

IN BRIEF

Vaccination drive picks up pace in Gzb

Ghaziabad: The vaccination drive against Covid-19 picked up pace at the Yashoda Super Specialty Hospital at Kaushambi in Ghaziabad on Monday, where final vaccine doses were given to those vaccinated in the first stage of the Covid vaccination campaign. The certificate of final vaccination, downloaded from the Co-Win portal, was also handed over. More than 100 people were vaccinated at the hospital. A 65-year-old doctor of the hospital, Dr R.K. Mani, administered the second dose of vaccine and set an example for senior citizens. Dr Mani is also the director of Covid-19 management and strategy of the hospital. He was first vaccinated in the first phase, after getting the second dose on Monday. The executive director of the hospital, Shubhang Arora, was also vaccinated. Mr Arora praised this vaccination campaign of the government and said that this is an unprecedented campaign which has brought India's name to the world. According to him, the way India has given out vaccines to its neighbouring countries is commendable.

KVVC supplies khadi silk sarees to police

New Delhi: The Khadi and Village Industries Commission, on Tuesday, supplied 850 khadi silk sarees to the Delhi police. "The purchase order by the Delhi police manifests khadi's growing acceptance in various government agencies. The use of khadi in our forces will significantly add to its popularity among the masses. At the same time, such prestigious orders are a big boost for khadi artisans," said KVVC chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena. Mr Saxena added, "These sarees will be worn by women front desk executives of the Delhi police who deal with the general public on a daily basis. This will further enhance khadi's visibility." The dual-tone sarees are made from high-quality tasar-katia silk. The sarees have been woven by traditional artisans in West Bengal who specialise in making this variety of silk.

2 smuggling 42kg cannabis in car held

Noida: Two suspected drug peddlers were arrested in Uttar Pradesh's Noida on Tuesday after over 42 kg of cannabis was allegedly seized from their possession, according to police. The accused were transporting the contraband, estimated worth around ₹5 lakh, in a car when they were intercepted by police at a traffic signal near Sector 57 of the city, they said. — PTI

■ Corona numbers continue to fall, active cases now 1,036

Covid: Delhi records 94 new cases, lowest in over 9 mnths

New Delhi, Feb. 16: Delhi recorded 94 fresh Covid cases on Tuesday, the lowest in over nine months, while the positivity rate slipped to 0.17 per cent in the city, authorities said.

One fatality was also registered, taking the death toll due to the viral disease to 10,894 in the national capital, according to the latest health bulletin issued by the Delhi government.

Delhi had recorded 96 coronavirus cases on January 27, which was the lowest then in over nine months and the first time that the daily cases' count was below the 100-mark in that month.

No death due to coronavirus was recorded in the city on Saturday, the second time in February when the single-day fatality count was nil.

On February 9, no fatality from the coronavirus infection was registered in the national capital after a gap of nearly nine months.



Sanitation workers receive the first dose of Covaxin vaccine at Hindu Rao Hospital in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

The fatality count was two on February 2, 5 and 7.

The 94 cases were detected in the 56,944 tests conducted the previous day, according to the bulletin.

The coronavirus case tally has climbed to 6,37,181 in the city, the authorities said, adding that the positivity rate has further declined to 0.17 per cent.

Delhi recorded 141 coronavirus cases and two deaths due to the disease on Monday, while the positivity rate stood at 0.36 per cent.

The tally of active cases slightly rose to 1,036 on Tuesday from 1,031 the previous day, according to the bulletin.

The total number of tests conducted the previous day included 34,679 RT-PCR tests and 22,265 rapid antigen tests, the bulletin said. — PTI

Reflect on how to stop 'brain drain': Sisodia urges varsities

New Delhi, Feb. 16: Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday said

expansion of universities is crucial to improve higher education and urged these institutions to reflect on how to stop "brain drain".

In his valedictory address at the North Zone Vice Chancellor's Meet organised by Association of Indian Universities, he stressed upon the difference between education and human resource development. "Human Resource Development is a mere tool of education, it is not the foundation of education. It is the role and responsibility of education to ensure that our children are not considered as mere tools or instruments for the world but as thriving human beings," he said. Talking about higher education in the post-COVID and post-NEP world, Sisodia, who is also Delhi's education minister, said there are certain challenges that universities and educators alike face in the current landscape of Indian education.

— PTI



Members of various social organisations display placards during a protest against the arrest of climate activist Disha Ravi at Police Headquarters in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

Left wing student group protests against Disha's arrest at police HQ

New Delhi, Feb. 16: The Left-wing All India Students' Association (AISA) staged a protest at the Delhi Police headquarters here on Tuesday against the arrest of Bangalore-based environmental activist Disha Ravi in the "toolkit" case.

The members of AISA from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi University, and Ambedkar University Delhi raised slogans for the immediate release of Ravi and accused the BJP of running a "brutal anti-democracy campaign".

"The youth is the future

of India. Assertive young voices like Disha make the democratic fabric of our country and BJP's all-out attack on us won't last," Prasenjeet Kumar, national working general secretary of AISA, said.

Ravi was arrested from Bengaluru on Saturday by the Delhi Police for allegedly creating and sharing a protest toolkit backing the farmers' agitation against the Centre's new agri laws.

The Delhi Police had said on Monday that Ravi along with Mumbai lawyer Nikita Jacob and Pune engineer Shantanu

Muluk created the toolkit that was shared with others to tarnish India's image and collaborated with pro-Khalistani elements.

In a statement, AISA alleged that the arrest of Disha Ravi on the basis of a "toolkit" was an "atrocious manifestation of RSS-BJP's anti-democracy agenda". "Toolkits have been a common tool of agitation and the malicious play to term it an 'international conspiracy' is BJP's way of defaming the mass farmer protest," it alleged. — PTI

R-Day clash: Court extends custody of Sidhu by 7 days

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 16

A Delhi court, on Tuesday, extended by seven days the police custody of actor-activist Deep Sidhu in connection with the Red Fort violence on Republic Day during the farmers' tractor parade against the Centre's three new agri laws.

Sidhu was produced before metropolitan magistrate Bhujali after expiry of his police custody in the case.

The police sought extension of his custodial interrogation, saying it was required for further investigation and to identify other accused persons in the case.

The court had, on February 9, sent Sidhu to police custody for seven days after the police alleged he was one of the main instigators of the violent incidents at the Red Fort.

The police had said there are videos where Sidhu can be allegedly seen at the site of the incident.

"He was instigating the crowd. He was also one of the main rioters. Several social media accounts need to be searched to identify the co-conspirators. Also, his permanent address is given as Nagpur but several places need to be visited in Punjab and Haryana to unearth further details," the police had alleged.



Farmers perform puja on the occasion of Basant Panchami during their agitation over new farm laws, at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

Sidhu's counsel, however, claimed he had nothing to do with the violence and was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Sidhu has been arrested for several offences under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) including rioting (147 and 148), unlawful assembly (149), attempt to murder (307), criminal conspiracy (120B), assaulting or obstructing public servant (152), dacoity (395), culpable homicide (308), and disobedience to order promulgated by public servant (188).

He has also been arrested under the sections of the Arms Act, Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, and the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act.

The police had announced a cash reward of ₹1 lakh for information leading to Sidhu's arrest.

Tens of thousands of protesting farmers clashed with the police in the national capital on January 26 during a tractor parade to highlight their demands.

Many of them reached the Red Fort driving tractors and entered the monument, where a religious flag was also hoisted. Over 500 police personnel were injured and one protestor died.

In the FIR registered in connection with the Red Fort violence, the police alleged two magazines with 20 live cartridges were snatched from two constables by protestors who also damaged vehicles and robbed anti-riot gear.

KOTIA ROW

Odisha to collector: Keep documents ready for SC hearing

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, FEB. 16

The Odisha government on Tuesday directed the Koraput district administration to arrange all necessary documents related to border dispute issue pertaining to the villages of Kotia in Koraput district ahead of the Supreme Court hearing on the state's petition seeking contempt of court proceedings against Andhra Pradesh.

The case has been listed for hearing in the apex court on February 19. In a letter to the Koraput district collector Abdaal Akhtar, the revenue department asked him to arrange all relevant documents related to three villages of Kotia gram panchayat where the neighbouring state recently conducted panchayat polls violating apex court

order. The collector has been asked to arrange documents "pertaining to G a n j a i p a d a r (G a n j a i b a d r a), P h a t u s i n e r i (Pattuchennuru) and P h a g u n a s i n e r y (Paguluchinnuru) under Kotia gram panchayat to prove beyond sustainable doubt that the state of Odisha has been continuously holding elections (Parliament Constituency, Assembly Constituency and Panchayat Elections) in these villages prior to 02.12.1968."

Other relevant documents over the welfare activities undertaken by the Odisha government in the areas should also be arranged as per the requirement of Odisha's Advocate-on-Record (AoR) in Supreme Court, Sibho Shankar Mishra, to defend the state in the court, the letter stated.

Tiger kills calf of elephant in Odisha forest, eats trunk

AGE CORRESPONDENT
BARIPADA, FEB. 16:

An elephant calf is suspected to have been killed by a tiger in Tangro reserve forest in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, a forest official said on Tuesday. The carcass of the infant elephant, aged around 4-5 months, was spotted by some people on the outskirts of the Kunjakacha village.

A team of forest officials rushed to the reserve forest area to carry out an on-spot investigation.

Nabin Chandra Singh, the ACF in Rairangpur, informed that the pugmarks of the big cat were spotted in the area. "A team of forest personnel visited the spot to investigate the death of the calf. A senior official of the Wildlife Trust of India and a veterinary officer were also present during the probe.

'Toolkit': Delhi police asks Zoom for Jan. 11 meet info

■ Continued from Page 1 sent the "toolkit" to teen climate activist Greta Thunberg through the Telegram app and also "coaxed her to act on it". The police alleged that Nikita Jacob and Shantanu Muluk were among the 70-odd people who attended the meeting organised by pro-Khalistan group Poetic Justice Foundation through the Zoom app, days before the Republic Day violence in the national capital that left more than 500 police personnel injured and one protestor dead.

Police sources claimed Shantanu Muluk was in Delhi between January 20 and 27, but did not elaborate.

"The Delhi police has written to video conferencing app Zoom seeking details of participants who attended the meeting on January 11," the official said. "We are also trying to probe the funding module in the toolkit case," a source said.

Officials said the police had so far not received a reply from Google on the document being investigated.

On Tuesday, the DCW asked the police to provide a copy of the FIR registered in the matter and reasons

for allegedly not producing Ms Ravi before a local court for transit remand. It also sought the reasons for allegedly not providing a lawyer of her choice when she was produced before a Delhi court, and a detailed action taken report, a statement said.

The commission has asked police to provide the information by Friday, the DCW added.

The court on Tuesday also directed the police to provide Disha Ravj the copies of the arrest memo and remand papers, which was placed to seek her custodial interrogation. The court also permitted her to get warm clothes, masks and books.

Chief metropolitan magistrate Pankaj Sharma allowed Ms Ravi to speak to her family members over the phone for 15 minutes a day and meet her lawyer for 30 minutes a day while she is in police custody. The court passed the order on an application filed by Ms Ravi through her lawyer.

Earlier, the court had on Sunday sent Ms Ravi to five-day police custody after it said her custodial interrogation was required to probe an alleged larger conspiracy against the Government of India and to

ascertain her alleged role relating to the "Khalistan" movement.

Earlier this month, the cyber cell had lodged an FIR against "pro-Khalistan" creators of the "toolkit" for waging a "social, cultural and economic war against the Government of India". The case was registered under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including criminal conspiracy and sedition.

The police said it was probing the role of a man named Peter Friedrich in connection with the "toolkit" case. The police said Mr Friedrich was on the radar of the Indian security establishment since late 2006 when he was seen in the company of Bhajan Singh Bhinder alias Iqbal Chaudhary. "He (Bhinder) has been a very leading proponent of the K2 desk of ISI. Friedrich was associated with him," the police said.

"Why his (Peter's) name is there on the document or why should he (Friedrich) be followed will be answered by Disha and her associates. Did they contact Friedrich through Mo Dhaliwal or directly contacted him is a matter of investigation," a senior police officer said.

India, China begin pullback in Kailash area

■ Continued from Page 1 the military infrastructure set up at Finger 5 on the north bank of Pangong Tso, including jetty and a helipad.

After completion of the disengagement process in Pangong Tso, Indian and Chinese commanders will

■ CHINESE TROOPS will move east of Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso and the Indian soldiers will move to their permanent base at Dhan Singh Thapa.

meet to take up other out-

standing friction points at Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang in eastern Ladakh.

Last week India and China had reached an agreement to disengage from the north and south banks of Pangong Tso to their pre-standoff positions after the nine-month military standoff in the region.

Under the agreement, Chinese troops will move east of Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso and the Indian soldiers will move to their permanent base at Dhan Singh Thapa Post near Finger 3. There will be a "temporary" freeze on patrolling by both sides in the area between Finger 4 to Finger 8 on the northern bank of Pangong Tso till both sides reach an agreement at the diplomatic and military talks.

Under the agreement, Chinese troops will move east of Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso and the Indian soldiers will move to their permanent base at Dhan

standing friction points at Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang in eastern Ladakh. Last week India and China had reached an agreement to disengage from the north and south banks of Pangong Tso to their pre-standoff positions after the nine-month military standoff in the region.

Under the agreement, Chinese troops will move east of Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso and the Indian soldiers will move to their permanent base at Dhan Singh Thapa Post near Finger 3. There will be a "temporary" freeze on patrolling by both sides in the area between Finger 4 to Finger 8 on the northern bank of Pangong Tso till both sides reach an agreement at the diplomatic and military talks.

Under the agreement, Chinese troops will move east of Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso and the Indian soldiers will move to their permanent base at Dhan Singh Thapa Post near Finger 3. There will be a "temporary" freeze on patrolling by both sides in the area between Finger 4 to Finger 8 on the northern bank of Pangong Tso till both sides reach an agreement at the diplomatic and military talks.

Opp. spreading 'lies' about farm laws, says Modi

■ Continued from Page 1 the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, which took place a few months after the Muzaffarnagar riots, and also during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

At the "virtual" function in UP earlier, meanwhile, Mr Modi in his 30-minute speech also accused previous governments of not honouring top leaders like Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr B.R. Ambedkar. He said the history of India was not just what had been written by those with a "slave mentality", and that it was imbued by ordinary people through "lok gathas", or folklore. As the country enters the 75th year of its Independence, it was time to remember their contribution and take inspiration from them, he added.



IN BRIEF

RSS CHIEF VISITS MITHUN, SETS OFF BENGAL POLL BUZZ

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, FEB. 16

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagawat on Tuesday met Bollywood film actor Mithun Chakraborty at his Mumbai residence over breakfast. Mithun Chakraborty was Rajya Sabha member of Trinamool Congress (TMC) in the past. The meeting between Chakraborty and Bhagawat assumes political significance as the state Assembly election in West Bengal is just three months away.

However, the actor said that he had a “spiritual relationship” with the RSS chief.

The BJP is considered a political wing of the RSS. The BJP has brought many leaders from the TMC.

But it is still looking for a face in West Bengal. It is said that the RSS chief’s meeting may be an attempt in this direction.

Confirming the meeting with Mr Bhagwat, Mr. Chakraborty told a news channel, “Let me inform you that I have been sharing a spiritual relationship with Mohan Bhagwat ji for a long time. He once said that when he will be in Mumbai, he would come to my home. He loves me and my family. As he is in Mumbai for his work, so he checked with me whether this date is fine with me or not.”

The veteran actor also said that the RSS chief has invited him and his family to Nagpur, which is RSS headquarters.

BJP MINISTER CALLS RAHUL ‘MIGRANT LEADER’

GILVESTER ASSARY
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
FEB. 16

BJP central minister Prahlad Joshi on Tuesday targeted Congress MP Rahul Gandhi calling him a “migrant leader” hiding in Kerala.

Joshi, who is the election in-charge of Kerala slammed, Rahul Gandhi for running away from Amethi and accused him of doing nothing for the people of that constituency which was once the pocketborough of his family . The people of Kerala would soon realise that the Congress will do nothing for the state or its people, he said.

But the Congressmen here say that despite BJP’s dig at Rahul Gandhi, the Wayanad MP continues to be very popular not only in his constituency which he visits quite often, but in the entire state. Unlike north India, BJP will not be able to gain much from its anti-Rahul tirade in Kerala.

The BJP leader who was addressing a press conference in Thrissur, dared Rahul Gandhi to make his stand clear on the Sabarimala issue. He said the Congress leader had supported the Supreme Court verdict allowing entry of women belonging to all ages into Sabarimala temple. “Rahul Gandhi and the state unit of the Congress have adopted a divergent stand on the issue,” he said.

WOMAN PARADED CARRYING BOY ON SHOULDER IN MP

AGE CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, FEB 16

A woman in a Madhya Pradesh village was forced to walk 3 km barefoot carrying a teenage boy on her shoulder allegedly by her in-laws as punishment for having an ‘extramarital affair’, police said on Tuesday.

The shocking incident that took place in Sanai village in Guna district on February 9, came to light on Tuesday when a video of it went viral.

Five persons including a minor were arrested in connection with the incident, Guna district superintendent of police Rajesh Kumar Mishra said. In the video clip, the 20-year-old woman was seen walking barefoot with the boy on her shoulder as some people were thrashing her with sticks and cricket bats.

The woman had separated from her husband, a resident of Banskhed village, two years ago and was living with another man in the village of Sanai. On the fateful day, some members from her husband’s family stormed her house and dragged her out. They then forced her to walk barefoot 3 km with the boy on her shoulder while beating her along the way.

20 women, 2 kids among 46 killed in bus accident in MP

Magisterial inquiry ordered, death toll likely to rise as many more passengers drowned

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, FEB 16

At least 46 people including 20 women and 2 children were on Tuesday killed when the bus in which they were travelling fell off a bridge in a canal in Madhya Pradesh’s Sidhi district.

The death toll in the incident may go up as several other passengers were feared drowned, officials said.

“As many as 46 bodies have so far been fished out of water. State disaster rapid force (SDRF) and national disaster rapid force (NDRF) personnel are searching for the passengers, feared drowned”, Rewa revenue divisional commissioner (RDC) Rajesh Kumar Jain, who was supervising rescue operations on the spot, told this newspaper.

Of the 46 slain passengers, 21 have so far been identified, officials said.

According to official sources, the mishap took place when the driver lost control of the bus and plunged it into the canal.

The ill-fated bus was travelling from Sidhi to Satna.

It took almost 4 hours for the rescue team to pull the bus out of water with the help of a crane.

While the driver of the bus along with 6 other passengers swam to the shore, several other passengers were feared to have been washed away in the current of water in the canal.



NDRF team carries out a rescue operation after an overcrowded bus plunged into a canal in Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday. Around 30 bodies have been recovered from the canal.

rent of water in the canal.

Water from Vansagar dam was diverted to Sihabal dam to bring the water level in the canal down before the rescue operation was launched, sources said.

The cries of passengers who lost their kin rented the air at the site of tragedy.

This was said to be the worst bus tragedy witnessed in MP in the last one decade.

Meanwhile, state revenue and transport minister

WHILE THE DRIVER of the bus along with 6 other passengers swam to the shore, several other passengers were feared to have been washed away in the current of water in the canal

Govind Singh Rajput ordered a magisterial enquiry into the incident.

Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has expressed shock and grief over the tragedy and announced ex-gratia of Rs

5 lakh each to the next of kin of the deceased.

He canceled all his official programmes including the cabinet meeting, scheduled to be held on Tuesday, to monitor rescue and relief operations from here. He also rushed 2 ministers, Tulsi Silawat and Ramkhlwan Patel to the spot.

Madhya Pradesh government has canceled the ‘griha pravesh’ or house warming ceremony to be participated virtually by Union home minister Amit

Shah in view of Tuesday’s bus tragedy.

The cancellation of the event in which 1.16 lakh beneficiaries of Prime Minister Awas Yojana were scheduled to be handed over their houses was announced by the chief minister.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi who expressed his condolence to the bereaved families also announced release of ₹2 lakh each to the next of kin of the deceased and ₹50,000 each for the injured in the incident.

Buses are a common mode of transport between smaller towns and districts in India. But operators often flout safety rules and pack them beyond their capacity.

Some 150,000 people are killed on India’s roads every year — the highest in the world — mainly due to speeding and careless driving. More than 350,000 people are disabled annually in these accidents.

Men and women, aged between 18 and 45 years, make up 70% of the fatalities, according to federal transport minister Nitin Gadkari.

“For the government, each life is precious, whether poor or rich, urban or rural, male or female. The situation is alarming... there are more deaths [in road accidents] than in Covid... It is more dangerous than Covid,” Mr Gadkari said at the weekend.

Mumbai stares at another lockdown

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, FEB. 16

Mumbai is staring at another lockdown as the coronavirus cases have kept rising in the city since last few days. Mayor Kishori Pednekar said that lockdown may be reimposed in the city if people continue to flout basic Covid-19 rules.

“It’s a matter of concern. Most people travelling in local trains don’t wear masks. People must take precautions or we will head towards another lockdown. Whether a lockdown will be implemented again is in the hands of people,” Ms Pednekar said on Tuesday.

The mayor appealed to people to follow safety rules to prevent the spread of Covid-19. “We should continue wearing masks, washing hands and maintaining social distance. Even almost a year after Covid-19 outbreak, citizens have to take precautions. If carelessness is shown, the State Government might think of another lockdown in the city,” she said.

There has been an increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in the city after the local trains, considered to be the life-line of Mumbai, were restarted for the general public from February 1.

Though Suresh Kakani, the additional commis-

MAHARASHTRA IS BACK AT the country’s top spot again, reporting maximum daily Covid infections in recent months.

sioner of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) denied the possibility of imposing another lockdown in the city, he said the next 10 days would be crucial for the city.

“We had expected some rise in the coronavirus cases in the city after opening all modes of transport for the general public. Hence, the BMC is taking strict measures to conduct contact tracing, testing and ensuring Covid rules are followed,” he said.

According to the civic sources, places like Borivali, Andheri, Jogheshwari, Kandivali, Malad, Ghatkopar, Bhandup, Mulund and Chembur have again seen a rise in coronavirus cases in recent days.

Maharashtra is back at the country’s top spot again, reporting maximum daily infections. Mumbai city is reporting the highest single-day cases in the state with a spike of 461 on Tuesday, 493 on Monday and 645 on Sunday. The total number of coronavirus patients in the city has reached 3,15,030, while the number of deaths is 11,423.

Activist gets bail, HC to decide lawyer case today

SHAHAB ANSARI
MUMBAI, FEB. 16

The Bombay high court on Tuesday reserved the verdict till Wednesday on the transit bail plea of Mumbai-based advocate Nikita Jacob in connection with the campaign document about the farmers’ protest. Activist Shantanu Muluk, against whom also a non-bailable arrest warrant has been issued, was granted bail for 10 days by the Aurangabad Bench of the high court on Tuesday.

The Delhi police has registered an FIR against Jacob and Mulik stating that the two along with 22-year-old Bengaluru resident Disha Ravi allegedly created the “toolkit” document on the farmers’ protest which touched upon “Pro-Khalistani elements”. This document was also shared on social media by Swedish teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg.

Jacob and Mukul are apprehending arrest in the toolkit case. The Delhi police have already arrested Disha Ravi, a 21-year-old climate activist from Bengaluru. The police has claimed that Ravi was a “key conspirator” in the formulation and dissemination of the document and she collaborated with pro-Khalisatani Poetic

Justice Foundation to “spread disaffection against Indian state.”

Jacob in her plea has stated that the Cyber Cell of Delhi Police, accompanied by personnel from Varrai police station in Goregaon (East) in Mumbai, had come to her home with a search warrant, and seized personal documents and electronic gadgets.

Jacob has contended that she has no religious, political or financial motive or agenda for researching, discussing, editing and circulating communication packs/toolkits for raising awareness, let alone to incite violence, riots or cause other physical harms. “Nikita Jacob is not named in the FIR. The ‘Toolkit’ was prepared by many. It doesn’t talk of violence nor of taking over Red Fort or anything,” her lawyer Mihir Desai contended.

In her application, Jacob has also said that she feared arrest “due to political vendetta and media trial.” Her application said that she learnt from social media that “some entity by the name Legal Rights Observatory appears to have filed a false and baseless complaint with the Delhi police and seeks to pin the blame for violence on January 26, 2021 on the applicant as well”.

A medic shows a Covid vaccine vial at Hindu Rao Hospital in New Delhi on Tuesday. - PTI

SA VARIANT OF COVID DETECTED IN 4 IN INDIA

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency input
NEW DELHI, FEB. 16

While the number of Covid-19 cases in India are on a steady decline, a few cases of the more infectious variant of the South African and Brazilian strains of the coronavirus are now a cause of concern for the government.

The new variants have been detected in India from people flying in from South Africa and Brazil prompting the government to announce much more aggressively testing of the incoming passengers and their contacts.

