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Sh. Manohar Lal

Chief Minister, Haryana

England men's Test captain Joe Root during a practice session ahead of the test series against India in Chennai on Wednesday. — PTI

For 1st time, CRPF's Cobra unit to induct women commandos

Bhopal: CRPF's anti-Naxal wing Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (Cobra) is soon going to induct women commandos in its units. The CRPF authorities have taken decision to induct women commandos in Cobra units. D. Prakash, CRPF IG, Chhattisgarh, said. Sources said the process has begun to recruit the woman commandos for Cobra. After training, the women would be deployed in combat duty along with their male counterparts in insurgency-hit Bastar. **Full report on Page 4**

Praveen Sinha to be acting CBI chief

New Delhi: CBI additional director Praveen Sinha, a 1988-batch Gujarat cadre IPS, has been appointed acting chief of the agency till a decision on a new director is taken to succeed Rishi Kumar Shukla who retired on Wednesday after a two-year fixed stint. **Full report on Page 4**

Time to extend hand of peace: Gen. Bajwa

New Delhi: Pakistan's powerful Army Chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa has said "it is time" for his country to "extend the hand of peace in all directions", even as he called on India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir issue in a "peaceful and dignified manner". **Full report on Page 3**

COUNTERPOINT

Not public, but our employees are insuring their jobs!

WEATHER

Max: 21°C
Min: 10°C
RH: 74%
Rain: 60%
Forecast: Scattered rains

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttaranayana
Tithi: Pushya Bahula Saptami till 12.07 pm
Star: Swati till 7.45 pm
Variyam: 1.03 am to 2.34 am
Durmuhurtam: 10.37 to 11.22
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.02 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.08 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 12.10 AM
MOONSET TODAY 11.28 PM

■ Khap mahapanchayat called for repeal of laws and withdrawal of cases against farmers

■ Stage collapses at farmers' mahapanchayat in Jind due to overcrowding, no one injured

Tikait issues 'gaddi wapsi' warning

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

In a show of strength by protesting farmers, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Wednesday warned the government that it could find it difficult to stay in power if the new agri-marketing laws are not repealed. Thousands of people who attended the khap mahapanchayat in Haryana's Jind adopted a five-point resolution which called for repeal of the three laws, constitutional guarantee of MSP, implementation of the Swaminathan Commission report, waiver on farm loans and withdrawal of cases registered against farmers following the Republic Day violence.

Just before Tikait was to begin his speech at the 'mahapanchayat' in Kandela village, the stage on which the farmer leaders had gathered collapsed under their weight. Nobody was reported hurt and the BKU leader went on to address the large gathering. Calling for a

Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait addresses during the "kisan mahapanchayat" against the new farm laws in Jind district on Wednesday. — PTI

"wapsi" (withdrawal) of the three new central laws, the BKU leader indirectly warned the Narendra Modi government that it could lose its "gaddi" (power) if the agitation continues. "We have so far talked about 'bill wapsi' (repealing the

farm laws). The government should listen carefully. What will you do if the youth call for 'gaddi wapsi' (removal from power)?" he said.

After the farmers' peaceful protests ran into trouble because of violence at the tractor rally on

Republic Day, the agitation has been garnering support from different state panchayats. There have been mahapanchayats at Muzaffarnagar, Mathura and Bagpat in the past few days. But the mahapanchayat at Jind in

■ Turn to Page 4

Judicial probe into violence: SC junks plea

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain petitions seeking judicial probe into Republic Day violence in the national capital allegedly by a section of participants in the tractor parade. One of the petitioners had sought direction to the media not to declare farmers as "terrorist" without evidence.

Telling the petitioners that they are not condoning the violence, Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde said, "We are sure that the government is inquiring into this... We read the PM's statement in the press that law will take its own course, we don't want to interfere in it. You can approach the government."

Tharoor, Rajdeep, others move SC for quashing of FIRs

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

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

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

■ More on Page 4

Stung MEA hits back at foreign critics

Govt tells Twitter to axe 'genocide' hashtags; Indian celebs, VIPs take on global icons

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

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

Before rushing to comment on such matters, we would urge that the facts be ascertained, and a proper understanding of the issues at hand be undertaken.

— Ministry of external affairs

Rihanna Fenty, Greta Thunberg, Meena Harris

government has also directed Twitter to comply with its order to remove content/accounts related to "farmer genocide" hashtags and warned that it may face "penal action" for non-compliance of its order.

A number of Indian

end Sachin Tendulkar and actors Ajay Devgn and Akshay Kumar tweeted to protest against the global campaign. "India's sovereignty cannot be compromised. External forces can be spectators but not participants. Indians know India and should decide for India. Let's remain united as a nation," tweeted Mr Tendulkar.

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

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Opp: Farmers not 'enemies', don't stand on prestige

LS stalled for 2nd day amid huge din

AGE CORRESPONDENTS
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

Several Opposition parties including the Congress and the DMK on Wednesday asked the government to withdraw the three farm laws without making it a prestige issue and not to treat the agitating farmers as "enemies".

Speaking on the motion on thanks on the President's address, Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad suggested that Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself should make the announcement on the repeal of the laws. Mr Modi was present in the House at the time.

Saying that disrespect to the national flag cannot be tolerated, he also condemned the violence at Red Fort during the farmers' tractor rally on Republic Day.

"I urge the government to withdraw the three bills," he said, adding that

the government should set up a committee to find out the whereabouts of people "who have gone missing" during the farmers' protest. The Congress leader cited several examples, including one during his own party's rule in 1988, of the government giving in to farmers' demands. Mr Azad, highlighting the problems farmers would face due to the new laws, said the government should not see repeal of the laws as a "prestige issue".

In the Lok Sabha, meanwhile, proceedings were stalled for the second consecutive day amid unrelenting protests by Congress-led Opposition MPs who demanded a separate discussion on the three farm laws. The Speaker, Mr Om Birla, had to repeatedly adjourn the House, finally calling it off for the day at 9 pm.

As soon as the House sat at 4 pm, Congress, CPI(M) and Trinamul Congress MPs stormed the Well of

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Indian Air Force's aerobatic team "Suryakiran" flies past the Yelahanka airbase during the inauguration of the 13th edition of Aero India in Bengaluru on Wednesday. — PTI

Biden signs orders to undo Trump immigration policies

Washington, Feb. 3: US President Joe Biden has signed three executive orders that he said would lead to a "fair, orderly and humane" legal immigration system and also undo his predecessor Donald Trump's headline policies that ripped children from the arms of their families.

The review of the existing policies and the subsequent recommendations coming from 60 to 180 days from various fed-

eral agencies are likely to benefit hundreds and thousands of Indian professionals in realising their dream of citizenship of the United States.

"I'm not making new law, I'm eliminating bad policy," Mr Biden said, flanked by vice-president Kamala Harris and newly confirmed Homeland Security secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, of the stream of executive orders he has signed as President.

— PTI

Bezos to step down as Amazon CEO, Jassy named successor

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

Amazon, which announced on Wednesday

that 2020 net sales increased 38 per cent to USD 386.1 billion, compared with \$280.5 billion in 2019, said Mr Bezos will transition to the role of executive chair in the third quarter of 2021 and Andy Jassy, CEO of the company's cloud business, Amazon Web Services, will become CEO at that time.

Mr Bezos has been Amazon's CEO since its founding in 1995. He oversaw its growth from an online bookseller into a \$1.7 trillion global retail and logistics giant, which has also made the 57-year-old into one of the world's richest persons.

Amazon is what it is because of invention. We do crazy things together and then make them normal, Mr Bezos said.

— PTI

No contracts, govt jobs for protesters: Bihar govt's order

Opp. slams order as 'against Constitution'

NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, FEB. 3

The Bihar government has landed into controversy after the police headquarters issued a directive stating that people indulging in road blockages and protests will not be eligible for government jobs or contracts. The Opposition slammed the BJP-JD(U) alliance government for the order which it said was "against the Constitution".

"If anyone is found indulging in a criminal act by engaging in any law and order situation, protests or road blockages and is charged for this, then it should be mentioned in the person's character verification report by the police. Such people should be prepared for serious consequences as they will be barred from getting any government jobs or contracts," director general of police S.K. Singhal said

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

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

"Why is the chief minister with 40 seats so scared?" he added.

Hitting out at Nitish Kumar, RJD leader Shivanand Tiwary said, "The Constitution of India has provided us

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PM to start Bengal poll campaign with Haldia rally Feb. 7

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, FEB. 3

Targeting West Bengal's Trinamul Congress in what was once its home turf, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will kickstart his Assembly election campaign from Haldia in East Midnapore, the Adhikari family bastion, with a BJP rally next week amid the party's rathayatra led by its president J.P. Nadda and home minister Amit Shah seeking "parivartan" in the poll-bound state.

