

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | THURSDAY 25 | FEBRUARY 2021

## WEATHER



**Max:** 31°C  
**Min:** 22°C  
**Rainfall:** Nil

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Maasi 13  
**Tithi:** Thrayodashi  
**Star:** Pusam/ Aayilyam  
**Rahukalam:**  
1.30 pm to 3 pm  
**Yamagandam:**  
6 am to 7.30 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 4.32 PM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 5.39 AM**

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+16,886)	(+141)
1,10,46,432	1,56,742

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+463)  
TN: 8,49, 629 12,478

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

11,28,83,311

### DEATHS

25,01,588

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES  
219

worldometers.info

## More than 8,000 new Covid-19 cases recorded in Maha after four months

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra on Wednesday witnessed a significant rise in coronavirus cases, with more than 8,000 new infections coming to light in a single day after a gap of over four months, health officials said. The state reported 8,807 cases Wednesday, taking its total infection count to 21,21,119. It had reported 8,142 cases on October 21 last year, after which the numbers had declined.

## C'garh: 2 security personnel killed, 1 hurt in Naxal incidents

**Raipur:** Two security personnel, one of them belonging to the ITBP, were killed and another one was injured in three separate incidents involving Naxals in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Narayanpur district on Wednesday, a police official said.

## COUNTER POINT



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

## Pandemic no reason to grant extra chance in civil service exams, rules Supreme Court

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

A bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar, Indu Malhotra and Ajay Rastogi dismissed the petition filed by civil service aspirants and clarified

that its decision would not restrict the Centre in exercising its discretion in future to deal with the difficulties as projected to the court. "Consequently, the petition fails and is accordingly dismissed," the bench said.

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

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**BJP names Nellore candidate much to unease of AIADMK**



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**Naravane: Strategy in place for talks with China**

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**Imran, Gotabaya discuss trade ties**



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■ **Factions organise separate Jaya birthday celebrations**

# No party unity in sight but Sasi for joint fight

**G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

The 73rd birth anniversary of the late J. Jayalalithaa on Wednesday saw the AIADMK, headed by Edappadi K. Palaniswami and O. Panneerselvam, and V.K. Sasikala, the contender to the party's general secretary post, organising separate celebrations with no sign of immediate unity in sight.

Paying floral tributes to a portrait of Jayalalithaa at the residence of her niece at TNagar, Ms Sasikala called upon the followers of Jayalalithaa to be united and fight the common enemy DMK in the elections. A group of about 200 supporters gathered at the house that also saw some prominent persons calling upon her and also joining her in paying floral tributes to Jayalalithaa.

A press release, issued by Ms Sasikala without any name or even signature and detailing the celebrations, had an AIADMK flag prominently embossed on the middle of the letterhead, which had images of C.N. Annadurai, M.G. Ramachandran and Jayalalithaa on top and just said 'party general secretary's camp office' with the T Nagar address.

The letterhead metaphorically suggested that Ms Sasikala is holding on to the post of general secretary and to the flag of the party that is not with her.



Chief Minister K. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam along with other AIADMK leaders celebrate their party supremo late J. Jayalalithaa's birth anniversary at AIADMK headquarters, in Chennai, on Wednesday.

— DC

For those having the party with them, Mr Palaniswami, Mr Panneerselvam and other ministers garlanded the statues of Jayalalithaa at the AIADMK headquarters and on the beach road and inaugurated a museum at her resting place on the Marina. They also launched a scheme to plant 73 lakh saplings all over the state.

When asked about Ms Sasikala's call for unity, her nephew and founder of AMMK T.T.V. Dhinakaran did not clarify whom she was referring to and said one had to find it out from her. Fisheries minister D. Jayakumar, when asked the same question, said the call was for the AMMK cadre.

Though Ms Sasikala was ambiguous in her speech to the supporters on what course of action she proposed to take, Mr Dhinakaran was clear on his plans. The general council of the AMMK will meet on Thursday and decide on the alliance that party will have with others.

Mr Dhinakaran gave no indication of a merger between the AIADMK and AMMK and only said that the AIADMK leaders were apprehensive of a unity.

Among those who called on Ms Sasikala were founder of All India Samathuva Makkal Katchi leader Sarath Kumar and his wife actress Radhika, founder of Naam Tamizhar

Katchi Seeman and film directors Bharatiraja and Amir.

Since Sarath Kumar's party is still in the alliance headed by AIADMK and Seeman normally does not enter into alliances with other parties for fighting elections, it was intriguing that the two leaders called on Ms Sasikala.

Though they all waxed eloquent on why they met Ms Sasikala on the birth anniversary of Jayalalithaa there was seemingly no common agenda in their visits. And there was absolutely no sign of Ms Sasikala having plans of taking over the AIADMK, claiming that she indeed is the general secretary..

# Modi biggest rioter, worse fate than Trump awaits him: Didi

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC**  
KOLKATA, FEB. 24

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

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

Without naming Mr Modi or home minister Amit Shah, Ms Banerjee also taunted them in Bengali. She said mockingly that only two leaders — Kimbhootkimakar (grotesque) and Hodo-



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses a public meeting, at Sahaganj in Hooghly district on Wednesday.

— PTI

kootkoot (pot-bellied man) — have been calling all the shots in the country. "There are only two leaders in the country. One of them is Hodo-kootkoot. I do not want it is called in English or Hindi because it is a typical Bengali classical word. Another leader is Kimbhootkimakar," she claimed.

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

Kimbhoothkimakar and HM Hodo-kootkoot, Pishi has lost it!" he tweeted.

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



## Tiger Woods survives car crash

**Los Angeles, Feb. 24:** In a career filled with remarkable comebacks, Tiger Woods faces perhaps his toughest recovery of all.

Woods was driving alone through a sweeping, downhill stretch of road through coastal suburbs of Los Angeles when his SUV struck a sign, crossed over a raised median and two oncoming lanes flipped several times before coming to rest on its side. Its airbags deployed.

A sheriff's deputy poked his head through a hole in the windshield to see Woods, still wearing his seatbelt, sitting in the driver's seat. The crash caused "significant" injuries to his right leg and he underwent what was described as a "long surgical procedure" at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. — AP ■ **P8**



Rajesh Das

## Panel to investigate woman IPS officer's sexual harassment charge against DGP

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

Special director-general of police Rajesh Das, against whom a woman Indian Police Service officer filed a complaint of sexual harassment, has been relieved of his responsibility as in charge of law and order with additional director general of police K. Jayanth Murali taking up that position.

Earlier, the government appointed a six-member committee, headed by additional chief secretary Jayashree Raghunadhan to inquire into the allegations. The woman officer had accused the special DGP of harassing her sexually after making her get into his car when both of them were on duty, providing security to the chief minister during his recent visit to Pudukkottai and Trichy districts.

Based on the complaint, the government formed the committee with Ms Raghunadhan as presiding officer and IPS officers Seema Agarwal, A. Arun and B. Shamoondeswari, V.K. Ramesh Babu, chief administrative officer in the DGP's office and Loretta Jhona of the International Justice Mission as members.

"The Committee shall take necessary further course of action as per the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, on the said complaint," the government order said.

Soon after the news of the woman officer's complaint came out on Wednesday morning, several woman politicians and others took to social media pointing out the lack of security for even a police officer. They all demanded action against the senior officer.

DMK president M.K. Stalin issued a statement threatening a massive protest by his party if the Chief Minister did not take action against Mr Das by suspending him and filing a criminal case against him.

## Rahul's north-south comment kicks up row

**DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs**  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 24

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's comment on Wednesday in Thiruvananthapuram obliquely comparing the voters of the north and the south has drawn sharp criticism from the BJP even as senior Congress leaders refused to come to the aid of their

# Vaccination for public set to start on March 1

**VINEETA PANDEY | DC**  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 24

After the vaccination of healthcare and frontline workers in the first phase, it is now time for the general public to get the Covid-19 jab. From March 1, people over the age of 60 years and those over 45 years having comorbidities will be able to get vaccinated at 10,000 government facilities and over 20,000 private hospitals, the government said Wednesday while announcing its plan to roll out the second phase of immunisation against novel coronavirus. The President, Prime Minister, several Cabinet and state chief ministers are expected to take the jab from March 1.

The number of beneficiaries in this category is expected to be over 10 crore. The vaccine shots will be given free of cost in government hospitals but they will be charged for in private hospitals.

Announcing the decision taken by the Union Cabinet on Wednesday, Union min-

■ **Those aged above 60 and those over 45 having comorbidities will be able to get vaccinated at govt and private hospitals**

ister for information and broadcasting Prakash Javadekar said that vaccine rates in the private sector are still being worked out by the health ministry in consultation with the private hospitals and manufacturers and will be announced in a couple of days.

"The second phase of the world's largest vaccination drive will begin on Monday in which anybody above 60 years and 45 years plus with co-morbidities will be given vaccines in 10,000 government and over 20,000 private hospitals. Whoever goes to the government centre will be administered a vaccine free of cost. The Indian government will pay for them. Those who want to get vaccination from private hospitals will have to pay," Mr Javadekar said. ■ **P4**

# Centre clears Prez rule in Puducherry

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
PUDUCHERRY, FEB. 24

The Union cabinet on Wednesday approved the proposal to impose President's Rule in Puducherry, days after a Congress-led government in the union territory lost power during a vote of confidence.

Announcing the Cabinet decision in New Delhi, Union information minister Prakash Javadekar told reporters that the decision was taken as no party was coming forward to stake a claim to form government in the UT. Significantly, he said the model code of conduct was expected to come into effect soon after the Election Commission announces the dates for elections in the UT, along with the four states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and West Bengal.

