

SHORT TAKES TOP SEERS MEET IN TN TO DISCUSS TEMPLE ATTACKS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 3

Top seers and heads of important peethams of the country on Wednesday met at a small village Ponpadi in Tamil Nadu, about 56 km from Tirupati, sources close to the organisers said. This is the day one of the first phase of Sanathana Dharma Parirakshana Sadassu.

The day-long meeting discussed about the attacks on the Hindu temples in Andhra Pradesh, state government role and the united action plan to be drawn on putting pressure on the pro-active political leaders. The seers also discussed on the systematic attack on the Hindu society, religion and institutions and how to protect them.

The sources added that not many religious heads from across the country could participate as the meeting was convened in a hurry.

Meanwhile, Srinivasananda Swamy said there was no need for some seers to meet in a village in Tamil Nadu when the issue was about attack on the temples in Andhra Pradesh.

All the religious heads should unite on a single platform in Andhra Pradesh and discuss the burning issue and not outside in a secret place," the Swamy told the reporters in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

Those who participated in the Ponpadi meeting include Kanchi Kamakoti Jagadguru Vijayendra Saraswati Mahaswamy, Dakshinamnaya Sringeri seer Bharati teertha Mahaswamy and Sringeri administrator K. Gowri Shankar, Humpi Vidyaranya seer Vidyaranya Bharati Mahaswamy, Pushpagiri seer Vidyasankar Bharati Mahaswamy, Tuni Sacchitananda Tapovana seer Sacchitananda Saraswati Mahaswamy, Ahobila Matha-deeswarulu seer Ranganatha Yatindra Mahaswami, Sri Bhuvaneshwari Mahapeetham seer Kamalananda Bharati Mahaswamy and Mumukujana seer Muttavi Sitaram guru.

EX-TTD CHIEF ALLEGES FAKE CHARGES ON TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, FEB. 3

Former TTD chairman Putta Sudhakar Yadav has said that the YCP government is sending TD leaders to jail on false charges as it feared impending defeat at the panchayat polls. The government is making false cases to silence the Opposition, he said.

Yadav told a media meet he held at the district TDP office on Wednesday that while some police chiefs wanted to act impartially, the YSRC leaders were pressuring them to register false cases against political rivals.

"The ruling party leaders are trying to intimidate mandal-level leaders of the Telugu Desam Party by arresting top leaders and registering false cases against them," he said.

He alleged that TD activists on campaign in villages were being threatened and false cases were being registered. A case of SC-ST atrocity was registered by a BC individual in Badripalli panchayat of Chapadu Mandal, he said.

Telugu Desam Kadapa Parliament in-charge M. Lingareddy demanded the removal of the Mydukuru Rural police inspector who was "terrorizing" Telugu Desam party workers. The government was adopting repressive measures like the arrest of Achennaidu, the murder attempt on TD national spokesperson Pattabhi, and the registration of SC and ST atrocity cases against Kadapa district leaders, he said.

SEC's 'eWatch' app not to be trusted, says YSRC

MLA alleges the app is developed in Telugu Desam office

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

Ruling YSR Congress has said the poll app of the State Election Commission, eWatch, is not trustworthy as it is a privately developed app.

YSRC MLA and the party's official spokesperson, Ambati Rambabu, said the ruling party in the state has no trust in the app launched by SEC Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar for monitoring the panchayat elections. He alleged that the app was developed in the Telugu Desam office.

Addressing the media here on Wednesday, the MLA said the election monitoring app was designed in the TD office in the same way SEC Ramesh Kumar's letter to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) was drafted there.

Rambabu said the government is not involved in the arrest of Atchannaidu. He was caught with evidence of threatening a candidate over filing the nomination for panchayat polls. The police did their duty. He criticised Atchannaidu for threatening to avenge the police act.

"TD leaders are day-dreaming and under the illusion of coming to power and forming the next state government, and they hope Lokesh, father Naidu, Atchannaidu and current SEC Ramesh Kumar would hold plum positions in future," he said.

Speaking on the SEC's visit to Gollagunta in East Godavari district, where the husband of a sarpanch candidate died under suspicious circumstances, Rambabu said that the job of SEC is to oversee the elections and not visit families. Police would take care of the investigations. He said the election commissioner visited Gollagunta "as a pilot" for Lokesh and as a representative of the TD.

Rambabu said TD leader K o m m a r e d d y Pattabhiram's car had been attacked in the past and the reason could be personal enmity. He criticised Pattabhiram for not filing an official complaint on the attack and accusing the YSRC leaders for no reason.



State Election Commissioner N Ramesh Kumar inspects Civil supplies department vehicles at SEC office in Vijayawada on Wednesday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

EC SEEKS TRANSFER OF MANDAL PARISHAD OFFICERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

In yet another letter to Chief Secretary Adityanath Das, State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar sought transfer of mandal parishad development officers where unanimous elections were held for posts of Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies and Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies in the last elections in the state.

As the State Election Commissioner is very particular to avoid any unanimous elections by force in the ensuing gram panchayat polls, he wrote a letter to the CS seeking the transfer of present MPDOs holding them responsible for such unanimous election earlier.

In Chittoor district alone, the SEC asked for the transfer of 30 MPDOs.

It is yet to be known as to how many MPDOs to be transferred in the entire state. However, it has to be seen as to how the Chief Secretary responds to the letter from the SEC.

Scrap election app, demands YSRC

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

YSR Congress on Wednesday lodged a complaint with State Election Commission (SEC) objecting to the release of e-watch application without following proper norms. Party state general secretary Lella Appireddy said that the Commission has released a mobile application named "e-watch" a technological platform to ensure free and fair elections. He said that it was both surprising and shocking that SEC has developed an election surveillance app without following the appropriate government regulations and it had not been developed by any State of Central government organisation or by any government empanelled organisation, which is violation of the citizens' right to free and fair elections.

Appireddy said that it was appalling that the Commission is resorting to clandestine acts. He pointed out that during

● **PARTY STATE** general secretary Lella Appireddy said that the Commission has released a mobile application named 'e-watch' a technological platform to ensure free and fair elections.

