

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SATURDAY 20 | FEBRUARY 2021

## WEATHER



**Max:** 32°C  
**Min:** 19°C  
**Rainfall:** 2 mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Maasi 8  
**Tithi:** Ashtami/ Navami  
**Star:** Rohini  
**Rahukalam:** 9 am to 10.30 am  
**Yamagandam:** 1.30 pm to 3 pm  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.20 am  
**Zohar:** 12.28 pm  
**Asar:** 3.44 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.15 pm  
**Isha:** 7.27 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.16 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.30 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 12.10 PM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 1.16 AM**

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+13,480)	(+89)
1,09,76,739	1,56,239

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 448)  
**TN:** 8,47,385    12,451

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

11,10,40,682

### DEATHS

24,57,011

COUNTRIES  
AREAS WITH  
CASES    219

worldometers.info

## India crosses 1 crore vaccination milestone

**New Delhi:** Over one crore Covid-19 vaccine doses have been administered in the country till now with the highest single-day vaccinations of more than 6 lakh jabs given on Thursday, the Union health ministry said on Friday. Of the 1,04,49,942 doses administered, joint secretary in the Union health ministry, Mandeep Bhandari, said 70,52,845 vaccine doses were administered to healthcare workers and 33,97,097 to frontline workers whose vaccination started on February 2. Of the 70,52,845 vaccination doses, 62,95,903 healthcare workers were administered the first dose, while 7,56,942 healthcare workers were given the second dose.

“A total of 6,58,674 vaccinations were done on February 18, which is the highest single-day vaccinations during the ongoing Covid-19 vaccination drive,” Bhandari said. While till 6 pm on Friday, 2,61,935 vaccinations were carried out. He said 41 hospitalisations have been reported till now out of which 25 have been discharged after treatment.

## COUNTER POINT



**Lift? Sure, but you will have to pay 50% of the petrol cost!**

## Nasa's rover makes historic Mars landing

Cape Canaveral, Feb. 19: A Nasa rover streaked through the orange Martian sky and landed on the planet Thursday, accomplishing the riskiest step yet in an epic quest to bring back rocks that could answer whether life ever existed on Mars. Ground controllers at the space agency's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, leaped to their feet, thrust their arms in the air and

cheered in both triumph and relief on receiving confirmation that the six-wheeled Perseverance had touched down on the red planet, long a deathtrap for incoming spacecraft

cheered in both triumph and relief on receiving confirmation that the six-wheeled Perseverance had

touched down on the red planet, long a deathtrap for incoming spacecraft. “Now the amazing science

starts,” a jubilant Thomas Zurbuchen, NASA's science mission chief, said at a news conference, where he theatrically ripped up the contingency plan in the event of a failure and threw the document over his shoulders. The landing marks the third visit to Mars in just over a week. Two spacecraft from the United Arab Emirates and China swung into orbit around Mars on successive days last week. — AP ■ P5



## STATE | 3

**FM interacts with top industry captains of TN**



## WORLD | 5

**Biden admin introduces Citizenship Act**

## SPORT | 8

**Medvedev mauls Tsitsipas, in final**



## India, China complete pulling troops back

■ **Corps commanders of two countries will meet in Moldo today**

**PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 19**

Indian and Chinese soldiers have completed their disengagement from the most contentious friction point of Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh after nine months of their eyeball-to-eyeball military standoff. Now the Indian and Chinese corps commanders will meet in Moldo on Saturday morning for the 10th round of talks to discuss disengagement in other friction points in Ladakh -- the Depsang Plains and Gogra-Hot Springs.

China on Friday for the first time officially acknowledged that four of its People's Liberation Army soldiers were killed and one officer seriously injured in the clashes with Indian troops in June last year in the Galwan Valley. The Indian Army had lost 20 soldiers, including Col. B. Santosh Babu, commanding officer of 16 Bihar, during that clash. Earlier this week, the head of the Indian Army's Northern Command, Lt.



In this image taken from video footage run Feb. 19, 2021 by China's CCTV via AP Video, soldiers bandage the head of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) regimental commander Qi Fabao as Indian and Chinese troops face off in the Galwan Valley on the disputed border between China and India, June 15, 2020. China's military said Friday, Feb. 19, 2021 that four of its soldiers were killed in a high-mountain border clash with Indian forces last year, the first time Beijing has publicly conceded its side suffered casualties in the deadliest incident between the Asian giants in nearly 45 years.

Gen. Y.K. Joshi, had said that Indian observers had counted more than 60 Chinese casualties being picked up on stretchers and taken back after the clash. “But whether they were fatal or non-fatal, we can't say with authority so I will not give a figure. But

recently, the Russian (news) agency Tass had put out a figure of 45 (Chinese soldiers killed in the clash) and I think that could be the figure we can look at,” he had said. Both India and China have withdrawn around 200 tanks and armoured

### CHINA ADMITS DEATH OF 4 SOLDIERS

- China has vacated the area between Finger 4 and Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso
- China dismantled military infrastructure at Finger 5, including a jetty and a helipad.
- Indian and Chinese soldiers have vacated the Kailash range on the southern bank of Pangong Tso.
- India and China have withdrawn around 200 tanks and armoured vehicles.
- India claims that its territory is up to Finger 8.
- Corps commanders to meet today in Moldo.
- China, for the first time, admits death of four soldiers

Under the India-China agreement, the Chinese troops will move east of Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso while the Indian troops will move to their permanent base at Dhan Singh Thapa Post near Finger 3. There will be a 'temporary' freeze in the patrolling by both sides in the area between Finger 4 and Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso till both sides reach an agreement in the diplomatic and military talks.

prise as it looked that they had come in for the long haul. China had built a large number of structures in the Finger area on the north bank of Pangong Tso and had deployed a significant number of its troops.

China has now vacated the area between Finger 4 and Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso, which its troops had occupied in May 2020. India claims that its territory is up to Finger 8. The Chinese soldiers have dismantled the military infrastructure they had set up at Finger 5, which includes a jetty and a helipad. Both Indian and Chinese soldiers have also vacated the Kailash range on the southern bank of Pangong Tso.

The Indian Army had on Tuesday released videos which showed Chinese troops dismantling sangars, temporary structures, and loading supplies and provisions onto trucks. The Chinese soldiers were also seen using earth-movers to dismantle shelters and restoring the land-forms as per the agreement.

vehicles and troops from the north and south bank of Pangong Tso.

The speed with which the disengagement, which started on January 10, has been completed by the Chinese PLA has taken many observers by sur-

## Doc stabs wife, crushes her under car wheels

**SINDHIYA SAMUEL & P.A. JEBARAJ | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 19**

A 35-year-old doctor stabbed his wife and crushed her to death under the wheels of his car in broad daylight in full public view on the outskirts of the state capital on Friday, police said.

Originally from Tindivanam, Dr Gokul Kumar (35), who used to work at a private hospital in Potheri, married Keerthana (28), a native of Coimbatore, three years



Gokul Kumar and Keerthana

ago. They had filed for a divorce as disagreement cropped up one year after their marriage.

Reports said Dr Gokul Kumar stabbed Keerthana

on her neck with a kitchen knife following an altercation at round 4.30 pm. She collapsed and fell on the floor. Murahari and Kumari, Keerthana's parents who stay with the couple, tried to stop Dr Gokul Kumar but he stabbed them, too, repeatedly. Mr Murahari suffered serious injuries on his abdomen, while Ms Kumari sustained minor cuts on her hands.

Eyewitnesses told police that after stabbing Keerthana and her parents, Dr Gokul Kumar

allegedly pulled his wife out to the road, and let her bleed. He drove his car from the parking space and crushed her to death under the wheels of his car before fleeing the scene.

Madurantakam police reached the spot after being alerted by the neighbours a few minutes after the incident rushed the severely injured Mr Murahari to M a d u r a n t a k a m Government hospital. The police later shifted the body of Keerthana to Chengalpeta government hospital for post-mortem. ■ P4

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## OTHER STORIES



A third year law student of the Vellore government law college, Rahul Ganesh, son of auto driver Somu, a resident of Ariyoor in the district, undertook a 12-km marathon rally to spread awareness among the public about the concept of environmental conservation, global warming, creation of forests for rain and unpolluted air, and the dangers of using plastics. Vellore CEO, Gunasekaran, flagged off the rally, which Rahul commenced from the Chittoor bus stand in Katpadi.

— K. Senthil Nathan

## Health dept orders to not use paediatric vaccines

Coimbatore, Feb. 19: The health department here on Friday asked the anganwadis and primary health centres (PHCs) not to use a particular batch of vaccines following the death of two infants a couple of days ago.

Postmortem revealed the death of one infant due to pneumonia and the cause of the other death was yet to be ascertained, sources in the department said.

Since the parents were panicky, the department ordered not to use the particular batch of paediatric vaccines until further orders, even as the condition of nearly 35 babies vaccinated at both the centres was reported normal, they said.

The babies, aged 2.5 months and three months, died after they were given pentavalent, rotavirus and oral polio vaccines at an anganawadi at Masakalipalayam and in a PHC at Sowripalayam in the city on Thursday.

— PTI

## BJP will get two digit in TN Assembly: Reddy

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THANJAVUR, FEB. 19

The BJP will enter the Tamil Nadu assembly with a two-digit strength of MLAs after the coming state assembly election, said P. Sudhakar Reddy, national co-in charge of BJP for Tamil Nadu elections, here on Friday.

Describing the chances of NDA's victory in the assembly election as bright, he said the party high command will decide on the number of seats to be asked in the NDA alliance for the elections.

He said the response to his tour in Tamil Nadu and enthusiasm shown by people are indications of the growth of BJP in the state.

