti-Naxal wing Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA) is soon going to induct women commands in its units. The CRPF authorities have taken decision to induct women commandos in COBRA units, D. Prakash, CRPF inspector general (IG), Chhattisgarh, told this newspaper.

Sources said the process has begun to recruit the woman commandos for COBRA. After training, the women commandos would be deployed in combat duty along with their male counterparts in their respective COBRA battalions in insurgency-hit Bastar in Chhattisgarh. Currently, the COBRA units are all male forces. CRPF has total 10 COBRA battalions.

Of these, 6 battalions have been deployed in south Bastar, comprising districts of Sukma, Bijapur, Dantewada and Narayanpur.

CRPF's 241 battalion, christened as Bastariya Battalion, was established a year ago.

MUM. DCP FILES DEFAMATION PLAINT AGAINST ARNAB GOSWAMI

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, FEB. 3

Deputy Commissioner of Mumbai Police, Abhishek Trimukhe has filed a criminal defamation complaint against Republic TV's editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami, his wife and director Samyabrata Goswami and ARG Outlier Media that runs the channel. The complaint filed in the Sessions Court, Mumbai, through the public prosecutor's office, seeks a "deterrent process of warrant" against the accused and "compensation" for Trimukhe.

The defamation suit has been filed claiming that defamatory statements were made against Trimukhe during a panel discussion in connection with actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death case.

Terming Arnab a habitual offender Trimukhe demanded stern action against him and mentioned a defamation case where in Arnab and Times Now, where he was earlier employed, were directed to pay ₹100 crore in damages.

SHORT TAKES

SHOOTING IN
FLORIDA: 2 FBI
AGENTS KILLED

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

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

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

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

SPACEX ROCKET
IN FIERY
CRASH, AGAIN

Washington, Feb. 3: A prototype of a SpaceX rocket the company hopes will one day journey to Mars crashed in a fireball as it tried to land upright after a test flight Tuesday.

It was the second such accident after the last prototype of Starship met a similar fate in December.

"We had again another great flight," said SpaceX announcer John Insprucker on an online broadcast.

"We've just got to work on that landing a little bit," he added. The company's founder Elon Musk was uncharacteristically quiet on social media, having announced the night before he was "Off Twitter for a while."

The stainless steel rocket, dubbed SN9 or "Serial Number 9," was cleared for lift-off from Boca Chica, Texas by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) less than a day earlier.

NEO-NAZI SONGS:
AUSTRIAN
RAPPER NABBED

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

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

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

UKRAINE BANS
3 PRO-RUSSIA
TV CHANNELS

Kiev, Feb. 3: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has banned three pro-Russian television channels in a move the presidency said was aimed at staving off Kremlin propaganda.

Kiev says it has become a regular target of Russian misinformation since 2014, when Moscow annexed the Crimean peninsula and backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, a conflict that has claimed more than 13,000 lives.

The ban came into effect in the early hours of Wednesday after Zelensky issued a decree imposing sanctions against pro-Russian lawmaker Taras Kozak and eight of his companies, including the three TV stations.

The channels — 112 Ukraina, Zik TV and NewsOne TV — are formally owned by Kozak, but are also linked to powerful MP Viktor Medvedchuk, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The decree late Tuesday made no mention of the reason for the ban, but Zelensky said on Twitter later his country supports freedom of speech, and "not propaganda financed by the aggressor".

Navalny jailed
for three years

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Several hundred of his supporters marched through the streets.

— AFP

Iran not to set
free ship captain

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

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps seized the Hankuk Chemi and arrested its multinational crew of 20 sailors near the strategic Strait of Hormuz on January 4, saying it had polluted the waters. The development came as Tehran urged Seoul to release billions of dollars of Iranian assets frozen in South Korea due to US sanctions.

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

Permission had been granted upon "the request

of the South Korean government and (with) the cooperation of the judiciary in Iran", he added.

He did not specify whether the crew had already left.

Seoul-based news agency Yonhap cited the South Korean foreign ministry as saying the captain would remain in Iran to look after the tanker. It was not clear when the vessel might be allowed to leave.

The arrested crew were from South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Myanmar.

Former US president Donald Trump in 2018 withdrew Washington from a landmark nuclear agreement with world powers and then reimposed and reinforced crippling sanctions on Iran.

Iran was a key oil supplier to resource-poor South Korea until Washington's rules blocked the purchases.

— AFP

Tamilians stage
stir in Lanka

Colombo, Feb. 3: Tamil political and civil society groups in Sri Lanka held a protest rally on Wednesday, highlighting the grievances being faced by the community in the island nation.

They alleged that lands owned by Tamils are being grabbed and Tamil areas are being systematically populated with the majority Sinhala community since the military conflict ended in 2009.