While Mr Modi's Haldia visit was already due on February 7, when he will inaugurate three big-ticket Central industrial projects, his political rally was not on the one-day tour agenda as he was supposed to start his campaign only after the poll schedule was announced, BJP sources said.

However, the party's state and central leadership decided at a meeting in New Delhi Tuesday to hold Mr Modi's maiden rally for the polls as part of his Haldia tour. State BJP chief Dilip Ghosh said: "The PM will visit Haldia to attend a government event. We invited him to address a party rally there the same day."

EC may declare poll dates within a week: Mamata

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

She also accused TMC turncoat Rajib Banerjee of malpractice, during his tenure as the state forest minister. **PAGE 4**

The sudden inclusion of the rally in the PM's tour reflected local TMC MP Dibyendu Adhikari's calculated preparations that fuelled speculation about his defection to the BJP in Mr Modi's presence.

The state government has, meanwhile, asked the BJP to take permission for its five rathayatras from the district administrations. On Wednesday a PIL was filed in the Calcutta high court over the rathayatras, fearing these might disturb the state's law and order situation.

Wanted criminal killed in gunfight

New Delhi: In a joint operation with Uttar Pradesh Police, the Delhi Police on Tuesday killed a criminal, who was wanted in a murder case of a constable, after an exchange of fire in Baraut area, officials said. The accused was identified as Zaved alias Rashid (38), a resident of Ghaziabad in UP, they said. A team of Delhi Police Special Cell was in Baraut. On Tuesday, information was received that Zaved was coming in a car near Gol Tubewell at Binali-Meerut Road between 10 pm to 11 pm, a senior police officer said. "Thereafter, a joint team laid a trap. Zaved came around 10.30 pm near Gol Tubewell. He was asked to surrender, but the accused opened fire. "Police also fired in which Zaved was injured. He was rushed to a hospital where he later died," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Pramod Singh Kushwah said. One semi-automatic pistol and three live cartridges were recovered from the spot.

AAP files complaint against Sambit Patra

New Delhi: The AAP on Wednesday filed an official complaint with the Delhi Police against BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra for allegedly posting a doctored video of Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal. In the complaint, AAP demanded action against Patra under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The police said it has received the complaint and is examining it. The AAP has been extending support to the farmers' agitation against the three agri laws. There was no immediate reaction available from Patra or the BJP. — PTI

28-yr-old man held for duping people

New Delhi: A 28-year-old man was arrested for allegedly duping over 50 people after promising them jobs in foreign countries, police said on Wednesday. The matter came to light after a man and his friends informed police. They were allegedly duped of ₹8,20,000 by the accused, identified as Murari Swami, a resident of Nagaur in Rajasthan. Swami had also provided them fake visas, police said. "On Monday, information was received that Swami was residing in a rented house in Bagdola village in Dwarka. Thereafter, police laid a trap and nabbed Swami," additional commissioner of police (Crime) Shishbesh Singh said. Swami told police that he had done many odd jobs in foreign countries and during his stay, learnt the procedure adopted by various companies in facilitating jobs abroad. He created fake profiles on Facebook and posted advertisement for jobs in foreign countries and also placed ads to provide visa assistance.

AIR QUALITY REMAINS 'VERY POOR' IN NCR

Noida: The average air quality in the NCR cities of Ghaziabad, Noida, Greater Noida, Faridabad and Gurgaon remained in the "very poor" category, which may cause respiratory illness on prolonged exposure, according to data issued by a government agency on Wednesday. Pollutant PM 2.5 and PM 10 also remained prominent in the air of the five immediate neighbours of Delhi, according to the air quality index (AQI) maintained by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). According to the index, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'. The average 24-hour AQI at 4 pm on Wednesday was 388 in Ghaziabad, 339 in Noida, 345 in Greater Noida, 317 in Faridabad and 306 in Gurgaon, according to CPCB's Sameer app. The CPCB states that an AQI in the "very poor" category may cause respiratory illness on prolonged exposure. On Tuesday it was 394 in Ghaziabad, 379 in Greater Noida, 372 in Noida, 354 in Faridabad and 324 in Gurgaon. The AQI for each city is based on the average value of all monitoring stations there. — PTI



Barbed wires and barricades put across a road to stop farmers during their protest against new farm law at Singhu border in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

'Delhi entry points look like international border'

Heightened security measures imposed at protest sites

New Delhi, Feb. 3: Farmers' agitation sites just outside Delhi resemble "international border" now with authorities building makeshift walls, planting huge metal spikes on roads and deploying concertina wire fences, protesters alleged on Wednesday, even as officials defended the heavy-barricading citing law and order issues.

The heightened security measures and various restrictions have been imposed at the three protest sites — Singhu (Delhi-Haryana border), Ghazipur (Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border) and Tikri (Delhi-Haryana border) — since the Republic Day violence that had left over 500 police personnel injured and one protester dead.

On January 26, breaking away from the designated routes for a tractor parade, hundreds of protesters clashed with police in various points to lay siege to the Red Fort and climb the flagpole.

While at the Singhu border, the epicenter of the ongoing farmers' agitation, shipping containers, iron rods between barriers and cement slabs have been used to seal the entry points, the tried-and-tested barbed wires, stone boulders and iron nails have been deployed at Tikri and Ghazipur borders to block people's entry into Delhi or to the protest sites.

"The protest sites are looking like international borders. It is as if we have come from Pakistan. On one hand, they (the gov-

ernment) want us to talk, and on the other hand they are doing everything to de-link us (from the city)," farmer leader Kulwant Singh Sandhu told PTI.

"This shows the restlessness of the government," he said. In addition to heavy-metal barricades and concrete slabs, measures like digging trenches and using DTC buses as road-blocks have been deployed at the said Delhi-Uttar Pradesh and the Delhi-Haryana borders.

Zamhoori Kisan Sabha General Secretary Sandhu claimed the barricading of national highways and stopping the movement of people and vehicles is the authorities' "strategy" to "irritate" the common people and try to make them stand against the protesting farmers.

"But the farmers won't budge," he said. "No matter how much obstructions they create in our path. They are stopping people so that they get irritated and turn against us." "They (the authorities) don't know that the locals and people across the

country support our movement. Sadly, the government has not learnt its lesson from the Ghazipur incident," he said.

Mandeep Singh (26), who has been camping at the Singhu border for the past 15 days, echoed his leader's sentiment and said the show of force and blocking the roads pose problems for the locals, not the protesting farmers.

"These multiple-barriers cannot dampen our spirit or affect our movement. We are following the instructions of our leaders, who have clearly told us to stay put at our respective places. We won't move ahead or take a step back. So, ultimately it is the locals who have to face trouble in commuting, not us," said Singh, from Punjab's Ludhiana district.

Another protestor Sadaker Singh, who has been camping at the Singhu border for the last 10 days, questioned authorities' intention.

"We will not relent. We are protesting peacefully and will continue our protests until our demands are met," he said.

Several locals, the protesting farmers said, have been helping them, be it by providing electricity connection from their houses, giving access to toilets and washrooms, or by sharing their shop's wi-fi connection as the Central government has suspended internet at the protest sites. — PTI

'If need arises, will approach L-G & Centre' R-Day clash: CM says AAP will trace missing farmers

New Delhi, Feb. 3: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said his government will help trace the farmers missing since the January 26 violence and if the need arises, he will approach the lieutenant-governor and the Centre.

Mr Kejriwal said that the Delhi government has also released a list of 115 persons lodged in different jails here in connection with the January 26 violence during the farmers' tractor rally.

"We are releasing a list of 115 protesters who were arrested by police in relation to the Republic Day incident and are in different jails in the city. Our government will make every effort to trace the protesters who are missing and I will even speak to the lieutenant-governor and the Central government if the need arises," he said at a press conference.

A delegation from the



Arvind Kejriwal

▶ Arvind Kejriwal said that the Delhi government has also released a list of 115 persons lodged in different jails here in connection with the January 26 violence during the farmers' tractor rally

legal team of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha met Mr Kejriwal and presented him a list of 29 missing farmers. It also demanded a judicial inquiry into the alleged "conspiracy against the farmers' protest" and constitution of a medical board to examine those in jail.

The chief minister, however, did not comment on the demand for judicial inquiry.

Arvind Kejriwal said that there 115 persons who are lodged in Delhi jails after being arrested

in connection with the "unfortunate" violence that happened during the farmers' tractor rally on January 26.

"It is possible that many of those missing had been arrested in connection with the chaos at Red Fort, due to which they are not able to connect to their families. We are issuing this list with the names, age, and address of 115 people so that their family members could identify them."

Over the last few days, many people and farmer unions reached out to the

chief minister with regard to the "missing" protesters.

Arvind Kejriwal assured the people that he will try his best to trace the missing protesters whose whereabouts are yet not known and unite them with their families.

"Many people have reached out to the Delhi government in the last few days owing to their family members who were protesting against the farm laws having gone missing, and they are unable to connect to them. I can understand the pain and suffering."

The farmer unions protesting at Delhi borders for scrapping of the Centre's farm laws have claimed that several are missing since the Republic Day violence. Delhi Police has said that it has arrested 122 protesters so far in connection with the January 26 violence. — PTI

Cash reward announced for Sidhu's information

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

Police have announced a cash reward of ₹1 lakh for information that can lead to the arrest of actor Deep Sidhu and three others in connection with the Red Fort incident in Delhi on Republic Day, officials said on Wednesday.

Cash reward of ₹50,000 each was also announced for Buta Singh, Sukhdev Singh, Jajbir Singh and Iqbal Singh for allegedly instigating protesters, police said.

The reward of ₹1 lakh was announced on Sidhu, Jugraj Singh, Gurjot Singh and Gurjant Singh who hoisted flags at the Red Fort or involved in the act, according to police. They were identified through CCTV and video clips, police said.



Deep Sidhu

New Delhi, Feb. 3: Activists of several student, youth and women organisations assembled at Mandi House here on Wednesday for a march in support of the farmers staging protests at the national capital borders demanding repeal of the Centre's new farm laws.

The activists of AISA, SFI, AISE, DSF, NSUI, CYSS, AIPWA and AICC-TU, carrying posters, banners and placards, gathered at Mandi House for the "citizens' march for farmers" till Jantar Mantar.

However, a senior police officer said they will not be allowed to march till Jantar Mantar as prohibitory orders under CrPC Section 144 were in force in the area. Roads near Mandi House were closed and traffic movement was affected.

Thousands of farmers have been camping at several Delhi border points, demanding a complete repeal of the three farm laws — the Farmers' (Empowerment and



An activist holds a placard during a protest in support of farmers' agitation over the new farm laws at Mandi House in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act — and legal guarantee of minimum support price for their crops.

Enacted in September 2020, the government has presented these laws as major farm reforms

aimed at increasing farmers' income, but the protesting farmers have raised concerns that these legislations would weaken the minimum support price (MSP) and "mandi" (wholesale market) systems and leave them at the mercy of big corporations.

The government has maintained that these apprehensions are misplaced and has ruled out a repeal of the laws. — PTI



Indian Army officers during a blood donation camp at AIIMS in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

Delhi records 150 new Covid cases, 6 deaths in 24 hours

New Delhi, Feb. 3: The national capital reported 150 fresh Covid cases and six deaths due to the disease on Wednesday, authorities said.

The death toll has now risen to 10,864, while the cumulative Covid case count is 6,35,481.

The city had reported two deaths due to the disease on Tuesday and three on Monday.

The 150 cases came out of 56,658 tests, including 30,812 RT-PCR and 25,846 rapid antigen ones, conducted the previous day for detection of Covid, according to a bulletin issued by the Delhi health department.

The tally of active cases dropped slightly to 1,208 from 1,217 on Tuesday, the bulletin said, adding that 6,23,409 patients have recovered, been discharged or migrated so far. According to the bulletin, 5,703 beds out of the total 6,302 in the city's Covid hospitals are vacant. The number of people in home isolation dropped to 440 from 466 on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, a total of 7,365 people — around 40 per cent of the targeted beneficiaries — were administered vaccine against the Covid in Delhi on Wednesday, officials said. 17 cases of adverse events following immunisation were reported during the day, they said. Frontline workers, including police personnel and sanitation staff, will receive Covid vaccine jabs starting Thursday, an official said. — PTI

4 held for chasing TV actress' car and verbally abusing her

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

The Delhi Police has arrested four men for allegedly chasing the car of a television actress and verbally abusing her in the national capital's Rohini area, officials said on Wednesday.

Prachi Tehlan's car was chased when she was returning home along with her husband in intervening night of Monday and Tuesday, they said.

When she reached her home at Prashant Vihar, the men got out of their vehicle and verbally abused her, a senior police officer

▶ PRACHI TEHLAN'S car was chased when she was returning home along with her husband in intervening night of Monday and Tuesday. When she reached her home in Prashant Vihar area, the accused got out of their vehicle and verbally abused her

said. She lodged a complaint on Tuesday morning, following which the men were arrested. The men were in an inebriated state at the time of the incident, a senior officer said.

9 global, domestic companies bid to redevelop NDLS



▶ THE DEVELOPMENT follows the pre-bid meetings, virtual roadshows that apprised the stakeholders of various developments and elicited feedback on the project

Build-Finance-Operate-Transfer (DBFOT) model.

The project offers multiple revenue streams to the developer, including revenue from real estate rights and is slated to be completed in around four years. The concession period is for 60 years, it said.

"The redevelopment of the New Delhi Railway Station is our flagship project that will stimulate economic development of NCR. The project attracted

cally located in the heart of Delhi and has proximity to Connaught Place, Delhi's prime commercial hub, it said.

It will be redeveloped into a world-class station in line with global standards with dome-shaped terminal buildings and two arrival and departure areas at the concourse level, the statement said.

It will also have two multi-modal transport hubs on every side, 40-floor high-rise twin towers (with hotel/offices and retail at podium) and pedestrian boulevard with high-street shopping outlets, it said.

Pedestrian movement, cycle tracks, and green tracks have been integrated into the proposed development plan. — PTI

Helpline for protesting farmers launched

New Delhi, Feb. 3: As protesting farmers face legal challenges emerging out of the tractor parade violence on Republic Day, some lawyer groups have come forward to offer legal assistance to them and have started helpline numbers.

Simranjeet Kaur Gill, an advocate at the Punjab and Haryana high court, said they are helping those who are in jail or have gone "missing" since the violent protests on January 26.

"We are providing legal help to those who have been arrested and missing after the farmers' tractor parade on Republic Day. A total of 124 people have been arrested so far and 39 are missing since January 26 as per our information. The number is increasing every day," said Gill, who is at the Singhu border with her team.

The volunteering lawyers have put up some posters under the head "advocate for farmers" advertising two helpline numbers each for the Singhu and Tikri borders, the two major agitation sites.

The cases have been filed under various sections, including attempt to murder, damaging public property, obstructing the public servants performing their duty, Gill said.

She said different teams are working the protest sites and outside. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

21 PER CENT
DROP IN BMC'S
REVENUEBHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, FEB. 3

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

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

"In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, the need arose to divert our attention by all means to health activities to face the pandemic. Though we are successful in riding over the pandemic, the outbreak adversely affected the economy overall and there is a considerable downfall in the revenue," said Iqbal Singh Chahal, BMC chief. Covid-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown resulted in closure of the small as well as large commercial units, due to which property tax collection was adversely affected.

SIVASANKAR GETS
BAIL IN KERALA
GOLD SCAM CASEGILVERSTER ASSARY
KOCHI, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

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

Didi hints at early Bengal polls

Accuses turncoat Rajib of anomalies in forest assistants' hiring

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, FEB. 3

West Bengal chief minister and Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday indicated that Assembly polls would be announced within a week in the state.

She also accused TMC turncoat Rajib Banerjee of malpractice during his tenure as the state forest minister. Hitting back at her within a few hours, Mr Banerjee, however, gave himself a clean chit.

Addressing a TMC rally in Alipurduar of North Bengal, the CM said, "Remember, only seven-eight days are left for the

polls to be announced. So time is less in hands."

Without taking the name of Mr Banerjee, she alleged, "The boy who was with us did some anomalies in the appointments of bon sahayak (forest assistant). A lot of people gave me this complaint. We are investigating it. One should ask him about his role in such malpractice when he makes tall talks. He joined the BJP after stealing."

Slamming turncoats, who left the TMC to cross over to the BJP, Ms Banerjee claimed that only the "greedy ones" are joining the saffron party.

Reacting to the TMC chief's allegations at a BJP



West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee addresses a public rally in Alipurduar on Wednesday. — PTI

rally at Hooghly's Gurap, Rajib said, "She claimed of anomalies in the recruitment of bon sahayak and talked of a probe. But with due respect to her, I can say with responsibility that I had impartially entrusted a panel for the

recruitment with transparency. At around 10 am on October 8, when I sent her a message complaining against a bigshot of Birbhum of threatening me to allot all the bon sahayak jobs to him, she called me to distribute the

jobs proportionately in quota among the TMC workers in all the districts."

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

SC refuses
to hear
pleas on
tractor rallyPARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain petitions seeking a judicial probe into violence on Republic Day in the national capital allegedly by a section of participants in the tractor parade that was taken out by the farmers agitating for the repeal of three farm laws which they are contending is for the corporatization of agriculture.

One of the petitioners had sought a direction to the media not to declare farmers as "terrorist" without evidence.

Telling the petitioners that they are not condoning the violence, Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading a bench also comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian said, "We are sure that the government is enquiring into this and taking appropriate action. We read the Prime Minister's statement in the press that law will take its own course, we don't want to interfere in it. You can approach the government."

Petitioner advocate Vishal Tiwari contended that on January 26 an unfortunate incident happened, blames are on both sides but people suffered.

When the Chief Justice said that the government is enquiring the issue, Mr Tiwari said let not the probe be one-sided.

To this, the CJI replied, "Your prayer is based on the fact that it is going to be one-sided. What is an investigation? It has to take all sides into account."



An elderly farmer walks on a road near the farmers protest site at Ghazipur border in New Delhi. — PTI

■ Opp. should not make stir another Shaheen Bagh: BJP in RS
'Doors always open for farmers'

New Delhi, Feb. 3: Asserting that the new farm laws were passed after extensive deliberations in Parliament, the BJP on Tuesday said in Rajya Sabha that doors are always open for farmers to resolve the issue amicably, and urged opposition parties not to make the farmers' agitation another Shaheen Bagh.

Moving the Motion of Thanks to the President's address in the Upper House, BJP member Bhubaneswar Kalita said the government respects farmers.

He said the government has given new rights to farmers through these new farm laws and none of their rights or facilities have been taken away.

Attacking the Opposition members, who were trying to disrupt the proceedings of the House, he said, "Let me remind

them that the three farm laws have been passed by both the houses of Parliament after much deliberations."

"The benefits of these three important farm laws have started reaching more than 10 crore people and small farmers. There has been no reduction in the rights and facilities of farmers. Through these agriculture reforms, the government has given new rights to farmers," he said initiating the debate.

The motion was seconded by another BJP member Vijay Pal Singh Tomar. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in the House when the debate started.

The Opposition members moved as many as 118 amendments to the Motion of Thanks to the President's address.

Mr Kalita said even after opposition members are

another Shaheen Bagh," he said. Shaheen Bagh in the national capital was the epicentre of the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

The BJP member from Assam cited the example of the Citizenship amendment bill which was passed by Parliament after the BJP returned to power with a decisive majority.

"Now they have objections and they want to organise another Shaheen Bagh. The anti-CAA parties in Assam are forming new parties and let me remind you what Congress got in 2019 Lok Sabha elections by supporting CAA, the anti-CAA parties will lose in 2021 elections in Assam," Kalita said. "The BJP alliance will win and return to power in Assam," he asserted.

— PTI

raising the issue to disrupt the House, "we have utmost respect for our farmers".

He said agriculture minister and railways minister have been holding discussion with farmers and many rounds of discussions have already taken place.

"The door is always open for farmers for discussion so that this issue of farm laws can be resolved amicably. The government is ready to discuss all issues concerning it, but my appeal to our friends, please do not make it

Pak Army Chief
Bajwa calls for
peace with IndiaSRIDHAR
KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

Qamar Javed Bajwa

In what is being seen as a possible outreach to India, Pakistan's powerful Army Chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa has said "it is time" for his country to "extend the hand of peace in all directions", even as he called on India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir issue in a "peaceful and dignified manner". Addressing a graduation ceremony at the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Academy earlier on Tuesday, Gen. Bajwa, however, referred to the Kashmir situation as a "human tragedy" that must be brought to its "logical conclusion" as per the "aspirations" of its people.

The apparent softening of stance of Gen. Bajwa comes in the wake of rock-bottom relations between the two nuclear-armed neighbours amid Pakistan's insistence that India reverse the abrogation of Article 370, an Indian Constitutional provision that had granted special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. India had split its erstwhile state of J&K into the two union territories of J&K and Ladakh in 2019. Pakistan's civilian government has repeatedly indicated that no talks are possible with India in the current situation.

It may be recalled that India's position vis-a-vis Pakistan has been that

"talks and terror cannot go together" and has repeatedly called on Islamabad to end its support for "cross-border terrorism". New Delhi has always indicated that if Pakistan is prepared to do this, India is ready to resume talks with its western neighbour. However, Gen. Bajwa's words are bound to be viewed with abundant caution by New Delhi which has maintained that terrorists continue their attempts to sneak across the Line of Control (LoC) in large numbers from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) to create havoc in the Indian union territory of J&K.

In its statement, the Pakistan military referred to Gen. Bajwa as saying that Pakistan stands "firmly committed to the ideal of mutual respect and peaceful co-existence". Gen. Bajwa also said that "it is time to extend the hand of peace in all directions" and that "Pakistan and India must also resolve the long-standing issue of J&K in a dignified and peaceful manner as per the aspirations of the people".

Govt formally seals
₹48,000cr Tejas deal

Bengaluru, Feb. 3: The government on Wednesday formally sealed the ₹48,000 crore deal to procure 83 Tejas LCA from state-run aerospace behemoth Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, a deal described by the government as the 'biggest' Make in India defence contract.

The contract was handed over by director-general (acquisition), ministry of defence, V.L. Kantha Rao to chairman and managing director of HAL, R. Madhavan, at the inaugural ceremony of Aero India-2021, the country's premier Defence and Aerospace show, here, in the presence of defence minister Rajnath Singh.

"I am very happy that HAL has got the orders for development of 83 new indigenous LCA (light combat aircraft) Tejas MKIA from Indian Air Force valued at more than ₹48,000 crore."

"It is probably the biggest Make in India Defence contract till date," Mr Singh said.

Tejas, manufactured by the HAL, is a single engine and highly agile multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft capable of operating in high-threat air environments.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month approved the procurement of 73 Tejas Mk-IA variant and 10 LCA Tejas Mk-I trainer aircraft from the HAL to boost IAF's combat prowess.

Mr Singh had on Tuesday inaugurated HAL's second LCA-Tejas production plant here, and said Tejas is not only indigenous, but it is also better than its foreign equivalents on several parameters, besides being comparatively cheaper. — PTI

Nirmala, PM Modi to visit
poll-bound Assam Feb. 6, 7

Guwahati, Feb. 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Assam on February 7 and lay the foundation stone of two medical colleges and launch the scheme for the upgradation of the state highways, state finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Wednesday.

This will be Mr Modi's second visit to the poll-bound state in a fortnight. The Assembly election in Assam is due in March-April this year.

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman too is scheduled to visit Guwahati on February 6 and be present at a programme where money will be given to the bank accounts of eight lakh tea garden workers in the state. Mr Sarma told press conference here.

The Prime Minister will visit Dhekiajuli from where he will lay the foundation of two medical colleges in Charaideo and Bishwanath districts. He will also launch the 'Assam Mala' scheme under which the state public works department will upgrade the state highways.

Work will be taken up in 2500 km to be taken up in the initial stage, he said adding the estimated



Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman during the ongoing Budget Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

₹5,000 crore project is expected to be completed within 15 years.

In the February 6 function where Ms Sitharaman will be the chief guest, the state government will transfer ₹3,000 each to the bank accounts of eight lakh tea garden workers which will involve an expenditure of ₹2.4 crore, Mr Sarma said. "Post-demonetisation and opening of bank accounts, we have been depositing ₹2,500 in each account. This year we have increased it to ₹3,000," he said.

The Union minister will also deliberate on the

budget at the function, he added.

A major event lined up for Friday is the appointment of 29,701 teachers and non-teaching staff by the state government, Sarma said.

The appointments will be made in two categories - in newly and recently provincialised schools where 16,484 teachers and non-teaching staff will be given appointment, while another 13,216 new appointments will be given at the level of lower, upper primary levels and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan along with assistant teachers at the secondary level, he said.

Five thousand more teachers will get appointment. Their verification process is pending, he said.

The minister said that a blue-print is also being prepared to appoint language teachers in the state with the focus of tribal languages and of the tea garden communities. Referring to the Covid-19 vaccination programme, Mr Sarma, who is also the state health minister, said Assam is "doing extremely well" and is jabbing more than expected with the daily target being exceeded in most of the places. — PTI

Ready to
rejoin Cong
to fight BJP,
says Vaghela

Ahmedabad, Feb. 3: Former Gujarat chief minister Shankersinh Vaghela, who had quit the Congress in 2017 after remaining in it for two decades, on Wednesday said he was ready to return to the party without any pre-conditions to fight the ruling BJP in the state.

Mr Vaghela, 80, who currently heads a little-known political outfit called the Praja Shakti Democratic Party (PSDP), issued a statement in which he claimed that many Congress workers and leaders have been urging him to return to the party.

However, before Mr Vaghela's statement, the state Congress earlier in the day denied as "rumours" the reports that he would rejoin the party in the coming days.

Mr Vaghela had quit the Congress before the 2017 Gujarat Assembly polls. Two years later, he had joined the Sharad Pawar-led NCP. However, in June last year, he had resigned from the NCP due to some differences and floated the PSDP. — PTI

PM's brother stages
sit-in at UP airport

Lucknow, Feb. 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brother Prahlad Modi staged a dharna at the Lucknow airport on Wednesday, alleging that police did not let his supporters reach there and took them into custody.

The police, however, has denied the charge.

According to Chaudhary Charan Singh Airport's additional-general manager (operations) Bhupendra Singh, Prahlad Modi arrived at Lucknow by an Indigo flight around 4 pm.

He sat on a dharna on the airport premises as he was unhappy over police stopping his supporters from reaching there, Singh said, adding that Prahlad Modi left after an hour and a half.

Mr Prahlad Modi told reports at the airport that he had come to Uttar Pradesh to take part in some social programmes in Sultanpur, Jaunpur and Pratapgarh.

After reaching here, I came to know that the workers who were coming to receive me were held by the Lucknow police and made to sit in a police station. Efforts are on to lodge cases against them, he claimed.

Mr Prahlad Modi claimed some police officers told him that there is an order to this effect from the Prime Minister's Office.



Prahlaad Modi, brother of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stages sit-in at Chaudhary Charan Singh Airport in Lucknow. — PTI

I felt that it would not be right if my children (workers) are in jail and I am free. Either let them go or I am sitting on a strike at the airport. Some police officers reached here and said there is an order to this effect from the Prime Minister's Office and I demand to see the copy of the order," Mr Modi said.

Goondagardi will neither help the government here nor the Prime Minister's office, he added.

Mr Prahlad Modi said if police did not give him the copy of the order, he would approach the Supreme Court. — PTI

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority	
Main Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.) Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com	
E-TENDER NOTICE	
E-Tender are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & http://etender.up.nic.in . Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.	
(A)	1. 79/CGM/SM(WC-5)/2021, Name of Work:- M/O Road (Providing and Laying C.C. Paver Blocks on Patri of Road and M/O Drain in E-5 Shatabdi Vihar Sector - 52), Noida Cost - Rs. 24.84 Lacs
Which can be uploaded by date 17.02.2021 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 18.02.2021 at 11.00 AM.	
Chief General Manager Noida	
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA	

NORTHERN RAILWAY OPEN-E-TENDER NOTICE	
The Sr. Divisional Engineer-III, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work:	
1. Name of work	Annual Zone for maintenance of track work in the section of SSE/P.Way/DLI under ADEN/DLI.
2. Approx cost of work	Rs. 9883033.25/- (Rupees Ninety Eight Lakh Eighty Three Thousand Thirty Three and paise Twenty Five only)
3. Earnest Money to be deposited	Rs. 0.00
4. Cost of tender document	Rs. 0/-
5. Date & Time of submission of tender bid and opening of tender	26.02.2021 @ 15:00 Hrs.
6. Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in
<p>● The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement system (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for participating in the e-tender system. ● For all terms and conditions please refer tender document. ● No manual offers are acceptable. ● Cost of tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only. No. No. 128-W/280/e Tender Notice/NIT/38/2020-21/W-3 Dated: 03.02.2021 253/2021</p>	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

SHORT TAKES

Bihar police seizes ganja worth ₹3.5cr

Gaya: The economic offence wing (EOW) of the Bihar police seized 240 kg ganja worth ₹3.5 crore and arrested six persons including a trainee Sub-Inspector of Excise department from Gaya district on Wednesday, a senior officer said. The EOW had received a tip-off that ganja worth crores of rupees will be transported to Bihar from Jharkhand. A team was constituted to identify and seize the vehicle carrying the ganja, additional director-general of police (EOW) Nayyar Hasnain Khan said. The ADGP said the EOW team identified the said vehicle on NH-2 in Gaya district but the trainee SI of excise department had taken the truck towards Bodhgaya. Khan said the trainee SI had taken ₹40,000 in cash as advance from the truck driver after demanding Rs 5 lakh for releasing the truck and illegal ganja. — PTI

40 students of nursing test +ve

Mangaluru: Forty nursing students from neighbouring Kerala have tested positive for Covid-19, prompting authorities to seal their college here as a precautionary measure on Wednesday, official sources said. The direction to seal the Aaliyah Institute of Nursing at Ullal in coastal Dakshina Kannada district in Karnataka, bordering Kerala, was given by the city municipality. Municipal commissioner Rayappa said 40 students from Kerala studying in the college tested positive for Covid-19 after which the district health officer, nodal officer and himself visited the college and issued the order. The area has been sealed and other students have been isolated from the infected, he said. The step has been taken as a precautionary measure and people need not panic, Rayappa added. — PTI

Assam Rifles seizes huge cache of arms

New Delhi: In a major success, troops of inspector-general Assam Rifles (South) in a joint operation unearthed a huge cache of weapons and ammunition from Nangbrang region in Manipur's Thoubal district. The weapons recovered included two 9mm BERETTA Pistols, one .32mm Chinese Pistol, one .32mm country-made Pistols, one 9mm pistol, two SMG carbines and one .12 bore rifle. Two rifle grenades were also recovered alongwith small arms ammunition of various types. "Based on credible intelligence regarding establishment of an arms caché in Kamiching area of Thoubal district in the run up to the municipal elections, an operation was planned and launched on Tuesday," said a senior official. The joint teams carried out an exhaustive search of the area over Tuesday and Wednesday in difficult terrain. This led to discovery of the caché in the early hours of 03 February morning.



BJP president J.P. Nadda offers prayers and Deep Darshan at Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram. — PTI

Women commandos to join Cobra units

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, FEB. 3

CRPF's anti-Naxal wing Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (Cobra) is soon going to induct women commandos in its units. The CRPF authorities have taken a decision to induct women commandos in Cobra units, D. Prakash, CRPF inspector-general (IG), Chhattisgarh, told this newspaper. Sources said the process has begun to recruit the woman commandos for Cobra. After training, the women commandos would be deployed in combat duty along with their male counterparts in their respective Cobra battalions in insurgency-hit Bastar in Chhattisgarh. Currently, the Cobra units are all-male forces. The CRPF has a total of 10 Cobra battalions currently.

Of these, 6 battalions have been deployed in south Bastar, comprising districts of Sukma, Bijapur, Dantewada and Narayanpur. CRPF's 241 battalion, christened as Bastariya

SOURCES said the process has begun to recruit the woman commandos for Cobra. The CRPF has a total of 10 battalions currently. Of these, 6 battalions have been deployed in south Bastar.

Battalion, was established a year ago. The battalion comprising exclusively tribal youths of Bastar constitutes 40 per cent of women commandos. The Chhattisgarh police has deployed an all-female district reserve group (DRG) in anti-Naxal operations in Dantewada district in 2019. Half of the 30-member strong female DRG team comprises surrendered Naxals, victims of Maoist violence including widows of security personnel slain in encounters with Naxals and spouses of jawans. They have undergone 45-day training in guerrilla warfare being inducted in the force. The female DRG team has been deployed in combat duties also besides serving as peacekeeping forces in Dantewada district.

Guj cadre IPS officer Sinha named acting chief of CBI

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

The government has appointed Praveen Sinha, a 1988-batch Gujarat cadre IPS officer, as the acting chief of the CBI till a decision on a new director is taken to succeed Rishi Kumar Shukla, who retired on Wednesday after a two-year fixed stint. Mr Sinha is currently posted as additional director in the CBI. The appointments committee of the Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose Mr Sinha. An order issued by the department of personnel and training on Wednesday stated that Mr Sinha will look duties of the director with immediate effect till the appointment of a new CBI chief or until further orders, whichever is earlier. Mr Shukla, a 1983-batch IPS officer, took over the reins of the agency on February 4, 2019.

US Army troops will be arriving in India on February 5 Indo-US military drill from Feb. 8

Jaipur, Feb. 3: The 16th edition of Indo-US joint military exercise 'Yudh Abhyas' will be held in Rajasthan between February 8 and 21, a defence spokesperson said on Wednesday.

The exercise near the India-Pakistan border aims at enhancing cooperation and interoperability between the two armies and will focus on counter-terrorism operations under the United Nations mandate, the spokesperson said.

The drill comes days after the Air Forces of India and France held a five-day joint exercise in Rajasthan in January.

Defence spokesperson Lt. Col. Amitabh Sharma

said, "As part of military-to-military exchange programmes, US Army troops will be arriving in India on February 5 for the 16th edition of Exercise 'Yudh Abhyas' with Indian Army troops.

He said the bilateral training exercise will be conducted at the Foreign Training Node at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges.

