

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | FRIDAY 26 | FEBRUARY 2021

## WEATHER



Max: 32°C  
Min: 23°C  
Rainfall: Nil

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Maasi 14  
**Tithi:** Chaturtashi  
**Star:** Aayilyam/ Magam  
**Rahukalam:**  
10.30 am to 12 noon  
**Yamagandam:**  
3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.17 am  
**Jumma:** 12.28 pm  
**Asar:** 3.44 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.17 pm  
**Isha:** 7.28 pm

## Haryana takes step towards making functioning of state Assembly paperless

**Chandigarh:** Haryana has taken a step towards making the functioning of the state Legislative Assembly paperless. A tripartite MoU was signed on Thursday between the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, the state government and the Legislative Assembly for the implementation of the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA), Speaker Gian Chand Gupta said.

## Mamata demnds immediate rollback of fuel prices

**Kolkata:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Thursday demanded immediate roll back of fuel prices by 50% and threatened a strong movement if it was not done. Banerjee told reporters that it was a 'mystery' why prices of petrol, diesel and LPG were not brought down in the country despite the decrease in international crude price by 50% in recent times.

## COUNTER POINT



**Not bail papers, he is distributing party tickets to potential candidates!**

## STATE | 4

**PF not a bounty, but a right: HC**



## WORLD | 5

**Biden revokes Green Card ban**

## SPORT | 7

**Kohli surpasses MS with most wins**



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## Both nations agree to abide by 2003 understanding

# LoC to fall silent as India, Pak to observe all ceasefire pacts

**PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 25**

Indian and Pakistan armies on Thursday announced observing ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) and all other sectors from February 24 midnight in a major de-escalation move.

The announcement comes after 2020 witnessed a record high of ceasefire violations of 5,133 at LoC and international border with Pakistan at Jammu and Kashmir in nearly 18 years; these figures were 3,479 in 2019 and 2,140 in 2018. The tensions on the LoC had risen after terror attack on CRPF convoy in Pulwama in February 2019 and revoking of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019.

● **Both sides agreed for strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease firing along the Line of Control and all other sectors.**

There have been nearly 600 ceasefire violations in first two months of 2021.

Some 24 security personnel were killed in these ceasefire violations by Pakistan and another 126 injured in 2020.

The agreement has also come at a time when India is currently focused on a military stand-off with China in Ladakh since May last year.

India and Pakistan had signed a ceasefire agreement in 2003 but it was fre-

quently violated.

India's director-general of military operations (DG-MO) Lt Gen. Paramjit Singh Sangha and his Pakistani counterpart, Maj. Gen. Nauman Zakaria held discussions over hotline. The two sides reviewed the situation along the LoC and all other sectors in a "free, frank and cordial atmosphere."

"In the interest of achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace along the borders, the two DGsMO agreed to address each other's core issues and concerns which have propensity to disturb peace and lead to violence," said a joint statement issued by both armies. It said both sides agreed for strict observance

of all agreements, understandings and cease firing along the Line of Control and all other sectors with effect from midnight 24-25 February 2021.

"Both sides reiterated that existing mechanisms of hotline contact and border flag meetings will be utilised to resolve any unforeseen situation or misunderstanding," it added. Pakistan military spokesman Maj. Gen. Babar Iftikhar said both the DGsMO have agreed that the existing 2003 understanding should be implemented in letter and spirit, according to a news report by Pakistan's newspaper *Dawn*. Both officials have agreed on making it sustainable and have expressed the intention to act on it. ■ **P5**

## PNB SCAM CASE

# Nirav Modi loses extradition fight

**London, Feb. 25:** In a comprehensive extradition win for the Indian authorities, a UK judge ruled on Thursday that fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi not only has a case to answer in the Indian courts but that there is no evidence to suggest he would not receive a fair trial in India.

Nirav Modi, wanted in India on charges of fraud and money laundering in the estimated USD 2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, lost his nearly two-year-long legal battle against extradition on all grounds as District Judge Samuel Goozee also



concluded that there are no human rights concerns that his medical needs would not be addressed as per several Indian government assurances. The 49-year-old appeared via video link at Westminster Magistrates' Court from Wandsworth Prison in south-west London, dressed in a formal suit and sporting a thick beard, and showed no emotion as excerpts of the judgment were

# NDA aims to ensure farmers' dignity: PM

**Coimbatore, Feb. 25:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday sought to underline the NDA government's commitment for the farmers to ensure their prosperity and dignity, saying it does not want small ryots to be dependent on anyone or "feel suffocated due to middlemen".

The conventional view of development only took into account the more vocal interest groups, ignoring small businessmen and small farmers, but the "NDA government has given topmost priority to these two sections," he said at a BJP rally here.

Training his guns against the DMK-Congress combine, he alleged their meetings are like "corruption hackathons" where their leaders sit and brainstorm



on how to loot.

In a statement that comes amid the sustained protests by farmers outside Delhi for nearly four months opposing the new Central farm laws, he said the NDA also wanted to bring a paradigm shift in the agricultural sector.

"It has been our honour to work for the small farmers of India. In the past seven years our efforts for the small farmers are aimed at giving them a life of prosperity and dignity."

"From kisan credit cards to soil health cards, from eNAM (National Agriculture Market) to an effective crop insurance scheme, we want to bring a paradigm shift in the agriculture sector," he said.

While farmers had for many years demanded rise in minimum support price (MSP), "it was our government which had the opportunity to bring a holistic MSP rise." In the last six years MSP for copra has nearly doubled, Mr Modi said.

Hitting out at the opposition, he said while its style of politics was "misgovernance with corruption" that of NDA was "governance with compassion."

"Both methods are very different. For the opposition what matters is personal gains. They want to capture

power to fill their pockets," he alleged.

The only politics people will accept is politics of development and good governance and they want a government where fruits of progress reach the public, he said. "They want the anti-development forces (to be kept) at a distance," he said. Taking a swipe at the DMK-Congress combine in Tamil Nadu, Modi said their "meetings are like corruption hackathons" where "their leaders sit and brainstorm on how to loot."

"Those who are given the most innovative ways are given posts and ministries. The opposition style of politics is based on bullying and harassing. Whenever DMK comes to power, they promote a strongman culture," he alleged. — *PTI*

# President's rule imposed in Pondy

**New Delhi, Feb. 25:** President's Rule was imposed in Puducherry following a recommendation by the Union Cabinet after a Congress-led government lost power in the Union Territory in a vote of confidence. The notification, signed by President Ram Nath Kovind, said the decision was taken after the president received a report from the administrator of the Union Territory of Puducherry on February 22. It said after considering the report and other information received by him, the president was satisfied that a situation had arisen in which the administration of the Union Territory of Puducherry could not carry on in accordance with the provisions of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 (20 of 1963). — *PTI*

# Retirement age of TN govt staff increased to 60 years

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 25**

The retirement age of all state government employees has been raised to 60 years from the present 59 years.

Making the announcement in the state assembly, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami recalled that the retire-

ment age was increased to 59 in May, 2020, from the earlier 58 years.

The rule will be applicable to all government staff and those working for all government organisations, corporations, schools and aided schools and all those who were scheduled to retire till May 31 would benefit from it.



R. Ashwin celebrates his 400th Test wicket.

— *BCCI*

# Axar, Ashwin shine as India beat England by 10 wickets

**DC CORRESPONDENT AHMEDABAD, FEB. 25**

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel bagged a match-haul of 11 for 70 as India drubbed England by 10 wickets on Thursday to take a 2-0 lead in the four-match Test series. The victory, achieved under two days to make it the shortest ever Test played in India, boosted Virat Kohli & Co.'s chances of qualifying for the World Test Championship final to be held in July.

Off-spinner R. Ashwin, playing his 77th Test, took four wickets in the second innings

to become the fourth Indian and second fastest in the world to take 400 Test wickets. Sri Lanka spin wizard Muttiah Muralitharan held the record having achieved the feat in his 72nd Test.

Former India captain Anil Kumble (619), Kapil Dev, (434) and Harbhajan Singh (417) are the other Indians who have 400 Test wickets to their credit. Speaking at the post-match presentation, India skipper Virat Kohli called Ashwin a modern-day legend. "It's time we stood up and noticed what Ashwin has done for the country," he added. ■ **P7**

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## SHORT TAKES

## President's rule imposed in Puducherry

New Delhi, Feb. 25: President's Rule was imposed in Puducherry following a recommendation by the Union Cabinet after a Congress-led government lost power in the Union Territory in a vote of confidence.

The notification, signed by President Ram Nath Kovind, said the decision was taken after the president received a report from the administrator of the Union Territory of Puducherry on February 22. It said after considering the report and other information received by him, the president was satisfied that a situation had arisen in which the administration of the Union Territory of Puducherry could not carry on in accordance with the provisions of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 (20 of 1963). "Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 51 of the Act and of all other powers enabling me in that behalf, I (a) suspend, until the constitution of the 15th Legislative Assembly of Puducherry, in relation to the said Union Territory of Puducherry..." the notification said. The president also suspended the operation of various provisions of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 (20 of 1963), thus imposing central rule in Puducherry. The notification also said the Legislative Assembly of the Union Territory is placed under suspended animation. V Narayanasamy, who led the Congress government in Puducherry, resigned on Monday ahead of the confidence vote after his government was reduced to a minority following a spate of resignations by his party MLAs and a DMK legislator in recent days.

## Woman techie ends life in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 25

A 32-year-old woman working with an IT firm in city suburbs allegedly jumped to death from the 4th floor of an apartment building in Oragadam in Kanchipuram district on Wednesday night.

According to the police, the woman identified as Elakiya was working in an IT company in Maraimalai Nagar. Elakiya, originally from Theni, got married to Dinesh (36) an engineer five years ago. The couple has twin boys.