MPTC, ZPTC elections that were scheduled to take place last year, Nigha, a SEC-approved election vigilance application was given an overwhelming thumbs-up by citizens. He recalled that during the 2019 General Elections, the Centre-owned C-Vigil application was put to use in the state. He said he did not understand the rationale to have a new app. He demanded an immediate response from the SEC with regard to concerns about safety and security measures of huge volumes of data when it is hosted in private servers. He wanted to know who would take responsibility in case of any data breach. He sought immediate scrapping of "e-watch" application.

AP BJP LAUNCHES TOLL-FREE NUMBER FOR POLL PLAINTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

State BJP has launched a toll-free number to lodge complaints on poll-related irregularities in the Andhra Pradesh.

State BJP president Somu Veerajulu said here on Wednesday that anyone who found irregularities in the wake of ensuing gram panchayat polls, could complain to the toll-free number 9650713714 to enable them take such issues to the notice of the law enforcing agencies for taking necessary action. He called upon the people to avail toll-free number to complain on attacks and untoward incidents related to the polls.

Reacting on the State Election Commission launching an app called 'eWatch', he asked for action on those who resort to irregularities in the polls.

2,598 PAPERS FILED FOR PHASE-II SARPANCH POLLS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

As the filing of nominations by the contestants for the positions of sarpanch and ward member in gram panchayat polls under phase-2 began peacefully on February 2 in AP, 2,598 nominations for sarpanch and 6,421 nominations for ward member, were filed.

The State Election Commission notified 3,327 gram panchayats out of a total number of 3,374 and also 33,562 wards out of 34,150 in all 13 districts in the state, to go for polls.

GIVE PUBLICITY TO NEW APP, SEC ORDERS

From Page 1

He called upon the district collectors to give widespread publicity on usage of the newly launched app to enable more number of people to use them. He lauded the district administrations, particularly young officers holding key positions, for making all requisite arrangements for the conduct of polls.

He said, "I appeal to the people living away from their native villages to return on poll day and exercise their franchise."

Earlier, State Election Commission secretary K. Kannababu explained about the functioning of the app by saying that it could be downloaded from Google Play Store and people can register on it.

He said that all the complaints would reach the call centre and after getting segregated based on the nature of the complaint, they would reach the district collectors and the SEC for follow-up action. He said that the identity of the complainants would not be disclosed. He also said that the app is tamper-proof.

BJP failed to initiate CBI probe in chariot burning case: Srinivas

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3



Vellampalli Srinivas Rao

Minister for endowments Vellampalli Srinivas Rao has alleged that the Telugu Desam and the BJP were trying to disrupt communal harmony in Andhra Pradesh by creating social rift in the name of religion, for their political gains.

Addressing a press meet here on Wednesday, the minister alleged that BJP Rajya Sabha member G.V.L. Narasimha Rao never tried to speak up for the rights of Andhra Pradesh in Parliament. But, he tried to defame the YSRC government by raising the Antarevedi chariot-burning incident. "The YSRC government has already asked the CBI to conduct an inquiry into this incident. The government constructed a new chariot for Antarevedi. On its part, the BJP government at the Centre failed to order a CBI inquiry into the incident, which shows its double-standard," he said.

The minister said the Antarevedi temple Rathotsavam is scheduled for February 26 and the new chariot would be used then. "The SIT investigation into the attacks on temples would unearth involvement of political leaders. TD leaders were clearly involved in these attacks. They were involved in the plucking and shifting of the Nandi idol in Srikakulam district and the police have arrested some TD leaders in this connection," he said.

Minister Srinivas Rao objected to the statement of BJP Rajya Sabha member Narasimha Rao that no action has been taken against the alleged demolition of the 140 temples in AP. He recalled that the BJP was in the TD Cabinet and its leader was the endowments minister when 40 temples were demolished by the Chandrababu Naidu government. "But neither Narasimha Rao nor other BJP leaders protested against it, and never questioned the demolitions."

He said Narasimha Rao was shedding crocodile tears on the temples' issue and trying to provoke people via raising baseless allegations along with the TD. He said in the majority of the temple attack cases, TD leaders "are the main accused" and "they are trying to mislead people when the police arrested them".

Srinivas Rao said the TD and the BJP responsible for the demolition of 40 temples never tried to reconstruct those. Chief Minister Jagan was now reconstructing those demolished temples, he said, and alleged that Chandrababu Naidu as then CM was responsible for the demolition of those temples CM Jagan is now saviour of the Hindu dharma. The government reconstructed Ram idols of the Ramateertham temple but MP Narasimha Rao is unable to acknowledge the good deeds of the YSRC government.

On the returning of cheque former minister and TD leader P. Ashok Gajapati Raju offered to Ramateertham temple, Srinivas Rao said Ashok Gajapati Raju put a condition about using his money for the remaking of the Ram idol. The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams meanwhile offered a Ram idol for free and hence his cheque was returned.

He said that if Ashok Gajapati Raju gives a donation to the temple without any condition then that would be accepted without any hesitation.

TD MPs meet Shah; complain against govt

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 3

A team of Telugu Desam MPs has complained to Union home minister Amit Shah in Delhi on Wednesday about the ongoing 'attacks and atrocities' from ruling YSRC ministers, MLAs and leaders in AP. "These are done with utter disrespect to all the constitutional systems and institutions," they have complained. The MPs

appealed to Amit Shah for urgent central government intervention to restore law and order so as to also ensure a "free and fair" panchayat poll in the state.

They said that there were non-stop attacks on a constitutional institution like the AP State Election Commission and false cases were being filed against the Opposition leaders and the contesting candidates.

AP SENT SEVERAL REMINDERS FOR CENTRAL FUNDS

From Page 1

Sources said several letters are being written from the Chief Minister's Office to the Union home ministry seeking the release of Central assistance to AP to enable it to provide relief to the affected farmers and to restore damaged infrastructure.

Despite no financial assistance being released, the state government has provided input subsidy to all the affected farmers to enable them to take up cultivation of crops for

the next season.

A senior official from AP State Disaster Management Authority said, "Though it is not unusual for Central assistance to get delayed at times, there is a long delay this time given the enormity of the extent of damage and the assurances given by the Central teams to expedite the release of funds to AP."

Sources say that it has to be seen whether the Centre releases 80 or 50 per cent of the relief sought.