Lt Governor in charge of Puducherry Tamilisai Soundararajan had no choice but to recommend President's rule as the opposition group led by N. Rangasamy of the NR Congress with seven members was not keen on taking the reins of a government that might be in place for just about two months as polls are likely to be held in

■ **The focus in the UT is now on the visit of the Prime Minister as well as that of home minister Amit Shah who is scheduled to come on Monday**

mid April itself. He had the support of four AIADMK MLAs besides the three (nominated) BJP MLAs.

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting Puducherry on Thursday, it would have been embarrassing not to have resolved the situation arising after Chief Minister V. Narayan- asamy put in his papers on Monday after walking out of the Assembly before the trust vote was taken on the floor of the House.

The focus in the UT is now on the visit of the Prime Minister as well as that of home minister Amit Shah who is scheduled to come on Monday. Mr Modi will be inaugurating a number of big projects including the new thermal power plant of the NLC in nearby Neyveli and a restored landmark building of Puducherry originally built when the French were still ruling the colony on the Bay of Bengal.

# Gujarat stadium named after PM Narendra Modi

**DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs**  
AHMEDABAD, FEB. 24

President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday inaugurated the world's largest cricket arena here, and renamed it from Sardar Patel stadium to Narendra Modi stadium in honour of the Prime Minister who is credited with conceptualising the facility. Spread over 63 acres, the stadium has been built at an estimated cost of Rs 800 crore and with a seating capacity for 1,32,000 spectators, it has surpassed the

hallowed Melbourne Cricket Ground which can accommodate 90,000.

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

"The world's largest Ahmedabad-based Sardar Patel Cricket Stadium has

been renamed the Narendra Modi Cricket Stadium, is it not an insult to Sardar Patel? The BJP, which asked for votes in the name of Sardar Patel, is now insulting Sardar Saheb.

The people of Gujarat will not bear the insult of Sardar Patel," Congress leader Hardik Patel tweeted in Hindi. The BJP rebutted the charge saying Congress president Sonia Gandhi and others never visited Sardar Patel's statue — Statue of Unity — in Kevadia and are now talking about insulting Sardar Patel. ■ **P4**



Local boy Axar Patel celebrates an England wicket during day one of the day-night Test in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. India were 99 for three in their first innings after left-arm spinner Axar Patel (6/38) and off-spinner R. Ashwin (3/26) bowled England out for 112. — BCCI/ ■ **Report on P8**



## SHORT TAKES

### Pondy reports 28 fresh cases of Covid

**Puducherry, Feb. 24:** Puducherry added 28 new cases of Covid-19 on Wednesday, pushing the caseload to 39,656.

A release from the Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said the new cases were identified at the end of examination of 2,069 samples.

A 79-year-old man, hailing from Uppalam village here, succumbed to infection during the last 24 hours raising the toll to 666, the director said. The deceased had co-morbidities like diabetes, hypertension and coronary artery disease (CAD). The cause of death was covid pneumonia, acute respiratory disorder syndrome and septic shock, the release said. Of the overall cases, 189 were active and 38,801 people were treated and discharged so far. The director said 17 patients were discharged after recovery from hospitals during the last 24 hours. The fatality and recovery rates were 1.68 per cent and 97.84 per cent respectively. Of the total 6.22 lakh samples tested, 5.78 lakh samples turned out to be negative. The director said 8,979 health care workers and 448 frontline workers were vaccinated against Covid-19 since the commencement of vaccination in January.

— PTI

## Kumbh Sandesh Yatra reaches Tiruchy

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUCHY, FEB. 24

The 7,000-km pre-launch Kumbh Sandesh Yatra (KSY), which commenced at Vijayawada on February 19, arrived at Tiruchy on Tuesday after passing through Srisailem, Tirupati, Pondicherry and Chennai en route to Kanyakumari from where the main yatra will commence its journey to Hardwar, according to KSY executive chairman Manken Srinivasa Reddy.

Reddy accompanied by executive secretary Delhi Vashant and KSY spokesperson Acharya Avinash Rai announced the KSY's detailed programme while replying to the reception given to them by a group of villagers led by Dr. Sevai Govindaraju, chairman of the south zone board of Continuing Education -Ozone at suburb Allur near Tiruchy on Wednesday. He said the main yatra will commence at Kanyakumari on February 27 and will reach New Delhi on March 20 via Madurai, Dindigul, Karur, Bengaluru, Dhavangere, Belgaum, Pune, Shirdi, Nashik, Ujjain, Bhopal, Jabalpur, Chitrakoot, Allahabad, Varanasi, Lucknow, Kanpur and Mathura.

KSY spokesman Acharya Avinash Rai said four holy bathing events will be held at Haridwar as part of the Kumbh Sandesh. The first one takes place on March 11, Maha Shivarathri day, the second one on April 12, Amavasya day, the third one on April 14, Mahasanganthi day, and the third holy bath will take place and the final holy dip will take place on April 27, the full moon day.

## Jaya's birth anniversary celebrated



CM Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Dy CM O. Panneerselvam open Knowledge Park at late CM J. Jayalalithaa Memorial on her 73rd birth anniversary on Wednesday.

— DC

## Advocates celebrate late CM Jayalalithaa's birth anniversary

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

Advocates owing allegiance to the ruling AIADMK party on Wednesday celebrated the 73rd Birthday of former Chief Minister late J. Jayalalithaa, near the entrance of the Madras high court.

A group of advocates led by AIADMK advocates wing president V.S. Sethuraman and A. Navaneethakrishnan, a

Rajya Sabha MP, celebrated the birthday of Jayalalithaa by distributing sweets, food and saree to the poor people, besides law books to law college students. Senior AIADMK party leader C. Ponnaiyan participated in the function. The function was organized by advocates D. Suryanarayanan and Annai Ezhil. Advocates K. Gopal, Ramana and Nixon, besides several others took part in the function.

Another group of lawyers led by advocate C. Thirumaran, the state joint secretary of AIADMK advocates wing and R. V. Babu, South Chennai district secretary of AIADMK Advocates wing celebrated the 73rd birthday of late Jayalalithaa by cutting a huge cake at the Aavin entrance of the Madras high court.

They also distributed sweets, food and saree to the poor people

## Four IAS officers transferred in Tamil Nadu

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

The state government on Wednesday ordered postings and transfers of four IAS officers. The following transfers and postings are notified:

Dr K. Jayanth Murali,

Dr K. Jayanth Murali, IPS Additional General of Police / Director, Vigilance of Anti-Corruption, Chennai was transferred as Additional Director General of Police, Law and Order, Chennai by downgrading the post held by Rajesh Das

IPS Additional General of Police / Director, Vigilance of Anti-Corruption, Chennai was transferred as Additional Director General of

Police, Law and Order, Chennai by downgrading the post held by Rajesh Das.

Karan Singha, IPS, Director General of Police, Training, police training college in Chennai was transferred and posted as Director General of Police, Training, police training

college in Chennai, earlier held by Karan Singha.

A. Kavalvizhi, IPS, Superintendent of Police, Crime against Women and Children, Chennai has been posted as Superintendent of police, Tiruvur district.

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## 15 held for issuing fake invoices worth ₹491 crore

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

The enforcement and compliance monitoring unit of the GST & Central Excise, Chennai Outer CGST Commissionerate, on Wednesday arrested 15 persons for allegedly issuing fake invoices, with an intention to pass illegal and unlawful input tax credit to the tune of ₹491 crore. In 252

fake invoice cases, the personnel are conducting further investigations.

Meanwhile, the CGST Seva Kendra launched a campaign against fake invoices to create an awareness regarding its economic impact, especially among small taxpayers / GST registrants. The handouts to create awareness on fake invoice menace was released in English and

Tamil languages.

The handout was released by J. M. Kennedy, Commissioner of GST & Central Excise, Chennai Outer, in the presence of P Anand Kumar, Commissioner of GST & Central Excise, (appeals-II) and other senior officers. During the function, enforcement officers from state GST also participated.

## Time to take the remand 'tool kit' seriously!



Sanjay Pinto

Are we witnessing an alarming and disturbing reverse trend of jail becoming the norm and bail the exception? Be it the Disha Ravi tool kit case or the detention of activists, the question raised in legal circles is whether remand is turning into a default option. Remember the case of a conscientious magistrate refusing to remand Nakkeeran Gopal two years ago? That had made headline news because it was probably quite uncommon.

Let's get down to brass tacks. The magistrate's power to remand a person to judicial custody or permit police custody is derived from Section 167 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). That function must be exercised judiciously keeping in mind guaranteed constitutional and relevant procedural safeguards.

Article 22(1) of the Constitution of India makes the communication of the

grounds of arrest to the accused mandatory. This is reinforced by the requirement under Section 50 CrPC of the disclosure of particulars of the offence. Likewise, Article 22(2) of the Constitution which imposes a 24 hour ceiling on the time for an accused to be produced before the "nearest magistrate", excluding the travel time, finds an echo in Section 57 CrPC. This is aside of Article 21 that harps on 'procedure established by law' for the deprivation of personal liberty.

For a moment, step into the shoes of the police. The remand of an accused person may be imperative to ascertain motive, modus operandi, conspiracy with others and possible concealment of evidence in the aftermath of a crime. Witnesses and victims or their family members may need to be protected. Public order would need to be maintained. The magistrate has to perform a fine balancing act - safeguarding society and upholding the rights of an accused individual.

Ordinarily, arrests must be made only in serious offences punishable with imprisonment for more than seven years. However, if



there is credible information about a cognisable offence punishable with imprisonment of 7 years or less, the investigating officer, as expressly laid down in Section 41(1)(b)(ii) CrPC must be satisfied, namely a reason to believe that the accused may commit any further offence or not cooperate with the investigation or induce or threaten witnesses or flee from the judicial process.