Sources said Dinesh was an alcoholic and the couple argued over his drinking habits often. At around 10 pm on Wednesday, when Dinesh was consuming liquor inside the house, an argument broke out between them. During the tiff, Dinesh reportedly hurled abuses at Elakiya.

Upset over this, she reportedly jumped from the 4th floor of the apartment building. Dinesh alerted the 108 ambulances, however, she was declared dead on the spot by the medical team.

Based on the information, Oragadam police came to the spot. The police sent the body to the Sriperumbudur government hospital for autopsy and a case of suspicious death has been registered. Oragadam police are investigating the case. An RDO investigation is also initiated in the case. An RDO investigation is done when a married woman, who has been married for seven or less, dies suspiciously. Further investigations are on.

## Govt bolsters coronavirus containment zone strategy

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 25

At a time when Covid-19 cases are increasing and new variants are reported in states like Maharashtra and Kerala, the Tamil Nadu government has tightened its containment zone strategy which had immensely helped the efforts of the state Covid task force to flatten the curve.

According to the latest order issued by the state health department, the containment zone strategy will be implemented in areas where three and more cases are reported or three and more families are affected by Covid-19.

In case of up to three cases or up to three households having positive cases, the affected families and their neighbours will be put in home quarantine.

The containment operation will be stopped in 14 days if no active case is reported in the zone during the period from the date of the last confirmation of positive case.

The containment zone is the primary area where an intensive action has to be carried out with the aim of breaking the chain of transformation.

In containment zones no

## Covid-19 tests vital for Kerala tourists to enter Nilgiris

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, FEB. 25

The district administration here has tightened their grip on tourists from Kerala as Covid-19 cases are reported to be rising in neighbouring Kerala. Even as Corona tests have been made mandatory for tourists from Kerala, both politicians and members of the tourism industry feel that the restrictions would cripple the tourism-based revenue flow, affecting their livelihood and also adversely affect their prospects in the election.

Though the threat from

movement will be allowed except for medical emergencies and essential goods and services. No unchecked person will be allowed inside. People who are transiting will be recorded and followed through the integrated Disease Surveillance Programme.

Active searches for cases will be conducted through physical house to house surveillance by special

Kerala tourists has not been too alarming, the district administration here has taken precautionary measures and made Covid-19 tests mandatory for tourists and travelers entering the Nilgiris from Kerala.

N. Chandrasekar, secretary, Nilgiris Hotels and Restaurants Association, said the restrictions on tourism would dampen the prospects of travel and tourism in the Nilgiris which is looking forward for the popular summer season, which is just four weeks away. The authorities should give

confidence to the tourism industry, he added. Collector J. Innocent Divya said that tourists and other travelers from Kerala must show negative Covid-19 reports at the check-posts, or samples will be lifted from them for analysis to keep track on them in the Nilgiris.

While e-registration process for tourists and those from other districts is already the practice in the Nilgiris, there are no restrictions or mandatory test procedures for locals to visit neighbouring districts and return to Nilgiris," she added.

defined by the district administration or local bodies.

The first containment zone was declared in the city on April 2. The authorities, a month later, had been able to set up at least 513 containment zones across the city. However, the zones were limited by the authorities for the last few months as the cases started coming down.

## 5 killed in blast in fireworks factory

Virudhunagar, Feb 25: Five people were killed and six injured in an explosion at a fireworks factory near Sivakasi in the district on Thursday, police said.

More than ten sheds where chemicals had been stored were razed to the ground in the mishap, the second such incident this month in a cracker manufacturing unit in this region, the country's fireworks hub.

Fire and Rescue service teams battled the blaze in the unit at Kalayar Kurichi, police said, adding the injured were rushed to hospitals. The cause of the explosion was not known immediately.

More than 20 people had died and around 30 injured in a major explosion in a fireworks unit at Achankulam village near Sattur in this district on Feb. 2.

—PTI

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 25

After the Central government allowed the oil marketing companies to increase ₹25 per a liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) domestic cylinder on Thursday, the Chennai residents demanded an immediate rollback of hike as it's the third time this month.

The residents said the price of a subsidized cylinder was Rs 735 on February 4. Now it has climbed up to ₹810.

## CHENNAI'S POLICE HISTORY



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami will inaugurate the 178-year-old iconic metropolitan police commissioner's office building in Chennai Egmore converted into a police museum on Saturday. The work is in the finishing stage. During the British rule, in 1842, the headquarters of the

Chennai Metropolitan police was opened at Vepery. Later, it was relocated to Arunagiri Mudaliars' bungalow on Egmore Pantheon Road. This is the second police museum in Tamil Nadu after Coimbatore. The Egmore museum houses important historical documents of the police,

weapons used by the British police, early uniforms of the Tamil Nadu police, photographs of belts, sniffer dogs, historical news packages, wireless instruments and artifacts. The names of the policemen who lost their lives in service are engraved on the wall.

— N. Sampath



Buses parked at Chinnamalai bus depot on Thursday.

—DC

## Transport strike leaves city commuters inconvenienced

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 25

The day one of indefinite strike by transport employees on Thursday caused hardship to commuters, particularly office-goers and students.

The Tamil Nadu transport workers affiliated with nine trade unions commenced their indefinite strike on Thursday demanding the government to conclude the 14th wage revision talks immediately, leaving several commuters stranded across the state.

Transport department officials claimed that nearly half the buses were

operated from all the depots and that services were maintained well.

On Thursday, with fewer numbers of buses on the road, commuters had to wait for a long time to catch a bus. This also resulted in jam-packed buses in the city and its suburbs. Worsening the situation, EMU train service was affected from 5.30 am to 8.25 am between Tambaram and Chennai Beach station after an overhead cable line snapped.

Nine transport unions, including DMK-affiliated LPE, CITU, AITUC and INTUC, have called for the strike over the govern-

ment's failure to conclude 14th wage revision talks, pending terminal benefits of the workers retired since 2020 and non-allocation of funds in the budget to compensate the losses incurred by the corporation which is a service sector. The unions also refused to accept the interim relief of ₹1,000 per month until the wage revision talks are completed, which was announced by the government.

Sources from the union said that the protest would continue till the government accepts to continue the talks and meet the demands.

## Jumbo tales: Protect and conserve gentle giants

B. Vijayalakshmi

## Viewpoint

The video of a mahout and his assistant caging an elephant chained to a tree at the annual elephant rejuvenation camp in Mettupalayam triggered an outrage among wildlife conservationists this week. Animal welfare activists sought action against the two men as the disturbing video had gone viral on social media. The two were arrested and remanded in judicial custody. The elephant belonging to Srivilliputhur Andal temple at the camp was examined by forest veterinary officers and found to be in good health. The recent inci-

dent left the state government red-faced as the 48-day elephant rejuvenation camp at Thekkampatti is an annual affair, inaugurated by former CM J Jayalalithaa in 2003. This year, more than 25 temple and mutt elephants in TN and Puducherry have been brought to the camp. The mahout was suspended and also a committee consisting of experts sensitized the mahouts at the camp on handling unruly elephants without resorting to cruelty. Last month, an elephant died near Ooty due to severe bleeding caused by a burning tyre thrown at it by local residents.

Two days after the camp incident, the Madras high court in a different case suggested that the state formulate a policy to prohibit private ownership of elephants. The court observed that elephants should ideally be under the care of the



Elephants take a bath with the help of mahouts at the rejuvenation camp in Mettupalayam.

— DC

forest department and that all temples and human agencies be banned from having

elephants. The petitioner, a devotee of Srirangam temple, alleged that elephants

owned by several temples faced inhumane treatment and sought the government to file a report on steps taken to rehabilitate temple elephants.

Last year, the Puducherry government was involved in a long, protracted legal battle with People for Ethical Treatment of Animals over the custody of Mankula Vinayakar temple elephant Lakshmi. Finally, the Madras HC directed the UT government to provide proper nutrition to the jumbo and sought a status report on the facilities provided to the animal.

Early this month, the Madurai bench of Madras high court directed the state government to pay Sindhu, a BE computer science graduate, ₹25 lakh as compensation within a month and provide her a job in the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments department

within two months. She was attacked by a temple elephant and sustained severe injuries on her throat in 1999. Also, a CBI probe has been ordered by the HC into a series of elephant poaching incidents reported in the state based on a report by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau.

With the Supreme Court upholding a Madras HC order against encroachments in the elephant corridor in the Nilgiris, concerted efforts of the forest department, experts and people alone can reduce the incidence of man-animal conflict. Similarly, the annual retreat for captive elephants may be a welcome measure, but the TN government should act fast and put in place a fool-proof system to ensure jumbos in religious and private places are not exploited but maintained and treated properly.

## Saudi Riyals, US dollars worth ₹70.28L seized

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 25

Chennai air customs seized Saudi Riyals and US dollars worth ₹70.28 lakh and arrested a passenger in connection with the case on Wednesday.

According to an official statement from the Customs Commissioner, Based on intelligence, Noormohamed Sultan (60) of Kanchipuram was intercepted by AIU officers after he cleared immigration and was proceeding towards the security hold area for boarding Indigo flight 6E-65 destined for Dubai, on suspicion of carrying foreign currency.

As he appeared to be nervous his search was carried out and 2000 US Dollars in 100 denomination valued at ₹1.45 lakhs

were recovered from his pant pocket.

His check in baggage, a carton box, was recalled from the aircraft. On opening, it was found to contain magazine/ old books and five covers wrapped with adhesive tape. On cut opening, it was found that the covers were made of old newspapers in which Saudi Riyals were ingeniously concealed.