Children force parents to shift to Bengaluru

From Page 1

"We were strictly directed by our children not to indulge in faction rivalry, but they have no problem if we continue with normal politics." Else, migrate Bengaluru, children tell their parents.

"Previously, youngsters forcibly entered into faction rivalry by way of inheritance of a vicious culture from their previous generation, led groups in villages and even eliminated rivals. However, police efforts to check such

● **KAPATRALLA, A faction village, had a drastic change after former SP A. Ravikrishna adopted the village four years ago.**

crimes and undertake awareness programmes helped control factionalism in a majority of the villages," Anantapur SP Satya Esubabu has observed.

Kapatrala, a faction village, had a drastic change after former SP A. Ravikrishna adopted the village four years ago.

KURNOOL | POLITICS

Byreddy Siddarth Reddy assaults YSRC office-bearer Raghuramaiah

YSRC meeting turns violent in ministers' presence

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, FEB. 3

The simmering discontent between Nandikotkur legislator Arthur and Byreddy Siddarth Reddy came out in the open when Siddarth Reddy assaulted office-bearer Raghuramaiah in front of four Cabinet ministers during a meeting here on Wednesday.

Municipal minister Bot-sa Satyanarayana, finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy, district

in-charge minister Anil Kumar Yadav and labour minister Gummanur Jayaram were in the town to finalise names of candidates for the ensuing gram panchayat polls.

According to an insider, the four ministers were no match to the aggressive stance taken by Siddarth Reddy, who hurled chairs and sharp objects causing injury to Raghuramaiah.

"The attackers hit Raghuramaiah twice while the ministers remained silent

spectators. It was only Botsa who tried to pacify the unruly attitude of Siddarth Reddy," an insider said.

Arthur said that when the discussion was taken up as to who should be fielded from Jupadu Bungalow panchayat, a few names popped up and were TD supporters who had joined YSRC. It was objected to by Siddarth Reddy and verbal objections turned violent when Reddy lifted a chair and threw it

on the party's office-bearer Raghuramaiah. While the matter was pacified when they took time to proceed to other matters, during the interregnum, Siddarth Reddy again assaulted Raghuramaiah. Botsa Satyanarayana made repeated pleas to Reddy to control himself, but they fell on deaf ears, he said.

Siddarth Reddy has become a liability to the party as his behaviour is feudalistic and against democratic practices.

The Nandikotkur MLA Arthur has objected to interferences of Reddy's followers in the constituency.

A YSRC leader said, "I bow my head in shame at the turn of events at Kurnool. Four Cabinet ministers could not do anything to control a person who turned violent. Unless checked now, the rebels would start dictating terms to the party bosses and the YSRC would soon turn into a

Congress party of yore," the leader said while sounding caution.

Nandikotkur constituency was reserved for SCs in 2019. Prior to the reservation, it was represented by Byreddy Rajasekhara Reddy and Gouru Charita Reddy.

To checkmate the influence of Byreddy Rajasekhara Reddy in the region, then chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy reserved the seat for Scheduled Castes.

SHORT TAKES

MANSAS SIGNS MoU WITH ACHARYA RANGA VARSITY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 3

Maharaja Alak Narayan Society of Arts and Science, Vizianagaram, and Acharya NG Ranga Agriculture University signed an MoU in Guntur on Tuesday. The memorandum was signed by the chairperson of MANSAS P. Sanchaita Gajapathi Raju and vice-chancellor of the university Prof. Adala Vishnuvardhan Reddy.

In a release, Sanchaita said the objectives of the MoU were to promote and enhance academic research and training in diversified fields, including biological sciences, agricultural sciences and engineering, humanities and social sciences.

The other features of the MoU were to promote faculty development and active collaboration among the faculty leading to joint research proposals and beneficial engagement with the stakeholders, to foster an eco-system for experiential and collaborative learning to the students leading to honing their skills and making them compatible to contemporary advancements and employability requirements.

She said the need for agriculture to become self sustainable and viable in the Indian context was emphasised. Among other things, the importance of collaborative research with the technical institution in bringing out proper synergies in the design and development of affordable farm implements /equipment through technological interventions for the benefit of farming communities were listed.

MADANAPALLI CASE: ACCUSED SENT TO VIZAG HOSP

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 3

The well-educated couple from Chittoor's Madanapalle, Dr Valleru Purushotham Naidu and Valleru Padmaja, who have been remanded at the local sub-jail for allegedly killing their two daughters, were shifted to the government mental care facility in Vizag on Wednesday, for a complete psychiatric evaluation and treatment, if necessary.

The couple is accused of murdering their daughters Alekhyia (27) and Sai Divya (22) in their house at Madanapalle on January 24. They were produced before the Judicial magistrate on January 26 and placed under remand at the Madanapalli sub-jail, where the authorities have lodged Padmaja in a special cell and Purushottam Naidu in a common cell.

Padmaja was said to still be in a state of trance and chanting the name of Lord Shiva the whole night. On the request of jail authorities, the couple was evaluated by a team of psychiatrists on January 27. They confirmed that the couple was suffering from delusions and needed a complete psychiatric evaluation in the presence of a psychologist.

The jail authorities presented the recommendation of psychiatrists to the local magistrate and obtained permission to shift the couple to Ruia Hospital Tirupati. There a team of doctors at the psychiatry ward completed basic assessment of the couple's mental state.

Doctors at Ruia hospital felt that the couple has to undergo a complete psychiatric evaluation in the presence of a psychologist. They also advised that the couple need custodian care as they are appearing highly delusional.

TTD readies for another sacred flower garden

Garden in 5 acres area near Bata Gangamma temple

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 3

With an aim to enhance the beauty of the precincts of Tirumala hills and also for the sake of daily worship of Lord Venkateswara, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has plans to develop yet another sacred flower garden atop the hill town.

The sacred garden is coming up in a five acres area near Bata Gangamma temple at Tirumala. The TTD's garden wing took up the project under the directions of its executive officer Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy and under the supervision of additional executive officer A.V. Dharma Reddy and with the help of sponsorships by donors.

