

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | THURSDAY 11 | FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 16°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Thai 29
Tithi: Amavasai
Star: Thiruvonam
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
Yamagandam: 6 am to 7.30 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.22 am
Zohar: 12.28 pm
Asar: 3.43 pm
Maghrib: 6.12 pm
Isha: 7.25 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.14 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.33 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.12 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 5.57 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+12,165)	(+94)
1,08,70,561	1,55,375

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+479)
TN: 8,43,209 12,396

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

10,76,14,262

DEATHS

23,57,305

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

68.26 lakh healthcare, frontline workers vaccinated against Covid-19: Health ministry

New Delhi: The number of healthcare and frontline workers vaccinated against Covid-19 reached 68.26 lakh on Wednesday, the 26th day of the countrywide inoculation programme, the Union Health Ministry said. The cumulative number of beneficiaries vaccinated against the coronavirus till Wednesday is 68,26,898, as per a provisional report, the ministry said.

Powerful undersea quake hits north of New Zealand

Wellington: A powerful undersea earthquake struck north of New Zealand on Wednesday evening, prompting tsunami warnings in parts of the region. The US Geological Agency said the magnitude 7.7 quake was centered at a depth of 10 kilometers (six miles) southeast of the Loyalty Islands.

COUNTER POINT



I sold my bag, books, tiffin box... which I feel are a burden to me, for a good price, dad!

It's masks, social distancing as Kerala film festival opens

SUPARNA SHARMA | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 10

The 25th edition of the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) opened on Wednesday all masked up, with strict adherence to social distancing and to a note of warning.

The IFFK, whose fumigated and sanitised auditoriums are running at just 50 per cent capacity and all delegates have to undergo rigorous antigen tests -- 70 out of 800 tested on Tuesday

turned out to be “positive” and are in quarantine — has adjusted well to the Coronavirus-induced new normal, but it continues to strike a note of dissent through the films it picks.

The festival's opening film, Bosnia's Oscar entry Quo Vadis, Aida?, which had its India premiere on Wednesday evening after chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the film festival, is a cautionary tale about “what happens when we fail to react on time to warning signs”. ■ **P4**

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Ooty under blanket of frost



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Military raids Suu Kyi's party offices

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Serena advances to Oz Open 3rd round



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TROOPS PULL BACK IN EASTERN LADAKH

Disengagement begins at Pangong Tso: China

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

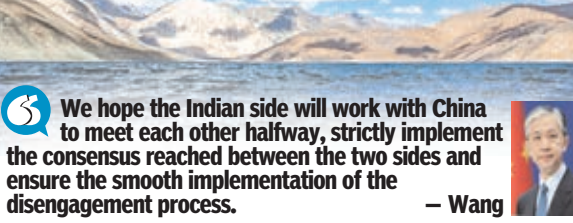
In a breakthrough in nine month tense military stand-off in Eastern Ladakh, Indian and Chinese armies on Wednesday started the process of disengagement from the contentious Pangong Tso.

“The Chinese and Indian frontline troops at the southern and northern bank of the Pangong Tso Lake start synchronized and organized disengagement from February 10,” said Senior Colonel Wu Qian, spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of National Defense, in a written statement on Wednesday. This move is in accordance with the consensus reached by both sides at the 9th round of China-India Corps Commander Level Meeting, the statement said.

There was no formal statement from India on Wednesday since Parliament is in session but sources said that tanks and armoured vehicles are being moved back in

WELCOME MOVE

REACTING TO THE CHINESE defence ministry's statement, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said that according to the consensus reached at the Chinese and Indian Foreign Ministers' meeting in Moscow and the 9th round of commander-level talks between the two sides, the front-line troops of the Chinese and Indian militaries began to conduct simultaneous and planned disengagement in the Pangong Lake area on **February 10**.



We hope the Indian side will work with China to meet each other halfway, strictly implement the consensus reached between the two sides and ensure the smooth implementation of the disengagement process.

— Wang

Southern bank of Pangong Tso. There are also reports of small troops disengagement from Northern banks of the lake. The disengagement will happen cautiously in a phased manner and each move will be verified. Defence minister Rajnath Singh will make a statement in Rajya Sabha on Thursday regarding 'Present Situation in Eastern Ladakh', said a tweet by

Defence Minister's office. Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Indian Army tanks were placed in close proximity to each other in the southern bank of Pangong Tso in Chushul sector. This is the area where Indian Army in a pre-emptive move in August last year to the surprise of Chinese, had occupied strategic heights which allowed it to dominate the

area. The sector also witnessed first incident of firing in 45 years at the LAC as tension soared in early September last year.

However, Indian troops have not been moved back from these strategic heights on Wednesday.

“If India cedes its sole bargaining chip—Kailash Range heights—before China begins to roll back all its land grabs, it will prove a big mistake,” tweeted strategic analyst Brahma Chellaney.

As per reports Chinese soldiers will also move beyond finger 8 area in North bank of Pangong Tso and Indian troops will be placed between finger 2 and 3. Indian and Chinese troops had brutally clashed in the area in May 2020 with many troops suffering serious injuries.

Indian and Chinese Corps Commanders had held 9th round of talks on January 24 where both sides had “agreed to push for an early disengagement of the front-line troops” in the Eastern Ladakh.

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PM likely to flag off Wimco Nagar metro route next week

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One detained for making hoax bomb call to CM's house

■ **REPORT ON PAGE 3**

Narayanasamy meets Prez, seeks recall of Pondy Lt Governor

New Delhi, Feb. 10: Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy on Wednesday met President Ram Nath Kovind here and urged him to recall Lt Governor Kiran Bedi for her alleged interference in the administration in the union territory.

Besides, he also flagged her 'impeding' the implementation of various proposals of the elected government.

The chief minister, who has been at odds with Bedi over a number of issues concerning the UT for long, told PTI he had presented a memorandum containing the various schemes allegedly impeded by Bedi. He had a half an hour meeting with the President.

Narayanasamy also handed over to Kovind the signatures collected from the public by the ruling Congress led Secular Democratic Alliance during the last few weeks requesting the Centre to replace Bedi.

The chief minister said he was accompanied by the Lok Sabha member from Puducherry V Vaithilingam and his cabinet colleagues M Kandasamy and Malladi Krishna Rao.

He said among other things, he had brought to the notice of the President the 'interference' by the LG in the implementation of the free rice scheme as decided by his government.

Oppn walks out before PM speaks on farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 10

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's response to the motion of thanks on the President's address in the Lok Sabha Wednesday was overtaken midway by angry Opposition protests as he referred to the farm laws. The Congress, after a huge altercation, walked out shortly after he said the slogan-shouting “was a planned strategy to drown out reason and hide the truth”.

The protests started as Mr Modi, after speaking on Covid-19, switched to the farm laws, saying: “This government and Parliament respects farmers and will always continue to respect them.” The motion of thanks on the President's address was later passed by the Lok Sabha.

The Opposition, which has shredded him over the past two days for comments like “andolanjeevi” and “parjeevi” (parasites) made during his last address, broke out in protests. As Speaker Om Birla repeatedly asked the members to calm down, Mr Modi said: “The farm laws will not bring down any farmers. No mandi has been shut nor have minimum support prices been stopped.”

The Prime Minister added: “Minimum support prices have been increased after the farm laws were enacted. Moreover, farmers can now sell their goods wherever they want.”



Divided, confused Congress can do no good: PM Modi

New Delhi, Feb. 10: In a sharp dig at the Congress, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said its Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha units move in opposite directions, and asserted that such a 'divided' and 'confused' party can neither do any good for itself nor can it think of any solutions for the country's problems.

Prime Minister Modi's remarks came amid a walkout by members of the Congress in Lok Sabha, including former party chief Rahul Gandhi, when he was speaking on the three farm laws during his reply to the debate on the motion of thanks to the President for his address.

“The condition of the Congress party, a very old party which ruled the country for about six decades, has now become such that its Rajya Sabha unit moves in one direction while the Lok Sabha unit moves in another direction,” Modi said. — *PTI*

TN political parties tell CEC they prefer one-day poll

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 10:

Most political parties in the State expressed concern over distribution of money during elections and wanted the coming Assembly polls to be held on a single day when they met the team of Election Commission (ECI) officials, headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora, on Wednesday.

The team, which is on a three-day visit to Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, had an interaction with representatives of political parties, many of whom complained of large scale irregularities in the voters' list and demanded that they be rectified.

Though the Chief Election Commissioner would be formally meeting the media only on Thursday, the party representatives spoke about the grievances that



Sunil Arora

they had expressed at the meeting.

Most of them wanted the installation of CCTV cameras to monitor the conduct of elections, higher level of security involving para military forces and employment of observers from other States.

The proposal to allow voters above the age of 80 to avail of the postal ballot facility was opposed by most of the parties other than the ruling AIADMK, whose representative Pollachi Jayaraman wel-

comed the move.

He wanted the election to be held in the fourth week of April as heat would set in by May and make it inconvenient for political party workers and also voters.

DMK's R S Bharathi said that the Election Commission was partial and allowed irregularities in the preparation of the voters' list. He wanted the elections to be conducted without any irregularities and wanted the government advertisements in newspapers and other media to be stopped.

Congress party's Damodaran wanted the ECI to ensure that counting of votes was done soon after polling without allowing for a huge gap between the two dates. DMDK representative demanded restrictions to be imposed on the manifestos in a bid to not allow parties not to promise whatever they wanted. ■ **P4**

GUTKA ISSUE

Privilege notice against Stalin, DMK MLAs set aside by HC

J. STALIN | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 10

The Madras high court set aside the second set of show cause notices of breach of privilege issued by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Secretary against the Leader of Opposition and DMK President MK Stalin and 18 other MLAs of his party for displaying Gutka sachets in the Assembly on July 19, 2017. Justice Pushpa Sathyanarayana set aside the show cause notices dated September 7, 2020 while allowing a batch of petitions filed by Stalin and DMK MLAs.

The judge observed that before parting with the matter, the court would like to quote the words of the American philosopher, Prof. Noam Chomsky - “The more privilege you have, the more opportunity you have. The more opportunity you have, the more responsibility you have”. The judge also said that Tamil poet and philosopher Thiruvalluvar, had said, “Those with pure mind and studied eloquence should use words that suit the audience”. In other words, “Men of clear mind and powerful speech should use words that suit the audience”.

Not only the proceedings of the Assembly has to commence with a Thirukural couplet every day, the legislators also should follow the Thirukural in their day to day life inside and outside the Assembly, Justice Pushpa Sathyanarayana added while ruling on the petition. ■ **P2**

OTHER STORIES

3 child labourers rescued under Operation Smile

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 10

Three child labourers were rescued as part of Operation Smile in Chennai's Tiruvottiyur on Wednesday. It is an initiative to ensure a secure childhood for kids saved from child labour and bonded labour in the state.

Every year, Operation Smile is carried out, in coordination with the Central government and all the state police departments. As part of Operation Smile conducted with the collaboration of the departments of Women and Child Welfare, Child Protection and Labour, Childline 1098 and police departments, child labourers are identified at bus stands, railway stations, construction sites in hazardous industries and some other busy places.

During one such operation in Chennai's Tiruvottiyur, the officials from CWC, Child helpline rescued three child labourers on Wednesday. Cases were booked against various establishments for engaging child labourers. The rescued children were admitted to a government home in Kelly's, the sources said.

Two murder accused hacked to death

Erode, Feb 10: Two murder accused were hacked to death by a group of people on a road in broad day light here on Wednesday while returning home after appearing in a court, police said. The two men, aged 30 and 38, were walking on a narrow street in Veerppanchatram locality around 2 pm when the gang of around 7-8 people waylaid and attacked them with sharp edged weapons, killing them on the spot, before fleeing the scene, they said.

