

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | TUESDAY 23 | FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 19°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Maasi 11
Tithi: Ekadashi
Star: Thiruvathirai/
Punarpusam
Rahukalam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm
Yamagandam:
9 am to 10.30 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.17 am
Zohar: 12.28 pm
Asar: 3.44 pm
Maghrib: 6.17 pm
Isha: 7.28 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.17 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.28 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 2.38 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 3.55 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+10,406)	(+73)
1,10,15,776	1,56,495

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+449)	
TN: 8,48,724	12,466

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

11,21,11,203

DEATHS

24,80,776

219

worldometers.info

Dadra and Nagar Haveli MP Mohan Delkar found dead in Mumbai hotel

Mumbai: Mohan Delkar, Lok Sabha member from Dadra and Nagar Haveli, was found dead in a Mumbai hotel on Monday, police said. The body of Delkar (58), a seven-term MP from the Dadra and Nagar Haveli Union Territory, was found at a Marine Drive hotel in south Mumbai, a police official said.

IAF chief embarks on 4-day visit to Bangladesh

New Delhi: Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria embarked on a four-day trip to Bangladesh on Monday during which he will meet senior officials of the neighbouring country's air force and also visit its key operational bases, the IAF said. Bhadauria's Bangladesh counterpart Air Chief Marshal ashuzzaman Serniabat was in India earlier this month and represented his country at the Chiefs' of Air Staff Conclave 21 at Air Force Station Yelahanka, Bengaluru, where he led a delegation to Aero India 2021.

COUNTER

POINT



He is promising an underground Metro in every village!

Bombay HC grants bail to poet Varavara Rao

Mumbai, Feb. 22: The Bombay high court on Monday granted interim bail for six months on medical grounds to ailing poet and activist Varavara Rao, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case. The court said it could not be a "mute spectator" and permit 82-year-old Rao's health condition to deteriorate in custody. A bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and Manish Pitale said there existed no doubt



that given his current medical condition, Rao would face "acceleration and intensification of ailments" if he continued to remain in custody.

It noted that medical facilities at the Taloja prison's hospital in neighbouring Navi Mumbai were inadequate. Rao is currently admitted in Nanavati Hospital, a private medical facility in Mumbai. He has been in custody since August 28, 2018, awaiting trial in the case, which is being probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The bench granted bail to Rao for six months, while directing him to stay within the jurisdiction of the NIA court

in the city during this period. Rao will be discharged from the hospital depending on his health condition and then released on bail, as per the HC.

While granting Rao bail on medical grounds, the HC dismissed NIA's argument that he was not entitled to relief on humanitarian grounds. However, the court imposed a host of stringent conditions on his bail, including prohibiting him from establishing contact with his co-

accused in the case. It also dismissed the Maharashtra government's submission that after discharge from the Nanavati Hospital, Rao would be shifted to the prison ward of the state-run JJ Hospital in Mumbai.

"We are of the opinion that this court, as a constitutional court, cannot be a mute spectator to the undertrial (Rao) being sent to prison and then to government hospitals where his health deteriorates further," the HC said. — *PTI*

Agri minister insulted farmers with his remarks, says SKM

New Delhi, Feb. 22: Samkyukta Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of protesting farm unions, on Monday accused Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar of "insulting" farmers by his remarks that mere gathering of a crowd does not lead to the farmers protesting against the new agriculture

laws, and said that mere gathering of a crowd does not lead to revocation of legislations. "Today, farmers are getting support pouring in from all sides, nationally and internationally. The protesters are not a crowd, but our annadatas, thanks to whom we are all alive today," the SKM said in statement. — *PTI*



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BJP undermining democracy, says Rajasthan CM Gehlot



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Italian envoy killed in DR Congo attack

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Stokes ready to handle all conditions during Tests



On Didi turf, Modi attacks Mamata over 'cut money'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, FEB. 22

Pitching for the BJP to come to power in West Bengal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday urged the people to bloom Kamal (Lotus) in the ensuing Assembly Election to bring Asol Poriborton (Real Change) which will replace the evils of 'Syndicate Raj through Cut Money,' Tustikaran (Appeasement) and Tolabaji (extortion) culture of the ruling Trinamul Congress with an all-round development in the state.

"A BJP government has to be formed in Bengal not only for mere Poriborton (change) in power but for Asol Poriborton (Real Change) here. Lotus needs to be bloomed here so that Asol Poriborton for which our young generation is waiting is ushered," Mr Modi told a massive rally of the saffron party at



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses BJP supporters during an election rally at Bandel in Hooghly district of West Bengal on Monday.

— *DC*

Chinsurah in Hooghly during his second visit to the state within two weeks.

Reiterating that the people "have already made up their mind" to oust the TMC from power, he also asserted that the state's infrastructure development has always been the Centre's "priority." Mr Modi then gave a fresh

example of the state government's lethargy to implement yet another central welfare scheme, after PM Kishan Samman Nidhi and Ayushman Bharat, under chief minister Mamata Banerjee's rule.

He alleged, "Jal Jiban Mission has been underway across the country to connect the households in the villages with a pipeline for smooth water supply. It is more important for Bengal because it has over 1.45 crore rural households. You will be shocked to know about the situation they have pushed Bengal into. Out of 1.45 crores, only two lakh rural households have tap water supply. So far 3.60 crore such households have been connected with water supply nationwide. After the central government put pressure on the state government here, the figure of two lakhs grew to nine lakhs under the scheme."

SUDDEN SPIKE IN VIRUS CASES

Amit Shah reviews Covid-19 situation

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, FEB. 22

Union home minister Amit Shah held a meeting on Monday with senior officials of the home and health ministries, along with health minister Harsh Vardhan, to review the Covid-19 situation across India in the wake of a sudden spike in cases in some states. India reported its steepest one-day hike in active Covid-19 cases since end-November on Monday. This rise is due to a high number of daily cases in five states – Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.

Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 6,971, followed by Kerala (4,070), while Tamil Nadu reported 452 new cases. In fact, 86.3 per cent of new cases are from these five states. On Monday, 14,199 new cases and 83 deaths were reported nationwide. The active cases have increased by 4,421 in the last 24 hours.

During the meeting, the ongoing vaccination drive and the steps needed to check the further spread of the virus were discussed.

Surge of virus cases in Kerala: TN steps up vigil at border

Chennai, Feb. 22: With neighbouring Kerala and four other states in the country witnessing a surge in daily Coronavirus cases, the Tamil Nadu government on Monday said surveillance in districts bordering Kerala has been intensified and it has been made mandatory for all returnees by flight to compulsorily undergo RT-PCR test.

The state health department continues to aggressively test for the virus and is involved in tracing the contacts, as it is determined to further bring down the cases, health secretary Dr J. Radhakrishnan said.

Expressing concern over non-compliance by people, including those who gather for political rallies, he appealed to the people not to lower the guard as five states in India have recorded an increase in cases. — *PTI*

SC puts one condition for Karti to travel abroad

New Delhi, Feb 22: The Supreme Court on Monday allowed Congress MP Karti Chidambaram, who is facing criminal cases that are being probed by the ED and the CBI, to travel abroad.

A bench, headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan, asked Chidambaram to deposit ₹2 crore with the registry and submit details on the places to be visited and the place where he would stay.

Opposing the application, Additional Solicitor General S V Raju said earlier Chidambaram was earlier allowed to travel abroad,



but with a deposit of ₹10 crore. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, who was appearing for Chidambaram, said the condition was not justified for a member of Parliament and he would not run away anywhere. The apex court said the

amount be deposited in a nationalised bank and allowed Chidambaram to travel for six months. Earlier, it had allowed him to travel to the UK, the US, France, Germany and Spain.

The Congress leader is facing several criminal cases related to the Aircel-Maxis deal and the Foreign Investment Promotion Board clearance to the INX Media for receiving foreign funds of ₹305 crore when his father, P. Chidambaram, was the Union finance minister. — *PTI*



Bomb disposal squad prepares to defuse an Improvised Explosive Device (IED), which was detected at a bridge, near the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway near Pantha Chowk, in Srinagar, on Monday.

— *PTI*

Abhishek's wife asks CBI team to visit home; sleuths examine her sister

Kolkata, Feb. 22: A day after the CBI served a notice to Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee's wife, Rujira Banerjee, asking her to join the probe in the alleged coal pilferage scam, she asked the central agency to send its team to her residence for examination on Tuesday, officials said.

CBI sleuths also visited the residence of the TMC leaders sister-in-law Menaka Gambhir in Kolkata on Monday to examine her in connection with the same case, they said.

Abhishek, the president of the TMC's youth wing, is the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

COAL THEFT CASE

After the summonses were issued on Sunday, the TMC hit out the BJP-led central government alleging political vendetta, while the saffron party said that the TMC was trying to politicise the matter

A team of CBI officials had visited the residence of Abhishek Banerjee on Sunday to deliver the summons but Rujira was not present.

The agency asked her to join the probe. She responded to the summons on

Monday and asked the CBI to visit her residence between 11 am and 3 pm on Tuesday. "Though I am unaware of the reason for me being called for questioning or the subject matter of the investigation, you may visit my residence as per your convenience between 11 am and 3 pm tomorrow, i.e. 23 February, 2021," Rujira said in a letter to CBI. "You are requested to kindly inform me your schedule," she said. Two woman officers of the CBI also visited the residence of Gambhir, Rujiras sister, and examined her for nearly three hours after a notice was served to her on Sunday, officials of the agency said. — *PTI*

IED detected on Srinagar-Jammu highway, tragedy averted

Srinagar, Feb. 22 : A major tragedy was averted on Monday when the security forces detected an improvised explosive device (IED) near the railway crossing in the Nowgam area of Jammu and Kashmir's Budgam district on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway. Police said a patrolling party of the security forces detected the IED on the national highway.

"Movement of traffic has been halted in the area. Bomb disposal squad has been deployed to defuse the IED," police sources said. — *Agencies*

SC allows repatriation of ED officer to her parent department

New Delhi, Feb. 22: The Supreme Court Monday allowed the request of an officer of the Enforcement Directorate, involved in the investigation of coal scam cases, seeking repatriation to her parent department subject to the condition that a "competent officer" takes charge in her place. A bench comprising Chief Justice SA Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian said that it is not disputed that the applicant, Sowmya Nuthalapati, is a married woman who has a child aged about two and half years and is currently residing in Hyderabad away from her husband due to her present posting. — *PTI*

SHORT TAKES

DMK-Cong seat sharing talks on Thursday

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 22

Seat sharing talks between the Congress and DMK would be held on Thursday, February 25, as the DMK is keen on finalizing the alliance with all its partners before its Tiruchy conference on March 14 with a view to having all the leaders of the coalition on the stage.

Congress leaders like Tamil Nadu in-charge Dinesh Gundu Rao and former Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy are expected to arrive on Wednesday to hold discussions with DMK leaders like M K Stalin and Durai Murugan at Anna Arivalayam.

It is rumoured that the Congress leaders are less inclined in getting the Chief Ministership for the party in Puducherry than in getting more number of seats to contest in the State Assembly elections.

The Congress wants the DMK to part with 30 to 35 seats, though the DMK does not want to give too many seats to the allies since they might not be able to win them all.

The DMK is also said to have made it clear that it would field candidates against all the present AIADMK ministers in the state and will not allot those constituencies to any of the allies. That itself would mean that many of the seats like Royapuram that were given to the Congress in the 2016 polls may not be allotted this time.

Otherwise, Congress leaders are upbeat over firming up the alliance in both Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. When Gundu Rao was asked about the DMK leader Jagatharakshan saying that his party would field candidates in all 30 constituencies in the Union Territory, he replied: 'Forget that.'

7 injured in jallikattu

DC CORRESPONDENT
ARIYALUR, FEB. 22

At least 7 bull tamers were injured in a jallikattu event held at Kilaiyur in Ariyalur district on Monday.

Police said 400 bulls and 250 bull tamers took part. Government chief whip S. Rajendran and Ariyalur collector T. Rathna inaugurated the event.

All the injured were treated at the health centre at the event site, police added.

Notices on thermal plant decommissioning by NGT

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 22

The south zone bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued notices over a petition seeking direction to the Central Electricity Authority, Central Pollution Control Board and Neyveli Lignite Corporation of India, for proper disposal of hazardous substances while decommissioning a thermal power plant of NLCIL operational since 1962.

In the petition, Dharmesh Shah stated that there are no effective guidelines for scientific decommissioning of thermal power plants. This can lead to non-disposal of remaining fly ash and

other hazardous substances used during operation.

The companies often prioritise economic concerns over environmental ones, leaving the plant sites environmentally unsafe. The central and state pollution control boards must ensure that decommissioning is done following norms in a scientific manner, to prevent the contamination of water, air and soil.

He also appealed to the tribunal to direct the central and state governments and NLCIL to place the decommissioning process on record.

The petitioner demanded proper disposal and related site remediation costs borne by NLC India, as per

the "Polluters' pay" principle. A 2020 report by the Health Energy Initiative, India found that plants in India did not follow any remediation or handling protocols to contain hazardous substances on erstwhile power plant sites.

When the matter came up for hearing, the bench comprising Justice Ramakrishnan and expert member Saibal Dasgupta issued notices to Central Electricity Authority, Central Pollution Control Board and NLC India, and said "we are satisfied that there arises a substantial question of environment which requires to be addressed in a scientific manner after consultation with the official

respondents as it is required to have some guideline to be followed by the thermal power plants which wants to decommission."

It may be noted that South Asia's first and only lignite-fired thermal power station was set up following the discovery of lignite deposits in Neyveli in NLCIL. The 600 MW TPS-I, was an Indo-Soviet collaboration with nine units. It had 6 units of 50 MW capacity each and 3 units of 100 MW capacity each and was commissioned between 1962 and 1970 in three stages with an initial capital cost of Rs 77.81 crore. The TPS-I was decommissioned in September last year.



Greater Chennai Police Commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal inaugurates an Aavin parlor at Vepery CoP office on Monday.

—DC

Man burns wife to death suspecting fidelity

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 22

48-year-old man allegedly poured kerosene on his wife and lit on her fire while she was asleep at their home in Chengalpet district, in the early hours of Monday, suspecting her fidelity.

According to police, the deceased woman has been identified as Jeeva (40). The accused, Jeeva's husband, Parthiban (48) and their 19-year-old daughter, also suffered injuries and were taken to a hospital where their condition is said to be stable.