The TTD is growing traditional flowers like Marigold, Vrukshi Raja, Lily, Madurai Jasmine, Kanakambaram, Manu Sampangi, Tulasi, paner leaves and other aromatic leaves that are used in daily puja of Lord Balaji. The yield of these flowers and aromatic leaves will be available for pujas at the Srivari temple from the

TTD resumes break darshan

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 3

The TTD has resumed the issuance of VIP break darshan tickets to devotees having Udayasthama and Vimshati Varsha Darshini sevas.

Those devotees, henceforth, can avail the break darshan facility through the donor management system portal online, which came into force from Wednesday.

It may be noted that the TTD has been providing the VIP break darshan facility to these tickets' holders from September 11 after all Arjitha sevas were cancelled from March 13 last year in

months of April and May. In the meanwhile, the TTD is also developing another Sri Venkateswara sacred flower garden at a cost of ₹1.5 crore from donations as depicted in Puranas in a 10-

acre land near Sila Thoranam, located on the way to Dharmagiri hills. In this garden, 25 varieties of aromatic plants like seven leaves banana plantation, which are considered

view of Covid-19. On appeal by Udayasthama seva ticket holders, the TTD is providing VIP break tickets darshan to them along with the Srivani trust donors.

However, from Wednesday these devotees need not have to go to Arjitham office at Tirumala to get their darshan tickets.

Instead, the devotees can directly go for darshan with online tickets in VIP break. The TTD requested the devotees to contact Arjitham office through landline: 0877-2263589 or e m a i l : arjithamoffice@gmail.com.

SVBC NODS TO OPEN KANNADA, HINDI CHANNELS BY UGADI FEST

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, FEB. 3

The board of TTD's Sri Venkateswara Bhakthi Channel (SVBC) on Wednesday approved the launch of SVBC's Kannada and Hindi version channels on the auspicious occasion of Ugadi on April 13. At the board meeting held in Tirupati on Wednesday, the SVBC board also endorsed the HR policy of the channel.

Speaking on the occasion, TTD executive officer Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy directed the officials to procure all equipment needed to convert the transmission into a HD channel and provide quality telecast to devotees.

Most auspicious will also be grown apart from Tulasi, Darbha, Sampangi, mango, Parijatha etc.

Villagers threaten to boycott GP poll over teacher posts

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, FEB. 3

Students of Darakonda primary school in GK Veedhi mandal in Visakhapatnam agency, their parents and villagers staged a dharna for few hours in the school campus demanding appointment of new teachers. The villagers announced that they would boycott the ongoing panchayat elections if no new teachers were appointed immediately.

Rajababu of Girijan Samakhyia at Darakonda told DC that the school has 180 students and had nine teachers until recently. Of them six teachers got transferred using the political connections, one is on long leave and another fell ill.

"The lone teacher Prasad is paying the multi-role of teacher as well as headmaster. His is also ill but attending the school regularly keeping in the mind the students interest," Rajababu said.

Parents of students said the teachers always ask them to teach the children

at home knowing well that the most of the parents were illiterate.

Some said the quality of mid-day meal was also not good and they were advising their children not to consume the food.

When the issue of taken to the notice of mandal education officer K. Nagabhushanam, he assured the village elders that he would take the issue to the notice of senior officials and project officer of ITDA. The villagers said no action was taken up so far.

On inquiry, district educational officer M. Lingeswara Reddy said has had asked the MEO to appoint three teachers urgently drawing from other schools where there were sufficient teachers. The DEO said he had stopped entertaining recommendation letters from political leaders to transfer teachers from far-flung villages to schools of their choice.

Girijan Samakhyia members said they would support the villagers if they boycott the elections on this issue.

TWO PERSONS HELD FOR STEALING EDIBLE OIL

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 3

Muthukuru police led by the Circle Inspector Sk Khajavali and SIs Anji Reddy and A. Sivakrishna Reddy arrested two persons including an employee of Gemini Edibles and Fats Pvt Ltd on Wednesday for stealing palm oil worth ₹50 lakh from the firm located at Pantapalem in Muthukuru mandal on January 27.

The accused have been identified as Janu Srinivasa Rao, 35, an employee of Gemini Edibles and Fats Pvt Ltd living in Nellore and a tanker driver Amaresh 28 of Mudigiri village in Kolar district of Karnataka.

According to Nellore rural DSP Y. Harinath Reddy, Amaresh came to the Gemini Edibles factory on January 27 around 11.45 pm and collected 18.5 tonnes of palm oil in his tank lorry at the loading point.

While the officials were busy in preparing the bills after weighing the quantity in the lorry, Amaresh took the tank lorry again to the loading point and filled the gap with the connivance of Janu Srinivasa Rao, an employee in Gemini.

A supervisor of the firm K.Chalapathi alerted the Human Resources manager of the company.

SPECIAL SQUADS TOLD TO PREVENT DISTRIBUTION OF CASH

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 3

Flying squads, statistical surveillance and expenditure teams have been directed to prevent distribution of liquor and money.

Meanwhile, in a review meeting with returning and polling officers at Singarayakonda in Prakasam district, collector Pola Bhaskar urged them to ensure that candidates follow the election code without any deviation.

DoS INKS PACT WITH TS-BASED FIRM

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, FEB. 3

Department of Space has entered into a Non Disclosure Agreement (NDA) with M/s Skyroot Aerospace Pvt. Ltd., a private company in Hyderabad building small satellite launch vehicles.

The NDA will enable the company for accessing the facilities and technical expertise available in Isro Centres to proceed with their launch vehicle development programme.

M/s Skyroot representatives also met Dr K. Sivan, secretary, DOS/Chairman, Isro.

Reminding that polling would be from 6.30 am to 3.30 pm, he told the officials to start the counting process from 4 pm onwards. He directed the police to arrest anyone found carrying lethal weapons and pay special attention to maintain law and order in rural areas.

Bhaskar instructed them to keep a tab on the movement of suspicious characters in the villages. Sub-collector of Kandukur Bhargava Teja, Tahsildar Usha Rani and MPDO

Zamiullah were present. Meanwhile, Kadapa district election officer Chevur Harikiran directed all election nodal officers to diligently carry out duties assigned to them during the ensuing panchayat elections in the district.

Harikiran, also the district collector, held a meeting with nodal officers on the arrangements along with district election observer Ranjit Basha, SP Anburajan, JC Gautami (Revenue), Srikanth Verma (Development).

