

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | TUESDAY 9 | FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 33°C
Min: 16°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Thai 27
Tithi: Thrayodashi
Star: Puradam
Rahukalam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm
Yamagandam:
9 am to 10.30 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.22 am
Zohar: 12.28 pm
Asar: 3.43 pm
Maghrib: 6.12 pm
Isha: 7.25 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.13 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.34 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 4.23 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 4.00 PM

CORONA COUNT

| CASES | DEATHS |
|-------------|----------|
| (+8,042) | (+54) |
| 1,08,47,142 | 1,55,172 |

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+464)
TN: 8,42,261 12,387

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

10,68,28,585

DEATHS

23,30,405

COUNTRIES,
AREAS WITH
CASES 219

worldometers.info

Civil service exam: SC asks Centre to consider if one-time relaxation can be given on age limit

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Monday asked the Centre to consider granting one-time relaxation on age limit to UPSC civil service aspirants, including those who had exhausted their last attempt in 2020 exam amid the Covid-19 pandemic and would get one more chance this year provided they are otherwise not age barred. The Centre had on February 5 told the apex court that it was agreeable to give an extra chance as a one-time relaxation to those civil service aspirants, who had appeared in their last attempt in the 2020 exam and are otherwise not age-barred.

Trump impeachment to open with debate on constitutionality

Washington: Donald Trump's historic second impeachment trial will launch this week with a debate and a vote on whether it's even constitutional to prosecute the former president over the deadly Capitol siege now that he's no longer in office. ■ P5

COUNTER POINT



He is ready to give the best price if the government wants to sell this jail!

Tribal girl, sold six times, ends life

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB. 8

An 18-year-old tribal, a victim of interstate human trafficking, was sold six times in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh over a period of two months before committing suicide in September last year. Arrest of eight accused including the alleged interstate human trafficking kingpin couple in Madhya

● **Arrest of eight accused including the alleged interstate human trafficking kingpin couple in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh on Monday unraveled the shocking and tragic story of the deceased**

Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh on Monday unraveled the shocking and tragic story of the deceased.

While Pancham Singh Rai and his wife were arrested in Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh, six of their accom-

plices were arrested in Lalitpur in Uttar Pradesh in connection with the human trafficking incident which ended in tragic death of the girl, hailing from Chhattisgarh.

According to the police, a

team of Chhattisgarh police landed in Chhatarpur on February 4 to trace out the girl following a complaint lodged by her parents alleging that a couple was threatening to kill her if they did not pay them money.

Later, a joint team of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh police on Monday raided the house of Santosh Kushwaha in Lalitpur in Uttar Pradesh and arrested him.

NATION | 4

₹41 lakh spent on Rafale jets induction event



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WORLD | 5

Netanyahu's corruption trial resumes

SPORT | 8

Djokovic off to fluent start



■ 'I will work for the party and strive for its growth till my last breath' Sasikala returns to enthusiastic welcome

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 8

Determined to capture the reins of AIADMK and to lead the party to victory in the Assembly elections, V.K. Sasikala, former aide of J. Jayalalithaa, returned to Chennai on Monday after four years of incarceration in Bengaluru with lakhs of supporters lining up to welcome her all along the highway. Speaking near Vaniyambadi, Ms Sasikala evoked the sentiments of the crowd by quoting an old MGR song to drive home the point that she was a slave to love, a slave to Tamil culture and a slave to her people but would never be cowed down by oppression.

Calling for unity in the AIADMK by terming the party cadre as children of one mother, she wanted them to be on a single line as her aim was to ensure that their common enemy was prevented from coming to power.

“We shall not give in to the divide-and-rule policy of our enemy. Our great organisation should not be wrecked for the personal likes and dislikes of some individuals,” she declared, hitting out at both the DMK and also the present AIADMK leadership.

She would work for the party and strive for its growth till her last breath, she said, adding that the party was her family and her family was her party. Jayalalithaa's children were her children, she declared to the crowd.

The AIADMK had risen like a phoenix whenever it went through tough times and it would face all odds,

● **“We shall not give in to the divide-and-rule policy of our enemy. Our great organisation should not be wrecked for the personal likes and dislikes of some individuals,” Sasikala declared, hitting out at both the DMK and also the present AIADMK leadership**

she told the crowds that eagerly gathered to accord a grand reception to the former party general secretary, who was expelled by the present leadership.

All through her journey on the Bengaluru-Chennai Highway, flowers, bouquets, garlands, folk dances, aarthis and poornakumbhams welcomed her with hordes of supporters, waving both the AIADMK and AMMK flags all along as her convoy inched its way home, making stopovers for her to receive the people's greetings.

Ms Sasikala, who started from the farmhouse in Bengaluru's suburb, where she has been staying since her release from the Parappana Agrahara jail on January 27, in a car with the AIADMK flag fluttering on the bonnet at 7.40 am was escorted till the Tamil Nadu border by a Karnataka police vehicle.

As she entered the state borders around 10 am, the flag was removed from her vehicle. But Ms Sasikala herself changed vehicles and boarded a Toyota MUV with the AIADMK flag on the bonnet. ■ P2



Expelled AIADMK leader V.K. Sasikala is welcomed by her supporters as she enters Tamil Nadu via Krishnagiri district, Monday. — PTI

AIADMK leaders in jitters

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 8

The massive crowds that turned up to welcome V.K. Sasikala as she returned to Chennai from Bengaluru on Monday has created a flutter in political circles with AIADMK leaders turning jittery and even DMK President M.K. Stalin taking note of the event. Speaking in Pudukkottai at a wedding function, Mr Stalin made a mention about someone starting from Bengaluru with a flag and said that “whatever will happen, will happen and the DMK will come to power in three months”.

Reacting to the return of Sasikala to the political scene, fisheries minister D. Jayakumar said that both Ms Sasikala and her nephew T.T.V. Dhinakaran were not members of the AIADMK. In fact they worked against the interests of the AIADMK in

the past elections, he said.

Calling them as the ‘B’ team of the DMK, Mr Jayakumar alleged that Mr Dhinakaran and Mr Stalin had a secret pact and that they had met in Madurai to strike the deal. Denying that there were sleeper cells within the AIADMK, he said that there were only traitors.

Though the state government had been cracking down on those who were showing their loyalty to Ms Sasikala by putting out posters welcoming her and also threatened her camp against the use of AIADMK flag in the cars, Ms Sasikala herself said that she had seen many such intimidations in life.

She was speaking to a local television channel on the eve of her departure to Chennai when she said that she would overcome the obstacles thrown at her. The party's grassroots level wo-

rkers were with her, she claimed and said that the party was made of those cadre.

Arasu Cable TV network blurring the images of JayaPlus channel, which had been telecasting live the journey of Sasikala from Bengaluru to Chennai on Monday and even carrying stories capturing the mood among the party cadre in the run up to the return since Sunday revealed the fears that had gripped the AIADMK leadership.

In fact, most leaders were reluctant to speak and the speculation is that they did not want to reveal their minds now because they were not sure as to how the wind would blow in the party. The rumour is some ministers would swing towards Ms Sasikala if they find her regaining her position and authority in the party.

‘YUDH ABHYAS’

Indo-US joint exercise begins in Rajasthan

Bikaner, Feb. 8: The 16th edition of the Indo-US joint military training exercise “Yudh Abhyas” commenced at the Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in the western sector of Rajasthan on Monday.

Brigadier Mukesh Bhanwala, Commander of the 170 Infantry Brigade of the Indian Army, welcomed the US contingent at the firing range and impressed upon both the armies to achieve optimum cohesion and interoperability during the exercise.

He laid stress on the importance of free exchange of ideas, concepts and best practices between the troops and the necessity to learn from each other's operational experiences, defence spokesperson Lt Col Amitabh Sharma said.

“The exercise will enrich both the contingents from each other's rich experience in counter-insurgency operations. Besides counter-insurgency operations, exchange of experiences in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief will also be a part of the exercise,” the spokesperson said in a statement. — PTI

EMERGENCY PURCHASE DUE TO SITUATION IN LADAKH: NAIK

New Delhi, Feb. 8: Emergency procurement of certain arms and equipment have been undertaken by the armed forces to beef up combat potential in view of the eastern Ladakh border standoff, the government said in Rajya Sabha Monday. Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik said the armed forces are procuring terrain and weather specific equipment to thwart the likely threat from India's “Northern adversary”, in a clear reference to China.

To a specific query, the minister also said no special allowance is given to families of the armed forces personnel who are posted along the border with China. “On the basis of the threat perception and technology available, the armed forces are procuring terrain and weather specific equipment to thwart the likely threat from our Northern adversary,” he said in a written reply. — PTI

R. Ashwin took six wickets as India fought back on the fourth day of the opening Test against England. Chasing a world record 420, India now requires 381 runs with nine wickets in hand. The day belonged to the Chennai duo of Ashwin and Washington Sundar. While Ashwin bagged his 28th five-wicket haul, Washington scored an unbeaten 85 in the first innings. — BCCI Report on P8



ASHWIN'S FEAT

WILL ATTEND MEET IF MODI CALLS IT: UNION LEADERS

SANJAY KAW | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 8

The farmers' unions which are on an agitation demanding the repeal of the three farm laws said the Prime Minister Narendra Modi should immediately call a meeting of the union leaders to end the stalemate. “If he (PM) calls a meeting tomorrow, we are ready to attend it... Today, the major question before us is how our agriculture mandis can survive,” farmer leader Satnam Singh Sahni said, reacting to Mr Modi's appeal to protesters to call off their agitation. Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait onday reiterated farmers' demand for a law on MSP for crops along with the repeal of the three agriculture-marketing laws and said that business over hunger will not be allowed in the country.

“Desh mein bhook pe vyapaar nahi hoga. Bhook kitni lagegi anaaj ki keemat utni hogi. Desh mein bhook se vyapaar karne walon ko baahar nikala jaega (There will not be business over hunger in the country. If hunger goes up, price of crops will be decided accordingly. Those wanting business over hunger will be driven out of the country),” Mr Tikiat said at Ghazipur border. , which has become one of the epicentres of the farmers' protests at Delhi borders. ■ P4

MAHARASHTRA TO PROBE TWEETS BY CELEBRITIES

Mumbai, Feb. 8: Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh Monday said the state intelligence department will conduct a probe into allegations that some celebrities were pressurised recently to issue tweets in connection with the ongoing farmers' protest.

Deshmukh made the remarks on an online platform after the Congress, a ruling coalition partner in Maharashtra, sought an investigation into the BJP's alleged connection with tweets of some celebrities and whether the saffron party ‘arm-twisted’ them.

Maharashtra Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant and some other party leaders on Monday raised the demand before Deshmukh in a meeting via video conference.

A number of prominent personalities, including cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar and legendary singer Lata Mangeskar, recently rallied around the central government on social media using hashtags #IndiaTogether and #IndiaAgainstPropaganda. This came after tweets by American pop star Rihanna and climate activist Greta Thunberg backing farmers who are protesting near Delhi's border points against the Centre's three new farm laws. After the virtual meeting with Deshmukh, Sawant in a tweet said, “Demanded investigation of BJP connection into the tweets of celebrities & security to be provided to our national heroes if needed & find out whether these celebrities were arm-twisted by BJP.” Responding to the demand, Deshmukh said the objection of the Congress leaders is in connection with the timing of the tweets and whether they were issued under pressure. Deshmukh noted that the tweets issued by badminton player Saina Nehwal and actor Akshay Kumar were similar. — PTI

FLOWER PETALS SHOWERED ON VEHICLE

Driving through a sea of supporters who had gathered at various points on the highway, Sasikala, in a shimmering green saree and facemask, accepted the greetings of the people with folded hands. Wherever her vehicle slowed down or stopped, flower petals were showered over it. The accumulation of flowers on the car's front windshield had to be repeatedly cleared and at one point an AMMK flag was used to clear the petals. Several cars and escort vehicles of private security personnel formed part of the convoy that meandered its way towards Chennai, causing severe traffic snarls at various points.



#SASIKALA TRENDS

In Twitter, #Sasikala trended along with #AIADMK and #AMMK and another hashtag 'TN welcome Chinnamma' was also on the top of the trending list. A video of her paying floral tributes to a portrait of J Jayalalithaa before starting her journey from Bengaluru along with her T T V Dhinakaran was also circulated through social media.

POSTERS CALL HER RAJAMATHA, DURGA

More posters started appearing on Monday with some of them suggesting that the two factions of AIADMK - the one led by O Panneerselvam and Edappadi K. Palaniswami and ruling the state and the one rallying around Sasikala - unite. Another poster called her a 'Rajmatha' while a banner, proclaiming to have come from Edappadi Constituency, the Chief Minister's home constituency, welcomed the 'Durga' who had come to destroy betrayal. Some banners erected to welcome Sasikala within the Karnataka border earned the wrath of pro-Kannada activists, who under the banner of Karnataka Rakshana Vedike, tore them down since they were in Tamil.

TV CHANNELS' LIVE TELECAST



Though Tamil television channels blacked out the massive roadshow on the Bengaluru-Chennai highway, JayaPlus, the channel once owned by the AIADMK and now run by the family members of Sasikala, beamed the images live since morning. Other channels that initially showed clippings from various places and also brought in guests for discussions suddenly stopped the telecast abruptly and moved on to show other news stories. However they resumed the live telecast later on. But the commentary and discussions on JayaPlus kept the people updated on the progress of Sasikala on the highway.

Sasikala back, flags jitters in AIADMK

SELFIES WITH HER

At points where crowds besieged Sasikala's vehicle men and women clicked photographs of her through the car glasses and some even tried taking selfies. One particularly youth on a motorcycle who managed to drive along with her car for a distance and was hauled up by the private security, was allowed to take a selfie with her. In the end, it turned out to be such a long journey as she took more than 17 hours to reach Chennai, a distance that could be normally covered in five hours. In Chennai, elaborate arrangements were made for her to pay tributes to AIADMK founder M G Ramachandran at his erstwhile residence in Ramapuram.



Travels in AIADMK functionary's car with flag

SANJEEVI ANANDAN | DC KRISHNAGIRI, FEB 8

Amid elaborate arrangements made by the police, V. K. Sasikala, close aide of former chief minister late J. Jayalalithaa, returned to Tamil Nadu on completion of her four-year jail term in Bengaluru's Parappanna Agrahara prison. She was given a big welcome at Zuzuvadi of Hosur here, by her supporters. Both the Karnataka and the Tamil Nadu police had put in place elaborate arrangements to handle any situation arising due to the large gathering of Sasikala's supporters. Over 1,500 police men including personnel from Krishnagiri and also from other districts were deployed for security purpose.

On their part, the Karnataka police had closed liquor shops and business establishments at Attibele on their side. Sasikala's supporters who tried to welcome their leader at Attibelle toll plaza were chased away by the Karnataka police.

Similar incidents were witnessed enroute to Attibele from Nandi hills where Sasikala stayed in a private resort. The police had to battle a mob that came to bid adieu to Sasikala, because of the trouble created by pro-Kannada outfits at Nandi hills, a few hours before Sasikala's departure to Tamil Nadu.

There was also trouble for the local 'Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam' (AMMK) cadres who initially made arrangements to welcome their leader. They rented a private vacant land for Sasikala to make her first public appearance from a public stage. But in a last minute glitch, Attibelle police revoked the permission given for the event, forcing the AMMK cadres to change the venue to a place near Zuzuvadi police check post in Hosur. They also prevented press reporters and her supporters from meeting Sasikala.

The situation in Tamil Nadu was also not smooth for Sasikala's journey, as SIPCOT police



V.K. Sasikala being felicitated on her return, after serving a jail term in a disproportionate assets case, in Krishnagiri district, on Monday.

Balakrishnan served notice to Sasikala over the unauthorised use of the AIADMK flag on her car bearing registration number TN09 BX9999. Her refusal to accept the notice resulted in tension at the place for some time. Her advocate N. Raja Senthur Pandian argued that the police have no role over the issue of using AIADMK flag by his client, but finally accepted it with an acknowledgement mentioning that 'the notice was accepted with protest'.

Finally, Sasikala stepped out of the car for darshan of goddess Muthumari, a temple at Dargha bus stop in Hosur. After the temple rituals, she entered Hosur town to a warm welcome by her supporters. As her convoy entered the Hosur SIPCOT area, Sasikala took the blessings of goddess Parthingara Devi and Sri Sri Sri Sathagiri Amma Elumalai Swamiji, followed by a special homam held for her well being.

At Shoolagiri, to the surprise of all, Sasikala was welcomed by supporters waving AIADMK flags, led by local unit AIADMK leaders including R. Sampangi and others. At Guruparappalli, Sasikala changed her car to another belonging to a local AIADMK functionary R. Sampangi, bearing registration number TN05 BR3333, allegedly due to some technical problems.

But in several quarters, this changing of cars is viewed as a tactic to avoid police action for the unauthorised use of the AIADMK party flag.

Fire damages two cars

As Sasikala's convoy entered Krishnagiri borders around 10 am, her supporters welcomed her by bursting crackers. Unfortunately, a car of one of her supporters was completely damaged as it caught fire due to the bursting of crackers. This incident triggered tension in Krishnagiri as AMMK supporters claimed it be the work of the rivals of their leader.

Strict vigil was maintained to avoid group clashes between Sasikala supporters and her rivals. The previous night, miscreants had damaged banners bearing Sasikala's image which were put up across Krishnagiri town.

Another car was also damaged in a fire at Bynapalli near Krishnagiri. This incident triggered tension for a while as Sasikala supporters linked the incident with the previous day's banner tearing incident in Krishnagiri town.

Later, it was found that the fire was triggered by AMMK cadres. The Sasikala supporters who waited at the Bynapalli toll plaza in Krishnagiri had also burst crackers leading to the mishap. One of the vehicles belonged to Vijayakumar of Erode. He had come to Krishnagiri to welcome his leader



Sasikala, and had parked the car in a place close to the spot where the crackers went off. The identity of the other vehicle's owner is yet to be known.

Police personnel there had removed the vehicles and

prevented the fire from spreading to other vehicles parked next to the burning ones.

The Krishnagiri fire and rescue services department staffs came to the spot and doused the fire.



A drone carries a poster of expelled AIADMK leader V.K. Sasikala as supporters welcome her return in Krishnagiri district, on Monday.

AIADMK CADRE IN SOUTHERN DISTRICTS WAIT FOR 'CHINNAMMA'

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUNELVELI, FEB. 8

In Tirunelveli, Sasikala's loyalists in the AIADMK, especially in Tirunelveli, Tenkasi and Ramanathapuram districts, where the party has strong base among the 'Mukkula thore' community, remained 'cats on the wall' to switch loyalty to their 'Chinnamma'.

The functionaries said they would decide their stand only after Sasikala unambiguously declares her political stand.

"Many of these functionaries, the 'suspect list' within the AIADMK, belong to the Mukkulathore community," said a AIADMK Tirunelveli district functionary. There is jubilation among the cadres in the grassroots

level after Sasikala's return, but Sasikala wants to join the AIADMK to strengthen it against the DMK to fulfill the dreams of party founder M. G. Ramachandran and former general secretary J. Jayalalithaa, he added.

Sasikala's return has also created an expectation among opposition leaders in the southern districts, who feel that the present crisis within the AIADMK of handling the Sasikala issue would help them. Ramanathapuram MP, Navaskani of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUM), one of the close allies of the DMK, said, "Sasikala's arrival has created confusion within the AIADMK and it will go in favour of the DMK alliance in the assembly election."

PROPERTY OF SUDHAKARAN AND ILLAVARASI IN KANCHI, CHENGALPET CONFISCATED

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB 8

Properties in Chengalpet and Kanchipuram districts owned by VN Sudhakaran and J. Illavarasi, close relatives of V.K Sasikala, have been confiscated by the respective district administration in compliance with a 2017 Supreme Court order, official sources said on Monday.

VN Sudhakaran and J. Illavarasi were also sentenced to undergo four-year imprisonment by the apex court in the year 2017. While Sasikala, close aide of late chief minister Jayalalithaa, was released on January 27, 2021, the other two are in jail and likely to complete their sentences soon.

The Kanchipuram district administration had confiscated 141 acres of land, valued at least Rs 300 crore owned by the duo in Walajabad's Uthukadu village. These are owned by Lex Property

Development Private Limited's partners Sudhakaran and Illavarasi.

Kanchipuram Collector Mageshwari Ravikumar visited the spot and reviewed the process. With the confiscation, necessary changes have been effected in the records and the properties are vested in the Government now. The income from the properties including rent and pending rent would accrue to the Government, the TN government said in a release on Sunday.

Similarly, properties belonging to them in Kithirpettai in Kanchipuram district and Cheyyur village in Chengalpet district were also confiscated on Monday, officials said.

Earlier on Sunday, Chennai district administration confiscated the properties of two in the city. This decision was taken in line with a 2017 Supreme Court order, the Tamil Nadu government said.

Speak Out

Why fee for digital payments?

The government of India / RBI has made it very clear that the common man should not bear any charges for making digital payments. Even merchant establishments are prohibited from levying such charges. Yet, TN Govt. levies up to 2 per cent for payments using credit/debit card, UPI, or net banking, for paying property tax through its Epanchayat portal. In RBI's own words "Such fees are not justifiable and are not permissible." And yet, this happens openly and publicly. PMO should immediately issue directions to all state governments to make this facility free of cost and RBI must ensure compliance.

P.K.Sundar, Coimbatore.

Fuel price hike unfair

It is really shocking to know that the prices of fuel products have recorded the highest and have crossed Rs.100 per liter mark for branded petrol in Rajasthan. Of course, the opposition party leaders would now come out on the streets to protest the price rise just for a day or two and then proceed with their own interest. Interestingly there would be suggestions to the state governments to reduce their local taxes, which differs from state to state.

When there is a uniform GST for all products, why there should be separate tax slabs for fuel is baffling. Less said about the increase in gas cylinder rate and the drastic cut in its subsidy is better. Whether it is Congress or BJP at the Centre and regional parties at the states, none of them is bothered about the hardships faced by the common man, who has to live within his meagre salary or pension.

N. Mahadevan, Chennai.

'Complaints not acknowledged'

The Tamilnadu CM is reported to have stated that an integrated grievance redressal system whereby the public can register their grievance through mobile phones will be flagged off in about a week's time. The idea of these systems is to ensure that one gets one's grievances redressed. If the grievances do not get redressed, irrespective of the system one opts for, the very systems become ineffective. Complaints made to officials through mail or other forms are not acknowledged. Similar is the case with the CM's cell. Coming up with new modes of systems does not mean anything; what is needed is a sound redressal mechanism, whereby the public gets speedy resolutions to the problems.

V S Jayaraman, Chennai.

SPEAKOUT IS A WEEKLY COLUMN.

Letters to this page should be typed or written on one side of the paper. All letters, including those sent by email, should bear the name, address and phone number of the writer. We will not use complaints without these details. If you have a complaint against a vendor or a corporate, mail the letter with supporting documentary evidence, or bring the same to the DC office. speakout.chennai@deccanmail.com Letters must reach by Friday.

AIADMK expels seven functionaries for alleged anti-party activities

Chennai, Feb 8: The ruling AIADMK on Monday announced removal of seven of its office bearers including a district deputy secretary for alleged anti-party activities.

Though party's coordinator O Panneerselvam and joint coordinator K Palaniswami did not specify the reason that prompted the

action against the seven, they were suspected to have joined in welcoming expelled AIADMK leader V K Sasikala upon her return to Tamil Nadu after serving a jail term at the Parappanna Agrahara central prison in Bengaluru.

The seven, from Tiruvallur and Krishnagiri districts, were being removed from

all posts, including primary membership, for going against party principles and bringing disrepute to it, the two leaders said in an AIADMK statement. They warned party workers to not to have any truck with them. Palaniswami is Tamil Nadi Chief Minister and Panneerselvam his deputy. —PTI



Twenty six elephants from various temples and mutts in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry were brought to Thekampatti in the district for the nearly two month long rejuvenation camp, which got underway on Monday. Forest Minister Dindigul Srinivasan, Local Administration minister S P Velumani and HR&CE Minister Sevur S Ramachandran inaugurated the camp by feeding fruits and sugarcane to the elephants. —B.Vignesh

OTHER STORY

Gold worth ₹49 lakh seized by Chennai customs

Chennai, Feb 8: The Customs officers at the Chennai international airport on Sunday seized 1.01-kilogram gold worth Rs 49 lakhs from two air passengers and arrested one of them.

According to the Airport sources, Based on intelligence, a 22-year-old man, Haroon Rashith of Chennai, who arrived from Dubai by Fly Dubai flight FZ-8515 was intercepted at the exit on suspicion of carrying gold.

He was subjected to a personal search and two heavy packets wrapped with black adhesive tape were recovered from his pant pocket. On cut opening, six gold cut bits weighing 350 grams valued at Rs. 17 lakh were recovered and seized under the Customs Act.

In another case on the same day, a passenger identified as Mohammed Manas (25) of Ramanathapuram who arrived from Sharjah by Indigo flight 6E-8245 was intercepted at the exit. Gold weighing 660 grams were recovered from his rectum. The same gold valued at Rs. 32 lakhs was recovered and seized under the Customs Act. He was arrested by the customs. In the two cases, Chennai customs made a seizure of 1.01 kg of gold worth Rs. 49 lakh. Further investigation is under progress.

Man attempts self-immolation

Chennai, Feb. 8: A 52-year-old man's attempt to self immolate was foiled at collectorate here on Monday during a grievance meeting with collector A. John Louis. Tension prevailed in the collector office for a few minutes after the incident.

Sources said the man identified as Velmurugan (52), from Taramani was talking to the collector when he doused himself with kerosene he had brought.

Velmurugan had applied for a patta for his land in Cheyyur village of Chengalpet district, 10 years back but the document is not being issued to him to this day. The collector directed the officials to immediately look into the issue and take action at the earliest. Further investigation is on.

Strategies to improve braking of electric vehicles

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 8

The researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology- Madras (IIT-M) have developed strategies to improve the braking performance of electric vehicles.

The research was led by Prof. C. S. Shankar Ram, department of engineering design, and PhD scholar V. S. Kesavan, who explored various strategies to study and incorporate the effect of different dynamic characteristics of 'friction brake' and 'regenerative brake' in vehicles. The study has been published in the peer-reviewed journal 'Vehicle System Dynamics'.

Prof. Ram said it was imperative to study the dynamic response during

on-road operation given the increasing adoption of electrified heavy road vehicles. "Brakes are used to ensure safe operation of vehicles, and this research focuses on braking of electrified heavy vehicles."

The team studied how performance is affected when braking systems are applied together or sequentially in heavy road vehicles. They evaluated how braking is affected when the regenerative brake is switched off quickly and gradually. They studied the effects of these strategies on both laden and unladen heavy road vehicles and considered two types of roads including dry and wet. Various strategies were evaluated through appropriate experiments performed in a hardware-in-

loop experimental setup equipped with 'IPG TruckMaker', a commercially-used vehicle dynamic simulation software.

It was found that on a dry road, co-operative braking (with regenerative braking as well as friction braking) reduces the vehicle stopping distance by 2.1 m, compared with conventional braking (friction braking alone) for a fully laden vehicle. Further, it was found that when the regenerative braking was switched off gradually, the effect of different dynamic characteristics of friction brake and regenerative brake reduces the percentage of momentary variation in the longitudinal deceleration by 80percent, in the pitch motion by 79 percent, in the suspension

deflection by 87 percent and in the wheel slip ratio by 90 percent compared with instantaneous switch-off.

These provide better driver braking feel, ride comfort and vehicle stability. The strategies developed by this study will ensure that one can get good ride comfort along with meeting desired brake demand and is therefore important for consideration by the electrified vehicle market.

The research team is now planning to extend the results of this study to analyse the impact of regenerative braking switch-off during active braking control in safety systems such as anti-lock brake system and electronic stability control system.

Kurumbas urge govt to include them in ST list

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, FEB. 8

The Tamil Nadu Kurumba (Kurumans) Makkal Munnatra Sangam has appealed to the state government to include the Kurumba community in the Scheduled Tribe list.

In a release at Tiruchy on Monday, sangam's state general secretary Veeran Muthusamy said a resolution to this effect was adopted at their state general council meeting held at Tiruchy on Sunday. He pointed out that their community was spread across 30 assembly segments of Tamil Nadu and hence a deciding factor in the next elections. He appealed to the parties to give them political recognition by allotting a few assembly seats in the forthcoming polls.

They would extend their support in the assembly election only to the political parties which accept these two demands, he added.

He said it was also decided to hold district and state-level agitations (in Chennai) before the end of this month to draw the state government's attention to their demands.

Plea to stop malpractices in higher education jobs

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, FEB. 8

The federation of temporary lecturers of private, government aided colleges, universities and its constituent colleges has appealed to Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to withdraw the government order (GO) which empowered the higher education department to regularise the services of honorary lecturers, who were not selected through a proper channel and entered service through the back door. The GO would severely affect the career of the qualified temporary lecturers working in private, government aided colleges, universities and its constituent colleges.

Federation's co-ordinator Prof. S. Tamilarasan, in a release at Tiruchy on Monday, said that a resolution to this effect was adopted at their emergency meeting held here on Sunday and added the GO will also affect the qualified persons and the aspirants of the college teacher's posts.

He said the meeting also appealed to the chief minister to introduce the common TRB system for the selection of assistant professors in government colleges.

He said it was decided to hoist black flags in the houses of the federation members, if the government did not accept their demands, and also to vote against the ruling party in the forthcoming assembly elections.

Colleges and schools reopen after long break

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, FEB. 8

After a slow retreat of Covid-19, students have begun to enjoy the taste of learning in classrooms with the reopening of colleges for all courses and schools for higher classes in the hills.

After a 10-month hiatus, students turned up in good numbers at their respective colleges here with renewed enthusiasm.

For the first year degree students Monday was special as they could step into the collegiate education scenario after completing their school education in last June.

Dr. M. Eswaramoorthy, Principal of Government Arts College here, said Monday saw over 80 percent of the students turning up at the college, apart from the students who joined the first year degree classes. This was a really very impressive feat amidst the Covid-19 crisis. The college is following the standard operating procedures.

In the schools, the enthusiasm among class 9 and 11 students to attend the classes was encouraging as many schools across the district reported a good turnout of students.



Senior students of Valliammal College for Women, Anna Nagar welcome first year students by giving rose and creating awareness on washing hands, wearing mask and maintaining social distance. —DC



Students of classes 9 and 11, Government girls higher secondary school, Chrompet, enter the campus with a temperature check. —DC

Colonial-era workshop gets green makeover



The colonial-era agricultural workshop has been converted into an ornamental garden in Washermenpet. Beautiful flowering plants enhance the the lawn. An audio arena has been set up to create awareness for children on importance of horticulture. —N.Sampath



DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 8

The department of horticulture has converted a vacant land at Washermenpet in north Chennai into a beautiful park at a cost of Rs 5 crore.

The construction began in January 2020 and a beautiful and sprawling park has come up on 3.8 acres out of the allocated five acres.

An audio arena is set up to create awareness for children. In addition, the park has 6,000 square feet of lawn with beautiful flowering plants and thousands of trees with enchanting leaves.

The park charges Rs 20 for adults and Rs 10 for children. Surveillance cameras will be installed in the park.

The government land, which was used as a workshop in 1920s for agricultural purposes, remained vacant for 18 years now. The agricultural machinery transported from the UK were stored and repaired in the workshop. "After the workshop was closed 18 years ago, this colonial land remained barren," said an official of the horticulture department.

Eventually, due to lack of maintenance the place got covered with bushes. Public often complained about anti-social activities. Subsequently, the horticulture department reclaimed the land and set up the park.

The old machinery in the agricultural workshop has been converted into an ornamental garden and more than 300 foliage machines are on display here.

Tamil Nadu records 464 new cases and four deaths

Chennai, Feb 8: The downward curve of Covid-19 cases in Tamil Nadu continued on Monday, with the state reporting 464 fresh infections while the active cases stood at 4,354.

The new patients, as well as the active cases, were lesser than those on Sunday, according to a government bulletin.

Among the new cases was a UK returnee. The total number of people who tested positive till date was 8,42,261.

Four people, including a 74-year-old man from Tirunelveli succumbed to the virus, with all the victims suffering from comorbid conditions, including chronic liver disease and hypertension, the bulletin said.

So far, 12,387 persons have succumbed to the pathogen.

On Monday, Chennai had the maximum number of fresh infections at 143, followed by Coimbatore (49) and Chengalpattu at 28.

Tenkasi had no new case, while 22 of the 37 districts had single digit additions. As many as 495 people were cured of the virus, as total recoveries surged to 8,25,520. —PTI

PF redressal meet tomorrow

Chennai: Nidhe Apke Nikat / PF near you will be conducted by the regional office of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation, Tambaram Region on February 10 (Wednesday) for mem-

bers/pensioners/employees having their P.F account/who are drawing pension/who are registered at RO Tambaram. The persons who have not got resolution for their grievances are requested to register

their grievances by e-mail to tam-grievances@epfindia.gov.in and can attend the Nidhe Apke Nikat programme on Wednesday from 10.30 Epfo, Ro Tambaram, according to a press release..

Ref : 1.G.O.(Ms)No.530, H&FW (N2) Dept, Dated : 05.12.2020

2.G.O.(Ms)No.588, H&FW (N2) Dept, Dated : 30.12.2020

3.W.P.(MD)No.19565 of 2020 and W.M.P(MD)Nos.16296 & 16297 of 2020 Before the Madurai Bench of Madras High Court Order Dated : 22.01.2021.

4. Health and Family Welfare (N2) Department letter No.396/ N2/2021-2 Dated : 02.02.2021

5.W.P.(MD)No.1935 of 2021 and W.M.P(MD)Nos.1650 & 1651 of 2021 Before the Madurai Bench of Madras High Court Order Dated : 04.02.2021.

6.R.No.66143/UHC/S2/2020, Dated : 06.02.2021 of the Director of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Chennai-6.

In Tenkasi District 41 Mini Clinics are going to be operationalised . The appointment for the post of Medical Officer is purely temporary on contract basis. Hence application for the post of Medical Officers are being welcomed on or before 16.02.2021, 5.00 PM

Sl. No Name of the Post No. of Vacancy Qualification

1 Medical Officer 41 1.MBBS (Degree from Government or Government approved Private Medical Colleges which are recognized by Medical Council of India).

2.Should have been registered with the Tamil Nadu Medical Council.

Conditions:-

1. The above mentioned posts are temporary only

2. Regularisation won't be done at any point of time and they will not be permanently absorbed.

3. The candidate should submit their undertaking to this effect before joining the duty.

Applications to be sent to :

The Deputy Director Health Services, The Secretary, District Health Society, O/o the Deputy Director Health Services Tenkasi @ Sankarankovil.

Note:

1. Application can be sent via Speed Post / Email or in person to above mentioned address only.

2. Application forms are available for issuing in office of the Deputy Director of Health Services, Tenkasi and all Block Primary Health Centres.

3. E-mail ID: dphskk@nic.in

4. The above mentioned number of posts is liable to change.

The Deputy Director Health Services

District Health Society, Tenkasi @ Sankarankovil

DIPR/232 /DISPLAY/2021

The District Collector

The Chairman, District Health Society

Tenkasi District.

SHORT TAKES

₹41 LAKH SPENT ON RAFALE JETS INDUCTION EVENTDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 8

Government spent ₹41 lakh (including ₹9.18 lakh GST) on the induction ceremony of five Rafale jets in September 2020 at Ambala Air Force Station, Parliament was informed on Monday.

"All new aircraft types in IAF are traditionally inducted through a befitting ceremony," said defence minister Rajnath Singh in a written reply. He said that the arrangements for this event were made mostly through local resources of IAF.

Singh, French minister of armed forces Florence Parly, CDS Gen Bipin Rawat and Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria were also present during the ceremony. The first five Rafale fighter aircraft were inducted in Squadron No. 17 or Golden Arrows at its first home base Ambala Air Force Station, one of the oldest air bases in the country.

In 2016, India had signed a ₹59,000 crore deal for 36 Rafales which will be based in Ambala and Hasimara (West Bengal) air bases. India has till now received 11 Rafale aircrafts.

On a question related to procurement for defence forces deployed at China border especially in Ladakh area, minister of state for defence Shripad Naik said that on the basis of the threat perception and technology available, the armed forces are procuring terrain and weather-specific equipment.

PAK INTRUDER KILLED BY BSF IN JAMMU

Jammu/New Delhi, Feb. 8: A Pakistani intruder was shot dead by the Border Security Force (BSF) along the India-Pakistan international border in Jammu on Monday, officials said.

The incident took place near the Chak Faquira border post (border pillar no 64) in the Samba sector around 9:45 am, they said.

"Despite repeated warnings, the intruder kept moving towards the border fence and was fired upon by BSF troops. Body of one Pakistani intruder has been recovered," a BSF spokesperson said.

The spot where the body was found is around 40 metres from the International Border on the Indian side, the officials said.

Another Pakistani intruder was similarly killed here in November 2020, while an underground tunnel was also detected in this region very recently, an officer said.

FARMERS FORCE BJP TO CANCEL MEET IN PUNJAB

Nawanshahr, Feb. 8: Farmers here on Monday forced their way through police barricades to protest outside the venue of a meeting called by the BJP, leading to the cancellation of the event which was to be attended by state party chief Ashwani Sharma.

Despite heavy police presence, the protesting farmers broke police barricades put up at several places and reached the meeting venue at Pandora Mohalla here.

Punjab BJP chief Ashwani Sharma was scheduled to meet party leaders, said officials.

Farmers led by activists of the Kirti Kisan Union staged a sin-in outside the venue and accused the BJP of spoiling the atmosphere by organising meetings despite the ongoing agitation against the Centre's new farm laws.

The farmers said they will continue to oppose the BJP till the Centre repeals its farm laws.

Later, the meeting was cancelled.

BJP's district president Poonam Manik described the incident as a "murder of democracy" and accused the ruling Congress of "orchestrating" such protests to "hide its failures".

Meanwhile, a group of farmers raised slogans against BJP leader and former Union minister Vijay Sampla in Moga.

Sampla was to hold public meetings in the wake of the upcoming municipal polls in the state. PTI

● **K by activists of the Kirti Kisan Union staged a sin-in outside the venue and accused the BJP of spoiling the atmosphere by organising meetings.**



Rescue operations underway at Tapovan Tunnel in Chamoli district on Monday, after a glacier broke off in Joshimath causing a massive flood in Dhaul Ganga river. — PTI

Survivors recount how a phone call saved their lives

ITBP men rescue 12 power project workers from tunnel in Tapovan

Joshimath, Feb. 8: They had lost hope of survival when one of them found his mobile phone network working, helping them contact the authorities who rescued them from an underground tunnel at Tapovan in Uttarakhand's Chamoli where flash floods wreaked havoc following a glacier burst.

"We heard people screaming at us to come out of the tunnel but before we could react, a sudden gush of water and heavy silt swamped upon us," rescued Tapovan power project worker Lal Bahadur said.

He, along with 11 of his other colleagues, was rescued by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) from an underground tunnel in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district on Monday evening.

According to officials, they remained stuck there for about seven hours, from around 10 am to 5 pm, till the last man was evacuated by rescuers.

The ITBP provided their recorded video accounts to the media.

They are now being treated at an ITBP hospital in Joshimath, about 25 km from the incident spot. This is also the base of the ITBP's Battalion No. 1, tasked with guarding the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China that runs along the state.

ISRO, DRDO helping to ascertain exact cause: CM

New Delhi/Dehradun, Feb. 8: As multi-agency relief operations continue in Chamoli and adjoining areas of Uttarakhand, Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on Monday said a comprehensive analysis of the entire incident is being carried out to avert future tragedies, and asserted the immediate priority was to provide food and other assistance to the affected people.

In an interview, he said the incident appeared to have happened due to the breaking of the glacier

and the chief secretary has been instructed to find out the real reasons.

"A DRDO team is already studying the cause of this tragedy and we have also sought the help of ISRO scientists and experts for the same," he said.

After a comprehensive analysis is undertaken to find the reasons of this incident, "we will build an elaborate plan to avert any potential tragedy going forward," Rawat said.

Asked about the ongoing relief operations, he said they are continuing in full

swing. "We have made all arrangements needed for the rescue and relief operations along with providing healthcare facilities to the affected people. Most importantly, we are working on re-establishing the connectivity to the affected villages," he said.

Rawat said while the extent of economic loss will be ascertained in due course, the top most priority for now is to save as many lives as possible and to rehabilitate those who have got displaced from their homes. — PTI

bridge (which was swept away by the floods), there are nine villages and choppers are dropping food packets after picking them up from our base in Joshimath," ITBP spokesperson Vivek Kumar Pandey said in Delhi.

Over 30 people from Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri who worked at a hydro project in Uttarakhand's Tapovan are missing after flash floods triggered by the breaking off a glacier caused extensive damage there. The missing people belong to Nighasan tehsil of Lakhimpur Kheri district.

The glacier burst at Joshimath in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district had triggered an avalanche and a deluge in the Alaknanda river system that washed away hydroelectric stations on Sunday.

The report of them going missing surfaced when some of the rescued workers contacted their family members and informed them about the tragedy.

According to the kin of those missing, at least 34 people from various villages — 15 from Ichhanagar, eight from Bhairampur; four from Babupurwa; three of Tikonika; and one each from Bhulanpur, Kadiya, Singahi and Mirzapur — are missing. — PTI

Protests erupt as BJP Rath Yatra diverted in WB

PRANMOY
BRAHMACHARI | DC
BERHAMPORE, FEB. 8

Within two days of its flag-off by Bharatiya Janata Party president J.P. Nadda from Nabadwip in Nadia, the first leg of the saffron party's Rath Yatra, calling for 'Parivartan' in poll-bound West Bengal, was allegedly stopped by the police at Beldanga in Murshidabad on Monday morning.

The incident took place a day before Nadda, in his second visit to the state in a span of three days, is expected to flag off the second leg of Rath Yatra from Tarapith in Birbhum.

As the ongoing procession came to a halt on its way, angry BJP workers erupted in protest and squatted on the Beldanga-Nowda state highway, putting up a road blockade for around three hours. They also shouted slogans against high handedness by the police.

Bengali TV actor Kaushik Roy, who participated in the rally, said, "Actually the ruling party is anguished by the spontaneous public welcome irrespective of cast, creed and religion to our event. So it is upto to stop our overwhelmed success."

● **THE INCIDENT** took place a day before BJP president J.P. Nadda, in his second visit to the state in a span of three days, is expected to flag off the second leg of Rath Yatra from Tarapith in Birbhum.

On Sunday afternoon, Trinamul Congress workers from Mirzapur in Beldanga shouted slogans against the Rath Yatra, objecting its route in the area.

BJP (Murshidabad) president Gouri Shankar Ghosh said, "The Rath Yatra entered the district as the party rank and file made an overnight stay at Bharat Sebasram Sangha in Beldanga. But the police stopped it to bar its passage through the Nowda-Hariharpara police station area, though it was our scheduled route, in apprehension of a communal trouble. Our Rath Yatra remained peaceful however."

Denying of stopping Rath Yatra, Superintendent of Police (Murshidabad) K. Sabari Rajkumar said, "Its route was diverted to National Highway 34 apprehending some trouble."

Later the Rath Yatra reached Berhampore.

Modi questions agitation motive

From page 1

He quoted former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the need for reforms in the farm sector and said Congress should take pride that Mr Modi had to do what the former prime minister wanted.

Mr Modi said since 2014 his government has initiated changes in the agriculture sector aimed at empowering the farmer. The crop insurance scheme was changed to make it more farmer friendly. The PM-KISAN scheme was also brought in, he added.

Taking a did at the internal strife within the Congress, Mr Modi said that while he was happy that Ghulam Nabi Azad had praised his government (on the holding of elections in Kashmir), he cautioned the Congress

not to do the opposite just because Mr Azad had said so. He said: "I hope your party takes it in the right spirit. They shouldn't make the mistake of doing just the opposite considering it as the view of the G-23."

The Congress, meanwhile, hit back at the PM's assertions. Raja Sabha MP Mallikarjun Kharge said: "In the wake of the farmers' agitation, we expected the Prime Minister would take back the laws and bring them back to Parliament after consulting with all stakeholders. But he didn't mention that. He only said people are agitating without understanding the laws. Is it possible?" He added: "He (PM) is misleading everyone by saying that people don't know what is in the laws. Are we all fools?" (Agencies)

'Will attend meet'

From Page 1

Mr Tikait's comments came in reaction to the Prime Minister's address in the Rajya Sabha where he assured farmers that the MSP will last forever.

On Mr Modi's remark about the emergence of a "new community" which is "engaged in protests", Mr Tikait said, "Yes, this time it is the farmers' community which has emerged and people are also supporting the farmers... This movement was first portrayed as

Punjab's issue, then Sikhs', then Jats, so on and so forth. The farmers of the country are united. There is no small farmer or big farmer. The movement belongs to all farmers," he said.

Another farmer leader Abhimanyu Kohar said that the protesting unions were ready to hold talks with the government only if it comes through formal channels. "Any issue can be resolved through proper dialogue. We are ready in-principle to resume talks."

Daily Covid-19 toll stays below 150

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 8

In a significant achievement, India's daily death toll due to Covid-19 has been less than 150 continuously for the last 10 days and in the last 24 hours, only 84 deaths were reported.

According to the Union Health Ministry, 17 States and Union Territories have not reported any

death in the last 24 hours. These are Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, Lakshadweep, Ladakh, Sikkim, Rajasthan, Meghalaya, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu-Kashmir, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Assam.

Besides 33 States/UTs have less than 5,000 active

cases. Health ministry officials said the effective strategy of containment including prompt tracing and tracking, aggressive and widespread testing, combined with standardized clinical management protocols have ensured the low mortality levels, in addition to consistent low daily positive cases.

"As part of the Covid management and

response policy, there has been a sharp focus of the Centre not only containing the Covid related fatality, but to reduce deaths and to save lives by providing quality clinical care to the critical and severe patients of Covid-19," officials added.

India has so far vaccinated 60,35,660 persons out of which 54,12,270 are healthcare workers and 6,23,390 are frontline workers.

FIGHTBACK | TIME

2 MLAs who defected to BJP in 2019 meets Chief Minister in Assembly chamber

Mamata unfazed by 'Ram card' threat, vows to return

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, FEB. 8

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised that the people of West Bengal "would bid farewell" to the ruling Trinamul Congress with the "Ram Card" in the coming Assembly polls, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, amid large-scale defections by party MLAs to the BJP, exuded confidence in returning to power for a third consecutive term with a "havoc majority" as two former TMC MLAs, now in the saffron party, met her on Monday, triggering speculation of their possible

comeback to the party. The TMC supremo made the statement in the Assembly Monday while replying to the debate on the state budget, a vote on account in an election year, that she had presented last week. "Do not worry. Finish the pending work. Talk about development work of our government. In the Assembly polls, the TMC will come to power again in the state with a havoc majority," Ms Banerjee said, without specifying any numbers.

Showing the victory sign after a photo-op with all MLAs at the end of the three-day budget session, that also marked the 16th

Assembly's closure, she later said: "Many are claiming I will not return, but I will be back."

Her positive gesture came after Bongaon North MLA Bishwajit Das and Noapara MLA Sunil Singh, who defected to the BJP from the TMC in June 2019 along with several councillors, held confidential meetings with her in her Assembly chamber on Monday, in a dramatic twist. Mr Singh is a relative of Barrackpore BJP MP Arjun Singh. Mr Das and Mr Singh claimed, however, that they had met the CM as MLAs on the subject of work in their constituencies.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee hands over the Lifetime Achievement Award to former Olympian hockey player Bir Bahadur Chettri at the 'Khelashree' award function, in Kolkata, Monday. — PTI

IN BRIEF

Armed men kill 19 in Nigeria

Kano, Nigeria: Nineteen people were killed at the weekend when armed men raided two villages in northwest Nigeria's Kaduna state, the government said, in the latest violence to hit the region. Gunmen from kidnapping and cattle rustling gangs — called bandits by locals — often raid villages in northwest Nigeria, stealing cattle, kidnapping for ransom and burning homes after looting supplies.

Aussie journalist held in China

Sydney: An Australian journalist who worked as an anchor for Chinese state television has been formally arrested for “illegally supplying state secrets overseas”, six months after she was detained in China without explanation, Canberra said on Monday. Australia's foreign minister Marise Payne said Chinese authorities informed her that Cheng Lei was formally arrested on February 5, after disappearing from public view last August.

Iran refuse French mediation in N-deal

Tehran: Iran appeared Monday to dismiss an offer by France to mediate between the United States and the Islamic republic in order to revive the 2015 nuclear deal. “The nuclear deal has no need for a mediator,” foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters without specifically mentioning France, but in response to a question about recent comments by the country's president. Emmanuel Macron said last week he was ready to act as an “honest broker” in talks between the new US administration of President Joe Biden and Tehran after the multilateral deal was torpedoed by ex-president Donald Trump.

US CAUCUS TO INDIA: MAINTAIN DEMOCRATIC NORMS

Washington, Feb. 8: A powerful India Caucus in the US Congress has urged the Indian government to ensure that the norms of democracy are maintained and protesters allowed to demonstrate peacefully and have access to the Internet as it held a meeting with New Delhi's envoy here. India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu, who regularly interacts with India Caucus members on a number of issues, had a virtual meeting with the top leadership of the Congressional India Caucus last week. The members included congressmen Brad Sherman and Steve Chabot who are the two Co-Chairs of the Congressional India Caucus along with Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna, who is the Vice Chair of the Caucus. “During this discussion, the caucus leadership welcomed reforms in the Indian economy including in agriculture,” sources said. During the meeting, the leadership of the India Caucus, which is the largest country-specific caucus in the House of Representatives, condemned the violence on January 26 in Delhi. Among other things “they were appreciative of the government's perspective on the farm reforms,” according to the sources. Sherman tweeted that they urged India to ensure that the norms of democracy are maintained and the protesters allowed to demonstrate peacefully and have access to the Internet.



People stage a demonstration against the February 1 military coup along a street in the town of Muse in Shan state, near the China-Myanmar border on Monday.

Myanmar's junta imposes curfew to stop protesters

Yangon, Feb. 8: Myanmar's military government imposed a curfew and bans on gatherings of more than five people in the country's two biggest cities on Monday as protests against last week's coup showed no sign of abating. The decrees covering Yangon and Mandalay were issued on a township-by-township basis, and those which have become public so far have the same restrictions. At least seven have been issued, and more are expected for other areas. Rallies and gather-

ings of more than five people, along with motorized processions, are banned, and a 8 pm to 4 am curfew is imposed. The measures are effective until further notice. The decrees say in response to people carrying out unlawful actions that harm the rule of law. The generals issued a stern warning Monday against further protests as an uprising against their coup gathered pace, with hundreds of thousands on the streets demanding the release of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The junta has so far refrained from using deadly force to quell the demonstrations sweeping most of the country, but with pressure building riot police fired water cannon in an attempt to disperse thousands gathered in Nanyidaw. The military last week detained Suu Kyi and dozens of other members of her National League for Democracy party, ending a decade of civilian rule and triggering international condemnation. In the face of an increasingly bold wave of defiance, state

broadcaster MRTV warned that opposition to the junta was unlawful and signalled a potential crackdown. “Action must be taken according to the law with effective steps against offences which disturb, prevent and destroy the state's stability, public safety and the rule of law,” said a statement read by an announcer on the channel. Tens of thousands of people overcame a nationwide internet blockade to rally over the weekend in the first major outpourings of opposition to the coup.

— AP/AFP



Benjamin Netanyahu

NETANYAHU'S CORRUPTION TRIAL RESUMES

Jerusalem, Feb. 8: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu briefly appeared in a Jerusalem courtroom on Monday to respond formally to corruption charges just weeks before national elections in which he hopes to extend his 12-year rule. Netanyahu was indicted last year for fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate cases. In recent months, Israelis have held weekly protests calling on him to resign over the charges and criticizing his government's response to the coronavirus crisis.

He stands accused of accepting lavish gifts from wealthy friends and offering to grant favours to powerful media moguls in exchange for favourable coverage of him and his family. The latest hearing was postponed last month due to lockdown restrictions on public gatherings.

— AP

S Africa to try new vaccine after stopping AstraZeneca WHO holds virtual meet over vaccine

Johannesburg, Feb. 8: South Africa is considering giving a Covid-19 vaccine that is still in the testing phase to health workers, after suspending the rollout of another shot that preliminary data indicated may be only minimally effective against the mutated form of the virus dominating the country.

The country was scrambling Monday to come up with a new vaccination strategy after it halted use of the AstraZeneca vaccine — which is cheaper and easier to handle than some others and which many had hoped would be crucial to combatting the pandemic in developing countries.

Among the possibilities being considered: mixing the AstraZeneca vaccine with another one or giving Johnson & Johnson's single-dose vaccine, which has not yet been authorised for use anywhere, to 100,000 health care workers while monitoring its efficacy against the variant.

The abrupt change in strategy was prompted by preliminary results in a small study that showed the AstraZeneca vaccine was only minimally effective against mild to moderate cases of the disease caused by the variant.

There is reason to hope the Johnson & Johnson vaccine may fare better in the country.

— AP

Geneva, Feb. 8: The World Health Organisation's vaccine experts were deciding on Monday on their usage recommendations for the AstraZeneca-Oxford Covid-19 vaccine — including for older adults. The 15-member Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) was spending the day in a virtual extraordinary

meeting discussing the two-shot vaccine. The WHO said the recommendations on who it should and should not be used for would be made public later this week. The regulatory authorities in several European nations have not authorised the vaccine for use among the over-65s — by far the most vulnerable age group for serious Covid-19 disease.

— AFP

Tanzanian prayers fail to prevent virus

Dar es Salaam, Feb. 8: Tanzania has spent more than six months trying to convince the world it has been cured of the coronavirus through prayer, while refusing to take measures to curb its spread.

However, dissent is mounting, along with deaths attributed to “pneumonia”, with even a politician in semi-autonomous Zanzibar admitting he has the virus.

“Covid-19 is killing peo-

ple and we see a lot of cases but we cannot talk about the disease,” said a doctor in a public hospital in Tanzania's biggest city Dar es Salaam, who like many asked not to be named for fear of reprisals.

Tanzanian President John Magufuli has continually played down the seriousness of the virus even as neighbouring countries shut borders and implemented curfews and lockdowns.

— AFP

US plans re-entry in UN rights panel

Finds authoritarian rulers leading UNHRC

Washington, Feb. 8: Announcing the new approach from Washington, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the pullout in June 2018 “did nothing to encourage meaningful change, but instead created a vacuum of US leadership, which countries with authoritarian agendas have used to their advantage.”

“The Biden administration has recommitted the United States to a foreign policy centered on democracy, human rights, and equality,” he said in a statement. “Effective use of multilateral tools is an important element of that vision.”

The decision is likely to draw criticism from conservative lawmakers and many in the pro-Israel community, who have derided the council and echoed Trump administration complaints that it was too quick to overlook abuses by autocratic regimes and governments and even accept them as members.

Blinken said President Joe Biden had instructed the State Department to “reengage immediately and robustly” with the council, but he acknowledged it still needs work.

“We recognise that the Human Rights Council is a flawed body, in need of reform to its agenda, membership, and focus, including its disproportionate focus on Israel,” he said.

Blinken said the council, when it works well, “shines a spotlight on

Impeachment trial of Trump today

Washington, Feb. 8: Donald Trump's historic second impeachment trial is opening this week with a sense of urgency — by Democrats who want to hold the former president accountable for the violent US Capitol siege and Republicans who want it over as fast as possible.

Scheduled to begin on Tuesday, just over a month since the deadly riot, the proceedings are expected to diverge from the lengthy, complicated trial that resulted in Trump's acquittal a year ago on charges that he privately pressured Ukraine to dig up dirt on a Democratic rival, Joe Biden, now the president. This time, Trump's Jan. 6 rally cry to “fight like hell” and the storming of the Capitol played out for the world to see. While Trump very well could be acquitted again, the trial could be over in half the time.

Details of the proceedings are still being negotiated by the Senate leaders, with the duration of opening arguments, senators' questions and deliberations all up for debate.

So far, it appears there will be few witnesses called, as the prosecutors and defense attorneys speak directly to senators who have been sworn to deliver “impartial justice” as jurors. Most are also witnesses to the siege, having fled for safety that day as the rioters broke into the Capitol and temporarily halted the electoral count certifying Biden's victory.

Defense attorneys for Trump declined a request for him to testify. Holed up at his Mar-a-Lago club, Florida, the former president was silenced on Twitter without comments since leaving the White House.

— AP

countries with the worst human rights records and can serve as an important forum for those fighting injustice and tyranny.” “To address the council's deficiencies and ensure it lives up to its mandate, the United States must be at the table using the full weight of our diplomatic leadership,” he added.

Trump pulled out of the council due to its disproportionate focus on Israel, which has received by far the largest number of critical council resolutions against any country, and because it failed to meet an extensive list of reforms demanded by then-US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley.

— AP

No jury in Hong Kong's 1st national security trial

Hong Kong, Feb. 8: Hong Kong has decided against using a jury for the first trial under a sweeping national security law imposed by Beijing, a legal source with direct knowledge of the case said on Monday.

Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng informed the defendant's legal team in early February, citing “the personal safety of jurors and their family members”, the source said.

Instead the trial will be heard by three judges who have been appointed to try national security cases.

A Department of Justice spokesperson declined to comment when asked because proceedings were ongoing.

The spokesperson for the judiciary also declined to comment “on individual cases”.

Trial by jury has been used by Hong Kong's common law legal system for 176 years and is described by the city's own justice department as one of the judiciary's “most important features”.

But the new national security law — which was imposed by fiat last June — allows for trials to be heard by dedicated national security judges in some circumstances.

The first person to

face trial is Tong Ying-kit, a 23-year old man arrested the day after the law came in to effect for allegedly driving his motorbike into a crowd of police officers while flying a protest flag.

Currently on remand, he is charged with terrorism and inciting secession — two new national security crimes — and faces up to life in prison if convicted. His case is being handled by the High Court's Court of First Instance, where trials are usually heard by a judge alongside seven to nine jurors.

According to the legal source, the Secretary for Justice invoked Article 46 of the national security law, which states three instances where juries can be scrapped for national security crimes.

— AFP

CHINA BLOCKS UNCENSORED CLUBHOUSE APP

Beijing, Feb. 8: A rare uncensored app that had attracted Chinese internet users to freely discuss taboo topics, including the mass detention of Uighurs, democracy protests in Hong Kong and the concept of Taiwanese independence appeared to have been blocked on Monday night. Authoritarian China deploys a vast and sophisticated surveillance state to scrub the internet of dissent and prevent citizens from accessing international social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter in what is often known as the “Great Firewall”.

SOCIAL | CONNECTION

Kim Beom-su, worth \$9.4 billion is founder of KakaoTalk

Korean billionaire to donate his wealth

Seoul, Feb. 8: One of South Korea's wealthiest people, the billionaire founder of the country's biggest mobile messenger operator KakaoTalk, promised on Monday to give away more than half his wealth.

The decision by self-made Kim Beom-su, worth around \$9.4 billion, is an unusual one for the world's 12th-largest economy, where business is dominated by sprawling family-controlled conglomerates.

“I have pledged to donate more than half of my assets throughout my life

to solve social issues,” Kim said in a message sent to all of Kakao's employees.

Kakao, founded in 2010, has a range of mobile offerings and its flagship messaging application is installed on more than 90 per cent of phones in South Korea.

Forbes described Kim the nation's “biggest gainer” during the Coronavirus pandemic last year.

His firm benefited from social distancing measures that saw more use of its messaging app, e-commerce platform, and



Kim Beom-su

online games. The promise to donate more than half of a billion-dollar fortune is at the core of the Giving Pledge, the philanthropic initiative set up by Bill and Melinda Gates, as well as Warren Buffett.

More 200 super-wealthy have signed the pledge, according to its website, but it has struggled to make headway in East Asia, listing only a hand-

ful of donors from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan — and none from Japan or South Korea.

Kim said he was looking to make his pledge official, adding discussions on the details of his donation were “at the early stage”. “I plan to find and help people that Kakao has difficulty approaching to solve social problems,” he added.

Kakao reported 120 billion won in operating profit in the third quarter, up 103 percent from a year earlier, and is expected to report record yearly profits for 2020.

— AFP

| தமிழ்நாடு அரசு பொது சுகாதாரம் மற்றும் நோய் தடுப்பு மருந்துத்துறை மாவட்ட நலவாழ்வு சங்கம் (District Health Society), திருப்பூர். | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| அறிவிப்பு - NOTIFICATION | | | |
| <p>பார்வை: 1. G.O (Ms) No. 530, H&FW(N2) Dept., Dt. 05.12.2020 பார்வை: 2. G.O (Ms) No. 588, H&FW(N2) Dept., Dt. 30.12.2020 பார்வை: 3. W.P.(MD) No. 19565 of 2020 and W.M.P.(MD) Nos. 16296 & 16297 of 2020 BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT ORDER- Dt. 22.01.2021 பார்வை: 4. HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (N2) DEPARTMENT Letter No. 396/N2/2021-2, dated 02.02.2021 பார்வை: 5. W.P. (MD) No. 1935 of 2021 and W.M.P. (MD) Nos. 1650 & 1651 of 2021 Dated. 04.02.2021.</p> <p>திருப்பூர் மாவட்டத்தில் செயல்படும் மனித சிவனில் மற்றும் நல வாழ்வு சபைகளில் (HWC) உள்ள கீழ்க்கண்ட பதவிகளில் ஒப்பந்த அடிப்படையில் பணியாற்றத் தகுந்த விண்ணப்பங்கள் 15.02.2021 மாவட்ட 5 மணிக்குள் வாங்கெடுக்கப்படும்.</p> | | | |
| வ. எண். | பதவியின் பெயர் | பதவியிடங்களின் எண்ணிக்கை | தகுதி |
| 1 | மருத்துவ அலுவலர் (Medical Officers) | 49 | MBBS (Qualified) Registered under TNMC |
| நிபந்தனைகள் : | | | |
| <p>1. இந்த பதவி முறிலும் தற்காலிகமானது. 2. எந்த ஒரு காலத்திலும் பணி நிறுத்தம் செய்யப்படமாட்டாது. 3. பணியில் நேருதவத்தான சபையிருப்பு ஒப்புதல் கடிதம் (Undertaking) அளிக்க வேண்டும். விண்ணப்பம் அனுப்ப வேண்டிய முகவரி :</p> <p>நிர்வாக செயலாளர் / துணை இயக்குநர் சுகாதாரப்பணிகள், மாவட்ட நலச்சங்கம் (District Health Society), துணை இயக்குநர் சுகாதாரப்பணிகள் அலுவலகம், எண். 147, நெடுப்பெரிச்சல் ரோடு, பூதூர், திருப்பூர் - 641 602</p> | | | |
| குறிப்பு : | | | |
| <p>1. விண்ணப்பங்கள் தேர்தலை / விண்ணப்பம் / விண்ணப்பம் மூலமாகவோ வாங்கெடுக்கப்படும். 2. விண்ணப்பப்புகளில் மாவட்ட துணை இயக்குநர் சுகாதாரப்பணிகள் அலுவலகத்தில் மற்றும் வட்டார ஆராய்ச்சு சுகாதார நிலையங்களிலும் பெறக்கூடாது. 3. பிள்ளைகள் மூலகரி (E-mail ID) miniclinicpr@gmail.com 4. மேற்கூறிய பதவிகளின் எண்ணிக்கை மாறுபடும். 5. கீழ்க்கண்டபொதுப்பிட்டுள்ளதற்கு சான்றிதழ் சரிபார்க்க / தேர்வுக்கு பொருத்தமான வேட்டாளர் அமைக்கும் உரிமை உள்ளது.</p> | | | |
| <p>செயலாளர் / துணை இயக்குநர் சுகாதாரப்பணிகள், மாவட்ட நலச்சங்கம், திருப்பூர் மாவட்டம், தலைவர் மாவட்ட நலவாழ்வு சங்கம், திருப்பூர் மாவட்டம், வெ.அ.எண். 69 / 2021/செ.அ.நெ.அ. திருப்பூர் / நாள் : 08.02.2021</p> | | | |

DECCAN Chronicle

9 FEBRUARY 2021

An ecological tragedy of Himalayan proportions

A tragedy of gargantuan proportions washed away close to 200 people, destroyed or damaged two hydroelectric dams and five bridges as the Nanda Devi glacier burst in Uttarakhand. The GLOF (glacier lake outburst flood) event that created a deluge of frightening proportions downstream in rivers was said to have been triggered by an avalanche on Sunday morning. The rescue efforts by over 2,000 members of the Army, police and paramilitary forces, and state and national disaster response teams have been heroic as the Himalayan state grappled with yet another tragedy like the 2013 monsoon floods in the wake of cloudbursts that killed nearly 6,000 people, which was the worst ever toll as muddy water poured down the gorges and drowned entire villages.

Ecologically fragile regions around the world are fraught with danger and the pace of development in sustaining a rising population trend, and man's co-existence with nature has been threatened in the most basic ways. The fallout from deforestation is clear even as the more populated stretches of the Himalayas show how precariously man is perched on mountainous terrain. It is obvious that lessons have not been learnt from years of having to deal with floods from the monsoon or melting glaciers. It is against this background that the foolishness of building hydroelectric dams too close to glaciers must be viewed when global warming is seen to create havoc in the icy Himalayan upper reaches.

It is a specious argument that a state which has to purchase power in the region of ₹1,000 crore a year must build dams in ecologically sensitive regions in order to save money. So long as the consumer pays for the power purchased, there should be no need for Uttarakhand to spend thousands of crores in building dams to generate electricity. They have been warned about this, including in scientific advice tendered to ruling party politicians. The era of building dams is truly over as man has learnt from experience that Nature is a force that can be overpowering when it is taken on or teased.

Himalayan efforts by a tiny state like Uttarakhand can't by themselves reverse global warming but man can learn from the simple principle that Nature cannot be toyed with, particularly in fragile zones. Melting glaciers are the clearest signs of climate change, and since this event took place outside the monsoon period, it is safe to assume human intervention was a causative factor. It will be up to scientists to study the event and render an opinion on what may have caused it and it is entirely up to the administration in hilly areas to enforce laws strictly to ensure that ecological preservation rules are always followed lest such events recur.

Quick communication of the impending water flow may have saved hundreds of lives downstream of the Ganga's several tributaries as many villagers were evacuated in time. The standard announcement of relief to the families of the dead followed a pattern which points to the government's utter helplessness in dealing with calamities and in stopping human contribution to climate change. The bursting of a glacier in the Garhwal Himalayas is a chilling warning of what we may be up against if we continue to recklessly exploit our planet's finite resources.

‘Gilt’ option for citizens

The Reserve Bank of India, during its latest monetary policy review, proposed to allow retail investors to park their money in government securities (G-Secs) — also called “gilt bonds” — by opening gilt securities accounts or “retail direct”. This is one of a series of steps that the Reserve Bank has been taking since January 2002 to increase the participation of a larger number of people in the purchase of government securities.

G-Secs are tradeable investment instruments issued by the Central or state governments and are the most risk-free sovereign-backed bonds available in the country. These securities are available in both short-term and long-term tenures — ranging from three months to 30 years — with an annual yield starting from 3.37 per cent. Though commercial banks and asset management companies dominate the G-Secs market now, the RBI's decision would provide a new risk-free investment option for retail investors.

This decision could also provide elbow room for the Central government to reduce its presence in the banking sector. A couple of years back, former RBI governor Yaga Venugopal Reddy had said that an “average citizen of India is most comfortable banking with PSU banks”. Sixty-five per cent of total deposits in the banking sector are with the public sector banks for the mere reason that they are owned by the government. If most risk-averse depositors could be persuaded to shift to the G-Secs, the government could go ahead with the denationalisation of banks at a faster pace.

However, there still remain a few challenges. Since G-Secs offer lower yields than fixed deposits, many people might not find it an attractive investment option. Banks' fixed deposits and small saving schemes have become a safety net for vulnerable sections of society and unless the government creates a decent social security net, they cannot be wished away by any government without facing the consequences in election season.

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

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Democracy Index: Why India's rank now falling

The Economist is a magazine though it refers to itself as a newspaper. It is over 175 years old and sells about 10 lakh copies a week. Its readers are mostly professionals, highly educated and with higher incomes. It is one of the very few magazines in the world, and possibly the only one of its size, which makes more money from subscriptions than it does from advertising. That means that its readers purchase it for its content. One year's subscription costs ₹15,000 in the United States, meaning that each issue is ₹300.

The magazine promotes free market policies of the sort generally associated with conservative, meaning right-leaning, parties. The Economist Intelligence Unit is its research and analysis division. Each year it compiles a “Democracy Index”, which shows the state of democracy around the world. This month, it gave its results for 2020. It would be instructive to see what it has said about India.

We have fallen from a global ranking of 27 in 2015 to 53. This is mainly, the Economist Intelligence Unit says, because “democratic norms have been under pressure since 2015”, and

as a result India's “global ranking slipped from 27th to 53rd as a result of democratic backsliding under the leadership of Narendra Modi”.

The slippage has not come due to electoral processes and political participation where, as most of us will accept, India continues to do well. The problem is on the side of political culture and civil liberties, where since Narendra Modi took over in 2014 India has declined. In January 2014, in the UPA's last days, the EIU gave India its highest rating of 7.92. This slid to 7.74 in 2015 and then 7.23 in 2017 and then dipped to 6.9 in 2019 and 6.61 in 2020. The EIU classifies India as a “flawed democracy”.

It describes flawed democracies as countries that have free and fair elections and, even if there are problems (such as infringements on media freedom), basic civil liberties are respected. “However, there are significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation.”

In the last few years, India has seen “the increasing influence of religion under the Modi premiership, whose policies have fomented anti-Muslim

feeling and religious strife, has damaged the political fabric of the country”. Remember, this is the magazine the world's topmost corporate executives and decision makers read. While our government responded strongly to Rihanna and Greta Thunberg, with the external affairs ministry issuing a statement, it hasn't said anything on this downgrade, which more people will read and take seriously than someone's tweet.

The EIU says that the enactment in December 2019 of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 “continued to fuel riots in 2020, with several left dead following clashes in February in the capital city, New Delhi. The act introduces a religious element to the conceptualisation of Indian citizenship, a step that many critics see as undermining the secular basis of the Indian State”.

The magazine does not deny Mr Modi's popularity but says that it comes from the same aspects it finds concerning. It says that he participated in the ground-breaking ceremony at the site of the destroyed Babri Masjid, and notes “the temple's construction will further endear Mr Modi to his Hindu nationalist base”.

Unfortunately for us, this is not a

popularity contest. The EIU says: “On top of these issues, the authorities' handling of the pandemic has also led to a further erosion of civil liberties in 2020.” And finally, it notes “by contrast, the scores for some of India's regional neighbours, such as Bangladesh, Bhutan and Pakistan, improved marginally in 2020”.

For those who think India's democracy is just fine and there has been no change in the past few years, perhaps it would be instructive to see what has happened on a few issues. The first is the introduction of electoral bonds. This is a mechanism whereby corporates and even foreign entities can donate money anonymously to political parties. Readers may not know that over 90 per cent of the total value of the bonds donated since the scheme began two years ago are bought in ₹1 crore denominations. Meaning it's not the common man giving money secretly to parties.

Second, that the Modi government has changed the RTI law to make its commissioners dependent on the government for their term and salary. Third, that the Constitution was repeatedly violated through bypassing the Rajya Sabha by illegally calling pieces of legislation

“money bills”. The manner of the passing of the farm laws, where the Rajya Sabha was not even allowed to vote despite it not being a money bill, will tell us where things stand today in democratic India.

The Economist also ran a story on India in this week's edition headlined “India's government is censoring people before they comment”. It quotes Idi Amin, late Ugandan dictator, who once declared he respected freedom of speech, but could not guarantee freedom after speech. The magazine says “India's government seems to be taking this concept one step further. Despite running what is often hailed as the world's biggest democracy, it has gained a taste for curtailing freedom before speech.” This is what the world made of issues like the jailing of Siddique Kappan by UP and Munagar Faruqui by MP.

If you were angered, like Sachin Tendulkar, Lata Mangeshkar, Virat Kohli, Ajay Devgan and Akshay Kumar, by six-word tweets from Western celebrities, you should consider what their most respectable and respected voices are also saying.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

Subhani



Does India want to be a Tier-2 UNSC member?



Mohan Guruswamy

Sometime recently, Mr T.S. Tirumurti, our permanent representative at the United Nations in New York, once again pleaded for the expansion of the UN Security Council permanent membership (P-5) to make it more broad-based. Addressing the UN General Assembly by video on September 26 in the landmark 75th General Debate, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also raised the issue of India's entry into the Security Council as a permanent member. He posed the question: “How long will India, the world's largest democracy and home to 1.3 billion people, be kept out of the decision-making structures of the United Nations?” He also asserted that reform in the responses, processes and very character of the global body was the “need of the hour”.

This is interesting, because for the first time India has asked for more than just a mere expansion of the UNSC by accommodating it as a permanent member. India has asked for a greater and comprehensive reform in “the responses, processes and character of the UN”.

The United States, Russia and China have already unveiled their visions of an expanded UN Security Council. During his visit to New Delhi as chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations in 2015, then US President Barack Obama categorically said he supported a reformed UNSC with India as a permanent member. But no sooner Mr Obama had returned to the US after his New Delhi visit, then US ambassador to the UN Samantha Powers said:

“It is very critical that any reform proposal enjoy broad consensus among member states”. This position takes it very close to the proposal of nations under the banner “Uniting for Consensus Group”, which is opposed to the UNSC's expansion by adding the G-4 of India, Germany, Japan and Brazil to it.

This group, led by Canada, Italy, Colombia and Pakistan, has made a counter proposal that envisages an enlargement of the number of non-permanent members from 10 to 20. The non-permanent members would be elected by the General Assembly for a two-year term and would be eligible for immediate re-election, subject to the decision of their respective geographical blocs.

The Chinese want “small and medium-sized countries to take turns to serve on the UNSC”. Russia, while not opposed to any expansion, has taken the position that the powers of the members of present UNSC should remain the same with full veto powers, meaning there could be two or three classes of UNSC members. The G-5 with veto powers, G-4 permanent members without the veto, and whoever else may be elected by the General Assembly.

The creation of the United Nations to preserve world peace began in October 30, 1943 when Britain, China, the Soviet Union and the US signed the Moscow Declaration on General Security. The signatories then met continuously from August to October 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington D.C. and fashioned a basic plan for the UN. The center-

India has asked for a greater and comprehensive reform in “the responses, processes and character of the United Nations”.

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

LETTERS

GLACIAL BREACH

The massive floods, triggered by a glacial breach that rushed through the Rishiganga river in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, wreaked a havoc of debilitating proportions with more than a dozen losing their lives and several others missing. Two hydro power projects also suffered extensive damage. The horrific incident in Uttarakhand is one more grim pointer to our growing vulnerability to the adverse weather events and the imperative need to usher in concerted measures aimed at building resilient infrastructure that could effectively withstand both natural disasters and mitigate its negative fallout on human lives and their livelihoods on the ground. Steps to reduce the increasing human intervention in the ecologically sensitive Himalayan regions such as Uttarakhand which is making it more vulnerable to climate change also brooks no delay.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

THE GLACIAL burst in Nanda Devi that triggered an avalanche and caused floods in the Rishiganga and Dhauliganga rivers in Uttarakhand brought back memories of a similar devastating incident in the State in 2013, which was dubbed as “Himalayan tsunami.” Uttarakhand is no stranger to disaster and the ecologically sensitive Himalayan region is prone to floods and landslides. But what is clear from this and earlier disasters is that our monitoring of vulnerable areas is highly inadequate. Unfortunately, there is no clarity on where and when exactly the tragedy originated, and what was the magnitude at the place of origin. It is the lack of credible and vital information in time that led to the tragedy in 2013. We need to have a workable disaster management plan and a mechanism to at least minimise such natural calamities in future.

R. Sivakumar, Chennai

LIC DISINVESTMENT

THIS REFERS your report *Unions slam LIC disinvestment move* (Feb. 2). LIC is a good example of the successful public enterprises in our country. LIC achieved its fame and name from the general public primarily by maintaining customer confidence. LIC maintains huge trust among the people. It will affect the common man's confidence. Your report clearly says LIC is an important tool in the hands of the government. The idea of disinvestment will lead to killing the goose which lays the golden egg.

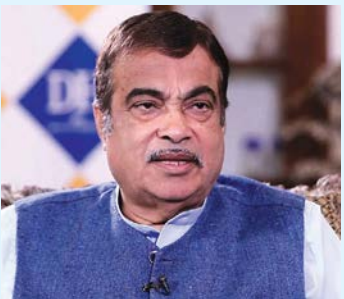
Suresh V.V., Vellore

quick BITES

| INDICATORS | % |
|------------------------|----------------|
| Sensex | 51348.77 1.22 |
| Nifty 50 | 15115.80 1.28 |
| S&P 500* | 3,902.36 0.40 |
| Dollar (₹) | 72.96 -0.04 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 100.04 -0.20 |
| Euro (₹) | 87.71 -0.41 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 46,877.94 0.20 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 60.34 1.69 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 6.040 -0.51 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 1.181 0.011 |

* As of 8:30 PM IST

NH construction pace in Apr-Dec was 28 km/day



The pace of highway construction during April-December 2020, on an average, was 28 km a day. Total highways constructed across India during the period was 7,767 km, road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari told Rajya Sabha. Of the total 7,767 km, the highest 1,662 km was constructed in Maharashtra at a cost of Rs 6,858 crore followed by 552 km in UP (Rs 1,351 crore) and 495 km in MP (Rs 1,446 crore).

HCL Tech celebrates \$10-bn revenue with ₹700-cr bonus to staff

New Delhi, Feb. 8: HCL Technologies on Monday announced a special one-time bonus worth over Rs 700 crore for its employees, as the IT giant marked the \$10-billion (about Rs 72,800 crore) revenue milestone.

The special bonus will be paid to employees this month—amounting to nearly \$90 million-plus

payroll taxes in some countries, the impact of which is excluded from FY21 Ebit (earnings before interest and taxes) guidance provided by the company last month, HCL Tech said in a statement.

HCL Tech said it is "issuing a one-time special bonus to employees around the world" worth over Rs 700 crore in recog-

niton of its recent milestone of crossing the \$10-billion mark in revenue for 2020.

"In celebration and gratitude all employees with one year of service or greater will receive a bonus, the equivalent of ten days' salary," the statement said.

Despite an unrelenting pandemic, each and every

member of HCL family demonstrated strong commitment and passion, contributing to the growth of the organisation, HCL Technologies' chief human resources officer Apparao V. V. said.

"The \$10 billion revenue milestone is a testament of our remarkable resilience as an organisation and the entrepre-

neurial spirit of our 1,59,000 plus employees," Apparao added.

HCL Tech said achieving this historic milestone in technology, business and engineering services and software, in just 20 years since its IPO, reflects efforts and consistent achievements of employees, deep relationships with leading compa-

nies across industries and a strong network of partners and stakeholders.

The IT services company had posted a 31.1 per cent rise in its December quarter net profit at Rs 3,982 crore, riding on strong momentum in its digital, products and platform segments. It had exuded confidence of clocking further accelera-

tion in bookings in the coming quarters.

HCL Tech's revenue grew 6.4 per cent to Rs 19,302 crore in the December quarter from Rs 18,135 crore in the year-ago period, as per US GAAP. The company had recorded revenue growth at 3.5 per cent quarter-on-quarter in constant currency.

■ Bull run takes Sensex above 51000

Nifty crosses 15000-mark

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 8



The market continues to make heavy gains post-the Union Budget and closed at new all-time highs on Monday, with the Nifty-50 Index closing above the 15000-mark at 15115.80 with 191 points gain.

The Nifty-50, launched on April 22, 1996, hit the 5000-mark in 2007 and 10000-mark in 2017.

The Sensex also, for the first time, closed above 51000 with a 617-points gain at 51348.77.

Global cues were also positive with US market closing in the positive territory on Friday, as US treasury secretary Janet Yellen pushed for the Congress to pass \$1.9 billion stimulus package, and the Asian markets opening in the green, Japan's Nikkei Index closed 2.12 per cent and China's

Shanghai Composite closed 1.03 per cent up.

Investors are taking comfort from the world's biggest-ever vaccination campaign. More than 124 million doses have been administered across 73 countries so far. While the vaccination programme in countries like India has just begun, countries like Israel have already inoculated more than one-third of their population with at least one of the two doses, according to a report.

"Indian equity markets continued their positive streak for the 6th day post Union Budget, amidst positive global cues," said Siddhartha Khemka, head -retail research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

IT, metal and auto sector stocks were top gainers, driven by heavy foreign portfolio investors buying after a strong earnings season. FPIs were net buyers of equities worth Rs 1,876.60 crore, as per provisional data.

INDIAMART CEO BOOKED FOR GOVARDHAN HILL ROCK SALES

Mathura (UP), Feb. 8:

Three men, including the CEO of e-commerce site Indiamart, were booked on Sunday for allegedly putting up for sale rocks taken from the Govardhan Hill here, at Rs 5,175 apiece, police said.

Govardhan Hill in Mathura is considered a sacred site for Hindus, as it is the setting for many legends relating to the life of Lord Krishna, who is believed to be embodied in the earth of the hill.

SP (rural) Shirish Chandra said an FIR has been filed under Section 265 of the IPC and Section 66 of the Information Technology Act against Indiamart founder-CEO Dinesh Agarwal, co-founder Brajesh Agrawal and Mathura-based supplier Ankur Agrawal.

The FIR was lodged based on a complaint by Mathura-based social worker.

—PTI

HC stays status quo order in Future-Reliance deal

SANGEETHA G
with agency inputs
CHENNAI, FEB. 8



The Delhi High Court on Monday stayed an earlier order by a single judge asking Future Group to maintain status quo with respect to its Rs 24,713-crore deal with Reliance Retail till the pronouncement of its final order.

A bench of chief justice D. N. Patel and justice Jyoti Singh passed the interim direction on Future Retail's appeal challenging the February 2 order of the single judge. In the February 2 order, Future Retail and all the concerned authorities were directed to maintain status quo with respect to all matters in violation of the order dated October 25, 2020. The single-judge is hearing Amazon's plea seeking enforcement of the October 25, 2020 Emergency Award given by Singapore International Arbitration Centre,

restraining Future Group from going ahead with the deal with Reliance Retail.

"Statutory authorities should not be restrained from proceeding in accordance with law on Future-Reliance deal," said the division bench on Monday, referring to bodies like NCLT, CCI and Sebi. It also turned down Amazon's request to suspend Monday's order for a week.

However, the bench clarified that it will not come in the way of the final order to be pronounced by the single judge. While asking the respondents to

maintain status quo, the single judge also wanted to file the status report within 10 days of the receipt of the order.

The court issued notice to Amazon and sought its stand on FRL's appeal by February 26 when it will commence day-to-day hearing of the matter.

In the interim order, the division bench said it was staying the single judge order as firstly, FRL was not a party to the share subscription agreement (SSA) between Amazon and Future Coupons Pvt Ltd (FCPL) and the US e-commerce giant was not a party to the deal between FRL and Reliance Retail.

The bench further said it was of the prima facie view that the share holding agreement (SHA) between FRL and FCPL, the SSA between FRL and Amazon and the deal between FRL and Reliance Retail "are different" and "therefore, the group of companies doctrine cannot be invoked."

COFFEE-BREAK

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

Aries: Continue your practice of taking risks, and even those who jeered at you will follow your lead. Keep close watch on valuables, as loss of prized possessions is indicated.

Taurus: Don't become obsessed with the safety of material objects, but do make sure your precious things are safe. A senior person may give you very helpful advice.

Gemini: Unsolicited advice will come in handy. Be sure to show your gratitude! The domestic front will be peaceful. A good day to spend quietly at home.

Cancer: Take pleasure in doing small things with loved ones. Tact will help you overcome all obstacles. You will have the confidence to deal with any difficult situation.

Leo: Don't let anger or negative emotions get the better of you. Instead, recall all the good times you have had and how much you mean to each other as partners.

Virgo: Keep track of items like keys today. You have what it takes to be a winner. You will divert all energies at work to achieve targets. You will handle everything efficiently.

You share your b'day with

Tom Hiddleston, Hollywood actor. He is best known for his roles as Loki in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. He has also enacted in War Horse, Midnight in Paris, The Deep Blue Sea, I Saw The Light and Kong: Skull Island amongst others.



Libra: It will be taxing to manage work and home. Recent tensions will necessitate decisions. Your instincts will be proved right. A friendship comes under fire.

Scorpio: Beware of accidents. A clash with a female at the workplace is on the cards. Take it in your stride. You take the lead in organising your agenda.

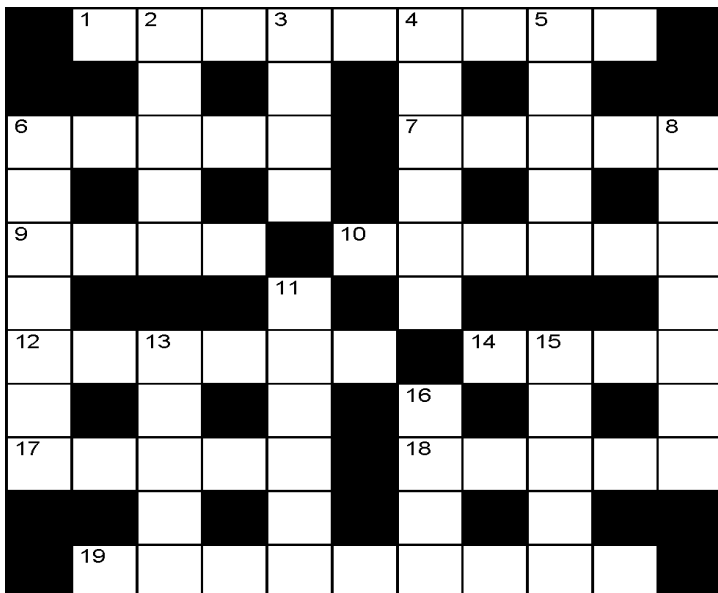
Sagittarius: Advice and comments by an elder relative will not be appreciated. The moment, will pass, but the relationship may be damaged.

Capricorn: Aches and pains continue. It's time to see a doctor. A positive attitude will be more helpful than getting frustrated and irritated with issues beyond your control. Stay away from negativity.

Aquarius: There is energy to move forward at work. Dealing with others is a chore. You will lack patience. People who have caused grief in the past return. A new individual brings a new perspective.

Pisces: You will get the best from your juniors and be appreciated at work. Good relations with family and neighbours indicated. A short trip is on the cards, and will help you relax.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

1. Not easy (9)
6. Lose blood (5)
7. Tossed pole (5)
9. Auction items (4)
10. Rent payer (5)
12. Beginning (6)
14. Capital of Peru (4)
17. Bare (5)
18. Body organ (5)
19. Administrative group (9)

Down

2. Bungling (5)
3. Lose colour (4)
4. Went by bike (6)
5. African country (5)
6. Swell up (7)
8. Withdraw (7)
11. Rarely (6)
13. Japanese capital (5)
15. Likeness (5)
16. Injured by bullet (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Expelled, 7. Avian, 8. Ditto, 9. Hot air, 10. Harp, 12. Obey, 14. Chopin, 17. Rates, 18. Learn, 19. Alarmist.

Down: 1. Edict, 2. Pencil, 3. Lids, 4. Extra, 5. Washboard, 6. Component, 11. Chilli, 13. Extol, 15. Plait, 16. User.

Word Mine

Y
U
R
M
A
N
P
L
O

TODAY'S RATINGS: 19 AVERAGE: 21
GOOD: 23 OUTSTANDING

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

North: 1. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 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1018, 1019, 1020, 1021, 1022, 1023, 1024, 1025, 1026, 1027, 1028, 1029, 1030, 1031, 1032, 1033, 1034, 1035, 1036, 1037, 1038, 1039, 1040, 1041, 1042, 1043, 1044, 1045, 1046, 1047, 1048, 1049, 1050, 1051, 1052, 1053, 1054, 1055, 1056, 1057, 1058, 1059, 1060, 1061, 1062, 1063, 1064, 1065, 1066, 1067, 1068, 1069, 1070, 1071, 1072, 1073, 1074, 1075, 1076, 1077, 1078, 1079, 1080, 1081, 1082, 1083, 1084, 1085, 1086, 1087, 1088, 1089, 1090, 1091, 1092, 1093, 1094, 1095, 1096, 1097, 1098, 1099, 1100, 1101, 1102, 1103, 1104, 1105, 1106, 1107, 1108, 1109, 1110, 1111, 1112, 1113, 1114, 1115, 1116, 1117, 1118, 1119, 1120, 1121, 1122, 1123, 1124, 1125, 1126, 1127, 1128, 1129, 1130, 1131, 1132, 1133, 1134, 1135, 1136, 1137, 1138, 1139, 1140, 1141, 1142, 1143, 1144, 1145, 1146, 1147, 1148, 1149, 1150, 1151, 1152, 1153, 1154, 1155, 1156, 1157, 1158, 1159, 1160, 1161, 1162, 1163, 1164, 1165, 1166, 1167, 1168, 1169, 1170, 1171, 1172, 1173, 1174, 1175, 1176, 1177, 1178, 1179, 1180, 1181, 1182, 1183,

SHORT TAKES

US still to decide on Tokyo Games

Tampa: US President Joe Biden said late Sunday it remains to be seen if the US will send a team to the pandemic-postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics, in a radio interview in which he also weighed in on diversity in sport.

Japan's government, organisers and Olympic officials all insist the Games will go ahead this summer, and that extensive virus countermeasures will ensure the event is safe.

Asked in a Super Bowl half-time radio interview with network Westwood One if he thought the Games would go ahead, Biden said any decision "has to be based on science".

"I hope we can play, I hope it's possible, but it remains to be seen," he said, stressing that Japanese prime minister Yoshihide Suga was "working very hard to be in a position to be able to safely open the games." — *AFP*

AITA lines up 78 events in March

New Delhi: Indian tennis will be buzzing with a lot of activity next month with 78 tournaments, including the pending 2020 National Championships and six ITF tournaments, set to unfold across the country after a halt in action caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

After the 2020 calendar was thrown haywire by the pandemic, the All India Tennis Association is clearing the backlog and has scheduled the men's and women's Nationals from March 15. The other age category Nationals will be played through the month. There will be 45 ranking series events too — 10 Talent series, 3 Championship series and one National series. The ITF events will begin with the men's \$15,000 event in Lucknow and a similar prize money women's event in Delhi from March 1. — *PTI*

Hami signs new deal with Merc

London: Lewis Hamilton has ended his long-running contract saga with Mercedes by signing a new one-year deal, the Formula One team announced on Monday.

The British driver, 36, will be bidding to win an unprecedented eighth world title when the season gets under way in Bahrain next month.

"We have always been aligned with Lewis that we would continue, but the very unusual year we had in 2020 meant it took some time to finish the process," said team principal Toto Wolff, referring to impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The story of Mercedes and Lewis has written itself into the history books of our sport over the past eight seasons, and we are hungry to compete and to add more chapters to it," he added. — *AFP*

Mitchell leads Jazz over Pacers

Washington: Donovan Mitchell scored 27 points, passed off 11 assists and grabbed nine rebounds to spark the NBA-best Utah Jazz to their fourth straight victory on Sunday, beating Indiana 103-95. Mitchell matched a career high in assists but just missed a triple double as Utah won for the 15th time in 16 games while the Pacers lost for the fifth time in six starts.

Live on TV

TENNIS

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

CRICKET

India vs England: First Test, Day 5 from 9.20 am on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Bengaluru FC vs Mohun Bagan from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

FA Cup: Fifth round — Burnley vs Bournemouth from 11 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD; Manchester United vs West Ham United from 1 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

Regd. No.
TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by
K. Sudhakar on behalf of
Deccan Chronicle Holdings
Limited and Printed at
Deccan Chronicle Press situated at
No 2/22, Sengalipalayam Road,
N.G.G.O Colony Post,
Kuruadampalayam Village,
Coimbatore - 641 022. RNI
Registration No: TNENG/2010/35692
Ph No : 2231252, 233, 255, 257 & 358
Editor: KAUSHIK MITTER

ASH-TONISHING

Offie Ashwin takes 6/61 as India stage fight back

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, FEB. 8

The ebbs and flows of Test cricket make it an intriguing spectacle. The fourth day of the opening Test between India and England was high on drama. The hosts who had begun the penultimate morning with the laborious task of saving the Test worked their way into contention. Chasing 420, India now need 381 runs in 90 overs with nine wickets in hand to cap off one of the greatest comeback wins in Test cricket.

It's not going to be as simple as the equation suggests though. The red-soil surface is expected to deteriorate further on day five and Virat Kohli & Co. would also be mindful of the fact that the highest successful chase on Indian soil was 387, incidentally against the same opposition at the same venue. Can India do it again?

Having lost Rohit Sharma (12) early, India, who were 39 for one at stumps, will resume the proceedings with Shubman Gill (15 not out) and Cheteshwar Pujara (12 not out) in the middle. An enthralling day's play is on the cards with fans hoping for yet another incredible chase much like the recent Brisbane heist.

The day, however, belonged to Chennai boys Washington Sundar and R. Ashwin. An elegant left-handed batsman, Washington showed a lot of maturity, scoring an unbeaten 85 that helped India cut down their first innings deficit to 241. The two TN players put on 80 runs for the seventh wicket. For Washington, it was his second successive Test half-century.