A senior police officer said that the Parthiban owns a scrap shop in the area, whereas Jeeva was a housewife. Parthiban would often quarrel with Jeeva suspecting her fidelity. The duo had a similar fight before they

went to bed on Sunday night.

While Jeeva was asleep, Parthiban allegedly sneaked into the room she was sleeping in with a cane of kerosene and poured it on her. Before she could realize what was happening, Parthiban set her ablaze.

On hearing her cries for help, the 19-year-old in the house rushed to her help, but in vain. Jeeva was charred to death on the spot. Parthiban also suffered injuries in the process, the police said.

Locals alerted the Acharapakam police, who visited the spot and sent the body of the deceased for post-mortem.

A murder case has been registered by the police. Acharapakam police arrested Parthiban and probe is underway.

Gang held for abducting businessman near Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 22

The police on Sunday arrested four members of a gang that kidnapped a Chengalpet-based businessman.

The victim has been identified as S. Balu (29), a resident of Kumili Village near Guduvancheri. Balu and his friend, Sathish (27) of Mamallapuram started an e-commerce business with an initial investment of 6 lakh each, two years back.

Police sources said recently the duo had a rift, especially on the business transactions. Following this, Sathish offered to withdraw from the partnership deal, requesting a refund of his initial investment.

However, Balu was not interested in repaying the

investment amount. Enraged Sathish sought the help of his brother in law Vikky and four of his friends- Prashanth (20), Vishal (22), Naresh (30) and Uma Maheshwaran (18) and hatched a plan to abduct Balu and get back the amount from him.

According to the plan, Vikky contacted Balu on Sunday night, saying that he wished to join Balu's partnership firm and hence the necessity to meet Balu in person to talk about the same.

Balu was asked to meet Vikky near the Maraimalai Nagar Taluk office. Following which Balu arrived at the specified location. Vikky and his friends who were in the hide in a car abducted Balu. While Vikky stayed back,

the others drove the car along with the kidnapped Balu, towards Mahabalipuram. It was reported that Vikky had seized Balu's car parked in the latter's house.

Meanwhile, on suspicion, the Chengalpet taluk police patrol near Thirupur-Chengalpet highway intercepted the car that was used to kidnap Balu, only to find the perplexed victim and four others inside the vehicle.

After an inquiry, Balu revealed that he was being abducted by the gang. The Chengalpet Taluk police arrested the gang of four and seized the vehicle. They were handed over to the Maraimalai Nagar police. The police have also launched a hunt for Vikky and Sathish.

Students told to write answer against farmers protest

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 22

A private school in Chennai is in the eye of a storm with activists criticising it for directing the class 10 students to write answers to a question regarding the farmers' protest in Delhi border.

Abusing the farmers as 'violent maniacs' and protesting with external instigation, the school asked the students to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper in the city on the 'Republic Day violent protest'.

Activist P. B. Prince Gajendra Babu said it is widely

accepted that no disputed fact or distorted information must find a place in the prescribed text book for students.

He said it is unfortunate that children do not have academic freedom to discuss and articulate on the day-to-day civic happenings independently and

school is becoming an area to plant ideas in the minds of innocent children. Was this part of the prescribed text book or discussion in the classroom?

He said without any such discussion how can a highly loaded question with clear intention of malign-

ing the agitating farmers be asked in the question paper? Has the school framed any opinion or the teacher who framed the question had done any study on the subject matter about the question? What is the need for such a question for a student less than 18 years of age?

Ads hailing AIADMK, EPS: HC orders notice to ECI, govt

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 22

The Madras high court has ordered notice to the Election Commission of India and Tamil Nadu government on a petition filed by the DMK party, which sought a direction to the ECI to take action against the AIADMK party as per Clause 16A of the Election Symbols (Reservation & Allotment) Order for violating its directions dated October 7, 2016 and consequently forbear the state government from in any way issuing advertisements in press, digital, social media, online, DTH platforms, which are hailing, popularizing or improving the electoral

prospects of the AIADMK party or its joint coordinator Edappadi K. Palaniswami or any of the AIADMK-K's previous or present leaders/members at the cost of the public exchequer.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Senthil Kumar Ramamoorthy posted to March 2, further hearing of the petition filed by DMK represented by its Organisation Secretary R.S. Bharathi.

When the case came up for hearing on Monday, senior counsel P. Wilson, appearing for the DMK submitted that the free and fair elections and purity in elections are basic features of the Constitution. Chief Minister Edappadi

K. Palaniswami is indulging in advertising in all TV channels, newspapers and all websites, commercial internet sites, pampering and projecting him since two months. On October 7, 2016, the ECI has issued directions to all political parties from resisting and that it would attract freezing of symbols and that the DMK party gave representations in January and February 2021. But the ECI has not taken any action, Wilson added.

Senior counsel G. Rajagopal, appearing for ECI submitted that the ECI has called for remarks from AIADMK and it was waiting for reply. Advocate general Vijay

Narayan submitted that the state has stopped the advertisements from February 18, 2021, and sought time to file a report.

In his petition, Bharathi submitted that since December 29, 2020 Edappadi K. Palaniswami was campaigning under the name and style of "Vetrinadai Podum Tamizhagam" (Tamil Nadu walking on a winning path) all over Tamil Nadu and was spending huge amount from state exchequer for advertising his poll campaign. The said advertisements were to popularize and project not only Edappadi K. Palaniswami but also carry the symbol and photo of J. Jayalalithaa and M.G. Ramachandran, former Chief Ministers and leaders of AIADMK party. Thus these advertisements were like party advertisements at the cost of the exchequer. The failure of the ECI to take necessary action to provide a level playing field to all political parties which were gearing up for the ensuing General Assembly elections in the State of Tamil Nadu which was likely to take place in April/May 2021 was against the principles of free and fair elections and was creating an unfair playing field. As a responsible opposition party, it was duty cast upon the petitioner to immediately approach this court to save the public coffer, he added.



Visitors take a look at the exhibition and sales of women self group products, organised on the occasion of International Women's Day, at Mother Teresa Women's Complex.

—DC

Insurance companies bound to follow provisions of Act: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 22

The Madras high court has said the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) must ensure that once the product is issued to cover any liability under any of the statute, then, the insurance companies are bound to follow the provisions of the said Act and ensure that the beneficiaries realize the benefits in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Justice S.M. Subramaniam further said suitable orders or instructions or circulars are to be issued so as to ensure that the Insurance Companies follow the requirements of the statute, more specifically, in the present nature of cases, the minimum wages, which is notified by the Central government periodically under the provisions of the Workmen Compensation Act.

The judge was passing

orders on an appeal filed by the legal heirs of a construction worker, who died after falling down from the fourth floor of a building under construction.

On the claim made the legal heirs of the deceased, the Deputy Commissioner of Labour awarded compensation but divided the liability both on the Insurance Company and the employer. The Deputy Commissioner of labour arrived at a conclusion that the Insurance Company was liable to pay compensation strictly with reference to the terms and conditions agreed in the policy. Aggrieved, they filed the present appeal.

Allowing the appeal and modifying the award, the judge directed the insurance company to pay the entire award. However, the judge granted liberty to the insurance company to recover the portion of the liability fixed on the employer by filing appropriate application

under section 31 of the Workmen Compensation Act.

The judge said if the insurance policy was issued, the insurance company as a public authority must issue, if the premium was paid for the minimum wages notified under the provisions of the Workmen Compensation Act. If the insurance company decided to collect any amount premium at the choice of the employer and accept the liability, then it causes infringement of the right of the workmen, which was otherwise assured under the provisions of the Workmen Compensation Act. Therefore, the insurance company was also obligated to collect the premium in consonance with the minimum wages so as to ensure that the rightful compensation was paid by the insurance company in the event of any accident or otherwise, the judge added and gave the above directive to IRDAI.

Speak Out



Rainwater of NE monsoon remains stagnant at Gandhi Nagar, Srinivasapuram, near Korattur. Residents want authorities to clear the water and put an end to the foul smell emanating from the area.

—DC

Former IAS officer Sagayam enters politics

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 22

Former IAS officer U Sagayam has declared that he was entering politics to clean up the state of corruption and assured his followers that he would back them like a right arm if they could put up a sustained fight.

Addressing a meeting organized at Adambakkam by his supporters on Sunday evening, Sagayam, who put in his papers after he found stagnating in the government service by being in the same insignificant job for six years, said ushering in a corruption-free administration was not that easy.

He made it clear that he was taking the first step of entering politics but would take the next step rather carefully without unveiling any definite plans for the future.

Narrating his experiences as an IAS officer and the shabby manner in which he was treated by the government because he stood up against corruption, Sagayam said people wanted him to enter politics.

After he resigned from the IAS, people were speculating a lot about him and even saying that he was a candidate of actor Rajinikanth though he had not even spoken to the superstar.

Since he did not want the youth power to go to waste, he had agreed to come into politics and bring changes in society.

Soon after Sagayam made the announcement, the political grapevine was replete with rumours of Sagayam joining hands with actor Kamal Haasan since he too was speaking about eliminating corruption from society.

SHORT TAKES



Health Secretary Dr J Radhakrishnan inaugurates three RO plants at the Tamil Nadu government multi-specialty Hospital, Chennai, been sponsored by the RCC Platinum Trust.

—DC

Tamil scholar statue unveiled in college

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR FEB. 22

A full-size bronze statue of P. Vridachalanar, a Tamil scholar, was unveiled at Navalar Na. Mu. Venkatasamy Nattar college here.

Vridachalanar was a former principal of Thamizhavel Umamaheswaranar Arts college and the founder of Navalar Na. Mu. Venkatasamy Nattar Arts College. He was instrumental in adding the quotes "Katranaitheerum arivum atralum" in the emblem of Chennai university. He contributed a lot to Tamil development for 30 years and served in various capacities in the senate and other bodies of Bharathidasan and Chennai universities.

Alumni of the Nattar college arranged for the installation of the statue. K. Thulasiah Vandayar, former MP and secretary and correspondent of Sri AVVM Pushpam College, Poondi, S.S.Palani Manickam, MP, S.N.M. Ubayathullah, former state minister, Sathu shanmuga adigalar of Palani adheenam, and Gunasekaran, former joint director of Tamil development participated in the function.

DMK suspends errant MLA

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 22

The DMK suspended K. Venkatesan, a former Puducherry MLA whose sudden resignation on Sunday added to the crisis of the Congress government led by V. Narayanaswamy, on Monday, while the party president M. K. Stalin vowed to go the people against BJP's 'murder of democracy.'

Venkatesan, who represented the Thattanchavady constituency in the Territorial Assembly, was suspended from the primary membership and all responsibilities of the party by its general secretary Duraimurugan.

Stalin, in a statement, said the BJP has done once again what it had been doing everywhere. He spoke in detail about the developments in Puducherry since the appointment of Kiran Bedi as Lieutenant Governor and the machinations of the BJP. He congratulated Narayanasamy for courageously saving democracy by explaining the BJP's chicanery and illegal activities in the Assembly before resigning from the Chief Minister's post.

TNCC President K. S. Alagiri said the Congress would return to power in Puducherry. In a statement, he pointed out that the BJP was rejected by the people of Puducherry and said that a lesson would be taught to the party in the next elections.

The Union Territory not being conferred with Statehood was a big drawback, said Dravidar

Yet another chapter in Pondy's political history of ruling dispensations collapsing

Puducherry, Feb. 22: The fall of the V. Narayanasamy-led Congress government on Monday is yet another chapter in the Union Territory's not so chequered political history with elected dispensations falling many a time either because of floor crossings or in fight between the parties constituting coalition governments. Endemic political instability was almost a rule in Puducherry more than an exception and there were instances of ministries falling like pack of cards during the last nearly five decades.

Only four governments had completed its full term, while six, including the Narayanasamy-led dispensation, had fallen.

The enforcement of the anti-defection law however brought floor crossings to an end in this former French colony although there was a stray case of defection by three members from AIADMK to DMK in the opposition bloc in 1985 who were disqualified.

Puducherry had governments for full term of five years only in 1985 (Congress government under leadership of Farook), 1991 (Congress ministry headed by V. Vaithilingam, present Lok

Kazhagam president K. Veeramani, adding that going back to the people was the right thing to do. Seeking justice from the

Sabha member), 2001 (Congress government headed by N. Rangasamy, now AINRC leader) and 2011 (AINRC government led by Rangasamy).

The governments that fell without completing the term were the one formed by DMK-CPI coalition (1969), AIADMK (1974 and 1977), DMK-Congress (1980), DMK-Janata Dal (1990) and now Narayanasamy-led Congress-DMK coalition.

The Government of Union Territory Act 1963 has provision for nominating three nominated members to the territorial Assembly having 30 elected members.

But it was only in 1985 was this facility used for the first time by the Congress government headed by M. O. H. Farook after 23 years since the Union Territory was formed in the wake of merger in 1962.

Friction between the chief minister and Lt Governor as was seen during the tenure of Narayanasamy was a rarity in the past.

The tussle between AIADMK Chief Minister S. Ramasamy in 1974 and the then Lt Governor Chhedi Lal was not as intense as it was between Narayanasamy and Kiran Bedi. PTI

people was the appropriate move as the BJP at the Centre would continue to give problems to the other parties.

Political prostitution, says Narayanasamy

From P1

Narayanasamy had organised an event a few weeks earlier to inaugurate the building once the reconstruction was over but the then Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi scuttled it, despite the government even printing invitations for the function. Bedi had said it cannot be opened without a Union Government representative as the reconstruction was carried out with central funds while it was the World Bank that funded the project.

To clear the stage of Congress government representatives for Modi, the BJP had been working for over two months with some top leaders from Karnataka visiting the Union Territory several times with some of them even camping there for a prolonged period. Among them were Union Minister of State Arjun Ram Meghwal and Rajya Sabha member and BJP national spokesperson Rajeev Chandrasekhar, who even flew into Puducherry by a chartered flight.

Apart from that, the BJP had appointed Nirmal Kumar Surana as in-charge of the party's affairs in the Union Territory. He has been staying in Puducherry and was spotted in the town soon after the Congress government lost the confi-



dence vote.

The team from Karnataka had taken rooms in hotels and were overseeing the operations carried out with uncanny precision with least consideration of the local political sentiments or democratic norms. By squeezing its way into the opposition camp, led by the NR Congress, the BJP has now left many MLAs and leaders in the alliance squirming as the local leaders fear facing their electorate back home.