As for the magistrate, he cannot go by 'ipse dixit' or an unsubstantiated statement by the police. There is a clear check list hemmed into the Criminal Procedure Code before remanding a person. First the requirements of Section 41(1)(b) must be met. Secondly, the

case diary that must be forwarded by the police as mandated by Section 172 CrPC, along with the remand report must disclose a genuine need for further investigation beyond the stipulated 24 hour window. Thirdly, a speaking order with reasons for the remand is prescribed.

Although non-compliance with these provisions would make the police liable for both departmental action and contempt of court and the magistrate answerable to the High Court, is this being followed strictly? The Supreme Court in Arnesen Kumar Vs State of Bihar (2014) had held that "the power to authorise detention is a very solemn function. It affects the liberty and freedom of citizens and needs to be exercised with great care and caution. Our experience tells us that it is not exercised with the seriousness it deserves. In many of the cases, detention is authorised in a routine, casual and cavalier manner."

The non-application of mind alluded to can be traced to the arrest information form shown to the accused at the time of arrest not containing the reasons

for the arrest or even the police station where the case is registered. It is not some top secret to be revealed only in open court. There are instances of mechanical reproduction in the case diary of all or most of the conditions contained in Section 41 CrPC! Courts have labelled such practices as a "subversion of law" that deserve to be "deprecatd."

Justice Anand Venkatesh of the Madras High Court in State of Tamil Nadu Vs Nakkeeran Gopal (2019) put the issue in perspective with commendable clarity. Clarifying that a magistrate is not expected to conduct a "roving inquiry" into the "sufficiency of materials as the investigation would be at a nascent stage", he ruled that "when remanding the accused, it is obligatory on the part of the Magistrate to apply his mind to the facts of the case and not to pass a remand order automatically or in a mechanical fashion."

It's a reminder to the players in the criminal justice system to take their 'tool kits' seriously!

(The writer is an advocate at the Madras high court, columnist & author)

## Covid spike in Kerala hits Chennai tour operators

**T. SUDHEESH | DC**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

The tour operating sector in Chennai, which was expecting a momentum in this vacation season after a huge pandemic setback, has taken a beating due to the Covid-19 spike in Kerala, one of the favourite destinations of annual holidaymakers from the city.

Facing the heat of the curbs imposed by the Kerala government, the package tour operators of Chennai, who are one of the main contributors to Kerala's tourism revenue, are now undergoing dreadful days as the sector started witnessing cancellations in bookings and travel plans.

S. Nagarajan, a tour operator from Poonamallee, here, said that he received 40 enquiries about Kerala tours for April-May, mainly from families, honeymoon couples and adventure tour groups. But none of them turned up as Covid-19 cases are spiralling in Kerala.

Usually, the tourists

**Facing the heat of the curbs imposed by the Kerala government, the package tour operators of Chennai, who are one of the main contributors to Kerala's tourism revenue, are now undergoing dreadful days as the sector started witnessing cancellations in bookings and travel plans**

from Chennai often choose hill stations in Munnar, heritage Fort Kochi and backwaters in Alappuzha during summer vacation. We used to conduct more than 100 school trips between February and March. This year all went in vain. Last season was also hit by the pandemic as Covid-19 cases were reported just before the summer season. In the pre-pandemic period we conducted at least Rs 5-10 lakh business in the April-May months. For last season, our turnover is zero, he said.

He alleged that the state

and central governments did not offer any help to the sector. Hundreds of tour operators left the business and started doing jobs as painters, auto drivers, fish vendors and daily labourers, he said.

"We have cancelled two adventure tour trips to Munnar which were all set to take off. At the last moment, some parents raised objections as Covid-19 cases were rising. So the plan got cancelled. Now we have no enquiries for Kerala trips this summer season. Usually the holidaymakers plan the trip a couple of months in advance and we get a lot of enquiries during February and March. We have no hope in this year's business even if the situation changes. Kerala is always a favourite destination for Chennai tourists as the travel is economical, time consuming and the place is tourism friendly. Last season we thought the situation would turn around for better this year. But the situation has changed from bad to worse," he laments.

"The tour operating business was expecting a fillip after the vaccination drive started. But the increasing Covid-19 cases in Kerala is definitely a matter of worry as lot of families in Chennai choose Kerala every year for holidaying", according to V.K.T. Balan, chairman, Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI), Tamil Nadu Chapter.

M. K. Ajit Kumar, spokesperson, South India MICE Association SIMA, said the tour operating business was badly hit in the post-pandemic period as now individual tour-makers don't depend on the help of tour operators. They have started contacting hotels and resorts directly for room booking and then choose their own vehicles to travel. So it will take time for the tour operating sector to return to normalcy, he said. The uncertainty hit the sector at a time when around 14 lakh tourists from Tamil Nadu, according to the data available with Kerala tourism, used to visit Kerala in the pre-pandemic period.

## House of retired VAO burgled

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

Around 110 sovereigns worth gold jewels among other valuables were stolen from the house of a retired VAO in Kannivakkam near Guduvancheri on Tuesday night.

Senthamarai, 62, worked as a Village Administrative Officer. Police sources said he lives with his wife on the ground floor of their house located in Tiruvallur Salai in Kannivakkam village, while the couple's son, Nandhakumar (35), a sidha doctor by profession

lived with his wife on the first floor. According to police, the theft happened on Tuesday night, when the family visited their relative in Valasaravakkam in the city. On Wednesday morning, neighbours noticed the locks on the retired VAO's house broken and alerted Senthamarai

lived with his wife on the first floor.

According to police, the theft happened on Tuesday night, when the family visited their relative in Valasaravakkam in the city. On Wednesday morning, neighbours noticed the locks on the retired VAO's house broken and alerted

Senthamarai. He rushed to the spot in the afternoon only to find the house ransacked. The Guduvancheri police were informed about the incident. They came to the spot along with a forensic team and sniffer dog.

Reports say around 110 sovereigns worth gold jewels, two kilograms worth silver jewels and vessels and Rs 50,000 in cash were stolen from both the houses.

Guduvancheri police registered a case. They are now scrutinizing the CCTV clips recovered from the neighborhood to find a lead. Further investigations are underway.

## Gold seized by Chennai air customs

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

The customs at the Chennai airport on Tuesday seized 773 grams of gold worth ₹ 37.17 lakhs and arrested an air passenger from smuggling the yellow metal.

According to the airport sources, based on intelligence, one Maithom sheik Haithar Ali (23) of Sivaganga who arrived from Dubai by Air India flight AI 906 was intercepted at exit on suspicion of carrying gold.

On personal search, three bundles of gold paste weighing 863 grams were found concealed in rectum.

On extraction 773 grams of gold worth ₹37.17 lakhs was recovered and seized under Customs Act.

He was arrested. Further investigation is under progress.



St Andrews Church celebrates 200 years.

## Special service at St Andrews Church to mark 200 years

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

St Andrews Church ('The Kirk' in Scottish) will complete 200 years of continuous service on Thursday Feb. 25 since its consecration. All Covid SOPs will be followed at the Thanksgiving Service to be held at the church, located on Poonamallee High Road opposite the Police Commissioner's Office and next to Egmore Station, when God's goodness in serving the people of the city will be celebrated.

A Bicentennial Commemorative Book will be released along with a Bicentennial Commemorative Film that traces the 200-year journey of the church from concept to

execution, to two centuries of service to generations of citizens.

"What we are celebrating today is the Living Church, not the edifice, but the congregation that has worshiped here and served God over these 200 hundred years, making a difference to the lives of the people in the community. Today, the congregation of over 500 families is involved with and supports many ministries that make a difference to the sick, the poor and the marginalised in the city and beyond," Rev Isaac Johnson, Presbyterian of St Andrews Church (The Kirk) said.

When the church was consecrated in February 1821, there was not very much development of

what is now Chennai and environs. The second oldest railway line in India was laid from Royapuram to Arcot in 1853. The Great Indian Sepoy Mutiny took place in 1857. The first 'screw pile' pier of what became the Madras Harbour was established in 1861. Landmarks such as the Central Station and Egmore Station followed much later in 1873 and 1908.

The Presbyters who served the Church and the congregations, the musicians who enlivened the worship within her walls, the members who loved and served the Church and the community in myriad ways, and the various ministries have all left their mark on this city.



## SHORT TAKES

## DMK-Congress alliance talks today

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

The DMK is likely to hold discussions with the Congress on seat allocation at 11 am on Thursday in a bid to finalise the alliance for the Assembly elections.

Top Congress leaders like the party's Tamil Nadu in-charge Dinesh Gundu Rao and former Kerala Chief Minister Oomen Chandy, who would be negotiating with the DMK top brass, are already in Chennai.

The top leaders held discussions with the functionaries of the TNCC at Sathyamurthy Bhavan on Wednesday to understand the sentiments of the local leaders and devise their strategy accordingly while negotiating with the DMK.

It is learnt that the Congress, which contested in 40 seats under the same alliance in the 2016 Assembly elections, is keen on getting 30 to 35 seats this time, too. However, the DMK, pointing out the fact that the Congress could win only 8 seats last time, is trying to reduce the allotment rather drastically.

## BJP names Nellai candidate much to unease of AIADMK

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUNELVELI, FEB. 24

Much to the discomfiture of the AIADMK, the BJP has announced the candidature of state vice-president Nainar Nagendran in Tirunelveli assembly constituency. Way ahead of all major parties and before the Election Commission issued the notification for the assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, BJP state president L. Murugan in a press brief-

ing in Tirunelveli introduced Nainar Nagendran as the party candidate in Tirunelveli. The state BJP president also opened the election office of the party.