They claimed that Tamil political prisoners continue to languish in jails. Members of Tamil National Alliance said the court order was served on politicians, preventing them from taking part.

India has once again pressed for the devolution of power to the provinces under the 13th Amendment (13A) of the Sri Lankan Constitution and the system of provincial councils as a step towards better representation of Tamil minority.

— PTI

NEW LIFE Simultaneous transplants have only been tried twice before

Man gets face, hands in rare surgery

New York, Feb. 3: Almost six months after a rare face and hands transplant, Joe DiMeo is relearning how to smile, blink, pinch and squeeze. The 22-year-old New Jersey resident had the operation last August, two years after being badly burned in a car crash.

"I knew it would be baby steps all the way," DiMeo said. "You've got to have a lot of motivation, a lot of patience. And you've got to stay strong through everything." Experts say it appears the surgery at

NYU Langone Health was a success, but warn it'll take some time to say for sure. Worldwides, surgeons have completed at least 18 face transplants and 35 hand transplants, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing, or UNOS, which oversees the US transplant system.

But simultaneous face and double hand transplants are extremely rare and have only been tried twice before. The first attempt was in 2009 on a patient in Paris who died about a month later from

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

Ousted leader's government accused of not probing voter fraud allegations

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

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

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

Police and court officials in the capital Naypyitaw could not immediately be contacted. At the same time that authorities were working to keep Suu Kyi



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

— AP

in detention, hundreds of lawmakers who had been forced to stay at government housing after the coup were told Wednesday to leave the capital city within 24 hours and go home, said a member of Parliament from Suu Kyi's party who is among the group. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared drawing the attention of the military.

The coup was a dramatic backslide for Myanmar, which had been making progress toward democracy, and highlighted the extent to which the generals have ultimately maintained control in the Southeast Asian country.

In response to the coup, Suu Kyi's party has called for non-violent resistance, and people in Yangon honked car horns and banged on pots and pans on Tuesday night.

— AP

Washington in touch with
India and Japan on coup

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

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

Suu Kyi.

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

The United States categorically said the military action in Burma is a coup.

"After a careful review of the facts and circumstances, we have assessed that Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Burma's ruling party, and Win Myint, the duly elected head of government, were deposited in a military coup on February 1," the State Department official said.

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

— PTI

WHO team visits Wuhan
lab at centre of speculation

Wuhan, Feb. 3: World Health Organisation investigators on Wednesday visited a research centre in the Chinese city of Wuhan that has been the subject of speculation about the origins of the Coronavirus, with one member saying they'd intended to meet key staff and press them on critical issues. The WHO team's visit to the Wuhan Institute of Virology was a highlight of their mission to gather data and search for clues as to where the virus originated and how it spread.

"We're looking forward to meeting with all the key people here and asking all the important questions that need to be asked," zoologist and team member Peter Daszak said, according to footage run by Japanese broadcaster TBS.

Reporters followed the team to the high security facility, but as with past visits, there was little direct access to team members, who have given scant details of their discussions and visits thus far. Uninformed and plainclothes security guards stood watch along the facility's gated front entrance, but there was no sign of the

protective suits team members had donned Tuesday during a visit to an animal disease research center. It wasn't clear what protective gear was worn inside the institute.

The team left after around three hours without speaking to waiting journalists. Following two weeks in quarantine, the WHO team that includes experts in veterinary medicine, virology, food safety and epidemiology from 10 nations has over the past six days visited hospitals, research institutes and a traditional wet market linked to many of the first cases.

Their visit followed months of negotiations as China seeks to retain tight control over information about the outbreak and the investigation into its origins, in what some have seen as an attempt to avoid blame for any missteps in its early response.

One of China's top virus research labs, the Wuhan Institute of Virology built an archive of genetic information about bat coronaviruses after the 2003 outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

— AP

ANTIVIRAL CURE
FOR COVID-19
IDENTIFIED

London, Feb. 3: Researchers have identified an antiviral drug which is highly effective against the Covid-19 causing Coronavirus, and could have major implications in how future disease outbreaks are managed.

The team, including researchers at the University of Nottingham in the UK, found that the plant-derived antiviral, at small doses, triggers a highly effective broad-spectrum host-centred antiviral innate immune response against three major types of human respiratory viruses, including Covid-19.

Given that acute respiratory virus infections caused by different viruses are clinically indistinguishable, an effective broad-spectrum that can target different virus types at the same time could significantly improve clinical management, the researchers said.

— PTI

Bezos to step down
as Amazon CEO

New York, Feb. 3: Jeff Bezos, who founded Amazon as an online bookseller nearly three decades ago, will step down as the CEO of the \$1.7 trillion global e-commerce giant and will become the executive chairman, a move he said would give him "time and energy" to focus on his other ventures and passions.