He said the farmers' agitation at Delhi borders will not have any impact on the state assembly elections. "We got maximum number of seats in Bihar assembly election and Hyderabad corporation election which were held after the agitation was launched by farmers. Only farmers from Punjab and Haryana are participating in the agitation. Some outside elements have also mingled with farmers and are creating problems. Farmers in the rest of the country are happy with the central government. They know that APMC and MSP will continue. In my opinion, farmers associations agitating in Delhi are not interested in finding a solution to the problem. The central government is open for talks and held talks 11 times so far" Reddy said.

He blamed the former UPA government and the DMK for the increasing petroleum prices. "When we wanted to bring petroleum products under GST, many state governments opposed it as they don't want to lose the cess. However, the Centre is trying to find a solution" he said.

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# Chennai reservoirs brim ahead of summer

T. SUDHEESH | DC  
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

Though Chennai is experiencing sunny weather for over a month now, the city reservoirs continue to receive a steady inflow of water, marking the level way ahead of the same period last year. The data on water storage level, provided by Chennai Metro Water, shows at least 1,330 mcft additional water since January 5. Now the total water storage level in the top five reservoirs stands at 11,012 mcft against the capacity of 11,757. This is almost double compared to last year in the same period, ie, 6,275 mcft.

This is a big relief for the Chennai residents, as the city, which experiences water crisis from mid-March, is gearing up for yet another summer season.

At the 140-ft Poondi reservoir, the biggest in the city, the water level now stands at 3,101 mcft.

The city reservoirs have received at least 26 mcft additional water since January 5. Now the total water storage level in the top five reservoirs stands at 11,012 mcft against the capacity of 11,757. This is almost double compared to last year in the same period, ie, 6,275 mcft.

This is a big relief for the Chennai residents, as the city, which experiences water crisis from mid-March, is gearing up for yet another summer season.

At the 140-ft Poondi reservoir, the biggest in the city, the water level now stands at 3,101 mcft.

This is a dip from 3,135 mcft on January 5. However, it was an increase from 2867 mcft (88 percent) on December 4 against the full capacity of 3,231. The water level on the same day last year was 1,767 mcft. The outflow is 219 cusecs of water while inflow is 30.

The water level in Chembarambakkam reservoir, where the outflow is 163 cusecs while inflow is nil, is 3,325, a fall from 3,364 mcft on January 5 but a rise from 3,137 mcft on December 4 against a total capacity of 3,645. The water level on the same day last year was 1,721.

Meanwhile, the water level at Redhill stands close to its capacity of 3,208, which is 2 mcft rise from 3,206 on January 5 against the full capacity of

3,300 mcft. The water level here on December 4 was 2,878 (87 percent) while storage was 2,715 in the same period last year. However, the outflow is 146 cusecs and inflow 140.

The water level in Cholavaram, which has an outflow of 10 cusecs with zero inflow, hit way high this year compared to last year. Now the level stands at 880 mcft against 881 on January 5 while the storage in the same period last year was just 69 mcft. Cholavaram has received at least 290 mcft more water within two months.

Meanwhile, in Kannankottai Theruvoykandigal reservoir that gets an inflow of 5 cusecs without outflow, the water storage is 498 mcft on Friday while the level was 396 mcft on December 5.

## TN reports 448 new infections, 7 more fatalities

CHENNAI, FEB. 19

Tamil Nadu on Friday logged 448 new Covid-19 cases and seven more fatalities, taking the caseload to 8,47,385 and the toll to 12,451, the health department said.

Recoveries outnumbered new infections with 467 people being discharged, taking the cumulative number to 8,30,787, leaving 4,147 active cases.

Chennai accounted for the maximum number of infections with 136, taking the total to 2,34,072.

The metropolis also accounted for a little over one-third of the Covid fatalities at 4,134 deaths. Among the deceased, five had pre-existing morbidities, while a 52-year-old man did not have any illness or comorbidity, the bulletin said.

—PTI

## Scrap to sculpture



Students at a scrap sculpture exhibition opened by Chennai corporation at Tiruvanmiyur government school.

— E.K. Sanjay

# Coast Guard ship C-453 commissioned

A. ARUL PALANI | DC  
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

The Indian Coast Guard Ship C-453, 17th of the 18 interceptor boat (IB) project built indigenously, was commissioned in Chennai on Friday by Leena Nandan, secretary, department of consumer affairs.

The ship was constructed by Larsen & Toubro Ltd. Jiresh Nandan, additional secretary, department of defence, Krishna S w a m y Natarajan, director general, Coast Guard, Inspector General S Paramesh, commander, Coast Guard region (East), JS Mann and other officials of Coast Guard and L&T shipyard were present.

ICGS C-453, the 27.80-meter-long IB with a dis-

placement of 105 tons and maximum speed of 45 knots (85 kmph), is capable of undertaking multifarious tasks including surveillance, interdiction, close coast patrol, search and rescue, in addition to rendering assistance to boats and craft in distress at sea.

ICGS C-453 is commanded by assistant commandant Animesh Sharma and will be based at Chennai under the operational control of commander, Coast Guard region (east).

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The ship, on joining the Coast Guard eastern fleet, will be deployed extensively for the country's territorial exclusive economic zone waters and other duties as enshrined in the Coast Guard Charter, to safeguard the maritime interests of India. The Coast Guard will now have 157 ships & boats and 62 aircraft. Further, 40 ships are at various stages of construction at different shipyards in India and 16 advanced light helicopters MK III are being accepted by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, Bengaluru, which will provide the added teeth to the surveillance capabilities of the Coast Guard.

# IUML hails withdrawal of CAA protest cases

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, FEB. 19

Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) national president Prof. K. M. Kader Mohideen has welcomed the Tamil Nadu Government's decision of withdrawing more than 10 lakh cases filed against those who violated the Covid-19 prevention norms and participated in the agitations against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and also

thanked the government in this regard.

Kader Mohideen, addressing a press conference on the sidelines of the Milad Nabi celebrations at a mosque administered by the prince of Arcot endowment at Tiruchy on Friday, pointed out that a few other state governments have moved a resolution against the union government's NRC, NPA, and CAA and appealed to Chief Minister Edappadi

K. Palaniswami to move a resolution against these three draconian acts, in the ensuing budget session of the state assembly.

Chief executive officer of the prince of Arcot endowment Tiruchy A.Basheer Ahamed, who was present at the press conference, said they have arranged a mass feeding with special prayers as part of the Milad Nabi celebrations.

# Traffic SI held for demanding bribe

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

A traffic police sub-inspector from Chromepet has been arrested for allegedly demanding a bribe of Rs 5,000 from the owner of a travels agency for a traffic violation, DVAC sources said on Friday.

The sub-inspector attached to the Chromepet traffic wing, identified as Krishna Kumar (48), had demanded a bribe of Rs 5,000 from the complainant Ezhumalai for releasing his vehicle seized and taken to the

police station for violating the traffic rules.

Ezhumalai, a resident of K.K Nagar runs a travel agency in the same area. On Thursday, one of his drivers came to pick up a customer in Tambaram. Sources said when the driver took a wrong U-turn on Chromepet-Sanitorium road, the traffic cop Krishna Kumar stopped the car.

He confiscated his car for violating the traffic rules and asked his owner to contact him to release the car.

On being informed by

his driver, Ezhumalai contacted the traffic cop, when the latter demanded a bribe of Rs 10,000 to release the car. As he initially refused to pay the money, Krishna Kumar allegedly insisted on paying Rs 5000.

As Ezhumalai did not want to pay the bribe, he approached the Alandur DVAC and lodged a complaint against the officer. Following the complaint, the DVAC sleuths laid a trap and directed him to give him the chemically treated currency to the officer.

The victim was asked to come to the Chromepet traffic wing office at 2: 30 pm on Friday to hand over the cash. On the advice of the DVAC officials, Ezhumalai handed over the chemically treated currency to Krishna Kumar, while the sleuths in plainclothes waited for him to accept the money.

When he reportedly accepted the bribe, he was caught red-handed. The DVAC officials further raided the Chromepet traffic wing police station. A search was also conducted at the house of the SI.

# Declare Covishield unsafe, volunteer urges HC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

A business consultant, aged 41, who claimed to have suffered serious side-effects after he volunteered for phase-III of the clinical trial of Covishield vaccine of the Serum Institute of India and was administered the vaccine on October 1, 2020, has approached the Madras high court seeking to declare that Covishield is not safe.

In his petition, Asif



Riyaz of Anna Nagar submitted that a close reading of the participant information sheet reveals that the vaccine is safe, with mild side-effect. He believed in the "safety" of

the vaccine and decided to volunteer to take the vaccine. He signed the consent form on September 29, 2020. Before being administered the vaccine, his brief medical history was obtained, but no blood, urine or any other diagnostic test, such as pulmonary function test or ECG, were done. Only tests for Covid-19 and antibodies were done, which were negative and the Covishield study vaccine was administered on him on October 1 at SRMC

Hospital.

He said there was no adverse reaction for the first 10 days, but from October 11 he suffered several side-effects and was hospitalised till October 26. The severe trauma he suffered, because of the "acute neuro encephalopathy", was an extreme side-effect of the test vaccine, he claimed.

In the petition, he sought to declare that the severe side-effects and his hospitalisation from October 11 to 26 was a "serious

adverse event" due to the administration of trial vaccine, and as a follow up to declare that Covishield was not safe and consequently direct the Serum Institute of India to pay him a compensation of Rs 5 crore.

Justice Abdul Quddhose, before whom the petition came up for hearing on Friday, ordered notice to the union government and the Drugs Controller General of India and posted to March 26 further hearing of the case.

