THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE I TUESDAY 16 | FEBRUARY 2021



ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Maasi 4 Tithi: Panchami Star: Puratathi Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm Yamagandam: 9 am to 10.30 am **PRAYERS**

Fajar: 5.20 am Zohar: 12.28 pm **Asar:** 3.44 pm Maghrib: 6.15 pm Isha: 7.27 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.15 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.32 AM **MOONRISE TODAY 9.36 AM MOONSET TOMORROW 10.04 PM**

CORONA **C**UNT

CASES (+8,831)

(+72)1,09,25,278 1,55,840

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

covid19india.org

(+455)

12,425 TN: 8,45,575

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

10,95,15,475 **DEATHS** £24,14,092

worldometers.info

Amit Shah reviews preparation for celebrating India @75

New Delhi: Union home minister Amit Shah on Monday reviewed the preparations for the celebrations of 75th year of India's independence, 400th 'Prakash Purab' of Guru Teg Bahadur and 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. The central government has already decided to celebrate the three events in a befitting manner. "HM @AmitShah held review

Congress demands rollback

of fuel price hike New Delhi: The Congress on Monday demanded immediate roll-

@MinOfCultureGol & @MIB_India

on preparations for celebration of

back of hike in prices of petrol, diesel and LPG cylinders as it accused the BJP-led government at the Centre of being insensitive towards the problems of the com-Party leader Rahul Gandhi attacked the government for the LPG price hike alleging that it was 'looting' people for the "development of

Rain triggers landslide in

Indonesia; 10 dead, 9 missing

Nganjuk (Indonesia): Torrential rains triggered a landslide on Indonesia's main island of Java that killed at least 10 people, with rescuers digging desperately with their bare hands and farm tools Monday to locate nine missing people, including four children, officials said. Dozens of soldiers, police and volunteers took part in the search in the village of Selopuro in East Java's Nganjuk district, National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokespersor Raditya Jati said.



You can't meet any minister. But don't worry. They will come to your house shortly!



STATE | 3 Share of seats at DMK's will, says Vaiko



NATION | 4 Nadda meet next Sunday to ready for 4 state polls

SPORT | 8 Nadal closes in on Slams record



Coimbatore, Feb. 15: The ruling AIADMK has ful-

filled its promises in elec-

tion manifestos unlike

arch-rival DMK, Tamil

Nadu Chief Minister K

Palaniswami said here on

Monday.
The DMK had given a "tall promise" of two acres

of land each to landless

poor families in its mani-

festo in 2006, which howev-

er, was never implemented, he said at a function. On

the other hand, the

AIADMK has fulfilled all

its promises from the days of its founder and late chief

Palaniswami was speak-

ing at a mass marriage of 123 couples, organised by Municipal Administration Minister S.P .Velumani here as part of the celebra-

tions of late chief minister

J Jayalalithaa's 73rd birth anniversary falling on

February 24.

Highlighting schemes for the welfare of women, he said the AIADMK govern-

ment had distributed over

₹4,200 crore worth mar-

riage assistance in the last

10 years benefiting about

Under the 'thaaliku thangam' (gold for man-

galasutra), a pet scheme of

ʻthaaliku

11.8 lakh women.

minister

claimed.

Ramachandran,

CM reiterates his party

always kept its promises

deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle, google.com/+deccanchronicle

IN TOUCH WITH KHALISTANIS

Warrants out for two more activists in 'toolkit' case

SHARMA | DC with agency inputs NEW DELHI/MUMBAI.

Non-bailable warrants was issued against two more people for allegedly sharing the "toolkit" related to the farmers' protest on the social media, the Delhi police said Monday, two days after it arrested climate activist Disha Ravi over the case. Meanwhile, hitting out at the police and other official agencies, scores of social activists and environmentalists called for the immediate release of Ms Ravi, asking the government to stop targeting India's youth.
This Delhi police action

also triggered a war of between Opposition parties and the

ruling BJP.
The Delhi police procured a non-bailable warrant from a local court against lawyer Nikita Jacob and environmental activist Shantanu Muluk over the protest "toolkit" shared by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg to support the Indian farmers' protests.

The police claimed Poetic Justice Foundation, the organisation allegedly behind Ms Thunberg's "toolkit", had contacted Mumbai-based Ms Jacob to organise a "tweet storm" ahead of the farmers'

Republic Day protests.

Delhi police joint commissioner Prem Nath said at a press conference on Monday that the two, Ms

CM OFFERS JOB

police lathicharge, dies;

A DYFI worker: Moidul

Islam Middya (31), who

was critically wounded allegedly in the police lathicharge during last week's Nabanna rally of the Left parties' youth wings demanding jobs,

succumbed to his injuries

at a private nursing home, prompting the CPI(M), it's ally Congress and the BJP in the opposi-

tion to accuse the Mamata

Banerjee government of

The auto-rickshaw dri-

ver from Kotolpur in

Bankura was the bread-

winner of his family. On

February 11 he participated in the DYFI-SFI march

which turned violent as

the rallyists and police

clashed with each other.

With deep injuries Moidul

was rescued from Esplanade. He was rushed

to a clinic from where he

was later shifted to a pri-

vate nursing home run by

CPI(M) leader and doctor:

Dr Halim said, "On February 13 morning Moidul was admitted after his medical tests

showed development of an acute kidney failure. It happens only when mus-cles get hit continuously

to become wounded and

it's internal protein comes

out and blocks the kidney

through blood. He had

massive muscle injuries

from the lathicharge by

CPI(M) MLA Sujan

Chakraborty claimed, "A

bright youth was mur-dered and turned into a

corpse." Leader of the

opposition Abdul Mannan

alleged, "It is a brutal

murder which reflects

unlimited atrocities of an

autocratic government." State BJP president Dilip

Fuad Halim.

the police.

Ghosh said,

his "murder

DYFI worker, hurt in

Oppn cries 'murder'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI

KOLKATA, FFB. 15

SPREADING DISAFFECTION?

Activists Disha Ravi, Nikita **Jacob and Shantanu Muluk** have been accused by the Delhi Police of collaborating with the pro-Khalistani group Poetic Justice Foundation for the creation of the 'toolkit' document shared earlier this month on Twitter by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg in support of the ongoing farmers' protest — to "spread disaffection against the Indian state".

Jacob and Mr Muluk, had

attended a Zoom meeting

hosted by Poetic Justice

Foundation on January 11

to decide the modalities of

This organisation is suspected to be working for

'Khalistani" separatists. Advocate Nikita Jacob

activist Shantanu Muluk

moved to the Bombay high

court on Monday seeking

transit anticipatory bail

after being named as sus-

pects in the case filed by

the Delhi police. Ms Jacob and Mr Muluk, both Maharashtra residents,

filed separate pleas, to be

heard by the Bombay high

court on Tuesday. The

Delhi police alleges that the duo was allegedly

involved in preparing the

document and was in

direct touch with "pro-

New Delhi, Feb. 15: In sweeping changes in the country's mapping policy, the government on Monday

announced liberalisation of

norms governing the acqui-

sition and production of

geospatial data, a move

that will help in boosting

innovation in the sector

and create a level-playing

field for public and private

Under the new guidelines, the sector will be deregulat-ed and aspects such as

prior approvals for survey-

ing, mapping and for build-

ing applications based on

that have been done away

with, Department of Scie-

nce and Technology Secretary Ashutosh Sharma

For Indian entities, there

will be complete deregula-

tion with no prior approvals, security clear-

ances, licenses, for acquisi-

tion and production of

geospatial data and geospa-

tial data services, includ-

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi said the liberalisation

of policies governing the

acquisition and production

ing maps, he said.

Khalistani elements'

environmental

creating the toolkit.



Ms Disha Ravi, 22, has been arrested and non-bailable warrants have been issued against the other two activists.

> Ms Nikita Jacob has approached the Bombay high court seeking protection from arrest for four weeks.

Shantanu Muluk is a native of Beed, Maharashtra. He is an engineer by education, the police said, adding he runs an NGO. His email account is the owner of the toolkit Google doc, the police said.

Twitter U-turn on Haryana min tweet

New Delhi, Feb. 15: In a tweet, Haryana Home Min-ister Anil Vij said that those with "seeds of anti-nationalism... should be destroyed... whether Disha Ravi or anyone else". Twitter said the tweet had been investigated and "is not subject to removal" under rules governing extreme speech

reads as — "If seeds of anti nationalism have been somebody's sown in thought process, he/ she should be destroyed from roots... whether she is Disha

Ravi or anyone else.' In a screenshot that Mr Vij shared a message from Twitter read — "Twitter is required by German law to provide notice to users who are reported by people from Germany via the Network Enforcement Act reporting flow... We have investigated the reported content and have found that it is not sub-

The reform will bene-

fit the country's farm-

ers, start-ups, private

sector, public sector

and research institu-

tions to drive innova-

solutions, the Prime

Vardhan said.

Minister said.

tions and build scalable

tors of the economy, signif-

icantly boost innovation in

the country and greatly enhance its preparedness

for emergency response,'

He said earlier even the

Survey of India, the organisation entrusted with mak-

ing maps, had to seek per-

mission for mapping from

different agencies, thus

delaying its work by at

least three-to-six months.