Amazon, which announced on Wednesday that 2020 net sales increased 38 per cent to \$386.1 billion, compared with \$280.5 billion in 2019, said Bezos will transition to the role of Executive Chair in the third quarter of 2021 and Andy Jassy, CEO of the company's cloud business, Amazon Web Services, will become CEO at that time. Bezos has been Amazon's CEO since its founding in 1995. He oversaw its growth from an online bookseller into a

\$1.7 trillion global retail and logistics giant, which has also made the 57-year-old into one of the world's richest persons.

"Amazon is what it is because of invention. We do crazy things together and then make them normal," Bezos said, adding that the company pioneered customer reviews, 1-Click, personalised recommendations, Prime's insanely-fast shipping, Just Walk Out shopping, the Climate Pledge, Kindle, Alexa, marketplace, infrastructure cloud computing, Career Choice, and much more.

"If you do it right, a few years after a surprising invention, the new thing has become normal. Right now I see Amazon at its most inventive ever, making it an optimal time for this transition," he said in a statement.

— PTI

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT					
NOT No. 295202-2021/BC/MW/CH/ENMAD Date: 02.02.2021					
FORM OF CONTRACT: C-FORM					
For and on behalf of the Government of Tamil Nadu, bids will be received by the Superintending Engineer, PWD, Building Construction & Maintenance Circle, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, Chennai - 605 005 for the works from the eligible contractors in the PWD Department as mentioned below on 18.02.2021 upto 03.30 PM, and will be opened by the Superintending Engineer on the same day in the presence of the contractor or the authorised agents at 03.30 PM.					
Sl. No.	Name of Work	Approximate value of work	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit to be Completed	Eligible Contractors	Cost of tender documents & EMD (in Rupees)
1.	Provision for AC arrangement to the newly constructed 1000sqm. Office and 200sqm. Emergency and Casual Care facility Block at Rajahmundry Government General Hospital, Chennai-3.	Rs. 183.00 Lakhs	Rs. 25,000/- 3 Tenors Months	Class-1 in PWD with Minimum net. of Rs. 75 Lakhs and A.C. tender price	Rs. 5,000/- The EMD should be submitted in favour of Chennai-5

NOTES : 1. Tender schedule can be downloaded free of cost from the website "http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in" or "http://www.tenders.gov.in". 2. Date and time for downloading and submission of the tender documents: 09.02.2021 from 12.00 Noon to 15.02.2021 upto 06.00 P.M.

3. Date and time of opening of the e-tender : 17.02.2021 at 11.15 A.M.

4. Detailed Tender Notice available in the website www.tnphcl.com & www.tnphcl.com

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DECCAN Chronicle

4 FEBRUARY 2021

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

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

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

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

Now that the hurdles have been cleared for a debate in Parliament on the farmers' protest, it is crucial that the Opposition parties, the ruling party, and those that are prone to sit on the fence seek to define farmers, farm agitators and hooligans.

Before any judicial inquiry is instituted — if that is done — it is incumbent on the political class to frame a definition and tell us if they believe the men who indulged in violence and marred the spirit of Republic Day by unfurling religious flags and symbols at the Red Fort were farmers. In the narrative backed by the government and its supporters, these criminal elements are being called "farmers", no less. But are they? Or are they calculatedly infiltrated fifth columnists tasked with maligning an entirely peaceful agitation that the government wasn't sure how to handle?

It seems quite extraordinary that the police and the National Investigation Agency, that is routinely unleashed on harmless civil society protesters, has not been directed to trace the whereabouts of a loud-mouthed actor who had acted as a BJP MP's election agent in Punjab, and his accomplices who are listed as bad characters in Punjab. From this person's remarks, it would appear he is a votary of "Khalistan". While that may not be held against him, his actions on Republic Day merit thorough scrutiny.

The government is yet to exhibit due diligence in this matter. But it has shown alacrity in hammering thousands of nails in the roads, and erecting layers of barricades, presumably to ensure that the farmers don't go on the rampage on their tractors. But have they ever done so in the past? What we see here is a glimpse of Chinese or Russian police state tactics in action, not those of — what we so proudly claim — the world's largest democracy!