"Nainar may be in the BJP's wish-list for Tirunelveli if the constituency is allotted to the BJP in the AIADMK-led alliance. It's politically unfair on the part of Murugan to openly announce Nainar Nagendran as its candidate evenm-

before the seat-sharing talks have begun," said a senior AIADMK functionary in Tirunelveli, who added that AIADMK has a strong presence in the constituency and Nainar Nagendran won twice in this constituency when he contested as the AIADMK candidate.

The AIADMK leaders also did not appreciate the "safronised lotus" wall graffiti across the constituency seeking vote for the BJP

before a formal understanding is reached between the parties in the alliance. They warned that this "big brotherly" attitude of the BJP would strain the relationship between the cadres of both the parties and affect the electioneering. However, responding to the AIADMK, the Tirunelveli constituency coordinator in BJP, Dhaya Shankar said they were aware of the last minute change.

## AIADMK-AMMK skirmish at Jaya's birthday fete

G. SRINIVASAN | DC  
THANJAVUR, FEB. 24

Garlanding of the statue of J. Jayalalithaa, former Tamil Nadu chief minister, on her 73rd birthday celebrations resulted in a skirmish between AIADMK and AMMK members at Thanjavur on Wednesday.

AMMK party cadres tied party flags around the statue of Jayalalithaa near the railway station before they

garlanded the statue. Later, the members, led by Rajeswaran, a former municipal councillor garlanded the statue. After this, the police asked them to remove the party flags around the statue as AIADMK members were coming to garland the statue. AMMK members refused to remove the flags and squatted on the road and agitated.

When AIADMK members came to garland the statue,

they asked the AMMK members to remove the flags. A wordy duel between the two groups resulted in a skirmish. The police intervened and tried to pacify them. While AIADMK cadres shouted slogans hailing EPS and OPS, AMMK members raised slogans hailing V.K. Sasikala.

Later the AIADMK cadres garlanded the statue and removed the flags of AMMK.

## PM to address convocation of Tamil Nadu Dr MGR Medical University on Friday

New Delhi, Feb 24 (PTI) Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the 33rd convocation ceremony of the Tamil Nadu Dr MGR Medical University via video-conferencing on Friday, his office said.

A total of 17,591 candidates will be conferred with degrees and diplomas at the convocation ceremony.

The governor of Tamil Nadu will also be present on the occasion. "Prime

Minister Narendra Modi will address the 33rd convocation of the Tamil Nadu Dr MGR Medical University on February 26, 2021 at 11 am via video-conferencing," the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

The university is named after former Tamil Nadu chief minister MG Ramachandran. It has a total of 686 affiliated institutions under its umbrella, encompassing the disciplines of medicine, den-

tistry, pharmacy, nursing, AYUSH, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and allied health sciences.

These institutions, including 41 medical colleges, 19 dental colleges, 48 AYUSH colleges, 199 nursing colleges, 81 pharmacy colleges and the rest being speciality post-doctoral medical and allied health institutions, are spread across the length and breadth of Tamil Nadu. —PTI

## Conspiracy of BJP and its allies toppled my govt: Narayanasamy

**Puducherry, Feb. 24:** Former Chief Minister of Puducherry V. Narayanasamy on Wednesday cautioned the voters against supporting the alliance comprising BJP, AINRC and AIADMK in the coming assembly polls here as these parties would have no qualms to merge the Union Territory with Tamil Nadu.

Addressing party workers during a demonstration here to condemn the 'toppling' of the Congress led government in Puducherry, Narayanasamy said, "my government was toppled through undemocratic and scrupulous designs and conspiracy hatched by the BJP in coordination with the AINRC and AIADMK."

He launched an emotional tirade against the BJP and its allies for "committing murder of democracy" by adopting "unprincipled practices to lure turncoats" to topple the democratically elected government here. "Even before my government was



formed in June 2016 the Centre had posted the former IPS officer Kiran Bedi as Lt Governor of Puducherry in May that year.

This was a clear proof of the plan of the NDA to rock the boat and disturb democratically elected government." The Congress leader claimed that the BJP led alliance would bite the dust in the forthcoming polls and all the contestants of the saffron party and its alliance partners would lose deposit.

"If by any chance the alliance comprising BJP and its allies comes to power, the separate identity of Puducherry as a union territory would be dismantled and its merger with neighbouring Tamil Nadu would happen," he alleged.

## PIL to fill vacancies in consumer dispute redressal commission

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

An advocate has approached the Madras high court to direct the state government to fill up the vacancy for the posts of the president and members of the state and district consumer dispute redressal commission in Tamil Nadu.

A division bench comprising Justices R.Subbiah and Sathi Kumar Sukumara Kurup before whom the Public Interest Litigation filed by advocate G.Alex Benziger, came up for hearing, ordered notice to the state government and Registrar General of the Madras high court and posted after two weeks, further hearing of the case.

Petitioner's counsel M.Rajashekar submitted that the quorum of the State Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (SCDRC) consists of three members namely the president, unless he is, or has been a judge of the high court and consists of two members and at least one member or the president of the stete Commission shall be a woman. The quorum of the District Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (DCDRC) consists of three members namely the president, unless he, or has been or is qualified to be a district judge and consists of two members and at least one member or the president of the district commission shall be a woman. The state of Tamil Nadu has got totally 30 DCDRC situated in each district and out of which only 5 DCDRC has got full time president. The remaining forums are functioning without full time president, he added.

He said due to want of quorum some of the other presidents and members have been given additional in-charge to function as members of the districts which will not only affect the litigants but also the commission will be functioning only for 3 days a week. Out of 30 district forums, 25 district forums were functioning without permanent president and 19 district forums were functioning without permanent members and hence all the cases were being adjourned for want of quorum and it was just and necessary to fill up the vacancy in order to ensure speedy justice to the consumer litigants, otherwise, the object of the Act will be defeated and the purpose for making such establishments will be nugatory, he added.

Rajashekar said the selection of the president of the state and district commissions was a long drawn process. Interviews has to be held by the selection committee and after the interview the names of the selected candidates has to be forwarded for appointment in the order of merit for the consideration of the state government. The state government after verifying the credentials and antecedents of the recommended candidates appoints them. Filling up of the vacant posts of the presidents and members of the state and district commissions has not at all been commenced as on date. Therefore, the petitioner sent a representation to the state government on January 30, 2021. But, there was no response. Hence, the petitioner has filed the present petition, he added.

## IN LOVING MEMORY

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

- Bhagwad Gita Chapter 8, Verse 4 -



### Smt. Tikkavarapu Urmila Chandrasekhar Reddy

W/o Late Shri. Tikkavarapu Chandrasekhar Reddy

18/03/1936 – 25/02/2016

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

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## SHORT TAKES

TWO JAWANS  
KILLED, 1 HURT IN  
NAXAL ATTACKSRABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, FEB. 24

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

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

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

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

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

POLICE OFFICER  
KILLED BY LIQUOR  
SMUGGLERSNAYEAR AZAD | DC  
PATNA, FEB. 24

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Scenes in Kashmir reminiscent of early '90s

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

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC  
SRINAGAR, FEB. 24

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

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



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

— PTI

belongings thoroughly.

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

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

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

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

evoked sharp criticism by political activities and netizens.

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

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

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

## Search on



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

— PTI

## PM flags personal healthcare biz to IIT grads

**Kharagpur (WB), Feb. 23:** Warning against the dangers of climate change and natural disasters like the one in Uttarakhand recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday asked the IITs to develop disaster resilient infrastructure that can withstand their effects.

Addressing the 66th convocation of IIT (Kharagpur), the oldest of Indian Institutes of Technology, he gave the students the mantra of 'Self-3': 'self-awareness, self-confidence and selflessness' in order to become startups for bringing about a change in the lives of people.

He also spoke of the need for making available safe, affordable and environment friendly energy to

people through initiatives like the International Solar Alliance.

"Climate change is a major challenge as natural disasters destroy infrastructure. India drew the attention of the world to the issue of disaster management.

"You can see what happened recently in Uttarakhand.

We should focus on developing disaster resilient infrastructure that can withstand natural disasters," he said.

The Prime Minister referred to the global Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), which he announced at the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019.

The CDRI envisages

partnership of national governments, UN agencies and programmes, multi-lateral development banks, financing mechanisms, private sector, and knowledge institutions to promote the resilience of new and existing infrastructure systems to climate and disaster risks to ensure sustainable development.

He hailed the role played by the IITs in developing technology to battle Covid-19, and said the hallowed institutes should now work fast on finding futuristic solutions to other health care problems.

"You represent the aspirations of 130 crore people of India," he said, while addressing the convocation virtually.

Noting that the needs

and aspirations of the 21st century India have changed, Mr Modi said IITs also need to transform from being just Indian Institutes of Technology to institutes of indigenous technologies.

"You have to become startups to bring about a change in the lives of people. You have to work on Self-3- self awareness, self-confidence and selflessness. You should recognise your potential and move forward, move ahead with full confidence, move ahead with selflessness," he told the students.

Underscoring the need for clean and affordable energy, the Prime Minister said India presented to the world the

concept of International Solar Alliance. He said the cost per unit of solar power was very little in India. However, it was still a great challenge to reach it to people's homes.

"Can you do something about reaching solar cookers to homes using 'chulha' (earthen ovens)," he asked.

He said before the coronavirus struck people used to keep only medicines at their homes.

"Things have changed. They now keep machines that measure blood pressure, machines that measure blood oxygen. A huge market has emerged for personal health care equipment," he said while speaking about research and innovation in the field.

2 militants killed  
in AnantnagDC CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR, FEB. 24

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

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

about the presence of four militants including an IED 'expert'.

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

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

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

Stadium named  
after PM Modi

From Page 1

The BJP also listed names of institutions and tournaments named after the Nehru-Gandhi family.