The two, prime accused in the murder of a person in 2018, were returning home after attending trial proceedings in the sessions court when the gang attacked them fatally. Police said they suspect it could be an act of revenge for the earlier crime, adding special teams have been formed to nab the assailants. — PTI

PM likely to flag off Wimco Nagar metro route next week



Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to launch the Chennai Metro rail service on the Wimco Nagar route in Washermenpet next week under the first phase of the metro rail expansion project. Metro Rail Safety Commissioner Abhay Kumar Roy inspected the route for three days from last Friday to Sunday. Two lakh passengers are likely to travel on this route every month. In the first phase of Chennai Metro rail, the project work from Airport Washermenpet - St Thomas Mount - Chennai Central has been completed and trains are plying. The first phase of the Rs 3,770-crore Washermenpet to Thiruvottiyur Wimco Nagar expansion project has been completed. The total length of the route is 10 km. The launching of Wimco Nagar route will help passengers who commute to Parry's Corner and the airport.

— N. Sampath

Fewer takers among frontline workers for Covaxin in TN

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 10

Though the state health department has succeeded in containing the spread of Covid-19, the vaccination programme, which was introduced on January 16, has not gained the expected momentum so far.

Marred by the controversies over lack of public data on trials, the vaccination programme had introduced two vaccines; Covishield (AstraZeneca), manufactured by Serum Institute of India), and Covaxin of Bharat Biotech. However, 25 days later, there are very few

With regard to Covishield, a total of 11,643 frontline workers turned up against the target of 126,186 thorough 6,901 sessions

takers for Covaxin among frontline workers in the state. According to the data provided by the state health department, only three frontline workers took Covaxin while 138 sessions were conducted across the state from January 16 to February 9. The target was 3,600. In the case of police, 29 personnel had turned up against the target of 1,200. Meanwhile, there was a slight increase among

healthcare workers who chose Covaxin. The data says 3,541 healthcare workers took Covaxin against the target of 13,800.

With regard to Covishield, a total of 11,643 frontline workers turned up against the target of 126,186 thorough 6,901 sessions. As many as 2,893 police personnel have been vaccinated. And 1,67,190 healthcare workers opted for Covishield when 6,24,264 beneficiaries were expected.

Responding to the vaccine hesitancy among beneficiaries, the health secretary said that people of Tamil Nadu were largely

conservative. "They always wait and watch. The hesitancy happens among people because of psychological factors. Only the time will allay the fear. We are sure the vaccination programme will improve in days to come," he says.

However, Dr. C.N. Raja, president, Indian Medical Association, Tamil Nadu branch, suggested that politicians, celebrities and public figures should take a jab to build trust among people. There is a lot of misinformation going on online against the vaccines. That is why the people are hesitant to turn up, he said.

IIT-M start-up launches electric bike

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 10

The Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M)-incubated start-up Pi Beam has launched an electric bike that can charge faster than a smartphone and has a range of 50 km.

Christened 'PiMo,' this utility e-bike does not require licence or registration and offers green and easy mobility on Indian roads.

As much as 90 per cent of PiMo's product components, including batteries and controllers, are manufactured in India. Pi Beam aims to sell 10,000 vehicles by the end of next financial year (2021-22).

PiMo was launched on Wednesday at the IIT-Madras Research Park in the presence of cricketer Dinesh Karthik, Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthi, director, IIT-M, Prof. Ashok Jhunjhunwala, professor in-charge, IIT-M Research Park and Mr. Visakh Sasikumar, CEO, Pi Beam Electric, among other dignitaries.

SHRC orders cop to pay ₹1 lakh to business man

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 10

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has directed a sub-inspector in Trichy to pay a compensation of ₹1 lakh to a Mumbai-based businessman for assaulting him in custody five years ago. The commission also recommended to the government to initiate disciplinary action against the cop.

M. Amirudheen had lodged a complaint in November 2016 stating that he was ill-treated and assaulted in G.H. police station, Woraiyur, Trichy. According to him he was doing a business in Mumbai, and his sister Nisha's son who was residing at Trichy was taken to Woraiyur police station at 9.45 am on June 8, 2016 and the first information report was lodged at 4 am the next day.

The case was registered in connection with a dispute between his nephew Shahrulkh Raja and another person. He alleged that the complaint was a motivated one and was filed

M. Amirudheen had lodged a complaint in November 2016 stating that he was ill-treated and assaulted in G.H. police station, Woraiyur, Trichy

due to a previous enmity. In this connection, the petitioner had engaged in a peace process on June 17, 2016 but he was abused by Sirajudheen and Shajahan.

Amirudheen lodged a complaint at the Woraiyur police station, but the station writer told him to lodge the complaint at the jurisdictional police station. But Gopal, the sub-inspector, assaulted him. He was made to sit on the floor and his mobile phone, wallet and watch were taken by Gopal. After obtaining signatures on blank papers the complainant was allowed to go. As he was unable to bear pain he was taken to the government hospital by his sister and admitted there. He was forcibly discharged by the doctors due to the intervention of

Gopal on June 18, 2016. Even after discharge he took treatment in a hospital in Trichy and later in Mumbai. He sought action against Gopal for ill-treating, abusing and assaulting him in the custody. However, Gopal said the complaint was false.

On completion of trial, SHRC member Dr. A. Chittaranjan Mohandoss said Gopal, despite being a public servant, has shown very little regard to all authorities. It is amply clear that he had scant respect for any person and was not even speaking the truth during the cross examination. The manner in which he conducted himself during the inquiry was indicative of his attitude to the public as well. Gopal assaulted the complainant at the police station, and wantonly arrested him to humiliate him. The commission directed Gopal to pay a compensation of Rs 1 lakh to Amirudheen and recommended to the government to initiate disciplinary action against Gopal.

Cement producers blast builders for calling strike on February 12

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 10

The South India Cement Manufacturers Association (Sicma) has condemned the Builders Association of India (Bai) for calling a strike on February 12.

In a statement on Wednesday, Sicma criticised the Bai for spreading misinformation among public, for their intent to take advantage of economic recovery and to further increase the

real estate prices.

The Sicma sent a letter to the prime minister and the union finance minister to look into the profiteering being done by the builders.

The Sicma said across markets, builders access cement at ₹6,000 per mt or below. That means cement constitutes only ₹150 a sq ft of built-up area. Then Bai should answer how can cement price impact increase in flat construction cost.

The Bai claims that price of cement has gone up by Rs 100 a bag, when the reality is that CAGR of cement price in last 5 years has remained flat. This shows the builder is trying to take higher input credit of GST by giving non-genuine bills, the Sicma said.

The Sicma has done a detailed study of flat construction based on land value in different markets. It was found that the total cost of a flat is not even 50 per cent of their sale price. The

Sicma said the government should ask the builders to reduce prices.

The Sicma asked why builders are not reducing the price and selling the inventory instead of holding on to finished/semifinished flats in a cartelised manner.

The Sicma asked what action has Bai taken against the builders who have duped buyers by either delaying or abandoning projects after taking money from them.

Red sanders worth ₹25 lakh meant for export to Singapore seized by customs

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 10

Over 495 kg of red sanders worth ₹25 lakh, was seized by Chennai air cargo customs from a consignment meant for export to Singapore at the Chennai airport, according to the commissioner of customs. Based on intelligence, customs officers intercepted an export consignment suspected

to contain red sanders wood at export shed Air Cargo, which was destined for Singapore.

The consignment declared, cotton bed sheets and it was packed in 12 cartons. As the cartons appeared to be unusually heavy they were taken up for detailed examination. A few bed sheets were found on the top and under the red colour cut logs were found. Forest officials certified the

wooden logs as red sanders "Pterocarpus Santalinus". Total 25 cut logs weighing 495 kg of red sanders valued at ₹25 lakhs were recovered and seized under Customs Act 1962 read with Foreign Trade (D&R) Act. Red Sanders is classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as "endangered" and falls under the Red list.

Absconding accused in Neet impersonation case held at city airport

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 10

A 26-year-old man, accused in the Neet impersonation case, was arrested by the Immigration officers at the Chennai Airport on Wednesday when he landed here from Singapore. A lookout circular (LOC) was issued by the Crime Branch-CID of Tamil Nadu police against him.

According to the Immigration official sources, the accused has

been identified as Tarun (26), son of Mohan. He had been working in the admission section of a private engineering and medical college in Trichy and had acted as a middleman in the Neet impersonation case, 2019

Chennai airport when he arrived from Singapore by an Air India flight. The immigration authorities, while verifying the passport of all the passengers who arrived in the flight, found that a LOC was pending against Tarun Mohan, who was

also cited as an absconding accused in the case, arrested him and proceeded with formalities to hand him over to the CB-CID police, which is probing the scam.

According to the CB-CID reports, Tarun Mohan was said to have acted as a middleman and the CB-CID police came to know that he had fled to Singapore at the height of the scam by getting special permission on the pretext of pursuing higher education, after resigning his job.

A main accused, Rasheed, hailing from Kerala, who had also acted as a broker in the case and was arrested recently, had told the CB-CID police that Mohan had fled to Singapore following which he was declared as an absconding accused and a LOC was issued to all the airports.

He was caught on arrival from Singapore on Wednesday. Police at the airport said the accused will be handed over to the CB-CID police.

He was caught on arrival from Singapore on Wednesday. Police at the airport said the accused will be handed over to the CB-CID police.

Earlier privilege notices against Stalin, MLAs set aside by CJ-headed bench

From P1

The First bench headed by Chief Justice A.P.Sahi had on August 25, 2020, set aside earlier privilege notices against Stalin and other MLAs, dated August 28, 2017, issued by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly secretary on the same issue while disposing of a batch of petitions from Stalin and others.

Justice Pushpa Sathyanarayana had on September 24, 2020, granted



an interim stay. In her present order, Justice Pushpa Sathyanarayana said the

Division Bench has already condoned the act of bringing in the prohibited items and exhibiting in the House interpreting the notification dated May 23, 2017 by holding that the purpose for which it was displayed was to register a protest to highlight the alleged failure to enforce the notification. Such an expression of protest by virtue of the notification cannot be said to be prohibited.

The alleged breach of privilege of not obtaining

permission from the TN Legislative Assembly Speaker precedes the act of displaying or exhibiting the banned products inside the House. When the second act of displaying was already held to be an act not prohibited under the notification, the required permission, when not codified or mentioned anywhere, does not arise. The committee cannot now, under the scope of reference on its own, include the alleged permission, disturbance etc.,

caused in the Assembly. Though the Division Bench, while dealing with the earlier show cause notices, had given liberty to deliberate upon the dispute any further in case the Committee of Privileges was of the opinion that any breach has been committed of the privileges of the House by the petitioners, the above directions or observations cannot be taken advantage of by the Committee of Privileges to expand the scope of the ref-

erence to issue the show cause notices.

"The inevitable conclusion of the discussion would be that the edifice of the notices has to fall and these petitions deserve to be allowed. Accordingly, the petitions are allowed and the impugned notices (SCN) are set aside", the judge added.

The judge said every person has a right to fair trial by a competent and impartial tribunal. In the breach of privilege laws, Members

of the Legislature became judges in their own cause raising concerns of conflict of interest and violating basic principles of fair trial. One of such actions was now before the court for judicial review of legislative action.

When it comes to administrative law, judicial review of administrative action becomes a vital part of it, the judge added.