Putin bares his fangs

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

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

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

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:
Chennai: SP 3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Phones: (044) 22254747, 22254748
Coimbatore: 77 Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore 641009. Phone: (0422) 2231255, 2231256
Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad 500 003. Phone: (040) 27803930-4. Fax: (040) 27805256
Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Ft. Road, Koramangala, Bangalore-560095. Ph: 08043460500; Fax: 080-22960551/52/55
Visakhapatnam: Survey No. 1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017. Phones: (0891) 2552333/2552334, Fax: (0891) 2755285
Vijayawada: No. C 3 & 4, Patnamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.). Phones: (0866) 2555284/ 2555287. Fax: (0866) 2555234
Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618
Anantapur: Thopovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904
Nellore: Survey No. 527/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatchalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/82, Telefax (0861) 2348580
Karimnagar: Survey No. 1341, Vavilalpally Colony, Jagitayala Road, Karimnagar 505 001. Phone: (0878) 2228908; Telefax: (0878) 2220433
Kochi: No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408
Kozhikode: No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001 Fax : 0495 4019018
Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph Press Thycaud post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471- 2735105/67, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-0888

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

R. MOHAN
Resident Editor

Subhani



No new taxes? Budget's Mahabharata lessons



Mohan Guruswamy

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

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

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

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

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

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

But let us take a cursory look at the numbers. Total expenditure in FY20-21 was ₹34.50 lakhs crores. The proposed expenditure for FY21-22 is ₹34.83 lakhs crores (Page 3 of FinMin's 'Budget at a Glance'), so where is the money for a breakout? The vision painted is a long-term vision. For instance, Tamil Nadu going to the polls in a few months gets a declared appropriation of ₹65,000 crores to build 3,600 km of highways over the next five years, when what matters to people and the economy is what will be spent this

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

PEG ELIGIBILITY AGE

The concession allowed to senior citizens 75+ relieving them from the obligation of filing income-tax returns is welcome. But how many of the citizens in that age group and beyond will benefit is a moot question. There are thousands of senior citizens below the age 75 who too survive merely on pension plus interest on bank investments the total of which is below the I-T exemption limit. Hence the finance minister can very well peg the age limit as 65+ for exemption of filing the IT returns. This will also reduce the workload in I-T offices.

S. Nagarajan Iyer, Coimbatore

SAVE PSUs

THIS REFERS to the proposal of the central government to resort to stake sale in public sector companies and financial institutions including two PSU banks to garner ₹1.75 Lakh crore in 2021-22, as announced by finance minister in the budget. It is pertinent here to mention that the public sector undertakings, which were coined as 'temples of economy' by our late prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, were started in different fields with an ambitious goal of achieving sustained economic growth and providing continuous employment to the masses. In order to create infrastructure like buildings, plant & machinery, etc., the central government has spent several thousand crores of public money over a long period of time. Hence, it owes the responsibility to run them viably by taking necessary steps like upgrading technology now and then.

M. Govindaraj, Gudiyatham

ENFORCE RULES

IT IS really shameful that the elected representatives of the people, whether in Parliament or Assembly, continue to boycott sessions after sessions, under one pretext or other. It seems they are more concerned about their own or their party's benefits than that of the people who elected them to power. It is high time the Supreme Court & Election Commission or concerned authorities, put an end to such disturbances. If an ordinary employee goes on such a protest, the company enforces the 'No work, no pay' rule and cuts the proportionate salary and perks. Why not the government bring in such a rule and cut the salary and perks of those members who disturb the sessions?

N. Mahadevan, Chennai

Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections



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

The pre-dawn coup in Myanmar on Monday recalls the worldwide outrage that Singapore's patriarch Lee Kuan Yew caused in 1996 by questioning Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's ability "to govern if ever she came to power". He said he had told the Americans, who were pressing for democracy to be restored, that they should be around to pick up the broken pieces if the experiment collapsed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the country back under dictatorship.

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

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

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

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	50,255.75 0.92
Nifty 50	14,790.00 0.97
S&P 500*	3,837.05 0.28
Dollar (₹)	72.95 0.02
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.59 0.27
Euro (₹)	87.80 0.29
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,387*232 0.48
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	58.75 2.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.084 -0.70
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.124 0.017

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Services sector expands in Jan.; biz optimism up

The services sector expanded for the fourth month in January as business activities quickened and business optimism rose to sustain the growth momentum. The India Services Business Activity Index of IHS Markit rose from 52.3 in December to 52.8 in January. The launch of vaccine boosted optimism towards the 12-month outlook for output. The overall degree of optimism touched an 11-month high.

Christie's Intl. Real Estate enters India



Global real estate consultant Christie's International Real Estate said it has entered India in partnership with Delhi-based Himmat and Rohini Singh LLP to tap opportunities in luxury housing market. Christie's International Real Estate is a global network offering exclusive home and luxury real estate services to buyers and sellers worldwide. The company is part of British auction house Christie's.

Airtel posts Q3 profit of ₹854 cr; revenue highest

Bharti Airtel posted a net profit of Rs 854 crore for Q3, compared to Rs 1,035-crore loss a year ago, on the back of improved realisations and customer addition. Airtel logged its highest-ever consolidated quarterly revenue of Rs 26,518 crore in Q3 FY21, up 24.2 per cent YoY. Its India business saw "highest ever" quarterly revenues of Rs 19,007 crore, up 25.1 per cent YoY. Mobile Arpu rose to Rs 166 from Rs 135 YoY.