Senior BJP leader and Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said, "Sonia Gandhi and others never visited Kevadia to pay respect to Sardar Patel statue there. They never visited that site and now they are talking about insulting Sardar Patel. Only BJP has shown respect to Sardar Patel".

The state-of-the-art stadium opened with the third Test between India and England, a day-night game from Wednesday. It will also host the fourth and final game of the series from March 4.

The Narendra Modi stadium in Motera is to be part of the planned Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave in Ahmedabad.

Gujarat deputy chief minister Nitin Patel, talking to a news channel said, "the Congress neither

knows the history or geography of Ahmedabad but tries to create controversy just to be in news. You can see files and (cricket) commentaries — that stadium is always called the Motera stadium. There is another Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel stadium but this stadium was popular as the Motera stadium."

Shiv Sena leader Priyanka Chaturvedi tweeted: "Stunning Motera Cricket Stadium Kudos. However Sardar Vallabhai Patel, great son of India, whose name was

used extensively to imply he wasn't given his due, we now see his name erased from the stadium. I am certain Honourable PM will object to his name being used to write-over India's Iron Man."

Responding to the criticism, BJP leader Y. Satyakumar tweeted: "Twenty-eight sports tournaments, awards and trophies named after members of Nehru-Gandhi family. Nineteen stadium named after the members of the Nehru-Gandhi family. Same party people are rattled when merely 1 stadium has been named after Narendra Modiji which was his vision and brainchild."

"This stadium was conceptualised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat. He was president of the Gujarat Cricket Association at that time," Mr Kovind said in his address after the inauguration.

"It represents India's aspirations and strength. India is called hub of cricket, so it is appropriate that we have the largest stadium. It will give India a new identity," the President said.

Also present on the occasion was Union home minister Amit Shah and sports minister Kiren Rijju along with a host of other dignitaries.

"We have decided to name it after the country's Prime Minister. It was Modiji's dream project," said Mr Shah after the inauguration.

Vaccination for public  
set to start on March 1

From Page 1

The minister, however, did not elaborate if people will have a choice of vaccines. Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said most of the ministers are thinking of paying for the vaccines.

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

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

These teams will work closely with state and UT administrations to ascertain reasons for the recent surge in the number of Covid-19 cases. They will also coordinate with health authorities of

the states and UT for requisite Covid-19 control measures to break the chain of transmission. States and UTs have been advised to regularly review the emerging situation with the concerned district officials to ensure that gains made so far in Covid management are not lost, officials said.

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

The health secretary has urged states/UT to focus on undertaking aggressive measures to break the chain of transmission and to ensure that RT-PCR testing is amplified to flush out undetected cases. "These states/UTs have been advised to increase testing in a focussed manner in the affected districts," he wrote.

## TOUGH | WORDS

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

## Naravane: Strategy in place for talks with China

PAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 24

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Lease report on port false: China

sion of the lease, he was quoted by the Sri Lankan newspaper Ceylon Today on February 20 as saying.

As we are implementing our policies giving much attention to all countries, the previous government made a mistake on the Hambantota port deal when they cancelled the lease and gave it on a longer period of 99 years plus another 99 years once the first term ends, Gunawardena said.

When asked whether the clause is mentioned in the MoU, Gunawardena said: Yes. It says the 99-year lease can extend for a further period.

— PTI

trade, tourism & adoption of technology in agriculture which both countries could positively leverage on," he wrote.

— PTI

# Reject UN rights body resolution: Lankan FM

allegedly responsible for rights violations during the last phase of the armed conflict with the LTTE in 2009.

A draft of the resolution is expected to be tabled at the UNHRC sessions on Wednesday, officials here said.

—PTI

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Tender Notice No. Mech-LMG-ET-2021-21; Date: 22-02-2021. E-tenders invited by the undersigned for the following works: Name of Work: Comprehensive AMC of Wheel Set & Earthing Equipment of LHB Coaches of Depot Agartala for a period of 4 years. Tender value: ₹1,68,74,557.00. Tender Document: ₹5,000.00. E-tender will be closed at 13:00 hrs. on 22-02-2021 and opened at 16:00 hrs. on 22-02-2021. The complete information and tender document of above e-tender is available upto 13.00 hrs of 19-03-2021 on the website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)  
DME (I/C), Lumding  
**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
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[illegible]

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE				
Work	Date & Time of Opening	Approx. Cost	Earnest Money	Completion period
Conversion of UAC based axle counter in SRE-6 Division.	24.03.2021 at 15:00 hrs.	₹3,81,37,202.00	NIL	09 Months
Conversion of line no. 10 of Sectional Route backward shunting signal at Chandigarh	24.03.2021 at 15:00 hrs.	₹72,20,875.00	NIL	09 Months

## 6-YEAR-OLD DIES IN GREEK CAMP FIRE

The blaze broke out late Tuesday at a short-term residence facility near the town of Thebes, about 90 kilometres (55 miles) from the Greek capital. Nobody else was reported injured. The fire service said in a statement that firefighters sent to the incident were initially prevented by camp residents from entering, and had to call police support to get in and extinguish the blaze. By then, the boy had already been brought unconscious out of the building where the fire broke out.

**Bangkok, Feb. 24:** Three Cabinet ministers in Thailand were forced to leave their posts Wednesday after a court found them guilty of sedition for taking part in sometimes-violent protests in 2013-2014 against the government then in power.

The Criminal Court in Bangkok found Digital Economy Minister Buddhipongse Punnakanta, Education Minister Natchapol Teepsuwan and Deputy Transport Minister Thaworn Senneam guilty along with about two dozen other defendants in a case that was launched in 2018. The verdicts can be appealed to a higher court but under the law the Cabinet ministers must relinquish their jobs immediately.

**Tehran, Feb. 24:** Three people were killed over two days in clashes in the southeastern Iranian town of Saravan near the border with Pakistan, the semiofficial *ILNA* news agency reported.

An angry mob stormed the district governor's office Tuesday, a day after shootings of fuel smugglers at the border left at least two people dead. Tuesday's *ILNA* report quoted Malak Fazeli, Saravan's representative in parliament, as saying: "As far as I know, three people lost their lives while being transferred to the hospital." It was unclear whether all three people were killed in the border shootings or if one of the fatalities was a result of the chaos at the district governor's office.

**London, Feb. 24:** Wanted diamond merchant Nirav Modi, who remains behind bars in a London prison as he contests his extradition

to India on charges of fraud and money laundering in the estimated USD 2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, will find out the UK court's ruling in the nearly two-year-long legal battle on Thursday.

## A man wearing a red beanie and a black hoodie with white text is running towards the left. In the background, several tires are burning on a city street, with thick black smoke rising into the air. Other people are visible in the background, some standing and some moving. The scene is set in an urban environment with buildings and trees.

Protesters burn tyres to block a road in front of Judge Fadi Akikis house during a demonstration calling for the release of anti-government activists detained following riots in northern Lebanon late last month, in Beirut, on Wednesday. — AP

# Germany prepares way for its troops to stay in Afghanistan

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

High pressure and water finding its way into the engine caused an explosion and fire inside the car, killing all the family members, Sahel said. The bride and groom were riding in a separate car and were not among the casualties. A police spokesman said the incident happened in an area where militants and Afghan forces are active and police were not able to provide assistance immediately. Meanwhile, a media advocacy organisation called Nai said in a statement that unknown gunmen shot and killed Dr Khalil Narmgo, former head of a Baghlan journalists association in northern Afghanistan. A Baghlan police official who wanted to remain anonymous as he was not authorised to speak to the media said Narmgo was returning to the

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

Chancellor Angela Merkel's Cabinet on Wednesday approved a new draft mandate that would enable German troops to stay until Jan. 31, government spokesman Steffen Seibert said. German troop deployments overseas require parliamentary approval, which is typically granted on an annual basis. The current mandate for Afghanistan expires at the end of March. NATO has just

capital of Baghlan province late Tuesday when unknown gunmen stopped his car, took him out, and opened fire at him. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Afghanistan has seen a nationwide spike in bombings, targeted killings, and violence as

under 10,000 troops in the war-ravaged country, helping to train and advise Afghan security forces.

Germany's contingent of nearly 1,100 is the second-biggest in the Resolute Support mission after the United States. President Joe Biden is reviewing his predecessor's 2020 deal with the Taliban, which includes a May 1 deadline for a final U.S. troop withdrawal. In Washington, calls are mounting for the US to delay the final exit or renegotiate the deal to allow the presence of a smaller force. Germany's foreign minister, Heiko Maas, has said the withdrawal of foreign troops should be tied to progress.

—AP

peace negotiations in Qatar between the Taliban and the Afghan government resumed this week after over a month's delay. The Islamic State group's local affiliate has claimed responsibility for some of the attacks, but many go unclaimed.

**Washington, Feb. 24:** A former top US military official has told lawmakers that the Afghan Taliban have had sanctuary in Pakistan and the terror group originated from the madrasas in that country.

During a Congressional hearing on Tuesday, General (ret) Joseph F. Dunford, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also told lawmakers that the probability of civil war is high in the wake of a precipitous US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

We know that the Taliban have had sanctuaries in Pakistan. We know that they have an active diplomatic effort traveling to Moscow, traveling to Beijing, traveling to other countries. We know they travel in the Gulf. We know Iran has provided some material support, he said.

Dunford said the Taliban gets its financial support from drug trade.