## Corrupt officials must be dealt with iron hand: HC to commissioner of labour

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

Pointing out that in the event of any lapses, negligence, dereliction of duty, corrupt activities, the commissioner of labour is expected to initiate action with iron hand and there cannot be any leniency or otherwise, the Madras high court has said all suitable actions are to be initiated against such officials who all are committing such misconducts as well as corrupt activities in the matter of hearing of the cases or signing of the orders or issuance of the Award copies to the parties or their counsels.

Justice S.M.Subramaniam made the observations while directing the commissioner of labour to constitute a special cell in the directorate to monitor these kinds of irregularities and illegalities in the office of the competent authorities across the state. "The special cell must contain a separate telephone number and a website enabling the workmen or the counsels appearing for the parties to register their complaint enabling the commissioner to initiate further actions on such complaints", the judge added.

**"The special cell must contain a separate telephone number and a website enabling the workmen or the counsels appearing for the parties to register their complaint enabling the commissioner to initiate further actions on such complaints"**

Passing orders on the petition filed by Vanaja and three others, which sought to condone the delay of 460 days in filing the C.M.A (Civil Miscellaneous Appeal) to the award dated October 22, 2018 and made on the file of the Commissioner for Employee's Compensation Court, Joint Commissioner of Labour-II, Chennai, the judge said this court is of the opinion that the delay is to be condoned, as there is no proof for serving of the award copy to the applicants and the insurance company.



## IN BRIEF

## DMK's second corruption list

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

The DMK presented a second representation, listing corruption charges against State Ministers, to the Governor Banwarilal Purohit on Friday and sought action against them.

The representation, signed by party president M K Stalin, was handed over by the top leaders of the DMK, including general secretary Duraimurugan and treasurer T R Baalu at the Raj Bhavan. Earlier, Stalin himself had presented a representation listing corruption charges against Chief Minister Edappadi K Palanisami and other Ministers to the Governor on December 22, 2020.

## Lankan Tamil refugee ends life

DC CORRESPONDENT  
PERAMBALUR, FEB. 19

A 31-year-old Sri Lankan Tamil refugee allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself at his friend's house at Perambalur in the wee hours of Thursday.

Police said the deceased, Indrakumar, residing at Ceylon Colony, went for a movie along with his friends Vinod and Manobalan on Wednesday night and after that he stayed at Vindo's house. On Thursday morning while Manobala went out of the Vinod house, Vinod who went to awaken the deceased found him hanging. Upon information, Perambalur police recovered the body and sent the same for post-mortem. Police are investigating.

## PMANE coordinator welcomes move

From P1

Anti-nuke activist and coordinator of People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy (PMANE) S.P. Udayakumar welcomed the announcement. He had yesterday petitioned the Chief Minister seeking withdrawal of 106 cases pending against anti-KKNPP protesters. "Many youths against whom cases were pending in connection with the mass struggle against the nuclear project have lost job opportunities all these years since 2011 as they could not get police verification certificates," said Dr Udayakumar in his petition.

It is to be noted that of the total number of 349 cases registered against about 2,000 protesters, the state government withdrew 213 cases on October 9, 2014 following a Supreme Court direction, while action was dropped in another 31 cases based on a ruling of the Madras High Court on a writ petition filed in 2015.

Among the 105 pending cases against the anti-KKNPP protesters, 68 are still in the FIR stage, while charge sheets were filed in 37 cases at the Valliyoor court.

## SBI Chennai Circle's CSR donation

Chennai: As part of its CSR activity SBI Chennai Circle donated Rs 21.83 lakh to SRI PRATYAKSHA CHARITABLE TRUST for purchase of laundry machine and accessories. The trust which was established in 2007 works to make a difference to society by rendering service in the fields of education, healthcare, culture, heritage, rural development, support for the aged and many more.

The cheque was handed over to managing trustee K. Jayaramakrishnan by Dinesh Khara, chairman, in the presence of B. Sankar, Chief General Manager Chennai Circle, and General Managers Shirley Thomas, U N N Maiya and Vinod Jaiswal.

## Uncertainty continues in Pondy

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D.SEKAR | DC  
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

Will Puducherry be brought under the President's rule after Monday? Or will the V Narayanasamy-led Congress government survive the trust vote? Or will the BJP be able to install an alternative government till the Union Territory goes to polls?

These were the dominating questions being deliberated in the political grapevine in Puducherry and also in the neighboring state of Tamil Nadu as the local units of the parties concerned went into huddle to decide on their future course of action.

The BJP leaders too were closeted to work out a strategy after three of them returned from New Delhi after reportedly meeting Union home minister Amit Shah.

BJP MLA V Saminathan,

former MLA A Namassivayam who defected from the Congress to the BJP and BJP's Puducherry unit in-charge Nirmal Kumar Surana, had rushed to Delhi when the Congress government was pushed to the precipice following the resignation of two of its MLAs.

Since the two MLAs quit, the obvious arithmetic points to the trust vote throwing up a 14-14 tie leading to the government losing the majority. Yet the Chief Minister V Narayanasamy had exuded confidence in winning the vote.

He has made a claim that nominated members of the House were not eligible for voting, which would mean that the three BJP MLAs appointed by former Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi, do not take part in the voting and thus the government would survive.

But the present Lieutenant Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan has treated the three nominated members and proper MLAs, particularly since their nomination had been subsequently approved by the Supreme Court.

In such a backdrop, how would Narayanasamy manage to get an additional vote in his favour on Monday when the Territorial Assembly convenes? The possibility is that some MLAs from the opposition would help out the government.

In view of the BJP's sudden entry into the opposition camp, many leaders of AIADMK and NR Congress are reportedly feeling threatened. One, the BJP might take away some of their seats that they had nurtured for years.

Two, the demography of some of the constituencies is such that some MLAs of

AIADMK and NR Congress might not be able to win their seats again if they are seen to be in the alliance of BJP.

So, even if not taking the risk of disqualification by cross voting, there is a chance of some MLAs not turning up for the trust vote on Monday and thus saving the Congress government.

Also Speaker V. P. Sivakolunthu could disallow the nominated members from casting their vote. But that could create a ruckus in the House followed by litigations, which could also lead to the promulgation of Presidents' rule.

Apart from that, the BJP, which has managed to bring the Congress government to the brink through a series of machinations, carried out through Kiran Bedi, may also spring a surprise, particularly in view of the

meeting the three local leaders had reportedly with Amit Shah.

The DMK, however, is unlikely to pull the rug from under the Congress feet, since the alliance between the two parties was indeed intact and DMK letting down the Congress at this juncture was not going to be beneficial to it.

With Tamilisai Soundararajan presiding over the entire drama that is to unfold on Monday, the final outcome is unlikely to be favourable to the Congress. But such a development could also be detrimental to the BJP's future growth as it could earn the people's wrath for pulling down an elected government. The Congress party, if it is pulled down, is more likely to earn some sympathy among the voters and romp home in the next elections, which are anyway coming soon.

## Man gets lifer for sex abuse of daughter

B. RAVICHANDRAN|DC  
OOTY, FEB. 19

The Mahila court here sentenced a man to life imprisonment under the Pocco act for sexually harassing his daughter.

Police sources in Gudalur said that one Abdullah Nasser (44), a textile trader from Koththarvayal village limits on the Nilgiris border, is alleged to have repeatedly sexually harassed his 11-year-old daughter for three years whenever his wife was away from home. He is also alleged to have threatened his daughter that he would kill her mother and relatives if she informed them about his misadventure, and the frightened child kept quiet.

Once, she happened to visit her maternal grandfather's house in Kerala, when she revealed to them the cruelty she suffered at the hands of her father, and refused to return to Gudalur to her house. Shocked, her grandfather's family took her to a hospital in Kerala, where medical examination confirmed sexual assault.

Following this, the girl was

■ Police sources in Gudalur said that one Abdullah Nasser (44), a textile trader from Koththarvayal village limits on the Nilgiris border, is alleged to have repeatedly sexually harassed his 11-year-old daughter for three years whenever his wife was away from home. He was awarded life imprisonment and slapped a fine of ₹10 lakh on him.

taken to the All women's police station at Gudalur, where a complaint was lodged in September 2017. Police registered a case and arrested Abdullaah Nasser and filed a case in the Mahila Court in Ooty under Pocco Act.

Malini Prabhakar, special public prosecutor (Mahila Court) here, said that the Mahila court which pronounced the judgment in this case on Friday, sentenced Abdulla Nasser to life imprisonment and slapped a fine of ₹10 lakh on him.

## Tamilisai holds video meet with Telangana officials

Hyderabad, Feb. 19: Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, given additional charge of Lt Governor of Puducherry, on Friday reviewed developments and other issues related to the state through video conferencing from Raj Nivas in the union territory capital.

She said she always gave top priority to the well-being of Telangana people

wherever she was.

"Wherever I am, I give top priority to the welfare and well-being of the Telangana people as the Governor of the state. Though I am in Puducherry now, I am constantly monitoring the affairs of the Telangana state," she said in the video conference with officials of the Raj Bhavan here.

She directed the officials to constantly update her

about the developments in Telangana, according to a Raj Bhavan press communique. "I am always thinking about the people of Telangana as the first citizen of the State. My additional charge as the Lt Governor of Puducherry does not affect my concern and care towards Telangana. I am with the people of Telangana always," she said. Secretary K. Surendra Mohan joined the meet. —PTI

## Pandiarajan is Nilgiris SP

DC CORRESPONDENT  
OOTY, FEB. 19

R. Pandiarajan, on Friday assumed charge as Superintendent of Police, the Nilgiris. While the district witnessed frequent transfers of SPs in the recent years, Pandiarajan is the fourth top cop to assume charge as SP of the Nilgiris in a span of three years.