Jubilant Food profit rises 22% to ₹124 crore

Jubilant FoodWorks, which operates Domino's Pizza and Dunkin' Donuts chains in India, reported a 21.71 per cent rise in consolidated profit at Rs 123.91 crore in Q3. Revenue from operations stood at Rs 1,069.27 crore compared to Rs 1,071.36 crore a year ago. Chairman Shyam S. Bhartia and co-chairman Hari S. Bhartia said the company has seen complete revenue recovery of the business and strong improvement in margins.



■ Nifty-50 inching towards 15K milestone

Sensex breaks 50000 barrier

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 3

The Sensex finally closed above 50000 for the first time, as the post Budget rally continued for the third consecutive session, with banks leading the gainers.

The index shot up to a new all-time high of 50526.39 before closing at 50255, gaining over 458 points, or 0.92 per cent.

The Nifty-50 Index too clocked a new all-time high of 14868.85 and finally closed at 14789.95, up 142.10 points, or 0.97 per cent.

The broader market outperformed the benchmarks. The BSE Mid-cap Index gained 1.38 per cent while the BSE Small-cap Index gained 1.47 per cent.

The all-round rally helped BSE's market capitalisation touch a new all-time high of over Rs 198.43 lakh crore.

The 15000 milestone for the Nifty-50 looks possible with the Budget announcement adding to the upward market momentum right now, said analysts.

"We can expect some resistance to set in the Nifty-50 at around 15,000 level. The budget is fueling a rally in all economy-driven sectors, along with banking. The uptick in global markets, resumption of FII flows and strong earnings trend coming from Q3 results are other factors that are taking markets higher," said Jaideep Hansraj, MD

of Kotak Securities. "In the last three sessions, almost all sectors have participated with many stocks showing eye popping moves. While the banking space already has rallied sharply in the last couple of sessions, other sectors such as Pharma and the PSE's were seen buzzing on Wednesday. The Nifty continues to clock new records and is now not far from creating a new history of 15000 mark," said Ruchit Jain, senior analyst-technical and derivatives, Angel Broking.

Expectations from third quarter results of telecom

major Bharti Airtel also buoyed market sentiments as the stock touched a new 52-week high of Rs 622.40 on the BSE.

"Bharti Airtel posted the highest ever consolidated quarterly revenues of Rs 26,518 crore—up 24.2 per cent year on year. Overall, numbers were above street expectation in all the fronts," said Keshav Lahoti, analyst, Angel Broking.

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 2,520.92 crore, who returned to the buying side post-Budget topping the more than Rs 6,000-crore buying on Tuesday.

Coal India Ltd (CIL) said in a statement. "CIL on Saturday last formally signed a major procurement pact worth Rs 2,900 crore, for purchase of 96 dumpers of 240 tonne capacity each with Belaz, the Belarus-based mining equipment manufacturer," it said.

In August last year, the CIL board had given its nod for the procurement of these dumpers.

The Rs 2,900 crore investment would be funded through CIL's own finances and includes the cost of equipment and spares and consumables for eight years. —PTI

Startups that link global, local firms raises \$120 million

Saritha Rai Feb. 3

Setwerk, a startup that connects global companies with manufacturing facilities in India, raised \$120 million to bolster its technology and expand its customer base.

The funding round consists of existing investors including Lightspeed Venture Partners, Sequoia Capital India and Greenoaks Capital, it said on Wednesday. The Series D round values the firm at more than \$600 million.

The Bengaluru-based startup more than tripled its sales last year as the pandemic exposed the fragile nature of global supply chains, prompting companies to diversify their manufacturing and sourcing to avoid disruptions. Setwerk offers its technology platform and project-management help to customers seeking manufacturers for everything from electric-vehicle and aerospace components to luxury apparel. —Bloomberg



JOURNEY OF SENSEX TO 50K

BSE Sensex makes history, closes over the 50000 mark for the first time ever on Feb 3, 2021

Key milestones:

- 11 Oct, 1999 (5,031.78)
- 7 Feb, 2006 (10,082.28)
- 9 July, 2007 (20,290.89)
- 11 Dec, 2007 (20,290.89)
- 5 Jun, 2014 (25,019.51)
- 26 Apr, 2017 (30,133.35)
- 17 Jan, 2018 (35,081.82)
- 3 Jun, 2019 (40,267.62)
- 4 Dec, 2020 (45,079.55)
- 3 Feb, 2021 (50,255.75)

Figures in points Source: BSE Sensex / KBK Infographic

& CEO, Kotak Securities.