The Taliban, he said is a Sunni terrorist organization. There's no question that the Taliban originates from the madrassas in Pakistan. — *PTT*

**ADVERTISEMENT**

Please refer to the advertisement issued in national newspapers on **09.01.2021** regarding the online written examination for Customs Brokers Examination, 2021 scheduled to be held on **24.03.2021**. The pattern for the written and oral examination will be as follows:

The online written examination will be a Computer Based Exam with Multiple Choice Questions. Questions will be bilingual i.e. in English and Hindi. Candidates have the option to answer either in English or Hindi. Other details are as follows:

The pattern of the examination will be as follows:

No. of questions	: 150
Time duration	: Two and half hours (1030 Hrs. to 1300 Hrs.)
Marking scheme	: +3 for each correct answer -1 for each incorrect answer
Maximum marks	: 450
Qualifying marks	: 270 (60%)

Those qualifying in the written examination will have to appear in Oral examination in terms of Regulation 6 of the Customs Brokers Licensing Regulations, 2018, as amended, during second quarter of the calendar year, 2021. The pass percentage marks for qualifying in the oral examination will be 60%.

For any query, please visit the websites ([www.cbic.gov.in](http://www.cbic.gov.in) and [www.nacin.gov.in](http://www.nacin.gov.in)) or contact the nearest Customs Commissionerate/ NACIN, Faridabad at email id [cbire.helpline@gmail.com](mailto:cbire.helpline@gmail.com).

Principal Director General  
NACIN, Faridabad

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**Tender Enquiry No.: Q-3994/20-21/PO-TICE-MM**

Chief Purchase Officer/MM, Central Purchase Organization, PSPCL,  
 2nd Floor, Multi Storey Building, The Mall, PSPCL invites E-tender of  
 10,000 Nos. EEL-2 (Re-designated as EEL-1), ISI Marked, Single  
 Phase, 10 KVA, oil immersed, CRGO/Amorphous core, Aluminium  
 wound, distribution transformers complete with fittings as per PSPCL  
 specifications & conforming to IS 1180 Part-1 (2014) & IS 2026 (with  
 latest amendments). For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to  
<https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 24.02.2021 onwards.  
**Note:** Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at  
<https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

C-78/21 RQ : 76155/12/118/2021/1890

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Sealed Tender in the prescribed format are invited only from the Govt/Private Insurance companies for insuring the Cloth Stock, Yarn, Furniture & Fittings, Plant & Machineries and Movable and Immovable Assets of Co-optex, for the period from 01.04.2021 to 31.03.2022.

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DIPR/1347/TENDER/2021 **Chief General Manager**

**Comprehensive AMC of Wheel Set Earthing Equipment**  
E-Tender Notice No. Moch-LMO-ET-17-2021, Dated 22.09.2021, is invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Name of Work:** Comprehensive AMC of Wheel Set Earthing Equipment of LHB Coaches of Coaching Depot Agarata for a period of 4 years. **Tender value:** ₹1,68,74,557.00. **Cost of tender:** ₹100.00. **Tender will be closed at 13:00 hrs on 19-03-2021 and opened at 16:00 hrs on 19-03-2021.** The complete information with tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 13.00 hrs of 19-03-2021 in website [www.itrecs.gov.in](http://www.itrecs.gov.in)

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 <b>PUBLIC WORKS</b> Tamil Nadu On Behalf of Government of Tamil Nadu, Contractors of Public Works Department	
S/	Name of Work
No.	
<b>TWO COVER SYSTEM - PREQUE</b>	
Sambalgarh Urban Division, Salem	
1. Construction of Two cover system of Sewerage for the area of 1000 Sq. Mts. at Sambalgarh Urban Division, Salem.	
2. Tender Documents will be available at the Office of Executive Engineer, PWD, Urban Division, Salem on 08.08.2019 till 10.08.2019. The application and completed form to be submitted to the <a href="http://www.tendersnpsc.in">www.tendersnpsc.in</a> DPR - 1107 - TENDER-2019	

S. No.	Tender No.	Name
1.	OT-34/ 20-21	Signalling work in c/c BFAC by UFSBI with UMB-LDH Section over
2.	OT-35/ 20-21	Outdoor signalling work 3 to common line and Release for forward movement from each station over Ambata

**Note:** 1. Open tender through E-tendering  
Vihar, Ambata Cantt. from the willing  
be opened soon thereafter. Tender  
PANTAN/TANTIN as per conditions. 2.  
3. Tender should have class  
in E-Tendering and they are requested  
before submitting their offer so as to

**No.: SW-Sig/UMB/NIT-13/2020-21**



## DECCAN Chronicle

25 FEBRUARY 2021

### Renew thrust on tests, speed up vaccinations

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

Back home in India, the scene is far from comfortable. As many as 16 of the 36 states and Union territories have reported a rise in the Covid numbers last week while seven states — Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and Haryana — have reported a dramatic hike. Several districts in Maharashtra are under lockdown. India at present hosts all the important variants of the virus and scientists are afraid that some of them could frustrate vaccination drive by mutation.

This situation leaves the Union government with little option other than taking a serious look at the way the pandemic is fought at the ground. The nation has now practically done away with every restriction that was part of the lockdown announced last year. Life has returned to near normal in most parts of the nation.

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

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

### Business trumps nationalism

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

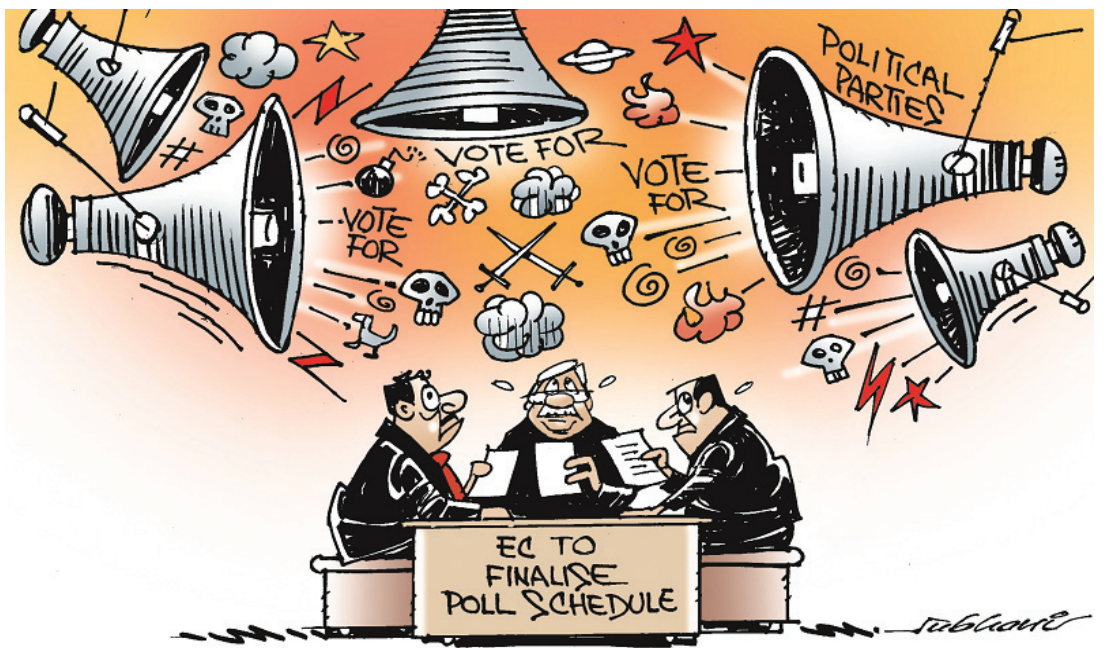
These clearances appear to have been accorded no sooner than the disengagement of troops and military hardware were completed in the north and the south banks of Pangong Lake last Friday, and while the Chinese side is being difficult about vacating the strategically vital Depsang Plains where China's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

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

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

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

Subhani



## Ignoring Biden mantra may be costly for India



K.C. Singh

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

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

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

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

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

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

Trump's role in it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

### LETTERS

#### LAW AND LIBERTY

The bail granted by additional sessions judge Dharmender Rana to climate activist Disha Ravi, charged with sedition under Section: 124A of IPC, strikes a blow for civil liberties, the kernel of democracy. It should encourage other members of the judicial fraternity to rediscover their role as the upholders of rights and freedoms guaranteed by the constitution and restore its sanctity and supremacy. The judiciary not only has to be outside the government's orbit, it must be seen to be independent of government control in the execution of its all-important constitutionally-mandated role as the final arbiter of almost everything under the sun. The powerfully written text of the bail order read like a treatise on the jurisprudence of bail; it could be the template and touchstone for similar cases.

G. David Milton, Maruthancode

#### MURDER OF DEMOCRACY

IT IS unfortunate that a democratically elected government in Puducherry has been brought down thanks to the autocratic, arrogant and anti-people policies adopted by Kiran Bedi, former Lt. Governor who acted openly as a lead member of the BJP with the only intention to stall the functioning of the government. Once she completed the task entrusted to her diligently, the saffron party went in for its usual practice to divide the Congress led government, get some of the legislators to resign and join their party and ultimately topple the government. It is nothing but a murder of democracy orchestrated by the BJP. The fitting reply for the manner in which a democratically elected government has been brought down will be for the people of Puducherry to re-elect the Congress alliance giving them a thumping majority.

Tharcus S. Fernando, Chennai

#### SURGE IN COVID CASES

**APPROPOS REPORT** Go for RT-PCR tests, states told (Feb. 22). It is alarming to note that the Covid-19 is hitting Maharashtra with its 'third-wave' and Kerala with 74% active cases reported. And in a few districts in Maharashtra the lockdown was imposed. Since the trains, flights and buses carry lakhs within India, there are chances of repeating 2020 with increasing cases and deaths. The mentioned tests, if conducted, may reveal, confirm the Corona infection but cannot prevent it. To prevent, force the public to wear face masks and maintain social distancing and by imposing a heavy fine on offenders.