In a series of tweets, Modi said, "Our government has

taken a decision that will

provide a huge impetus to

Digital India. Liberalising

policies governing the acquisition and production

of geospatial data is a mas-

sive step in our vision for

an Aatmanirbhar Bharat," he said. — PTI

That was on Monday afternoon but just hours earlier, it had issued a notice to the minister saving it had deleted the tweet based on a complaint from a user in Germany. The tweet

India liberalises mapping policy;

of geospatial data is a "mas-

sive step in government's

The reform will benefit the

country's farmers, start-

ups, private sector, public

sector and research institu-

tions to drive innovations and build scalable solutions, he said. Science and

Harsh Vardhan in a press

conference said the easing

of norms will greatly help

in several sectors that were

suffering because of non-

availability of high quality

hensive, highly accurate, granular and constantly

updated representation of

geospatial data will signifi-

cantly benefit diverse sec-

"Availability of compre-

Minister

Aatmanirbhar Bharat".

vision

Technology

will spur innovation, says PM

Jayalalithaa, it had given 6,086 kg of gold worth ₹1,796 crore. Similarly under the Amma two-wheeler scheme, the government has given ₹731 crore as subsidy benefiting 2.98 lakh women in purchase of the vehicles, Palaniswami said. With the climate conducive for industry, more investments were coming

to the state, he said, claiming Tamil Nadu stood number one in the country in maintaining law and order.

In his address, Dy Chief Minister O. Paneerselvam successful in getting various development projects from the Centre for Tamil

WELFARE FOR WOMEN

Vol. 11 No. 50 Established 1938 | 8 pages | ₹4.00

AIADMK government had distributed over ₹4,200 crore worth marriage assistance in the last 10 years benefiting about 11.8 lakh

thangam' (gold for mangalasutra), a pet scheme of Jayalalithaa, it had given 6,086 kg of gold worth ₹1,796

Under the 'thaaliku

With a conducive climate, more investments were coming to the state, he said, claiming Tamil Nadu stood number one in the country in maintaining

Deputy Chief Minister O Paneerselvam said the AIADMK rule was successful in getting various development projects from the Centre for Tamil Nadu.

TN political parties kick off poll process

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC

The DMK beat the ruling AIADMK and actor Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) in fixing the earliest date to start the electoral process, calling for applications from its members desirous of contesting the coming Assembly polls.

Though it was the AIADMK that first made the announcement on Monday that the applications can be filed from February 24, which happens to be the birth anniversary of the late J Jayalalithaa, MNM's subsequent statement in the day gave the date as February 21 and the DMK that gave the call quite late in the night fixed the dates from February 17 to 24 ahead of the other tw While the AIADMK and

DMK have called for applications for allotment Assembly seats in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala, the MNM has declared that it would be contesting in the 234 Assembly constituencies of Tamil Nadu, 30 constituencies in Puducherry Union Territory and in the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha by-election.

Those wishing to seek tickets from the AIADMK have been asked to pay a fee of ₹15,000 for seats in Tamil Nadu, ₹5,000 for seats in Puducherry and ₹2,000 for seats in Kerala at the party headquarters and obtain the necessary application form between 10 am and 5 pm from February 24 to March 5.

The forms should be filled up, providing the information asked for, and summarily submitted at the headquarters, a joint statement by the Panneerselvam and cocoordinator Edappadi K Palaniswami said on Monday Monday.

SC grants 5-day bail to Kerala journalist

New Delhi, Feb. 15: (PTI) The Supreme Court Monday granted 5-day interim bail to journalist Siddique Kappan, arrested on his way to Hathras where a young Dalit woman had died after being allegedly gang-raped, to visit his ailing mother.

A bench headed by

Chief Justice S.A. Bobde said the interest of justice would be served if appropriate safeguards are built into the order for the proposed visit of the prisoner. The apex court said that during his visit he shall not give any interview to the media, including social media. 'We, accordingly, per-

mit the prisoner -Siddique Kappan to go to days only for the purpose of seeing his ailing moth-

"He shall not meet the members of the public. He will be entitled to meet his relatives and doctors and anybody else in connection with his mother's health," the bench said.

prising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian, said that Kappan would be escort-ed by a UP police team and the Kerala police would co-operate with the UP police in the matter. "It shall be the responsi-bility of the UP Police to ensure that the prisoner - Siddique Kappan travel to and from his moth-

The bench, also com-

user privacy New Delhi, Feb. 15: The Supreme Court Monday asked the Centre and WhatsApp to reply to a fresh plea alleging lower stan-dards of privacy for Indians in comparison to European users saying it is the duty of the judiciary to protect citi-

zens' privacy.

SC notice to Centre,

WhatsApp over

People have grave apprehensions that they will lose their privacy and it is our duty to protect them, the top court said. "You may be two or three trillion companies but people value their privacy more than money" a bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde told WhatsApp even as it sought to argue that Europe has special data protection laws which India doesn't. The apex court issued

notice to the government and the Facebook-owned app on an interim applica-tion filed by Karmanya Singh Sareen in a pending petition of 2017. Senior advocate Shyam

Divan, appearing for the petitioner, argued that the messaging app was applying lower standards of privacy for Indians and they be barred from sharing data with Facebook.

The bench observed, "We are impressed by Mr Divan's argument that it was proposed before us that a data protection law would be brought into force. "Now under this policy you will share data of Indians." Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for WhatsApp, contended that Europe has a special law (General Data Protection Regulation) and it will follow law if the Parliament makes it a simi-

Ton-up 'Ash' puts India in driver's seat at Chepauk

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC

For someone who grew up watching Sachin Tend-ulkar's epic knocks at the M.A. Chidambaram Stad-

ium here, R. Ashwin lived his childhood dream on Monday. He delivered a batting masterclass by scoring a majestic century (106 off 148 balls) on a tricky surface where most batsmen bit the dust. Ashwin's brilliant knock after coming in at No. 8 took India closer to a thumping win over England in the second Test. The all-rounder complet-

ed a few milestones in front of his vociferous home crowd who chanted "Ashwin... Ash-win'

He became only the second Tamil Nadu cricketer, after Kris Srikkanth, to score a Test hundred at Chepauk. It was the third time in his career that Ashwin scored a century and took a five-for in the same match. Only the legendary Ian Botham has done it more times (five). 'The moment I scored the

century, I looked up at the terrace. I can't thank the crowd enough. The applause was thunderous," said Ashwin. ■ Report on P8



R. Ashwin celebrates his century against England in the second Test on Monday.

— BCCI



OTHER STORIES

TN records 455 new Covid cases, six fatalities

Chennai: Tamil Nadu on Monday added 455 new coronavirus cases and six more fatalities, pushing the overall tally in the state to 8,45,575 and toll to

Health Secretary J Radhakrishnan, who took the second Covid shot, urged people not to let their guard down vis-avis the virus and stressed on continued wearing of face masks in public. According to a government bulletin, 477 people were cured of the virus on Monday, with the total recoveries touching 8,28,918. The number of active cases as of today

NTECL, Tangedco pay interim dividend of ₹51.41 crore

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 15

For the first time, NTPC Tamil Nadu Energy Limited (NTECL), a 50:50 joint venture company of National Thermal Power Corporation Limited, and Tangedco (Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation) paid an interim dividend of ₹51.41 crore for the year towards Tangedco's 50 per cent

The NTECL runs the

The NTECL runs the Vallur Thermal Power Station (VTPS) with a capacity of 1,500 MW (3 units of 500 MW each). The plant, situated in Tiruvallur district, is operational since 2015

Vallur Thermal Power Station (VTPS) with a capacity of 1,500 MW (3 units of 500 MW each). The plant, situated in Tiruvallur district, is operational since 2015. About 70 per cent power from this station is used in

supplied to neighbouring Andhra Karnataka. Kerala. Telangana Puducherry.

C. V Anand, regional ED

(southern region), NTPC and director of NTECL presented the cheque to Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami in the Thangamani, Minister for

Electricity. Other dignitaries present during the occasion were Dr Rajeev Ranjan, chief secretary, S.K Prabakar, principal

secretary (energy), Pankaj Kumar Bansal, (Tangedco) and director (NTECL), Ashok Kumar, director (Tangedco) and director (NTECL), Basuraj Goswami, CEO NTECL, K. Rajasekhar, CGM(TS), NTECL and Srivastava, Raiiv CFO,NTECL.

The NTECL paid the dividend for the first time since its inception. The Interim dividend was also paid to the other joint venture partner - NTPC on its shareholding of 50 per-



Health secretary Radhakrishnan receives second dose of Covid vaccine at RGGGH on

₹4 lakh robbed from bike showroom

DC CORRESPONDENT

Some unidentified miscreants broke into a bike showroom Tambaram-Velachery main road and made away with ₹4 lakh in cash on Sunday night.

The owner of the showroom in Selaiyur near Tambaram, Theodore (56), lodged a complaint with the Selaiyur police. In his complaint, Jacob said he locked the showroom as usual at around 9 pm on Sunday and left for home.

Police said the thieves had also damaged the CCTV cameras inside the shop and took away the DVR. The thieves entered the showroom by breaking the locks of the third floor of the building

On Monday morning, when he came back to open the shop, he found things scattered. He rushed to the third floor of the building where he had kept the cash. thieves, however, broke open the cash locker and The Selaiyur police, based on the alert by Jacob, rushed to the spot along with forensic experts. Police said the thieves had also damaged the CCTV cameras inside the shop and took away the DVR. The thieves entered the showroom by breaking the locks of the third floor of the building.

Police are scrutinising the CCTV footage from the Tambaram-Velachery main road to identify the miscreants. A case has been registered and further investigations are on.

Wealth case against engineer, wife

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC SALEM, FEB. 15

Sleuths of the vigilance and anti-corruption police here have registered a case against an engineer and his wife for amassing assets worth over Rs 3.31 crore.

identified the Sources accused as G. Selvakumaran from Aroor, Dharmapuri district. He joined the service in 1997 as an assistant engineer. He had worked in Ariyalur, Perambalur and Villupuram districts as assistant engineer, assistant chief engineer and chief engineer, and is currently an executive engineer in the 'Rural Employment Program' Virudhachalam circle, Cuddalore district.

His wife Jayanti lives in Ayyamperumampatti The anti-corruption sleuths here had lodged a complaint with the police alleging that G. Selvakumaran had added more assets which was inappropriate to his income.

Additional Chandramelali and inspector Thangamani held an inquiry into the complaint and found that Selvakumaran and his wife Jayanthi had amassed over Rs 3.31 crore to their income between 2012 and

Following this, the vigilance and anti-corruption police had registered a case against the engineer and his wife Jayanthi on February 4, and are conducting an investigation.

His wife Jayanti lives in Ayyamperumampatti The anti-corruption sleuths here had lodged a complaint with the police alleging that G. Selvakumaran had added more assets which was inappropriate to his income

Seven including 2 school students hurt in ECR mishap

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 15

Seven passengers were severely injured after their share auto was hit by a sand-laden truck on East Coast Road on Monday morning, the police said.

The accident happened near Koovathur on ECR, when a share auto ferryseven passengers including two school stu-

truck plying between Chennai and Pavunjur. In the impact of the collision, a portion of the share auto was crushed. Passersby alerted the police and jumped in to

rescue the injured from

Kalpakkam was hit by a

dents from Koovathur- 108

the mangled auto. Koovathur police came to the spot and sent the injured to the Chengalpet government hospital via and fled the spot.

two 14-year-old students. Koovathur police registered a case and began an investigation. A manhunt has been launched for the truck driver who aban-

According to the police,

the injured were identi-

fied as, Auto driver, Sekar (35), Banumathy (42),

Anjalai(35), Hemavathy

(29) Ezhumalai (40) and

Bandh to urge Centre to recall Kiran Bedi called off



OUICK CROSSWORD

Puducherry, Feb. 15: The February 16 bandh by the Congress Democratic Alliance to urge the Centre to recall Lt Governor Kiran Bedi has been called off on the request of various traders Associations,

merchants Minister V Narayanasamy

that the decision was taken after they said it would inconvenience the

"The demand has been conceded and the proposed bandh has been called off", he said. The Chief Minister, however did not state when it would be next held.

The CM had submitted a said here on Monday. memorandum to He told reporters here President Ram Nath

Kovind on February 10, urging him to recall the former IPS officer, saying she was running a 'tughlaq

durbar.' He complained that Bedi was 'autocratic' and was interfering in the administration, besides 'impeding' the implementation of is proposals of elected governvarious the

four day agitation in the with the ruling Congress Union Territory from January 8, demanding recall of Bedi, besides going long hunger strike on February 5 on the

issue. Bedi, a former IPS officer, and Narayanasamy have been at loggerheads over various issues ever since she was appointed Lt ment. since she was appointed Lt
The SDA had staged a Governor in May 2016,

accusing her of going against the decisions of the government.

The Congress had in December, 2019 written to the President, seeking the recall of Bedi, who has maintained that being the Administrator of Union Territory she was discharging her duties as per law.

COFFEE-BREAK

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



ries: Make investment plans. Understand the benefits, pitfalls and schemes or seek a financial advisor's guidance. Today's beginning could shake things up at home.



or relocating at the moment. Increased insecurity may cause family squabbles. Gemini: Unattached Geminis grow stronger attractions but hesitate to commit. Show your emotions freely. Work hard at developing inner stability, and you'll reap benefits.

Faurus: Differences of opinion cause major stress. Avoid home renovations



Cancer: Professionals can expect fantastic openings with better income, possibly the best opportunities. You're in a higher income bracket but avoid debts you can't afford.

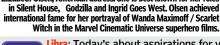


promising rewards. Expect a lucky break. Your intuition is heightened; you're in the right place at the right time. rgo: Your lifestyle could cause health issues;

.eo: It's one of your career's best phases,



get disciplined. Your personal growth comes from completing one project. Feeling your emotions completely enables you to uncover buried treasures.

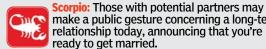


ibra: Today's about aspirations for you; you won't be hesitant or embarrassed in showing a caring and calm side to your nature. You'll

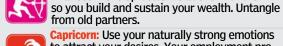
You share your b'day with

Elizabeth Olsen, American actress. She is best known for her roles

also do lots of introspection.



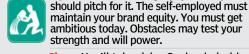
make a public gesture concerning a long-term relationship today, announcing that you're ready to get married. Sagittarius: At work, some people control your finances. Develop better relations with them



from old partners. Capricorn: Use your naturally strong emotions to attract your desires. Your employment prospects are mixed, setting the tone for a chosen

arius: Those seeking a pay rise or promotion

career change. Travelling is on the cards.



ambitious today. Obstacles may test your strength and will power. Pisces: You'll take risks. Seek admirable, talented people so you can learn from them. Managing your health today could be an issue. Exercise benefits you, helps release nagging



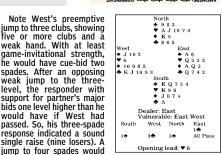


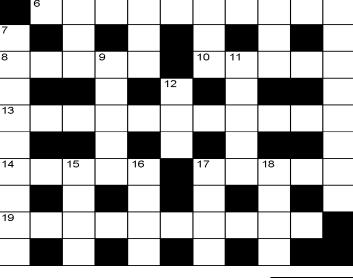
USE YOUR CARDS TO HELP PARTNER

Letterman avid Letterman quipped, "Traffic sig-nals in New York are just rough guidelines." Poor bridge defenders are like that, failing to help partner to find the winning defense when it was within their purview to do so.

How can East-West defeat
three spades in today's
deal? West leads his singleton heart, covered by the 10, queen and king. Declarer continues with the spade queen to East's ace.

Note West's preemptive jump to three clubs, showing five or more clubs and a weak hand. With at least game-invitational strength, he would have cue-bid two spades. After an opposing weak jump to the three-level, the responder with support for partner's major bids one level higher than he would have if West had passed. So, his three-spade response indicated a sound single raise (nine losers). A





Across 6. Resistance (10) & Eved lecherously (5) 10. Tag (5) 13. Baltic nurse (anag) (11)

17. Artefact (5) 19. Used too much (10)

14. Express indirectly (5)

Word Mine

IPO

TYCGR

GOOD; 18 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only.

Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid.
There should be at least one
nine letter word. Plurals, foreign
words and proper names are
not allowed.

1. Colourful gemstone (4)

2. Empty (4) 3. Window ledge (4) 4. Branch (4)

5. Have an effect on (9) 7. Law professional (9) 9. Distinguish oneself (5) 11. Diminish (5)

12. Young bear (3) 15. Quarry (4) 16. Tiredness sign (4) 17. Scarce (4)

18. Vegetable (4)

Across: 1. Jaguar, 3. Legs, 7. Slip, 8. Tariff, 10. Overact, 13. Tarnish, 16. Damage, 17. Neat, 18. Deny, **Down:** 1. Just, 2. Grieve, 4. Evil, 5. Suffer, 6. Vaccine, 9. Arrange, 11. Sordid, 12. Ascent, 14. Omen, 15. Star.

jumble

SUREE **CLOBK** CTAANV **ACOLAN** HIS COSTLY

The locksmith considered customer satisfaction the — KEY TO SUCCESS have promised a limit raise (eight losers); and a four-club cue-bid would have shown game-forcing values (at most seven losers). At trick three, East gives his partner a heart ruff, and his choice of card sends a to a club. East should have been as clear as possible by leading the heart five. West would ruff and play a diamond. East would win as cheaply as possible, cash his second his choice of card sends a suit-preference signal telling partner whether his reentry lies in diamonds or diamond winner and lead another heart to promote his partner's last spade. The defenders would take

At Bridge Base Online.

every East erred by return-ing the heart two. So each West, after ruffing, shifted

three spades and two dia Copyright United Feature Syndicate (Asia Features)



ALVIN AND HOBBES | Bill Watterson I TRIED TO PULL MY SNOW
PANT'S OFF, BUT I FORGOT TO
TAKE MY BOOTS OFF FIRST, SO
THOSE GOT STUCK, AND THEN
THE PANT'S GOT ALL TWISTED,
SO I FELL OVER, AND FINALLY
THE TEXCHER HAD TO CALL TWO



THE WIZARD OF ID|Parker and Hartsd

MILITARY SUPREMACY IS AT HAND! I HOLD HERE THE MOST EXPLOSIVE SUBSTANCE EVER CONCEIVED



ARCHIE|Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman





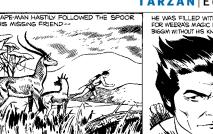


ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe





TARZAN Edgar Rice Burroughs







OTHER STORIES TN unit of SP to back DMK

DC CORRESPONDENT TRUCHY FEB .15

The Tamil Nadu unit of the Samajwadi Party has decided to extend its support to the DMK-led front in the forthcoming elections to the state assembly, according to party state principal secretary and spokesman Thameemul Ansari Nizami.

Mr. Nizami said in a release at Tiruchy on Monday that a resolution to this effect was adopted at the party's state administrative council meeting held here on Sunday under the leadership of party's senior general secretary K. Vasu.

He said it was also decided to join the DMK-led front and work for the victory of the DMK in all the 234 assembly segments and to approach M.K. Stalin to get a few assembly seats where chances were bright for the Samajwadi Party.

The meeting also decided to convene a meeting of the party state office-bearers at Tiruchy on February 21.

Among others, party's general secretary S.Muthuramalingam, agriculture wing secretary Balasubramanian and traders wing state president Ramanathapuram Balakrishnan



Former two time CPM MLA of Madurai East constituency N Nanmaran submis a representation to District Collector T Anbalagan seeking house under government's free housing scheme. The former MLA had submits the representation during the grievance meeting organised at Madurai Collectorate on Monday.



Actor-turned politician Khushbu begins election campaign for BJP in Triplicane

144th anniversary of Kumbakonam railway station celebrated

Now after completion of

G. SRINIVASAN I DC

The Thanjavur district rail users association organised a function to anniversary Kumbakonam railway station on Monday. Sweets were distributed

to people and staff and surviving retired rail staff were honoured on the occasion. K. R. Aravamudan, retired sta-tion superintendent, was honoured at the function. During his tenure, the Kumbakonam railway station won the division's best cleanliness award

The Kumbakonam rail-

way station is located between Villupuram and Thanjavur. It was on 15-2-1877, train service between Sirkali and Thanjavur started first to through Kumbakonam. Indo-Ceylon Express (Boat Mail) was operated via Kumbakonam. Kumbakonam to connect Chennai and Colombo in a train-streamer combine. The passengers bound for Colombo travelled up to

gauge conversion many long distance trains to Varanasi, Ayodhya, Bhuvaneswar, Hyderabad, Mysuru, Tirupati. Tiruchendur and Rameswaram are operated via Kumbakonam.

ferried to Thalaimannar in a streamer. They continued their journey to Colombo by train. Direct combined tickets were issued to the passengers bound for Colombo. During the 70s, a diesel

engine mounted train

with foreign technology was first operated on a trial basis from Trichy to Kumbakonam. Travelling in that train, popularly called "Coach Express", was considered as a status symbol those days. Swami Vivekananda came to Kumbakonam by train on 26 January, 1897 to deliver first his clarion call "Arise awake stop not till goal is reached". To commemorate this event a plaque of Vivekananda is installed in the station platform.

Now after completion of gauge conversion many long distance trains to Dhanuskodi near Rameswaram by train and

Ayodhya Bhuvaneswar, Hyderabad, Mysuru, Tirupati Tiruchendur Rameswaram are operated via Kumbakonam. The Villupuram-Thanjavur section is now fully electrified. The train users expect operation of ordi-

nary passenger trains with main line electric multiple units. Their long pending demand of track doubling the highly saturated Villupuram-Thanjavur section and an early approval for the new railway line between Needamangalam Vridhasalam Kumbakonam is yet to be fulfilled. But the prime

tion of all train services operated before the Covid-19 pandemic. M. A. Jameel, vice-president (TANDRUA) presided over the meet, A. Giri, sec-

demand now is restora-

retary, highlighted the importance Kumbakonam railway station. V. Muruganandam, station superintendent, V. Sathyanarayanan, secretary, Federation of Kumbakonam All Trade Industrial Association participated

AIADMK will never compromise on its ideology of secularism: CM

Coimbatore, Feb. 15: Chief Minister K. Palaniswami on Monday assured religious minorities of continued support and announced increase in the annual number of beneficiaries, from 600 to 1,000 a year, to visit Jerusalem for pilgir-image with financial assistance from the state

government. Promising to positively consider several representations of Christians including site for cemeteries, Palaniswami, in an apparent reference to his party's alliance with the BJP for Assembly polls likely in April, said elec-toral tie-ups were different from ideology.

alliance during elections but ideology is permanent and there shall absolutely be no compromise on adhering to AIADMK's ideology of secularism, brotherhood, harmony and not discriminating people, the Chief Minister asserted.

"Ideology is different from alliance for elections which come and go," he said addressing a conference of Tamil Nadu Christian Democratic Federation here.

"We will not compromise on our ideology. No one born in the Tamil land need have any apprehensions and our government is safeguarding all people and it will continue," he said, adding AIADMK leaders visited places of worship belonging to all



CM Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Dy CM O. Panneerselvam and rural and municipal administration minister S.P. Velumani bless 123 couples at a mass marriage to mark late CM J. Jayalalitha 73rd birth anniversary in Coimbatore on Monday.

'We don't differentiate

anyone. God is one.' People followed their respective religions and the government would never allow anyone to interfere in matters of faith, the chief minister said. "Hence, you (minorities including Christians) need not have any apprehensions. You have given a representation seeking land for cemetry. I am happy to say that wherever possible, the land allocation will be made," he

Announcing an increase in the number of beneficiaries to 1,000 from 600 for Jerusalem pilgrimage, he

noted that the government had already increased the assistance to ₹37,000 from ₹20,000 per pilgrim based on the request of the

Christian community. So far, 4,328 Christians have undertaken the pilgrimage with ₹8.25 crore financial assistance from the government. On other requests made

by them, he said it would be positively considered and suitable action shall be initiated expeditiously. Rather than eyeing votes, the AIADMK had all along been committed to the welfare of the people,

he said. "Consider the AIADMK government as yours," he ued support to the minori-

"In Tamil Nadu, nobody can do anything on the basis of religion," he said and underlined that the state was the forerunner in maintaining law and

order in the country. Praising Christian edu cational institutions for their services, he said the foundation for Tamil Nadu's development in the education sector was laid by Christians. He also listed several other welfare initiatives like an increase in allocation of subsidy for renovation of churches from ₹1 crore to ₹5 crore. — *PTI*

Ather Energy, a reality of 'Make in India' plans

SANJEEVI ANANDAN | DC KRISHNAGIRI, FEB 15

It was not a smooth ride for Tarun Mehta and his friend Swapnil Jain, both graduates from Chennai IIT, in their journey to build India's first electric scooter. Rising from a non-working prototype to the level of building a Rs 130 crore worth EV unit, remained an uphill task for the duo.

working a few hours before our meeting with the person who promised to invest Rs 75 crores on it. But, our team was not upset. We managed to make the model work and got the approval to start our venture. Tarun Mehta proudly told reporters.

"Our prototype stopped

On Friday, Tarun Mehta and Swapnil Jain came to Madakondapalli village near Hosur of Krishnagiri, where 'Ather Energy', a company promoted by them into the business of manufacturing India' first electric scooters is located.

'We initially had our manfacility



The electric scooter unit.

Whitefield in Bengaluru, and later moved to Hosur. The unit was shifted to Hosur because the place has lots of vendors into the business of supplying components required by us" Tarun said.

'Ather' is the perfect example of the 'Make in India' vision as 90 percent of our product including the batteries is locally made," added Tarun.

'Ather Energy' began its operations in January 2021 in Hosur. This unit is supported by the government of Tamil Nadu under its electric vehicle (EV) Policy. Apart from EV manufacturing, the facility will also focus on lithium-ion battery manufacturing. The investment is an opportunity for

value creation in the sector and will create job opportunities in the region. As part of this initiative, more than 4,000 employees will be trained in requisite skills in the EV sector over the next five years. 'Ather' also plans to increase its investment in Tamil Nadu from Rs 130 crore to Rs 635 crore in the next five years from 2021.

SHARE OF SEATS AT DMK'S WILL, **SAYS VAIKO**

ARULOLI M | DC TIRUNELVELI, FEB. 15

Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) may not get the number of seats it desires in the DMK alliance, said a party functionary, adding that party general secretary Vaiko him-self has lost his fighting spirit to demand more seats in the election.

At a fund raising meet here a few days ago, Vaiko had repeatedly stressed to his party

to nurse any gruage even 11-the party was given the least number of seats in the alliance. Pointing to that comment, an MDMK worker said, "Our general secretary said so in the larger interest of the secular forces, but we fear that the DMK may misread this magnanimity of Vaiko and take it as his weakness, and allot seats as they

Reacting to Vaiko's talks, sources in the DMK said that Vaiko remained a strong negotiator till the 2019 parliamentary elections, but in due course, turned reluctant due to health issues. In fact, the MDMK got its importance in Tamil Nadu politics mainly because of Vaiko's talent as a vociferous political campaigner.

But now, due to health issues Vaiko restrains himself from political discourses, and hence, is losing his hold on state politics, they said.

MNM to use blockchain tech to get applications

From P1

Those interested in contesting the elections as an MNM candidate will have to pay a fee of ₹25,000 which would not be refunded even if the person failed to get the ticket. Not only those who are not members of the MNM can also apply for seats and one candidate can apply for as many number seats by paying the fee of ₹25,000 to each seat.

Applications recommending eligible candidates can also be filed. said a press release by party president Kamal Haasan, who added that applications could be filed online by logging on to the party website. www.maiam.com or by obtaining the printed form from the party headquarters and sending the

filled form by post.
For the first time in the history of Indian politics, was blockchain technology to receive application from desirous candidates, Haasan said. The brief announce-

ment by DMK general secretary Durai Murugan said the application fee for general constituencies was Rs 25,000 and that for general

stituencies it was Rs 15,000. If the particular constituency to which a candidate applies goes to the alliance partners in the seat sharing arrangement, the fee would be returned, the statement For both the AIADMK

women and reserved con-

and DMK seat aspirants, there is always that risk of the constituency they evince interest in contesting being allotted to one of the allies since the seat allotment has not been announced though, it is saıa. tnat both tne Dravidian majors have finalized almost process.

Palanisami, during the 10 minute private converwith Prime sation Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday in Chennai is said to have given him the seat allocation plan. With the AIADMK keen on contesting in at least 170 seats, it is said to have earmarked 25 for PMK, 20 for BJP, 10 for DMDK, seven for Tamil Maanila Congress and two for Puthiya Tamizhagam.

The DMK, on its part, is still having talks with the allies with its second rung leaders doing the negotiations. While the smaller

SPEAK

parties have agreed to the number of seat the DMK is prepared to give them, the Congress is said to be expecting more than it is being offered now.

The mad scramble for seat among Congress members would start once the seat sharing talks are finalized, while the other smaller parties might have already chosen the prominent members of their parties as candidates for the elections.

Meanwhile Palaniswami and Panneerselvam planning to visit Deini on February 21 to inaugurate the three storied AIADMK party office that is being constructed there, the talk is that BJP national president J P Nadda would attend the function and also give the final seal of approval for the seat shar-

ing arrangement. Both the DMK and AIADMK have not mentioned anything about the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha by-election because their allies Congress and BJP would be fighting it out there as they did in the 2019 general elections that the late Vasanthakumar emerging victorious.



A bull chasing event at Katpadi Senguttai on Monday.

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, FEB .15

As the rift between the tribals here and the forest department seems to widen, the tribals have appealed to the Nilgiris district administration to implement the 'Tribal forest rights act' soon, and to take steps to return tribal lands taken over by the forest department in the

While a section of the tribals held a demonstration here on Monday to highlight their demands, K.M. Alwas, president, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group in the Nilgiris, said that though the 'Tribal forest rights was passed in 2006 itself, it is yet to be imple-

While a section of the tribals held a demonstration here on Monday to highlight their demands, K.M. Alwas, president, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group in the Nilgiris, said that though the 'Tribal forest rights act' was passed in 2006 itself, it is yet to be implemented in the Nilgiris, where in half-a-dozen primitive tribal communities live

Implement tribal forest rights act: Nilgiris tribals

mented in the Nilgiris, where in half-a-dozen primitive tribal communities live.

In Sholur revenue village alone, tribals are eligible for possession of 350 acres of land which are coming under the revenue-forest joint registry. Unfortunately, the district administration failed to give pattas to eligible tribal families under the 'forest right act' in Sholur village. Instead, it is shocking to see that the forest department had issued notice to the tribals to vacate lands under their possession and enjoyment, he added.

Many of the tribal hamlets across the Nilgiris are still lacking good road facilities. Though funds had been already allotted under the 'Tribal forest right act' to provide road facility and improve road infrastructure to the tribal hamlets, action has still not been taken in this regard due to objections

from the forest depart ment. Due to this, the tribal communities suffer a lot in times of medical emergencies, and also for regular transportation of their farm produce, he

The tribal communities should be given exclusive rights for collection and sale of minor forest produce. The district administration should take steps to provide patta to lands under the possession of the tribes across the Nilgiris. The tribes demand that construction bridge

Kallampalayam area over Moyar river in the wooded zone, should be fulfilled at the earliest as this plea is pending for decades, Alwas added.



The battered old GST road, Tambaram, near railway track, makes life miserable for motorists and pedestrians.

FOREIGN SECRETARY TO VISIT MOSCOW

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB 15

Secretary Foreign Harsh Vardhan Shringla will visit visit beginning Wednesday to hold the next round of India-Russia Foreign Office Consultations with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov, during which "the two sides will review the entire gamut of bilateral relations, including the forthcoming high level exchanges", New Delhi announced on

Russian President Vladimir Putin was initially expected to visit India last year for the India-Russia Annual Summit but both the visit and Summit could not take place then due to the Covid pandemic. Both India and Russia are time-test-ed friends and continue to have a strong relationship especially in the defence and civil nuclear sectors.

In a statement on Monday, the MEA said, "Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla will pay an official visit to Moscow on 17-18 February 2021 at the invitation of Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mr. Igor Morgulov. Foreign Secretary will hold the next round of India-Russia Foreign Office Consultations with Deputy Foreign Minister Morgulov, during which the two sides will review the entire gamut of bilateral relations, including the forthcoming high level exchanges.

COVID: NIGHT CURFEW IN 4 GUJ CITIES EXTENDED

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB 15

Amid a significant decline in the number of active cases of Covid-19 in the country, particularly National Capital Delhi, the government has asked all Central government employees to start attending offices as it was before lockdown.

There will be no exemption to any category of employees, except for those living in the containment zones. Such staff and officers will work from home and come to office only after their containment zone is de-notified. Offices will, however, follow staggered timings to avoid overcrowding in work places and meetings will be largely conducted through video conferencing. Biometric attendance for the time being will remain suspended. All iepartment canteens too wiii be opened with safety protocols in place to avoid crowd-

ing.
The country on Monday reg istered 11,649 fresh cases and 90 deaths. While new cases in most of the states are on a decline, in a major worry Maharashtra has once again started reporting high number of cases.

India till now has vaccinated 85.16 lakh persons.

Meanwhile, Gujarat announced to extend its 12 am to 6 am curfew in four cities – Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodra, and Rajkot - till February 28.

SPURIOUS LIQUOR CLAIMS 4 LIVES IN MADHYA PRADESH

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB 15

Four people died after consuming 'spurious' liquor in Chhatarpur district, police said on Monday. The incident took place in the village of

According to the police, around 150 people had gathered at the place of one Shital Ahirwar (60) in the village for a party on February 9.

Some of them procured liquor of brand "Dilse" from a liquor contractor hailing from Uttar Pradesh.

Many of them who consumed the liquor were taken ill, according to the police.

While Ahirwar's son died on Friday, he succumbed on Saturday. Two more people, Tulsidas Brar and Laluram Ahirwar, died on Sunday

night. "Viscera of the four deceased were sent for tests", Chhatarpur district superintendent of police Sachin Sharma said. A team of district officials and police officers rushed to the village to ensure proper medical treat-

ment of the affected people.

The incident comes in the wake of the death of 24 people caused by spurious liquor in Morena district in Chambal division in the state last

Covid cases jump in Maha



A Royal Bengal Tiger jumps from a pond inside an enclosure at the Byculla Zoo in Mumbai on Monday. The zoo reopened on Monday after 11 months of closure due to the coronavirus pandemic. The "3T formula" of tracing, testing and treatment will have to be implemented strictly to tackle a rise in Covid-19 cases in some parts of Maharashtra, state health minister Rajesh Tope said in Aurangabad on Monday.

BJP, Oppn clash over climate activist's arrest

Vij calls for 'extermination of seeds of anti-nationalism'

Chandigarh, Feb 15: The action taken by the Delhi Police on an FIR related to a toolkit shared by climate campaigner Thunberg in support of the ongoing farmer protests has triggered a war of words between the Opposition and the ruling

Accusing the government of "murdering democracy" by using force against a 21-year-old, the Opposition on Monday said the voice of India cannot be silenced even as the BJP defended the action, saying a crime is a crime no matter at what

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi led the Opposition offensive following the arrest of 21-year-old Disha Ravi in the case and said the country will not be

"Your lips are free to speak. Say that the truth is still alive. They are scared, not the country," he said in a tweet in Hindi.

"India will not be silenced," he added. silenced," he added. Many questions...But only Delhi Chief Minister one answer...21 year old."

Arvind Kejriwal said, "Arrest of 21 year old Disha Ravi is an unprecedented attack Democracy. Supporting our farmers is not a

RJD leader Manoj Jha said democracy is under "I am worried about democracy, as it is passing through the most difficult times," he said.
Union minister and

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Gajendra Singh Shekhawat tweeted: "If age is the criteria then Param Chakra Second Khetarpal, martyred at 21 is who I am proud of. Not some toolkit propagan-

BJP general secretary B L Santosh tweeted, "21 old...environment year activist...student...Are credentials for becoming a part of breaking India forces? How does she get the access for editing tool kit...? Why she is anti-national WhatsApp

"Bengaluru, Greta Thunberg, Vegan, sole bread winner, student, 21 passionate activist...so attempts to white wash a sin...!! Not one anarchist ready to answer the ques-tion...How 21 year old stu-

Toolkit," he asked. Meanwhile, in a comment on the arrest of climate activist Disha Ravi, Haryana Home minister Anil Vij on Monday urged "extermination from the roots" wherever seeds of anti-nationalism found.

dent got access to edit

The minister's remarks came two days after Disha Ravi was held by the Delhi Police for allegedly sharing with climate activist Greta Thunberg the toolkit related to the farmers' protest against Centre's farm laws.

The Delhi Police had claimed that the 21-yearold activist was an editor of the "toolkit Google doc" and "key conspirator" in the document's formulagroups...? tion and dissemination.

In the document, various

creating a Twitter storm and protesting outside Indian embassies, were listed to support the

"Whoever harbours the seeds of anti-nationalism in their mind, that has to be destroyed from the roots (samool naash), be it #Disha_Ravi or anyone else, Vij said in a one line tweet in Hindi. Later, the minister post-

ed a response from the Twitter after a complaint was filed regarding his tweet. The response from Twitter read, We have received a complaint regarding your account, @anilvijminister for the following content (Vij's particular tweet In Hindi (*Desh virodh ka beej* Whoever harbours the

We have investigated the reported content and have found that it is not subject to removal under the Twitter Rules or German law. Accordingly, we have result of this specific report, the response said. - *PTI*

11,649 cases, 90 deaths in 24 hrs Office timings staggered

All Central staff told to join work; cases rising in Maha

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 15

Amid a significant decline in the number of active country, particularly in Delhi, the Central govern-ment has asked all its employees to start attending office as they did before

the lockdown.

There will be no exemption for any category of employees, except for those living in containment zones. Such staff and officers will work from home and come to office only after their containment zone is denotified.

Offices will now follow staggered timings to avoid any overcrowding in workplaces and meetings will largely be held via video conferencing. Biometric attendance systems will for the time being remain suspended. All department canteens too will be

tion for any category of employees, except for those living in containment zones. Such staff and officers will work from home and come to office only after their containment

opened, with safety proto-cols in place, to avoid any crowding.
So far officers of the level

zone is denotified.

of undersecretary and above were attending office due to the restrictions imposed since March last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Centre had in May asked 50 per cent of its employees below the level of deputy secretary to work from their offices through staggered timings. The country on Monday registered 11,649 fresh Covid-19 cases and 90 deaths. While new cases in most states are on the Maharashtra has once again started reporting a high number of cases.

The state, that was once the pandemic's epicentre, on Monday reported 4,092 fresh cases after nearly six weeks. With the cases going up, health experts have sounded the alarm, saying this may lead to a "third wave" in the state, particularly in Mumbai. Some believe the resumption of local trains, and not adhering to Covid-19 protocols, could be the main reason for this rise. If the cases are not controlled soon, the state government may be compelled to reimpose somė restrictions. Gujarat has announced that it will extend its midnight to 6 am curfew in four cities -Ahmedabad,

Vadodara and Rajkot — till February 28. India has till now vaccinated a total of 85.16 lakh persons.

'Amit Shah said BJP has to come to power in Nepal, Sri Lanka⁵

Agartala, Feb. 15: Chief Minister of Tripura Biplab Kumar Deb has said that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has plans to expand their party in the neighbouring countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The Tripura while addressing the party workers in Agartala recalled a meeting with the Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who was then BJP national president, during his visit to the state and said, "When the home minister was our party chief, while discussion we said that BJP had come to power in several states.'

"In response, the minister (then BJP chief) said that Nepal and Sri Lanka are still left. He said that we have to expand the party to Sri Ĺanka and Nepal. We have to win there too," Deb added.

Biplab Kumar Deb was addressing the workers at an event in the state capital of Tripura. - Agencies

to ready for 4 state polls the initiative which DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, FEB. 15

Nadda meet next Sunday

In what appears to be yet another attempt by her to outclass the BJP with sops for the voters in pollbound West Bengal, chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday launched a scheme 'Maa Kitchen' offering daily meal at ₹5 to the poor.

The menu includes rice, daal, vegetables and egg (one piece) curry in a plate available on a first come first served basis from 1 pm to 3 pm.

Kickstarting the project from Nabanna, Ms Banerjee informed that her government would bear a subsidy of ₹15 per plate in Nadu.

would be run by self-help groups and would expand across the state.

Two outlets have been started in South Kolkata.

"It is a unique idea which was announced in the state budget. I will go to taste the food one day. This programme is aimed for the common people. It will create a business setup," Ms Banerjee said about the concept which is the brainchild of election strategist of the ruling Trinamul Congress: Prashant Kishor. The move resembles to 'Amma Kitchens' launched by late AIADMK leader J

'RSS marking houses of donors for Ram Temple'

Bengaluru, Feb. 15: Former Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy on Monday accused the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh of marking houses of those who gave donations for Ram Temple in was similar to what the Nazis did in Germany.
The RSS dismissed the

allegations, saying they do not qualify for any response. In a series of tweets, the Janata Dal-Secular leader claimed

that the RSS was born in India around the time Nazi Party was founded in Germany. 'It appears that those collecting donations for the construction of Ram Mandir have been separately Ayodhya and alleged it marking the houses of those who paid money and those who did not. 'This is similar to what

Nazis did in Germany during the regime of Hitler when lakhs of people lost their lives, Kumaraswamy tweeted.

3 forest guards attacked by timber mafia in MP

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, FEB 15

Three forest guards were

brutally attacked by timber mafia in a wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh, officials said on Monday. The incident occurred inside Panna National

Park on Saturday.
According to local subofficer Dinesh divisional (SDO)(forest) Singh Gaur, the three forshigh Gaut, the three for-est guards, Chatrapal Lodhi, Swamideen Kushwaha and Govind Singh Yaday, spotted a gang of timber smugglers cutting trees in

cutting trees in Vishramgang range under Panna National Park.

They challenged the goons who were armed with axes and other sharp weapons. who unarmed confronted them, leading to attack on them by the timber mafia

Chatrapal, however, somehow managed to escape from their clutches and saved himself by hiding in a nearby bush.

goons.

His two other colleagues were brutally attacked with axes by the goons, causing grievous injuries to them. He later alerted his higher authorities about the incident. Later, the injured guards

were rushed to the nearby government hospital.

The condition of two injured officers is stated to be critical.

Three suspects were picked up from the nearby village for interrogation in connection with the incident, the forest officer

This was the second attack on forest guards by the goons in the last 10 days On February 5, a forest

guard, identified as Madanlal Verma (52), was shot dead by the poachers in Ratanpura forest range under Punjapur reserve forest in Dewas district.

He had filmed his own murder on his cell phone camera while challenging

Security up along other parts of Indo-China border

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB 15

Even as Indian and Chinese forces have started the disengagement process in the Ladakh sector. Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), which is the Indo-China border guarding force, is clearly not taking any chances.

It has further increased its deployment along other parts of Indo-China border like North-East, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh to ensure that the Chinese Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) "does not open a new front and confrontation zone" in these areas. Home Ministry sources said that the ITBP has

taken timely action by enhancing deployment along the Indo-China border so that the Chinese security personnel do not try any transgression exercise in other sectors.

"We had some information that in an attempt to deflect attention from the ongoing disengagement in Ladakh, Chinese PLA could create problem in some other areas along the border. So we have deployed addi-tional ITBP troops in Arunachal Sikkim, higher and remote areas Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. Our

security forces are alert and we will not let PLA create any further mis-

Ministry remarked. Both Indian and Chinese

security forces agreed on a withdrawal formula in the Ladakh region following prolonged negotiation lasting several months. But Indian security forces remain on "very high alert" all along Indo-China border.
Sources said that all sec-

tor commanders of the ITBP are taking daily advance and remote check posts on Chinese activity in their respective zones These daily reports are then compiled and detailed analysis is being sent to the Home



EAM: ASSAM IS SPRINGBOARD OF ACT EAST POLICY

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, FEB. 15

Affairs (EAM) S Minister Jaishankar here on Monday said that Assam is the springboard of India's Act East Policy which aims at to create connectivity that will make the state more energetic, contributing and employed.

Asserting that all-round development of Assam is central to the success of the policy, the minister told reporters that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is deeply committed to the devel opment of Assam, and Japan International Cooperation Cooperation Agency (JICA)-aided projects in the state are examples of how international partnerships can contribute to the development of states. The minister, accompanied Japanese Ambassador Satoshi Suzuki, was here to review JICA-

assisted projects.

Mother Chuttku Devi and other family members of Mithilesh Kumar, who has been missing after flash floods in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, at her village Chokad, in Ramgarh district of Jharkhand on Monday.

U'KHAND | TRAGEDY | Toll stands at 54 while officials say 150 people are still missing Atmosphere in Tapovan village grim as kin lose hope

ies are being continually pulled out of the muckfilled power project tunnel here, the atmosphere outside is getting grimmer with families of the missing people losing hope of seeing them alive. Every

time a body is brought out of the adit tunnel, families waiting outside for over a week, take some time to pluck up the courage to see if the mortal remains are of a loved one or not. And the temporary relief of not finding a family member among the dead is

gripped by despair when

battling through tonnes of sludge choking the tunnel and are reminded that eight days have elapsed since the calamity happened. Nine bodies have so far been recovered from the tunnel at Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel project site taking the toll in the tragedy to 54, while officials say 150 people are still missing.

Out of the three bodies recovered from the tunnel on Monday one is of Satypal Singh Bartwal from Masoli village in Pokhri area of Chamoli district. "We hoped brief as they are soon

Satyapal would return alive. But now we will have to return home with my brother's body. It's unbearable," said his elder brother in a choked voice.

Over a dozen relatives of Bartwal including his brother, who had been camping at Tapovan village since the day the tragedy struck, broke down inconsolably after

identifying the body.
The crowd of disheartened relatives at the tunnel site has begun to disperse. Those who remain are found hanging around the mortuary where the bodies are being brought

Relatives of Jitendra, a resident of Jammu brought out dead from the tunnel on Sunday are also packing up to leave

"Seven of us had come from Jammu after we heard of the glacial disas-ter in Chamoli on February 7 and my brother's phone was switched off. We had been scouring different areas of Tapovan and Joshimath for four days in search of Jitendra until his body was brought out of the tunnel on Sunday. It's tragic, Jitendra's younger brother Pavan said.



SHORT TAKES

RUSSIAN CARGO SHIP LAUNCHED TO ISS

Moscow, Feb. 15: An unmanned Russian cargo ship launched successfully Monday with a load of supplies for the International Space Station.

The Progress MS-16 cargo ship blasted off as scheduled at 09:45 am (0445GMT) from the Russia-leased Baikonur launch facility in Kazakhstan and reached a designated orbit en route to the station.

It is carrying water, propellant and other supplies and is set to dock at the space outpost Wednesday.

The space outpost is operated by NASA's Kate Rubins, Michael Hopkins, Victor Glover and Shannon Walker, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Soichi Noguchi and Russian Space Agency Roscosmos' Sergey Ryzhikov and Sergey Kud-Sverchkov.

NICKI MINAJ'S FATHER KILLED IN HIT-AND-RUN

New York, Feb. 15: The father of rapper Nicki Minaj has died after being struck by a hit-and-run driver near New York City, police said Sunday.

Robert Maraj, 64, was walking on a road in Mineola, Long Island at 6:15 pm (2315 GMT) on Friday when he was hit, Nassau County Police Department said in a statement.

The driver left the scene of the accident, and Maraj was taken to hospital, where he was pronounced dead on Saturday. "The investigation is ongoing," police added.
The statement did not speci-

fy Maraj's relationship to Minaj, but a police spokesman confirmed he was her father. Minaj, 38, was born in Trinidad and Tobago and raised in the Queens borough of New York City.

The rapper has been nominated for 10 Grammy awards

SUSPECT HELD **IN NYC SUBWAY** STABBINGS

New York, Feb. 15: A 21-yearold Brooklyn man was arrested in the fatal stabbings of two people on New York Čity sub-

way trains, police said Sunday. Rigoberto Lopez was taken into custody Saturday night and was formally arrested Sunday on charges of murder and attempted murder, police said. One of the victims was discovered dead on a train in Queens late Friday with severai stab wounds to his neck and torso, police said. Two hours later, a 44-year-old woman was found stabbed to death in a subway car in upper Manhat-tan. Two nonfatal attacks one involving a 67-year-old man and the other involving a 43-year-old man — also occurred in upper Manhattan.

Authorities believe all four victims were homeless. Police said they believe Lopez may have committed all of the attacks. It wasn't clear if he had an attorney who could speak for him. Police leaders said they would deploy an additional 500 officers into the subway system to guard against future assaults.

LANDSLIDE IN INDONESIA: 10 DIE, 9 MISSING

Nganjuk (Indonesia), Feb. 15: Torrential rains triggered landslide on Indonesia's main island of Java that killed at least 10 people, with rescuers digging desperately with their bare hands and farm tools on Monday to locate nine missing people.

Dozens of soldiers, police and volunteers took part in the search in the village of Selopuro in East Java's Nganjuk district, National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesperson Raditya Jati said.

The mud that rolled down from surrounding hills late Sunday struck at least eight houses, injuring 14 people and leaving 21 people buried under tons of mud. Two were res-

cued on Sunday. Rescuers on Monday found bodies buried under as much as 6 metres (10 feet) of mud and were searching for the nine people still missing, Nganjuk district chief Novi Rahman Hidayat said. Heavy equipment arrived later to

help in the search. Overnight rains caused rivers to burst their banks in other districts of the province on Monday, sending nearly 1 metre (about 3 feet) of muddy water into some residential areas and forcing hundreds of people to flee from their submerged homes, Jati said.

Myanmar rattled by army movements, Net shutdown

People around the country flout orders to protest military's seizure of power

gs of armored personnel carriers in Myanmar's biggest city and an internet shutdown raised political tensions late Sunday, after vast numbers of people around the country flouted orders against demon-strations to protest the mi-litary's seizure of power. Public concern has alrea-

dy been heightened for the past few nights by what many charge is the military's manipulation of criminals released from prison to carry out nighttime violence and stir up panic. Ambassadors from the United States and Canada and 12 European nations called on Myanmar's security forces to refrain from violence against those protesting the overthrow of their legitimate government. They condemned the arrests of political leaders and activists as well as the military's interference with communications.

"We support the people of Myanmar in their quest for democracy, freedom, peace, and prosperity, they said in a joint statement issued late Sunday night. The world is watching.

The military seized power on Feb. 1, detaining the country's elected leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and members of her government and preventing recently elected lawmakers from opening a new session of Parliament.

The junta, led by Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, said it was forced to step in because the government failed to properly investigate allegations of fraud in last year's election, which Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won in a landslide. The state election commission

POWER CUT AS

BLANKET TEXAS

Dallas, Feb. 15: A win-

ter storm dropping snow and ice also sent temper-

atures plunging across

the southern Plains,

prompting a power emergency in Texas a

day after conditions can-celled flights and

impacted traffic across

Rotating power out-

ages were initiated by

the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, or

ERCOT, early Monday

morning, meaning thou-

sands went without elec-

tricity for short periods as temperatures fell into

the teens near Dallas

and 20s (about minus 5

degrees Celsius) around

"We urge Texans to put safety first," the council

tweeted as it urged resi-

dents to reduce electrici-

ERCOT manages the

flow of electric power in the state. "Traffic lights

and other infrastructure

may be temporarily wit-

hout power," ERCOT said. Officials in Hous-

ton had warned people

to prepare for outages

and hazardous roads —

conditions similar to

what residents might see

in the wake of a Cate-

gory 5 hurricane. Nearly 120 crashes, including a 10-car pileup

on I-45, were reported

Sunday, Houston Fire

tweeted.

Samuel Peña

Houston.

large swaths of the US.

SNOW, ICE



Protesters raise their hands with clenched fists during an anti-coup rally in front of the Myanmar Economic Bank in Mandalay, Myanmar on Monday.

found no evidence to support the allegations.

There was no official word about why armored personnel carriers traversed the streets of Yangon in broad daylight Sunday, making their way through busy traffic. As night fell, there were videos and other reports on social media of the movement of trucks packed with soldiers, and in the central city of

Mandalay as well.

An order that appears to be from the Ministry of Transport and Communications told mobile phone service providers to shut down internet connections from 1 a.m. to 9 a.m. Monday. -AP

London, Feb. 15: The UK's tougher new travel rules to contain the spread of Covid-19 vari-

ants came into effect from

Monday, involving compulsory hotel quarantines for anyone returning to

England from one of the

33 high-risk "red list"

countries. Those arriving

will have to pre-book and

pay £1,750 to spend 10 days

quarantining in governm-

ent-sanctioned hotels, cov-

ering the cost of the hotel,

transport and two sepa-

Extremely serious brea-

ches of the new norms

could result in a 10-year

jail term and fines of up to

£10,000. Those who have

not visited a "red list" country, such as India,

must still quarantine for

10 days at home and com-

plete two mandatory Cov-

id-19 tests on the second

and eighth day after arriv-

ing. "With the emergence

of new variants, we must

go further. The rules com-

ing into force today will

bolster the quarantine sy-

stem and provide another layer of security against

new variants at the border," said UK Health

Secretary Matt Hancock.

"These new measures

are important to protect

our vaccination program-

me, which has now seen 15

million people vaccinated,

we all work towards restoring normal life," he

rate tests post-arrival.

Suu Kyi detention extended

Yangon, Feb. 15: Myanmar's military leaders have extended their detention of deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi, whose remand was set to expire Monday and whose freed-om is a key demand of the crowds of people continuing to protest this month's

military coup.
Suu Kyi will now be remanded until February 17, when she will likely appear in court by videoconference, according to Khin Maung Zaw, a lawyer asked by Suu Kyi's party

British citizen pieaded gu

ilty on Monday to violat-

ing a coronavirus quaran-

tine order in Singapore by

visiting his fiancée sever-

al times in another hotel room. They are to appear

in court for sentencing on

February 26, and face a

possible sentence of up to

six years in jail and a fine of 10,000 Singapore dol-lars (\$7,500) on each charge. Skea Nigel left his

room at The Ritz-Carlton,

Millenia Singapore hotel on three occasions in

September, according to

the charge sheets. He was

Nigel climbed an emer-

gency stairwell and enter-

ed a room that his Singa-

who has been in a high-

risk destination on the

UK's red list — compris-

ing 33 hotspots with Covid-19 variants in circu-

lation — will have to enter

England through a desig-

nated port and have pre-

booked a quarantine package to stay at one of the government's "Managed

Non-residents are curre-

ntly not part of the essen-

Quarantine Facilities".

fiancée

not wearing a mask.

porean

quarantine order

Singapore, Feb. 15: A booked. The two spent

The Nobel laureate remains under house arrest on a minor charge of possessing unregistered imported walkie-talkies.