Speaking to media per-

sons Pandiarajan said that his priority was to maintain law and order. Traffic management was an equally important task.

With the fast approaching summer tourist season, focus would be more on traffic management, involving studies on traffic management issues, to evolve effective traffic management plans for the hills.

## Man can't abdicate responsibility of paying maintenance to estranged wife: SC

New Delhi, Feb. 19: The Supreme Court Friday said a husband cannot abdicate the responsibility of paying maintenance to his estranged wife and gave a last opportunity to a man to clear entire outstanding of Rs 2.60 crore along with monthly pay-out of Rs 1.75 lakh to his wife, failing which he would be imprisoned.

The man, who claimed to have been working on a project of national security in the telecom sector, said that he had no money and sought two years to pay the money. The top court said however that he has lost credibility by failing repeatedly to follow the court's order and wondered how a person with this kind of case was asso-

ciated with a project of national security.

A bench of Chief Justice Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian told the man, a Tamil Nadu resident, "Husband cannot abdicate from his responsibility to provide maintenance to his wife and it is his duty to provide the maintenance". It

ordered, "Accordingly by way of last chance, we permit the respondent (man) to make payment of the entire outstanding amount along with the monthly maintenance regularly to his wife...within a period of four weeks from today, failing which, the respondent may have to be punished and sent to civil prison". —PTI

## FM interacts with top industry captains of TN

Chennai, Feb. 19: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday held an informal meeting with top industrialists of Tamil Nadu to elicit their views on the budget she presented on February 1.

TVS Motor chairman Venu Srinivasan, MRF Ltd Chairman M Mammen, India Cements Ltd Vice Chairman N Srinivasan, former Ashok Leyland Chairman R Seshasayee and Apollo Hospitals MD Sunita Reddy were among those who took part in the meeting, sources said.

This is the first time she is meeting industry cap-

tains in Tamil Nadu after presenting the budget. However, the meeting was out of bounds for the media and the points discussed were not known.

Industry sources said the FM listened to the views put forth by the industrialists during the interaction. The India Cements Ltd Managing Director N Srinivasan said he thanked the FM for presenting an 'outstanding' budget that would spur growth.

"The budget will spur growth. I told her that during this calendar year itself, all the industries, including manufacturing,

will be running towards full capacity", Srinivasan told PTI.

The official twitter handle of the FM's office shared images of the Minister interacting with the industrialists. Earlier in the day, BJP Tamil Nadu unit president L Murugan received Sitharaman and presented a 'Vel' to her as part of welcoming her to the state.

"Vel" refers to a spear-like weapon that is traditionally associated with Lord Muruga. "Presented 'Vel' to Nirmala Sitharaman on her arrival to Chennai" Murugan said in a tweet. —PTI



Union finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman meets industrialists at a private hotel in Chennai on Friday. —DC

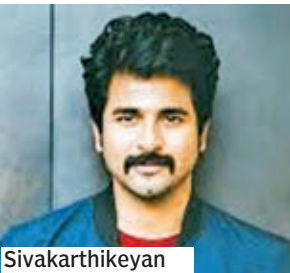
## Sivakarthiyan, Anil Srinivasan among 124 Kalaimamani awardees

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 19

Film actor Sivakarthikeyan and Ramarajan, director Gautam Vasudeva Menon, actress Ashwariya Rajesh, comedian Yogi Babu, comedienne Devadarshini, producers Kalaiipuli Thanu and Ishwari Ganesh and stunt master Jaguar Thangam were among the popular personalities named to receive the Kalaimamani awards for the years 2019 and 2020.

Some of the other well-known persons in the award list were Anil Srinivasan (piano), Sikkil S Gurucharan (vocal), Jolly Abraham (light music) and film director Liguat Ali Khan.

The State government announced the names of the



Sivakarthikeyan

winners of a plethora of awards in arts and culture, which include Kalaimamani, a special Kalaimamani named after J Jayalithaa, awards in the names of Bharati, M S Subbulakshmi and Balasaraswati and awards for impoverished aged Kalaimamani awardees of the past on Friday.

The announcement said eight old and impoverished



Aishwariya Rajesh

Kalaimamani awardees would get a silver parrot and an amount of ₹50,000 and the Kalaimamani gold medal would now weigh five sovereigns.

While the 59 persons have won the Kalaimamani for 2019, 65 artistes have won it for 2020.

The 'Puratchi Thalaivi Dr J Jayalalithaa Special Kalaimamani' has been



Anil Srinivasan

awarded to Saroja Devi (films), P Susheela (music) and Ambika Kameshwaran (dance) for 2019.

For 2020, the award goes to Sowkar Janaki (films), Jamuna Rani (music) and Parvathi Ravi Ghantasala (dance)

Awards have also been announced for the best art organization and the best drama troupe.

SATHYAM | ESCAPE | INOX CITY CENTRE | DEVI | PVR AMPA | ALBERT | WOODLANDS | SANGAM | PVR AMPA  
EGA | UDHAYAM | PALAZZO | KAMALA | AGS T.NAGAR | S2 PERAMBUR | DREAMS | BHARATH | CASINO  
INOX NATIONAL | JAZZ CINEMAS | PVR VRMALL | AGS VILLIVAKKAM | AGS OMR | AGS MADHURAVOYAL  
MAYAJAAL | ROHINI | KASI | S2 THYAGARAJA | MAHARANI | GOPI KRISHNA | PVR PALLAVARAM  
PVR VELACHERY | PVR ECR | PVR REDHILLS | VETRI CHROMPET | RAAKI AMBATUR | MURUGAN AMBATUR  
EVP CARNIVAL | GK COMPLEX PORUR | PRARTHANA INJAMBAKKAM | C3 MAMANDUR

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TAPAS NAYAK | VBHAGYARAJ | S MURUGADOSS | SATHYA RAJ | PALLAVI SINGH  
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## SHORT TAKES

## CONG LEADER IN MP HITS OUT AT KANGANA

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB 19

Senior Congress leader and former minister Sukhdev Panse has called Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut a 'naachney gaane wali' (a professional singer and dancer), sparking a row here.

The BJP termed his 'unchartable' remarks against the actress as reflection of 'narrow mindset' of the Congress.

"What do you expect from a leader of a party whose leader Rahul Gandhi re-tweets comments on farmers' stir by (pop star) Rihanna and (former pornographic actress) Mia Khalifa", BJP spokesman Rajneesh Agrawal said here on Friday.

While protesting the purported comment by Ranaut calling protesting farmers in Delhi as terrorists, Panse on Thursday said the Bollywood actress was hardly aware of farmers' plights since she was a 'naachney gaane wali'.

Senior Congress leader and former minister Sajjan Singh Verma came to the rescue of his colleague when the latter's comment on Ms Ranaut snowballed into a controversy.

"He (Panse) should have said Ranaut knows how to dance, but is not aware of farmers' issues", he said.

The Bollywood actress was currently shooting for her upcoming film *Dhaakad* in Sarni in Betul district.

## COURT REJECTS LALU YADAV'S BAIL PLEA

DC CORRESPONDENT PATNA, FEB. 19

The Jharkhand High Court on Friday rejected Lalu Yadav's bail plea in the fodder scam case pertaining to the illegal withdrawal of ₹3.97 crore from the Dumka treasury in the 1990s when he was the Chief Minister of Bihar.

Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh dismissed the bail petition of Mr. Yadav on the ground that he has not completed half of his prison term and asked his lawyer to file another application after two months.

"The court's observation was that he has to serve two more months in jail to complete half of the term of his total sentence in the case. We will file another application after two months", Lalu Yadav's lawyer Prabhat Kumar told reporters in Ranchi after the court's verdict on Friday.

Sources in the RJD said that the court's order came as a setback for Lalu Yadav's family and the party as they were expecting a favourable decision in the case.

He is already on bail in three out of four fodder scam cases pertaining to fraudulent withdrawal of ₹900 crore from Deoghar, Chaibasa and Dumka treasury. He was convicted in the Dumka case in March 2018.

The money was withdrawn through fake vouchers and bills on the pretext of purchasing fodder and other livestock. Fraudulent withdrawal from government treasuries and the use of fake bills and vouchers took place between 1991 and 1996 when Lalu Yadav was the Chief Minister of Bihar.

## TERRORIST GUNS DOWN TWO POLICEMEN

FROM PAGE 1

He identified the slain cops as Mohammad Yusuf and Suhail Ahmad. "They had received critical gunshot injuries," he said. He, however, also said that preliminary investigation on the basis of CCTV footage and other evidence indicate the involvement of two militants in the attack. He claimed that one of them was a local and the other a foreigner affiliated with proscribed outfit Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and said that a manhunt has been launched to arrest them.

Earlier during the day, a Special Police Officer (SPO) Altaf Ahmed was killed and a selection-grade constable Manzoor Ahmed were critically injured in a gunfight with militants in Beeru area of Budgam district. The police sources said that the gunfight broke out during a cordon-and-search operation launched by a joint team of J&K police, the Army's 53 Rashtriya Rifles and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)'s 79th Battalion in Beeru's Zanigam hamlet to flush out militants. However, after the initial exchange of fire the militants managed to break the security dragnet and escape.

## Some media coverage on Disha sensational, prejudicial, says HC

Delhi court sends climate activist Disha Ravi to 3-day judicial custody in toolkit case

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 19

The Delhi High Court on Friday said certain media coverage of investigation into the FIR against climate activist Disha Ravi for her alleged involvement in sharing a toolkit backing farmers' protest indicates "sensationalism and prejudicial reporting", but declined to order removal of any such content at this stage.

Justice Prathiba M Singh said the interim plea for removal of such news content and tweets by Delhi Police would be considered at a later stage.