He said the 11th Battalion of Jammu and Kashmir Rifles, part of the South Western Command will represent Indian Army in the exercise while the US Army delegation will be represented by the troops of 2nd battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment of 1-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team

THE EXERCISE near the India-Pakistan border aims at enhancing cooperation and interoperability between the two armies and will focus on counter-terrorism operations under the United Nations mandate

along with respective brigade headquarters.

"Exercise with US Army is significant in terms of security challenges faced by both the nations in the backdrop of global terrorism. The joint military exercise will enhance the level of defence cooperation between both armies which will also foster the bilateral relations

India will spend \$130bn to modernise military: Rajnath

Bengaluru, Feb. 3: India is vigilant in the face of attempts to change status quo at its border and prepared to defeat any misadventures to defend its territorial integrity, defence minister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday, amid the continued military standoff with China.

"We have long witnessed unfortunate attempts to employ force to change the status quo at our unresolved borders," he said at the inaugural ceremony of Aero India-2021, the country's premier defence and aerospace show, at Yelahanka Air Force Station here. "India is vigilant and prepared to counter and defeat any misadventures to defend our people and territorial integrity at all costs," the Minister asserted.



IAF's aerobatic team Suryakiran performs during the inauguration of the 13th edition of Aero India at Yelahanka air base in Bengaluru on Wednesday. — PTI

China and India are locked in a military standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 5 last.

Dubbed as Asia's largest military aviation exhibition, the three-day Aero India event commenced amid the COVID-19 pan-

demie with buzz around "Aatma-Nirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India) and "Make in India" push.

With a combination of both physical and virtual exhibition, the 13th edition of the biennial international event is said to be

the world's first hybrid aerospace show.

Mr Singh also said India plans to spend \$130 billion on defence modernisation in the next 7-8 years with the focus on domestic manufacturing of bigger and complex platforms.

The government has since 2014 brought in many reforms in the defence sector to create a conducive ecosystem for exports, foreign direct investment and offset discharge, he noted.

To achieve the twin goals of self-reliance and exports, the government has set a target to achieve a turnover of ₹1,75,000 crore in the field of defence manufacturing, including export of ₹35,000 crore in Aerospace and defence goods and services, by 2024, Mr Singh said. — PTI

Mehbooba accuses police of torturing political opponents

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, FEB. 3

Former chief minister and PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday accused the intelligence wing of J&K police of joining Central agencies in "terrorising" the people of Kashmir.

In a series of tweets, Ms Mufti alleged that J&K police's CID wing is also implicating political opponents of the government in false cases. She claimed that after failing to substantiate charges against PDP's youth leader Waheed ur Rehman Para, the intelligence wing of the police replaced the head of its special investigating team (SIT) which was probing a case as he refused to be an accomplice in framing invented charges.

"J&K CID has joined the list of Central agencies that work to terrorise Kashmiris & falsely implicate them. After failing to substantiate charges



MEHBOOBA MUFTI alleged that Mr Parra is being persecuted and tortured to admit the false allegations and that he has been kept under inhuman conditions

SHE ACCUSED the police of joining Central agencies in 'terrorising' people

against PDP's @parawahid CID replaced the SIT head because he refused to be an accomplice in framing invented charges," she wrote on micro-blogging site.

She also alleged that Mr Parra is being persecuted and tortured to admit the false allegations and that he has been kept under inhuman conditions. "Investigation against him has been fraudulent and politically motivated from day one...he is being persecuted & tortured to admit the false allegations. Since an admission didn't happen he is being kept under inhuman conditions. This investigation has been fraudulent &

politically motivated from day one", she tweeted. She said that the institutions meant to uphold law and order bring disrepute by getting involved in these deceitful investigations. "The norm dictating such deceitful investigations is 'Show me the man & I'll show you the crime'. Shameful & appalling that these actions discredit & bring disrepute to the institutions meant to uphold law & order," she said in another tweet.

Mr Parra was last month arrested in connection with a case related to an alleged nexus involving politicians, militants and overground workers and sympathisers and illegal

Tharoor, 6 journalists move SC against FIRs

PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

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

The FIRs alleged "misreporting" and "spreading disharmony" by their tweets and reports on the ongoing farmers' agitation seeking the repeal of three farm laws which

farmers' are contending aims to corporatise agriculture.

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

Several FIRs were filed against the petitioners in Delhi, Gurugram, Noida and Madhya Pradesh.

On January 26, thousands of agitating protesting farmers had clashed with the police during the tractor rally called by farmer unions to highlight their demand for repeal of the Centre's three farm laws.

Tikait issues 'gaddi wapsi' warning

Continued from Page 1

Haryana was the first one to be attended by BKU leader Rakesh Tikait who has now become the face of the farmers' agitation.

The massive turnout in different mahapanchayats has raised concerns for the BJP and given new hope to Opposition parties, especially the Congress, RLD and Samajwadi Party. The importance of the khaps, especially in the politically dominant Jat communities, is such that even Prime Minister Narendra Modi had to seek their blessings for his party during the 2014 elections.

With khap after khap rallying behind Mr Tikait and extending support to the protests against the farm laws, there is an increasing sense of vulnerability within the BJP ahead of the 2022 UP Assembly polls. The fact that the Muzaffarnagar mahapanchayat saw the return of shared unity of Hindu and Muslim khaps can also be a cause of further concern for the saffron party.

The khaps play a crucial role in Haryana politics. About 90-odd khaps spread across Sonapat, Jhajjar, Rohtak, Bhiwani, Dadri, Jind, Hissar and Kaithal and Jat community have already

expressed solidarity with the protesters.

At Jind mahapanchayat, several khap leaders said the Prime Minister and Union home minister Amit Shah should hold direct talks with the farmers' unions. But Mr Tikait made it clear that the decision to resume dialogue with the Union government will be taken by the Samyukta Kisan Union, an umbrella organisation of the protesting farmers.

"Just as you don't change the sarpanch midway, we will not change the leadership in the middle of the agitation," said Mr Tikait, who was accompanied on stage by other farmers' union leaders such as Balbir Singh Rajewal of BKU (Rajewal) and Gurnam Singh Chaduni, president of BKU, Haryana. He said the SKU would take a call on the future course of action.

Referring to the concrete and iron barricades erected by Delhi Police at the Singhu border, Mr Tikait and other speakers said members of the khap will soon remove them. Taking a dig at the Central leadership, the BKU leader said, "When the ruler is afraid, he does fortification..." He also reiterated that Singhu border would remain central to the agita-

tion. Mr Tikait said a village-to-village campaign would be carried out in Haryana till February 10 to garner support for the ongoing agitation. "And in case our demands are not accepted by the Centre, we will hold a mahapanchaya at national level."

The Jind mahapanchayat, hosted by the Sarv Jatiya Kandela khap, holds significance as it was organized at a village which is also the headquarters of the Kandela khap. The village was also the centre of farmers' agitation in 2002 against the then INLD government on the issue of power bills.

The Khandela khap has significant influence in about 20 adjoining villages. People from these villages have been providing logistic support and the manpower to the ongoing farmers' stir near Delhi borders for over two months.

Following Mr Tikait's emotional outburst a after January 26, farmers from the region, including Kandela village, had rushed to the Ghaziipur border after which the agitation got strong and government authorities, who were planning to remove the protesting farmers from the dharna site, had to retreat.

No contracts, govt jobs for protesters

Continued from Page 1

with the right to protest. The CM of Bihar himself had been part of many protests against several ruling regimes. Instead of taking harsh measures against the protesters, he should ask the administration to look into the problems of common people."

This circular from Bihar police comes almost a week after Bihar Economic Offences Unit (EOU) had issued a notice saying that offensive social media posts against the government, ministers and officials will be treated as cyber-crime and invite penal action.

Stung MEA hits back at foreign critics

Continued from Page 1

The reaction came after pop icon Rihanna referred to a media report on the farmers' stir and tweeted: "Why aren't we talking about this?!" Greta Thunberg tweeted: "We stand in solidarity with the farmers' protest in India". Ms Harris, a lawyer and author, was far harsher and lashed out at the Indian government by tweeting: "It's no coincidence that the world's oldest democracy was attacked not even a month ago, and as we speak, the most populous democracy is under assault. This is related. We all should be outraged by India's Internet shutdowns and paramilitary violence against farmer protesters. Militant nationalism is just as potent a force in US politics as it is in India or anyplace else. It can only be stopped if people wake up to the reality that fascist dictators aren't going anywhere."

The tweets have angered New Delhi that put out a statement on "recent comments by foreign indi-

viduals and entities on the farmers' protests".

The MEA said: "The Parliament of India, after a full debate and discussion, passed reformist legislation relating to the agricultural sector. These reforms give expanded market access and provided greater flexibility to farmers. They also pave the way for economically and ecologically sustainable farming."