So far, four persons have been found with the South African strain of Covid-19 while one person has been found to have the Brazil variant. All five persons are under institutional quarantine. There are 187 cases of the mutated UK strain in the country.



A medic shows a Covid vaccine vial at Hindu Rao Hospital in New Delhi on Tuesday. - PTI

2 more bodies recovered from Tapovan tunnel

Tapovan, Feb 16: Two more bodies were recovered early Tuesday from the Tapovan tunnel where intense rescue operations were underway for the 10th consecutive day in search of those missing in the Uttarakhand flash floods. With the recovery of two more bodies, the cumulative toll in Chamoli’s glacial disaster has mounted to 58 while 146 are still missing, a police official said.

While one body was recovered past midnight, another was recovered around 2 am from the tunnel, the official deputed at a temporary mortuary at Tapovan

where the bodies are being kept said.

So far 11 bodies have been recovered from the sludge choked intake Adit tunnel of the flash flood ravaged Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel project.

The multi-agency rescue effort in Chamoli district is focusing on the Tapovan tunnel where about 30 workers were feared trapped. The agencies involved in the Tapovan rescue work include the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the National Disaster Response Force and the State Disaster Response Force.

State-run power giant NTPC on Tuesday said it

has started disbursement of compensation to families of workers at its Tapovan project who lost their lives due to the flash flood in Uttarakhand earlier this month. The first cheque of ₹20 lakh was handed over to Vimala Devi, wife of late Narendra Ji of Tapovan Vihar on February 15.

Meanwhile, rescue operation at the site was on in full swing for the ninth consecutive day with extensive coordinated work being carried out by multiple agencies including NTPC to reach those trapped in the tunnel at the site. — PTI

Assets worth ₹17cr of Amnesty India attached

New Delhi, Feb 16: The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday said it has attached over ₹17 crore bank deposits in connection with its money laundering case against two entities of Amnesty International (India), the global human rights watchdog.

The agency said in a statement that a provisional order has been issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) “attaching bank accounts of Amnesty International India Pvt Ltd (AIIPIL) and Indians for Amnesty International Trust (IAIT)”.

It said “both the entities have acquired the proceeds of crime and formed the same in the form of various movable properties. The order involves attachment of movable properties worth of ₹17.66 crore being proceeds of crime”.

This money laundering case of the ED is based on a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) FIR filed against AIIPIL, IAIT, Amnesty International India Foundation Trust (AIIFT) and Amnesty International South Asia Foundation (AISAF) that was filed under various sections of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) and the Indian Penal Code (120-B which denotes criminal conspiracy).

“Amnesty International India Foundation Trust (AIIFT) had been granted permission under the FCRA during 2011-12 for receiving foreign contribution from the Amnesty International UK,” it said. However, the statement said the same was cancelled on the basis of the “adverse” inputs received.

“Since permission/registration has been denied to the said entity on the basis of adverse inputs received from security

● A PROBE FOUND, the ED said, that upon cancellation of the FCRA licence, Amnesty International India Foundation Trust and Amnesty entities adopted “new method” to receive money from abroad.

agencies during the year 2011-12, AIIPIL and IAIT were formed in the year 2013-14 and 2012-13, respectively to escape the FCRA route and carried out NGO activities in the guise of service export and FDI,” the agency alleged.

A probe found, the ED said, that upon cancellation of the FCRA licence by the Union government, Amnesty International India Foundation Trust and Amnesty entities adopted “new method” to receive money from abroad.

The agency said Amnesty International, UK sent ₹51.72 crore to AIIPIL in the guise of export of services and the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

“For export proceeds/advances to Amnesty International UK there was no documentary proof, such as invoices and copies of agreement between AIIPIL and Amnesty International UK, has been furnished by AIIPIL to the authorised dealer (AD) banks.”

“It is prima facie found that Amnesty International India Pvt Ltd and others have obtained foreign remittances to the tune of ₹51.72 crore in the guise of export of services and the FDI from Amnesty International (UK) whose source is the donations from individual donors,” the ED alleged. The agency has earlier attached some properties in this case and the total attachment value now stands at ₹19.54 cr. - PTI

SC clarifies: No suo motu contempt case against scribe

New Delhi, Feb 16: The Supreme Court on Tuesday late night clarified that its website “inadvertently” showed that a suo motu contempt case against journalist Rajdeep Sardesai for his tweets has been registered.

“This is in context with the news item being flashed in some news channels about initiating suo motu criminal contempt proceeding against Rajdeep Sardesai by the Supreme Court, it is made clear that no such proceeding has been initiated against Rajdeep Sardesai.”

“However, status shown at the Supreme Court’s website vide case no. SMC (Cr) 02/2021 has been placed in a d e r t e n t l y. Appropriate action to rectify the same is under process,” Supreme Court Deputy Registrar (public relation) Rakesh Sharma

said. Earlier, the news with regard to the suo motu contempt case against Sardesai was carried in the media based on the information available with the top court’s website. It was reported that the Supreme Court has registered a suo motu contempt case against Rajdeep Sardesai for his tweets allegedly scandalising judiciary.

The case was registered following a petition filed by one Aastha Khurana through advocate Om Prakash Parihar under Article 129 of the Constitution to the Chief Justice of India for initiating contempt proceedings against Sardesai. On September 17, 2020, Attorney General K K Venugopal had declined his consent to initiate contempt action against Sardesai for the same set of tweets. - PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
Re-invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement System)

Name of work with its location	Removal of existing through of Br. No. 242 DN (1x24.12m) span at Km. 197/23-25 and providing top bracing & new galvanized steel channel sleepers on SRE-UMB section in the jurisdiction of AXEN/BL/UMB
Approximate cost of work	₹22,35,503.80
Completion period of the work	(04) Four Months
Cost of Tender form	₹3,000.00 Note: Cost of Tender Form should be in the form of net banking of payment gateway only. FDR will not be accepted as cost of tender invited on IREPS as per Railway Boards letter no. 2015/CE-1/CT/5/1 dated 31.08.2016)
Date & Time for submission of tender & opening of tender	Upto 14:00 hrs. on 10.03.2021 Opening of tender after 14:00 hrs. on same day.
Website particulars where complete details of Tender can be seen & downloaded	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
No. : Tender Notice No. 32-W-BR-242-UMB	Date: 15.02.2021 340/21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Main Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

(A) 1. 45/CGM/SM/(WC-6)/2020-21, Name of Work:- D/o Village Sarfabad (C/o Drain C.C. Road and Fixing of Jail Near Red Temple Renver House to Chotte Lal House in Sarfabad), Noida.
Cost - Rs. 23.22 Lacs

Which can be uploaded by date 02.03.2021 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 03.03.2021 at 11.00 AM.
Chief General Manager
Noida
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52104.17	-0.10
Nifty 50	15313.50	-0.01
S&P 500*	3,931.51	-0.08
Dollar (₹)	72.69	0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.27	-0.24
Euro (₹)	88.35	-0.18
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,900v9	0.01
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	63.06	-0.38
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.022	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.263	0.063

* As of 8:30 PM IST

RailTel IPO subscribed 2.64 times on Day 1

The IPO of telecom infrastructure provider RailTel Corporation of India was subscribed 2.64 times on the first day of subscription. The Rs 819.24-crore offer received bids for 16,13,74,220 shares as against 6,11,95,923 shares on offer, as per an NSE update. The category meant for non-institutional investors was subscribed 75 per cent and those for retail individual investors got subscribed 4.99 times.

FM addresses RBI board, explains govt priorities



Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman explained the government's priorities to the RBI's central board during their first post-Budget meeting through video conferencing. The finance minister holds a customary meeting with the board members of RBI and Sebi after Budget presentation every year. The finance minister informed the members about the key initiatives in the Budget and the priorities of the government.

Bitcoin finally crosses \$50,000 mark

After a wild stretch in which Bitcoin repeatedly set new highs amid murmurs of its seemingly unstoppable ascendance, the digital currency crossed the 50,000-mark for the first time on Tuesday. Bitcoin is rallying as more companies signal the volatile digital currency could eventually gain widespread acceptance as a legitimate means of payment. Bitcoin has been mostly seen as a store of value, like gold.

BMW launches locally made X3 xDrive30i SportX

BMW expanded its popular the X3 range in the country by introducing the locally made new BMW X3 xDrive30i SportX priced at Rs 56.50 lakh at pan-India showroom. The German automaker has announced benefits up to Rs 1.50 lakh for the customers who book the vehicle through the BMW Online Shop till February 28. The BMW X3 range also has X3 xDrive30i at Rs 61.80 lakh and X3 xDrive20d at Rs 62.50 lakh.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

Tata Electronics to set up component-making plant in TN Tata enters mobile mfg

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 16

Tata Electronics will invest close to Rs 4,700 crore in a mobile phone component plant at Krishnagiri in Tamil Nadu. This is part of the MoUs signed by the Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday with 28 companies in sectors like electric vehicles, wind energy, auto components, city gas and textiles, attracting a cumulative investment of Rs 28,053 crore.

Tata Electronics will manufacture mechanical enclosures for mobile phones at a plant in Krishnagiri, where it will invest Rs 4,684 crore. The facility is expected to provide employment to 18,250 people.

Similarly, Pegatron Corporation, Taiwan, is setting up a smartphone manufacturing unit at Mahindra World City, Chengalpattu



near Chennai at an investment of Rs 1,100 crore. It hopes to commence production in about four months and provide employment to over 14,000 people. Taipei-based Pegatron is the second largest contract manufacturer of iPhone.

Chennai-based Sun-Edison is investing Rs 1,423 crore in a solar module manufacturing unit in Cheyyar and Bengaluru-

based Elest Private Ltd, Rs 7,948 crore for producing cell, battery, e-bus and e-truck. AG&P Group, Singapore, is investing Rs 2,430 crore in a city gas distribution unit and Mumbai-based NetMagic Rs 1,377 crore in data centre while Germany's Nordex Group is investing Rs 1,200 crore in wind turbine generators and allied component manufacturing. TVS Srichakra is

investing Rs 1,000 crore in a new tyre plant.

In total, 28 memoranda of understanding, which account for a cumulative investment of Rs 28,053 crore and employment potential for 68,775 persons, were signed between the companies and the Government of Tamil Nadu on Tuesday. The state cabinet had cleared these investments late Friday night. Some of these companies have already started working on the plants.

Tamil Nadu chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami also laid the foundation stone for four new Industrial Parks of the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (Sipcot) at Mana-pparai, Maanallur, Oragadam and Dharmapuri at a total investment of Rs 1,605 crore. These parks will cater to the requirements of the automobile and auto

component sector, food processing, general engineering industries, e-vehicle manufacturing and textiles sectors. These industrial parks will create employment opportunities for more than one lakh people, the government said.

Further, foundation stones of six industrial estates of the Tamil Nadu Small Industries Development Corporation also were laid at the function.

The government also announced its New Industrial Policy 2021, which aims at achieving an annual growth rate of 15 per cent in the manufacturing sector, attract investments worth Rs 10 lakh crore and create employment opportunities for 20 lakh people by 2025. The policy also wants the state to increase the contribution of the manufacturing sector to 30 per cent of its economy by 2030.

Nearly 12 mn jobs added in January

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 16

Around 12 million people were employed in January, the highest monthly addition since the lock-down. This saw the unemployment rate easing to 6.5 per cent during the month.

The number of employed people came down to 400.7 million last month compared to 388.8 million in December. The surge in employment in January also compensated for the loss in the past three months, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy.

"Month-over-month variations in employment rarely crossed the 5 million mark before the lockdown. The increase in January was twice this max variation," said Mahesh Vyas, CEO of CMIE.

This helped the unemployment rate ease from 9.1 per cent in December to 6.5 per cent in January.

The unemployment rate was volatile in the past six months, ranging from a low of 6.5 per cent in November to a high of 9.1 per cent in December. The average unemployment rate during August-January was 7.4 per cent.

"The two most recent months December and January have seen an unusual jump in this volatility. In December 2020, India added 11.3 million unemployed persons. In January, India saw the count of unemployed decline by 10.7 million. These are extraordinary variations. Perhaps, the



sharp rise in the unemployed in December was extraordinary and in January India has reverted to its normal count of unemployed, which seems to average at about 28 million," said Vyas.

In January 2021, there were 27.9 million unemployed people who were actively looking for work, while there were another 12.1 million who were also unemployed and willing to work but not actively looking for work.

"A lot of pent up demand in the B2B industry has started getting released as the fear of the second wave of the pandemic receded. IT budgets in the western world which were earlier put on freeze have been re-allocated. More companies are now hiring technical skills and domain experts. Infra-structure companies are hiring at a rapid pace because of increased government spending in the sector. Funded start-ups continue their hiring momentum. All these factors contributed to decline in the unemployment rate in January," said Aditya Narayan Mishra, director and CEO of CIEL HR Services.