Total, 357000 Saudi Arab Riyals in the denomination of 500 valued at Rs. 68.83 lakhs were recovered. Total foreign currency worth Rs.70.28 lakhs was recovered and seized under the Customs Act read with FEMA (Export and Import of Currency) Regulations. He was arrested. Further investigation is in progress.

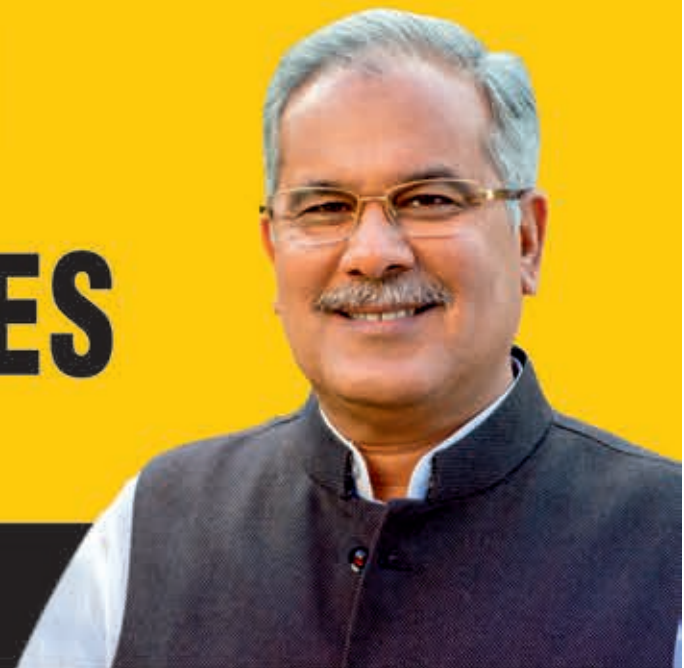


# Chhattisgarh

## CHAMPION AMID CHALLENGES



**Shri Bhupesh Baghel**  
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh



**First State  
to Procure Paddy at  
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95% of its Registered  
Farmers**



- ❖ Registered Farmers : 21,52,980
- ❖ Paddy Selling Farmers : 20,53,483
- ❖ Paddy Procured : 95.40 lakh metric ton

**New Record in  
Disbursement of  
Interest Free  
Agricultural Loan**



- ❖ Short Term Agricultural Loan in FY 2020-21 : ₹4,755 cr
- ❖ Kisan Credit Card Issued : 16 lakh
- ❖ New Registered Credit Committees : 725

**First State to Buy  
Cow Dung from  
Cattle Rearers**



- ❖ Generating Employment Opportunities through Gothans (Cow Sheds)
- ❖ Payment towards Purchase of Cow Dung : ₹ 75.48 cr
- ❖ Women Participation : 44.5%

**Leading State in  
Creating Industrial  
Investment  
Opportunities  
despite Recession**



- ❖ New Industries Established in 2 Years : 1,207
- ❖ Investment : ₹17,000 cr
- ❖ Employment Generated : 22,000

**Leading State in  
Procurement of  
Minor Forest Produce  
Setting New Record**



- ❖ Contribution to Country's Total Procurement : 72.5 %
- ❖ No. of Minor Forest Produce Procured at MSP : 52
- ❖ Raised Tendupatta Collection Remuneration : from ₹2500 to ₹4000 (per standard sack)

**Leading State in  
Utilization of  
CAMPA Fund**



- ❖ Total Tree Plantation in FY 2020-21 : 54 lakh Saplings
- ❖ Employment Generation during COVID-19 : 115 lakh Person Days

# WINNING STORY OF THE FASTEST GROWING STATE







FROM PG1

## NEW NORMS TO TIGHTEN GOVT CONTROL OVER ONLINE, OTT

FROM PAGE 1

Mr Prasad said the rules require the 'significant' social media intermediaries to follow additional due diligence including the appointment of a chief compliance officer, a nodal contact person and a resident grievance officer. All three officials will have to reside in India. They will have to publish monthly compliance report and detail contents removed proactively. The resident grievance officer shall register complaints in 24 hours, and file monthly compliance reports. User grievances have to be resolved within 15 days.

The rules state that users who voluntarily want to verify their accounts should be given an appropriate mechanism to do so and be accorded a visible mark of verification. Any contentious content flagged by the government or legal order has to be taken down quickly.

Also, social media platforms on being asked by court or government will be required to disclose the first originator of the mischievous information that undermines the sovereignty of India, security of the state, or public order. The intermediary, however, will not be required to disclose the contents of any message.

Beyond streaming and messaging, the code will also set guidelines for digital publishers of news and current affairs content, requiring them to disclose their ownership and other information. Releasing the guidelines, Mr Prasad said the code was needed to make social media and OTT companies accountable for "misuse and abuse".

Social media firms should be "more responsible and accountable," he said.

The new guidelines follow the government's spat with Twitter over allegedly inflammatory tweets and hashtags supporting farmer protests.

## Electrifying protest



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee rides an electric scooter during a protest against the hike in fuel price in Kolkata on Thursday. She slammed the BJP-led government at the Centre, "We are protesting against the fuel price hike. The Modi government only makes false promises. They have done nothing to bring down fuel prices. You can see the difference in petrol prices when the Modi government came to power and now." — PTI

# Godse 'devotee' inducted in MP Congress

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB. 25

A 'devotee' of Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse has been inducted in Congress here, much to the chagrin of a strong section of the party.

Babulal Chaurasia who had a few years ago pledged to spread Godse's last court statement to one lakh people was welcomed into the party by MP Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) presi-

dent and former chief minister Kamal Nath here on Wednesday.

The official Twitter handle of MP Congress on Wednesday evening broke the news of Chaurasia being admitted to Congress by sharing the picture of the event in the party HQ here.

Former PCC president of MP Arun Yadav reacted to the development with a one-liner, "Bapu hum sharminda hai" (Bapu, we are ashamed).

He tagged the photo-

graph showing Nath welcoming Chaurasia into the party in his Twitter account, while posting his comment.

Sources in the party said the decision to induct Godse's "follower" in the party has left many senior leaders in Congress flabbergasted.

Chaurasia had quit Congress and joined Hindu Mahasabha in 2014 to contest the local civic body elections in Gwalior.

He was said to be one of the brain behind the tem-

ple built for Godse in Gwalior in 2017.

He was also reportedly present at the 'consecration' ceremony held to install Godse's statue in the temple.

Later, the Gwalior district administration had removed the idol.

Talking to reporters in Gwalior on Thursday, Chaurasia described his joining in Congress as his "homecoming".

"I was not aware then that the idol I was worshiping was that of Godse.

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, FEB. 25

Tired of unending military tensions and frequent bouts of skirmishes between the facing troops, the border residents of Jammu and Kashmir have heaved a sigh of relief over India and Pakistan agreeing to strictly observe all agreements on ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) and other sectors.

"It has come as a great relief to us. We hope and pray that both sides will really ensure strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease firing along the LoC," said Irshad Ahmad Khawaja, a resident of Uri while speaking in this newspa-

per over the phone.

He said that the border residents were happy. Echoing their and his own sentiment, he said, "If the two countries' armies follow the promise we won't suffer any further human and property losses. *Kam se kam chen ki sans ley payengay* (At least, we will breathe in peace)."

Bashir Ahmed Wathloo, chairman of Rural Development Society, Uri said, "I will get a good night's sleep now. My joy knows no bounds today."

However, Bashir Ahmad Dar, who lives at Balkote, a hamlet at a stone's throw from the LoC, said he would keep his fingers crossed. Dar who lost his wife Farooqa Begum, 35, in cross-LoC shelling in

November last year said, "I feel lost since I have lost my spouse. Had the two sides abided by the ceasefire agreement they had reached in 2003, my world would not have been ruined".

Though the two countries pushed on with the ceasefire agreement signed after months of tortuous negotiations in 2003, the facing armies and border guards have often clashed both along the LoC and International Border (IB), the 198-km stretch of the 2,912-km India-Pakistan border from Gujarat to J&K called "Working Boundary" by Islamabad as it passes through a "disputed region" particularly.

## Explosives found near Ambani's house

Mumbai, Feb. 25: An abandoned vehicle with 20 gelatin sticks was found just metres away from business tycoon Mukesh Ambani's house in Mumbai on Thursday.

The SUV was noticed at around 3 pm after which some people from the vicinity alerted the local police, who rushed to the spot and cordoned off the entire area, sending the state government and the police into a tizzy.

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

# WORLD

## Biden revokes Green Card ban

### Lawyers: Was blocking legal immigration

San Diego, Feb. 25:

President Joe Biden has lifted a freeze on green cards issued by his predecessor during the pandemic that lawyers said was blocking most legal immigration to the United States. Former President Donald Trump last spring halted the issuance of green cards until the end of 2020 in the name of protecting the coronavirus-wrecked job market — a reason that Trump gave to achieve many of the cuts to legal immigration that had eluded him before the pandemic. Trump on December 31 extended those orders until the end of March. Trump had deemed immigrants a "risk to the US labour market" and blocked their entry to the United States in issuing Proclamation 10014 and Proclamation 10052.

Biden stated in his proclamation on Wednesday that shutting the door on legal immigrants "does not advance the interests of the United States". "To the contrary, it harms the United States, including by preventing certain family members of United

States citizens and lawful permanent residents from joining their families here. It also harms industries in the United States that utilize talent from around the world," Biden stated in his proclamation. Most immigrant visas were blocked by the orders. As many as 120,000 family-based preference visas were lost largely because of the pandemic-related freeze in the 2020 budget year, according to the American Immigrant Lawyers Association. Immigrants could not bring over family members unless they were US citizens applying for visas for their spouses or children under the age of 21.