Since the people of the former French colony have a secular and libertine outlook many MLAs feel that being seen as an ally of the BJP could be a setback in winning the seats again. It might make the task all more difficult as many constituencies have a sizeable number of people from the minority communities. Narayanasamy himself

set the tone for the collective reaction of the people of the Union Territory by calling the machinations that led to his government's fall as "political prostitution."

For, when the Congress formed the government in 2016, it had 15 MLAs of its own besides three from the DMK and an independent supporting it. Slowly the MLAs were made to resign and the Congress was weakened systematically to an extent that Narayanasamy could not even face the trust vote on Monday.

Whatever prompted the BJP to eye Puducherry, it could pull off the coup only because of the easy maneuverability that the small Union Territory with just 30 MLAs offered, though the national party might be gloating over the possibility of getting a toe hold in the impregnable South.

But observers in Puducherry say that it would be impossible for the BJP to win seats in the elections and would have to reckon with the three nominated seats that Bedi had created in the House. The only problem for the rival alliance is that it will have to win two more extra seats to get a majority. If it was 15 earlier, now they could have to win 17 as the BJP will open the account in the House with three members even without the elections.

BJP undermining democracy, says Raj CM Gehlot

Jaipur, Feb. 22: With the Narayanasamy government losing power in Puducherry, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Monday accused the BJP of grabbing power by destabilising Congress governments.

The Congress government in Puducherry fell on Monday after Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy resigned ahead of the confidence vote sought by him in the Assembly after his government was reduced to a minority due to a spate of resignations of party MLAs and a DMK legislator over the past few days. In a tweet, Gehlot said, "What has happened in Puducherry is most unfortunate and yet another case of how BJP is destabilising Congress governments to grab power through unethical means. First, they created problems in running the administration through the Lieutenant Governor and now this has happened."

"Luring Congress MLAs has been their modus operandi in all Congress ruled states. We saw this in Karnataka, MP and now in Puducherry. They tried it in Rajasthan but people of Rajasthan taught them a lesson," he said. Gehlot accused the BJP of undermining democracy in the country. "The people are watching what tactics BJP is adopting and the party will be taught a lesson by electorates in the next elections in Puducherry," the chief minister added. —PTI



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami takes part in the bhoomi pooja and Tirukalyana utsavam of Venkateshwara swami temple at Ulundurpet in Kallakurichi district on Monday.

—DC

Caste issue in south may ruin AIADMK's votebank

ARULOLI. M | DC
TIRUNELVELI, FEB. 22

The classification of seven sub-sects in the scheduled communities list as Devendrakula Vellalar may not turn the community members in favour of the AIADMK-BJP combine in the assembly election, thanks to the ongoing rift between the Tamilaga Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (TMMK) and Puthiya Tamilagam party, the two major parties representing the Devendrakula Vellalar vote bank in the state.

Devendrakula Vellalars, spread in the seven districts of Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Ramanathapuram, Pudukkottai, Thanjavur and Nagapattinam,

constitute around 17 per cent of the total number of electorates in the state. For the past 40 years, they have been demanding integration of the seven sub-sects - Kaladi, Pannadi, Devendrakulathan, Kudumban, Pallan, Kadaiyan and Vathiriyar, as 'Devendrakula Vellalars'.

"Both the Centre and state governments in a row had not addressed the demand appropriately, which ultimately resulted in some of these communities boycotting the by-election for the 30 assembly segments in 2019, dealing a major timely blow to major political parties. This election boycott made the ruling and other major political parties understand the seriousness of the issue. This

show of unity resulted in the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment introduce the scheduled caste order (Amendment) bill 2021 in Parliament," said Shanmuga Sudhakar, spokesperson, Tamilaga Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (TMMK), one of the two parties representing the Devendrakula Vellalars in the state.

TMMK founder president John Pandian, also had said that though his party awaits seat-sharing talks in the AIADMK-BJP alliance, they would be loyal to Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for the move. The AIADMK leadership also is hopeful of winning

Devendrakula Vellalar electorates in its favour in the assembly election.

"A section of the community, supporting Dr Krishnasamy's Puthiya Tamilagam (PT), in the southern districts, however, were not fully happy about the classification announced by the Prime Minister last week in Chennai in the presence of Chief Minister Palaniswami, as unlike the TMMK president John Pandian, PT leader Dr Krishnasamy, is against including Vathiriyar, one of the seven sub-sects into the Devendrakula Vellalar fold.

"We want only the six sub-castes barring 'Vathiriyar' to be classified as Devendrakula Vellalars," said Dr Krishnasamy. He

also said that Devendrakula Vellalars would not be happy on just the classification, as their major demand was delisting the community from the scheduled caste fold, by ensuring a special separate reservation of a minimum of six per cent. Dr Krishnasamy was also critical against TMMK leader John Pandian for welcoming the move of the Centre including the Vathiriyar section.

As the two major Devendrakula Vellalar parties in the AIADMK alliance are in conflict with each other, poll analysts guess that the AIADMK's strategy to get the entire Devendrakula Vellalar community votes in its favour, may not work out.

Now, Toda women take up eco-restoration drive

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, FEB. 22

Toda tribesmen here have taken up eco-restoration initiatives to develop eco-tourism in Pagalkodmund. In an initiative launched by the forest division here, Toda tribes women would be trained in vocational skills to help them earn a living, and thus pave a way for their economic empowerment.

Northey Kuttan alias Mani, president, Pagalkodmund tribal eco-tourism management committee, said that on the advice of the Nilgiris district forest division administration, it has been proposed to develop eco-tourism in Pagalkodmund to draw tourists to this scenic spot dominated by tribal communities.

To begin with, planting of native 'shola' tree saplings was taken up on Monday, to help spruce up the environment. The tribes here already planted around 270 Shola saplings in the past. Now, a nursery is being established to raise the native tree species and sell



A Toda tribal woman planting a native shola-tree sapling at Pagalkodmund Toda hamlet near Ooty.

—DC

them, besides planting them in the environs for eco-restoration purposes, he added.

"It has also been proposed to sensitise tourists on the need to promote native flora and the role of tourists in maintaining the health of the hill ecology, so that the ancient pristine charm of the

rural areas could be restored. The greening project is aimed to make Pagalkodmund Toda hamlet a model tribal hamlet for eco-restoration drive and related eco-tourism. Toda tribes women would also be trained in tailoring, knitting and other vocational activities," Kuttan added.

Centre revives Kanyakumari port

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR
IDC
CHENNAI, FEB. 22:

Social activists and civil society members of Kanyakumari district are up in arms over the Centre sudden-

ly reviving an old idea of developing a greenfield port in the district, which they thought has been abandoned, perhaps in view of the coming by-election to the Lok Sabha seat.

The proposed transshipment hub near Kanyakumari was a major election issue in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, during which the BJP candidate Pon Radhakrishnan had promised the voters that he would ensure that the project became a reality if he won the elections.

One of the reasons for

● The proposed transshipment hub near Kanyakumari was a major election issue in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, during which the BJP candidate Pon Radhakrishnan had promised the voters that he would ensure that the project became a reality if he won the elections.

Radhakrishnan losing the elections by a margin of 2.6 lakh votes to Congress candidate H. Vasanthakumar was said to be his overt advocacy of the project that many local environmentalists and social activists claimed would disturb the fragile ecosystem of the district.

Then, when there was no word about the project, the opponents of the scheme heaved a sigh of relief, hoping that it was dropped. But the latest newspaper advertisement calling for expression of interest from 'interested parties, port developers and shipping liners' has created panic over

the port coming up in the district.

Reacting to the advertisement, former chief secretary of Haryana, M. G. Devasahayam, who is now a resident of the district, shot off a missive to the chairman of the VOC Port Trust in Tuticorin that had called for the expression of interest through newspapers.

"Why is this environment destructive, worthless and anti-people project being revived again?" Devasahayam asked and demanded the withdrawal of the EoI notification. "Is the VOC Port Trust functioning as a political tool of the

ruling party to again polarize the people in the name of 'spurious development?' he wondered.

By-elections for the Lok Sabha constituency, necessitated by the untimely demise of Vasanthakumar last year, would be held along with the Assembly elections and those opposed to the port fear that it would be made into an election plank in the district that is even otherwise communally polarized.

Since there are groups in the district who favour the port project hoping that it would generate jobs in the district with a high level of literacy, the BJP could use it to get votes for its candidate. It will be an election that will see the BJP and Congress in a straight fight.

DMK protests against petrol, diesel price hike

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, FEB. 22

Members of the opposition DMK staged a demonstration against the hike in petrol and diesel prices and demanded to bring down the price hike immediately in different parts of Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai, Tiruvavur, Nagapattinam and Mayiladuthurai

districts on Monday. A group of DMK men belonging to the Tiruchy North district unit led by party's principal secretary K.N. Nehru staged a demonstration near Tiruchy collectorate, while partymen of Tiruchy South district led by Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi staged a similar demonstration at Anna Statue at Tiruchy. Among others

including K.N. Nehru and others spoke.

Later, Nehru told reporters that there would not be any benefit for the Cauvery delta farmers in the proposed interlinking Cauvery-Kundaruvai rivers, and said it will severely affect the traditional farmers. Moreover, this scheme was announced to gain in the forthcoming assembly elections.

Although two ministers represent the Tiruchy district in the state cabinet, most of the people's welfare measures particularly old age pension and marriage assistance schemes are not properly implemented, he added.

DMK members staged a demonstration in Thanjavur near the head post office protesting against a hike in

prices of petrol, diesel and gas cylinders. They carried gas cylinders with garlands to symbolise the hike in prices.

The agitation was led by Durai Chandrasekaran, Thiruvaiyaru MLA and district secretary of DMK. Thanjavur MLA C. Iraivan participated in the agitation. Similar agitations were held at Kumbakonam and Pattukkottai also.



Fiftyfive farmers from different districts of Tamil Nadu take part in a Isha Agro Movement Farm Tour in Coimbatore.

—DC

SHORT TAKES

AYODHYA AIRPORT
TO BE NAMED
AFTER LORD RAM

Lucknow Feb. 22: The under construction airport in Ayodhya will be named Maryada Purushottam Sriram Airport, Ayodhya after Lord Ram and a provision of ₹101 crore has been made for it in the budget presented in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly on Monday.

Besides the provision for the Ayodhya airport which will subsequently be made an international airport, the budget also provides for ₹2,000 crore for increasing the number of airstrips at Jewar Airport from 2 to 6.

Cities like Aligarh, Moradabad, Meerut will also be linked through air service soon, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath told reporters after the presentation of the budget by finance minister Suresh Khanna.

Under the Special Area Programme, a budget of ₹300 crore is proposed for special schemes of Purvanchal and a budget of ₹210 crore has been proposed for special schemes of Bundelkhand region.

Stressing on industrial and infrastructure development, a budgetary provision of ₹1,107 crore has been made for the Purvanchal Expressway Project, ₹1,492 crore for Bundelkhand Expressway Project and ₹860 crore for Gorakhpur Link Expressway Project.

PHOTOS OF COUPLE
IN GOVT CHOPPER
SPARK ROW IN MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB. 22

A couple did a ‘wedding’ photoshoot in a government chopper in Raipur triggering a security scare, officials said on Monday.

A video of the couple posing for a photoshoot in the helicopter on Monday went viral, causing flutter in the security establishment in Raipur.

Director of aviation department of Chhattisgarh government Nilam Namdev has constituted a 3-member committee headed by chief pilot Pankaj Jaiswal to probe the incident.

The committee has been asked to submit its report within a week.

“A 3-member committee has been constituted to probe the incident. Information available till now suggests that a driver in the state aviation department had opened the state hangar for the couple to do the photoshoot. He has been placed under suspension. Accountability will be fixed on the officers found responsible for the security lapse leading to the incident after the probe”, Namdev said.

One Sanket Sai and his wife, the newly married couple, had done photoshoots in wedding attire in the chopper on Sunday. The couple posed for the photoshoot inside and outside the helicopter.

Sanket is sarpanch of Dhandi Bahar village in Jashpur district in Chhattisgarh and is said to be a relative of the driver in the state aviation department Yogeswar Sai who allegedly led the couple to the hangar.

GUJARAT RS
BYPOLLS: BJP
WINS BOTH SEATS

Ahmedabad, Feb. 22: BJP nominees Dineshchandra Anavadiya and Rambhai Mokariya were on Monday declared elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat as the opposition Congress did not field candidates for the two vacant seats, one of which was held by its veteran leader Ahmed Patel.

The two seats had fallen vacant following the demise of the sitting MPs belonging to the Congress and the BJP.

One of the seats was held by veteran Congressman Ahmed Patel since 1993 till his death on November 25 last year due to complications related to Covid-19. The other seat fell vacant as BJP’s Abhay Bharadwaj, a first time MP elected to the RS in 2019, too, died on December 1 due to the Coronavirus infection.

Returning C.B. Pandya declared Anavadiya and Mokariya as elected uncontested from the two seats on Monday, which was the last date of withdrawal of forms.

Two dummy candidates of the BJP, Rajnikant Patel and Kirit Solanki, withdrew their nominations on Saturday.

With the bypoll to the two seats scheduled to be held separately, the Congress, decided not to field any candidate.

Bomb diffused



Bomb disposal squad prepares to defuse an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in Srinagar on Monday, which was detected at a bridge, near the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway near Pantha Chowk. Central Reserve Police Force personnel, patrolling the highway, found a tin can by the busy roadside at Nowgam, a police official said.

— PTI

86.3% of new Covid cases are
from 5 states including Maha

7th minister, 35 govt employees test +ve ahead of Maha budget session

FROM PG 1

During the meeting, the ongoing vaccination drive and the steps needed to check further spread of the virus were discussed.

The possible assistance to be offered to the affected states was also discussed in the meeting, senior officials said.

Haryana has announced to open schools for classes 3-5 from Wednesday while students for classes 6-8 will start going to school from February 1. Uttar Pradesh too has announced to reopen schools from March 1 though parents are still uncomfortable with the idea of letting children attend physical classes.

Meanwhile, nearly 1,100 people travelled between Banihal and Baramulla railway stations as train services resumed in Kashmir after remaining suspended for around 11 months due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Two trains chugged on the railway tracks in Kashmir as the railway authorities resumed the services partially. The Railways has been

MEHBOOBA MUFTI
RE-ELECTED PDP
PRESIDENT

Srinagar, Feb. 22: Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti was on Monday unanimously re-elected as president of the PDP for a three-year term.