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY ANANTAPUR, ANANTHAPURAMU - 515 002 (A.P.) INDIA

XI CONVOCAATION NOTIFICATION

The Eleventh Convocation of JNTUA, Ananthapuram will be held in the month of March, 2021. All UG, PG and Ph.D/M.Phil./M.S. Candidates who are qualified for the award of degree during the Academic year up to 2019-20 are hereby informed to send the filled in applications in the prescribed format to the Controller of Examinations (UG & PG), JNTUA on or before **25.02.2021**. Only Ph.D/M.Phil./M.S. Awardees and Gold Medalists will receive the degrees on the days and others will receive their degrees through registered post. Further details can be seen in the website www.jntua.ac.in under Examinations section.

Note: The candidates who have applied in response to our earlier Notification dated 16.12.2019 need not apply again and their applications will be considered for this Convocations.

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SHORT TAKES



Shashi Tharoor

THAROOR, PANDE, OTHERS MOVE SC TO QUASH FIRS

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

Congress member of parliament Shashi Tharoor, senior journalist Rajdeep Sardesai, Mrinal Pande, Zafar Agha, Vinod K Jose Pareesh Nath and Anand Nath on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court for the quashing of multiple FIRs registered against them for alleged misreporting of violence relating to farmers agitation in the national capital on Republic Day.

The FIRs have alleged “misreporting” and “spreading disharmony” by their tweets and reports on the ongoing farmers’ agitation seeking the repeal of three farm laws which farmers’ are contending aims to corporatise agriculture.

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

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

SIVASANKAR GETS BAIL IN KERALA GOLD SCAM CASE

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
KOCHI, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

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

Mamata says polls will be announced within a week

Accuses ex-TMC leader Rajib of anomalies in appointments

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, FEB. 3

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

She also accused TMC turncoat Rajib Banerjee of malpractice, during his tenure as the state forest minister, which

has come under a probe of her government. Hitting back at her within few hours, Mr Banerjee, however, gave himself a clean chit. Addressing a TMC rally in Alipurduar of North Bengal, the CM said, “Remember, only seven-eight days are left for the polls to be announced. So time is less in hands.”

Without taking the name of Mr Banerjee she alleged, “The boy who was with us but left us did some anomalies in the appointments of Bon

Sahayak (Forest Assistant). Lot of people gave me this complaint. We are investigating it. One should ask him about his role in such malpractice when he makes tall talks. He joined the BJP after stealing.”

Hitting back at the TMC chief, Mr Banerjee said at a BJP rally in Gurap of Hooghly, “She claimed of anomalies in the recruitment of Bon Sahayak and talked of a probe. But with due respect to her, I can say with

responsibility that I had impartially entrusted a panel for the recruitment with transparency. At around 10 am on October 8, when I sent her a message complaining against a big shot of Birbhum of threatening me to allot all the Bon Sahayak jobs to him, she called me to distribute the jobs proportionately in quota among the Trinamul workers in all the districts.”

He told the Chief Minister, “I remained silent so far. But you

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

21 per cent drop in BMC’s revenue

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, FEB. 3

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

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

“In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, the need arose to divert our attention by all means to health activities to face the pandemic. Though we are successful in riding over the pandemic, the outbreak adversely affected the economy overall and there is a considerable downfall in the revenue,” said Iqbal Singh Chahal, BMC chief.

According to civic officials, Covid-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown resulted in closure of the small as well as large commercial units, due to which property tax collection was adversely affected. The slow-down in real estate also led to reduction in assessment of new properties thus decreasing the revenue collection. Many ready possession flats in the city also remained unsold. In addition to that, the lockdown also resulted in restriction on movement of people and migration of labour which adversely affected the construction business in the city.

In Mumbai, the BMC has presently undertaken several major projects like Coastal Road, Goregaon-Mumbai Link Road, Mithi river works, sewage disposal, water tunnels, municipal hospital repairs etc which require large capital expenditure. For this, the civic body has proposed to raise ₹5,876 crore by way of Internal Loan from its reserves.

For the BMC, the major sources of revenue for 2021-22 are grant-in-aid on account of compensation in lieu of Octroi ₹10,583 crore, property tax ₹7,000 crore, DP department ₹2,000 crore, income from interest on investments ₹975 crore and water & sewerage charges ₹1,598 crore.

Farmers dig in their heels



Barbed wires put across a road by Delhi Police at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Wednesday to stop farmers from entering the national capital during their protest against the new farm laws. Blocking of borders is causing inconvenience to residents of Delhi and neighbouring states, besides financial loss to the people and the exchequer, the Rajya Sabha was informed. — PTI

IT’S TIME TO EXTEND HAND OF PEACE IN ALL DIRECTIONS: PAK ARMY CHIEF

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3

In what is being seen as a possible outreach to India, Pakistan’s powerful Army chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa has said “it is time” for his country to “extend the hand of peace in all directions”, even as he called on India and Pakistan to resolve the

Kashmir issue in a “peaceful and dignified manner”.

Addressing a graduation ceremony at the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Academy earlier on Tuesday, Gen. Bajwa, however, referred to the Kashmir situation as a “human tragedy” that must be brought to its “logical conclusion” as per the “aspirations” of its people.

Mufti accuses J&K police of torturing govt’s opponents

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, FEB. 3

Former chief minister and People’s Democratic Party (PDP) leader, Mehbooba Mufti, on Wednesday accused the intelligence wing of Jammu and Kashmir Police of joining Central agencies in “terrorising” the people of Kashmir.

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

“J&K CID has joined the list of central agencies that work to terrorise Kashmiris & falsely implicate them. After failing to substantiate charges against PDP’s @parawahid CID replaced the SIT head because he refused to be an accomplice in framing invented charges”, she wrote on micro-blogging site.

She also alleged that Parra is being persecuted and tor-

tured to admit the false allegations and that he has been kept under inhuman conditions. “Investigation against him has been fraudulent and politically motivated from day one...he is being persecuted & tortured to admit the false allegations. Since an admission didn’t happen he is being kept under inhuman conditions. This investigation has been fraudulent & politically motivated from day one”, she tweeted.