It also barred entry to immigrants with employment-based visas unless they were considered beneficial to the national interest such as health care professionals. And it slammed the door on thousands of visa lottery winners who were randomly chosen from a pool of about 14 million applicants to be given green cards that would let them live permanently in the

United States. The blocked visas add to a growing backlog that has reached 437,000 for family-based visas alone, said California immigration lawyer Curtis Morrison, who represented thousands of people blocked by the freeze. "I'm thrilled for my clients who are now in a position that they can now enter the US," he said.

"But that backlog will take years if the administration does not take ambitious measures." A federal judge last year issued a ruling that all but lifted Proclamation 10052 by allowing temporary foreign workers to enter the United States if their employers are members of the US Chamber of Commerce or several other large organisations that represent much of the US economy. But Proclamation 10014 continued to block thousands of immigrants. Immigration lawyers said they were surprised Biden did not immediately lift the freeze like he did with Trump's travel ban imposed against people from mostly Muslim-majority countries. — AP

FROM PAGE 1

The ceasefire will also come as a relief to villagers settled near LoC who have suffered both loss of lives and damage to their property. Some 22 civilians were killed during ceasefire vio-

lation by Pakistan in 2020 and 71 injured. In 2019, 18 civilians were killed and 127 injured in ceasefire violations by Pakistan.

However, there will be no compromise on anti-infiltration grid along the LoC and troops will not be

moved back, said sources. India has the right to respond in case of any major terrorist attack on India by Pakistan supported terrorists. Indian security forces had eliminated 221 terrorists in 2020 in J&K and 9 in 2021. Indian

sources insisted that the ceasefire with Pakistan had nothing to do with stand-off with China. Indian Army Chief General M.M. Naravane had said on Wednesday that there was no overt signs of any collusion between China and

## Coup attempt: Armenia PM

Yerevan, Feb. 25: Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan accused the military of an attempted coup and brought supporters to the streets on Thursday, as months of tensions over its defeat in last year's war with Azerbaijan came to a head.

Thousands marched through the streets of the capital Yerevan in support of Pashinyan, with the opposition urging him to step down to avoid bloodshed or even civil war.

President Armen Sarkisian, whose role is largely symbolic, said he was taking urgent

steps to try to defuse the crisis, calling on all involved to "show restraint and common sense."

Under pressure for his handling of the conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Pashinyan has ignored repeated calls to resign for losing swathes of territory to Azerbaijan in the war.

After largely backing the prime minister for months, the military's general staff on Thursday joined calls for him to step down, saying in a statement that he and his cabinet "are not capable of taking adequate decisions".

Pashinyan hit back with an accusation that top brass were mounting an "attempted military coup" and fired the chief of the general staff Onik Gasparyan. Hundreds of supporters then joined Pashinyan to march through central Yerevan, chanting "Nikol Prime Minister!"

Speaking to supporters through a megaphone, Pashinyan called for calm, as dozens of police deployed outside the main government offices. "The situation is tense, but we must agree that there cannot be clashes," said Pashinyan. — AFP

## Completely eradicated poverty in China, says Xi

Beijing, Feb. 25: President Xi Jinping on Thursday declared that China has scored a "complete victory" in its fight against poverty by lifting over 770 million people out of it in the last four decades, calling it another "miracle" created by the country that will go down in history. Absolute poverty has been eradicated in the world's most populous country, Xi announced while addressing a gathering held here to mark the country's accomplishments in poverty alleviation and honour its model poverty fighters.

China has a population of around 1.4 billion. "No country has been able to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in such a short time," Xi said. Xi said that all poor people in rural areas have been lifted out of poverty. With this, China has achieved the UN goal of poverty eradication 10 years ahead of

the 2030 deadline, he said. Over the past eight years, the final 98.99 million impoverished rural residents living under the current poverty line have all been lifted out of poverty. All the 832 impoverished counties and 128,000 impoverished villages have been removed from the poverty list, he said. Since the launch of the reform and opening up in the late 1970s, 770 million impoverished rural residents have shaken off poverty when calculated according to China's current poverty line, he said. China has contributed to more than 70 per cent of global poverty reduction over the same period, Xi, also General Secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China, (CPC), said. With such achievements, China has created another "miracle" that will "go down in history," he said. — PTI

## SRI LANKA SEEKS \$2.2 BN FROM CHINA

Colombo, Feb. 25: Sri Lanka is seeking \$2.2 billion from Chinese banks, the government said Thursday, in echoes of a borrowing binge more than a decade ago that resulted in the country having to give up a strategic port to China.

Money and capital markets minister Nivard Cabraal said the government was hopeful of finalising a \$1.5-billion swap facility with China's central bank. "Within the next two weeks we should be able to finalise it," Cabraal said reporters in Colombo.

### NORTHERN RAILWAY

#### Tender Notice

Chief Medical Supdt, Northern Railway, Firozpur for an on behalf of the President of India, invites expression of interest on the prescribed form for the following work:-

Name of work	Expression of interest from reputed, registered and licensed diagnostic centres for empaneling name for providing diagnostic services for patients of Sub-Division Hospital Amritsar.
Completion period	One year from the Date of starting
App. Cost of the work	N.A.
Earnest Money	N.A.
Cost of application form on cash/By post	N.A.
Date and time availability & Place of procuring application form	Any working day from office of Chief Medical Supdt., N Ry, Firozpur and can be downloaded from Railway website <a href="http://www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in">www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in</a> from 02.03.2021 to 07.04.2021 up to 11.00 Hrs.
Place of submission of bids	Chief Medical Supdt., N Ry Divisional Hospital, Firozpur.
Date and time of submission of application form	Up to 11.00 Hrs on 07.04.2021. Opening of bids at 11.30 Hrs on 07.04.2021
Note: Definition of similar type of works for above noted work: No applicable.	
No: 15-Med/Investigation Dated : 25.02.2021	432/2021
Serving Customers With A Smile	

### THE ERODE DISTRICT CO-OPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS' UNION LTD.,

VASAVI COLLEGE POST: 635316, ERODE, TAMILNADU. PHONE: 8883606125, 211. FAX: 0424-2534150. email: [erodavm.milk@gmail.com](mailto:erodavm.milk@gmail.com) GSTIN: 33AAAC0568A1ZC

Tender Notice for Milk Distribution Route Lorries, and Taxi

Sealed Tenders are invited in two part system (Technical Bid & Commercial Bid) from the owners of Hino lorry for Milk & Milk products distribution (EMCPA, A, B, E, F, G). Erod & Kothumuri from FBD to Erode client avin agents and Hing One Taxi (Owner Car) for Marketing field survey inspection Purpose work from the date of order to Two years

01 Last Date for sale of Tender Form	15.03.2021 up to 4.00 PM
02 Last Date and time for receipt of filled in Tender Form	16.03.2021 up to 11.00 AM
03 Place, Date & Time of Opening	Erode District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union Limited, Vasavi College Post, Erode. 638 316
Tender Pre-Bid Meeting	10.03.2021 at 11.00 AM
Part I Technical Bid	16.03.2021 at 11.30 AM
Part II Commercial Bid	After scrutinisation of Technical Bid
Total Number of Lorries. Total Number of Taxis	07 Lorries 01 Omni/Car
Tender Period	2 Years
Cost of Tender Form - Rs.6,000/- (6% GST Extra). Separate tender form should be submitted for each Milk Distribution Route and Hing Taxi. Tender form with terms and conditions can be downloaded at free of cost from Website: <a href="http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in">www.tenders.tn.gov.in</a> . All related details will be available in the website	
DB The decision of the General Manager EDCMPU Ltd. Erode shall be final, conclusive and binding in all the matters relating to this tender.	
Place: Erode. Date: 24.02.2021	DIRV 1403/TENDER/2021
GENERAL MANAGER	

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Registered office: Landmark, Race Course Circle, Vaddiyars 390 007.

Corporate office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai 400 051.

#### GOLD AUCTION CUM INVITATION NOTICE

The below mentioned borrowers have been issued notice to pay off their outstanding amount towards the facility against gold ornaments. ("Facility") availed by them from ICICI Bank Limited ("ICICI Bank"). We are constrained to conduct an auction of pledged gold ornaments on **Mar 08, 2021** as they have failed to repay the dues. ICICI Bank has the authority to remove account/change the auction date without any prior notice. Auction will be held online <https://gold.auction.in> between 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm. For detailed Terms and conditions, please log into our website. In case of deceased borrower, all conditions will be applicable to legal heirs.