Washington's senior state-mate Ashwin then took on the mantle to put England's second innings plans in disarray. Ashwin's 6/61 — his 28th five-wicket haul and third in as many matches at Chepauk — dismantled Joe Root & Co. for 178. England's second essay fizzled out especially after



R. Ashwin celebrates taking the wicket of England's Dom Bess on Day Four of the first Test in Chennai on Monday. — *BCCI*

going through the motions post-tea. In the morning session, left-arm spinner Jack Leach and pacer James Anderson grabbed two wickets each as England bowled India out for 337, to take a lead of 241 runs.

India made their intentions clear when Kohli tossed the new ball to Ashwin who struck off the innings' first ball to remove Rory Burns with a beauty. Ishant Sharma

completed his landmark 300th when he trapped Dan Lawrence. As wickets fell at regular intervals, England found it difficult to accelerate.

Ashwin who had to slog for 55 overs to take three wickets in first innings on a flat surface bowled with venom.

All-rounder Ben Stokes came a cropper by edging one to the wicket-keeper off Ashwin. Joe Root again top-scored for

England with a brisk knock of 40 (32 balls) before falling prey to the reverse swing of Jasprit Bumrah.

Ollie Pope's wicket at 130 for six — holed out to Rohit Sharma in a bid to reverse sweep Shahbaz Nadeem — changed England's approach on its head. They were in an attacking mindset until Pope departed. By cleaning up Jofra Archer, Ashwin claimed his fifth.

SCORECARD

England 1st Innings: 578
India 1st Innings (overnight 257/6): Rohit Sharma c Buttler b Archer 6; Shubman Gill c Anderson b Archer 29; Cheteshwar Pujara c Rory Burns b Dom Bess 73; Virat Kohli c Ollie Pope b Dom Bess 11; Ajinkya Rahane c Root b Dom Bess 1; Rishabh Pant c Jack Leach b Dom Bess 91; Washington Sundar not out 85; Ravichandran Ashwin c Buttler b Leach 31; Shahbaz Nadeem c Stokes b Leach 0; Ishant Sharma c Pope b Anderson 4; Jasprit Bumrah c Stokes b Anderson 0. Extras (b-4, lb-1, nb-1) 6. **Total (all out in 95.5 overs) 337.**
FoW: 1-19, 2-44, 3-71, 4-73, 5-192, 6-225, 7-305, 8-312, 9-323.

Bowling: James Anderson 16.5-5-46-2, Jofra Archer 21-3-75-2, Ben Stokes 6-1-16-0, Jack Leach 24-5-105-2, Dominic Bess 26-5-76-4, Joe Root 2-0-14-0.

England 2nd Innings: Rory Burns c Rahane b Ashwin 0; Dominic Sibley c Pujara b Ashwin 16; Daniel Lawrence lbw b Ishant 18; Joe Root lbw b Bumrah 40; Ben Stokes c Pant b Ashwin 7; Ollie Pope c Rohit b Nadeem 28; Jos Buttler st Pant b Nadeem 24; Dominic Bess lbw b Ashwin 25; Jofra Archer b Ashwin 5; Jack Leach not out 8; James Anderson c and b Ashwin 0. Extras (nb-7) 7. **Total (all out in 46.3 overs) 178.**
FoW: 1-0, 2-32, 3-58, 4-71, 5-101, 6-130, 7-165, 8-167, 9-178.

Bowling: Ravichandran Ashwin 17.3-2-61-6, Shahbaz Nadeem 15-2-66-2, Ishant Sharma 7-1-24-1, Jasprit Bumrah 6-0-26-1, Washington Sundar 1-0-1-0.

India 2nd Innings: Rohit Sharma b Jack Leach 12; Shubman Gill batting 15; Cheteshwar Pujara batting 12. **Total (for 1 wkt, in 13 overs) 39.**
FoW: 1-25.

Bowling: Jofra Archer 3-2-13-0, Jack Leach 6-1-21-1, James Anderson 2-1-2-0, Dominic Bess 2-0-3-0.

COACH CONFIDENT ENGLAND WOULD BOWL INDIA OUT

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 8

England have let India crawl back into the game with their inexplicable approach post-tea, but the visiting team's bowling coach Jon Lewis said "they are very much in control of the proceedings."

Set a target of 420, India require 381 runs on final day. Lewis is confident that England would bowl them out. "We are really happy with where we are at and with that many runs on the board, we are ahead of the game. We played some really good cricket and we are confident that we can create enough chances to win the game tomorrow," Lewis said.

When was asked about England's failure to accelerate the run-rate, Lewis said: "I think the guys were positive in the way they played and I do not think it is a straightforward pitch to just go and be reckless... So, in terms of the game, we are really comfortable with where we are at."

Lewis tipped spinner Jack Leach to trouble the Indians and prove to be a match-winner. "He's bowled an absolutely beauty to get Rohit Sharma out. He could walk away with four or five wickets tomorrow and we could win a Test match — I'm pretty sure people won't be talking about Rishabh Pant's first-innings runs if he does that."

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Djokovic off to fluent start

Melbourne, Feb. 8: Novak Djokovic served a reminder of why he's the greatest Australian Open champion in history as he demolished France's Jeremy Chardy in straight sets in round one on Monday.

The eight-time winner's 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 win showed that normal service had resumed at Rod Laver Arena after the year's first Grand Slam was delayed three weeks over the coronavirus.

Serena Williams, Naomi Osaka and Simona Halep also enjoyed convincing wins as the tournament finally got underway in front of limited crowds after a troubled build-up.

"It feels great, so great to see people back in the stadium," Djokovic said. "This is the most I've seen of a tennis court in 12 months."

Form and fitness are highly unpredictable at the Australian Open after the coronavirus wiped out five months of last season and badly disrupted preparations for the first Grand Slam of 2021.

But Djokovic left little doubt about his readiness to pursue a record-extending ninth title in Melbourne, breaking in the first game and completing the victory in 91 minutes.

The Australian Open was postponed to allow players to quarantine and play warm-up events, which were suspended for a day last week after a coronavirus case at a tournament hotel.

After the tortuous build-up, third seed Osaka struck the first serve on the centre

SELECTED RESULTS

Men's singles first round: Stanislas Wawrinka (SUI x17) bt Pedro Sousa (POR) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4; Milos Raonic (CAN x14) bt Federico Coria (ARG) 6-3, 6-3, 6-2; Emil Ruusuvuori (FIN) bt Gael Monfils (FRA x10) 3-6, 6-4, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3; Alexander Zverev (GER x6) bt Marcos Giron (USA) 6-7 (8/10), 7-6 (7/5), 6-3, 6-2; Dominic Thiem (AUT x3) bt Mikhail Kukushkin (KAZ) 7-6 (7/2), 6-2, 6-3; Grigor Dimitrov (BUL x18) bt Marin Cilic (CRO) 6-4, 6-2, 7-6 (7/5).

Women's singles first round: Bianca Andreescu (CAN x8) bt Mihaela Buzarnescu (ROM) 6-2, 4-6, 6-3; Venus Williams (USA) bt Kirsten Flipkens (BEL) 7-5, 6-2; Petra Kvitová (CZE x9) bt Greet Minnen (BEL) 6-3, 6-4; Naomi Osaka (JPN x3) bt Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUS) 6-1, 6-2; Serena Williams (USA x10) bt Laura Siegemund (GER) 6-1, 6-1; Simona Halep (ROM x2) bt Lizette Cabrera (AUS) 6-2, 6-1.

court against Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova and strode just 68 minutes later as a 6-1, 6-2 winner.

VINTAGE SERENA

Williams started her quest for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title in style with a 6-1, 6-1 romp past Germany's Laura Siegemund in 56 minutes.

"This was a good start, it was vintage Serena," said the 39-year-old, turning heads in a brightly coloured, one-legged catsuit.

Later, the 2019 US Open champion Bianca Andreescu won an emotional first match after 15 months out against Romania's Mihaela Buzarnescu 6-2, 4-6, 6-3.

— *AFP*



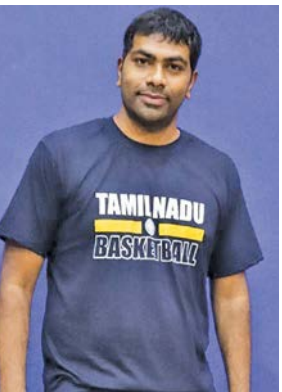
Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady kisses wife and supermodel Gisele Bündchen after defeating the Kansas City Chiefs in the NFL Super Bowl 55 football game in Tampa, USA, on Sunday. The Buccaneers beat the Chiefs 31-9 to win the Super Bowl. — *AP*

AADHAV ELECTED VP OF BASKETBALL FEDERATION

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 8

Tamil Nadu Basketball Association secretary Aadhav Arjuna has been elected the vice-president of the Basketball Federation of India at its annual general body meeting held in Bengaluru recently.

Aadhav said he would strive hard to provide a platform for players to showcase their talent. Aadhav has also promised to bring more national and international basketball events to Tamil Nadu. "We will definitely be hosting a lot of events here. We are looking at the possibilities of conducting national



Aadhav Arjuna

camp. We are also planning to bid for the senior national championship," added Aadhav.

KAPIL DOES IT FOR CLASSIC

Chennai: T. Kapil took three wickets as Classic CC beat Pattabiram CA in the second division of the Thiruvallur DCA league championship.

Brief scores: **TNCA Thiruvallur DCA League Championship: II Division:** Classic CC 155 for eight in 30 overs (Shrenik Suryanarayanan 49 n.o, T. Kapil 29, G. Naveen

Kumar 27, B. Hareesh three for 39) bt Pattabiram CA 123 for nine in 30 overs (S. Sudhan Pargunan 58, T. Kapil three for 39). **IV Division:** Jaya Education Group RC 130 for nine in 30 overs (B. Divakar 32, S. Prabhu 26, K. Nagaraj three for 24) lost to Universal CC 131 for five in 25.3 overs (M. Selvam 55, S. Gokul three for 53).

TNCA league: Vivek stars in UFCC win

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 8

R. Vivek's unbeaten 84 helped United Friends CC beat T.I. Cycles Sports and Recreation Club in the second division (elite) of the TNCA league. R. Rohit (48) and Swapnil Gugale (3/40) also played key roles in UFCC win.

BRIEF SCORES

II-Division Elite: T.I. Cycles Sports and Recreation Club 211 for 9 in 50 overs (P.S. Shiva Ramakrishnan 74, R. Mithun 43, Swapnil Mansukh Gugale 3 for 40) lost to United Friends Cricket Club (T. Nagar) 212 for 4 in 42 overs (R. Vivek 84 not out, R. Rohith 48, Rohan Prem 36). **RKS Cricket Academy** 283 for 9 in 50 overs (Paras Dogra 120, A.V. Abilash 96, R. Shomeshwaran 4 for 51, K. Bharat Reddy 4 for 54) beat Indian Overseas Bank 194 in 46.4 overs (S. Tarun Srinivas 62, Robert Fernandez 35, P.S.

Raghul 3 for 42). **Aruna Cricket Club** 226 for 8 in 50 overs (P. Rakesh Kumar 54, Ali Murtuza 46, Ishwar Suresh 30) lost to Indian Bank Sports and Recreation Club 228 for 3 in 38.4 overs (G. Jayavaradhan 93, Sachin Omprakash Katariya 75 not out).

II-Division Plate: ICF Sports Association 218 in 49 overs (A. Ganesh Kumar 85, Jash K Kankaria 37, R. Jayachandran 34, Prashant Bhandari 3 for 22) lost to Parry's Sports and Recreation Club 221 for 3 in 43 overs (V. Dinesh Kumar 107 not out, Ankita Dabas 32, Prashant Bhandari 30).

III-Division 'B': Bunts Cricket Club 195 in 47.2 overs (Mohamed Shafeequddin 40, R. Balachander 3 for 30, R. Vineeth 3 for 43) beat Sea Hawks Cricket Club 93 in 35.2 overs (T.K. Gowthama Raj 6 for 25). **Madras Aryan Club** 166 in 49 overs (R. Kamala Kannan 30, R. Krishna 3 for 31) beat Triplicane Cricket Club 119 in 37.4 overs (J. Gowri Sankar 43 not out, M. Suganesh 31, V.

Sornakaleeswaran 4 for 37, P. Kishore Kumar 3 for 31). **Royapettah Cricket Club** 221 for 9 in 50 overs (L. Vignesh Saalim 3 for 32). **Jai Hind Cricket Club** 214 for 8 in 30 overs (K. Venkatesh Sundar 48, S. Daniel 43, B. Arul 41 not out, Prince Packianathan 3 for 33) beat Bank of India Sports and Recreation Club 112 for 7 in 30 overs (P. Manikandan 33 not out).

VI-Division 'B': T.V. Sivaprakasam Memorial Sports Club 59 in 25.1 overs (P. Purushoth Kumar 5 for 14 RMF, V. Prasath 3 for 6) lost to Amar Cricket Club 61 for 2 in 13.3 overs. **Saidapet Gymkhana** 171 for 7 in 30 overs (J. Nandha Gopal 65, P. Bezaleel 36) lost to Madras Fertilizers Limited Rec Club 173 for 2 in 16.1 overs (Johnson Peter Xavier 85 not out, A. Mohammed Asif Ibbal 34). **Free Lancers Cricket Club** 156 in 29.2 overs (A. Selvendran 67, Prashaanth Balasubramanian 49, S. Keerthi Bushan 4 for 23) lost to YMCA (Royapettah) 157 for 5 in 28.3 overs (Ashwin Kumar Saravanan 55 not out, R. Srinivasan 45).

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