Amazon to make Fire TV sticks in India

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 16

Amazon will be manufacturing its devices in India, starting with streaming device Fire TV sticks. The US e-commerce giant will engage a Foxconn subsidiary as contract manufacturer for making the device in Chennai. Amazon has not, however, given any investment details of the venture.

The growth of video and audio streaming services like Netflix and Amazon's Prime Video has created a growing market for streaming devices in India.

Amazon will commence its manufacturing efforts with contract manufacturer Cloud Network Technology, a subsidiary of Foxconn, in Chennai and start production later this year, the company said in its blog.

It said the device manufacturing programme will produce hundreds of thousands of Fire TV stick devices every year, catering to the demands of customers in India. Amazon will continuously evaluate scaling capacity to additional marketplaces/cities depending on the domestic demand.

"Tamil Nadu has been an essential partner for Amazon India and we are excited to launch our first manufacturing line in Chennai. This contributes directly to the local economy and showcases India's ability to produce world-class products," the company said.

However, the company did not specify the investment to be made in the plant or the capacity of the unit.

Amit Agarwal, SVP and country head, Amazon India briefed Ravi Shankar Prasad, minister for communications, electronics and IT and law and justice,

on the details of the initiative on Tuesday.

"India is an attractive investment destination and is poised to become a major player in the global supply chain in the electronics and IT products industry. Our government's decision to launch a production linked incentive (PLI) scheme has received tremendous response globally. We welcome Amazon's decision to set up a manufacturing line in Chennai, as it will enhance domestic production capacities, and create jobs as well," said Ravi Shankar Prasad.

According to Agarwal,

Amazon is committed to partner with the Indian government to advance the vision of an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Through the make in India programme, the government intends to make the country a hub for electronics manufacturing to compete with countries like China and Taiwan.

Amazon will be joining Apple, Samsung Electronics and other technology companies setting up manufacturing operations in the country.

Amazon had earlier pledged an investment of \$1 billion in India.

PSBs rally up to 20% on privatisation buzz

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, FEB. 16

Shares of four PSU banks—Bank of Maharashtra, Bank of India, Central Bank of India and Indian Overseas Bank—rallied up to 20 per cent on speculations that the government may privatise them.

Share prices of the four PSU banks hit the upper circuit after a news wire report said, "Government has shortlisted four mid-sized state-run banks for privatisation," and also named them saying, "The four banks on the shortlist are Bank of Maharashtra, Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank and the Central Bank of India."

On the NSE, Bank of Maharashtra shares gained 19.81 per cent, IOB gained 19.63 per cent, Bank of India (19.97 per cent), and Central Bank of India (19.71 per cent) at market close.

The market is eagerly waiting for names of the two PSU banks that finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said would



bring amendments to Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act 1970 & Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act 1980.

These acts led to the nationalisation of banks in two phases and provisions of these laws have to be changed for the privatisation of banks, according to legal experts.

As the government has already announced the list of legislative business for the Budget session, it is expected that these amendments may be introduced in the monsoon session or later during the year, sources said.

The Budget session is scheduled to take up as many as 38 Bills, including the Finance Bill 2021, Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2020-21 and related Appropriation Bill, National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development Bill, 2021, and Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021.

private. The government has not officially issued a list of PSU banks to be privatised and it could take a few months for it to shortlist the banks.

"Other than IDBI Bank, we propose to take up the privatisation of two public sector banks and one general insurance company in the year 2021-22. This would require legislative amendments and I propose to introduce the amendments in this session itself," the FM had said in her Budget speech.

The government will consult and work with the Reserve Bank of India for executing privatisation of PSU Banks, she said at a post-Budget interaction.

The Government has to

Chinese investor in Koo's parent firm on way out

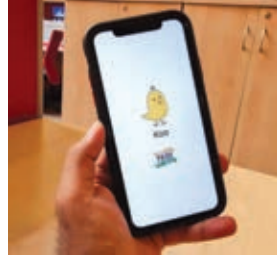
New Delhi, Feb. 16: The Chinese investor in the parent firm of Koo, India's answer to Twitter, is on its way out after other investors have pledged to buy out its 9 per cent stake, Koo's co-founder and CEO Aprameya Radhakrishna said.

Koo, which caught public attention after the government's tussle with Twitter over the removal of inflammatory contents, has crossed over 3 million downloads, with about a million active users.

Koo's investors include Accel Partners, 3one4 Capital, Blume Ventures, and Kalaari Capital. Global venture capital firm Shunwei is also an investor in Bombinate Technologies, the parent of Koo.

Shunwei Capital, which is led by a partnership team that includes people of Chinese origin, had invested in the earlier product of Bombinate, an app called Vokal.

Since Bombinate has pivoted its primary business and focused on Koo, Shunwei has committed to exiting the company, he said.



"Back in 2018, when we had just started with question-answer app Vokal, we got interest from Shunwei, which was a prolific Chinese investor in the content space," Radhakrishna said in an interview. Shunwei had invested across multiple companies in India and Bombinate was one of them.

"Over 2018 to now, Koo was started as an experiment and it gained traction. We had no idea, this will be a national sentiment product and that we should not take money other than Indian or something that is unwelcome," he said. "Nobody really questions about Vokal. It's about Koo."

He said when the investment happened, Koo didn't exist.

"Koo started getting traction recently. And the latest round of investment (\$4.1 million in Bombinate) was led by 3one4 Capital and Shunwei hasn't participated. We actually made sure that there is no more participation from Chinese investors," he said.

Shunwei, he said, is on its way out.

"Exits are a matter of timing. You need to have the interest to buy out existing shareholders as well," he said. "First priority was to infuse capital into the company. And if there will be more interest we will request Shunwei to exit. We now have enough interest to buy them out. They have also agreed to exit and this is in the process."

He did not say who would buy out Shunwei. Shunwei Capital, he said, held about 9 per cent interest in Bombinate.

Due to the increased restrictions on Chinese investors in India, the exit procedure was working through the required checks and clarifications before being completed, he said.

—PTI

NRIs FOCUS ON SOUTHERN REALTY FOR INVESTMENT



Mumbai, Feb. 16: Non-resident Indians (NRIs) are increasingly showing interest in the southern markets, especially Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, for real estate investments, with over 75 per cent of searches focusing on these markets during 2020, according to a report.

The maximum search or demand comes from NRIs living in the US, followed by the UAE and Britain, said the report by Commonfloor, a Quikr platform that offers home-seekers, sellers and realty professionals an online ecosystem.

The report said over 75 per cent of the NRI searches are directed towards the southern markets and Karnataka tops, with the most searches (31 per cent) for properties, followed by Tamil Nadu (20 per cent), Kerala (11 per cent) and Telangana (9 per cent).

On the property pricing trend, Bengaluru saw a dip in prices, especially at Whitefield, the Electronic City, Devanahalli and Sarjapur Road in 2020, while Kanakapura Road saw an increase, thanks to the metro.

Overall, properties across Hyderabad, Delhi and Chennai saw a dip in the pricing. Due to the sluggish nature of the economy, the stock of unsold inventory needed an extra push through discounts and offers which could explain this dip.

The searches were mostly for apartments for rent (39 per cent), followed by plot for sale, which got 17 per cent of the search volume. While 29 per cent of the NRI searches were about plots, about 45 per cent were looking for apartment/villa, of them 82 per cent were looking to invest in ready-to-move-in properties.

—PTI

TRAILING BRAND Timberland, North Face could be interested in buying brand

Adidas begins sale process for Reebok

THOMAS MULIER FEB. 16

Adidas AG plans to divest its underperforming Reebok brand as the German sportswear maker moves on after trying to revive its performance for more than a decade.

Adidas is starting a formal process to exit the business, and it will present more details on its new strategy March 10, the company said on Tuesday. The apparel maker said in December it was weighing options for Reebok.

Adidas is throwing in the towel 15 years after acquiring the brand for \$3.8 billion. While the pandemic could mute



prospects for the sale somewhat, soaring stock markets are driving asset prices higher. Reebok is likely to attract interest from rival sporting goods companies, especially in Asia, as well as private equity suitors, Bloomberg reported in December, citing people familiar with the matter, who asked not

to be identified because discussions are private.

Reebok returned to profitability in 2018 and eked out 2 per cent sales growth in 2019. Bloomberg reported in October that Adidas was exploring a sale and might start a strategic review.

Since his arrival at Adidas in 2016, chief exec-

utive officer Kasper Rorsted has prioritised fixing Reebok's long-sluggish performance.

He closed underperforming Reebok stores and allowed some licensing deals to expire, cutting sales at the long unloved sporting label while slashing expenses even more.

German publication Manager Magazin reported in October that interested parties include VF Corp, which owns the Timberland and North Face brands, as well as China's Anta International Group Holdings.

While Rorsted had hoped for about 2 billion euros (\$2.4 billion) from selling Reebok before the pandemic, he would now

be happy with less than that amount, Manager Magazin has said.

Reebok became an industry giant seemingly overnight in the 1980s, propelled by the aerobics boom. That momentum, however, quickly sputtered, and even Adidas has never managed to reignite the brand.

The chance to capitalise on Reebok's deep archive of classic footwear and apparel styles—from the clean white sneakers featuring the Union Jack to the black-and-white bulls-eye basketball kicks worn by Shaquille O'Neal—could be a motivating factor for potential buyers.

—Bloomberg

THE ASIAN AGE

17 FEBRUARY 2021

Fuel prices untenable, govt must revisit tax structure

Fuel prices soared across India for the eighth consecutive day on Tuesday. Since there are no elections anytime soon in the country, Indian oil companies merrily pass on every increase in global crude oil prices in the true spirit of a market-determined price regime on highly taxed petrol and diesel while the Narendra Modi government looks the other way.

Petrol price with certain additives crossed an unprecedented ₹100-mark in many cities in Madhya Pradesh, forcing many petrol pumps to shut down as their old analogue fuel dispensing machines were not designed to show a three-digit figure. Its neighbour Maharashtra would soon knock at the three-digit figure. States like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bihar, Punjab, West Bengal and Odisha, which are in the ₹90-a-litre-petrol club, could soon follow Maharashtra in joining the ₹100-a-litre-petrol club.

While the BJP demanded higher fuel subsidies when it was in the Opposition to protect consumers from higher global fuel prices when the crude oil price was as high as \$110 a barrel, it has turned petrol and diesel into a cash cow because of its inelastic demand curve

Since the retail price of petrol has crossed the ₹100-mark even when the Indian crude oil basket is US \$54.79 a barrel, there is a possibility of a considerable upswing in fuel price as the global crude oil price as of February 16 stands at US \$63.07 a barrel.

While the global fuel prices were to be blamed for a daily increase in fuel prices, it is heavy taxation — as high as 61 per cent in some states — that brought the fuel price to this unprecedented level. Ever since tax collection was effected slowing the economy, the Central government has gradually increased levies over the last six years of low global price regime — ₹11 of special additional excise duty, ₹18 of road and infrastructure cess and ₹2.5 of agriculture and development cess.

The stance of the BJP on fuel price has been quite paradoxical. While it demanded higher fuel subsidies when it was in the Opposition to protect consumers from higher global fuel prices when the crude oil price was as high as US \$110 a barrel, it has turned petrol and diesel into a cash cow because of its inelastic demand curve.

On May 16, 2014, when the NDA came to power, the price of petrol in Delhi was ₹71.41 per litre when global crude oil price (Indian basket) was US \$106 a barrel. Compared to this, the crude oil now stands at around US \$55 a barrel, which is almost half of the 2014 price, but the retail petrol price in Delhi, instead of halving, is now ₹89.

The treatment of petrol and diesel as sin products for taxation is patently wrong. It's an accepted fact that a hike in diesel price is an indirect tax imposed on the poor as they will bear the brunt of the resultant price rise. In rural India, where public transport is almost non-existent, petrol-run bikes are the predominant mode of transport for the poor and lower-middle-class people. Heavy taxes on fuel, therefore, go against fair tax practices which discourage the government from taxing the rich and the poor equally. It is also an irony that instead of—for example—taxing profits earned by a few thousands of super-rich people in speculative investments on the stock market, the government is bent on burning holes in already torn pockets of the common man.

Good cricket, bad pitches

On another dust bowl of a pitch that played worse than the first at Chepauk in Chennai, Team India beat England comprehensively to restore parity in the Test series. As a team that seems to enjoy being stung into action after losing the opening encounter as in Australia recently, the Indians may feel energised towards winning the series 2-1 or 3-1 and qualify for the World Test Championship final in London in the summer. Given a start in swashbuckling style by Rohit Sharma, a phenomenal batsman in home conditions, the Indians batted with great discipline in both outings. Unfortunately, such discipline was not seen in the spectators who were allowed to witness a match for the first time in India after a long gap due to the pandemic. The mask was an exception rather than the rule in the stands and physical distancing went for a toss, as it usually does in public events, including political rallies.

The heroics of Chennai cricketer Ravichandran Ashwin, who made a second innings century that belied the surprising bounce, turn and spin the designer Indian pitch was increasingly offering, was the clear highlight. He took five wickets in an innings and eight in the match. Statistically significant as his fifth Test match century was, it may be too early to compare him with past grass like Sir Garry Sobers, Sir Ian Botham and Kapil Dev. Such pitch conditions are loaded in favour of slow bowlers and do not create a good viewing spectacle as a mini dust storm seems to kick up each time the ball pitches. Regardless of the results which were even since England won the toss in the first Test and batted extremely well, these pitches do not make for good cricket. The performance of this Team India is so good it does not need the assistance of home conditions to perform against all comers.

THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY
Editor in Chief

Printer & Publisher: K. SUDHAKAR
THE ASIAN AGE office is located at:
New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.
Published and Printed on behalf of and for
Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.
London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.
RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Fresh push for lateral entry of babus likely

Last year, Arvind Panagariya, former vice-chief of the government Niti Aayog, wrote in his book, *India Unlimited – Reclaiming the Lost Glory*, that Indian babus suffered from the socialist hangover, which has slowed down the pace of reforms the Narendra Modi *sarkar* wishes to introduce. To support his view, he cited Mr Modi's initiative for lateral entry at the top levels of the bureaucracy. According to Panagariya, babus slowed down the process to the extent that at the very end of his term only nine officers could be inducted from outside.

But the government has not given up, yet. It is making another push to induct 30 more private sector specialists into different government departments at the crucial decision-making level of joint secretaries and directors on a contract basis. The Union Public Service

Commission (UPSC) will shortlist the candidates for interviews.

Prime Minister Modi has introduced the mechanism of recruiting fresh talent in the bureaucracy from the private sector during his first tenure. But the first round hasn't been the success that the government was expecting. It could recruit only nine of the 10 domain experts it had selected, and one of them, Arun Goyal, who had joined the commerce ministry as joint secretary, put in his papers barely a year later. It appears that far from changing the system, the lateral entrants are more likely to be subsumed by it. Further, a year after their appointment, the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) had issued a notice to the UPSC after a petition from whistleblower Indian Forest Service (IFoS) officer Sanjiv Chaturvedi alleged irregularities in the recruitment of three of the nine lateral entrants by the

government.

The government is catching flak already. Some opposition leaders are calling for the policy to be withdrawn. Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhkar Azad has threatened to "gherao" Parliament, calling the government's move a violation of constitutional rights. Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejaswi Yadav has said that UPSC's lateral recruitment an injustice to the youth.

Will the Modi sarkar overcome the political resistance from outside and from the babus within who may try to defend their turf?

KERALA IGNORES SC ORDER ON BABU TENURES

Though the Supreme Court fixed a two-year tenure for babus back in 2013, few states have complied with the directive. Most states are clearly unwilling to cede this leverage over bureaucrats. Even in states

where civil services boards were set up, by the order of the apex court, netas always seem to find ways to go around the directive to achieve their political ends. Even Kerala often held up as an example of progressive governance, has snubbed the SC's ruling.

Official data reveals that the average tenure of secretary-rank officers in "God's Own Country" from 2014 until 2018 was 11 months and has reportedly dipped further since then. Until last December, Kerala had only 34 officers of secretary and principal secretary rank holding 72 posts! 16 principal secretaries are holding 31 posts, of which 27 are cadre posts. Similarly, 18 secretary-rank IAS officers are looking after 41 posts!

Sources say that some officers including principal secretaries K.R. Jyothilal and Rani George are discharging three responsibilities, and Secretary Tinku Biswal is

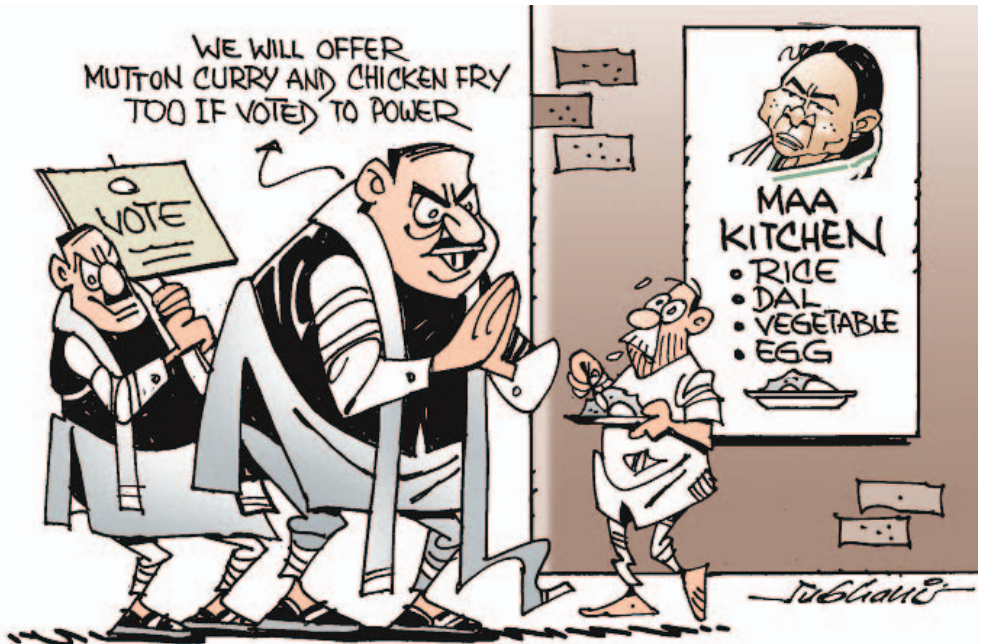
Though the Supreme Court fixed a two-year tenure for babus back in 2013, few states have complied with the directive. Most states are clearly unwilling to cede this leverage over bureaucrats.

managing four posts!

This data came to light as poll preparations begin for the assembly elections due in May this year. But while this flies against the idea of good governance, it is unlikely to matter to voters at the hustings, which may explain why governments continue to defy the apex court's order.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian](#) on Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

Subhani



PM's arguments on farm laws seem deeply flawed



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

A good case is often lost by a bad lawyer. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government appear to be the proverbial "bad lawyers" for the good case of farm reforms. Mr Modi's arguments in the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha during his reply to the motion of thanks on the President's address on February 9-10 ran themselves aground because of these bad arguments. He harped on the theme that the farm laws would emancipate the marginalised farmers because they can sell their produce to whomever they want. It is based on the premise that if they were to sell in the market-yard, or mandi, they would have to pay the mandi tax, while if they were to sell outside, they would escape the tax. And he said that since there would be many buyers — this is the first time that buyers are referred to by this government — the farmers would command a higher price. Mr Modi has tried to deflect the criticism that big corporates would dominate the open grain market.

But there are flaws in this argument. The small traders who are expected to flock to the farmers outside the mandis are unlikely to pay the higher price to small farmers. If anyone were to benefit from these transactions, at least when the price would be higher, it would be the big farmer. The big farmer would avert the mandi tax, and the better price would increase his profit margin. The margin for the smaller farmer would remain marginal.

Second, the small traders would bargain hard and they are more likely to beat down the price. The small farmer cannot hold on to his or her produce for too long.

The Prime Minister calls the analysis of the future behaviour of the market as "futile speculation". He does not seem to understand that future expectation is the basis of all commercial transactions.

And while creating an apparently tax-free parallel market to that of the mandis and a higher price for the produce, the government is really weakening the duty-shackled mandis and partly ridding itself of the obligation to buy grain at the MSP rates beyond the procurement limits of the Food Corporation of India. So, the assurances that mandis will continue to function and that the minimum support price (MSP) will continue appear so much like a deceptive election promise. Second, the trader who buys the grains at a high price would have to sell it to the consumer at a much higher price. In the year of a bumper crop, the natural slump in price would affect the farmer and it would be of benefit to the trader. And if the small traders are to be crowded out by big players because the big players can afford to buy at a marginally better price because they can make a much bigger profit on volumes.

The way out of this dead end for the small farmers is to grow cash crops like vegetables, flowers and cotton, where the prices that he

The small traders would bargain hard and they are more likely to beat down the price. The small farmer cannot hold on to his or her produce for too long... Future expectation is the basis of commercial transactions.

The government is really weakening the duty-shackled mandis and partly ridding itself of the obligation to buy grain at the MSP rates beyond the procurement limits of the FCI... So, its MSP assurances appear deceptive.

or she would command may be an option. The other part of this shifting the crop pattern is to enter into contract farming, where the he or she would have to grow the crops as required by the contractor, who would sell the produce for far-off customers, and who would assure a guaranteed price for the small farmer. The government, through the new law, protects the farmer from being evicted from the land if there were to be some dispute between the farmer and the contractor. The contractor is indeed a new avatar of the old moneylender or the "Mahajan", but who is more sophisticated because of his wider marketing network.

The Prime Minister's other argument is that the size of the marginalised farmers is likely to reach 86 per cent if one were to include the farmers in hilly regions, from the 51 per cent in the 1971 agricultural census as cited by Prime Minister Charan Singh, and that they cannot sustain themselves. It is indeed an inconvertible fact the small farmers cannot sustain themselves and there is a need for innovative solutions. What the policy-makers have in mind is to wean these small farmers away from their forever shrinking and unviable holdings to the cities and other sectors. This has been the plan of the government right from 2014 when Mr Modi and the BJP came to power. That is why they wanted to amend the Land Acquisition Act, which was introduced in the last days of the Manmohan Singh government. In the UP version, the land acquisition law favoured the farmers who could refuse to alienate the

land for a public purpose. The argument put forward by NDA's first finance minister Arun Jaitley was that it was an unworkable law as anyone could raise any objection to thwart a project. But the main reason behind the amendment was that of then rural affairs minister M. Venkaiah Naidu — that farmers want to give up farming because they find it unviable and therefore the law must help the farmers to move away from the agricultural sector.

The honest way of going about this important issue dealing with the challenges of agriculture is to tell the truth that the government is unable to pay the rising MSP bill, and that it would want the private corporates and merchants to take over the agricultural market. The government is now telling a lie — that farmers will get a better deal outside the mandi, which is not the case over the long term. There are complications and uncertainties. Mr Modi and his advisers hate any kind of complexity and they want to believe in simplistic formulations. Participating in the 2014 debate on the motion of thanks on the President's address, BJP Lok Sabha member Rajiv Pratap Rudy said that the rural population must be shifted away from the land as a way of lifting the population out of poverty and cited the Chinese example in this context. It would be far better if Mr Modi and his colleagues simply accept that the issue is a difficult one and that there are no simple solutions.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

The honest way of going about this important issue is to tell the truth that the government is unable to pay the rising MSP bill, and that it would want the private corporates and merchants to take over the agri-market

LETTERS

JUSTICE DELAYED

It took six years for the Bangladeshi government to serve justice to the killers of Bangladeshi-American engineer and blogger Avijit Roy. Five of them were sentenced to death by a court on Tuesday. They belong to the Al Qaeda-inspired domestic militant group Ansar Ullah Bangla Team. Roy was hacked to death while returning from a book fair in 2015. His wife had her fingers severed. Roy had founded a website called Mukto-mona and was an atheist. The killers will now appeal their sentence.

Priyanka Mathur Noida

BRACE UP, MUMBAI

MUMBAI IS heading towards another lockdown as there has been a record surge in Covid-19 cases. I think the lockdown is a good step as it will make people more aware of the precautions that still need to be taken to keep the disease away. Most residents travelling on trains and BEST buses do not wear masks. Deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar expressed dismay over people not following Covid precautions. I strongly feel that harsh decisions can be taken and people should remain prepared.

Bhagwan Thadani Mumbai

POLL FEVER RISES

WITHIN A SPAN of the next 3-4 months, four Indian States are going to elect the representatives for their respective Assemblies. They are: West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Kerala. From the point of view of the BJP, it can be said that the central party appears to be sitting pretty as far as the first state is concerned. However, in the second it can hope to get some seats only if the ruling AIADMK decides to take it under its wings. Though Assam can go the BJP way, in Kerala, the Hindutva party will have to plough a lonely furrough.