Loan A/C No.	Customer Name	Branch Name	Loan A/C No.	Customer Name	Branch Name	Loan A/C No.	Customer Name	Branch Name
190650003374	Akber Mohamed Basha	Branch Name: Arakonam	617605026261	Robert Nadesan	Branch Name: Devikapuram	761605000511	V Ramesh	Branch Name: Sholingur
190650003400	Karnakannan Natarajan	Branch Name: Arakonam	617605026262	Parthiban Kannan	Branch Name: Devikapuram	761605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Thiruvannamalai
158405013243	Selvan M	Branch Name: Arcot	191350005106	Elangovan M	Branch Name: Kadaladi, Tamil Nadu	619605029466	Manivelan S	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
080705014404	Chanchal Jain	Branch Name: Arcot	617605005087	Vijayganeshr R	Branch Name: Kadaladi, Tamil Nadu	619605029476	Ramkumar S	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
080705014377	Banu Velu	Branch Name: Arcot	617605005088	Vijayganeshr R	Branch Name: Kadaladi, Tamil Nadu	619605029184	T P Purushothaman	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
080705014353	Babu P	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605029471	Babu D	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
080705014357	Meerthi	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605022731	V Thirukaran	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
080705014357	Pangalcharam	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605023790	V Thirukaran	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
080705014357	Ruthi Meera R	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605022013	R Ramesh	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
080705014353	Ruthi Meera R	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000511	V Ramesh	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
080705014372	Ramesh K	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
080705014381	Kumaran P	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
080705014395	Geethapriya M	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
080705014405	Geethapriya M	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
080705014396	Kurugan Subhan Mahmood Ayaz	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
227805003505	Anand Anandraj J	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
227805004081	Anand Anandraj J	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
227805003933	Rajasekar Chinnaiah	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
613690021011	Prakash Chennakrishnan	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003408	Vinayagam M	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003410	Santhosh S	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003411	Sampath N	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003468	Kandaban S	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003915	Narayanasamy Gunasekaran	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003963	Ilavaraja M	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003923	Anandkumar K	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003924	Murugan Durai	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003978	Karti R	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003980	Sakthivel Ezhumalai	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003983	Sakthivel Ezhumalai	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003984	Sakthivel Ezhumalai	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003979	Sakthivel Ezhumalai	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003979	Sakthivel Ezhumalai	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003954	Balakrishnan Nadesan	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur
381505003973	Kuppan Munusami	Branch Name: Arcot	227905000342	Sownderajan Chandrasekar	Branch Name: Kolakaravadi	619605000524	Jayakanth Selvam	Branch Name: Tiruvallur

Date : 26.02.2021 Place : Tiruvannamalai, Vellore

Sd/ Authorised Officer For ICICI Bank Limited



# DECCAN Chronicle

26 FEBRUARY 2021

## Disha bail order should set welcome precedent

The order of the additional sessions judge of Patiala House Courts, Delhi, granting bail to Bengaluru-based climate activist Disha A. Ravi, arrested for her alleged role in the preparation of a “toolkit” that the police claimed led to the violent incidents in the nation’s capital on January 26, has sought to right two wrongs. One, it has made a timely intervention and stopped the state from using legal tools to put dissenting citizens behind the bars for no end. Two, it has reassured the people that Article 19 (1) of the Constitution which guarantees the freedom of speech and expression has the strength to come to the aid of a legitimate dissenter.

The court demolished the Delhi police’s case by pointing out that it was devoid of material evidence to connect the activist with the case slapped on her; and more importantly, whatever she did was protected by the Constitution. The court found that the investigating agency which charged the activist with sedition has produced “not an iota of evidence” to link her with seditious or violent acts; and reminded the police that it cannot resort to “surmises or conjectures” to convince itself of the culpability of an accused. The “scanty and sketchy” pieces of evidence the agency has produced are not enough to send a 22-year-old young woman with absolutely blemish-free criminal antecedents to jail, it said. The strong words on the nature of the evidence were, in fact, a censure of the police, which went overboard picking up a citizen violating the Supreme Court’s guidelines and her basic rights.

The court made a series of observations on the citizen’s rights that a democracy would love the judiciary to assert and protect in the face of state assault. “Citizens are conscience keepers of the government in any democratic nation,” it said. “They cannot be put behind the bars simply because they choose to disagree with the state policies.” In a warning to the self-appointed “patriots” who miss no chance to threaten dissenters with the label “traitor” and the state which has a proclivity to slap sedition charge at the drop of a hat, the court said, “The offence of sedition cannot be invoked to minister to the wounded vanity of the governments.” The court observed that difference of opinion, disagreement, divergence, dissent, or even disapprobation, are recognised legitimate tools to infuse objectivity in state policies. If the Constitution was not enough, the judge referred to the nation’s 5,000-year old civilisation and the Rig Veda to remind everyone that we were “never been averse to ideas from varied quarters”.

It’s an irony that a government manned by people who have participated in the greatest freedom restoration movement in Independent India is resorting to suppressing voices of legitimate dissent. They should not ideally expect the nation to experience the silence of a graveyard when they go about implementing their agenda. They will face, to quote the judge, an “aware and assertive citizenry, in contradistinction with an indifferent or docile citizenry”, which is, “indisputably a sign of a healthy and vibrant democracy”. The refreshing thoughts must set in motion a process to free many more that are languishing in prisons facing similar charges.

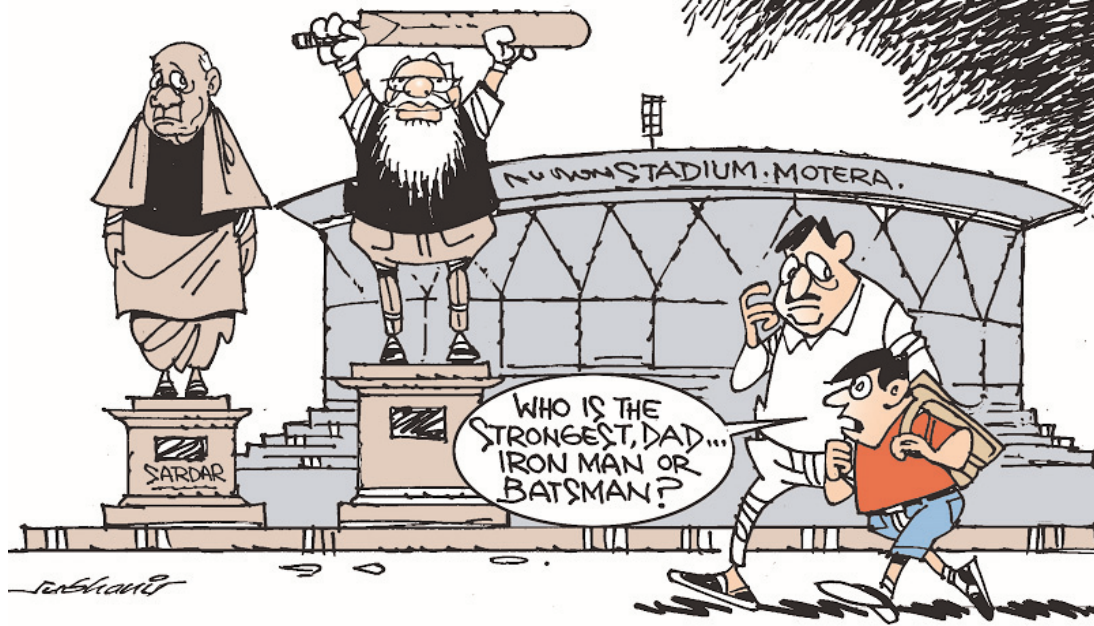
## An act of sycophancy

The Gujarat Cricket Association succumbed to the temptation of naming the stadium after the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The cricket arena had many earlier monikers like Gujarat and Motera, besides having borne the name of a famous son of the soil in Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

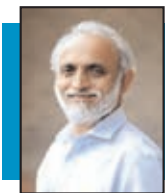
The baptism does break an unwritten law that no edifice should be named after a living person even if it seemed apt to honour a person who headed GCA in the long running Indian tradition of politicians getting themselves elected as presidents of cricket associations. The concept of a magnificent, cricket arena that cost more than ₹800 crores came from his grand vision and its creation was carried out by the other leading contemporary political personality, Union home minister Amit Shah, and his son who is the BCCI secretary. Donald Trump, as US President, even paid a ceremonial visit there just before the pandemic was declared in 2020.

The honour bestowed spontaneously and sentimentally on Narendra Modi is somewhat akin to India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru being awarded the Bharat Ratna by the first President Rajendra Prasad. But it does rankle considering this is a stadium named like this since the Maharashtra politician and chief minister S.K. Wankhede named one in Churchgate in Mumbai after himself in 1974. A second cricket stadium within a stone’s throw of historic Brabourne was owed to a clash of egos between Maharashtra Cricket Association and Cricket Club of India. The era of building an edifice of homage to members of one political family is thought to be well and truly over. And so the Congress playing the Sardar Patel card in criticism seems hypocritical now. The issue, however, is to do with the need for 21st-century India to evolve from a sycophantic, fetishist and neta-worshiping past.

Subhani



## Arrests on flimsy basis undermine democracy



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

It has been the bad practice and bad habit of the Indian police and criminal investigators to slap a mountain of charges against any accused in the hope that at least some, or even one, of them would stick. This amounts to indulging in slander in more than a legal sense. And this is what the Delhi police and its investigators have tried to do with the violence that erupted on January 26, 2021 when the farmers’ tractor parade went off the rails at some points. Instead of focusing on what went wrong during the tractor parade, the Delhi police went off on a tangent, distracted by the tweets of American pop singer Rihanna and teenage climate protester/warrior Greta Thunberg. Greta Thunberg put out a toolkit, retracted and put it back again. And it is here that Bengaluru climate activist Disha Ravi, 22, entered the picture. The Delhi police saw it as a good opportunity to nail the international linkages of the imagined conspiracy when they found the toolkit linkage between Ms Ravi and Ms Thunberg. The police discovered that Ms Ravi had a hand in the toolkit when she edited it for Ms Thunberg.

In the heightened atmosphere of the exaggerated nature of the petty violence that broke out at Red Fort on January 26, the reckless overreach of the police under the guidance of an authoritative Union home ministry came into play. The Delhi police went off to Bengaluru, arrested Ms Ravi and brought her to Delhi in total violation of all legal norms in a democratic polity. The courts did not

cover themselves in glory when the legal process was short-circuited in bringing Ms Ravi from Bengaluru to New Delhi as though this country was under martial law and no questions could be raised about the way the Delhi police went about hauling up an ordinary citizen in Bengaluru. The pusillanimity of the courts was further underscored when the police custody of Ms Ravi was readily granted for five days by duty judge Dev Saroha on February 14. This was the police riding roughshod over the law and the judge allowing it tamely. It is at the end of five days of police custody, two days of judicial custody and another day of police custody, with the police wanting to confront Ms Ravi with the other two accused, Nikita Jacob Shantanu Muluk, that she was finally granted bail and released.

The excesses committed by the cybercrime branch of the Delhi police should have been condemned by additional sessions judge Dharmender Rana. It was easier for him to excoriate the police on the serious charge of sedition that they brought against the young woman from Bengaluru. The judge tore into the flaky evidence on which they based their charge. It was necessary that the judge had said what he had about the innocuous toolkit and the laboured connect that the police wanted to make between the toolkit, Ms Ravi and the Poetic Justice Foundation (PJF). And he rightly pointed out that the PJF was not a banned organisation for

the police to charge Ms Ravi with having associated herself with an illegal entity.

Judge Rana could have avoided the homilies about pluralist Indian civilisation going back to the Rig Veda and rapped the police for creating a faux chargesheet. He did admit that the investigation was on, but the evidence produced by the police so far to oppose bail to Ms Ravi was paper-thin. But in times when the government is keen to spread the pall of fear by invoking demons who are less than paper tigers, Judge Rana seems to have found refuge in pious platitudes about democracy, liberty, and the right of the citizen to dissent. It would however be mistaken to get carried away by Judge Rana’s quiet protest. Something more serious is amiss in the police’s line of investigation into the violence of January 26. Traces of

“Khalistani” elements behind the three-month-old farmers’ agitation against the new laws brought by the Narendra Modi government has been the theme song of the government and the ruling party. It seems that the police just follows the lead of their political masters.

The “Khalistani” elements have been simmering beneath the surface for many years now, but it is quite clear that the farmers have nothing to do with them, and the people, whether Indian or foreign, who sympathise with the farmers’ agitation have nothing to do with them either. The government and the police are fully aware

**Judge Rana could have avoided the homilies about pluralist Indian civilisation going back to the Rig Veda and rapped the police for creating a faux chargesheet**

that showing support for protesting farmers cannot be an offence and it cannot be deemed seditious. It is only by bringing in the “Khalistani” factor that people like Ms Ravi can be charged with a crime, and even if the charge fails, they can be defamed. It is in this diabolical bid to outlaw dissent and protest that the government and the Delhi police are committing the crime of undermining democracy.

The Disha Ravi case goes much beyond the Delhi police’s cyber-crime cell. It is a blatant misuse of the laws of the land. The police can claim that they investigate charges against people in good faith, and they nurse no animus against anyone. We can readily concede the point if they had gone about the investigation in a sober manner. They could have easily built up more evidence, they could have interrogated Ms Ravi in Bengaluru without the cheap theatrics of arresting her and bringing her to Delhi.

There is a clear need for the courts to rule clearly and loudly that the police have no right to arrest people as long as they are cooperating with the investigation, and there is no danger of the person absconding. In the case of Ms Ravi, it is self-evident that she would have cooperated with the police investigation. Arresting Ms Ravi was an attempt by the police to humiliate and intimidate her and make an example of her to other dissidents. This just cannot be allowed in a democracy. The powers of the police to arrest people and keep them in custody for 24 hours before they are brought before a magistrate for being remanded smacks of a police state. A citizen’s liberty cannot be left to the mercy of a policeman or police-woman.

*The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst*

### LETTERS

#### SINO-INDIAN RELATIONSHIP

This is with reference to your editorial *Business trumps nationalism* (Feb. 25). You have given areas where both China and India are dependent on each other like heavy machinery, electronics, highways and pharmaceuticals. Since there is mutually agreed withdrawal of forces at eastern Ladakh, it is right time to normalise economic transactions which were in limbo for quite some time affecting the economies of both countries. Our armed forces must be ever vigilant at our borders and never yield to PLA tactics. In the larger interests of two populous Asian giants, they must work towards confidence building measures and allow the business to be brought back on even keel.

**Parthasarathy Mandadi, Tirupati**

#### VACCINATION DILEMMA

**APPROPOS YOUR** report *Vaccination for public set to start on March 1* (Feb. 25). As the central government has announced that vaccination for Covid-19 pandemic will be open to the public and commence from March 1, it will be highly appreciated if our Prime Minister and his Cabinet ministers could set an example to the public by vaccinating so that people would gain confidence on authenticity of the vaccine. While most of the people will be opting to be vaccinated at government hospitals since it is free of cost, one could imagine malpractices in drug dispensation. On the other hand, it will be a sure shot money making racket in private hospitals. It is pathetic to say that our country is so fraudulent in every sector and hence it is hard to gain faith in whatever is facilitated to the public through whichever scheme provided. At this juncture vaccination seems still to be a dilemma.

**Jacqueline Netto, Chennai**

#### KUDOS TO AXAR PATEL

**MOTERA GROUND** has become a happy hunting ground for spinners. The ball spun from day one in Narendra Modi Stadium and we enjoyed the spectacle of spinners reaping a rich harvest of wickets. Axar Patel did it in style and the Indian skipper Virat Kohli encouraged him by giving him the ball ahead of Ashwin and the move paid rich dividends. Thus, Axar Patel in his second match had a five-wicket haul and finished with 6 for 38. This reminds me of Bhagwat Chandrasekhar’s 6 for 38 at the Oval, which helped Team India win against England.

**C.K. Subramaniam, Chennai**

KAUSHIK MITTER

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Francis Pike



Is Antony Blinken, US President Joe Biden’s secretary of state, preparing to abandon Barack Obama’s powder-puff Asian foreign policies? It is now widely agreed that Mr Obama, under whom Mr Blinken served as deputy secretary of state, ceded to China uncontested control of the South China Sea. Mr Obama’s so-called “pivot to Asia” was all talk and no trousers. Mr Blinken, who believes diplomacy must be “supplemented by deterrence”, may be about to implement a more aggressive foreign policy in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

In his first speech as general secretary of the Communist Party of China in 2012, Xi Jinping made his intentions clear. He stated his commitment to “accepting the baton of history and continuing to work for realising the great revival of the Chinese nation in order to let the Chinese nation stand more firmly and powerfully among all nations”. President Xi’s international adventurism, under the umbrella of his “Belt and Road Initiative”, has been most evident in his illegal military occupation of the South China Sea, but it is a global strategy for domination which can be observed in Central Asia, the Indian Ocean, the

Middle East, Europe, even the Arctic.

How did Mr Obama respond? He did nothing. He issued platitudes. He vacillated over whether the Mutual Defence Treaty with the Philippines included the disputed South China Sea. By the end of his presidency, it was too late. And weakness in the South China Sea was undoubtedly an invitation for Mr Xi to push elsewhere on Mr Obama’s open door.

There are indications that the Biden administration will seek to construct alliances in Europe and Asia to contain the Chinese and Russian threats. As a former deputy secretary of state, Mr Blinken has long been President Biden’s point man on Europe and is known to be a long-time confidant. For a “multi-lateralist” who speaks fluent French, getting Europe onside will be important.

British PM Boris Johnson has been floating the idea of a “D-10” group: G-7 plus India, South Korea and Australia. Having finally decided to ditch Huawei, and persuaded by China’s crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong, the UK has thrown its hat into the “Stop China” camp. D-10 is a grouping that has some logic. By comparison,

Nato is undermined by the continuing membership of Turkey, now closely aligned with China. Even France’s President Emmanuel Macron said Nato was “brain dead”. But is the D-10 a credible base for an anti-Chinese containment strategy?

A containment strategy needs real military power. Besides the UK and France, the other European nations are largely window dressing. One suspects neither Mr Biden nor Mr Blinken have the cojones to initiate armed conflict to contest China’s already established military control of the South China Sea.

If Southeast Asia is lost, what next? China has already moved on to securing control of the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and Suez Canal trade routes. Burma is in China’s pocket. Bangladesh, with 165 million people, where in 2016 Mr Xi made the first state visit by a Chinese leader in 30 years, is being increasingly suborned by Chinese infrastructure investment and armaments. In the south, where the Bay of Bengal meets the Indian Ocean, China is entrenched. In 2018, China negotiated a 99-year lease for Sri Lanka’s Hambantota port and 15,000 adjacent acres — just off

India’s coast.

There’s the rub. For China’s Southeast Asia strategy is to contain India, which it sees as its long-term geopolitical rival. Although India lags a distant third to America and China in terms of aggregate GDP, it is also likely to overtake the US in 20 to 30 years. India already ranks fourth in the world in terms of aggregate military power.

As the world’s largest democracies, the United States and India should always be the best of friends. Yet US-Indian relations have rarely worked well. India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, rebuffed President Eisenhower; Nehru’s meeting with President Kennedy was a car crash. (Kennedy later admitted it was “the worst head of state visit I have had”.) Henry Kissinger described Indira Gandhi’s meeting with Richard Nixon as a “dialogue of the deaf”; even the normally polite Kissinger described Mrs Gandhi as “a bitch”.

Relations between American and Indian heads of government have later improved, but their substance has not. Mr Obama liked Dr Manmohan Singh but judging from his autobiography they do not seem

to have discussed much more than “progressive politics”. As for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the ultra-nationalist Hindu head of the BJP, he is, like Donald Trump, a populist with a cult following. Mr Biden may well court Mr Modi too. Noticeably Mr Blinken, like Donald Trump, refers to Asia as “the Indo-Pacific” — a term that the Chinese government detests.

While the geopolitical interests of America and India are clearly in alignment, bringing them into a more formal arrangement may be difficult. India is proudly independent. It does things its own way, and its prickly relationship with the West remains.

While India — currently engaged in border skirmishes with China in the remote Himalayas — is fully aware of the Chinese threat, it may be difficult to lasso the country into a formal mutual defence relationship. The D-10 is one of those neat ideas that might look good in a state department or Foreign Office briefing but, given the difficulties of co-opting India and Germany, can it cut the mustard in the real world?

*By arrangement with the Spectator*

## India, America & China: Can ‘D-10’ forge new relationships?



SHORT TAKES

Boxer Naveen makes semis

**New Delhi:** Naveen Boora (69kg) assured himself of at least a bronze by advancing to the semifinals while Manjeet Singh (+91kg) entered the quarters on an all-win day for Indian boxers at the 72nd Strandja Memorial Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria. Boora defeated Brazil's Eravio Edson in his quarterfinal bout, prevailing 5-0 in the contest. Manjeet, on the other hand, got the better of Ireland's Gytis Lisinskas in his last-16 stage bout on Wednesday night. Earlier, Jyoti Gulia (51kg) upstaged two-time world champion Nazym Kyzaiby of Kazakhstan to enter the quarterfinals along with two others. Gulia, a 2017 world youth champion, defeated the gold-winner from the 2014 and 2016 senior world championships. She will take on Romania's Perijoc Lacramioara in her quarterfinal bout later in the day. Another Indian to enter the quarterfinals on the second day was Bhagyabati Kachari. — *PTI*

Para archers cruise into final

**Dubai:** Para-archers Rakesh Kumar and Shyam Sundar Swami set up an all-Indian men's compound open final after brilliant victories in the last four stage of the 7th Fazza Para Archery World Ranking tournament here. Jyoti Baliyan also cruised to the final in the women's event, defeating Russia's Dzhoieva Anastasia by a point (139-138). Thus, the archers have ensured at least two silver and a gold medal for the country in the individual events. In the semifinal match, Rakesh defeated Turkey's Aygan Erdogan 143-138.

Guptill stars in New Zealand win

**Dunedin (New Zeal-and):** Veteran batsman Martin Guptill returned to form with a blistering 97 as New Zealand held on for a nail-biting win over Australia in the second Twenty20 international in Dunedin on Thursday. Guptill's Black Caps set Australia a challenging target of 220 after losing the toss but were made to sweat as Australia came within four runs of victory. Both sides took advantage of University Oval's short boundaries in a thrilling match that featured 30 sixes and 434 runs at an average of 10.9 an over. Marcus Stoinis starred for the Australians with 78 from 37 balls but Guptill's 97 from 50 laid the foundation for New Zealand's win. — *AFP*  
**Brief scores:** New Zealand 219/7 in 20 overs (Guptill 97, Kane 53, K. Richardson 3/43) bt Australia 215/8 in 20 overs (Stoinis 78, Santner 4/31).

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# AXARDHAM

## Patel hits back, makes Motera his own

**Ahmedabad, Feb. 25:** Left-arm spinner Axar Patel created an illusion of turn with 11 straighter deliveries that put India on the brink of the World Test Championship final with a 10-wicket demolition of England inside two days in the day-night third Test here on Thursday.

In only his second Test, Patel (15-0-32-5), with a match-haul of 11/70, relentlessly hit the good length area and hood-winked England batsmen, who played for turn only to find that there was none on offer from him.

The result was their lowest total against India — 81 all out in 30.4 overs leaving the hosts with a target of 49 which they achieved with minimum fuss taking a 2-1 lead in the four-match series.

At the other end, off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (15-3-48-4) was an ideal foil, becoming the fourth Indian bowler and second fastest in the world to complete a commendable milestone of 400 Test wickets with the dismissal of Jofra Archer.

Incidentally, after Afghanistan's debut Test in 2018 in Bengaluru, this was the second time that India won a Test match, well inside two days.

This was after England skipper Joe Root's fabulous career-best spell of 6-2-3-8-5 resulted in India's dramatic collapse from 114 for 3 to 145 all out.

India lost as many as seven wickets for only 31 runs after looking solid at 114 for 3 at one stage in the game but England lost all 10 in an entire session in which no pacer was seen in action.

Ironically, it was the non-turning deliveries from Patel that had the England's rank and file pressing the panic button as they pre-empted away turn every time.

Whether it was Zak Crawley, Jonny Bairstow or skipper Root, everyone lost the mind-game as Ashwin also joined the fun with records tumbling one after another.

When Patel sent back Ben Foakes, he became the first spinner to get 11 wickets in a pink ball Test match.

While a bowler might end up getting the man of the match, Rohit Sharma's 66 off 96 balls in the first essay was 24-carat gold given that other batsmen looked like sitting ducks.

But Indian batsmen save Rohit did have a torrid time during an afternoon session when Root and Leach made their lives miserable.

Ajinkya Rahane was rapped on the pads as Leach fired one in and it was not much of an issue for umpire Nitin Menon to adjudge him leg before.

— *PTI*



Axar Patel of India appeals for England's Zak Crawley's wicket during Day Two of their third Test at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday. — *BCCI*

### SCORECARD

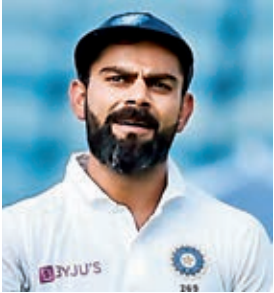
**England 1st innings: 112**  
**India 1st Innings (Overnight 99/3):** Rohit Sharma lbw b Jack Leach 66, Ajinkya Rahane lbw b Jack Leach 7, Rishabh Pant c Foakes b Root 1, Ravichandran Ashwin c Zak Crawley b Root 17, Washington Sundar b Root 0, Axar Patel c D Sibley b Root 0, Ishant Sharma not out 10, Jasprit Bumrah lbw b Root1. Extras (B-2, LB-2, W-1) 5. **Total (all out in 53.2 overs) 145. FoW:** 1-33, 2-34, 3-98, 4-114, 5-115, 6-117, 7-125, 8-125, 9-134. **Bowling:** James Anderson 13-8-20-0, Stuart Broad 6-1-16-0, Jofra Archer 5-2-24-1, Jack Leach 20-2-54-4, Ben Stokes 3-0-19-0, Joe Root 6.2-3-8-5. **England 2nd Innings:** Z. Crawley b Axar Patel 0, D. Sibley c Pant b Patel 7, J. Bairstow b Axar Patel 0, J. Root lbw b Axar Patel 19, B. Stokes lbw b Ashwin 25, O. Pope b Ashwin 12, B. Foakes lbw b Axar Patel 8, J. Archer lbw b Ashwin 0, J. Leach c Rahane b Ashwin 9, S. Broad not out 1, J. Anderson c Pant b Sundar 0. Extras 0. **Total (all out in 30.4 overs) 81. FoW:** 1-0, 2-0, 3-19, 4-60, 5-56, 6-66, 7-68, 9-80. **Bowling:** Axar Patel 15-0-32-5, Ashwin 15-3-48-4, Sundar 0.4-0-1-1. **India 2nd Innings:** Rohit Sharma not out 25, Shubman Gill not out 15. Extras (B-8, LB-1). **Total (for no loss in 7.4 overs) 49. Bowling:** J. Leach 4-1-15-0, J. Root 3.4-0-25-0.

# Kohli bests MS India sit atop as with most wins Eng out of WTC

**Ahmedabad, Feb. 25:** Virat Kohli on Thursday surpassed Mahendra Singh Dhoni's record of winning maximum number of Test matches as captain on home soil after leading the side to a 10-wicket victory over England in the day-night third Test here.

Kohli now has 22 victories at home in 29 Tests as captain which is one better than Dhoni, who had 21 wins in 30 Tests. Kohli already is India's most successful Test captain with 35 wins.

India chased down a target of 49 runs in only 7.4 overs to win the Test by 10



Virat Kohli

wickets and go up 2-1 in the series.

Sourav Ganguly and Mohammed Azharuddin have 21 and 14 victories to their credit as captains.

— *PTI*

**Ahmedabad, Feb. 25:** India knocked England out of contention from the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) final in June with their 10-wicket triumph in the day-night third Test here which propelled the hosts to the top of the standings.

India now have to either win or draw the final game here starting March 4 to claim the right to take on New Zealand at the Lord's. The Black Caps have already qualified and are placed second in the latest list.

"England have dropped to 64.1 percentage points

### NUMBERS GAME

**RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN JOINS 400-WICKET CLUB IN TESTS:**  
● Ravichandran Ashwin became the fourth Indian and 16th bowler overall to claim 400 wickets in Tests. The off-spinner from Chennai reached this milestone by dismissing Jofra Archer, leg before, in England's second innings on the second day of the third Test mach at Ahmedabad on Thursday (February 25).  
● By achieving this feat in his 77th Test match, he is the second fastest after Sri Lankan Muttiah Muralitharan who took his 400th wicket in his 72nd Test match.  
● Anil Kumble (619 wickets in 132 Tests), Kapil Dev (434 wickets in 131 Tests) and Harbhajan Singh (417 wickets in 103 Tests) are the other Indians to a ke 400 wickets before Ravichandran Ashwin.  
● Joe Root recorded his best bowling performance by taking five wickets for eight runs in India's first innings. It was first time England skipper has taken five-wicket haul with his off breaks in any type of the game. His previous best in Tests was four for 87 against South Africa at Port Elizabeth in 2019-20.  
● India slumped to their joint sixth lowest total against England at home by bowling out for 145 in 53.2 overs. India's lowest against England at home is 83 in 38.5 overs at Chennai in 1976-77.  
● Jonny Bairstow became the eighth England batsman to receive ducks in the both innings of a Test match against India. He is only fifth England batsman to achieve this 'unwanted' feat on Indian soil.  
● England were bundled out for 81 runs in 30.4 overs. It was first time when England were dismissed under 100 against India in Tests. Their previous lowest against India was 101 in 45.1 overs at The Oval in 1971.  
● Axar Patel became the fourth Indian bowler to take 11 or more wickets in a Test match against England. His match figures of 11 for 70 is the fourth best in India against England.  
— *S. PERVEZ QAISER*

# Shaw slams record score

**Jaipur, Feb. 25:** Mumbai captain Prithvi Shaw on Thursday became the highest individual scorer in Vijay Hazare Trophy national 50-over championships as he smashed an unbeaten 227 off just 152 balls to help Mumbai beat Puducherry by 233 runs in their Elite Group D game here.