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INSIDER DEALS: BIYANI BARRED FROM MARKET FOR A YEAR

New Delhi, Feb. 3: The Sebi on Wednesday barred Kishore Biyani and certain other promoters of Future Retail Ltd from the securities market for one year for indulging in insider trading in the shares of the company.

Apart from Kishore Biyani, who was the CMD and promoter of Future Retail Ltd (FRL), others facing ban are Future Corporate Resources Pvt Ltd, Anil Biyani and the FCRL Employee Welfare Trust.

In addition, the regulator has imposed a fine of Rs 1 crore each on Kishore Biyani, Anil Biyani and Future Corporate Resources. Besides, they have been asked to disgorge Rs 17.78 crore for the wrongful gains made by them.

Future Corporate Resources and FCRL Employee Welfare Trust have been directed to disgorge Rs 2.75 crore for the wrongful gains made by it.

Anil Biyani and Future Corporate Resources are promoters of FRL.

Sebi had conducted an investigation in the scrip of FRL to ascertain whether certain persons and entities had traded during the March 10, 2017 to April 20, 2017 period on the basis of Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI) pertaining to segregation of certain business of the firm.

Trading on the basis of UPSI violates provisions of Prohibition of Insider Trading norms. —PTI

Various government measures such as the Rs 3 lakh crore Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme, Covid-19 loans provided by banks and faster demand recovery in the domestic market has led to few companies opting for the Reserve Bank of India's one-time debt restructuring.

According to India Ratings, only 5 per cent of its rated 450 companies in the mid and emerging corporates (MEC) space had availed of the RBI's financial restructuring facility that was available till December 31, 2020. Also, companies that availed of restructuring were from the vulnerable bucket primarily in the 'IND BB' and below rating categories with stretched liquidity, belonging to the Industrial and Discretionary segments and operating mainly in sectors such as real estate, construction and engineering.

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up in exports in certain sectors," said the rating agency.

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Apple and Hyundai declined to comment.

Kia shares surged nearly 20 per cent on January 20 after a media report said Hyundai Motor Group had decided Kia would be in charge of proposed cooperation with Apple on electric cars. —Reuters

75% PROFESSIONALS ON LOOKOUT FOR JOB

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India remains resilient towards career growth as two in three (64 per cent) professionals say they are confident about their future progression while two in five think attending networking events (38 per cent), and investing in online learning (37 per cent) will be critical to landing a job. —PTI

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Bezos to move as Amazon quarterly sales hit \$125 bn

JEFFREY DASTIN & AKANKSHA RANA
FEB. 3

Amazon.com Inc founder Jeff Bezos will step down as CEO and become executive chairman, naming the head of its lucrative cloud computing division as successor in a sign of the company's transformation from web retailer to internet conglomerate.

This summer, Bezos, 57, will hand the keys of the world's largest online retailer to Andy Jassy, head of its cloud division Amazon Web Services known as AWS. The announcement on Tuesday settles a long-running question about who would replace the world's second-richest person at the company's helm.

Bezos is ending his role as CEO on a high note: the business he began as an internet bookseller 27 years ago is now one of the world's most valuable companies and posted three consecutive record profits after losses in decades prior. On Tuesday, Amazon reported quarterly sales above \$100 billion for the first time at \$125.6 billion.

Jassy, 53, joined Amazon in 1997 after Harvard Business School, founding AWS and growing it to a cloud platform used by millions of customers, the company's website said. He had been a clear contender for the top job since Amazon created two CEO roles years ago, the other held by recently retired consumer CEO Jeff Wilke.

Jassy has aimed to bestow a rock-star aura to keynotes at AWS's annual



Jeff Bezos

Las Vegas conference, speaking before over 60,000 attendees in 2019 after upbeat music preceded his talk.

Bezos, who already has

ANDY JASSY USHERED IN CLOUD COMPUTING BOOM

MATT DAY
FEB. 3

Incoming Amazon.com Inc CEO Andy Jassy cuts a low profile outside of the wonky world of cloud computing. But for much of the last decade he's been arguably the most important person in the tech industry.

The unit he leads, Amazon Web Services, has reshaped how companies buy technology, by simplifying computing services into their component pieces and offering them essentially for rent over the internet.

In the same earnings report in which Amazon said Jassy, 53, would succeed Jeff Bezos later this year, the company reported that AWS pulled in \$12.7 billion in sales in the fourth quar-

ter, making the unit a \$50 billion business on an annual basis.

"Andy brings the first principles thinking that has always been a part of what's made Amazon successful - deeply trying to understand the end customer, creating building blocks by which other people can build and than being good at rapidly iterating," said Matt McIlwain, a managing director with Madrona Venture Group in Seattle, who has closely tracked Amazon's rise. "He watched how Jeff approached problems. That's very important because there a lot of things that are deeply embedded in the culture of Amazon."