Arun Malankar Mumbai

DISHA OLD ENOUGH

WHY ARE POLITICAL parties in the Opposition harping on the fact that Disha Ravi is only 21 years of age? She is old enough to commit a crime as well as to make sacrifices for the greater good. While her arrest by Delhi Police for purported sedition is wrongful on its own accord, it is time to stop this harmful practice of infantilising young Indians.

Shovanlal Chakraborty Kolkata

SHORT TAKES

INDIAN IS TOP UN DIPLOMAT IN CHINA

Beijing, Feb. 16: Senior UN official Siddharth Chatterjee of India has formally taken over as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in China, a key posting of overseeing the work of 27 agencies, funds and programmes of the global organisation in the world's most populous country.

He will be UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's senior-most UN Representative in China as the UN Resident Coordinator.

Chatterjee, whose early career was in the Indian Army, was decorated for gallantry by the President of India in 1995. He holds a master's degree in public policy from Princeton University in the United States, and a bachelor's degree from the National Defence Academy in India.

5 BANGLADESH ISLAMISTS GET DEATH SENTENCE

Dhaka, Feb. 16: Five Islamist extremists were sentenced to death on Tuesday over the brutal murder of a Bangladeshi-American writer and rights activist six years ago.

Avijit Roy, a prolific blogger and the author of 10 books, including the best-selling "Bisw-asher Virus" ("Virus of Faith"), was hacked to death outside Bangladesh's largest book fair by machete-wielding extremists in February 2015.

The murder enraged the Muslim-majority nation's secular activists, who staged days of protests.

The judge at Dhaka's Special Anti-Terrorism Tribunal found six people guilty, sentencing five to death and one to life in prison. Two of them were tried in absentia, including sacked army officer Syed Ziaul Haque, who was accused of leading the group that carried out the attack.

HK ACTIVISTS GO ON TRIAL, 2 PLEAD GUILTY

Hong Kong, Feb. 16: Two former Hong Kong lawmakers pleaded guilty to illegal assembly charges Tuesday, as a trial opened for them and seven other prominent democracy activists in what is seen as a crackdown on dissent in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

The activists are charged with organising and participating in an illegal assembly during massive anti-government protests in 2019.

They include Martin Lee, an 82-year-old veteran of Hong Kong's democracy movement, and Jimmy Lai, a newspaper publisher who is being held without bail on other charges related to his pro-democracy activities. The two who pleaded guilty were Au Nok-hin and Leung Yiu-chung, both former members of the Hong Kong legislature.

Au pleaded guilty to both charges, while Leung pleaded guilty just to participating in an illegal assembly.

Prosecutors dropped the organising charge against Leung. The other seven pleaded not guilty. The charges stem from an Aug. 18, 2019, protest.

TURKEY DETAINS WANTED NZ I.S. MILITANT

Ankara, Feb. 16: Three New Zealand citizens were detained while attempting to illegally cross into Turkey from Syria, Turkey's Defence Ministry said. A ministry statement posted on Twitter on Monday said the group included a 26-year-old woman wanted on an Interpol notice for allegedly belonging to the extremist Islamic State group. The woman was identified only by her initials SA.

The three were caught by border security units while trying to sneak into the town of Reyhanli, in Hatay province, the ministry said.

The state-run Anadolu Agency said the woman was accompanied by two children when she arrived at a local courthouse to be questioned by judicial officials following her interrogation by police.

Turkey has intensified security along its border with Syria to prevent infiltrations and regularly carries out raids against suspected IS militants in the country.

Turkey has been hit by a string of attacks since 2015 by Kurdish militants and IS extremists, including a New Year's Eve attack on a nightclub in Istanbul that left 39 people dead in 2017.

New charge may see Suu Kyi being detained without trial

Accused of violating a law used to prosecute people breaking virus curbs

Yangon, Feb. 16: Police in Myanmar filed a new charge against ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, her lawyer said Tuesday, which may allow her to be held indefinitely without trial. Lawyer Khin Maung Zaw told reporters after meeting with a judge in the capital, Naypyitaw, that Suu Kyi has been charged with violating Article 25 of the Natural Disaster Management Law, which has been used to prosecute people who have broken Coronavirus restrictions.

Suu Kyi, who was ousted in a military coup on Feb. 1, has already been charged with possessing walkie-talkies that were imported without being registered. The maximum punishment for the Covid-19 violation is three years' imprisonment. However, the new charge may allow her to be held indefinitely without trial because a change in the Penal Code instituted by the junta last week permits detention without court permission.

Groups of demonstrators turned out in Yangon and other cities on Tuesday to protest the coup and demand that Suu Kyi and members of her ousted government be freed from detention. In Yangon, police blocked off the street in front of the Central Bank, which protesters have targeted amid speculation online that the military is



Demonstrators display pictures of detained Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi during a protest against the military coup in Mandalay, Myanmar on Tuesday. — AP

seeking to seize money from them.

Buddhist monks demonstrated outside the UN's local office. The protests are taking place in defiance of an order banning gatherings of five or more people. Around 3,000 demonstrators — mainly students — returned to the streets in Mandalay, the

country's second biggest city, carrying posters of Suu Kyi and shouting for the return of democracy.

Security presence was low-key around the march, with most police guarding key buildings in the city, such as state banks branches. On Monday in Mandalay, soldiers and police violently broke up a gathering of more than 1,000 protesters in front of the Myanmar Economic Bank.

They attacked the protesters with slingshots and sticks, and police could be seen aiming long guns into the air amid sounds that resembled gunfire.

Local media reported rubber bullets were fired into the crowd and that a

few people were injured. The government ordered internet access blocked on Sunday and Monday nights without giving a reason.

It has in the past few weeks imposed selective and ineffective blocks on social media platforms and prepared a draft internet law that would criminalise online activities.

— AP

Independent committee will examine riot: Pelosi

Washington, Feb. 16: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Monday that Congress will establish an independent, Sept. 11-style commission to look into the deadly insurrection that took place at the US Capitol.

Pelosi said the commission will investigate and report on the facts and causes relating to the Jan. 6, 2021, domestic terrorist attack upon the United States Capitol Complex and relating to the interference with the peaceful transfer of power. "In a letter to Democratic colleagues, Pelosi said the House will also put forth supplemental spending to boost security at the Capitol.

After former President Donald Trump's acquittal at his second Senate impeachment trial, bipartisan support appeared to be growing for an independent commission to examine the deadly insurrection. Investigations into the riot were already planned, with Senate hearings scheduled later this month in the Senate Rules Committee. Pelosi, D-Calif., asked retired Army Lt. Gen. Russel Honor to lead an immediate review of the Capitol's security process.

In her letter Monday, Pelosi said, it is clear from his findings and from the impeachment trial that we must get to the truth of how this happened.

She added, As we prepare for the Commission, it is also clear from General Honor's interim reporting that we must put forth a supplemental appropriation to provide for the safety of Members and the security of the Capitol.

Dozens spewed extremist rhetoric

College Park (US), Feb. 16: In a text message, a radicalised Trump supporter suggested getting a boat to ferry "heavy weapons" across the Potomac River into the waiting arms of their members in time for Jan. 6, court papers say. It wasn't just idle talk, authorities say.

Investigators found invoices for more than \$750 worth of live ammunition and for a firearm designed to look like a cellphone at the Virginia home of Thomas Caldwell, who's charged with conspiring with members of the far-right Oath Keepers militia group in one of the most sinister plots in the US Capitol siege.

Right-wing extremists, bled by Donald Trump, were unleashed last month, and their menacing presence has reignited the debate over domestic extremism and how law enforcement should be handling these groups.

Their talk of civil war, traitors and revolution mirrored fighting words echoed by right-wing social media personalities and websites for months as Trump spread bogus claims about a rigged presidential election.

In nearly half of the more than 200 federal cases stemming from the attack on the Capitol, authorities have cited evidence that an insurrectionist appeared to be inspired by conspiracy theories or extremist ideologies. — AP

Lawmakers from both parties, speaking on Sunday's news shows, signalled that even more inquiries were likely. The Senate verdict Saturday, with its 57-43 majority falling 10 votes short of the two-thirds needed to convict Trump, hardly put to rest the debate about the Republican former president's culpability for the Jan. 6 assault.

There should be a complete investigation about what happened, said Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, one of seven Republicans who voted to convict Trump. What was known, who knew it and when

they knew, all that, because that builds the basis so this never happens again. Cassidy said he was attempting to hold President Trump accountable, and added that as Americans hear all the facts, more folks will move to where I was. He was censured by his state's party after the vote. — AP

● **INDIAN-AMERICAN** Pronita Gupta has been named US President Joe Biden's Special Assistant for Labour and Workers on the Domestic Policy Council.

Navalny defamation: \$13K fine sought

Moscow, Feb. 16: A Russian prosecutor on Tuesday asked a Moscow court to fine opposition figure Alexei Navalny 950,000 rubles (\$13,000/-10,600 euros) for allegedly defaming a 94-year-old veteran. The prosecution also asked for a three-and-a-half year suspended sentence Navalny received in 2014 to be converted into real jail time as the alleged defamation occurred during the suspended sentence.

Another Moscow court earlier this month already converted the suspended sentence to jail time over Navalny allegedly violating the terms of the suspended sentence while recovering from a poisoning attack in Germany.

A Moscow district court was on Tuesday hearing the final arguments in the defamation case against Navalny, who referred to the World War II veteran and others who appeared in a pro-Kremlin video as "traitors".

Navalny took part in the hearing from inside a glass cage for defendants. Wearing a blue hoodie, the 44-year-old anti-graft campaigner frequently smiled and paced inside the glass cell, an AFP journalist reported.

His lawyer Olga Mikhailova insisted the charges were "contrived and arbitrary". After the final arguments were delivered, the judge adjourned the hearing to February 20. — AFP

Free speech 'champion' for British universities draws praise and alarm

London, Feb. 16: The British government said on Tuesday it will appoint a free speech champion for universities to protect against attempts to silence academics and speakers with unpopular opinions.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said he was deeply worried about the chilling effect on campuses of unacceptable silencing and censoring.

That is why we must strengthen free speech in higher education, by bolstering the existing legal duties and ensuring strong, robust action is taken if these are breached, he said. The new champion will investigate allegations

of infringement of free speech, such as the dismissal of academics or the no platforming of invited speakers.

The Conservative government also plans to give a regulator, the Office for Students, powers to fine universities that breach a requirement to support free speech.

Academics and others who are expelled, dismissed or demoted for their views will be able to seek compensation through the courts under the plans, which have not yet been turned into law.

In recent years, controversies over free speech on UK campuses have erupt-

AstraZeneca vax gets WHO nod

Toronto, Feb. 16: The World Health Organisation has granted an emergency authorisation to AstraZeneca's Coronavirus vaccine, a move that should allow the UN agency's partners to ship millions of doses to countries as part of a UN-backed programme to tame the pandemic.

In a statement Monday, the WHO said it was clearing the AstraZeneca vaccines made by the Serum Institute of India and South Korea's AstraZeneca-SKBio. The WHO's green light for the AstraZeneca vaccine is only the second one the UN health agency has issued after authorizing the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in December.

Monday's announcement should trigger the delivery of hundreds of millions of doses to countries that have signed up for the UN-backed COVAX effort, which aims to deliver vaccines to the world's most vulnerable people. "Countries with no access to vaccines to date will finally be able to start vaccinating their health workers and populations at risk," said Dr. Mariangela Simao, the WHO's Assistant-Director General for Access to Medicines and Health Products.

The Coronavirus has infected more than 109 million people and killed at least 2.4 million of them. But many countries have not yet started vaccination programmes and even rich nations are facing shortages of vaccine doses as manufacturers struggle to ramp up production. The AstraZeneca vaccine has already been authorised in more than 50 countries, including Britain, India, Argentina and Mexico. It is cheaper and easier to handle than the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which needs deep-cold storage that is not widespread in many developing nations.

Both vaccines require two shots per person, given weeks apart. Last week, WHO vaccine experts recommended the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine for people over age 18, including in countries that have detected variants of Covid-19.

But that was contrary to the recommendation from the African Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which said countries that had identified a virus variant first seen in South Africa should be "cautious" in their use of the AstraZeneca vaccine, suggesting that other shots be prioritised instead. — AP

Iraq rocket hit kills contractor

Baghdad, Feb. 16: A US-led coalition contractor was killed and an unspecified number of other civilians were wounded when a barrage of rockets struck outside an airport near where US forces are based in northern Iraq, Iraqi security and coalition officials said. More than a dozen rockets hit late Monday in areas between the civilian international airport in the city of Irbil in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish-run region and the nearby base hosting US troops.