Referring to the minutes of the proceedings and the Tamil Nadu Assembly

Rules, the judge said in the absence of material to show that the reference was made under Rule 226 in exercise of suo motu power, it has to be stated that the provisions contained in the TN Assembly Rules ought to have been complied with by the respondents, which they failed in the instant case. The non-compliance of these Rules vitiates the impugned notices and on that ground also, the same were liable to be quashed, the judge added.

Children participate in road safety awareness month skating rally at Marina beach on Wednesday.

— DC

OTHER STORY

NLCIL income
₹ 1875.13 croreDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 10

The Neyveli Lignite Corporation India Ltd has recorded a total income during the quarter and nine months ended December 31, 2020, of ₹1875.13 crore and ₹6110.99 crore respectively as against ₹2436.75 crore and ₹6558.63 crore respectively in the corresponding period of the previous year.

In a statement the Navratna public sector, NLCIL released on Wednesday stated that the profit after tax for the quarter and nine months ended Dec 31, 2020 was ₹74.06 cr and ₹386.99 crore respectively as against ₹361.55 cr and ₹1021.37 cr respectively in the corresponding period of the previous year. The earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBIDTA) for the nine months ended December 31, 2020 was ₹2396.60 cr as against ₹2755.31 cr; in the corresponding period of the previous year.

For the Consolidated financial statement, the total income of the group during the quarter and nine months ended Dec 31, 2020 was ₹2623.29 crore and ₹8197.94 crore respectively as against ₹3093.18 crore and ₹8187.56 crore respectively in the corresponding period of the previous year. Consolidated Profit after tax for the quarter and nine months Dec 31, 2020 was ₹183.15 crore and ₹588.61 crore respectively as against ₹400.15 cr and ₹954.86 crore respectively in the corresponding period of the previous year.

HC orders notices on info about Periyar in textbooks

DC CORRESPONDENT
MADURAI, FEB. 10

The Madurai bench of the Madras high court on Wednesday ordered notice to the Tamil Nadu home secretary, school education secretary, higher education secretary and to the managing director of Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Service Corporation for their

response on a public interest litigation seeking removal of a historically false information in the school and college textbooks in the state.

The division bench of justices M M Sundresh and S Ananthi was hearing a writ petition filed by a Madurai-based advocate, I Mohamed Razvi, who prayed for the removal of an incorrect information

that E V Ramasamy (popularly called Periyar in Tamil Nadu) was awarded the title "Socrates of South East Asia", in the ninth standard Tamil Samacheer textbook and in college books.

The bench sought the response of the seven respondents in the case within 12 weeks. The petitioner also complained that the Unesco seal has

been misused by the state government.

The information that Periyar was awarded the title "Socrates of South East Asia" by the Unesco on June 27, 1970, was removed by Wikipedia from its page on E V Ramasamy Periyar based on a complaint from one Jeganathan Srinivasan a few years ago.

Denotified community members lay siege to minister's house

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, FEB. 10

The representatives of 68 denotified community associations, led by P.Ayyakannu, state president of the Desiya Then India Nathigal Inaippu Vivasayegal Sangam, laid a siege to the residence of the backward class and minorities welfare minister S. Valarmathi at Tiruchy on Wednesday.

They demanded the government to issue DNT certificate to all 68 denotified communities.

A delegation led by Ayyakannu submitted a petition to the minister who assured them that she will take up the issue with the chief minister shortly.

Later, Ayyakannu told the media that if the government settles their issue one crore DNI and ST people will vote for the AIADMK in the forthcoming assembly elections. Otherwise, they either boycott the election or vote against the ruling party.

Meanwhile, Valarmathi declared open the rest-room of the TNSTC crew members at Dheeran Nagar bus depot at Tiruchy.



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami holds a 'vel' during his election campaign at Tirupattur district on Wednesday. —K.Senthil Nathan

PM cites 'Churchill Cigar Assistant' anecdote to underline need for change

New Delhi, Feb 10:

Defending the farm laws as much needed reforms, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday underlined that change is essential and cited the case of CCA, a British era post in Tamil Nadu for supplying cigars to then UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill that was not abolished till several decades after independence.

Speaking in Lok Sabha on the motion of thanks to the President for his address, Modi said change and reforms are essential for the progress of every modern society. He also mentioned social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyotiba Phule and B R Ambedkar who had the courage to push for reforms in society against the prevailing norms.

Stressing that still water leads to diseases while moving water instills new energy, Modi said he opposes the mindset of "status quo" and asserted that the young generation wouldn't wait long for change. "One should take responsibility and decide

TN CONNECTION

according to the needs of the country. This mindset of 'status quo' has also played havoc in stopping the country's progress. Till when will we continue with this status quo," Modi said. To buttress his point for change, Modi cited a story of CCA, Churchill Cigar Assistant, in the office of Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu. The post was specifically created for ensuring the supply of cigar to Churchill from Tiruchirappalli in the state. Despite Churchill losing in 1945 and India becoming independent in 1947, the post continued till several decades later and the fact came to light when the state government set up a commission for raising the salaries of government employees. The CCA wrote to the Commission seeking a raise but no one was even aware that such a post existed. This incident is the biggest example of a need for change in governance for the progress of the society, Modi suggested. He said a country cannot be run by just "cutting ribbons" and photo-ops.

"We should make every attempt to bring changes. There may be mistakes, but if the intention is fair, there will be good results," he said. Not acting due to fear of failure does not benefit anyone, the prime minister said.

He also took potshots at those asking why the laws were introduced when farmers didn't ask for them, saying that India is a democratic country and not a feudal set up where people should seek something from those who are in power. The government should be sensitive towards the people and take decisions that are good for the country, Modi said, while noting that people did not demand Ayushman Bharat, Jan Dhan Accounts and Swachh Bharat, but still the Centre initiated these welfare programmes. He said laws against dowry, triple talaq and child marriage were also not demanded, still, the governments brought these laws as they were required for the overall well-being of the nation. —PTI

One detained for making hoax bomb call to CM's house

Coimbatore, Feb 10: A youth was on Wednesday detained in nearby Tirupur for making a hoax bomb threat call to the residence of Chief Minister K.

Palaniswami in Salem district on Wednesday. According to police, the CM's house received a call claiming that a bomb was planted there, early this

morning. Immediately, a bomb squad along with sniffer dogs carried out searches for nearly two hours, which proved that the call was a

hoax, they said. The call was traced to a youth, whose identity is yet to be revealed, in Tirupur and interrogation was on, they added. —PTI

Govt confiscates Thanjai property of Sasikala kin

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, FEB. 10

The Tamil Nadu government has confiscated 26,540 sq. ft of land in Thanjavur

town belonging to V.N. Sudhakaran and J. Elavarasi, relatives of V.K. Sasikala, an aide of former chief minister J. Jayalalitha, as per an apex

court order dated February 14, 2017, in the appeal case of disproportionate wealth case against the former CM.

A release issued here on

Tuesday by the government said that the land belonged to Lex Property Development (P) Ltd in which the abovesaid two persons are partners.



Corporation Commissioner P.Kumaravel Pandian chairs a meeting with officials about collection of property tax in Coimbatore on corporation office premises on Wednesday. —DC

Bus services in areas near Outer Ring Road

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 10

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami recently inaugurated the Chennai Outer Ring Road (CORR) connecting Vandalur and Minjur. Minister for Rural Industries P. Benjamin on Wednesday inaugurated two bus routes connecting Vandalur and Minjur areas. This will help people residing near the Chennai Outer Ring Road areas. Bus No. 206 Cut starts from Poonamallee and run via CORR, Mannivakkam connecting road, Perungalathur and reach Tamabaram.

Four Buses will run daily for once in 35 minutes. Bus No. 203 will start from Poonamallee and run via CORR, Padapai, Oragadam connecting road and reach Valajabad.

Four buses will run daily for once in 50 minutes. The number of above bus services will increase when the public demand increases, according to a press release.

Ooty under blanket of frost

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, FEB. 10

Ooty has come under the blanket of frost again as the mercury level plummeted to 1.5 degree Celsius on Wednesday morning. With the return of severe frosting, a bone-chilling cold wave has begun to sweep the hills.

After the Covid-19 outbreak in last March, the weather pattern too has undergone changes in Nilgiris. While the hills here witnessed unprecedented south west monsoon rains this time, the rain profile that dominated most of December and till mid-January masked the onset of winter in time. While generally the frosting, the characteristic of winter in Nilgiris, begins to wane after Pongal, this year frosting began to make its appearance only after Pongal in mid-January.

The severe frosting that chilled the hills till the end January began to recede since the dawn of February. But, much to the surprise of the hill residents and eco-



Frosting that turned everything white on ground in Thalaikundah area in Ooty. —DC

gists, the frosting is back in Ooty for the past couple of days. While the minimum temperature was 3.5 degree Celsius on Tuesday morning, it further dipped to 1.5 degree Celsius on Wednesday morning that saw frosting turned every-

thing white on the ground in the early morning.

Frosting is more severe in the suburbs like Kandal and Sandinallah. Though the day's weather is warm and shiny, the weather between dusk to dawn is really bone chilling, making the hill resi-

dents and tourists turn to woollen garments to keep them warm.

As the frostbite chars the tea fields and vegetable crops in low-lying areas, the farmers are crossing their fingers on how to manage the impact of frost in mid-February.

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ZAROORI HAI

SHORT TAKES

IJU FLAYS ED
RAIDS ON
NEWSCCLICK

Hyderabad/Chandigarh, Feb. 10: The Indian Journalists Union (IJU) has condemned the Enforcement Directorate raids on the digital news platform Newsclick and described them as continuation of the government's ongoing efforts to silence the media critical of its policies.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, K. Sreenivas Reddy and Balwinder Singh Jammu President and Secretary General of IJU respectively said that five journalists have been arrested in the country in the first month of 2021 creating a record of sorts. They also recalled the recent sedition charges against senior journalists who were covering developments on the Republic Day.

The news portal Newsclick has been closely covering the ongoing farmers agitation against the farm laws. The raids by ED on a small news portal and the immediate allegation of ₹30 crore money laundering betray the designs of the government, the IJU leaders commented.

Raids by obliging central agencies and FIRs by puppet police in various states against journalists are a clear and brazen effort to silence the critical media by creating fear psychosis, the IJU leaders said. They demanded the government to desist from this kind of tactics and help foster a media friendly environment crucial to the sustenance of democracy.

96 ARRESTS IN 93
SEDITION CASES
IN 2019: GOVT

New Delhi, Feb. 10: As many as 93 cases of sedition were registered in different parts of the country in 2019 in which 96 people were arrested, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Wednesday.

Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy said chargesheets were filed against 76 people while 29 were acquitted by the courts in 2019. The highest number of 22 sedition cases in 2019 was registered in Karnataka where 18 people were arrested, he said in a written reply to a question.

Reddy said 17 sedition cases were registered in Assam where 23 people were arrested.

A total of 11 sedition cases were registered in Jammu and Kashmir where 16 people were arrested. As many as 10 sedition cases were filed in Uttar Pradesh in which nine people were arrested, he said.

Replying to another question on whether any step has been taken to strengthen the sedition law (Section 124A of the IPC), the minister said the "amendment of laws is an ongoing process".

WILSON MOVES HC
AGAINST 'PLANTED
EVIDENCE'

**SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, FEB. 10**

Activist Rona Wilson on Wednesday filed a petition in the Bombay High Court seeking dismissal of the case against him in connection with the 2018 Bhima Koregaon violence. His lawyer submitted a digital forensic report from a Massachusetts-based forensic firm Arsenal Digital which mentioned that a hacker hacked Rona Wilson's laptop and planted 10 letters right before Wilson's arrest.

Advocate Sudeep Pasbola on behalf of Rona filed the petition and also attached a digital forensic report from a Massachusetts-based forensic firm Arsenal Digital that mentioned that a hacker hacked Rona Wilson's laptop and planted 10 letters right before Wilson's arrest.

