

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | 13 FEBRUARY 2021



WEATHER

Max: 33.0°C
Min: 17.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Cloudy.
Max/Min temp.
33/17 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+11,636)	(+93)
1,08,91,462	1,55,569

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+143)	(+1)
TS: 2,96,277	1,614
(+68)	(+1)
AP: 8,88,760	7,162

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

10,84,74,469
DEATHS
23,83,558
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

219
[worldometers.info/
coronavirus](http://worldometers.info/coronavirus)

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttaramaya
Tithi: Magha Shuddha Vidiya till 12.58 am
Star: Shatabhisha till 3.14 pm
Variyam: 10 pm to 11.41 pm
Durmuhuram: 6.47 am to 8.18 am
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am
HIJRI CALENDAR
Jamadi- ul- Akhir 30,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 6.10 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.00 pm
Magrib: 6.11 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.33 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.09 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 7.43 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 8.27 PM

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India take on England in second Test from today



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Quota in pvt varsities: Jagan

Directs officials to convert colleges into private universities

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 12

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said that the government has decided to amend the AP Private University Act, 2006 by which 35 per cent seats in private universities would be filled by the government quota. The amendment Bill will be introduced in the Budget session.

He said that the government had decided to introduce English medium in Intermediate and degree colleges, including professional colleges, to improve the employability of the students.

CM Reddy was speaking at a review meeting on higher education in the CM camp office at Tadepallion Friday where he enquired about the reopening of colleges and conducting of classes.

He directed the officials to set highest standards for new private universities and convert the existing colleges into private universities. He said there should be joint certification with 200 best educational institutions of the world and it should last for five years and this should be considered as criteria for recognising a college as a private university.

Discussing aided col-

leges, it was opined that they should be handed over to the government or private totally if they cannot be run independently.

With regard to introducing English medium at the degree level, the Chief Minister directed the officials to come up with appropriate courses so that students face trouble.

■ Page 2: CM wants practical knowledge

Poll body gags Kodali for lowering its stature

Don't talk against SEC, HC tells Jogi

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 12

The State Election Commission on Friday imposed a gag order on civil supplies minister Kodali Sri Venkeshwara Rao until the completion of gram panchayat polls on February 21.

State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar in the order issued stated that the SEC was not satisfied with the explanation given by the minister.

Accordingly, the SEC issued an order restraining the minister from speaking to the media, to any group or groups of people or in meetings until the completion of the elections. The SEC said that the order would come into effect immediately and directed the Krishna district collector and the superintendent of police Krishna (Rural) district and the Vijayawada police commissioner to ensure enforcement of the order.

Earlier, the SEC had served a showcase notice on the minister for making allegedly derogatory remarks against Kumar during his press meet earlier in the day. The utterances were lowering the stature of the SEC and the public stand-

lunch motion petition in the High Court on Friday.

Single-judge bench headed by justice D.V.S.S. Somayajulu heard the petition and imposed curbs on the legislator on speaking against the SEC and the ongoing polls. However, the court permitted him to speak to the media persons about government schemes.

The court also directed the SEC to serve notice on the legislator and seek an explanation for making such comments. The case was posted for the next hearing on February 19.

ing of the election commissioner, it said, adding that the minister's comments were made with a malicious intent.

■ Page 2: Minister denies making derogatory remarks



KAKINDA CIVIC REPRESENTATIVE KILLED BY FRIEND

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, FEB. 12

Kampara Ramesh, corporator of ninth division in Kakinada Municipal Corporation, was brutally killed, allegedly by his friend Gurajana Chenna. It is stated Chenna ran the corporator over with his car multiple times in drunken rage at a car washing centre in Valasapakala village of Kakinada Rural Mandal. The incident occurred at 2 am on Friday.

■ Page 2: Corporator was brought dead, say doctors

BUS PLUNGES INTO ARAKU GORGE, 4 FROM HYD KILLED

DC CORRESPONDENTS
VISAKHAPATNAM/
HYDERABAD, FEB. 12

Four persons, including a month-old baby were killed and 19 others sustained injuries when a mini-bus in which they were travelling plunged into 100-feet deep gorge in Anantagiri mandal in Visakhapatnam district on Friday evening. All the victims and the injured belonged to the same extended family and were residents of Hyderabad.

■ Full report on Page 2

CM okays more polls under SEC

To complete political activity within 2 months and focus on attracting investments to state

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 12

The state will soon witness a paradigm shift in governance with Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy deciding to prioritise development and attracting investments after successfully launching and stabilising welfare schemes in the first two years of his tenure.

As part of this multi-pronged strategy, the Chief Minister, sources close to him told *Deccan Chronicle*, decided to not object to holding of even mandal, zilla parishad and municipal polls before the end of State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar's stint in March.

"He wants to finish the political activity by facilitating all polls in the next one or two months and focus fully on propelling growth by taking advantage of the post-Covid economic initiatives of the Centre," sources said.

The Supreme Court's two-judge bench directed the listing of the matter for further hearing on February 19.

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 12

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The government had earlier chalked out a plan to prevent the SEC from going ahead with the polls to zilla parishad and

tions in the last two meetings held between the SEC and Chief Secretary Adityanath Das and Director General of Police Gautham Sawang.

Sources said the government had earlier chalked out a plan to prevent the SEC from going ahead with the polls to zilla parishad and

urban bodies but the Chief Minister negated it.

Overwhelming support from people as reflected in YSR Congress-backed candidates sweeping the gram panchayat polls also came in handy for changing the strategy, sources added.

■ Page 2: Construction to resume in Amaravati

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COUNTER POINT



SHORT TAKES

GANTA, AVANTI SHARE DAIS AT HUNGER STRIKE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 12

Tourism minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao (Avanti) on Friday shared the same dais with his political guru Ganta Srinivasa Rao, Telugu Desam MLA, at the relay hunger strike protesting against privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP).

The hunger strike, started at the main gate of VSP, has been launched by Ukku Parirakshana Committee. The hunger strike camp was inaugurated by Kolla Rajamohan Rao, who had participated for getting the steel plant for Visakhapatnam in 1970s.

Soon after the inauguration, Ganta Srinivasa Rao displayed to people his new resignation letter written as per format required by the assembly speaker for acceptance. Announcing that he was resigning from the assembly in interests of the people, Ganta appealed to Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy that he convene a meeting of his cabinet immediately and pass a resolution against privatisation of the steel plant.

The tourism minister suggested to Ganta Srinivasa Rao that resignation should be used as the last resort against the central government and not now. "Right now, it is time to unite political parties, trade unions and people to launch a state-wide agitation, till the centre revokes its decision," Muttamsetti remarked.

CPI national general secretary said the state government should enact a new law to prevent PSUs from selling off lands allotted by the state government. He later called on those sitting on hunger strike.

TWO RETURNING OFFICERS SUSPENDED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 12

Srikakulam collector and election officer J. Niwas suspended two returning officers of LN Peta in the district for dereliction of duties. One of the officials, L. Govardhana Rao, school assistant of Kuntibhadra Zilla Parishad High School under Kothuru mandal, was appointed returning officer for LN Peta gram panchayat (stage-2). The other was reserve returning officer V. Mallesu, teacher at the Temburu Zilla Parishad High School of Patapatnam mandal.

They were suspended under Section 134 of Peoples Representation Act, 1951 and AP Service Rules. They were asked not to leave the headquarters until further orders.

On February 9, Govardhana Rao was allegedly negligent in securing the ballot papers and handing them over to proper authority, as per a preliminary inquiry. It may be recalled that the students of LN Peta Zilla High School found ballot papers in the school campus which were later burnt by the sweepers.

CENTRE HAS DECEIVED STATE, SAYS CONG CHIEF

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, FEB. 12

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee working president Tulasi Reddy on Friday said the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government at the centre has succeeded in deceiving AP due to incompetence of the present YSR Congress government and the earlier TDP government in the state.

Otherwise, he wondered how the centre could neglect granting special status to Andhra Pradesh when such an assurance had been given at the time of state's bifurcation itself.

No Jagan link in POSCO deals: Min.

Peddireddi alleges that Chandrababu Naidu was suffering from a "Jagan phobia"

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 12

Minister for Panchayat Raj Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy said on Friday that no connection existed between Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and the POSCO steel company. Instead, Reddy urged Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu to comment on the issue of Vizag Steel Plant privatisation.

The minister refuted an allegation of TD leader Chandrababu Naidu that the CM planned to purchase the Vizag Steel. He admitted that POSCO representatives met CM Jagan, but this was a courtesy call. Recalling that Venkaiah Naidu had, as a student leader, agitated for the setting up of the Vizag Steel Plant, he said the VP should now intervene and stop the Centre from privatising this prestigious entity.

Minister Reddy told the media that Chandrababu Naidu was suffering from a "Jagan phobia".

"Naidu is envious of Jagan," he said and added that Jagan as CM has implemented over 90 per cent of the promises the YSRC made in its election manifesto. "Jagan did this in just 18 months and took his governance to the doorsteps of the people through village and ward secretariats."

He said the YSRC will win the present gram panchayat elections with a thumping majority as the people were largely benefited by the welfare initiatives of the state government.

The minister said Chandrababu was still unable to reconcile to his party's defeat in the assembly polls in 2019.

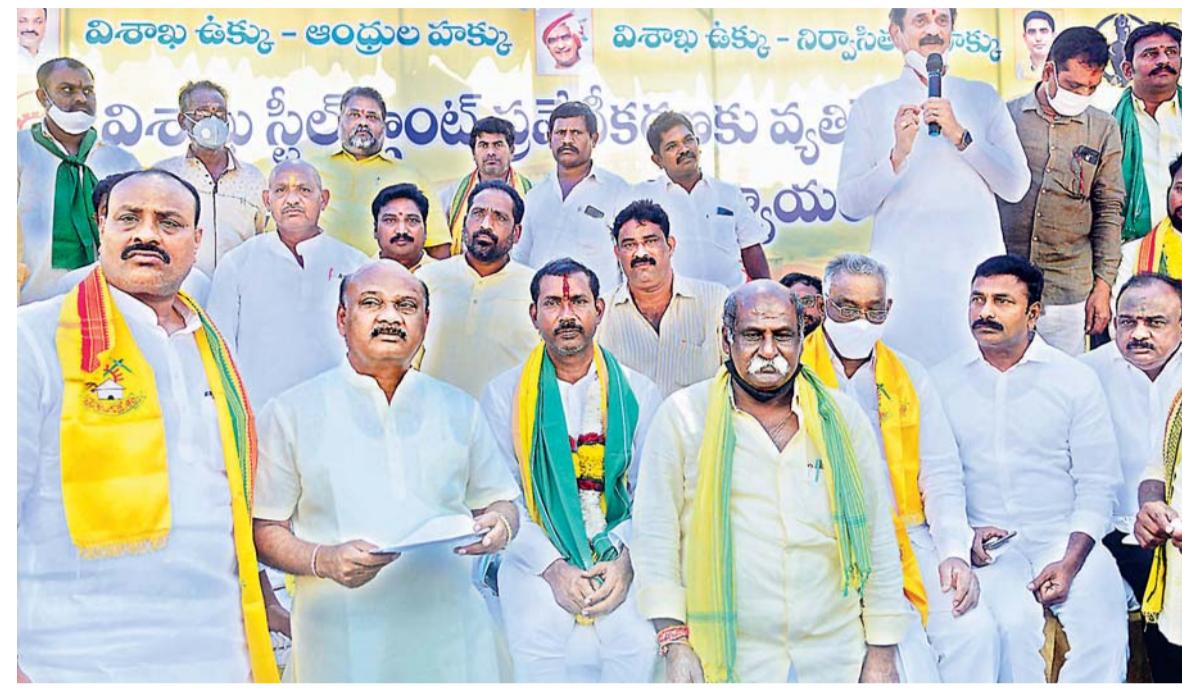
"Thus, the TDP has been raking up issues to create chaos in AP." He slammed the TD leader for his "attempts at misinterpreting the election results" and stated that the public had rejected the TDP, which got less than 10 per cent seats in the assembly.

Brushing aside the allegations of the YSRC using force to effect unanimous polls for grama panchayats, the minister said

Chandrababu was protecting Atchannaidu and Kollu Ravindra, who had terrorised the contestants".

Minister Reddy said, "There is overwhelming response from the people of Chittoor to the good governance provided by the Chief Minister and me. The government is implementing a lot of welfare schemes. Due to this, Chandrababu's men will be defeated even in his own constituency and in the whole of Chittoor district."

On the Visakhapatnam steel plant, the minister noted that this was a central government institution. If POSCO company wanted to have a deal, they would talk to the Prime Minister of the Union Government. "POSCO is a multinational. Its representatives met the chief minister by way of a courtesy call. The meeting had nothing to do with the Vizag steel plant."



TD State Chief Kinjarapu Atchannaidu joins former Gajuwaka MLA Palla Srinivas, who sat on a hunger strike against the Centre's move to privatise the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, at Gajuwaka in Visakhapatnam on Friday.

— K. MURALI KRISHNA

Properties of VSP valued at over ₹3 lakh cr: Atchannaidu

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 12

AP TD president and former minister and Kinjarapu Atchannaidu asserted that the shifting of the executive capital to the port city was not aimed at the development of the city but was part of a bigger conspiracy to "loot" industries including Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) and public assets.

Addressing the TD hunger strike camp at the party office in Gajuwaka on Friday, Atchannaidu said the properties of the VSP were valued at over ₹3 lakh crore in the open market.

The Chief Minister expected that locating the capital in Vizag would further jack up the prices of the lands, after which he could take over the plant after its privatisation, he said.

He reminded that it was then Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy who prevented the allotment of Obulapuram mines to the steel plant in 2004. The mines could have prevented the losses that VSP is facing, he added.

Another former minister and TD politburo member Ch. Ayyanna Patrudu, alleged that the Chief Minister and Rajya Sabha member V. Vijaysai Reddy were aware of the POSCO

move and it was former chief secretary Neelam Sahney who led a delegation to New Delhi to meet central leaders on the privatisation.

He said the YSRC government has been eying maritime cities and was planning to take over Krishnapatnam and Kakinada ports as well as the Vizag Steel Plant.

Yanamala Ramakrishnudu, Leader of the House in the Legislative Council, said no new industry had come to the state during the last 21 months. He said that the YSRC's failures had made it necessary for the people to start another agitation for protecting the VSP. Other leaders said the people's representatives, employees and the general public should fight a united struggle. The workers should not fall in the trap of the ministers and YSRC MLAs as they were the ones responsible for the present plight of VSP.

Construction to resume in Amaravati, says CM

From Page 1

The Chief Minister, according to sources, strongly believes that the state would go to the polls only in 2024 as the combined election proposal of the Centre may not materialise in the immediate future.

The CM also directed the officials to relaunch construction activity in Amaravati as per the recommendations of the nine-member committee at the earliest and create civic infrastructure to attract investments into the region. "We will approach the court with a clear plan on

protecting the interests of farmers who gave their lands for the capital and urge it to vacate the status quo on the crucial three capitals Bill that would facilitate the shifting of executive capital to Visakhapatnam," said sources.

Jagan Mohan Reddy is said to have expressed his resolve to focus on attracting investments to the state and make use of the financial assistance promised by the Centre for capital-intensive projects. The government will propose pharma, marine, IT and industrial clusters to attract investors.

Minister denies making derogatory remarks

From Page 1

Earlier, Venkateshwara Rao on Friday denied making any derogatory remarks against the State Election Commission and

requested it to withdraw the show-cause notice served on him. He said he had high regard for and respect towards constitutional bodies and in particular the SEC.

Rice exports begin from Kakinada deep water port

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, FEB. 12

on the quality of rice exports in order to earn the confidence of importing nations. He said that APEDA was introducing new measures so that farmers' revenue for their agricultural products would increase up to three times. During an interaction with rice exporters, he said that rice exporters from the district are sending quality rice.

APEDA would bring a global-level brand status to AP rice soon he said.

Lakshmisetti said that traditionally rice is being exported through the anchorage port, but the port has a limited capacity and therefore, the state's potential could not be tapped.

But, now, there is a possibility of trebling rice exports annually from the current level of two million tonnes through anchorage and deep water port. He said that rice exports from the port would grow by leaps and bounds.

He said that an action plan has been drawn to promote Indian non-basmati rice abroad. He said that the focus should be

on the quality of rice exports in order to earn the confidence of importing nations. He said that APEDA was introducing new measures so that farmers' revenue for their agricultural products would increase up to three times. During an interaction with rice exporters, he said that rice exporters from the district are sending quality rice.

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4 die as bus falls in Araku gorge

DC CORRESPONDENTS
VISAKHAPATNAM/
HYDERABAD, FEB. 12

Four persons, including a few months old baby were killed and 19 others sustained injuries when a mini-bus in which they were travelling plunged into a 100-feet deep gorge in Anantagiri mandal in Visakhapatnam district on Friday evening.

All the passengers in the bus belonged to the families of five brothers and were residents of Shaikpet in Hyderabad. They had hired the bus for a trip to Araku valley in Visakhapatnam district. They left in the bus hired from Dinesh Travels, also based in Shaikpet, on February 10 and were expected back on February 14.

According to officials involved in the relief and rescue operations at the accident site, among the dead were two men, a woman and a baby.

Officials said that the family left Borra Caves around 5.30 pm on Friday.

The driver, as he was not familiar with the road, or possibly because of brake failure, overshot a sharp bend and the bus went



Accident victims being taken to hospital on Friday.

down the gorge. Among the injured, along with several adults, were children.

As per Swamy Goud, who responded to a phone call to Dinesh Travels, three persons had booked the vehicle for a family trip to Araku. There were 26 persons in all in the bus, he said.

Meanwhile, the Hyderabad district collector was instructed to visit Shaikpet and inquire and assist in relief operations.

According to the Anantagiri district police, the bus fell into the gorge

while negotiating a hairpin bend on the hilly road between Dumukku and Tyda villages. The bus was on its way to Visakhapatnam from Araku valley and was about 100 km from its immediate destination.

Anantagiri sub-inspector K. Sudhakar said the bodies of the victims were being shifted to S. Kota community health centre, where the injured persons were taken for immediate care and treatment.

Some of those who received serious injuries were to be taken to

Visakhapatnam for better treatment.

As the police scrambled to mount relief efforts, officials reached out to any available vehicle and roped in taxi cabs to rush to the accident spot and to carry the injured to hospitals.

"The incident might have taken place around 7.30 pm and we got a call 10 minutes later. We mobilised all available vehicles including 108 ambulances and rushed to the accident spot 30 km away," said taxi driver Ramesh, from Borra Caves.

CM says the SEB should organise regular raids and stop smuggling of liquor

CM orders babus to take stern action against graft

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 12

and liquor trafficking.

During the review meeting held at the camp office, the Chief Minister said no one was responsible for the loss of revenue to the state through illegal activities and corruption will not be spared, even at the organisational level. Action must be taken as soon as information is received on such activities.

The CM said the SEB should organise regular raids and stop smuggling of liquor. The CM also promised incen-

tives to SEB staff.

The officials briefed the CM on the performance of the Special Enforcement Bureau ever since its formation on May 16, 2020. After this step was initiated to curb illicit liquor flow, 79,632 cases

of alcohol was seized, 12,766 litres of beer confiscated, 4,54,658 litres of country liquor seized, 1,12,70,123 litres of jaggery wash destroyed,

2,85,142 kg of black jaggery impounded, 22,715 vehicles seized and cases registered against 240 government employees are involved in irregularities.

As for sand, 7,244 cases were registered, 4,79,692 tonnes of sand seized, 9,689 vehicles impounded and 1,120 red sander logs seized apart from cash of ₹4.92 crore by way of raids on poker camps.

DGP Goutam Sawang, revenue special chief secretary Rajat Bhargav and SEB commissioner Vineeth Brijjal were among the officials present.

CORPORATOR WAS BROUGHT DEAD: DOCTORS

From Page 1

The killing of Ramesh has sent shock waves in political circles of Kakinada city. Agriculture minister Kurasala Kannababu, Kakinada city MLA Dwarampudi Chandrasekhara Reddy and Kakinada mayor S. Pavani are among those who have expressed their condolences over the death of Ramesh.

Sarpavaram circle inspector Nunna Raju said Kampara Ramesh came to the car wash centre last night and started drinking there along with his friends. The matter of Gurajana Chinna came up at the time. Following this, Ramesh phone Chinna, who reached his car and hit Ramesh and his friends.

While they were heavily drunk, Ramesh found that his car keys were missing. He then asked everybody at the place not to move until his car keys are found. This led to an altercation between Chinna and Ramesh. Following this, the inspector said, Chinna started his car and hit Ramesh repeatedly before running him over.

Chinna then fled from the spot while other friends rushed Ramesh to a private hospital at Sarpavaram, where doctors declared him brought dead. Soon after receiving information, Kakinada DSP V. Bhima Rao rushed to the spot with Kakinada rural and city inspectors. Sarpavaram police have registered a case. Security has been beefed up to check any untoward incidents in the city. The DSP said clues and technical teams are gathering evidence and collecting CCTV footage.

According to sources, Kampara Ramesh was once the city Congress president and later became a close associate of YSRC leaders and ministers. He had also been the floor leader of Congress in Kakinada Municipal Corporation. Ramesh was involved in land settlements and reportedly settled a land dispute involving Chinna. The corporator's death is the third murder in Kakinada during the past two decades. Previously, Lorry Transport Owners Association president Abbu Chowdary and Vegula Siva Babu, a leader of Truck Operators' Union, had been murdered.

CM WANTS PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE TAUGHT

From Page 1

Textbooks must be printed in Telugu and English for the convenience of students. He directed officials to draft the curriculum to create employment opportunities for the students. He said awareness on basic financial activities such as stock markets should be created among B Com students which will create scope for self-employment. He said good courses are available online and directed the officials to add those courses in the curriculum.

SHORT TAKES

MP COPS PROVIDE SECURITY TO KANGANA

Bhopal, Feb. 12: Madhya Pradesh police have put in place thick security cover around Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut in the wake of a threat by some state Congress leaders that they would not allow her shoot for a film if she did not apologise to farmers over her tweets, an official said on Friday.

Shooting for *Dhaakad*, Ranaut's new film, is going on in Sarni area of Betul district. Sarni City Superintendent of Police (CSP) Abhay Ram Choudhary said, "Security has been tightened for the actress after MP home minister Narottam Mishra directed Betul Superintendent of Police Simala Prasad to do so."

Police personnel equipped with batons and firearms are deployed around the coal handling plant (CHL) near a power project, where the shooting is on, he added.

"Police will man gate numbers two and four of the CHL, from where actors usually enter the shooting venue," Choudhary said.

An inspector has been assigned to oversee Ranaut's safety at the resort, located around 45 kms from Sarni town, where she is during for the shoot, he said.

"We will ensure that she does not face any disturbance during the shoot," the CSP added.

ASSAM CUTS FUEL PRICES BY ₹5, DUTY ON LIQUOR BY 25%

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, FEB. 12

Assam government on Friday announced to cut petrol and diesel prices by ₹5 and reduced the duty on liquor by 25 per cent. The new rates will come into effect from Friday midnight.

The announcement has come months before the Assembly election and especially at a time when fuel prices have been touching new highs across the country.

While presenting a vote-on-account for six months, finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told the Assembly that the move will result in losses of nearly ₹80 crore revenue per month.

"When the Covid-19 was at its peak, we had increased taxes on petrol and diesel. With the Covid-19 situation improving and the additional burden on the health sector reducing, the state cabinet has decided to withdraw the additional taxes on these fuels," Sarma said.

"Effective from Friday midnight, prices of petrol and diesel will decrease by ₹5 per litre. As a result, Assam will have the record of providing cheapest petrol in the country after Gujarat. Even prices of diesel would be the lowest after Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh," he stated. Sarma further announced that additional taxes of 25 per cent imposed on liquor products at the peak of Covid-19 has also been withdrawn.

INDIA RECORDS STEEP DECLINE IN COVID-19 CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 12

India on Friday recorded 9,309 fresh cases and 87 deaths due to Covid-19 as the country's total active caseload saw a sharp decline, falling to 1.35 lakh.

The positive cases now comprise only 1.25% of the total cases and the day to day change of active cases in the last few weeks is showing a consistent decline, said Union health ministry officials.

The distribution of new cases in India in the last 24 hours shows a positive picture with only one state reporting over 1,000 cases while the rest of the states and UTs reporting less than 1,000 new cases. Four states and union territories have not reported any new cases in the last 24 hours. These are Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Ladakh, Tripura and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

A significant decline in the daily deaths too has been noticed as 18 states/UTs have not reported any new deaths in the last 24 hours while 13 states/UTs have reported between 1-5 new deaths.

National Recovery Rate is 97.32 per cent, which is one of the highest globally. Officials said the continued high rise in the recoveries had led to progressively improving national Recovery Rate.



TMC Rajya Sabha MP Dinesh Trivedi pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi after resigning as MP during the ongoing Budget Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Friday. — PTI

TMC MP Trivedi resigns, says party no longer in Didi's hands

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 12

In yet another major blow to West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee, TMC Rajya Sabha MP Dinesh Trivedi dramatically announced his resignation on the floor of the House on Friday, saying he felt "helpless" over the political violence in his state. He added, "The kind of violence that is happening in Bengal, it is a threat to democracy. I feel very strange sitting here. I think of what I should do.

I think of Rabindranath Tagore. Obey party discipline? Of course, but I feel stifled. My soul is saying I sit here and say nothing, what is the point? I resign."

Minutes after his resig-

nation, BJP general secretary and West Bengal in-charge Kailash Vijayvargiya said Trivedi was welcome in the party.

Trivedi said, "If you sit here quietly and cannot do anything, then it is better that you resign from here and go to the land of Bengal and be with the people. The way violence is taking place in our state, sitting here, I am feeling perplexed as to what I should do."

Talking to reporters after submitting his resignation, he said, the TMC is no longer in Mamata Banerjee's hands. It has been taken over by a corrupt professional who doesn't understand politics. And there is no forum within the party to air our views."

Trivedi had endorsed

Modi's Lok Sabha speech on Twitter, saying, "I am personally in agreement with this. The way forward is to let our young talented minds innovate, create and distribute wealth. Pay Govt levies, create jobs. For that, our Govt officers (babus) too, need to encourage the youth." He was trolled for his tweet with many saying he may switch from the party.

TMC Rajya Sabha deputy leader Sukhendu Sekhar Ray said that Trivedi was "ungrateful" and had betrayed the trust of the masses. "For the last so many years he (Trivedi) did not say anything. Now all of a sudden, just months before the Assembly polls, he has complaints. This shows his true colours," Ray said.

Trivedi had endorsed

KHARGE ALL SET TO BE LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN RAJYA SABHA

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 12

Senior Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge is all set to replace retiring member Ghulam Nabi Azad as the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha. There were several frontrunners to the post of LOP but the scales were loaded in favour of Kharge as he is a loyalist and has the experience of leading the Congress from 2014-2019 in Lok Sabha.

He was sent to Rajya Sabha after he lost the 2019 Lok Sabha election. He was also handling the affairs of Maharashtra till recently as the General Secretary of the AICC. Others who were in reckoning included Anand Sharma, P. Chidambaram and Digvijaya Singh. In the end it was loyalty and seniority of Kharge that ensured his selection.

He is a nine-time Karnataka MLA and two-time Lok Sabha MP. He has also held the important portfolios at the center of Railways and Labour.

Ghulam Nabi Azad was given an emotional farewell by the House and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who broke into tears while heaping praises on the Congress leader.

In his speech, Prime Minister said it would be difficult for anyone to fill the shoes of Ghulam Nabi Azad as he cared not only about his political affiliation but also about the country and Rajya Sabha.

Azad was a member of the Upper House from Jammu and Kashmir, which does not have an Assembly currently after it was made a Union Territory with the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution.

Hence, it was difficult to repeat him and at present there is no vacancy. He officially retires on February 15.

12 workers killed, 36 hurt in fire mishap in TN factory

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIRUDHUNAGAR, FEB. 12

As many as 12 workers were killed and around 36 injured in a fire accident in a cracker manufacturing unit near Sivakasi in Virudhunagar district on Friday.

The accident occurred at around 11 am when more than 120 persons were working in Mariammal Fire Works at Achankulam village near Satur. The accident is suspected to have been caused by mishandling of the chemical mixture in the process of manufacturing fancy type crackers.

It damaged 20 worksheds fully, killing five persons including a woman on the spot while seven more succumbed to burns at the hospital. Around 36 injured persons were undergoing treatment at the government hospitals in Virudhunagar, Sivakasi, Surti, Kovilpatti.

Fire and rescue personnel from the fire stations at Sivakasi, Virudhunagar

and Satur had to struggle for four hours to contain the spread of the fire further and to put it out by 3 pm, according to the district fire officer Ganesan. District collector R. Kannan said after inspecting the accident spot that those workers who suffered more than 50 per cent burns were referred to Madurai Rajaji government hospital for further treatment. A detailed enquiry would be conducted, which will help identify the exact cause of the fire that sparked the explosion.

The local villagers, who first rushed to the rescue of the workers on hearing the deafening sound of the blast, however, complained that eight workers were made to work in a shed against the permitted four.

This caused congestion that prevented workers from running out when the accident occurred, said a villager.

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SHORT TAKES
DANISH INTEL ARRESTS 14 FOR TERROR PLOT

Copenhagen, Feb. 12: Fourteen people arrested in Denmark and Germany suspected of planning an attack with explosives had "militant Islamist" motives, Danish intelligence services said on Friday.

Thirteen people were arrested at the weekend in a suburb outside Copenhagen, Denmark's PET intelligence service said Thursday, confirming another arrest had been made in Germany.

"The operation took place due to suspicions that a terror attack motivated by militant Islamism was being prepared," PET said in a statement.

The 13 arrested in Denmark were remanded in custody suspected of "planning one or more terrorist attacks or being accessory to attempted terrorism," PET said.

TIANWEN-1 PROBE SENDS VIDEO OF MARS

Beijing, Feb. 12: China's space agency released video footage from its spacecraft circling Mars on Friday, two days after it successfully entered the planet's orbit in Beijing's latest ambitious space mission.

In the video, published by state broadcaster CCTV, the surface of the planet is seen coming into view out of a pitch black sky against the outside of the Tianwen-1, which entered the orbit of the Red Planet on Wednesday.

White craters are visible on the planet's surface, which fades from white to black through the video as the probe flies over the course of one Martian day, said official news agency Xinhua.

The five-tonne Tianwen-1 — which translates as "Questions to Heaven" — includes a Mars orbiter, a lander and a solar-powered rover and launched from southern China last July.

UK DEVELOPS TEST TO DETECT WOMB CANCER

London, Feb. 12: British scientists announced on Friday they had developed a test to detect womb cancer using urine samples, explaining the method could replace a painful and invasive procedure currently in use. At present, clinicians diagnose the cancer by taking a biopsy, a process which requires a narrow telescope called a hysteroscope, to examine inside of the uterus and remove cells. Nearly a third of women who undergo the procedure have the process repeated because of technical difficulties or intolerable pain, the research showed.

Thousands of women in Britain who do not have womb cancer also undergo the procedure, with huge financial implications for the country's state-run National Health Service (NHS).

Myanmar protests swell as US sanctions coup leaders

Over 23,000 prisoners released as part of prison amnesty, no word on Suu Kyi

Yangon, Feb. 12: Huge crowds thronged cities around Myanmar to demand the return of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Friday for a seventh straight day of protests, after Washington announced sanctions on the generals behind last week's coup.

A torrent of anger and defiance has brought hundreds of thousands of people out in nationwide rallies demanding the country's generals relinquish power.

Demonstrations have so far largely been peaceful, but police fired rubber bullets on students while dispersing a sit-down protest in the city of Mawlamyine, arresting at least five.

With teachers, bureaucrats and air traffic controllers among the government employees walking off the job to demand an end to junta rule, the country's new military leader Min Aung Hlaing told striking workers to return to their offices.

"Those who are away from their duties are requested to return to their duties immediately for the interests of the country and people without focusing on the emotion," he said, in a speech reported by state media.

The new US sanctions target Min Aung Hlaing and other top generals, after President Joe Biden announced his administration was cutting off the military's access to \$1 billion in funds.

Head of another day of mass rallies, state media announced the release of more than 23,000 inmates as part of a prison amnesty. Friday was a public holiday in



Protesters holding signs with the image of detained Myanmar civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi take part in a demonstration against the military coup in front of the Chinese embassy in Yangon on Friday. — AFP

Myanmar and mass pardons to empty the country's overcrowded prison system are common on significant local dates.

More than 260 people have been detained in the days since the coup and about 20 released, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group.

Massive rallies were back underway in the commercial hub of Yangon on Friday, including a contingent of

pro-Suu Kyi or any of her allies were among those set to be freed.

"There is a serious concern that the sudden release.. is to clear space for the detention of political prisoners," the AAPP said.

But there was no indica-

Premier League fans who put aside their club rivalries to protest the coup.

"I hate the military coup more than Manchester United!" read one sign.

But further east in the port city of Mawlamyine, police moved quickly to clear a sit-in protest by university students, and footage showed officers hauling away several demonstrators. — AFP

Trump impeachment trial lawyers to urge his acquittal

Twitter suspends pro-Trump activist group for violations

Washington, Feb. 12: Lawyers for Donald Trump take the Senate floor on Friday to rebut the Democratic-led impeachment of the former president for inciting insurrection, with Republican lawmakers then widely expected to vote to acquit.

Democratic impeachment managers rested their case on Thursday after two days of often emotional presentations.

Now the Republican property tycoon's lawyers will get a chance to respond. They are expected to make arguments brief, hastening the Senate verdict.

"There's no reason for us to be out there a long time. As I said from the start of this thing, this trial never should have happened," one of the lawyers, David Schoen, told Fox News.

The impeachment team charged Trump with stoking an insurrection

"repeated violations of the companies anti-doxing policies", the group's founder James O'Keefe said in a tweet.

The suspension came a day after the group posted a video in which its journalists confronted Guy Rosen, Facebook's head of integrity and security, outside his home.

In a statement shared to multiple US outlets, Twitter said the group had been "permanently suspended for repeated violations of Twitter's

after losing re-election to Joe Biden on November 3.

According to the case against him, the former president began to lay

private information policy", but did not specify which tweets had broken those rules. The group had over 7,00,000 followers on Twitter at the time of its suspension.

O'Keefe's account was also removed from the platform, though it returned after only a few hours. Project Veritas and O'Keefe came to prominence for their provocative sting efforts aimed at exposing "corruption" among progressive activists or liberal elected officials. — AFP

staged a fiery rally near the White House, calling on the crowd to march on Congress, which was in the process of certifying Biden's victory.

Ex-EU banker to be Italy's new PM

Rome, Feb. 12: With almost all the political parties behind him, Mario Draghi on Friday entered the final straight in his bid to form a new government to lead Italy through the Coronavirus pandemic.

The former European Central Bank chief, called in after the outgoing centre-left coalition collapsed, could visit President Sergio Mattarella as early as Friday evening to be officially named prime minister.

Draghi has spent the last nine days assembling a government of national unity to manage the deadly pandemic that hit Italy almost exactly one year ago, triggering a deep recession.

After securing the support late Thursday of the final key player, the populist Five Star Movement (M5S), Draghi has almost all the main parties on board, from leftists to the far-right League.

"The Draghi government is born," headlined Rome-based daily Il Messaggero, while Milan's Corriere Della Sera added: "Draghi in the home stretch." The 73-year-old economist must present a list of ministers when he visits Mattarella. — AFP

Americans to be vaccinated with 200 mn doses

Washington, Feb. 12:

US President Joe Biden announced plans to vaccinate most Americans by the end of July with the help of 200 million newly acquired doses, as the country's inoculation campaign kicked off a new phase in drugstores and supermarket pharmacies, some of which will offer shots as of Friday. Even as the Biden administration inked deals to acquire "100 million more Moderna and 100 million more Pfizer vaccines" and Covid-19 cases fall in Europe, the World Health Organisation warned against rash reopenings, in a sobering reminder of the long global battle ahead in taming the pandemic.

The US immunisation campaign got off to a shaky start in December, and even as recently as Thursday, Los Angeles moved to temporarily close five major inoculation centers including its giant Dodger Stadium site, due to vaccine shortage. Mass Covid-19 vaccination programs are being ramped up in many countries in the race against more contagious variants, and governments are urging populations to continue to cope with closures as the inoculation campaigns move forward. Worldwide deaths now stand at nearly 2.4 million, with the Middle East surpassing 1,00,000 fatalities on Thursday. — AFP

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DECCAN Chronicle

13 FEBRUARY 2021

Go slow on peace thrust, up the ante during talks

Once the breakthrough was achieved after several rounds of talks at various levels, the India-China agreement on disengagement at Pangong Tso in Ladakh is only a promising start towards peace. Surprisingly speedy the process of China moving back its armour from the shores of the lake may seem, but India would have to be most cautious on how the de-escalation exercise works out because it will be surrendering a lot of leverage in giving up the Kailash range heights for securing just the Pangong Tso disengagement in the north and south banks.

Given the history of fraught relations exacerbated by border tensions over the last few years since China's intrusion in 2017, it should be considered fortunate if this initial pullback leads to lasting peace. India would do well to remember how disadvantageous the narrow agreement seems right now because armed Chinese soldiers can be present at Finger 8 while India will be confined to its Finger 3 base and will be unable to patrol up to the Chinese perception of LAC, which used to be east of Finger 8 prior to April 2020.

The disengagement is indubitably positive but India must monitor the progress closely and also press for the resolution of all remaining issues, which are many considering the number of hotspots in Ladakh and further east, including the Depsang plateau where China has held Indian territory of around 1,000 sq km and the PLA has also been stopping the Indian troops from patrolling traditional points. Obviously there is far more to do in terms of tough negotiating in military commander level talks that are to be held within two days and in higher-level negotiations afterwards.

The border situation cannot be dealt with in isolation as China seemed to demand in its call to set right ties, including trade even as talks went on about de-escalation. The point to ponder is whether China is aiming for a larger resetting of ties in a global sense in view of the change in the White House, which Joe Biden signalled with a tough sounding phone call to Chinese President Xi Jinping. It would be a great development for world peace if indeed China is willing to negotiate even from its stronger position post-Covid vis-a-vis economic recovery from worldwide lows imposed by the pandemic.

The trust deficit, including between China and its largest trading partner, the United States, has been enlarged by suspicions over the origin of the coronavirus being Wuhan. A sliver of hope is to be spotted in China seeking peace while agreeing to try and resolve the border issue, even if it did so only on facing India's strong position on its capturing of the Kailash range heights. Doubts will remain over whether China will remobilise quickly as it has the advantage over India in terms of infrastructure capabilities, which is why abundant caution is advised as well as the highest vigil on friction points beyond Eastern Ladakh. Negotiations over easing punitive economic actions taken by India can wait until it is established that the push for peace is real.

Kamal's black humour

There is never a dull moment in Tamil Nadu's political scene, particularly when the state gears up for an Assembly election. But when a celebrated actor like Kamal Haasan tickles the funny bone, the entire realm turns a theatre of the absurd. When the general council of Mr Haasan's party, named differently as the Makkal Needhi Maiam (People's Justice Centre), made him the "permanent president" by passing a resolution, his detractors, who never miss an opportunity to pick holes in whatever he does or says, raised serious questions, quite out of sync with the prevailing mirth.

What's that general council? How were those members elected? By whom? So wondered the dirty disparagers without realising that it's an internal matter of the party that others should not poke their noses into. They also asked if someone could remain permanently on a high pedestal in a domain where there are no permanent friends or enemies. But Mr Haasan, who hails from a world of make-belief, perhaps believes in the juxtaposition of surrealism with harsh political realities, hoping that it would provide relief from the ennui caused by the ubiquitous harangué and pageantry.

Whatever it was, he made the people laugh though they had heard of even "permanent chief ministers", as hailed in the rhetoric of fawning sycophants, in the past. Displaying a similar sentiment, those who inherited the mantle of running the government from the late J. Jayalalithaa accorded her the exalted status of "permanent general secretary" of the AIADMK posthumously and kept the post vacant "permanently" after throwing out V.K. Sasikala, who had succeeded her. Perhaps it was the spectacular return of Ms Sasikala to reclaim the post that inspired Mr Haasan to look for permanency in the party president's job. Anyway, the same general council's resolution to make Mr Haasan the chief minister of the state did not evoke any laughter.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

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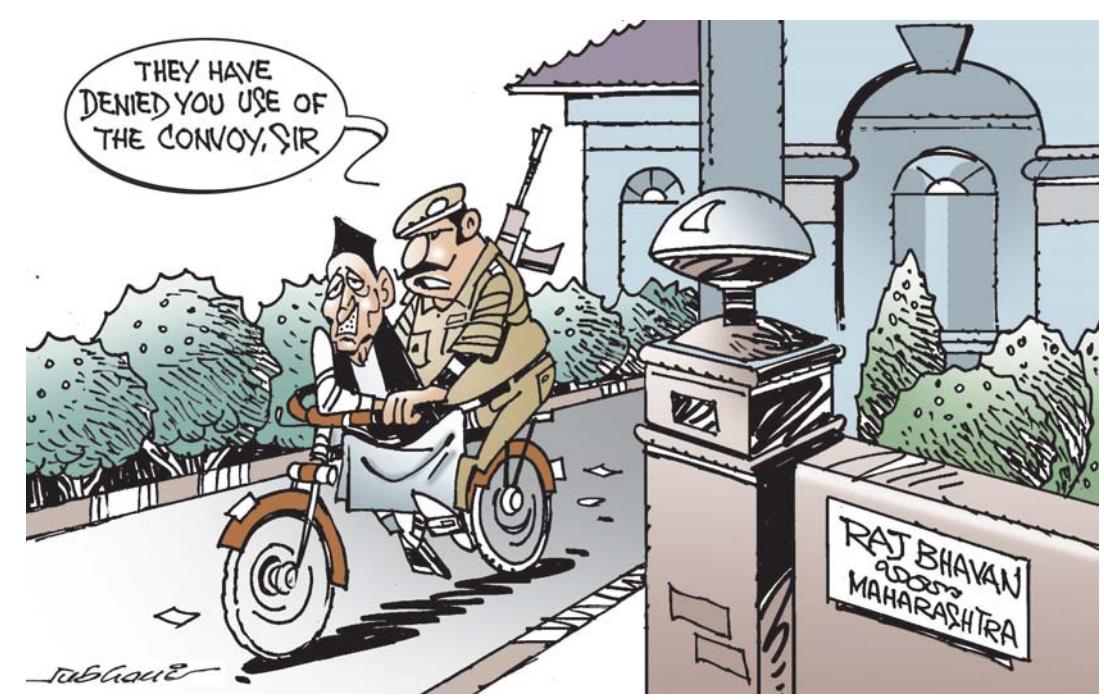
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"Oh Bachchoo let's have due regard
For the story-telling genius of
Scheherazade
Who over a thousand and one nights
Scaled creation's narrative heights

She held a king under her spell
Assuring him there was more to tell
And so, with each inventive breath
Do story-tellers stave off death."

— From Lambe's Laments by
Bachchoo

Subhani



Why China 'disengaged': Always carry a big stick



Syed Ata Hasnain

After nine rounds of talks at the military theatre level which appeared to be tapering off without any results, we find a positive development announced by the Raksha Mantri in Parliament on Thursday: a decision to disengage between the Indian Army and China's People's Liberation Army in the over nine-month-long standoff in eastern Ladakh. The issues worth examining are the triggers which created a positive sentiment, the modalities involved in the disengagement and the strategic dynamics for the future.

Why has China accepted a mutual disengagement? There is speculation that its strategic objectives having been met, it was willing to disengage; but this may not entirely be true. The objectives have been analysed to a great extent. My belief veers on the coercion theory; that India's soaring strategic confidence through the past five years deeply worried China. The feasibility of India actually becoming a part of military equations and alliances and thus upsetting the strategic balance in Asia was not too appealing for China. India's talk about regaining all territories of J&K was perceived as becoming a national obsession, emboldening beyond acceptable limits. Limited military coercion to force India back to the starting line was felt necessary. However, China was surprised by India's push-back and deep sense of resolve to stick it out. A border conflict or even general war was not the intent as it was unwinnable for China without a major redeployment. It couldn't afford creation of near permanent voids elsewhere. A continuing standoff gave

no real advantage to China except the projection of threat of a two-front war for India, which too sounded hollow given Pakistan's precarious internal economic, political and social health.

With the world slowly recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, shaking into a reset and a potential new order emerging, China cannot miss the opportunity to draw favourably from it. Remaining in confrontation mode with committed troops paid no real dividends. By agreeing to disengage it is attempting to project a sense of reason and political maturity; in reality it is an exit that is giving it face. No one should expect that the agreement to disengage will be achieved overnight or that conflict resolution is on the cards. There are likely to be many revisits, especially because India just cannot trust China to implement what it has agreed upon.

The Indian government invested in a new strategy of trusting its military leadership to undertake negotiations which were really in the political-diplomatic-military domain. In nine rounds, the military stood its ground well, reflecting an intellectual and pragmatic approach. Of course, it runs the risk of coming up against obstacles in implementation. The last time it tried implementing what was agreed upon in theatre level border meetings, it led to the Galwan incident. The Indian Army is not one which will simply move back to implement an agreement with a country with whom there is virtually zero trust. It will verify and verify, just like its officers and soldiers did in June 2020, which led to Galwan. With caution and the lessons learnt, that procedure has to be implemented all over again.

It is unlikely we have seen anything close to a final agreement. I do perceive it is incomplete at present as it primarily relates only to the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso. While the actions in north Pangong Tso have been spelled out more specifically, the same is absent in relation to the south. The details of this will need to be probably thrashed out when the stage for the pullback of forward deployed infantry comes up. Limits have been put on patrolling north of the lake to avoid physical contact between the troops of both sides. The theatre-level military-diplomatic talks will at some stage have to come down to border meetings at lower levels to restore trust and confidence.

What India should be seeing upon is the physical delineation of the LAC without prejudice to anything permanent. It will get rid of the one issue which is the bane of the LAC's management: that is, the perception about where ours or the Chinese claim line exists. This is unlikely, of course, but must remain the pressure point on the Chinese side as a terminal objective of the current talks, the tenth round of which is likely to come up soon. The Raksha Mantri in his Rajya Sabha statement laid it out clearly: "The House should also know that there are still some outstanding issues with regard to deployment and patrolling at some other points along the LAC in eastern Ladakh. These will be the focus of further discussions with the Chinese side".

The reference was to other areas in contention, especially Dapsang, where a much greater threat exists to our defences, as also an opportunity for us to threaten the main Chinese highway to Xinjiang. Without an operational-tactical advantage, if this is vacated at the Kailash heights, it is difficult to foresee any further concessions by the Chinese. Perhaps there is more to it and will emerge in due course as understandably full transparency on military operational issues is not currently possible.

Progress on the agreement and subsequent moves towards more positive signs is not contingent upon only the events in eastern Ladakh. Everything here is linked to geopolitical issues relating to Chinese and Indian interests elsewhere in South Asia; relations with countries such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka being an example. It would be helpful if India can detach the developments in eastern Ladakh from the dynamics of Sino-Indian relations elsewhere. India will find itself under increasing pressure from China regarding its strategic equations with the Quad nations. Having come thus far and also having received fair importance from the United States in its perception of India's role in the Indo Pacific region, New Delhi may feel it's in a dilemma. However, its interests clearly lie where it has established greater trust and identified commonality of interests. It cannot afford to be seen to be submitting unreasonably to Chinese demands. The inevitability in India's approach towards the emerging situation should be to waste little time in enhancing its conventional military capability through the self-reliance route towards modernisation.

The inevitability in India's approach should be to waste little time in enhancing its conventional military capability through the self-reliance route towards modernisation

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps

LETTERS

RESTORE TRAINS

Most express trains and passenger trains have not been restored. In the absence of passenger trains, the college going students and others are suffering. The bus journey is expensive and uncomfortable. It may be noted that roads in AP are bad beyond description. May we request the railways to come to the rescue of common man.

P. Ramakrishna

Rajahmundry

NAIDU'S TANTRUMS

N. Chandrababu Naidu, who claimed victory in 38 per cent sarpanch candidates supported by his party in the first phase of GP polls, is now demanding fresh polls alleging electoral malpractices by the ruling party apart from 'criticising' AP SEC for its failure to control YSRC from committing electoral offences. *Ulta chor kothwali ko daante* is the Hindi proverb that fits aptly in this regard.

Govardhana Myneedu

Vijayawada

VIZAG STEEL PLANT

The idea of selling the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant is nothing but vengeance against Andhra people for not giving the BJP any space in the state. It must be remembered that the plant is the soul of the people and thousands of people are employed and thousands indirectly eke out a living. In fact a township has sprouted in the vicinity. If the plant is privatised, the lives of the dependents directly or indirectly will turn topsy-turvy. Hence a rethink is needed.

D.S.P. Rao

Kakinada

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

India is on the threshold of change: Indira

NEW DELHI, February 12

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi opined that in India today "there is a conflict between the forces of change and of the 'status quo'".

Mrs Gandhi, in an interview to the French national radio, also affirmed her party's belief in democracy and said, "we are trying to give it greater meaning".

"We believe the interests of the people are best safeguarded in a democracy, because a democracy is perhaps the only system which strengthens people themselves".

SHORT TAKES



Amritha (left) and Sriitha Mandava pose with their trophies at the Boulder Hills Golf and Country Club in Hyderabad.

Mandava sisters bag golf titles

Hyderabad: Hyderabad girls Sriitha and Amritha Mandava won the age group titles at the Young Master Southern India Classic golf tournament played at the Boulder Hills Golf and Country Club in Hyderabad.

Sriitha tallied 231 over 36 holes with round scores of 78, 73 and 80 to take the top spot in the Girls 12-13 years category ahead of Anvithi Gangisetty (271) and Riya Jadon (281). Amritha got a total score of 242 over 36 holes in three rounds (79, 81, 82) to emerge winner in the Girls 14-15 section.

Lavanya Jadon (249) and Amishi Jain (300) were second and third respectively.

Drishiti Karumbya was the best in Girls 16+ with a score of 220 (73, 72, 75) ahead of Jasmine Sachdev (234 – 77, 78, 79) and Vidushi Keni (236 – 77, 78, 81).

Aarya Goyal and Sanjana took the first and second spots in the Girls 7-9 category.

State cue sports from Feb. 22

Hyderabad: The Telangana Cue Sports Association is organising the Telangana State Ranking Snooker & Billiards

Championship (junior and senior) from February 22 to March 7. The top five players in senior snooker and finalists in junior snooker, senior and junior billiards will represent Telangana at the Nationals.

Himanshu Jain, Nabil Lakdawala, Md Ghous, Khizar Raoof, D. Arvind Kumar (senior snooker); Mushtaq Hussain, Vishwanath and Vibhas (junior snooker & billiards) are among the top players participating in the championship.

Rashmikaa in singles final

Hyderabad: Hyderabad girl Shravika Rashmikaa entered the final of the singles event at the MPTA AITA Open Women's Tennis tournament being played at Chennai.

In the semifinals played on Friday, Rashmikaa defeated Pooja Ingle of Maharashtra in straight sets at 6-4, 6-1.

Hyderabad FC hold East Bengal 1-1

Vasco: Aridane Santana scored a last-gasp equaliser to help Hyderabad FC hold SC East Bengal to a 1-1 draw and dent the Kolkata side's hopes of making it to the playoffs of the Indian Super League here on Friday. Bright Enobakhare scored in the 59th minute for SC East Bengal, who seemed to be cruising towards the win until the stoppage-time leveller from Santana. The result extended the Nizams' unbeaten run to nine games. With the draw, Hyderabad are at third spot with 24 points from 17 matches. — PTI

Live on TV

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

CRICKET
India vs England: Second Test, Day One, from 9.20 am on Star Sports 1

Pakistan vs South Africa: Second T20 from 6.30 pm on Sony Ten 1

FOOTBALL
English Premier League: Leicester City vs Liverpool from 6 pm; Crystal Palace vs Burnley from 8.30 pm; Manchester City vs Tottenham Hotspur from 11 pm; Brighton vs Aston Villa from 1.30 pm (Sunday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Italian League: Napoli vs Juventus from 10.30 pm; Spezia vs AC Milan from 1.15 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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Indian captain Virat Kohli during a practice session at the Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Thursday. — BCCI

PITCHED BATTLE

Chepauk surface in focus again as India look to hit back

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 12

The wound hasn't healed. And the dust is yet to settle. Four days after being battered by the visiting England team in their own den, India have the unenviable task of lifting themselves for yet another 'pitched' battle at the same venue. Round two starting here at the M.A. Chidambaram stadium on Saturday will be a test of character for Virat Kohli & Co.

India find themselves in an unexpected situation. It's only the second time this decade that India have started a bilateral series (minimum three Tests) at home on a disappointing note. When it happened last time, against Australia in February 2017, they roared back with vengeance to clinch the series 2-1 eventually.

Much like in the opening game, the focus will once again be on the pitch. A different strip with black clay on the top layer will be used this time around. With just a three-day gap, the groundsmen didn't have much time. Both teams know what to expect — the track will turn from day one.

England skipper Joe Root has already shown the ideal way for countering spin in subcontinental conditions. But this pitch is expected to pose a bigger challenge to Root.

Annoyed with the flat surface, Kohli had blamed his supporting spinners Shahbaz Nadeem and Washington Sundar for leaking runs. But he backed Ajinkya Rahane despite his poor run of form. Rohit Sharma, who has just one half-century



Rohit Sharma plays a shot during a practice session at the Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Thursday. — BCCI

in his last eight innings, hasn't faced much scrutiny either. Kohli still felt "all was well" in his batting unit. If not for the brilliant first innings knocks from Rishabh Pant and Washington, India would have slumped to further embarrassment.

With allrounder Axar Patel deemed fit and set for his Test debut, Shahbaz is back in the standby players' pool. If the team management decides to retain Washington for his batting ability, Kuldeep Yadav will continue cooling his heels. He hasn't played a Test since he took

a five-for at Sydney in January 2019.

England, on the other hand, have made four changes in their team. James Anderson who used reverse swing to rattle the Indian top-order has been rested. With Jofra Archer too being ruled out with an elbow injury and off-spinner Dom Bess to be replaced by Moeen Ali, England's bowling attack will sport a new look. In Anderson's absence, another experienced campaigner, Stuart Broad, will spearhead the attack. Fast bowlers Olly Stone and Chris Woakes will fight for the final spot.

"We are playing at home after two years. The last big home Test series was against South Africa. If you take the records out, I'm sure you will find something there. And, it's not about individuals, it's always about the team. My focus is always on con-

It will turn from Day One: Rahane

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 12

"I am sure it will turn from day one," India vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane said it loud and clear. The flat pitch that offered no assistance to bowlers was one of the talking points after India's eight-match winning streak at home came to a halt in the opening Test against England earlier this week.

As India prepare to bounce back in the series, it's no surprise that "the wicket looks completely different."

"However, we have to wait and see how it behaves in the first session. We have to forget what happened in the first Test and focus on the job at hand. We know these conditions really well, so we have to put our best foot forward and move on," said Rahane.

Rahane's average of 37.35 in 28 Tests at home is not as impressive as his away numbers — 44.44 in 42 Tests. His last two innings of 1 and 0 have put him under the scanner. However, the Mumbai batsman doesn't want to read too much into the stats.

"We are playing at home after two years. The last big home Test series was against South Africa. If you take the records out, I'm sure you will find something there. And, it's not about individuals, it's always about the team. My focus is always on con-

tributing to the team's success. If you take out the last 10-15 Tests, you will see my performance. I don't worry about what happened in the first Test. I only worry about what the team wants from me," said Rahane.

England batsmen not only looked comfortable, but also played efficiently by employing sweep shots against the Indian spinners, but the same cannot be said of the hosts.

"It (shots that we play) depends on how they bowl. We play according to their line and length. England have come up with a plan to play sweep and reverse sweep. It's not necessary we have to copy them," further added Rahane.