A little-known Shiite militant group calling itself Saraya Awliya al-Dam, Arabic for Guardians of Blood Brigade, claimed responsibility for the attack. US Army Col. Wayne Marotto said Tuesday a civilian contractor with the coalition who was not a US citizen was killed. He did not provide further details about the citizenship of the killed

contractor. Marotto also said a US military serviceman and eight civilian contractors were wounded in the assault.

An unspecified number of Iraqi and Kurdish civilians were wounded as rockets hit busy residential areas close to the airport. The coalition confirmed that 107 mm rockets, a total of 14, were launched, with three impacting an airbase hosting US troops. The Trump administration had said that the death of a US contractor would be a red line and provoke a US escalation in Iraq against Iran-backed groups.

The December 2019 killing of a US civilian contractor in a rocket attack in province of Kirkuk sparked a tit-for-tat fight on Iraqi soil that brought the country to the brink of a proxy war.

The official position of President Joe Biden is not yet clear. — AP

HIGHEST ECHELONS

With more than 32 mn people of Indian-origin, Indians are the largest diaspora in the world

200 PIOs occupy leadership positions in 15 countries

Washington, Feb. 16: More than 200 Indian-origin people occupy leadership positions in as many as 15 countries, including the US and the UK, building a legacy for future generations, according to a first-of-its-kind list by a US-based organisation working among the Indian diaspora.

The 2021 Indiaspora Government Leaders List, which was released on Monday, had drawn from government websites and other publicly-available resources to prepare the

report to showcase the achievements of the community leaders across different sectors.

It said that more than 200 leaders of Indian heritage have ascended to the highest echelons of public service in 15 countries across the globe, with over 60 of them holding Cabinet positions.

"It is a huge source of pride to have the first woman and first person of colour as the Vice President of the world's oldest democracy be someone of Indian heritage. We wanted to

use this seminal moment on Presidents' Day to highlight a host of others in the diaspora who also are in public service," said Indiaspora founder M.R. Rangaswami, a Silicon Valley-based entrepreneur and investor.

He was referring to Kamala Harris, the first woman Vice President of the United States.

"These leaders are building a legacy for future generations, and one that extends beyond our community to all of the constituents and communi-

● **THE 2021 Indiaspora Government Leaders List, which was released on Monday, had drawn from government websites and other publicly-available resources to prepare the report to showcase the achievements of the community leaders across different sectors.**

ties that they serve," Rangaswami said in a statement.

The list also includes diplomats, legislators, hea-

ds of central banks and senior civil servants from countries with significant histories of diaspora migration, such as Australia, Canada, Singapore, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.

"It is an honour to be included on the 2021 Indiaspora Government Leaders List. As the longest-serving Indian-American member of Congress, I am proud to be a leader in the Indian-American community, which has become an integral part of American

life and society, said Congressman Ami Bera, Chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia. With more than 32 million people of Indian-origin or (PIOs) globally, according to India's Ministry of External Affairs, Indians are the largest diaspora population in the world.

The officials on the 2021 Indiaspora Government Leaders List collectively represent more than 587 million constituents, and their countries account for an estimated \$28 trillion in

GDP, demonstrating the impact these leaders are having globally.

"It truly is inspiring to note the remarkable contribution that government leaders of Indian heritage have made to advance the societies that they now represent. "For a sizable segment of the population, it is government policy addressing social injustices that lead to a transformative path of sustainable socio-economic progress, said Rosy Akbar, Fiji's Minister of Education, Heritage, and Arts. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Olympian arrested in drug trafficking

Sydney: Former Olympic swimmer Scott Miller was in custody on Tuesday and charged with drug trafficking after Australian police seized methamphetamine valued at 2 million Australian dollars (\$1.6 million) and accused him of directing a criminal syndicate.

Police arrested 45-year-old Miller and a 47-year-old man, who has not been named, on Tuesday at their Sydney homes after finding methylamphetamine concealed in eight candles in January, a police statement said.

Miller was the director of a criminal syndicate, Police Detective Superintendent John Watson alleged. The two men were allegedly distributing drugs from Sydney that were bound for regional New South Wales state.

Miller won a silver medal in the 100-meter butterfly at the Atlanta Olympics in 1996. — AP

Boxing qualifier for Games scrapped

New Delhi: With the IOC deciding to scrap the Olympic world qualifiers for boxing because of the “challenges” posed by the global Covid-19 restrictions, India is unlikely to add to the unprecedented nine who have made the cut for the Tokyo Games in July-August.

The world qualifier, which was to be the final qualifying event for the Games after the continental events, was scheduled to be held in Paris in June. “The 53 quota places (32 men and 21 women) planned to be allocated at the final World Olympic Qualifier will now be allocated equally across the four regions (Africa, Americas, Asia/Oceania and Europe) and all the weight categories,” the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) Boxing Task Force stated. — PTI

1978 World Cup winner Luque dies

Buenos Aires: Argentina World Cup winner Leopoldo Luque died on Monday of a heart attack while he was receiving treatment for Covid-19, hospital sources said.

Luque, who was 71, contracted coronavirus, which led to a pneumonia that provoked his death, a hospital source from the western city of Mendoza said.

Striker Luque scored some crucial goals as Argentina won the World Cup for the first time on home soil in 1978. He scored Argentina’s opening goal of the tournament in a 2-1 win over Hungary and added three more, including a brace in the crucial 6-0 thrashing of Peru that sent them into the final.

In total, he netted 22 goals in 45 appearances for the national team and was top scorer at the 1975 Copa America. — AFP

Clarkson stars as Jazz down Sixers

Los Angeles: Jordan Clarkson erupted for 40 points off the bench as the Utah Jazz overpowered the Philadelphia 76ers 134-123 in the NBA’s clash of the conference leaders on Monday.

Clarkson produced a dazzling display of long-range shooting, making eight of 13 attempts from beyond the arc as Utah overturned an early double-digit deficit to score a convincing win at Salt Lake City’s Vivint Arena. — AFP

Live on TV

TENNIS

Australian Open: Quarterfinals from 5.30 am on Sony Six, Sony Ten 2, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Goa vs Odisha from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

English Premier League: Burnley vs Fulham from 11.30 pm; Everton vs Manchester City 1.45 am (Thursday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Champions League: Porto vs Juventus from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2, HD; Sevilla vs Dortmund from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

WWE

NXT: Bouts from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002, and Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C - 9, Sector - III, Noida - 201301.
Editor - T. Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep. Rs. 20.00 per copy.

UPROOTED

India rout Root & Co. in four days to level series

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, FEB. 16

Normal service resumed on Tuesday as India roared back to a 317-run win over England in the second Test here at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium. With the four-match series levelled at 1-1, the focus now shifts to Ahmedabad’s swanky new Motera stadium where the remaining matches, including a day-night contest, will be played.

If India go on to win the series 2-1 or 3-1, they will qualify for the World Test championship final against New Zealand to be held at Lord’s in July. On the other hand, England need to win the remaining two Tests to make it to the summit clash.

Debutant Axar Patel claimed a five-wicket haul (5/60) as England were skittled out for 164 shortly after lunch on day four.

Chasing an impossible 482, England’s ability to delay the inevitable was

SCORECARD

India 1st Innings: 329
England 1st Innings: 134
India 2nd Innings: 286
England 2nd Innings (overnight 53/3): R. Burns c Kohli b Ashwin 25, D. Sibley lbw b Patel 3, D. Lawrence st Pant b Ashwin 26, J. Leach c R. Sharma b Patel 0, J. Root c Rahane b Patel 33, B. Stokes c Kohli b Ashwin 8, O. Pope c I. Sharma b Patel 12, B. Foakes c Patel b Yadav 2, M. Ali st Pant b Yadav 43, O. Stone lbw b Patel 0, S. Broad not out 5. Extras (b6, lb1) 7. **Total (all out in 54.2 overs):** 164.
FoW: 1-17, 2-49, 3-50, 4-66, 5-90, 6-110, 7-116, 8-116, 9-126, 10-164.
Bowling: Sharma 6-3-13-0, Patel 21-5-60-5, Ashwin 18-5-53-3, Siraj 3-1-6-0, Yadav 6.2-1-25-2.

riding on the shoulders of Joe Root. The England skipper, who made a 92-ball 33, gloved a leaping delivery off Axar to be caught at slip, soon after lunch, to leave the visitors at 116 for 8. Left-handed batsman Moeen Ali used his long handle to smash Axar for three sixes in a row. His entertaining knock (48 off 13 balls) didn’t last long as Kuldeep Yadav had Moeen stumped. It was Rishabh Pant’s fourth dismissal of the match and it ended England’s misery with a day and almost two ses-

sions to spare.

Axar became only the second Indian left-arm spinner to take five wickets on Test debut. Dilip Doshi made the pioneering achievement against Australia at the same venue in 1979.

Axar said the conditions were helpful for spinners. “But, it was important to bowl at the right speed, because if you were too slow, there was time to adjust. So I was bowling stump-to-stump, and waiting for errors from the batsmen. Even if we had bowled first, I don’t think

it would have made a big difference because there was a lot of help from the pitch even on the first day,” said Axar.

R. Ashwin removed the ‘dancing’ Dan Lawrence off his first ball of the day and dismissed his ‘bunny’ Ben Stokes for the 10th time in his career to take his match tally to eight. He missed out on becoming only the fourth player to achieve the rare double of a century and a 10-wicket haul in the same game.

Kuldeep who was playing his first Test since January 2019 could bowl only 12.2 overs in the entire match. The ‘Chinaman’ spinner, however, knew it was for the team’s cause. “It’s very important when your team is doing well, to keep giving them support. Axar and Ashwin were bowling well, so my job was to maintain that control. It felt like a debut for me, because I’ve not played for so long,” said Kuldeep.

NUMBERS GAME

● India recorded their biggest win in terms of runs by winning the second Test match by 317 runs in Chennai on Tuesday. Their previous biggest was 279 runs, at Headingley, Leeds in 1986. India have also beaten England six times by an innings.

● The 246 runs victory at Visakhapatnam in 2016-17 was India’s previous biggest against England at home.

● The 317-run victory was India’s 15th at Chepauck which is their highest at any venue. They have 13 wins in Delhi and Kolkata each.

● It was India’s 21st win in India under Virat Kohli. He equals Mahindra Singh Dhoni’s record for most wins by an Indian captain at home. Overall, India have won 34 Tests under Kohli, which is seven clear of the next-best, 27 under Dhoni.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER



Members of the Indian team celebrate their win over England on Day Four of their second Test in Chennai on Tuesday.

— BCCI

Kohli says crowds make a difference

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 16

India skipper Virat Kohli said their emphatic 317-run win over England was an example of the grit and determination of the young Indian side.

“It is a perfect game for us. Our application with the bat was outstanding in this game. The conditions were challenging for both sides, but we showed more application with the bat. We didn’t panic out there looking at the turn and bounce, we showed grit, got into the game and scored 600 runs in the match. We know our bowlers are going to do the job for us if we put up these runs in home conditions,” said Kohli.

The Chennai win also ended Kohli’s four-match losing streak which began in Wellington in February 2020. Kohli said the toss that he won wouldn’t have mattered

INDIA JUMP TO SECOND SPOT IN WTC RANKINGS

Chennai, Feb. 16: The resounding 317-run win over England in the second Test here on Tuesday propelled India to second in the World Test Championship standings issued by the ICC.

After the series-levelling win at Chepuak, India have 69.7 percentage of points (PCT) and 460 aggregate points, behind New Zealand, who have already qualified for the WTC final to be held at the Lord’s June. New Zealand have 70.0 PCT and 420 points.

India, who had lost the first Test by 227 runs, need to win the one more and at least drawn another to make it to the WTC final. They were fourth on the table before Tuesday’s result.

— PTI

much in the game. “If you looked at our second innings, we still applied ourselves and got almost 300. It wasn’t unfair if the toss went either way. Both teams should be in the game from the first session onwards, whether it is on spinning to seaming tracks, and that exactly

was the case in this game,” he added.

When the opening Test was played behind closed doors, the hosts sorely missed spectators. Kohli said the crowds make a big difference. “When fans are behind you, you push more as a team. It was a bit strange in the

first game to be playing at home without the crowd in the stands. We were pretty flat on the first two days over there to be pretty honest, myself included, didn’t pick up energy on the field. But from the second innings onwards in the first game, we picked up and were on the money in terms of our body language.”

Known as ‘knowledgeable cricket fans’, the Chepauck spectators have drawn a lot of praise over the years. It was Kohli’s turn to acknowledge it on Tuesday.

“The Chennai crowd is very intelligent, they understand their cricket really well. In a 15-20 minute period, where the bowler needs the support of the crowd, it is my responsibility to involve everyone and bring in the crowd. If I am running in to bowl in this heat, I want people to motivate me,” he added.