The court, however, asked media houses to ensure that no leaked investigation material is broadcast as it could affect the probe and directed Delhi Police to abide by its stand on affidavit that it has not leaked nor intends to leak any probe details to the press.

The court also said that police would be entitled to hold press briefings in the matter in accordance with the law and the agency's 2010 office memorandum with regard to media coverage of cases.

To media houses, the court said they should ensure the information received from their sources is authentic and only verified content ought to be publicised as also that the investigation is not hampered.

The court was hearing Ravi's plea to restrain police from leaking to the media any probe material in relation to the FIR lodged against her.

The petition also sought to restrain the media from publishing the content or extract of any private chats, including those on WhatsApp, between her and third parties.



Police officers in plain clothes escort environment activist Disha Ravi (C) to a local court in New Delhi on Friday. — AFP

The police, represented by Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, placed an affidavit before the court categorically denying leaking of any information to the media.

It also assured the court that it has no intention of leaking any information to the media.

The ASG during the hearing said that the possibility of leakage by some officer of the agency cannot be ruled out entirely.

The court, however, directed that the police has to abide by its affidavit.

The media houses, one of them represented by advocate Mrinal Bharti, told the court that the source of information in the present case was the Delhi Police and its tweets.

ASG Chetan Sharma and central government standing counsel Ajay Dignapaul, appearing for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, told the court that the petition was not maintainable as no complaint was first made to it for taking action against any TV channel or media house for any

alleged incorrect reporting of the case.

The News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) told the court that it can take any action only if a complaint is made to it regarding the media houses named in the plea.

It further told the court that media houses named in the plea were members of the News Broadcasters Association (NBA).

Ravi, in her plea, has said she is "severely aggrieved and prejudiced by the media trial surrounding her arrest and

the ongoing investigation, where she is being viscerally attacked by the respondent 1 (police) and several media houses".

She has claimed that her arrest from Bengaluru on February 13 by a Cyber Cell team of Delhi Police was "wholly unlawfully and without basis".

She has also contended that in the present circumstances, it was "highly likely" that the general public will perceive the news items "as being conclusive as to the guilt of the petitioner (Ravi)".

"In these circumstances, and to restrain the respondents from further violating her privacy, her reputation, and her right to a fair trial, the petitioner is moving the present petition," the plea has said.

Her petition has alleged that investigative matters have been leaked to the media and the press briefings by the police are "prejudicial" and "grossly violative of her right to a fair trial and presumption of innocence".

It has claimed that the police first "leaked investigative material" - like alleged WhatsApp chats - the substance and details of which were only in the possession of the investigating agency.

Thereafter, the "private alleged WhatsApp chats" were published and disseminated by various media houses which was a violation of the provisions of the Cable Televisions Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 (CTN Act), the Programme Code and the Uplinking and Downlinking Guidelines, the petition has contended.

Meanwhile, a Delhi court on Friday sent climate activist Disha Ravi, arrested for allegedly being involved in sharing a "toolkit" on social media related to the farmers' protest, to three-day judicial custody. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Akash Jain sent Ravi, 21, to jail after Delhi Police produced her before the court on expiry of her five-day custodial interrogation. Police said that her custodial interrogation was not required for the time being and the agency may seek her further interrogation once her co-accused - Shantanu Mukul and Nikita Jacob - join the interrogation.



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

## MP CM'S SLEEP DISTURBED, ENGINEER FACES MUSIC

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, FEB. 19

An engineer of state public works department (PWD) has been placed under suspension for the inconvenience caused to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan owing to mosquito bites during his night stay in a government rest house in Sidhi on February 17.

In-charge of the Sidhi circuit house Babulal Gupta was suspended for the poor maintenance of the rest house which caused inconvenience to the 'special guest' (Chief Minister) during his night stay, a notice served to him by the Rewa revenue division commissioner (RDC) Rajesh Kumar Jain said.

The notice dated February 18 went viral on Friday.

The notice said assistant engineer of PWD Babulal Gupta who was in-charge of the circuit house had been intimidated of chief minister's stay in the facility much in advance.

The notice said lack of maintenance of the rest house has been found and complaints of mosquito menace in the rooms have been received.

## Doc stabs wife, crush her under car wheels

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, Dr Gokul Kumar, who was speeding in his car, met with an accident near Athur toll plaza under Acharapakkam police limits on Chennai-Trichy National highway. His car overturned due to rash driving and he sustained injuries. Acharapakkam police rescued him from the car and admitted him to a hospital nearby.

He was later handed over to the Maduran-takam police, which is investigating the case.

Keerthana was working in the human resource department in a private company in Melmaruvathur, the police said. After the marriage, the couple moved to Krishnapriya Colony in Maduran-takam in Chengalpet district near Chennai.

Police sources said that Dr Gokul Kumar and Keerthana have had a disagreement on several issues from just a year after their marriage. However, during the COVID-19 lockdown, the couple began arguing with each other very often which pushed them to apply for a divorce.

## Political climate hots up in Kerala ahead of state assembly elections

## Open for chief ministership if BJP wins, says Sreedharan

GILVESTER ASSARAY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 19

With Kerala currently witnessing the 'ceremonial' yatras of political parties crisscrossing 140 Assembly segments in the state, rival Fronts have started vying with each other to woo the voters besides galvanising their cadre for the forthcoming elections.

After the recent two day visit of the Election Commission team to Kerala, there are speculations that the Assembly polls might be held in the second week of April or first week of May. Quite understandably then, the political parties are leaving no chance to prepare for the crucial electoral battle.

The ruling CPM-led LDF has launched two yatras — Vikasana Munnetta Yatra (Development yatra), one from Kasargod to cover the northern districts and another from Kochi to cover the southern districts. The Congress-led UDF's Aishwarya Kerala Yatra led by opposition

leader Ramesh Chennithala is almost on its last leg covering southern districts.

The BJP's yatra is set to be flagged off by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on

February 23 in Kasargod. Prime Minister Narendra Modi who was in Kochi on Sunday to launch projects worth ₹1,600 crore took time to attend the BJP state unit's core committee meeting in which he

pleting big infrastructure projects, Sreedharan said that he will contest the Assembly elections if the party wants and will also be open to chief ministership if the party asks.

The 88-year-old technocrat also made it clear that he will not be interested in governorship, saying that it is purely a "constitutional position and no powers at all" and that he won't be able to make any positive contribution to the state in such a position.

Known as 'Metroman' for the efficiency in com-

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Known as 'Metroman' for the efficiency in com-

While the US took 31 days to achieve this, UK crossed the mark in 56 days

## Over 1 cr vaccinated against Covid so far

SANJAY KAW | DC with agency inputs NEW DELHI, FEB. 19

A little over a month after starting its Covid-19 inoculation drive, India on Friday achieved the landmark feat of vaccinating over one crore people against the deadly virus. The health ministry said Friday India was the second-fastest after the United States to achieve this milestone.

While the US had taken 31 days to achieve this, Britain had crossed the one-crore vaccination mark in 56 days. India achieved it in 34 days. Till 8 am Friday, the total number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered to

healthcare workers and frontline workers in India was 1,01,88,007.

The ministry data, however, showed an uneven pattern, with several states and Union territories injecting doses to less than 50 per cent of their target frontline workers. Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Punjab are among the larger states yet to reach 50 per cent vaccine coverage.

Among eight states that accounted for 57.47 per cent of total inoculations in the country, Uttar Pradesh accounted for 10.5 per cent doses. Seven states administered 60.85 per cent of the second dose vaccine.

In this, Telangana led the

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## DECCAN Chronicle

20 FEBRUARY 2021

### Cong's Punjab lesson: Set store by the local stalwarts

The spectacular sweep by the Congress in the civic polls in all three regions of Punjab earlier this week presents an object lesson to the Narendra Modi government as well as the Congress Party itself. The poll results have pushed the otherwise powerful Akali Dal, which derives its authority from Sikh religious forums, and the BJP into a narrow corner.

The lesson for India's oldest party, which now appears to be in a semi-solent state in many parts of the country — is that the road to revival is not closed. But there is a proviso: in the states the party must be led by local stalwarts who have come up the political ladder in the normal course of elections and manoeuvring, and not by lightweight flunkies accidentally selected by the central leadership and its nominated committees on a whim or to bestow personal favours.

In Punjab, chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh, in spite of his advanced years, proved his mettle. He gave mature political leadership. He could instinctively pick issues to highlight that matter. He also dealt with upstarts favoured by the Centre in a manner that did not raise any dust and he did not throw tantrums, although he is a maharaja. Attempts by his opponents to throw barbs of a personal nature at him cut no ice.

No doubt, the farmers' agitation helped the Congress greatly. Former party chief Rahul Gandhi's initiative in the Lok Sabha in holding two minutes silence — by treading into the Speaker's domain — in memory of the farmers who have died in the agitation could hardly have gone unnoticed in Punjab or anywhere else.

But these meaningful acts of symbolism may not have gone far enough and been translated into votes, were it not for the astute leadership of the state by Captain Amarinder and the tending of the state party organisation by PCC chief Sunil Jakhar in a sober manner. The Congress high command, such as it is, will doubtless realise that the party could have swept the Assembly election in neighbouring Haryana if only it had handed over charge of the party to Bhupinder Hooda early enough.

The Modi government and the ruling BJP cannot but have noticed that the day after the Punjab civic poll results came out, Rakesh Tikait, who has by now emerged as a famous farmers' leader from western Uttar Pradesh, called on the community of farmers to intensify their agitation and not return home until the controversial farm laws are rolled back. It is not unlikely that the farmers will show up in poll-bound West Bengal to queer the pitch for the BJP, which is trying hard to challenge CM Mamata Banerjee.