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

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Mahir Ali



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By arrangement with Dawn



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50781.69	2.07
Nifty 50	14982.00	1.86
S&P 500*	3,901.34	0.51
Dollar (₹)	72.33	0.16
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.44	0.33
Euro (₹)	87.98	0.03
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,307▼148	0.31
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	67.17	2.75
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.147	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.425	0.061

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Common infra for govt, corp bonds mull'd

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

## Bidders of PSBs should have deep pockets: RBI



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

## Bosch to invest ₹800 cr to upgrade

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

## Maruti drives in new Swift from ₹5.73 L onwards

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

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## ■ Bourses trade till 5 pm; indices soar Glitch gives stocks an extended run

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, FEB. 24

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

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

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

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

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

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

The NSE finally

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

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

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

The NSE should "explain the reasons for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## All pvt banks can now offer pension, other govt biz

New Delhi, Feb. 24:

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

Currently, only a few large private sector banks are allowed to conduct government-related business.

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

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

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

—PTI



Nirmala Sitharaman

## PLI for pharma, IT hardware unveiled

New Delhi, Feb. 24: The government on Wednesday extended the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme to the pharmaceutical and IT hardware sectors, offering over Rs 22,000 crore of sops to boost domestic manufacturing and create jobs.

The PLI scheme will help India export IT goods worth Rs 2.45 lakh crore and Rs 1.96 lakh crore of pharma products over 2022 to 2028, communications and IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said while briefing reporters on decisions taken by the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The scheme provides manufacturers cash-backs of between 1 per cent and 4 per cent of additional sales of locally made goods over a certain period, with 2019-2020 as the base year.

While Rs 15,000 crore of incentives will be provided for the pharma sector over the period 2020-21 to 2028-29, Rs 7,325-crore PLI will be made available for domestic manufacturers of laptops, tablets, personal computers and servers for four years.

The focus of the scheme is to get global champions to India and to make national champions out of local manufacturers," Prasad said.

The scheme for the IT hardware sector envisages production of Rs 3.26 lakh crore and exports of Rs 2.45 lakh crore over the next four years, creating 1.80 lakh jobs.

The same for the phar-



Ravi Shankar Prasad

ma sector is expected to promote production of high-value products and increase the value addition in exports.

Incremental sales of Rs 2.94 lakh crore and incremental exports of Rs 1.96 lakh crore are estimated during six years from 2022-23 to 2027-28, creating 20,000 direct and 80,000 indirect jobs.

The PLI push for hi-tech IT hardware gadgets comes close on the heels of the Cabinet last week clearing a Rs 12,195-crore scheme for telecom equipment manufacturing.

An incentive scheme for mobile phone manufacturing was announced last year and has since garnered strong response from players despite the challenging times of the pandemic.

The PLI scheme for IT hardware announced on Wednesday will benefit five major global players and 10 domestic champions, an official statement said.

The PLI scheme is expected to enhance the development of the electronics ecosystem in India, at a time when global manufacturing is undergoing a shift and companies across the

world are looking to diversify their manufacturing locations to mitigate the risk involved in depending on a single market.

"India will be well-positioned as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) on account of integration with global value chains, thereby becoming a destination for IT hardware exports," the statement said.

The scheme will usher additional investment in electronics manufacturing to the tune of Rs 2,700 crore.

The laptop and tablet demand in India is now largely met through imports, valued at Rs 29,470 crore and at Rs 2,870 crore, respectively.

The market for IT hardware is dominated by six-seven companies globally, which control about 70 per cent of the world market. These companies are able to exploit large economies of scale to compete in markets.

As many as 16 companies were approved under the first round of the PLI scheme for large scale manufacturing of mobile phones and specified electronic components.

Another scheme for promoting manufacturing of electronics components has also received 22 applications involving an investment of about Rs 13,500 crore in the areas of active, passive and electromechanical components, displays and mechanics for mobile phones.

—PTI

## India, China reduced global income inequality: ILO

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

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

According to the ILO, the global labour income distribution is lopsided. A worker in the top decile earns \$7,475 per month and one in the bottom decile, just \$22.

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

### DIFFERENT STROKES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 91-year-old Suzuki chairman to bow out

RIVER DAVIS  
FEB. 24

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

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

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



Osamu Suzuki

president from 1978 to 2000.

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

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

—Bloomberg

## Foodgrain output to hit record 303.34 mt

New Delhi, Feb. 24: India's foodgrain production is estimated to rise 2 per cent in 2020-21 crop year to an all-time high of 303.34 million tonnes on better output of rice, wheat, pulses and coarse cereals amid good monsoon rains last year, the agriculture ministry said.

Crop year runs from July-June. In the 2019-20 crop year, the country's foodgrain output (comprising wheat, rice, pulses and coarse cereals) stood at a record 297.5 million tonnes (mt).

Releasing the second advance estimates for 2020-21 crop year, the ministry said foodgrain production is projected at a record 303.34 mt.

Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar

attributed the rise in production to efforts of the farmers, scientists and the central government.

As per the data, rice production is pegged at record 120.32 mt against 118.87 mt in the previous year.

Wheat production is estimated to rise to a record 109.24 mt in 2020-21 from 107.86 mt while output of coarse cereals is likely to increase to 49.36 mt from 47.75 mt. Pulses output is seen at 24.42 mt, up from 23.03 mt in 2019-20.

In the non-foodgrain category, production of oilseeds is estimated at 37.31 mt against 33.22 mt. Sugarcane production is pegged at 397.66 mt against 370.50 mt. Cotton output is pegged at 36.54 million bales (170 kg each) versus 36.07 million bales. —PTI

## NRIs NOW PREFER LUXURY HOMES

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

Post-Covid, non-resident Indians prefer to buy luxury homes rather than affordable or mid-segment homes.

As per Anarock's latest consumer survey, at least 73 per cent NRIs now prefer properties priced between Rs 90 lakh and Rs 2.5 crore. In the pre-Covid survey of H2 2019, just 41 per cent of NRIs had preferred properties within this price bracket. They had preferred affordable and mid-segment homes then.

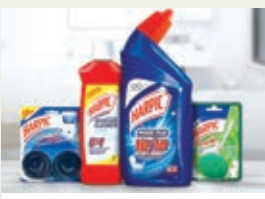
"The pandemic has increased NRIs' emotional association of long-term security with physical assets as 63 per cent of the polled NRIs state this as their reason for buying homes," said Prashant Thakur of Anarock Property Consultants.

## Harpic drives RB's India sales

New Delhi, Feb. 24: British FMCG major RB Plc on Wednesday said the large contribution from markets like India, where consumption of its hygiene products such as toilet cleaner Harpic soared in the Covid-impacted 2020, helped it to grow 11.8 per cent to 13.99 billion pounds in the year.

The company witnessed a volume growth of 9.6 per cent in 2020, led by the strong performance of its disinfectant brands driving market penetration and share, said RB, which owns brands like Dettol, Lysol, Durex, Strepsils and Vanish.

"All geographic regions have grown, with the largest contributors to growth including the US, India and China," said RB (Reckitt Benckiser) in an



earning statement.

Its leading disinfectant brands have seen exceptionally strong levels of penetration and brands as Dettol and Lysol are used in over 300 million households globally.

"In India alone, Harpic is now used in over 100 million homes, up by nearly 30 million compared to 2019, as a result of purpose-led marketing campaigns centred around behaviour change," the company said.

Lysol is now estimated to be present in over half

of all US homes, while in Canada, its penetration is up over 1200 basis points over the past year.

"Mortein and Harpic also delivered growth in all their major geographies, with Harpic particularly strong in India," it said.

In 2020, RB's net revenue for the hygiene segment was up 19.5 per cent at 5.81 billion pounds.

Its popular brands as Dettol and sexual well-being brand Durex helped RB to get its net revenue from the health segment to go up by 12.1 per cent to 4.89 billion British pounds in 2020 on a like for like basis.

"Consumer demand for disinfectants drove strong demand for Dettol throughout 2020, with the brand growing over 50 per cent," it said. —PTI

ucts and more than 100 brands.

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

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

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

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



## SHORT TAKES

## Stadium renamed after PM Modi

**Ahmedabad:** India's president on Wednesday inaugurated the world's largest cricket arena here, renamed from Sardar Patel stadium to Narendra Modi stadium in honour of the prime minister who is credited with conceptualising the facility in its current awe-inspiring form. The state-of-the-art stadium, inaugurated by President Ram Nath Kovind, can accommodate a jaw-dropping 1.32 lakh spectators. "This stadium was conceptualised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat. He was president of the Gujarat Cricket Association at that time," Kovind said in his address after the inauguration.

## Tamil Nadu go down to MP

**Indore:** Tamil Nadu suffered their second defeat in the Vijay Hazare Trophy one-day tournament after losing by 11 runs to Madhya Pradesh. M Shahrulkh Khan's attacking knock of 67 not out (77 balls, 3X4s, 5X6s) could not carry Tamil Nadu past the line in pursuit of 226-run target against Madhya Pradesh.

**Brief scores:** Madhya Pradesh 225 all out in 48.2 overs (Aditya Shrivastava 46, Parth Sahani 46; M Mohammed 3/39) beat Tamil Nadu 211 all out in 49 overs (Shahrulkh Khan 67 not out, Dinesh Karthik 37, B Indrajith 32) by 14 runs.

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## AXAR'S SIXER!

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

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

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

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

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

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

India trailed by just 13 runs with seven first innings wickets in hand.

Before this, it was a nightmare that unfolded for England with the 47-run stand for the third wicket being their best.

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

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



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

of honour by his teammates after being felicitated by President Ram Nath Kovind and Home Minister Amit Shah ahead of his landmark game.

In reply to a below par score, India negotiated the opening spells of much-vaunted England seamers

James Anderson and Stuart Broad without any damage in the tricky twilight period. Rohit and Shubman Gill (11) did not face too much trouble seeing out the precarious phase.