Advocate Pasbola had approached the Arsenal Digital to examine the electronic copy of his client's laptop.

These are the same letters which were first used by the Pune police and later by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) as evidence to show Rona's complicity in Bhima Koregaon case.

Relying on these letters the Pune police in the past had claimed that the arrested accused were planning to assassinate the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On January 1, 2018, the violence at Bhima Koregaon village in Pune district left one dead and injured several others, including 10 policemen.

Violence erupted after some people, reportedly with saffron flags, pelted stones at cars heading towards the village for the commemoration of the 200 years of Bhima-Koregaon war on New Year's Day.



Women and children ride a tractor on their way to take part in farmers protest against farm reform laws near Singhu border in New Delhi on Wednesday.

— PTI

Man wanted in Red
Fort violence arrested

Iqbal Singh was nabbed from Hoshiarpur in Punjab

**BHASKAR HARI
SHARMA | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 10**

The Special Cell of Delhi Police on Tuesday night nabbed a man wanted in connection with the violence at the Red Fort on Republic Day. The accused identified as, Iqbal Singh, was also carrying a reward of ₹50,000 on information leading to his arrest.

According to Sanjeev Kumar Yadav, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Special Cell, Iqbal was nabbed from Hoshiarpur in Punjab on Tuesday night by the northern range of Special Cell.

Earlier on Monday, the Special Cell had arrested actor-activist Deep Sidhu, a "prominent player" behind the violence at the Red Fort from Haryana's Karnal bypass.

The Delhi police had announced a cash reward of ₹1 lakh for information that can lead to the arrest of actor Sidhu, Jugraj Singh, Gurjot Singh and Gurjant Singh who hoisted flags at the Red Fort or were involved in the act.

A cash reward of ₹50,000 each was also announced

Tikait: Not aiming
for change in power

New Delhi, Feb. 10: BKU leader Rakesh Tikait on Wednesday asserted that the agitating farmers were not aiming at any change in power at the Centre but a solution to their problems as he said many of their leaders will tour different parts of the country to spread the movement.

Tikait, who had earlier said that police should have shot those who unfurled flags at Red Fort during the tractor rally on Republic Day, defended the act saying it was not treason and youths were being framed.

for Buta Singh, Sukhdev Singh, Jajbir Singh and Iqbal Singh for allegedly instigating protesters.

Of them, Sidhu, Iqbal Singh and Sukhdev Singh have been arrested. Police said raids are being conducted to nab the rest of them. Sidhu has been sent to seven-day police cus-

Addressing the protesting farmers at Singhu border, he said that the agitation against the farm laws will stretch till the Centre addresses their issues.

"We do not aim change in power (at the Centre). The government should do its work. We want it to repeal the farm laws and ensure law on MSP," he said.

Tikait said that the agitation will be long drawn and continue till government starts talks with farmer leaders. "The government should hold the talks. Our committee is ready to talk," he said. — PTI

tody by a city court.

On January 26, thousands of protesting farmers who reached ITO from the Ghazipur border clashed with the police. Many of them driving tractors reached the Red Fort and entered the monument, where a religious flag was also hoisted.

CONG WILL SCRAP
LAWS IF VOTED TO
POWER: PRIYANKA

Lucknow, Feb. 10: Attacking the Centre over the new farm laws, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra told a rally in western Uttar Pradesh that if voted to power her party would scrap them.

At a kisan panchayat organised by the party in Saharanpur, the Congress general secretary accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders of insulting farmers who are protesting against the laws.

"The three laws are demonic. If voted to power, the Congress will scrap these laws," she said.

She said the party's fight will continue till the laws are scrapped.

The rally is the first in a series of such farmers' meetings planned the party in western Uttar Pradesh, a year before the assembly elections in the state.

— PTI

US says will always
stand with its friends

**SRIDHAR
KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 10**

Signalling a consistency in American foreign policy, the new Joe Biden Administration said on Wednesday that it is "concerned by Beijing's pattern of ongoing attempts to intimidate its neighbours" such as India, adding that the United States "would stand with (its) friends".

The US state department also described India as "one of the most important partners in the Indo-Pacific region" of the US, adding that it "welcomes India's emergence as a leading global power and its role as a net security provider in the region".

Describing its Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership

Glacier burst toll
34; 200 missing

**DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, FEB. 10**

The ITBP, Indian Army, NDRF and other agencies continue cutting the loose ends of pipes and wires inside the Tapovan tunnel as rescue work continued on Wednesday to take out construction workers trapped since the flash floods that followed Sunday's glacier burst.

According to the ITBP, the tunnel authorities are also assisting in marking of the tunnel inside as the rescue teams intensified efforts to reach the 30-35 men trapped in a sludge-choked tunnel.

Rescue workers are racing against time to cut through the obstructions and reach out to trapped people at the Tapovan and Rishi Ganga power project sites even though hope to find survivors is slowly dimming.

So far, 34 bodies have been recovered and over 200 men are still missing.

An ITBP reconnaissance team visited the glacier-break site that is suspected to have triggered the massive flash floods even as its chief S.S. Deswal said the rescue operation to locate the 30-35 workers trapped in the Tapovan tunnel will continue till it reaches a "logical conclusion".

Mr Deswal said they are "very hopeful" that the workers in the 1,500-metre-long tubular structure marked as "head race tunnel", out of the total 2.5 km length, are safe with the help of possible air vents in the structure.

"We are very hopeful that we will be able to rescue them. The workers are stated to be located at

Kin of missing
stage protest

Raini (Uttarakhand), Feb. 10: The families of workers missing from the Rishiganga hydel project site created a ruckus here on Wednesday accusing the authorities of not carrying out the rescue operations properly after the sudden flood in the Alaknanda river system wreaked havoc.

The kin of around 40 missing workers engaged in a heated argument with the authorities of the project for two hours, alleging lack of urgency in the rescue work.

"It is four days since the tragedy occurred but all the focus is on restoring connectivity. Rescuing the missing people does not seem to be the priority," alleged a man from Punjab, whose brother Jugal worked at the Rishiganga hydel project. "Jugal's phone rings when his number is dialed," he said.

Rishiganga project manager Kamal Chauhan,

● **THE KIN OF** around 40 missing workers engaged in a heated argument with the authorities of the project for two hours, alleging lack of urgency in the rescue work.

who had to face the wrath of the families, said his help was not being taken by the administration to locate the missing.

The death toll in the disaster was 32 as on Tuesday with six more bodies being recovered during the day, officials had said as multiple agencies raced against time to reach the workers trapped inside a tunnel at the power project site and 174 people remained missing. The missing people include those working at NTPC's 480-MW Tapovan-Vishnugad project and the 13.2-MW Rishiganga Hydel Project and villagers whose homes nearby were washed away.

— PTI

their workstation that is about 180 metres from the mouth of the Tapovan tunnel," the ITBP chief said.

"I can tell you that we will continue our efforts till any length of time... for whatever time it takes to reach the logical conclusion and find the workers. My boys are determined to locate those trapped there and we may reach that slip tunnel spot

(where those trapped are said to be located) by Wednesday evening," he said.

A multi-agency team of rescuers comprising the ITBP, NDRF, state disaster response force and the Army have cleared about 120 metres of slush inside the 22-25 feet high tunnel till now, but the continuous flow of the silt is hampering their rescue efforts.



ITBP and other agencies cut the loose ends of pipes and wires inside the Tapovan Tunnel as rescue operation continues in Chamoli district.

- PTI

DIDI: BJP USING
RATH YATRA TO
DIVIDE SOCIETY

Raiganj/Malda, Feb. 10: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday mocked BJP leaders for travelling on raths "as if they are gods", and alleged saffron party's rath yatra is meant to create division in the society on the basis of religion.

Accusing the saffron party of resorting to "lies" about Hinduism, Banerjee said the desperation to defeat her has stemmed from the BJP's ambition to wipe out the last opposition bastion in the country.

Addressing two back-to-back rallies in the minority Muslims dominated Uttar Dinajpur and Malda districts, Banerjee appealed to the voters to ensure victory of the TMC candidate and not waste their votes by casting them in favour of "stooge of BJP from Hyderabad", in a swipe at Asaduddin Owaisi AIMIM.

After impressive showing in the neighbouring Bihar, AIMIM is preparing to fight Assembly elections in Bengal where Muslim voters form a sizeable section of the electorate.

"Rath yatra is a religious festival. All of us have participated in this festival. We know Lord Jagannath, Balaram and Goddess Subhadra travel in those chariots.

"But, the BJP leaders are using this rath yatra for their own political purposes to divide the society and pit one against the other. BJP leaders are travelling on raths as if they are gods," she said.

Kerala film fest adjusts
to the new normal

FROM PG 1

Directed by Jasmila banic, Quo Vadis, *Aida?* is based on recorded facts and recalls in shocking detail the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995.

After the traditional inauguration with the lighting of the lamp, legendary French filmmaker Jean Luc Godard received the Lifetime Achievement award. Greeting the audience from his home through videoconferencing, Godard said, "I am sorry for speaking in the tongue of the dominators (English). Thank you very much Kerala. Thank you to the Kerala festival for screening good and sensible films. It is great that five of my films are being screened there," and in his quintessential style, lit a cigar.

Quo Vadis, Aida? (Where are you going, Aida?) leads a long list of foreign and Indian films at IFFK that have dissent as their cen-

SC halts dismantling of INS Viraat

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, FEB. 10**

The Supreme court on Wednesday halted further dismantling of decommissioned INS Viraat on a plea by a Mumbai-based Envitech Marine Consultants Pvt Ltd seeking to convert over six-decade old aircraft carrier into a maritime museum & multi-functional adventure centre.

The petitioner-firm has offered to pay ₹100 crore for the ship so that it can be converted into a museum instead of being dismantled.

Putting on hold the dis-

mantling of INS Viraat which was decommissioned by India Navy on March 5, 2017, a bench headed by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde and also comprising Justice A.S.Bopanna and Justice V. Rama-subramanian issued notice to the Centre and a Gujarat-based private company Shree Ram Group which had bought it for scrapping and took it to Alang port in Gujarat for dismantling.

Shree Ram Group is a ship-breaking firm of Bhavnagar in Gujarat which had bought it for ₹38.54 crore in an auction in July last year.

**DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 10**

The decline in daily numbers of fresh cases of Covid-19 continues in India with the active caseload now dropping to 1.41 lakh on Wednesday.

The present active cases now consist of just 1.30 per cent of India's total positive cases. In the last 24 hours, 11,067 fresh cases and 94 deaths were reported across the country.

As many as 33 states and UTs have reported less than 5,000 active cases in the last 24 hours.

Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli currently have zero active cases while 19 states/UTs have not reported any death in the last 24 hours. These are Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, J&K, Jharkhand, Puducherry, Manipur, Nagaland, Lakshadweep, Meghalaya, Sikkim,

A&N Islands, Ladakh (UT), Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and D&D & D&N.

As many as 81.68% of the new recovered cases are concentrated in 6 states while Kerala has reported the maximum number of single day recoveries with 6,475 cases, 2,554 people recovered in Maharashtra in the past 24 hours followed by 513 in Karnataka.

TN political
parties tell CEC
they prefer
one-day poll

FROM PAGE 1

Action taken against persons committing offences during elections were not being followed up and that the people wanted to know that happened to them after their arrest, said CPM leader Rangarajan, while CPI's Veerapandi said that the government announcing sops should be stopped six months ahead of the polls. BJP's K T Raghavan said the polling date should be fixed only after the Tamil New Year's Day.