Mufti’s name was proposed by senior leader Ghulam Nabi Lone Hanjura and seconded by Khurshid Alam, a party spokesperson said after the election. Senior PDP leader Abdul Rehman Veeri was the chairman of party election board, he said.

The spokesperson said the party’s electoral college in Jammu had earlier unanimously re-elected Mufti as party chief.

Senior leader Surinder Chaudhary was the returning officer for the election. Talking to reporters, Mufti said Jammu and Kashmir was going through tough times and that she will continue to lead the PDP on the mission for which it was established. “The PDP was established for raising the voice of the people and problems they face. We will continue to do that,” she said.

In response to a question, the PDP president said, “If they (police) think that I should be arrested for fighting for peoples’ rights, let them do their duty. I will continue to do my work.”

Asked about restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, Mufti said, “It is not for me to decide. The Centre has to restore it.”

People in Kasargod fume
as K’taka ups restrictions

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 22

With the Karnataka authorities scaling up restrictions on transit passengers from Kerala, people living in Kasargod and adjoining areas are facing a harrowing time.

People of Kasargod, the northernmost district of Kerala, depend on hospitals in Mangaluru for their medical requirements. Besides, a large number of students from Kerala are also pursuing higher education in various institutions across Karnataka.

The Karnataka authorities have sealed the major borders in view of the

increasing the number of train services in a graded manner.

Already more than 65% trains are running. Over 250 plus trains were added in January alone

Gangrape accused held after 22yrs

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, FEB. 22

In a breakthrough in the 1999 Anjana Mishra gangrape case that largely contributed to the end of the Congress rule in Odisha, the state police with the help of its Maharashtra counterparts has apprehended prime accused Vivekananda alias Biban Biswal, who was absconding for 22 years.

The accused was held on Sunday from Lonavala where he was working as a plumber, the Odisha police said on Monday.

Briefing media persons here, Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Twin City Commissioner of Police

● **ON MONDAY**, Kerala reported 2,212 new cases of Covid-19. As of now the state has 55,468 positive cases, over 2.42 lakh people are under surveillance including 2.33 under home/institutional quarantine.

high prevalence of Covid cases in Kerala. The Karnataka authorities have stated that those who wish to enter the state have to produce Covid-19 negative certificate through an RT-PCR test taken 72 hours before their crossover. There is also heavy deployment of health and police personnel at the four borders to screen the people enter-

ing the state. The restrictions have led to angry protests by a section of people in Kasargod. On Monday morning workers of the Congress-led UDF staged a demonstration on the national highway and blocked traffic at Talapady. The protestors did not allow vehicles coming from Karnataka to enter Kerala for a couple of hours even as the authorities on the other side of the border intercepted people and asked them to produce Covid negative certificates.

The blockade and checking by officials resulted in long queues of vehicles on either side of the interstate check post.

more weeks with the Delhi Disaster Management Authority on Monday deciding to maintain status quo on the number of passengers, sources said.

Dr Sudhanshu Sarangi on Monday said the accused had changed his name to Jalandar Swain and was staying in Aamby Valley in Lonavala near Mumbai. “Biban had mentioned Naranpur (Cuttack) in his permanent address. When we initiated an inquiry, we found out that no such person belongs to Naranpur. He had a permanent job, Aadhaar card and bank account there. He was in contact with his family members and had asked his family to get a death certificate in his name to avoid police detention in future,” the CP informed.

Dr Sarangi said that a special mission under the title of ‘Operation Silent Viper’ was launched three

months ago with a team of three police personnel, including Cuttack deputy commissioner of police (DCP) Prateek Singh. On February 19, a special team led by Badambadi police station inspector Rashmi Ranjan Mohapatra left for Mumbai to arrest the accused.

“Odisha police with the help of Maharashtra counterparts launched operation ‘Aamby Valley.’ The cops got to know that a person named Swain works in Aamby Valley as a mechanic and stays in a staff quarters two and a half km away. Seeing the police, the accused tried to escape. However, the cops managed to arrest him

and brought him here,” Dr Sarangi said.

After the witnesses recognised the accused Biban Biswal, he was produced before the Special CBI Court here which sent him to judicial custody.

“The accused has been handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation which investigated the case. The next course of action will be taken by the investigating agency,” the senior cop added.

On the intervening night of January 9-10, 1999 Anjana was gang-raped by three persons near Baranga while she was going to Cuttack from Bhubaneswar along with a journalist-friend in a car.

Mr Chouhan who held a meeting to review situation in the state directed the collectors in the districts bordering Maharashtra to strictly implement guidelines issued for the pandemic and conduct thermal screening and RT-PCR tests on the people coming from the neighbouring state.

He asked them to be vigilant while granting permission to organise big fairs and religious festivals in the areas bordering Maharashtra.

Mr Chouhan also ordered the collectors in all the 52 districts to constitute crisis management committees to deal with the situation.

MASKS MADE
COMPULSORY IN
BHOPAL, INDORE

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, FEB. 22

Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday ordered coronavirus tests for people entering into MP from Maharashtra in the wake of sudden surge in Covid-19 cases in the neighbouring state.

Mr Chouhan who held a meeting to review situation in the state directed the collectors in the districts bordering Maharashtra to strictly implement guidelines issued for the pandemic and conduct thermal screening and RT-PCR tests on the people coming from the neighbouring state.

He asked them to be vigilant while granting permission to organise big fairs and religious festivals in the areas bordering Maharashtra.

Mr Chouhan also ordered the collectors in all the 52 districts to constitute crisis management committees to deal with the situation.

4G services likely to
be suspended in
J&K in March, April

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 22

Security agencies are once again likely to recommend suspension of 4G services in J&K during March-April in view of specific Intelligence inputs that Pakistan-based terror outfits were planning “major infiltration and terror attacks” in the Valley and along the Indo-Pak border areas.

The Centre had decided to restore 4G services in J&K last month after a gap of nearly a year. These 4G services were restricted by the Centre, on recommendation of security agencies, after Article 370 was revoked in J&K in August 2019. Anticipating that the decision to scrap Article 370 could trigger large-scale unrest in the Valley it was decided to restrict usage of 4G services.

So though these services have now been restored security and Intelligence agencies are closely monitoring the situation in the Valley. Intelligence agencies said that though the situation as of now was under control but could deteriorate during the coming season.

Intelligence agencies have received specific inputs that a large number of militants, close to 500, were waiting at launch

● **THE CENTRE** had decided to restore 4G services in J&K last month after a gap of nearly a year.

pads along the Indo-Pak to infiltrate into India with onset of summer. Cell phone serves, particular messaging plays a crucial role in terror activities hence security forces are skeptical that 4G services may once again have to be suspended in case violence in the Valley escalates in the coming days.

“There is concrete information with us that major infiltration and terror attacks are being planned during March-April. Cell phones play a major role in terror operations so if security situation deteriorates in the coming days then we will have suspend these 4G services again,” a senior Intelligence official said.

Kashmir Valley witnessed a relatively peaceful winter this year with a sharp drop in number of terror incidents. But things, security official feel, could change with the onset of summers for which adequate preventive measures like strengthening anti-infiltration grid along the border areas and increasing deployment with the Valley were being done.

Rahul: Centre will
not roll back farm
laws unless forced

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 22

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday called for intensifying the farmers’ agitation saying that the Narendra Modi led-BJP government at the Centre was not going to roll back the three farm laws unless it is forced.

The Congress leader who was addressing a public meeting held as part of Tractor Rally held in his constituency Wayanad, said there was a reason why Modi was not withdrawing the three laws. “The reason is clear. These three laws are designed to destroy the agricultural system in India and give the entire business to two or three of Narendra Modi’s friends,” he said.

Gandhi said the world is watching the farmers struggle very closely. Even international pop stars have commented on the farmers’ stir. But the government in Delhi is

unable to feel the pain of the farmers.

“Agriculture is the only business that belongs to Bharat Mata and the government wants to snatch this from the farmers,” he said.

Earlier, Rahul Gandhi led a tractor rally from Thirikaipetta to Muttill in Wayanad to protest against the farm laws.

At a separate meeting of Kudumbasree women self help groups, Rahul Gandhi took a dig at Prime Minister for ridiculing MGNREGA.

When he took office in 2014 he ridiculed MGNREGA. But later he was forced to accept that the rural job guarantee scheme held the poor in good stead during Covid pandemic.

Gandhi who was addressing the meeting of the self help groups Poothadi grama panchayat, said the self help groups and MGNREGA were brought by the UPA government to empower the people of the country.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi takes out a tractor rally from Thirikaipetta to Muttill in Wayanad district. — PTI

POLITICAL | CHARGE BJP leaders says Cong lost Puducherry after Rahul visited the UT

‘Midas touch’: BJP takes dig at Rahul again

New Delhi, Feb. 22: As the Congress government in Puducherry fell after losing majority, senior BJP ministers and leaders took a dig at Rahul Gandhi saying it was due to his “Midas touch” that the party lost power in the Union Territory soon after his visit.

The Congress government in Puducherry fell on Monday after Chief Minister V. Narayanamsy resigned ahead of the confidence vote in the Assembly with the coalition ministry reduced to a minority due to a spate of resignations of party MLAs and a DMK legislator recently.

Seizing on the development, several BJP leaders, state functionaries and ministers took a

dig at the grand old party and Rahul Gandhi’s leadership.

In a sarcastic tweet, Union minister Piyush Goyal said Rahul Gandhi’s Puducherry visit to strengthen his party has “gone well”.

“Congress loses power in Puducherry, reducing its presence to just 3 states, along with trivial existence in Maharashtra & Jharkhand. Few years from now, Congress will only exist in the books of history,” he said.

Another Union minister, Harsh Vardhan, also took a dig at the former Congress chief, saying, “The marvel of Sh @RahulGandhi Ji has worked again!”

“After losing out Puducherry, @INCIndia’s presence has

shrunk to just 3 states - Punjab, Rajasthan & Chhattisgarh, apart from being fringe players in Jharkhand & Maharashtra. Clean sweep on the cards it seems!” he tweeted.

Reacting to the development, BJP’s IT cell chief Amit Malviya said Rahul Gandhi went to Puducherry and “true to his midas touch, Congress loses its government in the UT!”.

After Congress lost its government in Puducherry, its presence has shrunk to just three states - Punjab, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh and in Jharkhand and Maharashtra, it is as good as on the margin, Malviya said.

“It’s just a matter of time before Rahul Gandhi achieves, which no other Gandhi has,” he

tweeted. BJP MP Rajeev Chandrasekhar claimed that Rahul Gandhi is “effectively doing a job of dismantling” the Congress all over the country and now in Puducherry too.

“Congress is left in 3 states only and in rest of India survives as B/C-teams of and on the coattails of parties like Shiv Sena, DMK,” he said in a tweet.

BJP general secretary C T Ravi said, “Rahul Gandhi goes to Puducherry, and the rest is history!!!”

Several BJP functionaries at the state level also took jibes at the Congress over the fall of government in Puducherry.

BJP leader from Andhra Pradesh Rameshnaidu Nagothu said after Puducherry, BJP

workers invite Rahul Gandhi for a visit to West Bengal and Assam. Both Assam and West Bengal are poll bound.

BJP MLA from Maharashtra Siddhartha Shirole took a dig at Rahul Gandhi saying his leadership is helping millions of Indians “fulfil their dream of Congress Mukht Bharat”.

“A feat that no other Gandhi family member could ever achieve,” he added.

Khushbu Sundar, who recently switched to the BJP from the Congress, took a swipe at her old party, tweeting, “Karma comes back. You reap what you sow.”

It was not just the BJP that took potshots at the Congress after it lost power in Puducherry. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

OFFICER SHOT AT
McDees, KIDNAP
SUSPECT DIES

Lonoke (US), Feb. 22: An Arkansas police officer was hospitalised in stable condition after being shot during a confrontation at a McDonald's restaurant with a man who was kidnapping a 14-year-old North Carolina girl.

The suspect died from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound on Sunday after fleeing from authorities, according to the Arkansas State Police. The girl was found safe.

Two Lonoke, Arkansas, police officers confronted the driver of an SUV parked at the fast-food restaurant Saturday night after the vehicle was connected to a North Carolina child abduction case. Lonoke is located about 27 miles east of Little Rock.

EVACUATION
AMID FLOODS IN
INDONESIA

Bekasi (Indonesia), Feb. 22: Thousands of residents are being evacuated on the outskirts of Indonesia's capital amid flooding after the Citarum River embankment broke.

Bekasi district in Indonesia's West Java province have experienced flooding since Saturday because of heavy rain. "Some embankments are broken, not only from the river embankment but also from the irrigation embankments," Public Works and Housing Minister Basuki Hadimuljono said Monday. Raditya Jati, spokesperson for the National Disaster Mitigation Agency, said that more than 28,000 residents in four villages in Bekasi district and 34 villages in Karawang district are affected.

CHILD SEX ABUSE
TRIAL OF EX-U.S.
PRIEST PUT OFF

Oecusse (East Timor), Feb. 22: East Timor abruptly postponed the trial on Monday of a defrocked American priest facing allegations he sexually abused young girls at a children's shelter he ran in a remote enclave in East Timor—one of the most Catholic places on Earth. Soon after Richard Daschbach, a former missionary from Pennsylvania, arrived in the courtroom, judges said they needed more time to make revisions to documents and asked the 84-year-old defendant to return on Tuesday.

PROTESTS
SWELL IN
MYANMAR

Yangon, Feb. 22: Protesters gathered in Myanmar's biggest city on Monday despite the ruling junta's thinly veiled threat to use lethal force if people answered a call for a general strike opposing the military takeover three weeks ago.

Despite roadblocks around the US Embassy in Yangon, more than a thousand protesters gathered there, while 20 military trucks with riot police had arrived nearby. The crowds were gathering after supporters of the Civil Disobedience Movement, a loosely organised group leading the resistance, called for people to unite on Monday's date for a "Spring Revolution." The junta warned against the general strike in a public announcement carried last Sunday on state television broadcaster MRTV. "It is found that the protesters have raised their incitement towards riot and anarchy mob on the day of 22 February. Protesters are now inciting the people, especially emotional teenagers and youths, to a confrontation path where they will suffer the loss of life," the onscreen text said in English, replicating the spoken announcement in Burmese. The junta's statement also blamed criminals for past protest violence, with the result that "the security force members had to fire back." Three protesters have been shot dead so far. The protest movement has embraced nonviolence and only occasionally gotten into showing matches with police and thrown bottles at them when provoked. In Yangon, trucks cruised the streets Sunday night blaring warnings against attending gatherings of five or more people. A ban on such gatherings was issued shortly after the coup but not widely enforced as cities saw large daily demonstrations.