The former chief minister said that the institutions meant to uphold law and order bring disrepute by getting involved in these deceitful investigations. “The norm dictating such deceitful investigations is ‘Show me the man & I’ll show you the crime’. Shameful & appalling that these actions discredit & bring disrepute to the institutions meant to uphold law & order,” she said in another tweet.

Parra was last month arrested by the J&K police in connection with a case related to an alleged nexus involving politicians, militants and their Over Ground Workers (OWGs) and sympathisers and illegal money transactions.

The police sources had said that the case in which the J&K police’s Criminal Investigation Kashmir (CIK) wing

rearrested Parra was registered by it under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 sometime ago and has since filed over two dozen FIRs at various police stations across the Union Territory.

The sleuths of the CIK had taken 33-year-old Parra in custody within the premises of a Jammu prison soon after he was released from over six week long detection on January 9. Earlier a special court of National Investigation Agency (NIA) at Jammu had granted him bail, the relief given on a surety bond of ₹1 lakh and a personal bond of the like amount.

The NIA had arrested him on November 25 last year for his alleged “close links” with Kashmiri lawyer Irfan Shafi Mir, who was arrested by the police along with Hizb-ul-Mujahideen commander Syed Naveed Mushtaq alias Naveed Babu, another militant Asif Ahmed Rather and tainted J&K police officer Davinder Singh in January 2020.

Since the arrest had come merely two days after Parra’s filing his nomination papers for J&K’s maiden District Development Council (DDC) elections, the PDP had termed the NIA’s action as a political blackmail of the ruling BJP.

CRPF’S COBRA TO INDUCT WOMEN COMMANDOS

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, FEB. 3

CRPF’s anti-Naxal wing Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA) is soon going to induct women commands in its units. The CRPF authorities have taken decision to induct women commandos in COBRA units, D. Prakash, CRPF inspector general (IG), Chhattisgarh, told this newspaper.

Sources said the process has begun to recruit the woman commandos for COBRA. After training, the women commandos would be deployed in combat duty along with their male counterparts in their respective COBRA battalions in insurgency-hit Bastar in Chhattisgarh. Currently, the COBRA units are all male forces. CRPF has total 10 COBRA battalions.

Of these, 6 battalions have been deployed in south Bastar, comprising districts of Sukma, Bijapur, Dantewada and Narayanpur.

CRPF’s 241 battalion, christened as Bastariya Battalion, was established a year ago.

No govt jobs for protesters blocking roads: Bihar cops

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, FEB. 3

The Bihar government has landed into a controversy after the police headquarter issued a directive stating that people indulging in violent protests and road blockages will not be eligible for government jobs or contracts.

The circular says that the police will issue a verification report about the person’s character and also find out about his past criminal history.

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

This comes almost a week after Bihar Economic Offences Unit (EOU) in a circular had said that offensive social media posts against the



government, ministers and officials will be treated as cybercrime and invite penal action.

The unit had also informed all state government departments about the decision and asked them to report about individuals and organisations involved in such posts on social media.

The development has triggered strong reactions in Bihar.

The RJD which is the main opposition party in the state has termed the state government’s directive “against the constitution”.

“It seems that Nitish Kumar is trying to compete with Mussolini and Hitler by issuing such kind of directives. It means that if a person

● THIS ORDER comes almost a week after Bihar Economic Offences Unit in a circular had said that offensive social media posts against the government, ministers and officials will be treated as cybercrime and invite penal action.

uses his democratic right to protest against the system then he will be denied a job. This also means that they will not give jobs and will not allow anyone to protest”, Leader of the opposition Tejashwi Yadav said in a tweet.

“Why is the Chief Minister with 40 seats so scared?” he added. Hitting out at Nitish government, RJD leader Shivanand Tiwary said that “The Constitution of India has provided us with the right to protest. The Chief Minister of Bihar himself had been part of many protests against several ruling regimes. Instead of taking harsh measures against the protesters, he should ask the administration to look into the problems of common people”.

PM’s brothers stages sit-in



Prahlaad Modi, brother of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stages sit-in at Chaudhary Charan Singh Airport in Lucknow on Wednesday. Prahlaad Modi alleged that the police did not let his supporters reach there and took them into custody. Police, however, have denied the charge. Prahlaad Modi told reports at the airport that he had come to Uttar Pradesh to take part in some social programmes in Sultanpur, Jaunpur and Pratapgarh. “After reaching here, I came to know that the workers who were coming to receive me were held by the Lucknow police and made to sit in a police station. Efforts are on to lodge cases against them,” he claimed. — PTI

MUM. DCP FILES DEFAMATION PLAINT AGAINST ARNAB GOSWAMI

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, FEB. 3

Deputy Commissioner of Mumbai Police, Abhishek Trimukhe has filed a criminal defamation complaint against Republic TV’s editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami, his wife and director Samyabrata Goswami and ARG Outlier Media that runs the channel. The complaint filed in the Sessions Court, Mumbai, through the public prosecutor’s office, seeks a “deterrent process of warrant” against the accused and “compensation” for Trimukhe.

The defamation suit has been filed claiming that defamatory statements were made against Trimukhe during a panel discussion in connection with actor Sushant Singh Rajput’s death case.

Terming Arnab a habitual offender Trimukhe demanded stern action against him and mentioned a defamation case where in Arnab and Times Now, where he was earlier employed, were directed to pay ₹100 crore in damages.

SHORT TAKES

SHOOTING IN
FLORIDA: 2 FBI
AGENTS KILLED

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

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

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

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

SPACEX ROCKET
IN FIERY
CRASH, AGAIN

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

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

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

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

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

NEO-NAZI SONGS:
AUSTRIAN
RAPPER NABBED

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

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

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

UKRAINE BANS
3 PRO-RUSSIA
TV CHANNELS

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

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

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

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

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

Navalny jailed
for three years

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Several hundred of his supporters marched through the streets.

— AFP

Iran not to set
free ship captain

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

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

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

Permission had been granted upon "the request

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

He did not specify whether the crew had already left.

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

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

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

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

— AFP

Tamilians stage
stir in Lanka

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

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

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

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

— PTI

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

— AP

Washington in touch with
India and Japan on coup

Washington, Feb. 3: Terming the detention of Myanmar's top civilian leaders by the military "a coup", a senior State Department official has said that the United States is in constant touch with regional allies like India and Japan on the latest developments in Naypyitaw as the two countries have better contact with the military in the Southeast Asian nation.

Myanmar's military on Monday took control of the country for one year and detained all the top political figures, including de facto leader Aung San

Suu Kyi.

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

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

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

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

— PTI

WHO team visits Wuhan
lab at centre of speculation

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

"We're looking forward to meeting with all the key people here and asking all the important questions that need to be asked," zoologist and team member Peter Daszak said, according to footage run by Japanese broadcaster TBS. Reporters followed the team to the high security facility, but as with past visits, there was little direct access to team members, who have given scant details of their discussions and visits thus far. Uninformed and plainclothes security guards stood watch along the facility's gated front entrance, but there was no sign of the

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

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

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

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

— AP

ANTIVIRAL CURE
FOR COVID-19
IDENTIFIED

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

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

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

— PTI

US extends N-arms
treaty with Russia

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

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

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

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

and the world safer," Blinken said.

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

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

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

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

— AP

Biden orders fair
immigration system

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50,255.75	0.92
Nifty 50	14,790.00	0.97
S&P 500*	3,837.05	0.28
Dollar (₹)	72.95	0.02
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.59	0.27
Euro (₹)	87.80	0.29
Gold (10gm) (₹)	47,387.232	0.48
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	58.75	2.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.084	-0.70
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.124	0.017

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Services sector expands in Jan.; biz optimism up

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

Christie's Intl. Real Estate enters India



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

Airtel posts Q3 profit of ₹854 cr; revenue highest

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

Jubilant Food profit rises 22% to ₹124 crore

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



Nifty-50 inching towards 15K milestone Sensex breaks 50000 barrier

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Figures in points Source: BSE Sensex / KBK Infographic

& CEO, Kotak Securities.

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

Expectations from third quarter results of telecom

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

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

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

INSIDER DEALS: BIYANI BARRED FROM MARKET FOR A YEAR

New Delhi, Feb. 3: The Sebi on Wednesday barred Kishore Biyani and certain other promoters of Future Retail Ltd from the securities market for one year for indulging in insider trading in the shares of the company.

Apart from Kishore Biyani, who was the CMD and promoter of Future Retail Ltd (FRL), others facing ban are Future Corporate Resources Pvt Ltd, Anil Biyani and the FCRL Employee Welfare Trust. In addition, the regulator has imposed a fine of Rs 1 crore each on Kishore Biyani, Anil Biyani and Future Corporate Resources. Besides, they have been asked to disgorge Rs 17.78 crore for the wrongful gains made by them.

Future Corporate Resources and FCRL Employee Welfare Trust have been directed to disgorge Rs 2.75 crore for the wrongful gains made by it.

Anil Biyani and Future Corporate Resources are promoters of FRL.

Sebi had conducted an investigation in the scrip of FRL to ascertain whether certain persons and entities had traded during the March 10, 2017 to April 20, 2017 period on the basis of Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI) pertaining to segregation of certain business of the firm.

Trading on the basis of UPSI violates provisions of Prohibition of Insider Trading norms. — PTI

Bezos to move as Amazon quarterly sales hit \$125 bn

JEFFREY DASTIN & AKANKSHA RANA
FEB. 3



Jeff Bezos

Amazon.com Inc founder Jeff Bezos will step down as CEO and become executive chairman, naming the head of its lucrative cloud computing division as successor in a sign of the company's transformation from web retailer to internet conglomerate.

This summer, Bezos, 57, will hand the keys of the world's largest online retailer to Andy Jassy, head of its cloud division Amazon Web Services known as AWS.

The announcement on Tuesday settles a long-running question about who would replace the world's second-richest person at the company's helm.

Bezos is ending his role as CEO on a high note: the business he began as an internet bookseller 27 years ago is now one of the world's most valuable companies and posted three consecutive record profits after losses in decades prior. On Tuesday, Amazon reported quarterly sales above \$100 billion for the first time at \$125.6 billion.

Jassy, 53, joined Amazon in 1997 after Harvard Business School, founding AWS and growing it to a cloud platform used by millions of customers, the company's website said. He had been a clear contender for the top job since Amazon created two CEO roles years ago, the other held by recently retired consumer CEO Jeff Wilke.

Jassy has aimed to bestow a rock-star aura to keynotes at AWS's annual

Las Vegas conference, speaking before over 60,000 attendees in 2019 after upbeat music preceded his talk.

Bezos, who already has

focused on other personal enterprises in years past, said in a note to employees posted on Amazon's website, "As Exec Chair I will stay engaged in important Amazon initiatives but also have the time and energy I need to focus on the Day 1 Fund, the Bezos Earth Fund, Blue Origin, The Washington Post, and my other passions." Blue Origin is Bezos' space company.

He added, "I've never had more energy, and this isn't about retiring."

—Reuters

ANDY JASSY USHERED IN CLOUD COMPUTING BOOM

MATT DAY
FEB. 3

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

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

In the same earnings report in which Amazon said Jassy, 53, would succeed Jeff Bezos later this year, the company reported that AWS pulled in \$12.7 billion in sales in the fourth quar-

ter, making the unit a \$50 billion business on an annual basis.

"Andy brings the first principles thinking that has always been a part of what's made Amazon successful – deeply trying to understand the end customer, creating building blocks by which other people can build and than being good at rapidly iterating," said Matt McIlwain, a managing director with Madrona Venture Group in Seattle, who has closely tracked Amazon's rise.

"He watched how Jeff approached problems. That's very important because there a lot of things that are deeply embedded in the culture of Amazon."

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

—Bloomberg

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

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 3

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

Over a decade, the organised sector share of agriculture, forestry and

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

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

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

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

China share in Indian exim rises

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 3

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

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

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

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

\$2,263 million against \$390 million in the year-ago period. Aluminum and aluminum articles registered a growth of 1124 per cent to \$233 million.