The Punjab results also point to the fact that the dissatisfaction with the Centre's policies that have fuelled unemployment, shutting down of micro, small and medium industries, and the relentless climb in diesel and petrol prices, are hurting the urban voter badly. The government leadership and the ruling party leadership need to look sharp and make wise choices.

### Prince's ransom for cricketers

A couple of IPL teams seem to have gone overboard in splashing crores on cricketers who are looking to rediscover their mojo after very poor outings in the last edition of the league played in the UAE. Considering that 130 countries around the globe are yet to lay their hands on vaccine supply in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, such splurging seems a tad extravagant. But then chasing sporting success is an expensive but far from scientific pursuit. Perhaps, the extravagance has to be seen as part of a larger sport bubble that comes more as an entertainment package and is not to be equated with normal pay for work rewards in common men's lives and livelihoods. The 2020 records of Chris Morris of South Africa, who at ₹16.25 crores has become the cash-rich league's most expensive player at an auction and Glenn Maxwell of Australia who gets close to US \$2 million (the approximate procurement cost of 5.7 lakh vaccines) bear no relation to the prince's ransom being paid as salaries.

The teams seemed so overenthusiastic about foreign T20 all-rounders that they could not show the same largesse to homegrown talent. The riches showered on some youngsters in this annual auction like K. Gowtham, bought by Chennai Super Kings for US \$9.25 crores and M.Shahrukh Khan, picked up by the renamed Punjab Kings for ₹1.2 crores, may have been heartwarming as their potential to shine in the T20 format is being recognised. The champions Mumbai Indians, who were parsimonious compared to the likes of Royal Challengers, Bangalore who broke their bank at the auction on a couple of expensive buys, also chose to take on the cricketer with the famous surname — Arjun Tendulkar — at the modest starting price of ₹20 lakhs. In cricketing terms, the hunt for impact players who can be expected to swing games with bat and/or ball seemed logical enough. The timing of the commitment of millions seems a bit awkward when the world is vaccinating against the existential crisis posed by the virus.

KAUSHIK MITTER  
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR  
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE

R. MOHAN  
Resident 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.  
**Bangalore:** 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  
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**Rajahmundry:** Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618  
**Anantapur:** Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904  
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**Karimnagar:** Survey No. 1341, Vavilalpally Colony, Jagityala 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: 0471-2735105/6/7, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-088s

Farrukh Dhondy

Cabbages & Kings

"There is time always, Bachchoo, To talk of many things As the Walrus did expound On cabbages and kings

And yet this global fear Clips conversation's wings The only news we hear Is of Covid's mutations!"

— From **O For a Sip of Bepsi Kohla** by Bachchoo

### Why it's crucial to stand up for views you may not agree with...

Without freedom of speech and opinion, there is no democracy. The system of counting votes and giving the majority the privilege of governing in fairness to the minority — is only the first requirement. The rule of unoppressive, uncoercive law, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of speech — yes, even on Twitter — are some of the rest.

Twitter has now banned Donald Trump's outpourings, not because they're left-wing or supportive of some mythical religious bias, but because very many of them amount to hate speech and incitement to break the law.

In Britain, there are laws against hate speech. Though difficult to define, the law trusts judges and

juries to identify speech which calls for any sort of attack on the minorities — or even a majority of the population. It's a law that upholds decency, but "hate crime" shouldn't stretch to expressing a questioning or dissenting opinion about, say, a religion. I am free to publicly proclaim that I don't believe in virgin births, or that God engraves, by lightning, laws on stone tablets or indeed dictates books to prophets. I won't have, I hope, crossed the line between a theological or scientific belief and incitement to attack any religious group or the buildings they pray in.

The definition of hate crime in any democracy should not deteriorate or ever be interpreted as "Disagree Crime". Dictatorships and fascist regimes, some, as in Turkey, based on religion and others on a mafiocracy, are universally known for their intolerance of dissent. Turkey locks up its journalists and Russia arrests and imprisons 11,000 of the protesters who took to the streets in favour of the release of a dissident politician. Other nations disgracefully encourage and allow curtailment of the freedom of speech or even fiction, on the grounds of dubious interpretations of religious sanctity.

In recent years, American and British universities have entertained insidious attacks on the principle of freedom of speech. Cambridge University, for instance, backpedalled in recent months on an edict they issued to "respect" all opinions. Several senior and junior members of the university interpreted this injunction as a "shut-up" call to all dissidence. They wanted the diktat to be modified to "tolerate" all opinions, while reserving the right to contradict and oppose them. The dissidents won.

Several prominent writers and academics, among them J.K. Rowling of the Harry Potter books, Germaine Greer, widely recognised as a pioneer of contemporary feminism and, most recently, Prof. Selina Todd of Oxford University, have been variously "no-platformed" by university student organisations because they've argued, in the media or through social media outlets, that transgender women were not really women and shouldn't be afforded the reserved rights and spaces that belonged to the gender. They had rational and scientific arguments on their side and each one, and others on the side of these three, strongly aver that they are not denying social or political rights to

transgender people, but insist on their own freedom, without censure and abuse from trolls, to hold scientific and biological arguments which deny that humans or animals can change gender because they want to.

In a recent case, brought by a young woman who was, when she was underage, subject to what she called pressure and "mind control" at the Tavistock Institute, the court ruled that influencing or indulging minors to change their gender and undergo medicinal, surgical and psychological therapy to do so, was unlawful.

This censorship, the denial of platforms to people whose opinions, politics or stances on any issues which the banning and debarring bodies disagree with, has been confined to supporters of what has come to be known as the "woke" agenda. People with doubts or dissenting opinions on race, gender, sexual orientation — and politicians who have acted in favour of right-wing policies — have been the targets of this denial of appearance on university platforms, sometimes being informed of the banning only hours before they were invited to appear.

The phenomenon has been taken up by right-wing commentators, who argue that this is an anti-demo-

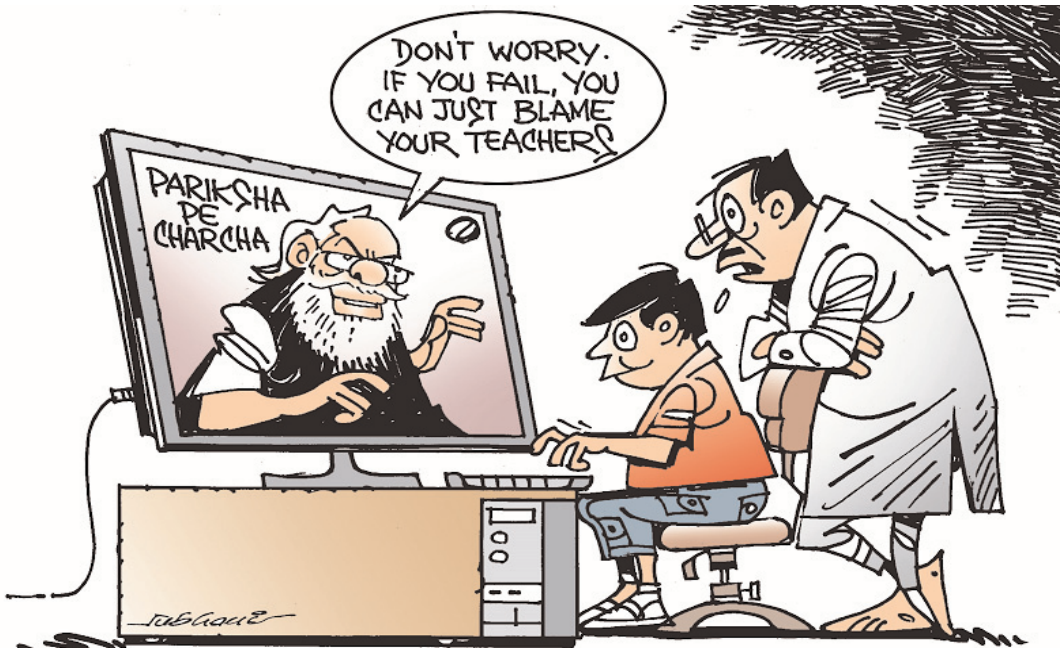
cratic assault on free speech in the very institutions, the universities, where opposing arguments should be debated. Britain's Conservative government, with an ear wide open to these commentators, has now resolved to legislate for "free speech" and appoint a sort of supreme to see that this law is enforced.

Prof. Todd has expressed her support for such a law. She says it's necessary as the atmosphere on campus, perpetrated by self-appointed activists and attitude-enforcers, inhibits the expression of dissenting opinions — about history, science, politics, sociology and even literature.

The National Union of Students' representatives argue that there is no need for such a law and that it has constantly been vigilant about absolute freedom of speech in universities. A good cellar of salt should flavour this assertion.

Time will tell if this law and its enforcement have any effect. Perhaps every country with a claim to being democratic should pass such a law and appoint a manifestly independent "neyta" with powers to dismiss frivolous and outrageous attacks on the freedom of opinion and creativity from politicians and charlatans.

Subhani



## Women walk taller... But what if Ramani had lost?

Shobhaa De



The temptation to gloat at this very moment is pretty darn overwhelming. I'm sure millions of women across India (and possibly the world) are viewing journalist Priya Ramani's acquittal by a Delhi court in a criminal defamation case filed by former Union minister/journalist/author M.J. Akbar as a personal victory. It was a goose-bumps-inducing historic few minutes for those present at Delhi's Rouse Avenue courts on Wednesday as Ravindra Dubey, additional chief metropolitan magistrate, pointed out what should have been obvious to everybody all along — that even a person of high social standing can be a sexual harasser and a woman cannot be punished for raising instances of abuse decades later. The irony of that significant observation is not lost on anyone, given that Priya Ramani was the accused in this case, and had to fight valiantly for her truth to be established in court! And yes — as in most such cases, it is men (and more infrequently, women) "of high social standing" who are guilty of misusing this very "social standing", secure and complacent in the belief that nothing and no one can touch them because of it.