OVER 66K
SCAVENGERS
IDENTIFIED
ACROSS INDIA

New Delhi, Feb. 10: As many as 66,692 m anual scavengers, including 37,379 in Uttar Pradesh, have been identified across the country, the government said on Wednesday.

In a written reply in Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale said 340 people have died while cleaning sewers and tanks in the last five years.

Out of the 340 deaths, full compensation has been paid to 217 and partial compensation has been paid to 47, according to the data shared by Athawale.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

TIANWEN-1
PROBE ENTERS
MARS ORBIT

Beijing, Feb. 10: China says its Tianwen-1 spacecraft has entered orbit around Mars on a mission to land a rover and collect data on underground water and possible signs of ancient life.

The arrival of the orbiter-rover combo in orbit on Wednesday evening Beijing time makes it the second spacecraft in two days to reach the red planet. An orbiter from the United Arab Emirates led the way on Tuesday.

Next week, the US will try to land its Perseverance rover on the Martian surface. Only the U.S. has successfully touched down on Mars — eight times beginning with two Viking missions.

KPMG BOSS
SORRY FOR
'MOANING' JIBE

London, Feb. 10: The UK chairman of global accountancy firm KPMG has apologised for telling staff to stop moaning about working conditions during the Coronavirus pandemic.

"I am sorry for the words I used, which did not reflect what I believe in, and I have apologised to my colleagues," UK chair Bill Michael said in a statement.

"Looking after the wellbeing of our people and creating a culture where everyone can thrive is of critical importance to me and is at the heart of everything we do as a firm," he added.

The *Financial Times* reported that during a virtual meeting on Monday, members of KPMG's financial services consulting team told Michael about their concerns over potential cuts to pay and the ranking of individuals' performance. Michael told staff to "stop moaning" and to stop "playing the victim card", according to the FT which cited employees.

KPMG, along with Deloitte, EY and PWC, form Britain's so-called Big Four accountants that are set for a shake up.

UN PRESSES EU
OVER RISING
MIGRANT CASES

Brussels, Feb. 10: UN agencies are pressing the European Union to end the growing practices of denying migrants their right to apply for asylum, collectively expelling them and using violence against people trying to enter the bloc without authorisation.

Border pushbacks and collective expulsions are illegal under international refugee treaties, which allow people fearing for their safety to apply for protection.

Greece and even the EU's border and coast guard agency Frontex are among those accused of pushbacks or complicity in them. They deny using such methods.

The International Organisation for Migration said Wednesday that it continues to receive documented reports of human rights violations against migrants and refugees, including children, involving countries that are part of the 27-nation bloc.

POLICE BUST
GANG HIJACKING
CELEB PHONES

London, Feb. 10: Police have arrested 10 people in the UK, Belgium and Malta for allegedly hijacking mobile phones belonging to US celebrities including internet influencers, sports stars and musicians to steal personal information and millions in cryptocurrency, authorities said.

The European Union police agency Europol said Wednesday that the gang is believed to have stolen more than \$100 million in cryptocurrencies by using so-called SIM swap attacks.

These attacks involve deactivating a victim's mobile phone SIM card, either by tricking the phone company or using a corrupt insider, so that the number can be transferred to another card under the gang's control.

The arrests were the result of a joint investigation by UK, US, Canadian, Belgian and Maltese police, Europol said. Europol didn't specify the nationalities of those caught in the sweep, but the UK's National Crime Agency said a day earlier that eight men were arrested in England and Scotland.

Two others were arrested previously in Belgium and Malta, Europol said.

US keen to learn Covid origin
to stop future catastrophes

Worst affected by pandemic, America wants China, WHO to be transparent

Washington, Feb. 10: It is imperative that the world learns as much as possible about the earliest days of the Covid-19 pandemic so that the world can understand its origins and prevent future biological catastrophes, the US has said after international experts investigating the origins of the disease have dismissed as unlikely a theory that the virus came from a laboratory in China.

The US, which is the worst affected country from the pandemic, is looking forward to receiving the report and the data from the investigation by the World Health Organisation's (WHO) team of experts into the origins of the Covid-19 in China's Wuhan city.

The WHO experts arrived in China last month for the long-awaited probe into the origins of the deadly coronavirus pandemic. On Tuesday, the team dismissed that the virus could have leaked from a Chinese lab, a theory strongly supported by former US president Donald Trump.

The team members said that the deadly virus was most likely to have transmitted from an animal to humans. "Broadly speaking, we have expressed our concerns regarding the need for full transparency and access from China and the WHO to all information regarding the earliest days of the pandemic," State Department Spokesperson Ned Price told reporters on Tuesday at his daily news conference.

"It's imperative that the world learns as much as possible about the earliest days of the Covid-19 pandemic so that we can understand its origins and so, importantly, we can prevent future biological catastrophes," Price said.

"I think the jury is still out. Clearly, the Chinese, at least heretofore, had not offered the requisite transparency that we need and that just as importantly, again, the international community needs so that we can prevent these sorts of pandemics from ever happening again.

This goes back to one of the very first actions that President Joe Biden took as president when he re-engaged with the WHO," Price said. China reported the first Covid-19 case in the central Chinese city of



People wear face masks to help curb the spread of the Coronavirus and go shopping for the upcoming Chinese New Year celebrations at the Dihua Street market in Taipei, Taiwan, on Wednesday.

— AP

WHO slams US Covid intel
as curbs tightened in Europe

Wuhan, Feb. 10: A WHO expert sent to China to probe the coronavirus hit out at US intelligence on Covid-19 as his team headed home with few answers about the origin of a pandemic that was forcing more clampdowns in some of the hardest-hit parts of the world.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel was set to seek an extension of strict virus curbs, as the European Commission chief addressed the stumbling vaccination rollout on the continent — which accounts for a third of the 2.3 million Covid-19 deaths worldwide.

The Coronavirus has infected close to 107 mil-

lion people, devastating the global economy, and questions over the handling of the initial outbreak in central China have sparked an intense diplomatic row between Washington and Beijing.

The WHO mission to the ground zero city of Wuhan wrapped up on Tuesday without any concrete answers, with Washington again expressing scepticism about China's transparency and cooperation.

But WHO team member Peter Daszak tweeted: "Please don't rely too much on US intel: increasingly disengaged under Trump & frankly wrong on many aspects." He said they worked "flat out

under the most politically charged environment possible."

China had repeatedly delayed the WHO trip, and bristled at accusations of a lack of transparency.

Beijing warned Washington not to "politicise" the mission after the White House demanded a "robust" probe.

State Department spokesman Ned Price said Tuesday that the United States supports the investigation. But when asked if China had fully cooperated with the WHO, he said: "The jury's still out." The WHO team did not identify which animal transferred the Coronavirus to humans. — *PTI*

EU LAWMAKERS
OK \$815 BILLION
RECOVERY PLAN

Brussels, Feb. 10: European lawmakers on Wednesday approved a €72.5 billion euro (\$815 billion) recovery package of loans and grants to help member states recover faster from the coronavirus pandemic.

The regulation for the Recovery and Resilience Facility was adopted with 582 votes in favour, 40 against and 69 abstentions. The RRF is the central pillar of the bloc's €750 billion euro (\$910 billion) recovery plan that was adopted by EU leaders last year.

"In the long-term, this money is going to bring about change and progress to meet our digital and climate goals," said Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, a lawmaker closely involved in the negotiations.

"We will ensure that the measures will alleviate poverty and unemployment, and will take into account the gender dimension of this crisis. Our health systems will also become more resilient." — *AP*

UN: N. KOREA
STOLE \$300M
TO FUND NUKES

Seoul, Feb. 10: North Korea has stolen more than \$300 million worth of cryptocurrencies through cyberattacks in recent months to support its banned nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, a confidential UN report said.

Compiled by a panel of experts monitoring sanctions on Pyongyang, the report said the country's "total theft of virtual assets from 2019 to November 2020 is valued at approximately \$316.4 million", citing a UN member state.

Financial institutions and exchanges were hacked to generate revenue for Pyongyang's nuclear and missile development, said the report, which was seen by AFP.

The North is known to operate an army of thousands of well-trained hackers who have attacked firms, institutions and researchers in South Korea and elsewhere.

It has also been accused of exploiting its cyber capabilities for financial gain.

The North is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its banned nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes, which have made rapid progress under leader Kim Jong Un.

A summit between Kim and then-US president Donald Trump in Hanoi in February 2019 broke down over sanctions relief and what Pyongyang would be willing to give up in return. — *AFP*

Plane set ablaze
in Huthi attack
on Saudi airport

Riyadh, Feb. 10: A civilian plane was engulfed in flames Wednesday after Yemen's Huthi rebels launched a drone strike on an airport in southern Saudi Arabia, days after the US moved to delist the insurgents as terrorists.

Saudi authorities did not immediately report any casualties from the attack, claimed by the Huthis, the latest in a series of rebel assaults on the kingdom despite a renewed American push to de-escalate the six-year conflict.

"A cowardly criminal terrorist attack launched against Abha International Airport in Saudi Arabia by the Huthi militia," state-run Al-Ekhbariya television quoted the Riyadh-led military coalition battling the rebels as saying.

"A fire that engulfed a passenger plane due to the Huthi attack on Abha Airport is under control," it added.

The coalition did not say how the attack was carried out, but earlier in the day reported that it

had intercepted two "booby trapped" drones in the south.

The Iran-backed Huthis, who control much of northern Yemen, said they had struck Abha airport with four drones. Yahya Sarie, spokesman for the Huthis' armed wing, claimed the airport was used to launch attacks on Yemen.

But the coalition insisted that targeting the airport constituted "a war crime" and "put the lives of civilian passengers in danger", according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

The rebels appear to be stepping up attacks on the kingdom and on Riyadh-backed Yemeni forces after the United States moved last week to lift a short-lived designation of the Huthis as a terrorist group.

The Huthis have resumed an offensive to seize the Yemeni government's last northern stronghold of Marib, according to a government source, with dozens of casualties on both sides. — *AFP*

Military raids Suu
Kyi's party offices

Yangon, Feb. 10: Myanmar's military raided the Yangon headquarters of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party late Tuesday, officials said, as the United States joined the UN in "strongly" condemning violence against protesters demanding a return to democracy.

The latest assault on Myanmar's civilian leadership came as anger at last week's coup and the detention of Suu Kyi by the generals has driven hundreds of thousands of people into the streets, defying a junta ban on rallies. "The military dictator NLD headquarters at around 9:30 pm," the National League for Democracy announced on its Facebook page.

The party's short statement gave no further details.

The raid came after demonstrations erupted

for a fourth straight day Tuesday, with police using water cannon in several cities, firing rubber bullets at protesters in the capital Naypyidaw and deploying tear gas in Mandalay.

The rallies came despite a warning from the junta that it would take action against demonstrations that threatened "stability", and a new ban on gatherings of more than five people.

The United States, which has led global censure of the coup, on Tuesday renewed its call for freedom of expression in Myanmar — and for the generals to step down.

"We strongly condemn violence against demonstrators," US State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters, adding that people in Myanmar "have rights to peaceful assembly." — *AFP*

Democrats set to detail case at
Trump 2nd impeachment trial

Washington, Feb. 10: Democratic lawmakers prosecuting Donald Trump are set to detail their case against him Wednesday at his impeachment trial, in a longshot bid to convince skeptical Republican senators they should convict the former president.

Trump's second impeachment trial opened on Tuesday with Democrats showing harrowing video footage of his supporters' January 6 assault on the US Capitol, where they smashed down doors, broke into the Senate chamber and led riots that left five people dead.

Trump faces a single charge of inciting the insurrection after he told enraged Republican supporters near the White House to "fight like hell." Securing a conviction is highly unlikely, as



US Senator Josh Hawley talks with reporters as he leaves the Capitol after the first day of former US President Donald Trump's second impeachment trial in Washington, DC.

— *AFP*

the Democrats would need 17 Republican senators to vote with them to make a two-thirds majority.

So far, only six Republicans have agreed that the trial is even constitutional in the first place.

Following Tuesday's opening statements from

Democratic "impeachment managers" and Trump's lawyers, both sides will flesh out their cases starting Wednesday, with the Democrats going first.

Under impeachment rules, each side is allowed up to 16 hours over two

days to present their case, starting at noon (1700 GMT).

Senators will also be given a total of four hours for questioning.

On Tuesday, senators voted 56-44 in favour of the constitutionality of the historic trial, rejecting a bid by Trump's lawyers to throw it out on grounds that a former president cannot be tried by lawmakers.

Earlier, both sides presented their opening cases, with Democrats arguing that Trump broke his oath in a naked bid to retain power after losing the November election to Joe Biden. Refusing to accept his defeat, Trump spread lies about vote rigging and repeatedly pressured officials, including then vice president Mike Pence, to try and stop the transfer of power. — *AFP*

New model to predict Indian monsoon

London, Feb. 10: Scientists, including those of Indian-origin, have developed a new system which they say can provide farmers in India early forecasts of expected variations in the monsoon season, an advance which may help reduce crop losses.

The researchers, including those from the European Centre for Medium-range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) in the UK, used their long-term global weather forecasting system to predict when the summer monsoon will

start, and how much rainfall it will bring.

In the study, published in the journal *Climate Dynamics*, they noted that the model provided accurate forecasts a month in advance for the timing of the monsoon in India's major agricultural regions.

The scientists believe providing this information to farmers could help them prepare earlier for unexpected heavy rainfall or extended dry periods,

both of which regularly destroy crops in India.

According to the researchers, the Indian monsoon brings around 80 per cent of India's annual rainfall with even small variations in the timing of its arrival potentially having a huge impact on agriculture.

"Accurately predicting these year-to-year variations is challenging, but could be the difference between prosperity or poverty for many families," said study co-author Amulya Chevuturi from

the University of Reading in the UK.

"The forecasting accuracy we identified in India's main agricultural regions provides a clear opportunity for this system to make a positive difference to people's lives," Chevuturi said in a statement.

He believes a month's warning of a drought or deluge is a valuable time to understand the likely impact on water availability and for the farmers to make provisions to reduce the threat to food supplies. — *PTI*

ADVANCED | TECH

DECCAN Chronicle

11 FEBRUARY 2021

To save public money, start to disinvest fast

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement to privatise two public sector banks and a general insurance company marks a clear departure from a cautious approach adopted by the Narendra Modi government since 2014 over the disinvestment policy. This move reaffirms the government's intent, announced last year, to exit all non-strategic sectors.

Despite his stated belief in the concept of "less government and more governance", Prime Minister Narendra Modi had done very little in terms of reducing the government's ownership of companies. In fact, the Department of Public Enterprise's data shows that there are 339 CPSEs (excluding insurance companies) as on March 31, 2018, compared to 290 CPSEs on March 31, 2014.

Several attempts to sell state-owned companies that have become a burden on exchequer were skillfully scuttled by conditions framed by bureaucrats. If the political leadership becomes successful in implementing its plan, it could prevent taxpayer's money from being invested in running inefficient companies, and that money could be fruitfully used elsewhere.

It is time for the government to move on and exit all sectors where private companies are strong. If there are no buyers, the government should give handsome compensation to employees and shut industries.

The core issue at the heart of the demand for privatisation is not so much about the propriety of the government's role in businesses as it is about the uselessness of such presence. When the Jawaharlal Nehru government decided to set up large state-owned industries, it was more a need of the hour than an ideological statement because private industrialists had no financial muscle to bankroll such massive projects. This approach was also in tune with the recommendations made by the country's eight top industrialists of the day, which was referred to as the 1945 Bombay Plan.

Though Indira Gandhi's decision to nationalise banks was dictated by her political agenda, it brought about confidence among people in the safety of their money deposited in banks. From the year 1934, when the Reserve Bank of India was established to the time of bank nationalisation in 1969, over 1,500 banks had failed in the country, eroding people's faith in the banking sector. An implied sovereign guarantee to people's money in banks resulted in the greater formalisation of public savings which helped in creating capital for entrepreneurs.

While the earlier government's intervention in critical sectors had helped the country in creating a strong industrial base, whereupon a new India was built, it is time for the government to move on and exit all sectors where private companies are strong. If there are no buyers, the government should give handsome compensation to employees and shut industries.

To protect itself from allegations of selling family silver and also to create the base for future high-tech industries, the government should chip in to create the ecosystem required for semiconductor fab factories or high-tech medical equipment companies or aircraft manufacturing using the Maruti model, where the government invests money and the private partner brings in the technology. If the government succumbs to pressure to continue with the status quo to please a few lakhs of PSU employees, it would be a great disservice to crores of Indians of the present and future generations.

Modi & Azad: Civility back

Not often in the recent past has Parliament been invaded by an out-break of civility. But when it did, as in extremely emotional speeches by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Rajya Sabha Opposition Leader Ghulam Nabi Azad of the Congress, it augured well for a sense of dignity and decorum to be ushered back into India's increasingly polarised polity. Before a Prime Ministerial image makeover, Modi was stateliness personified, as in his opening speech as PM to both Houses of Parliament. Since then, in a fractured political scene, he has been seen more in confrontational mode, attacking opponents in India and when he goes abroad and in the House too when he mocked Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul.

The spirit of give and take seemed to have evaporated in Parliament with many sessions lost to the "in the Well" attitude of the Opposition ranged against the intransigence of the Treasury benches when it came to lending an ear to diverse points of view. Civil debates on national issues have been few and far between but the ruling BJP is not the only party guilty of reducing Parliament into a non-functional laggard. This could change, much as it should, during the debate on the farmers' stir and into the future when political parties on sharply divergent ideological paths can be expected to only drift further apart thanks to the compulsions of poll politics and the seeming need for harsh language at the hustings.

Clever interpretations of acronyms appear to be the current fad as politicians attack each other, which is why such fulsome praise of opponents, which Mr Modi and Mr Azad showered on each other on the eve of the former Kashmir CM retiring from Parliament, is to be seen as a breakthrough. Brushing aside cynical views of the use of words of praise being opportunistic and rare, we must wish that civility stays in Parliament where government and Opposition members meet most often and in debates that make the legislature one of the pillars of democracy. Politicians of all hues would do well to remember that cordiality costs nothing and that the nation and the Constitution always come first.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

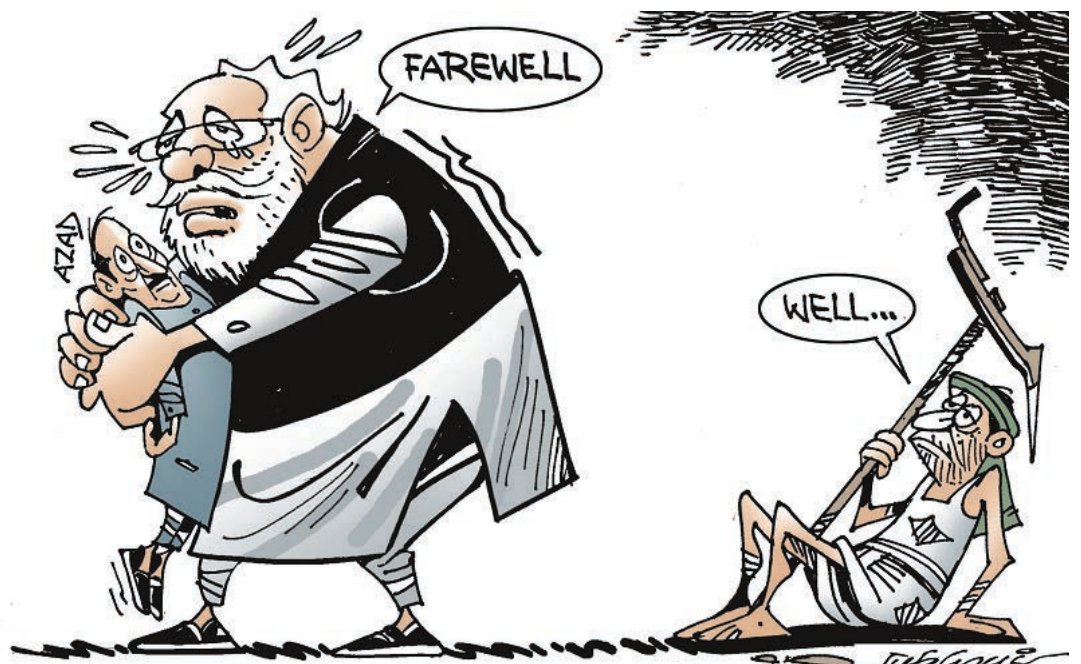
KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

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
Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Ft. Road, Koramangala, Bangalore-560095. Ph: 08043460500; Fax: 080-22960551/52/55
Visakhapatnam: Survey No. 13A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017. Phones: (0891) 2552333/2552334, Fax: (0891) 2755285
Vijayawada: No. C 3 & 4, Patamata, 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: Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904
Nellore: Survey No. 527/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemedugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/ 52, 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 Thiruvaid post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/67, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/S-D-348/2006-08ss

Subhani



The siege within: India and the 'foreign hand'



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

Can tweets by international pop star Rih-anna, teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg and other global celebrities in support of India's protesting farmers destabilise this country of over 1.3 billion people?

Or should we look within? Is foreign meddling the real threat facing us or is India's real challenge the deepening domestic polarisation on just about every front?

Successive governments in India have pointed at the "foreign hand" in times of crisis. I entered journalism in the 1980s when one regularly heard of the invisible "foreign hand" that was out to dismember our country. In many of her public speeches, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi spoke of the dark spectre of foreign forces out to destabilise India.

Rajiv Gandhi, who came to power in 1984 with a huge majority after his mother's assassination, also talked of the "invisible" foreign hand trying to derail India's development.

Back then, there was no Twitter or social media or troll armies, and no virtual slugs. But on government-run Doordarshan and All India Radio and in sections of the print media, there was no escaping allusions to these dark, powerful and invisible forces out to get us.

Cut to the New India. The "foreign hand" is back. The ruling BJP sees comments from global celebrities in support of the ongoing farmers' protests as part of a deep conspiracy against the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi says India has been seeing increased FDI but there is a new FDI that has emerged — "Foreign Destructive Ideology". Mr Modi says India needs to be protected against it.

Is the world really out to get us? Or should we get used to the fact that in a networked glob-

alised world, nothing is local anymore? As protests erupted across the United States following George Floyd's death at the hands of the police on the streets of Minneapolis, the Black Lives Matter movement resonated around the world. Support for BLM led to demonstrations in a number of countries. In a more recent example, the coup in Myanmar has been denounced by individuals around the world, including in India.

There is really no way we can prevent the rest of the world from taking interest in our domestic affairs, especially if we wish to be at the high table of the international community. If we so eagerly lap up foreign praise, can we afford to be so prickly about the foreign gaze when the comments are adverse? If Indians rejoice at going up the World Bank's ease of doing business 2020 survey, they can't totally shrug off slipping in the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2020 Democracy Index's global rankings.

The problems will not go away simply if foreigners stop talking about it. And as for us, stopping and reversing the current trend of polarisation is vital, for the simple reason that no country or society can make real progress if social cohesion starts eroding.