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

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

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

Government sources said Twitter had unilaterally unblocked accounts and tweets despite specific blocking orders. Twitter is an "intermediary" and is obliged to obey government directives, sources said, adding that the platform may face penal action if it doesn't comply with the orders.

The ministry of electronics and information technology had recently directed Twitter to block around 250 tweets/Twitter accounts that were sending out "fake, intimidatory and provocative tweets" on January 30 with hashtags accusing the Narendra Modi government of planning the "genocide" of farmers without any further substantiation.

repeal of the three laws. "As per the demand of our party president M.K. Stalin, I would urge the government (that) the Prime Minister in his reply should assure the repeal of these farm laws," he said.

Farmers not 'enemies', don't stand on prestige, says Opp

Continued from Page 1

The House raising slogans, seeking repeal of the three laws, as Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Choudhury sought a separate discussion on the three laws. The Speaker repeatedly urged members to follow the

rules and allow Question Hour to proceed, but to no avail.

The House was first adjourned till 5 pm, and again for another two hours till 7 pm.

There was a third adjournment till 9 pm, but

the Opposition MPs refused to budge from the Well, so the Speaker adjourned the proceedings for the day.

Describing farmers as the "annadata", the Congress leader said there was no point in con-

fronting them, and instead the government should focus on other major issues like revival of the economy.

DMK MP Tiruchi Siva asked for an assurance from the government and the Prime Minister on the

THE ASIAN AGE

4 FEBRUARY 2021

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Putin bares his fangs

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

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

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

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Subhani



No new taxes? Budget's Mahabharata lessons



Mohan Guruswamy

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

Even in a much poorer country and smaller economy like India, in the ultimate analysis it's the state of the economy that determines political longevity. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi's hucksters kept repeating all day on Monday and Tuesday this week that even a huge contraction of the economy and despite tens of millions of migrant workers being rendered jobless and homeless in a massive drop of the guillotine with the March 21, 2020, lockdown, Mr Modi won the state elections in Bihar later that year. But did he? The NDA polled 34.86 per cent of the popular vote while the Tejjashwi Yadav-led UPA got 36.20 per cent of the popular vote. The NDA came to power with a very slim majority in the Assembly and the margins in as many as 11 seats were by just a few hundred votes. So to believe Mr Modi always wears a Teflon suit is quite erroneous. It's always the economy, stupid!

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

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

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

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

Total expenditure in FY20-21 was ₹34.50 lakh crore. The proposed expenditure for FY21-22 is ₹34.83 lakh crore (Page 3 of FinMin's 'Budget at a Glance'), so where is the money for a breakout?

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

WHERE'S THE MONEY?

For ambitious budgeting for infrastructure and growth schemes, the revenue shortfall must be fulfilled. FY21 provided for market borrowings at `9.67 lakh crores. This has now increased to `12 lakh crores. The creation of a so-called "bad bank" as an asset management device would eventually add `8.5 lakh crores of NPAs, and in this "bold economy" will lose primacy of concern. The total debt, at 85 per cent of GDP, will swell and drag down the economy. The Budget is sadly silent on the immediate need to provide interim incomes to the millions affected last year. If this class isn't in the scheme of things, who is this Budget for?

R. Narayanan
Mumbai

CHURLISH STALIN

THE DMK HAS played the DMDK's pleas to the AIADMK for an alliance. This criticism is uncalled for. Perhaps, M.K. Stalin, DMK's president, is following in the footsteps of the Congress, which still divides and rules. Incidentally, the DMK has expressed its desire to contest 190-200 seats. If so, they will have 34 to 44 seats to distribute to allies. It was still trying to woo Kamal Haasan's MNM. With the AAP's support, the new party has a better chance.

Capt. N. Viswanathan
Coimbatore

RETROGRADE STEP

MYANMAR'S MILITARY seizing power on Monday in a bloodless coup against Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically elected government is a retrograde step. The military blamed the government for not acting on fraud claims in the November's elections, in which Ms Suu Kyi's party won a landslide majority. The coup has drawn the ire of the international community and undermined Myanmar's transition to full democracy.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the country back under dictatorship.

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

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

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

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

SHORT TAKES

SHOOTING IN
FLORIDA: 2 FBI
AGENTS KILLED

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

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

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

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

SPACEX ROCKET
IN FIERY
CRASH, AGAIN

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

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

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

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

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

NEO-NAZI SONGS:
AUSTRIAN
RAPPER NABBED

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

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

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

UKRAINE BANS
3 PRO-RUSSIA
TV CHANNELS

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

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

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

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

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

Navalny jailed
for three years

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Several hundred of his supporters marched through the streets.

— AFP

Iran not to set
free ship captain

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

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

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

Permission had been granted upon "the request

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

He did not specify whether the crew had already left.

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

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

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

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

— AFP

Tamilians stage
stir in Lanka

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

They alleged that lands owned by Tamils are being grabbed and Tamil areas are being systematically populated with the majority Sinhala community since the military conflict ended in 2009. They claimed that Tamil political prisoners continue to languish in jails. Members of Tamil National Alliance said the court order was served on politicians, preventing them from taking part.

● **SRI LANKA** on Tuesday scrapped a deal to develop a major port terminal with India and Japan amid weeks-long protests by trade unions and opposition parties. Sri Lanka had agreed to develop the Strategic East Container Terminal at the Colombo port with India and Japan.

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

— PTI

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

She can be detained at least till mid-Feb; charge entails three yrs in prison

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

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

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

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



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

— AP

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

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

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

— AP

WHO team visits Wuhan
lab at centre of speculation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— AP

ANTIVIRAL CURE
FOR COVID-19
IDENTIFIED

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

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

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

— PTI

Washington in touch with
India and Japan on coup

Suu Kyi.

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

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

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

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

— PTI

US extends N-arms
treaty with Russia

Washington, Feb. 3: The United States joined Russia on Wednesday in extending the two countries' last remaining treaty limiting their stockpiles of nuclear weapons, two days before the pact was set to expire.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement the U.S. would use the five years of the New START treaty's renewal to pursue limits on all of Russia's nuclear weapons. That's after the Trump administration pulled out of two other such deals, as part of a broad withdrawal from international accords.

The countries last week announced plans to extend the agreement, even as the Biden administration has stepped up criticism of Russia over the jailing of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, its involvement in a massive hack and other issues.

"Especially during times of tension, verifiable limits on Russia's intercontinental-range nuclear weapons are vitally important. Extending the New START Treaty makes the United States, US allies and partners,

and the world safer," Blinken said.

"An unconstrained nuclear competition would endanger us all." The treaty, signed in 2010 by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, limits the number of US and Russian strategic nuclear weapons. The outgoing Trump administration made a late bid to extend the treaty, but Russia rejected its conditions.

The treaty was due to expire Friday. Both houses of the Russian parliament voted unanimously last month for the extension, and President Vladimir Putin signed the bill.

That was after President Joe Biden and Putin talked and agreed on the extension, part of a quick round of diplomacy by the less than month-old U.S. administration to keep the treaty going.

The extension doesn't require formal congressional approval in the United States. The Biden administration will also work on control measures for China's smaller but growing arsenal of nuclear warheads, Blinken said.

— AP

Biden orders fair
immigration system

Washington, Feb. 3: As part of his efforts to ensure that the legal immigration system operates fairly and efficiently, US President Joe Biden signed an executive order on Tuesday to review the policies of the previous administration, including that of the public charge.

The review of the existing policies and the subsequent recommendations coming from 60 to 180 days from various federal agencies are likely to end up in benefiting hundreds and thousands of Indian professionals in realising their dream of citizenship of the US. "The federal government should

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

The president told reporters at the White House that his executive orders are about how America is safer, stronger, more prosperous when it has a fair, orderly and humane legal immigration system.

"Today we are going to work to undo the moral and national shame of the previous administration," he said.

— PTI



quick BITES

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

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Services sector expands in Jan.; biz optimism up

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

Christie's Intl. Real Estate enters India



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

Airtel posts Q3 profit of ₹854 cr; revenue highest

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

Jubilant Food profit rises 22% to ₹124 crore

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

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■ Nifty-50 inching towards 15K milestone

Sensex breaks 50000 barrier

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 3

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

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

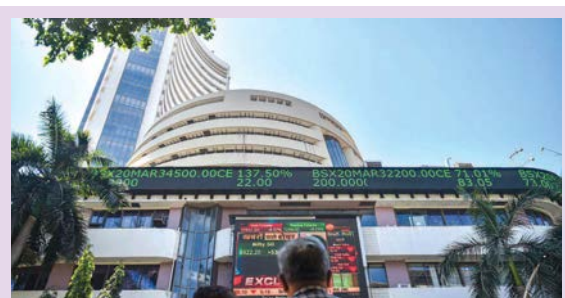
The Nifty-50 Index too clocked a new all-time high of 14868.85 and finally closed at 14789.95, up 142.10 points, or 0.97 per cent.