Well, a plucky woman, Priya Ramani, and her equally plucky lawyer, Rebecca John, just threw that smug self-assurance into the dustbin. Good on you, ladies! What I appreciated the most was the sobriety and restraint displayed by both women as soon as the verdict was delivered (M.J. Akbar was surrounded by dozens of policemen, while Priya had all the

to bully and browbeat women — no questions asked.

Often it is the unalloyed arrogance of men in power (I refuse to call them "powerful men" — they are anything but!) that makes them believe in their own invincibility. Here's my theory for what it's worth: M.J. Akbar overplayed his card. Plus, he was badly advised by his mighty legal team. He probably thought he could turn the tables on Priya Ramani and crush her with formidable money power and political clout. Who was she, after all? That's the way mediocre minds function. One expected M.J. Akbar to be a shrewder strategist. Like some of his contemporaries, who ducked under the radar, and waited for the #MeToo storm to blow over. Today, hardly anybody remembers who they were — and nobody cares! The momentum is long over. People have moved on. And those very same men are carrying on with their lives like nothing ever happened. A few are still lying low, perhaps hoping their accusers have "forgotten", preferably "forgiven". Dream on! No Sir... Women do not forget. Never! Some are unable to fight back, others too emotionally drained to rage on. But no woman forgets the face of her abuser or his despicable abuse, till her last breath.

The court in this remarkable verdict has emphasised that there is no time bar for speaking out. A woman is entitled to do so decades later, if she so chooses. In no way

**Priya and Rebecca must know what this victory and acquittal signifies for women — it is like the biggest validation of all times! It shows one thing unequivocally — women matter. Their voices matter.**

does that diminish her truth.

"A woman cannot be punished for raising her voice," the court said. But she is! Often, with extreme punishment — rape and murder. Then comes the question of her "rights" — what rights? Those are enshrined in our Constitution — but does anybody bother with these rights when women across the board face the worst form of torment? Priya Ramani spoke for working women everywhere when she outed M.J. Akbar — her boss in the 1990s. I wrote four impassioned columns at the time, and was asked to "calm down", mostly by men of his generation, some of whom had faced similar charges in the media and had denied them. Most of the Bollywood men accused during the height of the #MeToo movement are back in the studios, chastened for now, but certainly not sensitised. It's just that they don't want to be caught with their pants down — not that they see anything wrong with sexual harassment per se. It's the same power trip as the one M.J. Akbar imagined would insulate him when he tried to put Priya Ramani on the back foot by suing her for defamation. The point is: A man's reputation has to be impeccable to have the guts to sue a woman for tarnishing it. That's really rich, in this case, considering the court accepted advocate Rebecca Jacob's argument that M.J. Akbar's reputation was far from "stellar". Bravo!

"Right of reputation can't be protected at the cost of life and dignity of the woman..." Yessssss!

So ... all the "powerful" men cowering at the moment at the thought of the repercussions of this verdict — cower away. It's your turn next!

"... But what if Priya Ramani had lost?"

Readers can send feedback to [www.shobhaade.blogspot.com](http://www.shobhaade.blogspot.com)







## SHORT TAKES

## Pugilists Chanu, Vinka make semis

**New Delhi:** Asian youth gold medalists Babyrojisana Chanu (51kg) and Vinka (60kg) advanced to the semifinals of the 30th Adriatic Pearl tournament in Budva, Montenegro, assuring themselves of at least a bronze medal each with dominating first-round wins. Manipur's Chanu, who trains at MC Mary Kom's academy, did not put a foot wrong and dominated her opponent Georgieva Blagovesta of Bulgaria from the word go and as a result, the referee had to stop the contest in the first round itself. She will face Uzbekistan's Feruza Kazakova in the semifinals. Vinka, who was up against Uzbekistan's Sevara Ashurova in a quarterfinal bout, produced a flawless display of her attacking prowess. She will face Suvi Tujula in the semifinals. — *PTI*

## BWF extends Oly qualifying time

**New Delhi:** The Tokyo Olympics badminton qualification period was on Friday extended by nearly two months to June 15 after the postponement of three important tournaments due to Covid-19 related restrictions. The qualification period was earlier to end on April 25. "The Olympic Qualifying period for the Race to Tokyo will now close on 15 June 2021, with the last tournament counting for qualification being the Singapore Open 2021," the BWF said in a statement. "BWF is working with the IOC to update the Tokyo 2020 qualification system whereby the final updated regulation will be shared once ready following formal approval by IOC," it added. — *PTI*

## Star high jumper Vlasic retires

**Zagreb:** Croatia's two-time world champion and double Olympic medalist Blanka Vlasic announced on Friday she was retiring after struggling with injuries for years. Vlasic, 37, said in an open letter that since winning a bronze medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics, "I have been trying to cure my injury, four years full of hope that I will once again stand in front of the bar and challenge myself. "The following years brought countless rehabilitation treatments, hope and disappointment," she added. — *AFP*

## Harden digs deep to lay Lakers low

**Los Angeles:** James Harden scored 23 points as the Brooklyn Nets blew away a depleted Los Angeles Lakers in a one-sided showdown between the Eastern and Western Conference heavyweights on Thursday. With Kevin Durant sidelined with a hamstring strain, Harden shouldered the offensive burden. — *AFP*

## Live on TV

## TENNIS

**Australian Open:** Women's singles final from 1.30 pm, followed by mixed doubles final on Sony Six, Sony Ten 2, HD

## CRICKET

**PSL:** Karachi Kings vs Quetta Gladiators from 7.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

**South Africa T20 League:** Lions vs Warriors from 1.30 pm; Knights vs Dolphins from 5.55 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

## FOOTBALL

**English Premier League:** Southampton vs Chelsea from 6 pm; Burnley vs West Brom from 8.30 pm; Liverpool vs Everton from 11 pm; Fulham vs Sheffield United from 1.30 am (Sunday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

**Indian Super League:** Jamshedpur vs Mumbai City from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

**Italian League:** Genoa vs Verona from 10.30 pm; Sassuolo vs Bologna from 1.15 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2

## UFC

**Fight Night:** Curtis Blaydes vs Derrick Lewis and other bouts from 6.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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Ph No : 2231252, 235, 255, 257 & 358  
Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**

## Money, Money, Money

## Jamieson didn't know how much ₹15 crore was

**Christchurch, Feb. 19:** Waking up at around midnight in New Zealand, Kyle Jamieson wondered how much ₹15 crore would be in his country's currency, after having watched an intense three-way bid for him in the IPL auction. The 6'8" pacer eventually ended up with Royal Challengers Bangalore for \$2 million approximately, making him the highest paid New Zealander and fourth highest in the IPL's 14-year history.

"I woke up around midnight and decided to check the phone. Rather than trying to avoid the situation, (I thought) I'll sit back and enjoy it. It was certainly a weird hour and a half waiting for my name to be called up," Jamieson was quoted as saying by *stuff.co.nz*.

"I had a message from Shane Bond (former New Zealand pacer and Mumbai Indians bowling coach) as it was going and he said, 'How good is this'. "I didn't actually know what the amount of money, how that translated to New Zealand dollars. It was quite cool to share that moment with him and ride that two or three minutes with him," he added.

Also showing interest in him were Delhi Capitals and the Punjab Kings in the auction on Thursday.

Former Black Caps coach Mike Hesson, RCB's director of cricket operations, led the charge to win the three-way bidding for Jamieson, who made his Test debut against India at home last year.

His retainer fee for the Black Caps, according to the report, is between \$100,000 to \$150,000, which makes RCB's winning bid amount 20 times more.

It completed a rapid rise for Jamieson, who is known for extracting awkward bounce. The right-arm quick, playing in the 2019 Super Smash, picked up 6 for 7 in four overs, a New Zealand T20 record.

He has so far played in six Tests, two ODIs and four T20Is. He took two five-wicket hauls in his first four Tests and has also shown a lot of competence with the bat as well.

Asked what would he buy if his New Zealand teammates asked for a treat, Jamieson said, "Probably a few coffees I would have thought."

"I don't know. It's only been a few hours. My bank account hasn't changed overnight, but there'll be a bit of stick given and a few coffees and a few beers I'm sure," the New Zealand speedster further added.

Jamieson will join a star-studded RCB team who scooped ₹14.5 crore in the auction. — *PTI*



New Zealand bowler Kyle Jamieson in this file photo.

## ₹9.25 crore IPL contract is nerve-wracking: Gowtham

**Ahmedabad, Feb. 19:** A net bowler with the Indian team right now, uncapped Karnataka all-rounder Krishnappa Gowtham is still trying to get a grip on his emotions after fetching a mind-boggling ₹9.25 crore deal with Chennai Super Kings which left his parents and wife overwhelmed by tears of joy.

After a bidding war at the IPL auction in Chennai on Thursday, Gowtham was bought by CSK, his price surpassing that of Krunal Pandya's then record of ₹8.8 crore by the Mumbai Indians in 2018 for an uncapped player.

"It was nerve-wracking, I was very anxious, watching on TV," Gowtham, who is currently with the Indian Test team here as a net bowler for the series against England, told *ESPNewsInfo*.

"We'd just landed in Ahmedabad and I'd just switched on TV and my name came up. Emotions were changing every minute. Then, Rohit Sharma and Hardik Pandya knocked on my door and gave me a big hug and they asked for a big treat," he added.