Angry youth rattle Spain in
support of jailed rap artist

Demand roll back of Public Security Law passed by the previous admin

Barcelona, Feb. 22: The imprisonment of a rap artist for his music praising terrorist violence and insulting the Spanish monarchy has set off a powder keg of pent-up rage this week in the southern European country. The arrest of Pablo Hasél has brought thousands to the streets for different reasons. Under the banner of freedom of expression, many Spaniards strongly object to putting an artist behind bars for his lyrics and tweets. They are clamoring for Spain's left-wing government to fulfil its promise and roll back the Public Security Law passed by the previous conservative administration that was used to prosecute Hasél and other artists.

Hasél's imprisonment to serve a nine-month sentence on Tuesday has also tapped into a well of frustration among Spain's youths, who have the highest unemployment rate in the European Union. Four in every 10 eligible workers under 25 years old are without a job. "I think that what we are experiencing now with the cases of Pablo Hasél (...) and other rappers politically detained by this regime is a brutal attack against the freedom of speech," 26-year-old student Pablo Castilla said during a protest in Barcelona. "The protests are being brutally repressed by the allegedly progressive national government and the Catalan government. "They are attacking us youngsters because we



A man throws a road sign against police officers protecting a national police station during clashes following a protest condemning the arrest of rap singer Pablo Hasél in Barcelona, on Sunday.

— AP

are showing our anger."

For many, Hasél's case also represents what they perceive as a heavy-handed reaction by a state whose very structure is in need of deep reform. Hasél's lyrics that strike at King Felipe VI and his father, King Emeritus Juan Carlos I, have connected with a growing public debate on the future of Spain's parliamentary monarchy. Unquestioned outside fr-

inge circles of the Left until the past decade, the royal house has been plagued by financial scandal that has reached Juan Carlos himself. Many Spaniards were aghast when the former monarch left Spain for the United Arab Emirates amid a court investigation into his alleged fiscal improprieties. As well as shouting its support for Hasél, a crowd that gathered in Madrid on Saturday

chanted "Where is the change? Where is the progress?" and "Juan Carlos de Borbón, womaniser and thief." The debate has caused tensions inside Spain's left-wing coalition government.

While Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and his Socialist Party back the parliamentary monarchy Spain has had since the end of Francisco Franco's dictatorship in the 1970s,

their minor partner, the upstart United We Can party, wants to get rid of the monarchy and has supported this week's protests for Hasél despite their violent turn.

The anti-monarchic streak in the protests cuts across Spain. But in Hasél's home region of Catalonia, an already tense political climate appears to be magnifying the uproar.

— AP

Italian envoy
killed in DR
Congo attack

Kinshasa, Feb. 22: The Italian ambassador to Congo, an Italian carabinieri police officer and their Congolese driver were killed Monday in an attack on a UN convoy in an area that is home to myriad rebel groups, the Foreign Ministry and local people said. The ambush occurred as the convoy was travelling from Goma, Congo's eastern regional capital, to visit a World Food Programme school feeding project in Rutshuru, the UN agency said in a statement. WFP said it was seeking information from local authorities, as the ambush occurred on a road that had previously been cleared for travel without security escorts.

Luca Attanasio, Italy's ambassador to the country since 2017, carabinieri officer Vittorio Iacovacci and their driver were killed. Other members of the convoy were injured, WFP said. The attack occurred in the territory of Nyiragongo, in North Kivu, the same area, known as the "three antennas," where two Britons were kidnapped by unidentified armed men in 2018, said Mambo Kaway, president of a local civil society group. "There were five people aboard

the vehicle, including the Italian ambassador," Kaway said.

"The driver died after being shot with several bullets, and others were wounded," he said. "The situation is very tense," he added. The wounded were taken to a nearby UN hospital. The North Kivu governor, Carly Nzanzu Kasivita, said that the vehicles were taken hostage and escorted into the bush and that when local people saw them, they alerted the authorities. The Congolese army and park guards for Virunga National Park came to the rescue, he said.

"There was an exchange of fire. The attackers fired at the bodyguard and the ambassador," the governor said, adding that the ambassador later died from his wounds. Attanasio, a 43-year-old career diplomat, leaves a wife and three young children. The attack, a few kilometres north of the regional capital of Goma, was just next to the Virunga National Park. Last month gunmen shot and killed at least six rangers in the Rutshuru area of the park.

Marie Tumba Nzenza, Minister of Foreign Affairs, sent her condolences

Stop smearing CPC, halt support
to separatist forces: China tells US

Beijing, Feb. 22: China on Monday urged the US to stop "smearing" the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) and its one-party political system, lift sanctions on trade and halt Washington's backing of "separatist forces in Taiwan, Tibet, Hong Kong and Xinjiang."

In his annual speech at the Lanting Forum, focusing on China-US ties, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the Biden administration should adjust the hardline policy pursued by former President Donald Trump towards Beijing to check its growing influence.

We have no intention to challenge or replace the United States. We are ready to have peaceful coexistence and seek common development with the United States, Wang said.

Likewise, we hope the United States will respect

● **CHINA ON** Monday expressed its support for India in hosting this year's BRICS summit and said it will work with New Delhi to strengthen the cooperation among the five-member grouping of emerging economies.

● **India has assumed the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) Chairmanship for 2021 and is set to hold this year's summit.**

● **On February 19, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar launched India's BRICS 2021 website at the BRICS Secretariat at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan in New Delhi.**

China's core interests, national dignity, and rights to development. We urge the United States to stop smearing the CPC and China's political system, stop conning at or even supporting the erroneous words and actions of separatist forces for 'Taiwan independence', and stop undermining China's sovereignty and security on internal affairs concerning Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet, he said.

We hope that the US side will adjust its policies as

soon as possible, among others, remove unreasonable tariffs on Chinese goods, lift its unilateral sanctions on Chinese companies and research and educational institutes, and abandon irrational suppression of China, he said.

The relations between China and the US are at an all time low. The two countries are currently engaged in a bitter confrontation over various issues, including trade, the origins of the novel Coronavirus pandemic, the communist

giant's aggressive military moves in the disputed South China Sea and human rights. US President Joe Biden who spoke to his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping for over two hours in his first phone call on February 11 later said there would be repercussions for China's human rights abuses and he made the message clear to his Chinese counterpart in his talks.

In a CNN town hall on February 17, Biden said he stressed to Xi during their long conversation that the US would continue to assert its role as a voice for human rights on the world stage, including at the United Nations and other international agencies.

We must speak up for human rights. It's who we are, the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* quoted Biden as saying.

— PTI



Jeremy Winningham cleans snow from the windshield as his daughter Courtney drives at Rice Lake, Wisconsin on Saturday.

— AFP

U.S. HOSPITALS
GRAPPLE WITH
WATER CRUNCH

Houston, Feb. 22: Hospitals across the South grappled with water shortages as the region carried on with recovery efforts in the wake of a devastating winter storm, and the weather offered a balmy respite — temperatures as high as the mid-60s.

At the height of the storm on Sunday, hospitals were left scrambling to care for patients amid record cold, snow and ice that battered parts of the country more accustomed to going through winter with light jackets and short sleeves.

The icy blast ruptured water mains, knocked out power to millions of utility customers and contributed to at least 76 deaths — half of which occurred in Texas.

At least seven people died in Tennessee and four in Portland, Oregon.

— AP

COSMIC | TRIP Hayley Arceneaux will launch later this year with a billionaire

Bone cancer survivor to go into orbit

Cape Canaveral, Feb. 22: After beating bone cancer, Hayley Arceneaux figures rocketing into orbit on SpaceX's first private flight should be a piece of cosmic cake.

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital announced Monday that the 29-year-old physician assistant — a former patient hired last spring — will launch later this year alongside a billionaire who's using his purchased spaceflight as a charitable fundraiser.

Arceneaux will become the youngest American in space — beating NASA record-holder Sally Ride by over two years — when she blasts off this fall with entrepreneur Jared Isaacman and two yet-to-be-chosen contest winners.

She'll also be the first to launch with a prosthesis. When she was 10, she had surgery at St. Jude to replace her knee and get a titanium rod in her left thigh bone. She still limps and suffers occasional leg pain, but has been cleared for flight by SpaceX. She'll serve as the crew's medical officer. "My battle with cancer really prepared me for space travel," Arceneaux said in an interview with *The Associated Press*. "It made me tough, and then also I think it really taught me to expect the unexpected and go along for the ride." She wants to show her young patients and other cancer survivors that "the sky is not even the limit anymore."

"It's going to mean so much to these kids to see a survivor in space," she said. Isaacman announced his space mission February 1, pledging to raise \$200 million for St. Jude, half of that his own contribution. As the flight's self-appointed commander, he offered one of the four SpaceX Dragon capsule seats to St. Jude. Without alerting the staff, St. Jude chose Arceneaux from among the "scores" of hospital and fundraising employees who had once been patients and could represent the next generation, said Rick Shadyac, president of St. Jude's fundraising organisation. Arceneaux was at home in Memphis, Tennessee, when she got the

"out of the blue" call in January asking if she'd represent St. Jude in space. Her immediate response: "Yes! Yes! Please!" But first she wanted to run it past her mother in St. Francisville, Louisiana. (Her father died of kidney cancer in 2018.) Next she reached out to her brother and sister-in-law, both of them aerospace engineers in Huntsville, Alabama, who "reassured me how safe space travel is."

A lifelong space fan who embraces adventure, Arceneaux insists those who know her won't be surprised. She's plunged on a bungee swing in New Zealand and ridden camels in Morocco. And she loves roller-coasters. Isaacman,

who flies fighter jets for a hobby, considers her a perfect fit. "It's not all supposed to be about getting people excited to be astronauts someday, which is certainly cool," Isaacman, 38, said last week.

— AP

to respect their engagements, including the refusal of taking into account the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights." Navalny, 44, an anti-corruption investigator and Putin's most prominent critic, was arrested in Moscow last month.

— AP

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION AND WATER SUPPLY DEPARTMENT SATHYAMANGALAM MUNICIPALITY STATE TENDER (Two Cover System) CORRIGENDUM/22.2.2021			
Due to Administrative reasons the following corrections are made in this office Tender Notice Dated:19.02.2021 published on 19.02.2021 in all Editions of Tamilnadu for the works as mentioned below.			
Name of the Work : Providing Internal Plumbing for House Service Connection both Domestic and Commercial under UGSS to Sathyamangalam Municipality.			
Last date for receipt of Tender		Date of Opening of Tender	
For	Read	For	Read
From 19.02.2021 to 05.03.2021	From 19.02.2021 to 10.03.2021	05.03.2021 at 3.30 PM	10.03.2021 at 3.30 PM
DIPR/1313/Tender/2021		Commissioner, Sathyamangalam Municipality.	

aavin THE TAMIL NADU COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LIMITED SHOLINGANALLUR DAIRY : CHENNAI - 119 TENDER NOTICE	
Sealed tenders are invited from the tenderers for the Maintenance of Garden work by deploying 12 Nos of workers at Sholinganallur dairy for 24 months for the year 2021-2023.	
Tender documents can be obtained from the office of the TCMFP Ltd, Rajiv Gandhi Salai, Sholinganallur, Chennai -119 from 23.02.2021 to 10.03.2021 by paying Rs. 590/- inclusive of all tax. Rs. 100/- has to be paid extra for getting it by post. Tender documents can also be downloaded from the designated website www.tenders.tn.gov.in and www.aavinmilk.com at free of cost. Pre - bid meeting will be held on 05.03.2021 at 3.00 PM. The last date for submission of tender through e-tender in the www.tntenders.gov.in website or at the Office of The Managing Director, 3rd Floor, No. 3A, Pasumpun Muthuramalinganar Salai, Nandanam, Chennai - 35 is on 11.03.2021 at 3.00 PM and the same will be opened on the same day at 3.30 PM before the tenderers / their representatives.	
DIPR/ 1311/TENDER/2021	DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER (DG)

DECCAN Chronicle

23 FEBRUARY 2021

Withdraw restrictions on academic webinars

In the pre-Covid-19 era, governments used the visa as a tool to prevent individuals from certain countries from taking part in educational, cultural or sporting engagements. India cut a sorry figure when it showed the world that it was ready to demonise an entire nation for political reasons. At other times, it was particular individuals who were targeted for the views they held, regardless of their country.

But what we have just seen is a whole new ballgame. A January 15 order by the education ministry that recently came to light asked all government entities, including publicly funded educational institutions and universities, to “seek approval” of the “administrative secretary” of the concerned department/ministry for organising any “online/virtual international conferences/seminar/training etc”.

On the other hand, those meant to confer approval were required to ensure that the subject matter of an event did not relate to the “security of the State, border, the Northeast states, UT (Union territory) of J&K, or any other issues which are clearly/purely related to India’s internal matters”.

Has the government gone totally insane? Or is this just a way of imposing thought control through the backdoor because we are not — last heard — a country with a totalitarian constitution in which the single ruling party or dictatorial agency (the military, for instance) must decide and control everything, including who hears what and who says what?

In the Covid era, webinars became the lifeblood of intellectual and scientific interactions and exchange of ideas among peers internationally, and it is this which is being sought to be curbed, forcing Indian scholars and students in all fields to be shut in without being able to take recourse to the latest findings and thinking in the various domains around the world. In short, the very idea of discussion is being pushed into a room and the door banged shut in order to please Big Brother.

It is no surprise that the scientific community is not pleased. In a letter to education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal (and others), the president of the Indian Academy of Sciences, Partha Majumder, had called the order “too constraining” for the advancement of science in the country. He has also raised the valid point that frequently, even for domestic webinars, foreign scholars of repute, including Nobel laureates, are invited as interlocutors and discussants as exchanges with them are of extraordinary benefit to our own scholars and students. Are such forums to be classified as foreign?

Besides, even if we shut the doors on international experts, will Indians, when they are discussing crucial issues of science and other fields of scholarship, be wholly free to talk about issues for which the sanction-giving authority must specially look out? The answer seems fairly clear. Indeed, it is likely that it won’t be before long that private institutions of knowledge too will be brought under the mischief of the order.

The instruction must be withdrawn lock, stock and barrel. Seeing that the heads of scientific institutions representing over 1,500 top scientists of the country reacted publicly, principal scientific adviser K. Vijayaraghavan and secretary (technology) Ashutosh Sharma have hinted at a modification of the order. That isn’t enough, the whole thing must be scrapped. It is odd that that the PSA, a man of science, is not repelled by the tone and the meaning of the entire directive.

Cyborgs of tennis

Novak Djokovic, one of the three knights of modern tennis, turned on his best game on the hard court at the Rod Laver arena he can call his own backyard for having won nine times and never having been beaten in an Australian Open final. His opponent Daniil Medvedev was so much in awe of the champion that he calls him a “cyborg of tennis” alongside Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, who between them have won 58 Grand Slams and 15 of the last 16. And is there a more accurate yardstick than Grand Slam titles to measure who among the three is going to be judged as the greatest tennis player of the professional era?

The Serbian’s spotless returns of serve on a cool Melbourne night could be rated as his greatest weapon in the dismantling of a young challenger even as he played every ground stroke as if he were indeed armed with superhuman qualities. If tennis is all about eliminating errors, then Djokovic is just that champion. Not a crowd favourite because of the stand he has taken on various issues and because he called for leniency from the hard quarantine imposed on all visiting players before the Australian Open, Djokovic also had to battle many who were not chanting “Ole, ole, ole” in his support.

Naomi Osaka is the emerging great of the women’s game who won her fourth Grand Slam in a manner reminiscent of the dominating tennis of Serena Williams, who she beat in the semis before demolishing Jennifer Brady in the final. The youngster may have victories that favour the hard courts of the Australian and US Opens but, on the evidence of her Melbourne showing, she may need only an attitudinal change to win on grass and clay. Having once said that to become a tennis legend was her life goal, the 23-year-old is well on her way now with a polished game and a record of Grand Slams to lend greater weight to the voice to speak up on sensitive social subjects that she has never been afraid of.

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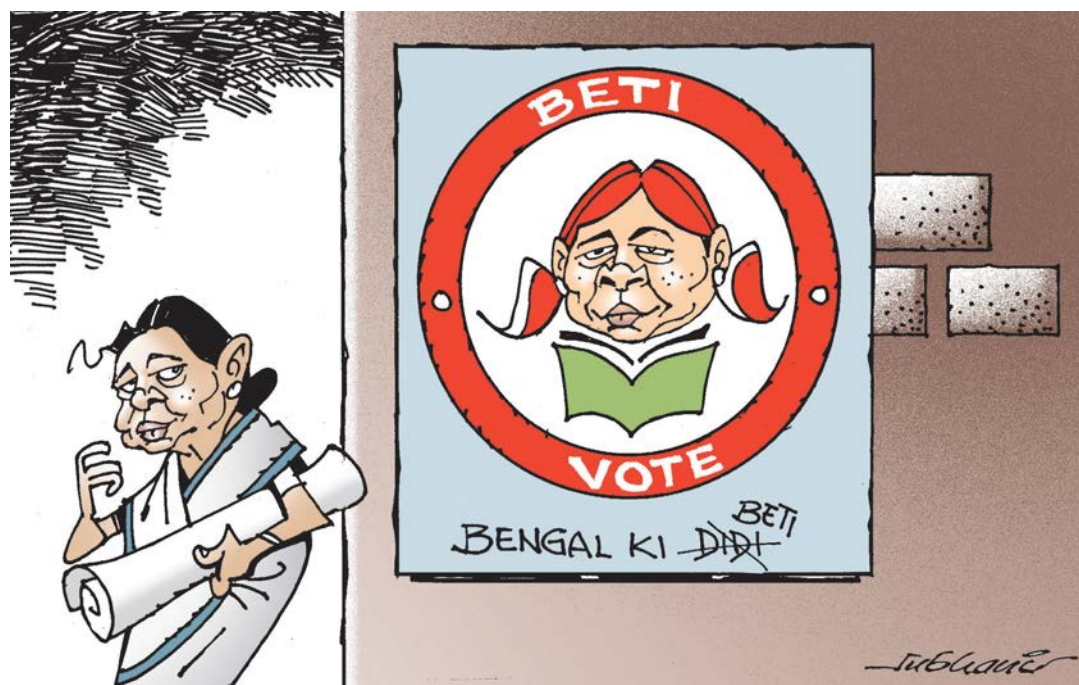
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Subhani



Hashtag power: Twitter, govt in fight for survival



Shashidhar Nanjundaiah

An Editors Guild of India webinar on February 12 reporting from the Naxalite badlands featured song videos, pornography and abusive language. Now, why would an organised group of “unknown persons” like to cyber-bomb a seminar? Perhaps the theme was inconvenient? As the guild pointed out later, the seminar would talk about the excesses of the government and the struggles of the tribals — or Adivasis — at the hands of the left-wing extremists. Open webinars are vulnerable to mischief anyway, and this writer has himself faced tough, disruptive questions during them. But such is the nature of free speech. Where does free speech end? Would we consider the disruption of the guild’s webinar also free speech, or would we find it unreasonable enough to be restricted? Should the guild be held responsible for those who misused the platform?

Gatherings, virtual or physical, promote mobilisation of thought, and that can be problematic. That is why the recent spat between the Centre and Twitter has rich meanings for a researcher.

The Twitter-government conflict is a fight for survival. In Twitter’s constitutional framework, economic survival is founded on a business model of big numbers and a systematic process of ensuring openness and diversity of voices. Let us remember, to be fair, that Twitter’s understanding of freedom of speech is rather American. The courts there allow restrictions posed only from a clear and explicit call to violence or breach of national security.

A landmark judgment in the 2014 Elonis vs US case stated that an explicit

threat includes one where “reasonable people hearing it will perceive it to be a threat”. No amendments were made, however, in what free speech meant on the social media. Of course, national security is a reasonable restriction in American law too. But the courts relentlessly uphold the free speech rights of an individual. Most courts also rule in favour of protecting the voices of minority groups, unless there is an explicit threat, but Twitter usually watch groups with historical problems more carefully.

Twitter’s country-specific censorship has disabled accounts that were clearly neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic. The site does not usually block accounts that are critical of regimes, whether or not a country is authoritarian. Governments then tend to take action against individuals who may use disagreeable or inconvenient language against a regime about its majority religion. Instances are replete from Turkey, Bahrain, Thailand, and several other countries — not exactly stellar examples of individual freedom-granters.

The social media has two broad roles — the organisational and the dialogic, and it is the former that is spooking nervous governments. By threatening Twitter officials with jail and publicly contemplating the application of media laws to the social media, the government is putting on public display how spooked, rather than concerned, it is. For the Indian government, in particular, irrespective of party, there are several historical precedents — most glaringly so over the last six years. To cry conspiracy on groups of like-minded people who use a convenient technological tool — the hashtag — to

galvanise support and make claims is extremely thin-skinned.

People and political parties — many on Twitter, such is the delicious irony of the social media — have raised doubts about whether the Delhi police wittingly or unwittingly facilitated the Republic Day drama. Should we therefore assume that our government liberally allowed the virtual mobilisation to brew on Twitter, and then failed to protect a public monument where the real action was?

Certainly, history has shown us that mobilisation topples governments even through rhetorical intent. Organisational power can often translate into transactional power — and from Indira Gandhi to Narendra Modi, it poses a human challenge to professed development goals. The social media is just the latest galvanising force that transcends geography.

But can the social media enable a coup in India? But is it possible to argue that it can? Similarly, can a group of people hoist a private flag atop a public building as the police watch? But can the Centre argue that the breach was a security problem? That’s what matters. And the public display of anger is a warning to the rest of us not to rub the government the wrong way. Consider the potent words of BJP leader Anil Vij in Disha Ravi’s context: “Those who even think in anti-national terms must be eradicated”.

Let’s flip a question: Would the flag be hoisted atop Red Fort on Republic Day if the social media had not existed? This sounds like a rhetorical question. Like during the Arab Spring, “hashtag mobilisation” can indeed take on unimaginable, real proportions. But which political leader has not used it to campaign and

discredit, proclaim and decry, often using clever but false equivalence?

But false narratives cannot be confused with fake news. It should worry us that instead of seeking to protect its citizens’ privacy (it took the Supreme Court to state recently that privacy is paramount), or protect conventional media businesses like Australia, Spain and several other countries are now doing, the Indian government and its agencies are seeking to use the social media to identify inconvenient people to fit into its narratives that can fuel pseudo-nationalistic frenzy. Disha Ravi’s arrest is only the latest example. As a former SC judge noted on a prominent news channel, it seems the new tendency is to arrest in a hurry, ask questions later — no wonder a judge has questioned the police on its “conjectures”.

Any government should be responsible for creating an ecosystem that enables its citizens to feel involved but secure, responsible but free. Knee-jerk reactions from the State and highly publicised arrests of people who are merely practising their rights tend to inhibit citizens from speaking up. As a medium, the social media does not represent — it merely amplifies.

Meanwhile, the home-grown Twitter, Koo (I understand the onomatopoeic word is a call that people in coastal Karnataka use to catch someone’s attention) has deftly built a base of political support and is a perfect platform for mobilisation. And as expected, the BJP government has taken the lead. Sure, Koo is no less dialogic, but fair dialogue depends on whether the government indeed ends up painting social media in the same brush as the editorial media — and if Koo can adopt editorial interventions that are fair and just to all.

The writer has led reputed institutes of media and communications, and is the founder of “Being Responsible”, which promotes media literacy. The views expressed here are personal.

The social media has two broad roles — the organisational and the dialogic, and it is the former that is spooking nervous governments.

LETTERS

FALL OF CONG IN PONDY

The fall of Congress led coalition government led by its Chief Minister Narayanasamy in Puducherry did not spring a surprise as it was a foregone conclusion since its legislators went on a resignation spree. The sordid turn of political events in Puducherry, at the tail end of the tenure of Congress government which culminated in its fall, has once again underlined the failure of central Congress leadership to effectively handle its internal dissensions. Puducherry has now joined the list of Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka where it failed to keep its flock together and lost the government to its political adversary, the BJP. Regardless of the perception that the fall of Congress government was scripted by BJP through engineering defections in its ranks, what cannot be forgotten here is the inability of its leadership to put its house in order in several of its state units.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

THE DESTABILISING of the democratically elected government in Puducherry has been staged perfectly. The formation of NR Congress and BJP coalition government has become imminent. It will be the second government in the south supported by BJP in the south. Overthrowing an elected government by engineering defections is a very bad precedent in a democratic set up. It runs contrary to what democracy stands for. The anti-defection law, in its present form, holds no terror to the political class. It is all the more friendly to defection-politics. It cries out for immediate correction. The Representation of the People Act needs a complete overhaul.

Sravana Ramachandran, Chennai

FUEL PRICE RISE

IT IS unclear what is preventing finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman from liaising between states and the Centre to bring down the skyrocketing prices of petrol and diesel (*Centre, states must work together to lower fuel prices: FM, Feb. 21*). It is also disappointing that Chief Minister Palaniswami didn’t raise this crucial issue at the NITI Aayog meeting held on Feb. 20. Obviously both the finance Minister and Chief Minister are happy to see an abundant harvest of revenue from rising fuel prices. But they can’t ignore its cascading effect on the prices of essential commodities and services. The finance minister must convene an emergency meeting between the Centre and states to explore the possibilities of reducing the predatory taxes on petrol and diesel and bringing them under the GST.

Kangayam R. Narasimhan, Chennai

Aakar Patel



Who’s to blame for ₹100 petrol: Nehru, Indira or Modi Sarkar?

The price of petrol has crossed ₹100 in some parts of India for the first time. A parallel development is that of the total revenue that the government receives — 33 per cent, or one-third, now comes from the tax on fuel. India’s consumers pay the highest rate of tax on the petrol and diesel that they consume. The nations that follow India on the list of those with high taxes are all European nations, plus the United States and Japan. These are of course places where consumers are much better off than us and the government can in fact extract money from them without significant hurt.

In India, the majority of consumers are poor. And a tax on fuel affects all of us equally and hurts the poor disproportionately. The autorickshaw owner and the Uber driver pay the same to fuel up their vehicle as the corporate executive and or business tycoon. This makes very little sense. Ideally, taxation should be focused on those who can afford to pay more, and this is through direct taxes like income-

tax. But this has not happened in India for a variety of reasons. The base of people who file their income-tax returns has gone up, but the actual money that comes in as direct taxes has not gone up proportionally.

The other reason that taxes from fuel have gone up as a proportion of all taxes is what has happened to the Goods and Services Tax. This was meant to replace a series of other taxes and create a single market where more trade and more commerce would happen, expanding the economy. But the GST was not able to produce as much revenue as the taxes it replaced. And the market has not grown. Indeed, in the last 36 months, the Indian economy has slowed significantly, falling from around eight per cent growth in the quarter starting January 2018 to around three per cent in the quarter starting January 2020. And in the period after that, the economy has actually contracted for the first time in decades. And so, the short-term prospects for growth are not good, and the government must look

around for immediate ways in which it can fund itself. The easiest way is through taxes on fuel.

Petrol and diesel had been deregulated before Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office. The logic of deregulation was that the Indian State kept subsidising the consumer even when the price of crude rose globally, putting the mostly state-run oil businesses here at a loss. The consumer was protected no matter what the price of crude was. But now the reverse has happened. The government is protected no matter what the price of crude is. If the price goes down it takes more profits and does not lower the retail rate of petrol and diesel. If the price goes up, it hikes up the rates further. This was not the purpose of deregulation.

The Prime Minister says that it is not his fault and previous governments are to blame for keeping India dependent on imported crude. But that is the case with all the world’s nations who do not have a reserve of oil that can be tapped. Alternative sources of energy are a

recent phenomenon and their ability to match fossil fuels in terms of price is something even more recent. We should know that in the area of petrol and diesel in automobile use, this parity has still not come.

Petrol and diesel are very energy dense. About 50 kg of fuel or a full tank can take the car for about 700 km. For an electric car to do that, it needs a lithium ion battery pack that must be at least 45 or so kilowatt hours. The price of this battery alone is around \$5,000, and so approximately ₹4 lakh. Add the rest of the car and the minimum cost of a vehicle that can do the same range as a petrol or a diesel-driven car can do today is around ₹10 lakh, which is out of the budget for three-fourths or more of India’s car buyers. This will change over time and the cost of battery packs will fall as more and more nations take to electric vehicles for environmental reasons. But it is wrong to assume that it could be done today and certainly wrong to assume it could have been done in the past.