Leaving aside the foreign gaze for a moment and looking within, we cannot but help notice a deeply polarised and fractured nation, with deepening domestic political divisions. That is the real challenge, and that challenge cannot be surmounted by simply choking protests or forcibly shutting up views that clash with those of the government of the day. There must be a dialogue. The government must stop its storm troopers — from ministers to those on the streets — from statements and actions that polarise further. Else,

social cohesion will become even more fragile.

The Global Risks Report 2021 brought out by the World Economic Forum lists "social cohesion erosion" among the highest-likelihood and highest-impact long-term risks facing our pandemic-battered world. "As public health gaps, digital inequality, educational disparities and unemployment — risks that result from a complex combination of existing inequalities and the impact of the pandemic — affect vulnerable groups the most, they may further fray social cohesion," it says.

Too many people have little left to lose. The global recession, the report notes, is now expected to force as many as 150 million more people into extreme poverty, increasing the total to 9.4 per cent of the world's population. This setback in the global development agenda will heighten vulnerability to future shocks and threaten the erosion or collapse of states, it warns.

Our government also admits that the economic shock caused by the ongoing pandemic is severe. It is now hoping for a V-shaped economic recovery. No such recovery will be possible without the vibrant pluralistic democracy that is key to India's power. If democracy is our calling card, we must also listen to critical views and voices without feeling the need to link them with ulterior motives. Getting prickly about criticism will only worry the whole world even more.

"There is a debate about the potential impact of American concerns about the state of democracy and liberal-

ism in India on the US-India relationship," pointed out Tanvi Madan, director of the India Project and senior fellow at globally renowned think tank Brookings, in a January 2021 essay titled "Democracy and the US-India relationship".

"Often commentators argue there will either be no effect because of India's utility for the US or major impact because of the incoming Biden administration's emphasis on values," Madan added. "The answer is likely to lie somewhere in between. A pragmatic Biden team will likely recognise that India will be key to their objectives vis-a-vis issues like the Indo-Pacific and China, climate change and global health security."

"However, questions about India's trajectory as a pluralistic democracy could directly or indirectly affect the pace and tone of the relationship — especially if they are accompanied by doubts about India's capabilities, economic growth and policies, and willingness to play a balancing role versus China."

India's handling of the ongoing farmers' protests has taken a lot of sheen off the country's image, coming as it does on the back of many other illiberal measures. This is unfortunate for many reasons, including the fact that India is getting a few things right even in these fraught, polarised times. Take India's vaccine diplomacy. India has supplied low-cost coronavirus vaccines to many countries across the world. "With the US and Europe preoccupied with Covid-19 and many nations looking to India for a Covid-19 antidote, Delhi can score valuable points," as G. Parthasarathy, a former diplomat, noted in a recent commentary.

The bottom line: we must get our act together. At the end, a country does not rise or fall because of the foreigner's gaze but because of what its insiders do or fail to do.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

LETTERS

DEEP SIDHU'S ARREST

The arrest of Deep Sidhu, the main executor cum mastermind of violence and vandalism on Republic Day in Delhi, is welcome news and the police officers concerned deserve high praise, besides special incentives as an appreciation. The arrest of the prize catch is expected to reveal the ugly men who had instigated the actor to indulge in actions that had brought immense shame and disgrace to national pride and sovereignty on the historic day. It is expected that the legal community should never offer its services to the vandal and the judiciary hands down exemplary punishment, which should be a warning and reminder to anyone who thinks of enacting similar events even in his dream.

Marudamalayan,
Coimbatore

AZAD'S SPEECH

IT HAS taken so many years for Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad to realise that India is the safest and fittest place for all people to live in peace, especially for the Muslims, after noticing the condition of the life of the people in the countries around India. He further says that he is proud to be an Indian Muslim because of the freedom and safety enjoyed by people of all religions. Mr Azad had this late realisation at least when he had laid down the office of the Member of Rajya Sabha. The substance and essence of the speech of Mr Azad is that Indian Muslims of any denomination or any state cannot and will not have a better place to live than India and it is the duty of every Muslim born here to love and defend this nation when in peril.

S. Nagarajan Iyer,
Coimbatore

SASIKALA FACTOR

THIS IS with reference to your editorial *Sasikala the 'X' factor in TN's soap opera politics* (Feb.10). Chief Minister Palaniswami and his deputy Panneerselvam had a peaceful sailing for the last four years as Sasikala was out of sight and out of mind. Whether her advent at this juncture will be a blessing or curse for AIADMK only post-election results will reveal. To take her help or distance her from the party will act as a double-edged weapon. Any dissent in AIADMK will be to the advantage of DMK, which was out of power for quite a long period. If she keeps away from politics for the time being, it will be a blessing for Jayalalithaa's successors at the helm and will be a catalytic twist to Tamil Nadu politics

Parthasarathy Mandadi,
Tirupati

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



NGT hauls up Kerala govt for ignoring 'legacy waste' directive

Kerala's chief secretary Vishwas Mehta came under fire from the National Green Tribunal (NGT) over the continued ineffective solid waste management in Kochi.

According to sources, the tribunal made scathing remarks against the state government while criticising the affidavit filed by Mr Mehta and threatened to prosecute officers responsible for ensuring that parameters of environmental safety are met. The tribunal lamented that the chief secretary's affidavit did not show any effective action being taken on the ground, despite several directives issued in the past two years.

The tribunal, quoting a report by the State Pollution Control Board, noted that the municipal authorities in Kochi were continuing unauthorised operations and were

yet to start work for bio-mining.

The directive came while the tribunal was hearing a case seeking direction to take effective steps for infrastructure development for collection, storage, segregation and disposal of tonnes of waste, termed legacy waste, that has accumulated over the years in Kochi's Brahmapuram area.

Ironically, the adverse comments came at a time when the state government claims that it is strictly following the "green protocol" and chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan declared more than 11,000 government offices and public sector undertakings as "green" on Republic Day!

NITISH TO WEED OUT HOME DEADWOOD

The Nitish Kumar government in Bihar is moving ahead with its announcement last year of retiring

identified "inefficient" employees. The state home department headed by the chief minister has set up high-level committees to implement the order.

According to sources, a committee headed by additional chief secretary of the home department Amir Subhani will deal with Group A employees of the department. The panel also includes special secretary Vikash Vaibhav, among others. The other committee will be headed by secretary of the home department, K. Senthil Kumar, and include joint secretary Bimlesh Kumar Jha, among other senior officials. It has been tasked with identifying the deadwood from among Group B, C and D employees. Both committees will meet every year in June and December to consider the proposals to retire identified officers. Further, the department has instructed all

offices and directorates under it to set up such panels at their level.

Previously, in 2017, the state government had announced to compulsorily retire non-performing education department officials, school headmasters and teachers after disappointing Matric and intermediate exams. But the decision was not followed through, say sources. Will it be any different this time?

RETURN OF THE PODIGAL?

Is Shah Faesal, the former IAS officer from Jammu and Kashmir, contemplating a return to the civil service that he had quit in protest against "unabated killings" in Kashmir? A tweet by the ex-babu, who was the first Kashmiri to top the civil service exam, in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Mann Ki Baat" program seems to hint at a change of mind, say some observers. In his tweet,

Mr Faesal praised the PM's radio programme and wrote that "communication can build solidarities..."

The buzz around Mr Faesal's plans has only grown, especially when he quit Jammu and Kashmir People's Movement, the political party he had set up barely a few months later.

Interestingly, his resignation as an IAS officer in January 2019 has been kept in abeyance all this while. The government has not accepted it, pending the investigation into some of his social media posts.

That it was never accepted means that the door is still open for him to rejoin the IAS. Watch this space for updates!

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

SHORT TAKES

Footballers axed for sexual abuse

Buenos Aires: Argentina's top flight football team Velez Sarsfield suspended two players charged with sexual abuse of a woman during a party at the end of 2020. Striker Thiago Almada, a young prospect of the club, and defender Miguel Brizuela were charged by prosecutors specialized in gender violence in San Isidro, north of Buenos Aires, where the accuser made the complaint. The accuser said she was sexually abused by several people during a party at the house of Martin Lucero, who also plays for Velez. The celebration was illegal because it had more than the 10 guests allowed by local authorities amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Velez said in a statement that the players were set apart from its squad after the charges became public. The club has a protocol against gender violence in its statutes. — *AP*

Pistons pack off Brooklyn 122-111

Los Angeles: Steve Nash tore into his depleted Brooklyn Nets side Tuesday as their losing streak continued with defeat to the lowly Detroit Pistons. The Nets — with Kevin Durant absent due to Covid-19 protocols — once again put in another abject defensive display as the Pistons, bottom of the Eastern Conference, romped to a 122-111 home win. It marked the seventh straight game that the Nets have shipped 120 points or more, an unwanted new record for a franchise with designs on becoming an NBA powerhouse following the signing of James Harden last month. The Pistons dominated from the outset, racing into a 38-26 lead in the first quarter and never relinquishing their grip on the contest thereafter. A downcast Nash questioned his players' mentality following the loss. — *AFP*

Star runner Gudaf scripts new record

Lviv, France: Gudaf Tsegay broke the women's world record for the indoor 1500 metres on Tuesday after posting a time of three minutes, 53.09 seconds during a meeting in Liviv. Ethiopian Tsegay beat by more than two seconds the previous record set by her compatriot Genzebe Dibaba in Karlsruhe in 2014. American Grant Holloway ran the second fastest time ever in the men's 60m hurdles, registering 7.32sec to leave him trailing only Colin Jackson's world record of 7.30sec from 1994. "I'm not really surprised. I worked to do that. I've got to keep this dynamic and stay under 7.40 consistently," said Holloway, the reigning 110m hurdles world champion. Getnet Wale of Ethiopia fell 0.08sec short of the men's 3000m indoor world record, his time of 7min 24.98sec just shy of Daniel Komen's mark from 1998. — *AFP*

Poor pilot decision behind Kobe death

Los Angeles: As helicopter pilot Ara Zobayan encountered a cloud bank and decided to try to climb out of it, he was likely worried about getting his star client, Kobe Bryant, his daughter and six others to a girls basketball tournament, federal safety investigators said.

Live on TV

TENNIS

Australian Open: First round matches from 5.30 am on Sony Six, from 1.30 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

CRICKET

Pakistan vs South Africa: First T20 from 6.30 pm on Sony Ten 1, HD

FOOTBALL

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

FA Cup: Fifth round — Wolverhampton Wanderers vs Southampton from 11 pm; Barnsley vs Chelsea from 1.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

Regd. No.
TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by
K. Sudhakar on behalf of
Deccan Chronicle Holdings
Limited and Printed at
Deccan Chronicle Press situated at
No 2/22, Sengalipalayam Road,
N.G.O Colony Post,
Kurudampalayam Village,
Coimbatore - 641 022. RNI
Registration No: TNENG/2010/35692
Ph No : 2231252,253,255,257 & 358
Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**

Serena shimmers

Advances to Oz Open 3rd round; Djoker on a roll

Melbourne, Feb. 10: Serena Williams strolled into the third round of the Australian Open on Wednesday but former US Open champion Bianca Andreescu's emotional comeback from 15 months out ended at the hands of Taiwanese veteran Hsieh Su-wei.

Williams, 39, continued her quest to equal Margaret Court's all-time mark of 24 Grand Slams with a 6-3, 6-0 romp past 99th-ranked Serbian Nina Stojanovic in just 69 minutes on Rod Laver Arena. "I wasn't thinking as much in the second (set), as I was in the first," said Williams, who hit 27 winners in her 101st Australian Open match while again sporting her unique, one-legged catsuit inspired by track legend 'Flo-Jo'.