Jassy has led AWS since the launch of its first major services in 2006. —Bloomberg

Few firms opt for RBI's one-time restructuring

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, FEB. 3

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BLOOMBERG | INDEX India climbs back into top 50; US drops out of top 10 ranking

South Korea leads world in innovation

MICHELLE JAMRISKO, WEI LU & ALEX TANZI
FEB. 3

South Korea returned to first place in the latest Bloomberg Innovation Index, while the US dropped out of a top 10 that features a cluster of European countries. Korea regained the crown from Germany, which dropped to fourth place. The Asian nation has now topped the index for seven of the nine years that it's been published. Singapore and Switzerland each moved up one spot to rank second and third.

India climbed back into the top 50 for the first time since 2016.

The Bloomberg index analyses dozens of criteria using seven equally weighted metrics, including research and development



spending, manufacturing capability and concentration of high-tech public companies.

The 2021 rankings reflect a world

where the fight against Covid-19 has brought innovation to the fore—from government efforts to contain the pandemic, to the digital infrastructure that's allowed economies to work through it, and the race to develop vaccines. "Innovation is often measured by new ideas, new products and new services," Cath-erine Mann, global chief economist at Citigroup, said, but it's their "diffusion and adoption" that is the real metric of success.

Much of the Bloomberg data comes from before the virus crisis. Still, it's notable that many countries high on the index -- like Korea, Germany and Israel -- have been world leaders in some areas of fighting the pandemic, whether it's contact-tracing or speedy vaccination. American names like

Zoom Video Communications Inc or vaccine-maker Pfizer Inc are among the past year's emblems of innovation, reflecting the US's top ranking for density of high-tech firms.

Korea's return to the top spot is due to an increase in patent activity, where it ranks top, alongside a strong performance in R&D and manufacturing.

There's near-total agreement in South Korea that "R&D is essential to have a future," said Lee Kyung-mook, a professor of business management at Seoul National University. "It's sandwiched between more developed nations, which still outperform them in technology, and China that is catching up fast relying on lower labour costs." —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Ajay re-elected as BFI president

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

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

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

Serena sizzles; Osaka, Barty toil

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

Williams has been in belligerent form at the Yarra Valley Classic and overpowered the Bulgarian with a 6-1, 6-4 victory in 74 minutes. The American will play world number six Karolina Pliskova or compatriot Danielle Collins in the quarter-finals. Osaka and Barty, however, were pushed to the brink, but both avoided early exits at Melbourne Park. Japan's Osaka was made to work hard against in-form Katie Boulter, but fought back for a 3-6, 6-3, 6-1 victory to reach the quarter-finals in the Gippsland Trophy. Meanwhile, Barty also had a fright in her match against Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic, but recovered from a second-set stutter to win 6-0, 4-6, 6-3. — AFP

Zverev, Tsitsipas open with wins

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

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

Irving punches big to pip Clippers

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

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

— BCCI

WISE CAPTAIN

My job is easy when Virat is around: Rahane

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 3

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

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



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

— BCCI

They are a balanced side. We have to play good cricket and back our strengths. It's all about staying in the moment," said Rahane.

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

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

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

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

The curator for the opening test has said the Chepauk wicket would sport an "English look" with lush green outfield and a decent amount of grass on the wicket. Rahane, however, feels it's too early to say how the wicket will behave. "Indian wickets always suit spinners. We have to wait and see," he added.

In Ravindra Jadeja's absence, Axar Patel is tipped to make his Test debut. Asked about the bowling combination for the opening Test, Rahane chose to keep his cards close to his chest. "The

team management will decide the combination only on the match eve, after the final training session," he said.

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

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

ROOT WANTS TO BE PART OF T20 WC SQUAD

New Delhi, Feb. 3: England's Test captain Joe Root wants to be in the squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup though he understands it is not going to be a cakewalk for one of the country's finest batsmen in the game's traditional format.

Root will be appearing in his 100 Test when he leads England in the series opening match against India from Friday. The focus, for now, is the four-match Test series but the technically sound Root has not given up on his T20 ambitions.

"For me, the most important thing is that England go into that World Cup with the strongest squad and give ourselves the best chance of winning there, and hopefully, I can be a part of that squad," Root said.

"And if no then I will be backing those guys because it would be a huge achievement on the back of what we have achieved in 50 over world cup," the England Test captain added. — PTI

Important to post big 1st innings total: Trott

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 3

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

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



Jonathan Trott

who played 52 Tests.

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

of the Year award in 2011.