The last aspect is that of infrastructure. Lithium ion batteries in cars take about 10 hours to charge at home, assuming all car buyers have a garage with access to electricity. America, Europe and China have tens of thousands of direct current fast chargers in networks that span their nations.

This enables cars to charge up in about half an hour or so. India does not have these networks because the government has not built them. Even if all cars today were to magically become electric and not dependent on fossil fuel, where would they be charged? That the Prime Minister did not say.

The reality is that no matter what Jawaharlal Nehru or Indira Gandhi or Atal Behari Vajpayee did, we would be dependent today on petrol and diesel. The question is whether the government should extract such a large share of tax from us. That is a question only Narendra Modi can answer and not Jawaharlal Nehru.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	49,744.32 -2.25
Nifty 50	14,675.70 -2.04
S&P 500*	3,886.18 -0.53
Dollar (₹)	72.49 0.22
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.39 0.23
Euro (₹)	87.62 0.10
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,013.278 0.60
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	64.53 2.58
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.202 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.345 0.00

* As of 8:30 PM IST

IndRa ups outlook on banking sector to stable

India Ratings & Research revised its outlook on the banking sector to stable for FY22 from negative even as it sees higher stress emerging in the retail loan segment. For PSBs the outlook has been revised to stable from negative and for private banks, the stable outlook is retained. Overall stressed assets (gross NPA+ restructured) could rise 30 per cent for the banking system, almost 1.7 times in the retail segment in H2FY21.



■ Covid fear, bond yields pull down stocks Sensex sinks below 50000

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 22

The Sensex tumbled below the 50000-mark on negative global cues, as bond yields and crude oil price rose globally. Besides, Covid concerns leading to localised shutdowns in parts of Maharashtra added to the market anxiety.

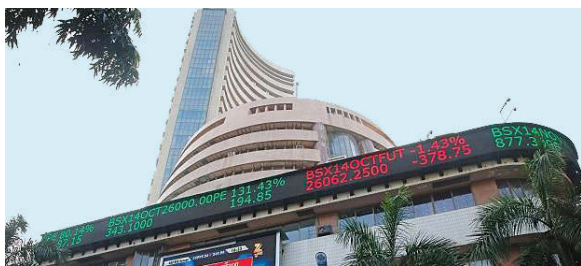
The Sensex fell 2.25 per cent, or 1145 points, to close at 49744 on sustained selling. Monday's fall is the biggest in the last two months.

The Nifty-50 Index also fell 2.04 per cent, or 306 points, closing at 14,675 points.

This is the fifth straight session the market has fallen over rising bond yields. BSE's market capitalisation dropped below Rs 200 lakh crore as investors suffered notional loss of over Rs 4 lakh crore in the Monday sell-off.

"Global cues were weak as yields on the benchmark US 10-year Treasury notes rose to a one-year high, worrying investors that money might move away from emerging markets. Further, there were concerns over the risk of higher inflation due to sharp jump in commodity prices, which tempered optimism around a vaccine-led economic recovery," said Siddhartha Khemka, head-retail research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Except Metals, all other sectoral indices closed in the red. The top losers included the Nifty Bank



SBI CALLS ON RBI TO MAKE SHORTING BONDS COSTLIER

SUBHADIP SIRCAR
FEB. 22

The RBI should consider steps to disincentivise short selling, which may have triggered the recent sell-off in the sovereign bond markets, according to the chief economic adviser at SBI Research.

Banks and primary dealers resort to such short-selling when they expect bond prices to fall, and this becomes a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' sometimes with traders borrowing securities from the repo market and rolling them over till yields rise, Soumya Kanti Ghosh wrote in a note to clients on Monday.

"The only way to break such self-fulfilling expect-

tations is for RBI to conduct large scale open market operations to provide necessary steam to the bond market to rally and with the increase in price many short-sold positions will trigger stop losses and market players will scramble to cover open positions," he said.

Yields on the benchmark 2030 debt rose 14 basis points last week amid fears about how the RBI plans to manage the huge government borrowing programme and a rise in global bond yields. The 2030 yield was up 6 basis points to 6.20 per cent on Monday.

Short selling typically involves selling security borrowed from the repo market.

—Bloomberg

(-1.63 per cent), Nifty IT (-2.89 per cent) Auto (-2.28 per cent) and Nifty Realty (-2.80 per cent).

"The recent spike in the Covid cases combined with subdued global cues

Kochi firm completes phase 2 trial of Covid drug

Kochi, Feb. 22: The city-based PNB Vesper Life Sciences has successfully completed phase 2 clinical trials of PNB-001 (GPP-Baladol), its proprietary drug to treat the coronavirus infection and said it will soon move the government for deploying the drug for emergency use.

The company, which has its labs in England, had in early September 2020 received the approval from the Drug Controller General (DCGI) to conduct the phase 2 clinical trial of GPP-Baladol in patients with moderate infection of the pandemic with oxygen support.

The company on Monday said the clinical trial was initiated in November at BJ Government Medical College and Sassoon General Hospital in Pune, and Victoria Medical College and Research Institute in Bengaluru on 40 patients.

"We will submit the clinical trial report to the DCGI on Monday itself," the company's promoter and chief executive P.N. Balam said, adding the trial protocol was designed in-line with the solidarity trial conducted by the WHO and other international clinical trials.

The Kochi-based was firm the first in the world to begin phase 2 trial for a new chemical entity.

—PTI

SC halts NCLT okay for Future-Reliance deal

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 22

The Supreme Court has on Monday halted regulatory approval by the National Company Law Tribunal for the Future-Reliance deal till further orders. While this comes as a relief to e-commerce giant Amazon, it is a setback for Future Retail, which has been maintaining that it will face liquidation if the deal collapses.

The Supreme Court ordered that the NCLT can continue reviewing the deal and overseeing the approval process, but cannot pass a final order till the court hears Amazon's concerns. The stock exchanges and the antitrust watchdog Competition Commission of India have already cleared the deal.

"In the meantime, the NCLT proceedings will be allowed to go on but will not culminate in any final order of sanction of scheme," the court said in its order. The court has given two weeks to file the counter-affidavit and another week for rejoinder affidavit, if,

any. The case will come up for further hearing after five weeks.

Amazon had filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court against the Delhi High Court's division bench order of February 8. The division bench had stayed the status quo order passed by a Single Judge of the court on February 2, asking Future Group and concerned authorities to maintain status quo in the Reliance-Future deal till it pronounces the final order.

The division bench had said that statutory authorities like NCLT and Sebi should not be restrained from proceeding in accordance with law on Future-Reliance deal.

Future Retail also said the NCLT can issue directions to convene

meetings of shareholders and creditors of applicant companies, including Future Retail, to consider the deal.

Amazon had approached the Delhi High Court last month, seeking enforcement of the October 25 interim order of the emergency arbitrator (EA) at the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) that had restrained Future Retail from going ahead with the deal with Reliance. Amazon alleges that the deal violates an earlier contract between the company and the Future Group.

As part of the agreement entered while buying 49 per cent stake in Future Coupons in 2019, Amazon would have a call option to acquire all or part of the promoters' shareholding of 47.02 per cent in Future Retail between the third and tenth year of the transaction and this would be subject to law. Amazon also claims that the 2019 agreement had categorically prohibited Future Retail from selling a stake to Reliance Industries.

DHFL: AUDITOR UNEARTHS FRESH FRAUD WORTH ₹6,180 CR

New Delhi, Feb. 22: Dewan Housing Finance Corporation (DHFL) on Monday said its transaction auditor, Grant Thornton, has reported another fraudulent transaction of Rs 6,182 crore in the company. The administrator of the company received an initial report from Grant

Thornton indicating that there are certain transactions which are "undervalued, fraudulent and preferential in nature", DHFL said in a regulatory filing.

"As per the transaction auditor report shared with the administrator, the monetary impact of the above transactions covered

under the application amounts to Rs 5,381.90 crore towards outstanding principal, Rs 589.36 crore towards accrued interest and Rs 210.85 crore towards notional loss of interest on account of charging lower rate of interest," said the filing about the impact on the company.

—PTI

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: Be clear in communications today. Review and restructure doubtful financial commitments. Frank discussions with your partner will help improve your love life.



Taurus: You may need to mull over your thoughts. Interactions will be marked by cooperation, and yield goodwill. Effective planning will ensure long-term success.



Gemini: Positive news regarding a loved one is likely. Work will be hectic and last-minute changes may prove unsettling but will ultimately work in your favour.



Cancer: A chance to restructure your portfolio is likely. Brainstorm with friends or colleagues if confused. You may realise that a personal relationship is waning.



Leo: Determination will ensure that things go according to plan despite obstacles. Take the time to understand what seniors expect and take decisions accordingly.



Virgo: Opportunities for new business partnerships are likely. Prepare for important meetings. Positive developments are likely for those with interests abroad. Spend more time with your partner.

You share your b'day with

Dakota Fanning, American actress. She is best known for her roles in I Am Sam, Hounddog, The Secret Life of Bees, Coraline, The Runaways, The Twilight Saga and Now Is Good amongst others.



Libra: Chance meetings or conversations can lead to interesting insights and information. Some of you may feel you are not being appreciated, but it's not true.



Scorpio: State your views but keep an open mind. You may feel control slipping, and it's best to reassess. Finances will improve but keep a check on expenses.



Sagittarius: You will have renewed energy and enthusiasm. Work on strengthening your relationship. Patience, not anger, is the solution. Meetings will be productive.



Capricorn: Be discreet about innovative plans. You may regret impulsive purchases. Stressful moments could leave you feeling agitated and restless. There may be trouble at home.

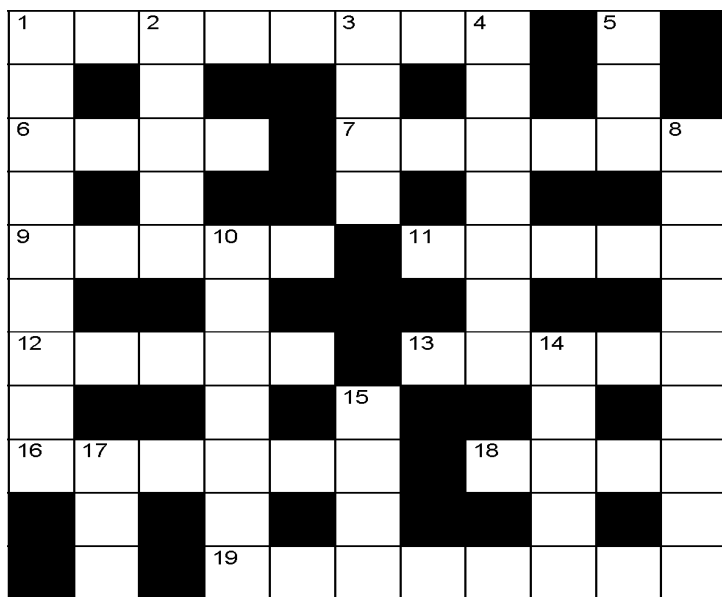


Aquarius: You may find it hard to decide about a certain issue as your emotions and intellect pull you in different directions. Projects that utilise your creative ideas have the potential to succeed.



Pisces: Make the most of your abilities to network as your contacts could lead to career enhancing opportunities. Distractions are likely. Use charm and humour to disarm skeptics.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- Contracted (8)
- Probability (4)
- Military pageant (6)
- Last (5)
- Burn in (5)
- Frighten (5)
- Knitting stitch (5)
- Hire (6)
- Shock (4)
- Trounces (anag) (8)

Down

- Winter crystal (9)
- French sculptor (5)
- Flying device (4)
- Without affectation (7)
- Muck (3)
- Decree (9)
- Paint type (7)
- In search of (5)
- Church song (4)
- Encountered (3)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 6. Fumigating, 8. Trend, 10. Abode, 13. Absenteeism, 14. Faded, 17. Shown, 19. Substitute.

Down: 1. Luge, 2. Mind, 3. Lava, 4. Silo, 5. Agreement, 7. Steadfast, 9. Niece, 11. Beech, 12. Ate, 15. Debt, 16. Date, 17. Sate, 18. Oats.

Word Mine

U
E
C
N
S
S
O
N

TODAY'S RATINGS: 4 AVERAGE; 5 GOOD; 7 OUTSTANDING

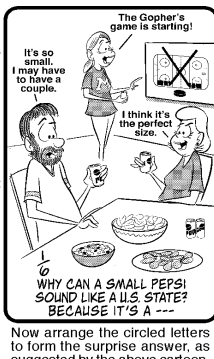
How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

Dealer: South
Vulnerable: Both
West: North
East: South
Pass: 77
Opening lead: ♦ 9

jumble

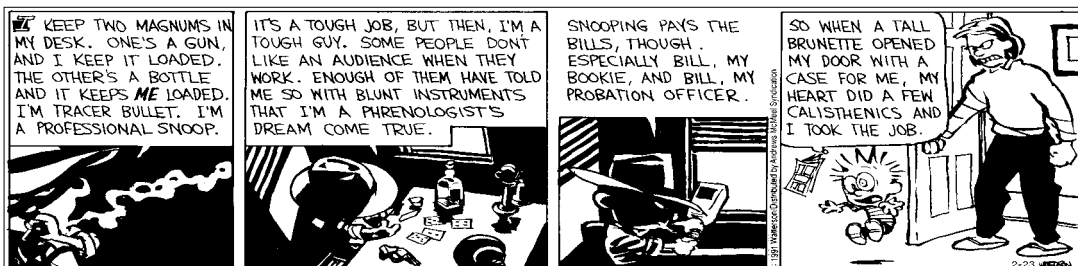
TRYID
TOMOT
ZENEEES
LIRPAL

Answers tomorrow
Yesterday's Jumbles: PILOT, POKER, MAGNET, FONDUE
Answer: The android was nervous about a postscript brain replacement but would — KNEAP AN OPEN MIND



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

ALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & Craig Boldman



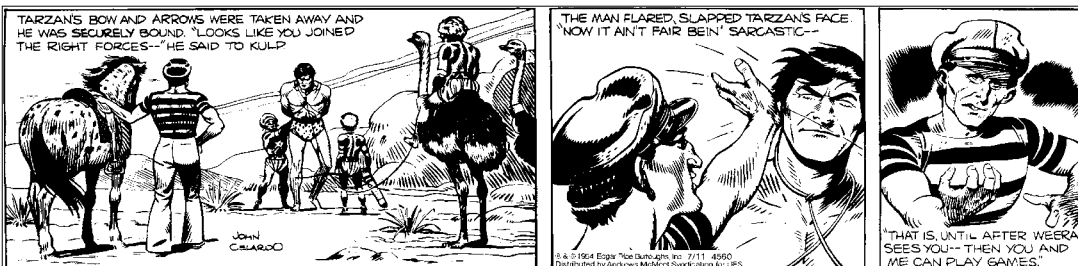
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs

bridge
PHILLIP
ALDER

THE
PROPHETS
MAY
OCCASIONALLY
BE RIGHT

Publius Syrus was a Latin writer who was born in Turkey in 89 B.C. One of his "Sententiae" was: "Many receive advice; few profit by it." I wonder how many teachers feel like that. None would be an ideal number, but that would be far too optimistic. I teach a lot of bridge classes, and I am particularly happy when a deal comes along that "agrees" with one of my Sententiae.