When queried about the team's negative body language in the first Test, Rahane said: "There are moments when you don't have that energy but that doesn't mean it has happened because of a change in captaincy. As I have said earlier, Virat is our captain and will remain our captain. If you are trying to dig and find some masala, unfortunately you will not get it."

The second Test will allow 50 per cent spectators in the 45,000 capacity stadium. Rahane is excited to have the crowds back.

"We know how much that means for us. I hope people will come enjoy the cricket," added the seasoned Test batsman. My focus is always on con-

Hazare selection turns hazardous

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 12

Muck at the Hyderabad Cricket Association continues to fly after the flawed selection of State squad for the upcoming Vijay Hazare Trophy triggered tempers that have boiled over beyond cricket corridors.

After a memorandum was submitted to the Telangana State Human Rights Commission on Thursday, urging chairman Justice Gunda Chandralia to look into the 'Murder of talent and grave violations of human rights by HCA' the secretaries of affiliated clubs whose players have been ignored despite consistent performances, are organising a protest at the Gymkhana grounds — Hyderabad's cricket cradle — at 11.30 am on Saturday.

The protest is "against the illegalities and autocratic decisions of select office bearers in selecting the team by violating all norms and constitutional obligations and in utter violation of Supreme Court approved registered Constitution," a note being circulated, read.

For the record, only one batsman from the Top 10 scorers in the League matches that were conduct-

ed to select State sides, has made Hyderabad's Vijay Hazare squad.

Mir Jaweed Ali of Budding Star, No.6 on the list, is the odd man out.

The bowling selection is even more baffling. Leg-spinner G. Arjun of Balaji Colts leads the list with 45 wickets in 5 matches but has been surpassed by No.2 Ashish Srivastava who has 36 wickets against his name in 6 matches. Both are leg-spinners.

Arjun has also conceded fewer runs, has a better strike rate and has been more economical.. he didn't see a googly coming.

All this leaves a bad taste in the mouth and drags the Gentleman's Game through muddled streets. It's time the HCA administrators played with a straight bat.

Aspiring players had risked contracting Covid to turn up for the local league matches after they, along with their parents, had to sign declarations stating they would not hold the HCA responsible should they catch the dreaded virus.

Turns out that there were no first aid facilities at the grounds to treat players who got injured during the course of play.

Now, this selection snub has hurt them even more.

HYDERABAD'S TOP 10 BATSMEN

Player	M	Inn	Runs	Best	Ave
1. A. Varun Goud	7	11	788	227	87.56
2. Rohit Rayudu	8	13	741	165	61.75
3. P. Akshat Reddy	7	13	726	176	60.50
4. Yash Kapadia	7	12	706	194	70.60
5. Md Junaid Ali	7	12	704	170	58.67
6. Mir Jaweed Ali	6	10	697	237	77.44
7. M. Abhirath Reddy	5	8	694	222	115.67
8. M. Pratyush Kumar	8	16	673	119	44.87
9. A. Taksit Rao	6	11	631	151	63.10
10. Sarthak Bharadwaj	5	9	625	159	78.13

(Tabulated as matches played, innings batted, total runs scored, highest score, average)

Hurt Djoker hints at exit from Open

Melbourne, Feb. 12:

Defending champion Novak Djokovic admitted his Australian Open might be over after an injury-hit win on Friday as fans were kicked out ahead of a statewide Coronavirus lockdown.

In the now-empty stadium, a grimacing Djokovic, who needed repeated treatment on an abdominal injury, recovered from losing the third and fourth sets to beat Fritz 7-6 (7/1), 6-4, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4.

In women's singles, Naomi Osaka had to deal with a fierce landing on her nose but was otherwise little bothered as she breezed into the last 16.

The third seed clinched an easy 6-3, 6-2 victory over Tunisian 27th seed Ons Jabeur in 1hr 18min.

In another match, Serena Williams she wore down Anastasia Potapova 7-6 (7/5), 6-2. — Agencies

Tanay, Mickil, Karthikeya, Ritwik, Vamshi on top Mujaheed, Raheem, Gunawith, Haji, Ayub and Sachith lead performers in A-2 division league

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 12



Mickil, Karthikeya, G. Ritwik, Vamshi, Mujaheed, Raheem, Ayub Khan, Rahman, Khalid, and Varun Tej.

Gautam 3/4) lost to XI Masters 149/2 in 15.3 overs (S. Prajwal Rao 106 n.o — 53b, 21x4, 2x6). Points: XI Master 5, Adams 0.

■ WMC 196 in 38.5 overs (SV Aditya Varma 58, Vilash Reddy 37, Karthik Kumar 3/44, Vikranth Reddy 3/43) lost to HUCC 199/5 in 39.3 overs (Laxmi Sree Madhan 102 n.o — 11b, 16x4, 1x6, Nikunj Patel: HUCC 5, WMCC 0).

■ Shalmal CC 135 in 36.2 overs (Abid Ali 4/40) lost to Adilabad District 138/2 in 19.1 overs (L. Mahesh 62, D. Venkatesh 56 n.o). Points: Adilabad 5, Shalmal 0.

■ Mega City 101/9 (all out) in 37 overs (Jai Kiran 35 n.o) lost to Nizamabad District 105/3 in 28.3 overs (Dama Ajith 56 n.o). Points: Nizamabad 5, Mega City 0.

■ Vijayanand 360/9 in 90 overs (Abhinav 69, Ravi Teja 117 — 109b, 17x4, 1x6, Akshar 41, Chakravarthy 39, Praveen 4/61) bt Manikumar 91 in 35.5 overs (Vishwanath 49 n.o, Ankit Kumar 91 n.o). Points: International 5, Sunshine 0.

■ Vizianagandla 213/3 in 42.5 overs (P. Sunil 38, A. Nikshit 30, B. Sai Chandra 35 n.o). Points: Kishoresons 0.

■ Secunderabad Gymkhana 285 in 89 overs (Md Adil 103 — 16b, 14x4, 1x6, A. Sai Prachotan 30, Anuj Singh 55, N. Saketh Reddy 3/60) bt Warangal District 213 in 49

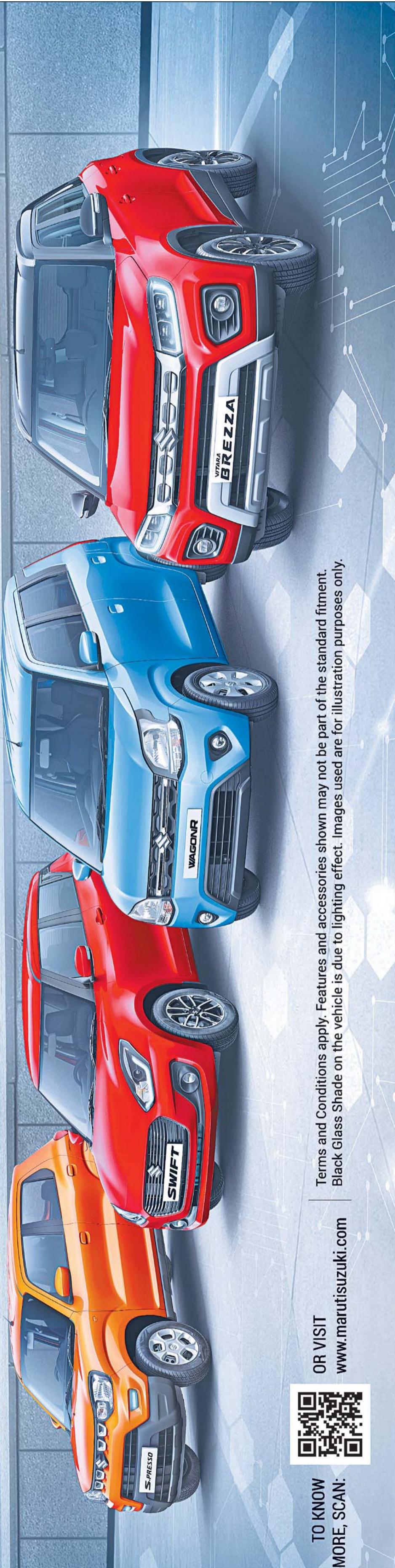

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