The 21-year-old Shaw, who has played in five Tests and five ODIs, broke the earlier record of the highest individual score held by Sanju Samson (212 not out against Goa in 2019). Puducherry's decision to put Mumbai in to bat backfired badly as Shaw and Suryakumar Yadav (133 off 58 balls) toyed with their bowling attack at the Saiwai Mansingh Stadium and post a mammoth 457/4.

Prashant Solanki (5/48) then picked a five-for as Mumbai bundled out Puducherry for 224 to reg-

ister their third win on the trot.

Shaw and Yashasvi Jaiswal (10) added 58 runs for the first wicket to lay the foundation. After Jaiswal was dismissed, Shaw found an able partner in Aditya Tare (56, 7x4) as the duo stitched a 153-run stand for the second wicket. Suryakumar, who came in at No. 4, was in his elements, hitting 22 fours and four sixes. He and Shaw added 201 runs for the third wicket stand and helped Mumbai go past the 400 mark. — *PTI*

#### BRIEF SCORES

■ Mumbai 457/4 in 50 overs (Prithvi Shaw 227 not out, Suryakumar Yadav 133; Pankaj Singh 2/79) beat Puducherry 224 (Damodaran Rohit 63; Prashant Solanki 5/48)  
■ Himachal 251/8 (Nikhil Gangta 100 not out, Kulwant Kherjoliya 2/30) lost to Delhi 252/4 (Kshitiz Sharma 67 not out, Lalit Yadav 52 not out).



Mumbai's Prithvi Shaw celebrates his double century against Puducherry in the Vijay Hazare Trophy match at Saiwai Mansingh stadium in Jaipur on Thursday.

### STATE SQUASH CHAMPIONSHIP

## SANDHESH, ASHWIN STORM INTO SEMIS

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 25

PR Sandhesh and Ashwin Ganesh stormed into the semifinals in the U-17 section of the state closed squash championship at the Indian Squash Academy on Thursday.

#### RESULTS

**Boys U-15:** Round of 16: Arihant Ks (1) bt Shravin Jain 11-0, 11-2, 11-1. Ijaz Mohammed bt Meyyappan P 11-1, 11-2, 11-2. Darshil Parasrampuria bt Aravind R 11-0, 11-6, 11-4. Rahul Rathnavel bt Aarush Rajagopal 11-4, 11-0, 11-6. Sandhesh Pr bt Adithya 11-1, 11-3, 11-5. Paygon bt Advait 11-7, 11-4, 11-3. Jai Murlikanna bt Anbarasan 11-1, 11-2, 11-3. Aakash Kannan bt Dheer Hirani 11-6, 11-6, 11-6.

#### BOYS U-17

**QF:** Sandhesh Pr bt Aakash Kannan 11-6, 13-11, 11-8. Ashvin Ganesh bt Abhay S Vasudev 11-6, 11-4, 11-5.

#### BOYS U-19

**QF:** Navaneeth Prabhu bt Abhay S Vasudev 11-3, 11-4, 11-5. Adhil

Mohammed Syed bt Sreekartikayan 11-7, 11-7, 11-5. Arihant Ks bt Kautham Krish 11-2, 11-2, 11-7. Shreemann Raghavan bt Meyyappan L 11-7, 11-5, 11-2.

#### MEN

**Round of 16:** Guhan Senthilkumar bt Kautham Krish 11-2, 11-2, 11-3. Navaneeth Prabhu bt V. Anand 11-1, 11-3, 11-0. R Kishore Arvind bt Raghu Venkatesh 11-3, 11-4, 11-2. R. Dinesh bt Solomon Ravi 11-4, 11-6, 11-6. Vaarish Sawlani bt Murukesh Mani 11-7, 8-11, 11-7, 13-11. Kissan bt Chirag Surana 11-6, 11-7, 8-11, 11-7. Avinash Viswanathan bt Sathya Narayanan 7-11, 11-9, 8-11, 12-10, 11-6. Velavan Senthilkumar bt Adhil Mohammed Syed 11-3, 11-3, 11-2.

**Girls U-15: QF:** Ananya Narayanan bt M Amritha Rajalakshmi 11-2, 11-4, 11-6. **Round of 16:** Manvi Jain bt Tanusri Nanda Kishore 11-6, 11-3, 11-3. Yaavnaa Saravanakumar bt Sobana Stanly 11-1, 11-1, 11-1. Ananya Narayanan bt Ananthi Vivek 11-2, 11-2, 11-5.

# Blank-cheque buyers eye corporate spinouts

**KIEL PORTER & CRYSTAL TSE**  
FEB. 25

Blank-cheque companies, flush with cash and on the hunt for a private business to take public, have started adding corporate carve-outs to their list of potential purchases.

The surge in special purpose acquisition companies (Spacs), which have raised more than \$137 billion over the past 12 months, has set off a global search for suitable targets—usually startups with little revenue or mature companies sitting in private equity portfolios. Now Spacs are also looking at divisions of public companies, with an eye on those that have the potential to be carved out as standalone businesses.

Publicly traded Ireland-based packager Ardagh Group SA on Tuesday agreed to sell its beverage-can unit to a blank-cheque company backed by finan-

cier Alec Gores. The transaction valued the can business at \$8.5 billion, including debt, making it the biggest Spac deal involving a corporate carve-out since the surge began, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

This type of transaction could become popular as more blank-cheque firms move to the deal-making stage of their life cycle, crowding the market with suitors looking for a transaction.

"It's a pretty sizable deal," said Christopher Anthony, a partner at Debevoise & Plimpton LLP. "It'll be interesting whether this gets on people's radar and stokes interest for this type of transaction."

US-based Eventbrite Inc's co-founder Kevin Hartz, whose Spac on Wednesday announced a \$2.1 billion deal to merge with Markforged Inc, said that a public-company spinout was among the targets it reviewed before choosing

the manufacturer of 3D printers.

"Spacs have the ability to offer a path to liquidity not just for standalone-type private companies, but also public companies," Hartz said.

While blank-cheque companies have circled carve-outs before, some haven't made it to the finish line. Hartz said it's easier to complete a deal with a private company than a spin-out entity, whose financials and accounting functions must be separated from its parent.

Michael Klein's Churchill Capital Corp IV, months before it announced a deal with Lucid Motors Inc, held talks with AT&T Inc about acquiring a part of satellite provider DirectTV.

Some do succeed. Intercontinental Exchange Inc in January said it would list its cryptocurrency platform Bakkt Holdings LLC through a Spac in a deal that valued the unit at \$2.1 billion. — *Bloomberg*

## FINANCIAL Chronicle

### quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	49517.11 0.50
Nifty 50	14563.50 0.54
S&P 500*	3,803.94 0.11
Dollar (₹)	73.25 0.27
Pound Sterling (₹)	86.01 -0.05
Euro (₹)	81.51 -0.05
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,946▲297 0.60
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	56.43 1.38
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.931 0.12
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.168 0.034

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

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### ■ Country scores in digitalisation & connectivity

# India top over-performer in frontier technologies

**SANGEETHA G**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 25

India is the top "over-performer" in terms of readiness in using, adopting and adapting frontier technologies like artificial intelligence, big data, block chain and robotics, as per the Unctad global index.

The global index rates 158 countries on their readiness for frontier technologies based on five building blocks: information and communication technologies (ICT) deployment, skills, research and development (R&D), industry activity and access to finance. Frontier technologies are those that take advantage of digitalisation and connectivity. They include artificial intelligence (AI), the internet of things, big



data, block chain, 5G, 3D printing, robotics, drones, gene editing, nanotechnology and solar photovoltaic.


The Unctad report finds that a few developing nations are exhibiting stronger capabilities to use, adopt and adapt frontier technologies than their per capita GDPs would suggest.

"The greatest over performer is India, whose actual index ranking was 43, while the estimated one based on per capita

income was 108. Hence, India over performed by 65 ranking positions. It is followed by the Philippines, which over performed by 57 ranking positions," says the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Over-performance is measured as the difference between the actual index rankings and the estimated index rankings based on per capita income. Ukraine, Vietnam and China are also in the top five over-performers.

Outliers like India and China exceeded expectations by performing well for R&D. This reflects their abundant supplies of qualified and highly skilled human resources available at a comparatively low cost. They also have large local markets, which attract investment

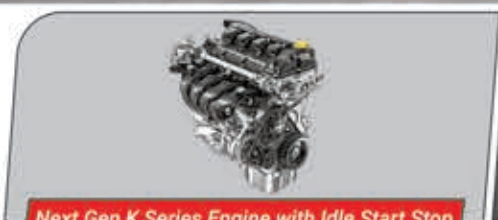


 **MARUTI SUZUKI** ARENA

The New 2021  
**SWIFT**  
LIMITLESS THRILL  
STUNNING LOOKS



**BELIMITLESS**



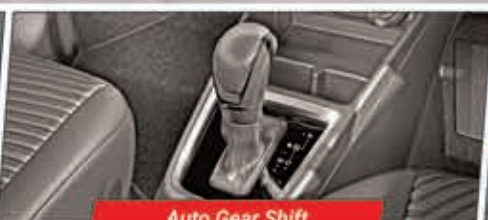
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