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

BLOOMBERG INDEX India climbs back into top 50; US drops out of top 10 ranking South Korea leads world in innovation

MICHELLE JAMRISKO, WEI LU & ALEX TANZI
FEB. 3

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

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

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



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

The 2021 rankings reflect a world

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

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

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

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

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

—Bloomberg

75% PROFESSIONALS ON LOOKOUT FOR JOB

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

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

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

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

Ajay re-elected as BFI president

New Delhi: Incumbent Ajay Singh was on Wednesday re-elected President of the Boxing Federation of India, comfortably defeating challenger Ashish Shelar in the polls which had an International Boxing Association (AIBA) observer in attendance. Singh, also the chairman of Spicejet airlines, prevailed 37-27 in the elections held at a Gurugram hotel for a fresh four-year term. He will have a new secretary general by his side in Assam's Hemanta Kumar Kalita. Kalita would be succeeding Maharashtra's Jay Kowli, who had decided against contesting for the post after extending his support to Shelar ahead of the elections. "I don't want to comment on the margin, I am happy that the BFI has reposed faith in me. I hope to live up to the expectations and take boxing forward," Singh said. — PTI

Serena sizzles; Osaka, Barty toil

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

Zverev, Tsitsipas open with wins

Melbourne: Alexander Zverev and Stefanos Tsitsipas opened their seasons with fighting wins in the ATP Cup Wednesday as they warm up for the Australian Open, while Italy and Russia became the first teams into the semifinals. Seventh-ranked Zverev had to dig deep to overcome Canadian dangerman Denis Shapovalov 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) and seal the tie for Germany. But he gained valuable court time ahead of another crack at a first Grand Slam trophy at the Australian Open starting next week. Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff upset Milos Raonic 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/2) in the opening match and Canada are now out after a second narrow loss for Shapovalov, who pushed Novak Djokovic hard in their Group 'A' clash on Tuesday. Greece's world number six Tsitsipas was also forced to work hard by Australian Alex de Minaur, who won the season-opening Antalya Open last month, eventually triumphing 6-3, 7-5. — AFP

Irving punches big to pip Clippers

Los Angeles: Kyrie Irving rattled in 39 points and James Harden bagged the 50th regular season triple double of his career as the Brooklyn Nets outgunned the Los Angeles Clippers 124-120 on Tuesday. The potential NBA finals sneak preview at the Barclays Center saw the Nets' big three of Irving, Harden and Kevin Durant combine for a total of 90 points to halt the Clippers' three-game unbeaten streak. Kawhi Leonard led the Clippers scoring with 33 points while Paul George added 26 and French international Nicolas Batum chipping in with 21. The Nets were given a scare late in the game when a 118-108 advantage shrank to a single point with five seconds remaining. Elsewhere on Tuesday, Fred VanVleet exploded for a franchise record 54 points as the Toronto Raptors demolished the Orlando Magic 123-108. — AFP

Live on TV

CRICKET

Pakistan vs South Africa: Second Test, Day 1 from 10.30 am on Sony Ten 2, HD

Big Bash League: Challenger from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: North East United vs Goa from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3



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

— PTI

WISE CAPTAIN

My job is easy when Virat is around: Rahane

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 3

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

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

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



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

— PTI

Kohli. Now that Kohli is back from paternity leave, Rahane is happy to hand over captaincy to him.

"Virat is back and that's a big positive. With him around, my job is really easy as I can take a back-seat and only need to help him. The captain has too

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

The curator for the opening test has said the

wait and see," he added. In Ravindra Jadeja's absence, Axar Patel is tipped to make his Test debut. Asked about the bowling combination for the opening Test, Rahane chose to keep his cards close to his chest. "The team management will decide the combination only on the match eve, after the final training session," he said. As New Zealand have already qualified for the World Test championship, the India-England series will decide the other finalist. Rahane said India are not thinking that far ahead. "Right now, we are focussed on only the Chennai Test. The championship is still three-four months away. We deserve to be there though," he added.

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

Man Utd wreak havoc on Saints

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

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

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side hit five more after the break, tying them with Leicester's 9-0 win at Southampton in 2019 and United's own 9-0 victory against Ipswich in 1995. Aaron Wan-Bissaka's goal opened the floodgates and Marcus Rashford bagged United's second. Jan Bednarek's own goal made it three for the hosts before Edinson Cavani added the fourth.

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

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

United's first victory in three league games means

THE RESULTS

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

they are behind leaders Manchester City only on goal difference.

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

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



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

— AP

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ROOT WANTS TO BE PART OF T20 WC SQUAD

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

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

"For me, the most important thing is that England go into that World Cup with the strongest squad and give ourselves the best chance of winning there, and hopefully, I can be a part of that squad," Root said. "And if no then I will be backing those guys because it would be a huge achievement on the back of what we have achieved in 50 over world cup," the England Test captain added. — PTI

Important to post big 1st innings total: Trott

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 3

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

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



Jonathan Trott

who played 52 Tests.

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

of the Year award in 2011. England skipper Root has been leading from the front by scoring a truck-load of runs. Trott said captaining in subcontinental conditions is a skill in itself. "Handling the conditions and rotating the bowlers accordingly is a big challenge for a skipper. But, captaincy comes naturally to Root. He is a good decision-maker and has a great presence around the guys as well. I have full confidence in his ability," he added.

POPE ADDED TO ENGLAND SQUAD

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

CA pull out, a dark time: Pietersen

New Delhi, Feb. 3: Michael Vaughan and Kevin Pietersen on Wednesday questioned Australia's decision to postpone their tour of South Africa and expressed doubts if they would have done the same with a powerful cricket nation like India.

Cricketer Australia announced their decision to postpone the trip to South Africa, citing

"unacceptable health and safety risk" in that country because of a fresh Covid-19 outbreak. Vaughan said it was not a good precedent set by Australia. "The Aussies pulling out of the tour of SA is a huge worry for the game ... Would they have pulled out of a tour to India is the question ?? !," Vaughan tweeted. He said the three big

cricket nations — India, England and Australia — should instead help the cricket boards, who are feeling the heat of the pandemic.

Kevin Pietersen too slammed Australia's decision to withdraw from the tour.

"No way @CricketAus would have not played India in a Test tour. It's a really dark time in the world of cricket with CA

cancelling their tour of @OfficialCSA. @england-cricket also pulled out of SA due to Covid issues, but players test positive in SL and tour goes on?," Pietersen tweeted.

On Tuesday, Cricket South Africa (CSA) had slammed its Australian counterpart for postponing the Test tour, saying it is "extremely" disappointing and will lead to "serious financial loss". — PTI