Anderson and Broad did not get much the desired movement with the pink

ball and the dew factor did not have a big role either.

But Jofra Archer (5-2-24-1) gave England the breakthrough in the 15th over with Gill, trying a pull shot from the off stump, top-edged for Zak Crawley to end the 33-run opening partnership. India lost another wicket soon after

## SCORECARD

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

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

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

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

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

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

in Cheteshwar Pujara with Leach getting him trapped LBW for a first-ball duck to reduce India to 34 for 2.

After that, Rohit and Virat shared 64 runs for the third wicket, rotating the strike and finding the gaps as well for regular boundaries. Kohli was dropped by Ollie Pope when he was on 24.

—PTI

## Tiger in hospital after major crash

**Washington, Feb. 24:** The amazing golf career of Tiger Woods, from two-year-old prodigy to his epic comeback 2019 Masters victory, was in jeopardy Tuesday after injuries suffered in a serious solo car crash. The 45-year-old American, among the world's most famous athletes for the past quarter-century, underwent surgery for multiple leg injuries following the early morning wreck near Los Angeles.

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

Woods has faced plenty of prior troubles off the course, including multiple back and knee surgeries,



Tiger Woods

the 2009 revelation of multiple affairs that led to an emotional public apology and divorce from wife Elin Nordegren plus a 2017 reckless driving incident.

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

## Strong field for state squash event

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 24

Tamil Nadu Squash Rackets Association (TNSRA) is all set to host the state closed championship, a one-star national circuit event, at the Indian Squash Academy from February 25. After a 12-month hiatus owing to the pandemic, the tournament, held under the aegis of Squash Rackets Federation of India, will mark the return of squash action in Tamil Nadu.

With 166 participants in 12 categories, the championship has attracted a strong field.

Debandranath Sarangi, president of TNSRA, said: "With the current pandem-

ic situation, we are happy to see players actively participating in state closed tournaments. We have ensured that this event will be held following strict protocols. I would like to thank the parents for their great support."

## TOP TWO SEEDS

**Men:** 1. Guhan Senthilkumar; 2. Velavan Senthilkumar. **Women:** 1. Sunayna Kuruvilla; 2. Aprajith Balamurukan. **U-19 boys:** 1. Navaneeth Prabhu; 2. Shreemann Raghavan; **Girls U-19:** 1. Trina Iris; 2. Mithali Uttamchand. **Boys U-17:** 1. Sreekarthikeyan; 2. Parthiv Yagnesh Natarajan; **Girls U-17:** 1. Pooja Arthi; 2. S. Akshaya Sri.

## COFFEE-BREAK

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



**Aries:** Some may get financial rewards. Misunderstanding between you and your life partner may be there. There will be new ventures in your path of success.



**Taurus:** If you get a chance, do not miss the opportunity to develop social contacts. Prolonged misunderstanding with your lover would only create a rift in the relationship.



**Gemini:** Customer service professionals should make sure that you are helpful and caring. A careless attitude is likely to upset seniors at work. Make efforts to succeed at work.



**Cancer:** Those in business have to work with care. Financially you may do well and your expenses would be manageable. Some may gain financially.



**Leo:** Someone you know will try to make you look bad. Do not trust someone with sensitive information. Avoid finalising any big deals today, as you may not succeed.



**Virgo:** You play the role of mediator effectively and keep the situation from getting worse. Excellent day for doing a rethink on career options. Success in court matters are likely.

## You share your b'day with

Shahid Kapoor is an Indian actor. He starred in the films like Vivah, Chup Chup Ke, Ishq Vishk Jab We Met, Kaminee, Haider, Padmaavat, Kabir Singh, Udta Punjab amongst others.



**Libra:** Don't take a casual approach today. Deal with utmost care in every aspect. It is not the right day for progress in a new venture. Students may get success.



**Scorpio:** Avoid any arguments with seniors at work place. Teachers, make sure you are able to create a stimulating environment for students.



**Sagittarius:** Your life partner will behave normally and will understand you. Try new things to improve your productivity at work. You will experience success.



**Capricorn:** A busy day at work may leave you feeling tired and drained. You may feel the need for time and space away from your domestic obligations. Find new ways and patterns to deal with career issues.



**Aquarius:** Deal with one issue at a time and you will get through all your tasks. A conservative approach when dealing with your finances may take little longer to provide returns.



**Pisces:** You will be able to come up with solutions to obstacles. Certain events or conversations could put you in a slightly nostalgic frame of mind. Avoid speculative activities.



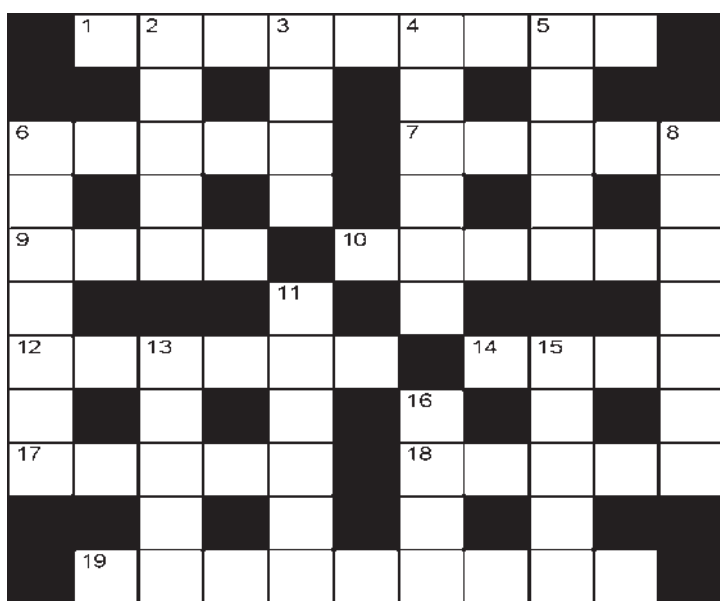
Phillip Alder

LOT OF THINKING WILL FEEL GOOD

J. Churton Collins, who was an English literary critic, wrote, "Half our mistakes in life arise from feeling where we ought to think, and thinking where we ought to feel." I can't help feeling -- or thinking, if you prefer -- that that sums up today's deal rather well. Many players would think that they were making the right play when they weren't. Others would make the wrong play, and with that awful feeling that they

were doing something wrong, but not being quite sure what it was. Playing in three no-trump, South faced a low-diamond lead to East's ace and a diamond return through his king-jack. How should he have continued? When South finessed the diamond jack, West won with the queen and returned the suit. Declarer ran dummy's club suit, discarding a heart from hand, West, under pressure but not

## QUICK CROSSWORD



Across  
1. Manacles (9)  
6. Flying (5)  
7. Appearance (5)  
9. Fashion (4)  
10. Picturesque (6)  
12. Small wave (6)  
14. Impulse (4)  
17. Wilt (5)  
18. Saltpetre (5)  
19. Forthright statement (9)

Down  
2. Shun (5)  
3. Obligation (4)  
4. Open (6)  
5. Scowl (5)  
6. Thought highly of (7)  
8. Hide (7)  
11. Tick by (6)  
13. Stage accessories (5)  
15. Proportion (5)  
16. Tangle (4)

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**  
Across: 1. Relocate, 7. Pound, 8. Satin, 9. Lessen, 10. True, 12. Cuff, 14. Formal, 17. Nurse, 18. Stoic, 19. Gold mine.  
Down: 1. Routs, 2. Ledger, 3. Case, 4. Tutor, 5. Applicant, 6. Interlace, 11. Bonsai, 13. Forgo, 15. Moose, 16. Lead.

## Word Mine

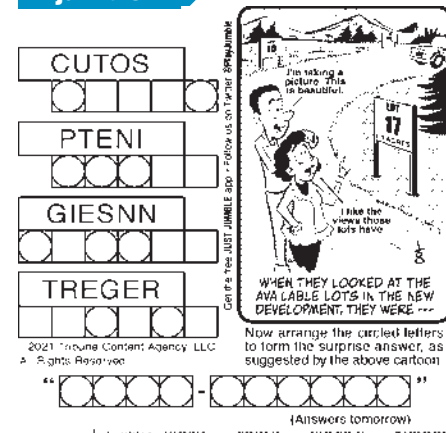
Y  
N  
L  
P  
P  
H  
O  
O  
Y

TODAY'S RATINGS: 6 AVERAGE; 7 GOOD; 9 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.

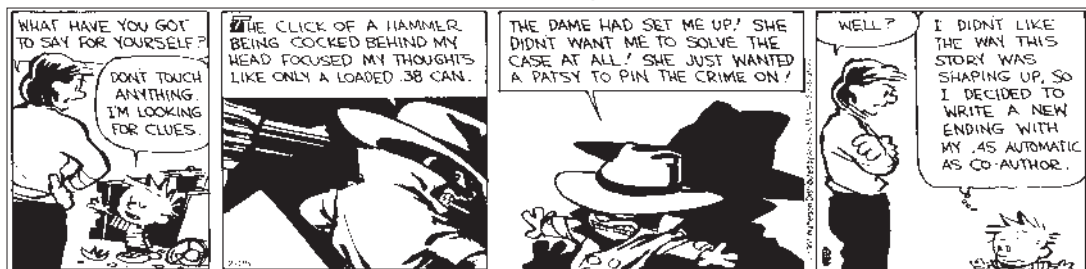
South: J, A, G, H, I, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z  
West: K, A, J, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z  
East: J, A, G, H, I, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z  
Opening lead: # 4

## jumble



Yesterday's Jumbles: KIOSK, TOPAZ, FUMBLE, TYCOON  
Answer: The pool player but he would win. But after missing the shot, he would be -- OUT OF POCKET

## CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



## THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



## ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli &amp; craig boldman



## BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



## ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



## TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs