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

POPE ADDED TO ENGLAND SQUAD

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

CA TO GIVE NOC TO IPL-BOUND OZ PLAYERS

Melbourne, Feb. 3: Cricket Australia on Wednesday said it will grant No Objection Certificates to its IPL-bound players on a "case-by-case" basis, a day after it had postponed the national team's tour of South Africa due to fresh Covid-19 outbreak.

Even though the IPL-bound Australian cricketers are sweating over their participation in the 14th edition, to be held in India in the second week of April, players' agents have indicated that unless there are injury concerns, there should not be any issue in granting NOCs as the event will be organised during CA's official break.

"We have, obviously, got precedent on that from the IPL last year. We have got, obviously, the IPL, if you like, (has) proven its bio-security protocols. As and when applications are made, we will consider each of those case-by-case, on their merits," CA interim CEO Nick Hockley said. — PTI

Man Utd wreak havoc on Saints

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

United's first victory in three league games means

THE RESULTS

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

they are behind leaders Manchester City only on goal difference.

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

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



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

— AP

Ronaldo's brace packs off Inter

Milan, Feb. 3: Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice as Juventus came from behind to beat Inter Milan 2-1 at the San Siro in their Italian Cup semifinal first leg on Tuesday.

Record 13-time winners Juve will be favourites to reach a sixth final in seven years when they bid to complete the job in the return game in Turin next Tuesday.

Inter, who beat Juventus 2-0 last month in Serie 'A', have it all to do to keep their hopes of lifting a first Italian Cup since 2011 alive.

Inter made a flying start in the ninth minute, as Lautaro Martinez got in front of Matthijs de Ligt to meet Nicolo Barella's low cross, sweeping a right-footed finish into the net despite Gianluigi Buffon getting a hand to the shot.

But Juventus were given a way back into the tie midway through the first half.

Juan Cuadrado, who was making a run into the box off the ball, was held by Ashley Young, with VAR deeming that the visitors should be awarded a penalty. Ronaldo did the rest, hammering the spot-kick into the roof of the net to score his 21st goal of the season. — AFP

SEVILLA ENTER COPA DEL REY SEMIFINALS

Madrid, Feb. 3: Lucas Ocampos' second-half goal was enough to see Sevilla edge past second-tier Almeria 1-0 on Tuesday to reach the Copa del Rey semi-finals.

Papu Gomez made his debut for Sevilla but made little impact and was substituted on the hour mark.

It was his first appearance since December 16 after falling out of favour with Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini.

Gomez's fellow Argentinian Ocampos broke Almeria's stubborn resistance in the 67th minute, heading home Suso's cross.

It is the first time Sevilla, five-time winners, have reached the last four since being thrashed 5-0 by Barcelona in the 2018 final.

Sevilla are bidding for a second major trophy under former Spain and Real Madrid coach Lopetegui, having won the Europa League last season. — AFP

FOUL FOWLER IS BANNED FOR FOUR GAMES, FINED

Kolkata, Feb. 3: East Bengal football club's high-profile English coach Robbie Fowler was on Wednesday suspended for four matches and fined ₹5 lakh after being found guilty of making "insulting" remarks against Indian referees at the ongoing ISL. Fowler was in the dock for stating that he was "not sure whether the Referees have an Anti-English thing or Anti East Bengal thing" in the ISL being conducted in Goa.

"The Committee held such utterances and publications are gross inconceivable derogatory and contemptuous aspersions apart from blatant malice on the part of Mr. Fowler and tends to offend the dignity, reputation and image of the Referees in India," read the All India Football Federation's disciplinary committee's order. — PTI

CA pull out, a dark time: KP

New Delhi, Feb. 3: Former England skippers Michael Vaughan and Kevin Pietersen on Wednesday questioned Australia's decision to postpone their tour of South Africa and expressed doubts if they would have done the same with a powerful cricket nation like India.

Cricket Australia announced their decision to postpone the trip to South Africa, citing "unacceptable health and safety risk" in that country because of a fresh Covid-19 outbreak.

Vaughan said it was not a good precedent set by Australia.

"The Aussies pulling out



Kevin Pietersen (left) and Michael Vaughan (right) during a press conference.

of the tour of SA is a huge worry for the game ... Would they have pulled out of a tour to India is the question ?? !," Vaughan wrote on his Twitter handle.

The former captain said the three big cricket nations — India, England and Australia — should instead help the cricket boards, who are feeling the heat of the pandemic. Former star England batsman Kevin Pietersen too slammed Australia's decision to withdraw from the tour.

"No way @CricketAus would have not played India in a Test tour. It's a really dark time in the world of cricket with CA cancelling their tour of @OfficialCSA. @englandcricket also pulled out of SA due to Covid issues, but players test positive in SL and tour goes on?!", he tweeted. — PTI