But eighth seed Andreescu, playing her first tournament since October 2019 after a serious knee injury, could never cope with Hsieh's quirky range of shots and lost 6-3, 6-2 in one hour 23 minutes.

Kvitova, the former Wimbledon champion and Melbourne runner-up in 2019, committed 44 unforced errors in her 6-4, 1-6, 6-1 defeat to Romania's Sorana Cirstea.

But seventh seed Aryna Sabalenka was little troubled in going through 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 against Russia's Daria Kasatkina.

In the men's draw, eighth seed Diego Schwartzmann of Argentina wasted little time in reaching the last 32, brushing aside Frenchman Alexandre Muller 6-2, 6-0, 6-3 in an hour and 32 minutes on 1573 Arena.

Later Novak Djokovic will look to continue his Melbourne Park "love affair" and march towards a record-extending ninth title against young American Frances Tiafoe. Djokovic demolished France's Jeremy Chardy 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 on Monday as the year's first Grand Slam kicked off three weeks late because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

US Open champion Naomi Osaka will headline the evening session against France's former world number four Caroline Garcia, with the Japanese star seeking her second Australian Open title in three years.

Germany's volatile US Open finalist Alexander Zverev will close out the



Above: Serena Williams of United States makes a forehand return to Serbia's Nina Stojanovic during their second round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne on Wednesday. Serena won 6-3, 6-0.

Below: Poland's Iga Swiatek reacts after winning second round match against Italy's Camila Giorgi at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne on Wednesday. Swiatek won in straight sets 6-2, 6-4.

— *AP*

night session against America's Maxime Cressy. The fifth seed is known for a short fuse and it showed on Monday as he smashed a racquet during a 6-7 (8/10), 7-6 (7/5), 6-3, 6-2 win against another Marcos Giron.

The tantrum-prone Nick Kyrgios could also provide fireworks out on his favourite John Cain Arena against France's 29th seed Ugo Humbert.

Austrian third seed Dominic Thiem, last year's runner-up to Djokovic, is the highlight in the afternoon session on Margaret Court Arena against Germany's 70th-ranked Dominik Koepfer.

Women's second seed Simona Halep appeared to have overcome a lower back injury in 6-2, 6-1 romp past wildcard Lizette Cabrera on Monday and faces another

SELECTED RESULTS

Men's singles second round: Novak Djokovic (SRB x1) bt Frances Tiafoe (USA) 6-3, 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (7/2), 6-3; Dominic Thiem (AUT x3) bt Dominik Koepfer (GER) 6-4, 6-0, 6-2; Nick Kyrgios (AUS) bt Ugo Humbert (FRA x29) 5-7, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-4; Alexander Zverev (GER x6) bt Maxime Cressy (USA) 7-5, 6-4, 6-3; Diego Schwartzman (ARG x8) bt Alexandre Muller (FRA) 6-2, 6-0, 6-3; Taylor Fritz (USA x27) bt Reilly Opelka (USA) 4-6, 7-6 (8/6), 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/5), 6-2; Marton Fucsovics (HUN) bt Stanislas Wawrinka (SUI x17) 7-5, 6-1, 4-6, 2-6, 7-6 (11/9); Milos Raonic (CAN x14) bt Corentin Moutet (FRA) 6-7 (1/7), 6-1, 6-1, 6-4; Pedro Martinez (ESP) bt Emil Ruusuvuori (FIN) 1-6, 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/5); Dusan Lajovic (SRB x23) bt Alexander Bublik (KAZ) 6-4, 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 6-3; Adrian Mannarino (FRA x32) bt Miomir Kecmanovic (SRB) 6-1, 6-2, 6-4; Grigor Dimitrov (BUL x18) bt Alex Bolt (AUS) 7-6 (7/1), 6-1, 6-2; Pablo Carreno-Busta (ESP x15) bt Jiri Vesely (CZE) 6-3, 7-6 (7/3), 2-6, 6-4; Denis Shapovalov (CAN x11) bt Bernard Tomic (AUS) 6-1, 6-3, 6-2; Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN x20) bt James Duckworth (AUS) 6-4, 6-1, 6-2; Aslan Karatsev (RUS) bt Egor Gerasimov (BLR) 6-0, 6-1, 6-0

Women's singles second round: Serena Williams (USA x10) bt Nina Stojanovic (SRB) 6-3, 6-0; Simona Halep (ROM x2) bt Ajla Tomljanovic (AUS) 4-6, 6-4, 7-5; Hsieh Su-wei (TPE) bt Bianca Andreescu (CAN x8) 6-3, 6-2; Garbine Muguruza (ESP x14) bt Liudmila Samsonova (RUS) 6-3, 6-1; Naomi Osaka (JPN x3) bt Caroline Garcia (FRA) 6-2, 6-3; Sara Errani (ITA) bt Venus Williams (USA) 6-1, 6-0; Marketa Vondrousova (CZE x19) bt Rebecca Marino (CAN) 6-1, 7-5; Iga Swiatek (POL x15) bt Camila Giorgi (ITA) 6-2, 6-4; Sorana Cirstea (ROM) bt Petra Kvitova (CZE x9) 6-4, 1-6, 6-1; Zarina Diyas (KAZ) bt Bernarda Pera (USA) 6-4, 3-6, 6-3; Ons Jabeur (TUN x27) bt Anna Karolina Schmiedlova (SVK) 6-3, 6-2; Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x7) bt Darya Kasatkina (RUS) 7-6 (7/5), 6-3; Ann Li (USA) bt Alize Cornet (FRA) 6-2, 7-6 (8/6); Anastasia Potapova (RUS) bt Tmes Babos (HUN) 6-2, 6-4; Fiona Ferro (FRA) bt Elena Rybakina (KAZ x17) 6-4, 6-4; Veronika Kudermetova (RUS x32) bt Varvara Gracheva (RUS) 5-7, 6-2, 6-2.

Australian, Ajla Tomljanovic, in the night session.

BOPANNA-BEN LOSE IN FIRST ROUND

India endured a second successive disappointing result at the Australian Open with Rohan Bopanna and Ben McLachlan bowing out after a close opening-round defeat to Ji Sung Nam and Min-Kyu Song in

the men's doubles event, here on Wednesday.

Bopanna and his Japanese partner lost 4-6 6-7(0) to the Korean wild card pair in one hour and 17 minutes.

Not having enough court time due to hard quarantine seemed to have an effect on Bopanna's sharpness. McLachlan, on his part, struggled to negotiate volleys and that hurt them. — *Agencies*

BANGAR IS RCB BATting CONSULTANT

Bengaluru, Feb. 10: Former India batsman Sanjay Bangar was on Wednesday appointed as the batting consultant of Indian Premier League side Royal Challengers Bangalore ahead of the upcoming season.

Bangar served as the batting coach of the Indian men's senior team for five years from 2014 when Ravi Shastri took over as team director. He continued in the role till the 2019 World Cup before being replaced by Vikram Rathour.

"We are delighted to welcome Sanjay Bangar to the RCB Family as a batting consultant for #IPL2021! Welcome aboard, Coach!" the RCB said in a tweet.

KRUNAL TO LEAD BARODA

India all-rounder Krunal Pandya will lead the Baroda squad in the Vijay Hazare Trophy beginning February 20.

Krunal had led Baroda initially in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy but then had to leave the tournament's bio-bubble midway due to his father's demise.

Baroda have picked a 22-member squad for the domestic 50-over championship.

Meanwhile, India batsman Shreyas Iyer was on Wednesday named as captain of the Mumbai team for the Vijay Hazare Trophy .

— *PTI*

Man U pip West Ham, in quarters

London, Feb. 10: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer warned "wasteful" Manchester United to be "more clinical" after they edged into the FA Cup quarterfinals with a hard-fought 1-0 win against West Ham on Tuesday.

Solskjaer's side were well below their best in a scrappy fifth round tie at freezing, snow-dusted Old Trafford.

But a fine finish from Scotland midfielder Scott McTominay ensured United advanced to the last eight for a seventh successive season.

United last won the FA Cup in 2016 and McTominay's third goal in three games kept them in the hunt to lift the trophy for the 13th time.

After the frustration of the late Everton equaliser that dented their Premier League title challenge on Saturday, this was an essential result to lift the mood at United.

It was hardly an eye-catching performance however, with United labouring against defensive West Ham until McTominay and Bruno Fernandes were intro-

THE RESULTS

Manchester United (McTominay 97)	1
West Ham	0
Bournemouth (Surridge 21, Stanislas 88-pen)	2
Burnley	0

duced as second half substitutes.

Meanwhile, Burnley suffered a surprise exit as second tier Bournemouth won 2-0. Sean Dyche's side fell behind to Sam Surridge's first half goal and Junior Stanislas finished them off with a late penalty.

While the loss was embarrassing, it will be forgotten if Dyche ensures Burnley retain their Premier League status.

Burnley are currently 17th in the Premier League, sitting eight points clear of the relegation zone. It could have been an even more chastening night for Burnley, who initially included the ineligible Erik Pieters in the team before being alerted to the issue by Bournemouth's media chief. — *AFP*



Former India cricketer C.D. Gopinath (right) receives a specially commissioned caricature from Indian Army veteran Col. Vembu Shankar.

C.D. GOPINATH FELICITATED TO COMMEMORATE HISTORIC WIN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 10

C.D. Gopinath, the lone surviving member of India's triumphant team that beat England for their maiden Test victory on February 10, 1952, was felicitated on the 69th anniversary of the historic match.

Indian Army veteran Col. Vembu Shankar and other cricket enthusiasts commemorated the event at

Gopinath's Chennai residence on Wednesday.

The 90-year-old Gopinath cut a cake shaped like a cricket bat and ball placed on turf, in the presence of his wife and great grandchildren.

Gopinath was given a specially commissioned caricature.

Gopinath said the celebrations after the historic match were not so grand.

"We just shook hands and went home," he said.

CHENNAIYIN CRASH OUT OF PLAYOFF CONTENTION

Goa, Feb. 10: An injury-time own goal from Enes Sipovic proved to be the difference as Jamshedpur FC edged Chennaiyin FC 1-0 at the GMC Stadium in Bambolim in the Indian Super League on Wednesday.

Jamshedpur did not register a single shot on target, compared to Chennaiyin's four but still ended on the winning side. The result lifted Owen Coyle's team to the sixth spot while Chennaiyin stayed eighth.

The opening half proved to be a cagey contest with both sides displaying great defensive organization. Chennaiyin started bright and fashioned chances but failed to convert them again. Jamshedpur eventually grew into the game but lacked incisiveness in the attacking third. Jamshedpur keeper TP Reheneesh was called into action early on, forcing a fine save from Lallianzuala Chhangte.

Benzema, Mendy floor Getafe 2-0

Madrid, Feb. 10: A depleted Real Madrid moved to within five points of La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid on Tuesday by beating struggling Getafe 2-0.

Madrid were without nine first team players, prompting Zinedine Zidane to adopt a 3-5-2 formation which he admitted they had not practised, with Marcelo and the 20-year-old Marvin Park as wing-backs.

Karim Benzema and Ferland Mendy scored the goals at Valdebebas, with Mendy's finish teed up by his fellow left-back Marcelo, who revelled in his new role.

Madrid's victory puts them in sight of city rivals Atletico even if Diego Simeone's side have played two games fewer.

"We have to believe in ourselves, we have to fight. There is a lot of the league left, a lot in front of us," said Zidane. Atletico had slipped up for the first time in nine league matches on Monday night, a late equaliser conceded in a 2-2 draw with Celta Vigo giving Madrid and Barcelona a ray of hope in the title race. And while the trophy remains very much in Mendy's hands, Madrid can only hope to increase the pressure by building some momentum.