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

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

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

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



JOURNEY OF SENSEX TO 50K
BSE Sensex makes history, closes over the 50000 mark for the first time ever on Feb 3, 2021.
Source: BSE Sensex / KBK Infographic

& CEO, Kotak Securities.

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

Expectations from third quarter results of telecom

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

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

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

Jassy ushered in cloud boom

MATT DAY
FEB. 3

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

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

In the same earnings report in which Amazon said Jassy, 53, would succeed



Andy Jassy

Jeff Bezos last this year, the company reported that AWS pulled in \$12.7 billion in sales in the fourth quarter, making the unit a \$50 billion business on an annual basis.

"Andy brings the first principles thinking that has always been a part of

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

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

— Bloomberg

China share in Indian exim rises

SANGEETHA SYED
CHENNAI, FEB. 3

China has improved its share in both exports to India and imports from India in recent months, regardless of the border stand-off.

China's share of imports into India moved up from 13.7 per cent in 2019-20 to 17.7 per cent till November in FY21.

Chinese share in India's exports too has gone up in the current fiscal. Its share was 5.3 per cent in 2019-20. But this share has moved up to 7.8 per cent in the eight-month period between April and November, as per government data.

Among the various export items to China, iron and steel saw a growth of 480 per cent between April and November this fiscal to

\$2.263 million against \$390 million in the year-ago period. Aluminum and aluminum articles registered a growth of 1124 per cent to \$233 million.

In the case of imports from China, articles of apparel and clothing accessories grew by 46 per cent during April-November, other made-up articles by 37 per cent and pharma products by 18 per cent.

Over half of India's GVA comes from unorganised sector: IMF

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 3

Agriculture, forestry and fishing have 97 per cent of their economic activity in the unorganised sector followed by accommodation, food services and trade at 86 per cent. Over 52 per cent of India's gross value added (GVA) at basic prices comes from the unorganised sector, finds a report by the International Monetary Fund.

Over a decade, the organised sector share of agriculture, forestry and fishing has come down to 2.9 per cent, from 3.2 per cent in 2011-12, as these activities have moved more into the unorganised sector in recent years. Unorganised agriculture activity is calculated using data on land use estimates, area under cultivation for main crops, and estimates of inputs used in agriculture.

However, the share of accommodation, food services and trade has remained static at 86 per cent in the unorganised



sector.

In the construction sector, 74.5 per cent activity happens in the unorganised sector and real estate and ownership of dwellings too has a higher share of unorganised activity at 62.8 per cent, though this has reduced from 63.1 per cent in 2011-12.

While public administration and defence are the only sectors fully under the organised segment, electricity, gas and water has 94.7 per cent organised activity and financial services, 88 per cent.

Overall, the unorganised sector has a higher share of GVA at basic prices at 52.4 per cent. This share has come

down from 53.9 per cent in 2011-12.

According to the IMF the terms unorganised sector and informal sector are used interchangeably in the official statistics for India. The unorganised sector covers units that may not maintain regular, comprehensive accounts and whose activities are not regulated under any statutory Act. It therefore comprises enterprises operated by own account workers and unregistered enterprises.

Unincorporated enterprises that maintain accounts are considered quasi-corporations and are included in the organised or formal sector.

NEW RULES FOR OPCs, REVISED THRESHOLDS FOR SMALL FIRMS

New Delhi, Feb. 3: The corporate affairs ministry on Wednesday said it has amended rules for One Person Companies (OPCs) and has extended fast track merger process to startups and the small companies.

In a release, the ministry said incorporation of OPCs is being incentivised in order to bring in

more unincorporated businesses into the organised corporate sector.

The move is expected to directly benefit startups and innovators, especially those who are supplying products and services on e-commerce platforms.

With the amendments, OPCs will be allowed to grow without any restrictions on paid up capital

and turnover as well as get converted into any other type of company at any time.

Also, the ministry has revised the threshold for paid-up capital and turnover for small companies to Rs 2 crore from Rs 50 lakh and the turnover threshold to Rs 20 crore from Rs 2 crore.

—PTI

Few firms opt for RBI's one-time restructuring

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, FEB. 3

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

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

"The lower-than-expected restructuring was on account of the various government measures and faster demand recovery in the domestic market, supported by a marginal pick-

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

In August last year, the RBI had announced a one-time restructuring for personal and corporate borrowers affected by pandemic-related stress.

The rating agency said, "The lower restructuring stems from the Rs 3 trillion Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme and the Covid-19 loans provided by banks, offering respite to issuers with weak liquidity and increasing their ability to withstand the sustained cash flow pressures caused by the Covid-19 led lockdown. Even though not all issuers had availed the additional funding, the same has flowed down to the entities lower down the value chain. Many banks have also automatically converted the interest due on the working capital loans under moratorium into term loans, thus, eliminating the need for the issuers to apply for the restructuring scheme. Moreover, the revised definition of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) has enhanced the access of freshly included entities to funding from the financial system."

KIA MOTORS TO MAKE E-VEHICLES FOR APPLE?

Seoul, Feb. 3: South Korea's Kia Corp shares surged to their highest in over two decades on Wednesday after a local media report said the car-maker will sign a 4 trillion won (\$3.59 billion) deal with Apple Inc to build electric vehicles.

Shares in Kia, an affiliate of Hyundai Motor Co, jumped as much as 14.5 per cent to hit its highest since 1997 at 102,000 won on Wednesday.

The rally came after South Korea's online news outlet DongA.com reported that Apple would invest \$3.6 billion in Kia as they collaborate to produce Apple's electric vehicles in Kia's Georgia plant, without citing any sources. The report said the deal would be signed on February 17.

Apple will aim to produce 100,000 vehicles annually by 2024 at the Kia plant, the report said, aiming to expand that annual capacity to 400,000 at a later stage.

Apple and Hyundai declined to comment.

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

—Reuters

75% PROFESSIONALS ON LOOKOUT FOR JOB

New Delhi, Feb. 3: The job market is set to become more competitive this year as three in four Indian professionals are likely to consider changing jobs or actively look for a new roles in the next 12 months, according to LinkedIn Job Seeker research.

The survey, based on 1,016 responses, shows that three out of four Indian professionals will actively look for a new job in 2021.

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

—PTI

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

South Korea leads world in innovation

MICHELLE JAMRISKO, WEI LU & ALEX TANZI
FEB. 3

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

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

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



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

The 2021 rankings reflect a world

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

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

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

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

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

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Ajay re-elected as BFI president

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

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

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

Serena sizzles; Osaka, Barty toil

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

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

Zverev, Tsitsipas open with wins

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

Seventh-ranked Zverev had to dig deep to overcome Canadian dangerman Denis Shapovalov 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) and seal the tie for Germany.

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

Irving punches big to pip Clippers

Los Angeles: Kyrie Irving rattled in 39 points and James Harden bagged the 50th regular season triple double of his career as the Brooklyn Nets outgunned the Los Angeles Clippers 124-120 on Tuesday. The potential NBA finals sneak preview at the Barclays Center saw the Nets' big three of Irving, Harden and Kevin Durant combine for a total of 90 points to halt the Clippers' three-game unbeaten streak.

Kawhi Leonard led the Clippers scoring with 33 points while Paul George added 26 and French international Nicolas Batum chipping in with 21. The Nets were given a scare late in the game when a 118-108 advantage shrank to a single point with five seconds remaining. Elsewhere on Tuesday, Fred VanVleet exploded for a franchise record 54 points as the Toronto Raptors demolished the Orlando Magic 123-108. — AFP



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

— PTI

WISE CAPTAIN

My job is easy when Virat is around: Rahane

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 3

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

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



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

— PTI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ROOT WANTS TO BE PART OF T20 WC SQUAD

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

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

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

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

Important to post big 1st innings total: Trott

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 3

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

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



Jonathan Trott

who played 52 Tests.

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

of the Year award in 2011.

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

POPE ADDED TO ENGLAND SQUAD

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

CA TO GIVE NOC TO IPL-BOUND OZ PLAYERS

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

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

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

Man Utd wreak havoc on Saints

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

United's first victory in three league games means

THE RESULTS

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

they are behind leaders Manchester City only on goal difference.

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

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



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

— AP

Ronaldo's brace packs off Inter

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

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

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

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

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

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

SEVILLA ENTER COPA DEL REY SEMIFINALS

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

Papu Gomez made his debut for Sevilla but made little impact and was substituted on the hour mark. It was his first appearance since December 16 after falling out of favour with Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini.

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

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

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

FOUL FOWLER IS BANNED FOR FOUR GAMES, FINED

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

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