His base price was ₹20 lakh, and he was quickly the focus of a fierce bidding war between the Kolkata Knight Riders and the Sunrisers Hyderabad, before CSK swooped in with a late bid.

Krishnappa has modest



**It was nerve-wracking, I was very anxious, watching on TV. My parents had tears, happy tears. They were all so happy for me.**

— **KRISHNAPPA GOWTHAM**  
after fetching a mind-boggling deal with Chennai Super Kings

IPL statistics. He has played just 24 matches in three seasons since 2018 and has scored 186 runs and taken 13 wickets.

He was a part of RR for two seasons — 2018 and 2019 playing 15 and 7 matches respectively — and was with Kings XI Punjab (now Punjab Kings) in 2020 where he featured in just two games before being released.

Gowtham's parents and wife in Bengaluru were in tears when they came to know of the good news.

"My parents had tears, happy tears. They were all

so happy for me," Gowtham said.

"It's hard to describe that feeling. It's all just sinking in. Obviously this isn't the first time I've been part of the auction but every time your name comes up, the kind of butterflies in your tummy is unimaginable," he added.

Gowtham will be playing under M. S. Dhoni and he remembers queuing up with a few other uncapped players to get his bat signed by the legendary wicketkeeper batsman after an IPL game three years ago. — *PTI*

## ARJUN CAN'T WAIT TO WEAR MI'S JERSEY

**New Delhi, Feb. 19:** Pacer Arjun Tendulkar cannot wait for his maiden IPL stint to start with Mumbai Indians and thanked the coaches for having faith in him after being picked by the five-time champions at the players' auction.

The 21-year-old, son of iconic former captain Sachin Tendulkar, got a major fillip on Thursday when he was bought by Mumbai Indians at his base price of ₹20 lakh.

His celebrated father hasn't just played for the franchise but is also the mentor of the side, which is the most successful team in the IPL.

"Since childhood I have always been a die hard fan of Mumbai Indians. I would like to thank the coaches and support staff who showed faith in me."

"I am excited to join the MI Paltan and can't wait to wear the blue and gold," Arjun said in a video message posted on MI's *Twitter* handle.

Arjun has been a net bowler for the franchise for the past two-three seasons. He recently made his senior Mumbai team debut when he played in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, the national T20 championship, against Haryana. — *PTI*

## MORRIS ROLE IS TO SUPPORT ARCHER: SANGA

**Mumbai, Feb. 19:** Rajasthan Royals' director of cricket Kumar Sangakkara on Friday said that allrounder Chris Morris, who was brought by the franchise for ₹16.25 crore in the IPL auction, will have a "very specific role of supporting" pace spearhead Jofra Archer.

Morris became the most expensive buy in IPL history when he was picked by RR following an intense bidding war at the auction on Thursday.

"Morris was significantly high in terms of auction price. Morris has a very specific role for us to play in supporting (Jofra) Archer. It gives us a lot more flexibility in the way we use Archer," Sangakkara said.

"Also, Morris' numbers, when he is (has) been fit and strong, has been some of the best in all IPLs," Sangakkara added. — *PTI*



Belgium's Elise Mertens (left) and partner Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus leap with their winner's trophy after defeating Czech Republic's Barbora Krejickova and Katerina Siniakova 6-2, 6-3 in the women's doubles final at the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on Friday. — *AFP*

## Medvedev mauls Tsitsipas, in final

**Melbourne, Feb. 19:** Russia's Daniil Medvedev overpowered Stefanos Tsitsipas to make his first Australian Open final Friday, where he will bid to stop world number one Novak Djokovic from clinching an unprecedented ninth title.

The 25-year-old, ultra-confident on the back of his unbeaten run, which includes three titles, has been knocking on the door of Grand Slam success for some time, but has yet to win a title.

To finally get over the line he must on Sunday beat top seed Djokovic, who has won all eight finals he has played at Melbourne Park.

But nobody on tour has more momentum than Medvedev, whose tricky game has stymied all opponents since November, and he has won three of his last four against the 17-time Grand Slam-winning Serb. "It definitely wasn't easy," said Medvedev, only the third Russian after Yevgeny Kafelnikov and Marat Safin to reach the Australian Open final. "I got a little bit scared and tight (in the third set) because it's a semifinal of

## THE RESULTS

**Men's singles semifinal:** Daniil Medvedev (RUS x4) bt Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x5) 6-4, 6-2, 7-5.

**Women's doubles final:** Elise Mertens (BEL)/ Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x2) bt Barbora Krejickova (CZE)/ Katerina Siniakova (CZE x3) 6-2, 6-3.

a Slam... but happy I was able to turn my game on, especially in some tight moments on my serve."

## ELISE-SABALENKA DUO CLINCHES DOUBLES TITLE

Elise Mertens and Aryna Sabalenka won the Australian Open women's doubles final Friday to collect their second Grand Slam trophy as a team.

It is likely to be their last for a while.

The 22-year-old from Belarus was the dominant player on court as she and Mertens, the U.S. Open doubles champions in 2019, combined for a 6-2, 6-3 win over third-seeded Barbora Krejickova and Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic.

Second-seeded Sabalenka and Mertens wasted three championship points in an eight-minute last game. Sabalenka earned a fourth championship point with an ace and clinched the title when Siniakova sent a backhand wide.

— *Agencies*

## INDIA'S ANKITA DAZZLES, WINS MAIDEN WTA TITLE

**Melbourne, Feb. 19:** India's Ankita Raina on Friday claimed her maiden WTA title by lifting the Phillip Island Trophy along with Russian partner Kamilla Rakhimova, a feat which will catapult her into the top-100 in the doubles for the first time in her career.

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

The 28-year-old Indian shared the \$800 prize money with her partner and earned 280 ranking points, which will take her to 94 from the current 115 when the WTA doubles chart is updated next week.

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

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

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

## Bruno nets brace in Man U victory

**Paris, Feb. 19:** Bruno Fernandes scored twice as Manchester United romped to a 4-0 victory over Real Sociedad in their Europa League last-32 first leg on Thursday, while Gareth Bale impressed for Tottenham in a 4-1 thrashing of Austrian side Wolfsberg.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's United are all but into the last 16, with four 'away' goals to take into the return game in a week's time, after the first leg was played in Turin due to Coronavirus travel restrictions.

The Premier League outfit grabbed the lead in the 27th minute when Fernandes pounced on a defensive mix-up to slot in from Marcus Rashford's clipped pass.

Solskjaer's men doubled their advantage 12 minutes into the second period as Fernandes stroked home his 21st goal of the season.

United continued to play at a pace Sociedad could not deal with and Rashford finally got his goal in the 65th minute.

The tie was surely put to bed in the final minute of normal time as Daniel James raced clear and fired into the bottom corner.

Meanwhile, Gareth Bale notched his first Tottenham assist since April 2013 to tee up Son Heung-min for the opening goal in Budapest against Wolfsberg, before drilling in the second before the half-hour mark.

A wonderful individual strike from Lucas Moura extended Spurs' first-half lead, and although Michael Liendl pulled one back for the Austrians with a second-half penalty, the English club have one foot in the next round after Carlos Vinicius' 88th-minute goal. — *AFP*



Australian speedster Jhye Richardson in this file photo.

## I almost got blanked: Jhye

**Christchurch, Feb. 19:** Promising Australia fast bowler Jhye Richardson was left "excited as well as exhausted" after he earned a "life-changing" bid of ₹14 crore from Punjab Kings at the IPL auction.

Richardson was in quarantine in a Christchurch hotel room for the upcoming T20 International series against New Zealand when he tuned into the broadcast of the IPL auction in Chennai.

"My name came up and I got this wave of (nausea) just not knowing what to expect. For the first, what to me felt like about 20 minutes, no one put their paddle up and it's one of those things where you're just like, 'Oh no'. You have no idea what's going to happen," Richardson was quoted by *cricket.com.au*.

"Then the first paddle went up, which was probably (only) like 10 seconds or five seconds (later), but it felt like a

lifetime. I feel like I played a game yesterday. I mentally exhausted myself of feeling all these emotions, of feeling sick and excited."

"I almost blanked. I was watching it, but I felt like I wasn't actually watching it. After everything happened you're obviously really, really excited but then you just hit this massive wall," he said.

He said emotions took over and he felt as if he had hit a "massive wall". — *PTI*

## Captain Virat opens up on depression

**New Delhi, Feb. 19:** India captain Virat Kohli has revealed that he battled depression during a harrowing tour of England in 2014 where he felt like the "loneliest guy in the world" after a string of failures with the bat.

In a conversation with former England player Mark Nicholas on his 'Not Just Cricket' podcast, Kohli conceded that went through a tough phase during the particularly difficult tour.

"Yes, I did," was his response when asked whether he had suffered from depression at the time.

"...it's not a great feeling to wake up knowing that you won't be able to score runs and I think all batsmen have felt that at some stage that you are not in control of anything at all," he recalled.

Kohli had a disastrous tour of England in 2014, registering scores of 1, 8, 25, 0, 39, 28, 0, 7, 6 and 20 in five Tests, averaging 13.50 in his 10 innings. He roared back to form in the tour of Australia after that, accumulating 692 runs in the Test series.

"You just don't understand how to get over it. That was a phase when I literally couldn't do any-



Virat Kohli

thing to overturn things...I felt like I was the loneliest guy in the world," he said of the England tour.

Kohli remembered feeling alone despite the fact

that there were supportive people in his life. He said professional help was what he needed.

"Personally, for me that was a revelation that you could feel that lonely even though you a part of a big group. I won't say I didn't have people who I could speak to but not having a professional to speak to who could understand what I am going through completely, I think is a huge factor. I think I would like to see it change," Virat added.

Virat believes mental health issues cannot be overlooked as they can destroy a person's career.