Ashwin realistic about white-ball comeback

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 16

R. Ashwin hasn’t played an international white-ball game since the West Indies thrashed India at Kingston in July 2017. But the all-rounder said he would give it his best crack if he gets an opportunity again.

“I have been out of the white-ball team for the last 3.5 years. Every time I have got an opportunity in the IPL, I have put a very earnest attempt and contributed in whatever way I can. If the team deems it fit and if I get the opportunity, I will give it my best crack. Obviously, I will think I am good enough,” said Ashwin.

Asked whether he still dreams of playing in the

World T20, Ashwin said: “For me, it is not a dream to play in the T20 WC. The space I am in right now, I am enjoying what I am doing on a day-to-day basis. It has been more about the process. There are a lot of cricketers who have done very well for India in different formats over the last couple of years.”

Ashwin who started his career as a top-order batsman had to rediscover his batting in the recent Australia series after a prolonged lean patch. “I’m someone who tries hard. When it doesn’t go my way, I try harder. A lot of my batting was about me internally thinking about what was happening with the crease, the setup and the technique,” he said.

WE WERE OUTPLAYED, SAYS ROOT

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 16

Former England cricketers and a few experts from the UK made a lot of hue and cry about the Chepauck surface when England were bowled out for 134 in their first innings.

However, England skipper Joe Root made it clear that the pitch was not the reason they lost the game.

“We were outplayed. I would say a good pitch makes for some very exciting cricket, but that is not the reason why we lost the game. We have to be very honest about that. It was a bit of an education for all of us,” said Root.

Contrary to what Kohli felt, Root said the toss played an important role. “I don’t think it necessarily dictated who’s going to win the game, but we would have certainly liked to have batted first on it. The thing that stands out is that India made the most of the opportunity and we did not perform well enough in that first innings,” he added.

MOEEN TO FLY BACK HOME

England will be without their all-rounder Moeen Ali but are set to welcome back seamers James Anderson and Jofra Archer when they take on India in the pink-ball day-night Test which begins on February 24.

Root said Moeen had chosen to go home to be with his family. “If players feel that they need to get out of the bubble, that has to be an option. He feels he wants to be at home with his family and we completely respect that.”

Big guns in cruise mode

Djokovic, Serena in semis

Melbourne, Feb. 16: Novak Djokovic smashed his racquet to bits and then swept Alexander Zverev out of the Australian Open as the defending champion followed Serena Williams and Naomi Osaka into the semi-finals on Tuesday.

It was a patchy performance from the world number one, who is nursing an abdominal injury and drew deeply on his mental fortitude to win 6-7 (6/8), 6-2, 6-4, 7-6 (8/6).

Djokovic will be hot favourite to reach Sunday’s final when he plays Russian qualifier Aslan Karatsev, who continued his dream run with a 2-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2 win against injured Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov.

After destroying his racquet as he slipped behind in the third, Djokovic recovered brilliantly to take the set and he was ice-cool on the big points, drilling an ace to seal the decisive tiebreaker.

“Down to the very last shot it was anybody’s match,” said the 33-year-old Serb.

“A lot of nerves out there, a lot of pressure. Emotionally I feel a little bit drained, honestly.”

The Serb remains on track for a record-extending ninth Australian Open title and 18th Grand Slam trophy, nipping at the heels of rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, who both have 20.

Earlier, Williams took a step towards a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title with a 6-3, 6-3 dismantling of second seed Simona Halep, her nemesis in the 2019 Wimbledon final. Williams, 39, said her level was improving ahead of her meeting with Japan’s Osaka, who came out on top in their tempestuous 2018 US Open title match.

Their semi-final promis-



Serena Williams celebrates after defeating Simona Halep in the quarterfinal on Tuesday.

— AP

RESULTS

Men’s singles quarterfinals:
Novak Djokovic (SRB x1) bt Alexander Zverev (GER x6) 6-7 (6/8), 6-2, 6-4, 7-6 (8/6); Aslan Karatsev (RUS) bt Grigor Dimitrov (BUL x18) 2-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2.

Women’s singles quarterfinals:
Naomi Osaka (JPN x3) bt Hsieh Su-wei (TPE) 6-2, 6-2; Serena Williams (USA x10) bt Simona Halep (ROM x2) 6-3, 6-3.

es much after Osaka, the reigning US Open champion, looked in formidable touch in her 6-2, 6-2 win over Taiwan’s Hsieh Su-wei.

Elsewhere, 114th-ranked Karatsev became the first man to reach an Open-era Grand Slam semi on debut when he ousted a hobbling Dimitrov 2-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2.

The 27-year-old has knocked out three seeds as he became the lowest-ranked player to reach a major semi-final after world number 125 Goran Ivanisevic at Wimbledon in 2001.

— AFP

Porto test awaits Ronaldo’s Juve

Porto, Portugal, Feb. 16: Cristiano Ronaldo returns to his native Portugal for the first time as a Juventus player as his side face Porto on Wednesday with the Italian giants fighting to keep up with Europe’s most powerful clubs in the Champions League.

On the field Juve are still finding their feet under novice coach Andrea Pirlo but they crave European glory more than anything having lost five Champions League finals since last winning the trophy in 1996.

Off the pitch, meanwhile, their chairman Andrea Agnelli is one of the leading figures behind plans to reform the continent’s elite club competition.

Agnelli has long been one of the main backers of a Champions League which guarantees access to an elite few and makes it harder for other clubs to gain entry.

Amid talk of a breakaway Super League which would undoubtedly feature his club, Italy’s richest and most successful, the 45-year-old has given his backing to an expanded Champions League starting from 2024 onwards, guaranteeing more matches and, ultimately, more money.

Juventus have dominated Serie A for the last decade

without managing to win the Champions League. Porto, meanwhile, are the only club from outside the so-called ‘Big Five’ leagues in this season’s last 16.

Both are two-time European Cup winners. For the Turin side, success in Europe this season appears even more important as their domestic domination shows signs of faltering under Pirlo with hopes of a 10th consecutive Scudetto in peril.

Juve’s hopes will be on five-time *Ballon d’Or* winner Ronaldo and the Champions League record goal-scorer with 134 goals to deliver them the trophy.

WERNER ENDS GOAL DROUGHT AS BLUES WIN

Timo Werner ended his Premier League goal drought as the Chelsea forward sealed a 2-0 win against Newcastle that lifted the Blues into fourth place on Monday.

Werner netted late in the first half at Stamford Bridge after setting up Olivier Giroud’s opener for Thomas Tuchel’s revitalised team.

It was a cathartic moment for Werner, who had gone 14 league games without a goal since scoring against Sheffield United in November.

— AFP



Juventus players Leonardo Bonucci (from left), Cristiano Ronaldo and Alex Sandro at a training session in Turin on Tuesday, eve of their Champions League Round of 16 first leg match against Porto.

— AFP

My
Kerala
My
Pride

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE VICTORY OF WILLPOWER

PUBLIC SCHOOLS ON PAR WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

- 45000 hi-tech class rooms, an additional admission of 6.8 lakh students
- Digital classes for all students during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Kerala becomes the first State to go digital in school education

KERALA, NUMERO UNO IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

- Mighty resolve which defeated pandemics like the Nipah and the Covid-19
- Entire health system from sub-centres to medical colleges achieve excellence
- E-health system gains efficiency
- More than 500 primary health centres upgraded to family health centres
- Outpatient time extended till 6 pm

MAJOR LEAP IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

- Public sector undertakings garner profits
- Licenses and other permissions made online through K-Swift single window system
- 62593 Micro Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) units started between 2016 and November 2020 alone
- 444 kilometre GAIL pipeline materialized

ELECTRICITY IN EVERY HOUSE

- A state that has not had any power cut or load shedding for the past five years
- 17 lakh new connections
- A call to toll free number 1912 brings service at your doorstep
- Edamam-Kochi Punalur-Madakkathara power highways materialized

2.5 LAKH PLUS HOUSES CONSTRUCTED UNDER THE LIFE MISSION SCHEME

- More than 2.5 lakh houses provided
- 1.5 lakh houses under construction
- 101 housing complexes for the homeless and the landless

SUMPTUOUS, SECURE

- Free food kit for everyone
- 863107 families given new ration cards
- E-ration card scheme commenced
- Rs 20 meal through 876 popular restaurants

DRINKING WATER FOR ALL

- 11.33 lakh new drinking water connections including more than nine lakh connections by the Kerala Water Authority and 1.76 lakh connections through the Jalandhi scheme were provided

SECURITY IN THE CYBER WORLD

- Police App sets a model in the digital service sector
- DGP's online grievance redressal system and helpline came into force
- Cyber police stations in all districts

TITLE DEEDS TO MORE THAN 1.5 LAKH PEOPLE

- Online land mutation at 1656 villages
- 441 smart villages
- 150 grama panchayats to ensure transparency of services provided by panchayats
- Integrated Local Governance Management System enforced

SHOULDERS TO SUPPORT

- Welfare pensions hiked to Rs 1600
- 60.31 lakh beneficiaries
- Arrear-free pensions delivered at houses every month
- 95 lakh families provided food through community kitchens during COVID 19 period

K FONE SCHEME

- Free High Speed Internet connection to more than 20 lakh BPL families through K Fone Scheme

FLOURISHING FARMS

- 19,555 hectare barren land turned to farming under the Subhiksha Keralam Scheme
- Floor price for 16 different vegetables and fruits announced
- Land for vegetable farming increased from 52829.99 hectare to 96313.17 hectare

SUPERIOR QUALITY ROADS & BRIDGES

- The Public Works Department refurbished 11,580 kilometre road to higher quality in the past 4½ years.
- Kundannoor Vyttila flyovers at the cost of Rs.182 crore
- Alappuzha and Kollam bypasses, Thondayad and Ramanaattukara flyovers and six lane roads at Karamana-Kaliyikkavila were materialised

CLASSROOMS FOR SC ST STUDENTS

- 12,500 classrooms completed for Scheduled Caste / Scheduled Tribe students
- Forest Rights for 3,500 people
- Reserved Forest Land Rights for 2500 people and agricultural land for 300 people through the Kerala State Land Bank Project will be made available

AYYANKALI URBAN EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME

- Ayyankali Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme allocation increased by five times
- Wages increased to Rs 291
- Dairy farmers included in the scheme

HOUSES FOR ESTATE WORKERS

- Special housing schemes for estate workers
- Financial aid for the dependents of deceased workers hiked from Rs 10,000 to Rs One lakh

GROWTH IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

- Number of domestic and international tourists increased from 1.24 crore (2015-16) to 1.83 crore (2019-20)
- Income from tourism sector increased from 6949.88 crore (2015-16) to 10,271.06 crore (2019-20)

FIRST OPEN UNIVERSITY NAMED AFTER SREE NARAYANA GURU

- Sree Narayana Guru Open University, the first Open University in the State and Digital University came into being

CONSERVATION OF FORESTS

- New 319.50401 hectare land was declared as Reserve Forest
- A vast project of Rs 800 crore to take over private estates within the forest land and to preserve mangroves
- Compensation for the dependents of those killed in wild animal attacks increased from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh

KIIFB, A HELPING HAND TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT

- Development works to the tune of Rs 20,838 crore till date
- Basic infrastructure of global standards through KIIFB

KERALA BANK CAME INTO FORCE

- Investment of Rs. 61,000 crore till date and a profit of Rs 374 crore earned in the 2019-2020 financial year

SAFE SHORES

- Rs. 64 crore spent to renovate 56 coastal schools aiming at the educational needs of children from fishermen families
- A large scale project of Rs 2450 crore to rehabilitate those who face threat from tidal wave attacks through the Punargemham scheme
- 2020 houses were provided under the Care Home scheme to those who lost their houses in floods

NOVEL SPIRIT TO SPORTS SECTOR

- Rs 1000 crore for the construction of stadiums of international standards in all districts
- Sports Life Fitness Centres in districts

PSC APPOINTMENTS

- 1,55,544 were appointed till December 31, 2020
- 51,707 temporary appointments through Employment exchange

COMMUNITY SKILL PARKS

- 16 Community Skill Parks to provide employment skills through ASAP to educated youth
- She Skills scheme to ensure female representation at workplaces
- A volunteer team of 3,67,603 members for the able execution of variety of programmes from Covid
- First Line Treatment Centres to pre-monsoon sanitation



AHEAD AGAIN



കേരള സർക്കാർ
ഇൻഫർമേഷൻ ആൻഡ് പബ്ലിക് റിലേഷൻസ് ഡയറക്ടറേറ്റ്

Connect with CM | fb.me/cm.kerala | twitter.com/cm.kerala | PRD Live Mobile App | keralainformation.in | PRD Media Handbook App