Look at today's North hand. Your partner opens one no-trump, showing 15-17 points. What would you do? One of my students responded two clubs and rebid two no-trump over two spades. South, with a maximum 17 points, immediately went on to game. As North put down her dummy, she said to me, "I know you recommend not looking for game when our maximum combined count is

25, but I have three 10s as well." Later, I fed this hand into the Kaplan-Rubens evaluation program (available at rbridge.net). It gave a result of only 6.85 points! That queen-doubleton was downgraded. The defenders did well. West led the diamond nine, top of nothing. East took dummy's queen with her king and cashed the jack. West carefully unblocked the eight, and under the diamond ace he threw the dia-

mond seven. Then East led the four, swallowing West's three. The diamond two and club ace resulted in three no-trump down two. The top for North-South went to the pair who played in one no-trump. Everyone else was in three no-trump going down one or two. No one was allowed to make the contract.

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SHORT TAKES

Boxers return with five gold medals

New Delhi: Babyrojisana Chanu (51kg) and Arundhati Choudhary (69kg) fetched two more gold medals as Indian women boxers ended with five overall for a top finish in the 30th Adriatic Pearl Tournament in Budva, Montenegro. Lucky Rana (64kg) secured a silver as Indian women emerged as the top team with 10 medals (five gold, three silver and two bronze). Uzbekistan (2 gold) and Czech Republic (1 gold) ended at second and third position respectively. Three-time Khelo India gold-medallist Arundhati pulled off a dominating 5-0 victory over Ukraine's Maryana Stoiko on Sunday, Chanu, who trains at M.C. Mary Kom's Imphal-based academy, got the better of Asian junior champion Sabina Bobokulova of Uzbekistan in a close fight which ended 3-2 in favour of the Indian. — *PTI*

Medvedev among top 3 for first time

Paris: Daniil Medvedev broke into the top three for the first time in Monday's ATP rankings, while Russian compatriot Aslan Karatsev shot up 72 places after his shock run to the Australian Open semi-finals. Karatsev, 27, rose from 114th to 42nd after knocking out three seeds before his dream run was ended by Djokovic in the last four. The title win reinforced Djokovic's status as world number one, guaranteeing he will mark his 311th week there as of March 8, surpassing Roger Federer's record of 310. Meanwhile, Naomi Osaka moved up one spot to second in the WTA rankings following her success at the Australian Open. Osaka, 23, trades places with Simona Halep, the Romanian dropping down to third. Williams jumps up four places to seventh despite again falling short of a record-tying 24th major. — *AFP*

Mumbai Falcons clinch third spot

Abu Dhabi: Mumbai Falcons created history here on late Saturday night, becoming the first all-Indian team ever to finish in the top three of an FIA Championship. The team, led by the country's racing star Jehan Daruvala who also clinched the third position in the Driver's Championship standings, grabbed three podiums during the last weekend of the 5-round Formula 3 Asian Championship to end its campaign in style. The Falcons missed the second place by a mere 2 points, riding on an impressive 9 podium finishes through the championship. The Yas Marina International Circuit was abuzz on Saturday, with the stage set for an explosive season finale on the Formula 1 Grand Prix layout.

Team India finish 5th in ALMS race

Abu Dhabi: Chasing the Le Mans dream, Racing Team India, the first all-Indian team to compete at the international endurance racing stage, ended its first Asian Le Mans Series campaign fifth in the overall championship standings. The trio of Narain Karthikeyan, Arjun Maini and Naveen Rao, raced their ORECA 07 LMP2 car to a pair of fifth place finishes in the final two races of the season at Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina track on Friday and Saturday.

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: East Bengal vs North East United from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

FOOTBALL

Champions League: Atletico vs Chelsea from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2; Lazio vs Bayern Munich from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1

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Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**

ROOT FOR GRASS

Anderson happy with grass on Motera strip but says it won't be there on match day

Ahmedabad, Feb. 22: Veteran fast bowler James Anderson is pretty sure that the newly laid track at the Motera Stadium will be devoid of any grass for the upcoming Day/Night Test against India even though there is a nice green cover on it at the moment.

The third Test under lights will start from Wednesday and for England's premier fast bowler, he doesn't expect it to behave much differently from the second Test track at the Chepauk which India won by 317 runs.

"The pitch, it has got grass on it but I am pretty sure it's not going to be there when we turn up on the match day," Anderson said with a wry smile during a virtual conference on Sunday.

"So we have to wait and watch. As seam bowlers, we have to be prepared to bowl as best we can in any given condition. If it swings, it's great and if it does not, we still have a job to do," Anderson said. He felt that the pink SG Test ball that he bowled with during the net sessions, swung more than its red counterpart.

"Look this is the second pink Test in India and first in February so we don't know how it would behave."

He urged critics of the much-debated rotation policy to look at the "bigger picture", considering the massive amount of cricket to be played by the England team in the coming days.

England did not play Jonny Bairstow and Mark Wood in the first two Tests but have brought them back for the final two games as part of a rotation policy while first-choice keeper Jos Buttler is back home after the opening Test. The idea is to help players cop up with life inside the bio-bubble.

"You have got to try and look at the bigger picture.



Members of the Indian team during a training session at Motera in Ahmedabad on Sunday. — *BCCI*

The idea was if I missed that one, that would give me the best chance of being fit and firing for the pink-ball Test," Anderson said.

Former players, especially Kevin Pietersen, have criticised ECB's thought process, saying the board must play its best players in a big series like this against India.

Anderson, 38, himself played the series-opener where he took five wickets in England's victory but was rested for the second where India emerged triumphant by a massive 317-run margin.

"I am feeling good and fresh and ready to go again if called upon. It's frustrating to an extent but I can see the bigger picture with the amount of cricket that we have got." — *PTI*

Stokes ready to handle all conditions during Tests

Ahmedabad, Feb. 22: Brushing aside the incessant talk around spin-friendly pitches in India, big-hitting England all-rounder Ben Stokes has said that Test players should be proficient in handling all kinds of conditions.

Ahead of the day/night Test here starting Wednesday, Stokes wondered how the newly-refurbished Motera strip would behave but at the same time, stressed that top-flight cricketers should be able to deal with whatever they are

faced with.

"The thing about being a Test batsman is that you need to be able to handle all types of conditions. India is one of the places where it is a lot tougher for overseas batsmen to come and be successful, but then so too is England," he wrote in a column for the *Daily Mirror*.

"And that is part of the game, the challenges and why we love it," he said.

The turning tracks in India became a talking point during the ongoing series when some former

England players such as Michael Vaughan asked whether such strips were ideal for Test cricket.

The series is tied at 1-1 after India's brilliant 317-run win in the second Test in Chennai.

Stokes' bowling quota of just two overs in that game raised a few eyebrows but he said it was about

"Don't read too much into the fact that I didn't bowl a huge amount in the second game, I'm sure if it was a green seamer I would have bowled a lot more overs." — *PTI*

LAHIRU TESTS +VE ON EVE OF WINDIES TOUR

Colombo, Feb. 22: Sri Lankan fast bowler Lahiru Kumara tested positive Monday for coronavirus on the eve of the team's departure to the West Indies for a tour already delayed by the virus.

The 24-year-old had been with the rest of the 35-man squad in a bio-secure bubble since February 10. He played two practice matches on Friday and Saturday.

News of the infection is the latest blow to the tour of three one-day internationals, three Twenty20s and two Tests due to start in Antigua on March 3.

It was originally due to begin on February 21 but was postponed after Sri Lanka's

Lahiru Thirimanne and coach Mickey Arthur tested positive. Both have fully recovered and will travel with the rest of the squad, which was yet to be officially named. — *AFP*

Pep & Co march on towards title

London, Feb. 22: Manchester City remain 10 points clear at the top of the Premier League as Raheem Sterling's early header was enough to beat Arsenal 1-0 on Sunday, while Jose Mourinho's Tottenham suffered another damaging defeat at fourth-placed West Ham.

An 18th consecutive win in all competitions edged City ever closer to a third league title in four years even if Pep Guardiola's men did not hit the heights they have in recent weeks at the Emirates.

Sterling could have scored three times inside the first five minutes, but his soaring leap to nod home Riyad Mahrez's cross secured all three points as City kept a 10th clean sheet in their last 13 league games.

Arsenal remain in 10th with their best chance of a return to the Champions League next season dependent on success in the Europa League.

Tottenham are just two points better off than their north London rivals in ninth, nine points off the top four after a fifth defeat in their last six league games.

Mourinho's men were undone by a slow start to each half at the London Stadium and lost 2-1.

Michail Antonio opened the scoring after just five minutes before the rejuvenated Jesse Lingard smashed home the third goal of his loan spell from Manchester United two

THE RESULTS

Arsenal	0
Manchester City (Sterling 2)	1
Manchester United (Rashford 30, James 57, Fernandes 75-pen)	3
Newcastle (Saint-Maximin 36)	1
Aston Villa (Traore 48)	1
Leicester (Maddison 19, Barnes 23)	2
West Ham (Antonio 5, Lingard 47)	2
Tottenham (Moura 64)	1

minutes into the second half.

"The results are the consequences of multiple situations in football. Mine and my coaching staff methods are second to nobody in the world," said a defiant Mourinho.

"Our potential is higher than where we are so there is frustration."

Tottenham rallied after Lucas Moura's powerful header pulled a goal back as the impressive Gareth Bale and Son Heung-min hit the woodwork late on.

But West Ham held on to bolster their unexpected challenge for Champions League football by moving two points ahead of fifth-placed Chelsea.

Leicester are up to second after a bright first-half performance saw off Aston Villa 2-1. — *AFP*



Manchester City's Raheem Sterling (left) scores against Arsenal in their English Premier League match at the Emirates Stadium in London on Sunday. — *AFP*

Messi scores but Cadiz snatch late equaliser

Barcelona, Feb. 22: Cadiz snatched a late penalty to draw 1-1 at Camp Nou and deal Barcelona an unexpected setback in their bid for the Spanish league title on Sunday.

Five days after being beaten 4-1 by Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League, Ronald Koeman's side saw two points slip away when substitute Alex Fernandez converted an 88th-minute penalty conceded by Clement Lenglet.

Lionel Messi appeared to put Barcelona on their way to an easy win in his club record 506th league appear-

ance in Spain. But after Messi scored from the penalty spot in the 32nd minute, Barcelona were unable to finish off many scoring chances.

The draw leaves Barcelona in third place and eight points behind leaders Atlético Madrid, who lost 2-0 to Levante on Saturday. Real Madrid were the biggest beneficiary of the round, moving three points behind Atlético after winning 1-0 at Valladolid on Saturday. Madrid has played one more match than Atlético and Barcelona. — *AP*

BLACK CAPS CON KANGAROOS TO WIN FIRST T20

Christchurch (New Zealand), Feb. 22: A Devon Conway batting masterclass inspired New Zealand to a 53-run win over Australia in the opening Twenty20 international in Christchurch on Monday.

Conway smashed an unbeaten 99 off 59 balls as the Black Caps overcame a shaky start to finish on 184/5 after losing the toss and being put in to bat.

In reply, the tourists were all out for 131 after 17.3 overs, with Black Caps spinner Ish Sodhi taking four wickets for 28 to give the hosts an early edge in the five-match series. Australia captain Aaron Finch refused to blame the loss on his team's two-week Covid-19 quarantine upon arrival in New Zealand. — *AFP*

Brief scores: New Zealand 184/5 (Conway 99 n.o., Phillips 30, J Richardson 2/31) beat **Australia 131** (Marsh 45, Sodhi 4-28, Southee 2-10).

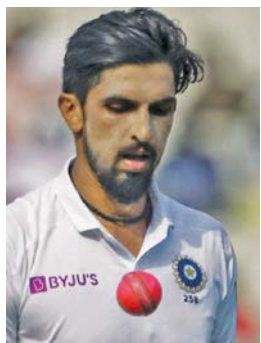
Ishant says understanding captain's psyche paid off

Ahmedabad, Feb. 22: On the cusp of becoming only the second Indian pacer after the legendary Kapil Dev to play 100 Tests, Ishant Sharma on Monday attributed his remarkable longevity in the game to understanding what the "captain wants from him".

Ishant made his Test debut as a gangly 18-year-old in Bangladesh when Rahul Dravid was the captain and subsequently was led by Anil Kumble, M.S. Dhoni, Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane during the last decade and half.

So which captain understood him the best in all these years?

"It is difficult to say who understood me the most as all of them understood me really well. But more than the captain understanding



Ishant Sharma

me, it was always important as to how I understood the captain," Ishant said during a virtual press conference ahead of the third Test against England, beginning here on Wednesday.

"That's very important. What does the captain want from me specifically. If those things are clear, communication becomes easier," said the man who has 302 wickets from 99 Tests so far.

Does he think that being dropped from white ball squads and also missing out on a couple of seasons of IPL helped him reach the milestone quicker than many others?

"I normally treat this as a blessing in disguise. It's not that I don't want to play white ball as that's what is the job of a sportsman but if he is not playing, what does he do? At best he can train."

For him, it was important that he forgets what's not there and be grateful for what he has. "I didn't want my Test cricket to get affected because of my non-selection in ODIs. I should be grateful that I am at least playing one format," he said. — *PTI*

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