Suu Kyi's extended detention is likely to further inflame tensions between the military, which seized power during a Feb. 1 coup, and the protesters who have taken to the streets of cities across the Southeast Asian nation seeking the return of the government they elected. Protesters continued to

gather across Myanmar on Monday following a

nine nours togetner. Mosi

travellers have to stay in

an assigned hotel room or

at home for 14 days after

arriving in Singapore

under Coronavirus quar-

antine rules. They receive

meals and regularly rec-

Nigel arrived at the

State Courts on Monday

with Agatha Maghesh

Eyamalai, whom he has

since married. The Briton

said he was guilty of two

charges for flouting the rules. Four other charges

against him were tem-

porarily withdrawn. The

prosecution asked that

Nigel be jailed for four

weeks and fined 1,000 Singapore dollars (\$750).

the Coronavirus lockdo-

wn. The government said

it has tough measures

already in place requiring

all travellers into the UK

from any location, to pro-

vide proof of a negative Covid-19 test taken no

more than three days

before departure and non-

UK residents from the 33

red list countries are

banned from

already banned entering Britain.

ord their temperatures.

night in which authorities cut the country's internet access and increased the cities seeking to curtail demonstrations.
Thousands of engineers

marched on the streets of Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, chanting and holding signs that read: Free our leader, Who stands with justice? and Stop arresting people illegally at midnight.

In Yangon, the country's most populous city, fewer protesters gathered on

Israeli hit kills 9 fighters in Syria

fired several missiles early on Monday target-ing areas near the Syrian capital, Damascus, Syria's state news agency reported. An opposition warmonitoring group said the strikes killed nine Iran-backed fighters.
The SANA news agency

claimed that Syrian air defences shot down most of the missiles, which it said were fired from Syr-ia's Israeli-occupied Gol-an Heights. The Britainbased Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor with a network of activists on the ground, said the strikes hit positions of the Syrian army's Fourth ns near the highway that over the years.

Lebanese capital of Beirut. It said another strike hit Syrian army positions in Kisweh, just south of Damascus.

The Observatory said that of the nine Iran-backed fighters killed, seven were near the Damascus-Beirut highway and two in Kisweh. Weapons depots were also struck in both areas, it added.

Syria's foreign ministry filed a complaint with the UN Security Council and called on the international community to condemn Israel and prevent it from carrying out such attacks in the future. Israel has launched hundreds of strikes against Iran-linked Division in the mountai- military targets in Syria

Meghan again in the family way

London, Feb. 15: Brita- kle's disclosure in The in's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle are expecting their second child, their spokesman said in a Valentine's Day announcement on Sunday. The couple released a black and white image of them under a tree, all smiles, with Markle, 39, sho-

wing signs of pregnancy. "We can confirm that Archie is going to be a big brother," the spokesman said, referring to the cou-ple's son. "The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are overjoyed to be expecting their second child." Meghan and Harry, 36, who is Queen Elizabeth II's grandson, quit frontline royal duties in March last year and now live in Californ-

New York Times in November that she had suffered a miscarriage in July.

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said: "Her Majesty, Duke of Edinburight, Prince of Wales and the entire family are delighted and wish them well." Misan Harriman, a friend of the couple who took the photograph they released, wrote on Twitter: "Meg, I was there at your wedding to witness this love story begin, and my friend, I am honoured to capture it grow." The couple's departure last year — dubbed "Megxit" by the British press — was a far cry from 2018, when they married in a cerem ony at Windsor Castle wat ia. The news follows Mar- ched around the world

Virus: Tougher travel rules come into force in Britain Briton breaks S'pore

Shah Mahmood Qureshi

CLASH IN S. ASIA COULD THREATEN

Islamabad/Karachi **Feb. 15:** Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on Monday that any military conflict in South Asia could endanger stability in a region that is critical for global trade flows and security.

Addressing the 9th International Maritime Conference (IMC 21) in Karachi, Qureshi also said that the Indian Ocean offers promising potential for mutual cooperation and collaboration.

"The international community needs to be cognizant of the fact that any military conflict in South Asia could endanger stability in a region that is critical for global trade flows and security," he said.

gle and Facebook were close to striking "significant commercial deals" to pay Australian media for news ahead of Australia creating world-first laws that would force the digital giants to finance journalism, a minister said Monday. Parliament is scheduled to consider the draft laws on Tuesday after a Senate committee last werecommended no changes to the proposed regulations that Google and Facebook have condemned as unworkable.

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, one of ministers responsible for the legislatiat the weekend with Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Sundar Pichai, chief executive of Alphabet Inc. and its subsidiary Google. Frydenberg had also spoken with Australian news media executives. "We've made real progress, I think, in the last 48 to 72 hours and l think we're going to see some significant commercial deals which could be of real benefit to the domestic media landscape and see journalists rewarded for generating original content, as it should be, and this is a world-leading reform," Frydenberg said.

GREATER CHENNAI CORPORATION Storm Water Drain Department

Oz: Google near

media pay deals

Short E-Tenders are invited for the following work

as per details turnisned below:				
Name of the Work	Approx. Value of work including 12% GST	EMD Rs	Eligible Class	
nstruction of compound wall, hway at Jayachandran Nagar am in Dn-191, Zone - 14		1% of the work value	Class-I	

1. Tender last date and time of submission: 22.02.2021 unto 3.00 pm. Bid document will be available in website https://tntenders.gov.in Tender open date and time: 23.02.2021 at 3.30 pm. DIPR/1089/Tender/2021 Superintending Engineer /SWDD

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE **DISTRICT HEALTH SOCIETY TENKASI DISTRICT NOTIFICATION**

Ref: 1. G.O.(Ms)No.513, H&FW (EAP-II) Dept, Dated : 03.12.2020 2. G.O.(Ms)No.515, H&FW (EAP-II) Dept, Dated : 03.12.2020

3. W.P.(MD)No.19565 of 2020 and W.M.P(MD)Nos.16296 & 16297 of 2020 Before the Madurai Bench of Madras High Court Order Dated : 22.01.2021 4, W.P.(MD)No.1935 of 2021 and W.M.P(MD)Nos.1650 & 1651 of 2021 Dated:04.02.2021

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU

5. RC No.7852/NHM/P14/2020 Dated.11.02.2021 of the Mission Director of National Health Mission

In Tenkasi District 1 Dental Surgeon post are sanctioned in Taluk government Hospital. Hence

application for the post of **Dental Surgeon** temporarily on contract basis are being welcomed on or before 23.02.2021 5.00 PM.

SI. Name of the Post 1.BDS Degree from Government or Government approved Private Dental Colleges which are recognized by Dental Council of India. Surgeon 2. Should have been registered with the Tamil Nadu Dental Council.

Conditions:-

1. The above mentioned posts are temporary only.

2. Regularisation won't be done at any point of time and they will not be permanently absorbed. 3. The candidate should submit their undertaking to this effect before joining the duty.

Applications to be sent to:

The Deputy Director Health Services.

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

1. Application can be sent via Speed Post / Email or in person to above mentioned address only. 2. Application forms are available for issuing in office of the Deputy Director of Health Services, Tenkasi and

all Block Primary Health Centres. 3. E-mail ID: dphskk@nic.in 4. The above mentioned number of posts is liable to change

The Deputy Director Health Services District Health Society, Tenkasi @ Sankarankovil DIPR/ 296 /DISPLAY/2021

The District Collector

The Chairman, District Health Society

Tenkasi District.

said. Starting Monday, any UK or Irish resident tial-only travel rules of **UK'S CHIEF MOUSER CELEBRATES 10 YEARS ON THE PROWL**

London, Feb. 15: Larry the cat, a four-legged inhabitant of London's 10 Downing St., is marking a Britain's mouse-catcher in chief on Monday. The tabby cat was recruited by then-Prime Minister David Cameron to deal with a pack of rats seen scuttling close to the British leader's official residence, and entered Downing Street on Feb. 15, 2011. The former stray, adopted from London's Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, was given the title Chief Mouser to the Cabinet Office, an unofficial pest

He was the first cat to hold the rat-catching port- chance — one minute

folio since the retirement of Humphrey in 1997, and has loyally served three prime ministers. But it seems like yesterday that Larry was just another cat — as opposed to a media superstar — said Lindsey Quinlan, the head of cattery of Battersea.

"Throughout his time at Number 10, Larry has proven himself to not only be a brilliant ambassador for Battersea but also demonstrated to millions of people around the world how incredible rescue cats are," she said. "His rags to riches tale is yet more proof of why all animals deserve a second

they may be an overlooked stray on the streets, the next they could become one of the nation's beloved political figures, with fans around the world. Larry, who has met a

number of world leaders, has been largely unfriendly to men but took a liking to former US President Barack Obama. When former President Donald Trtook a nap under his car. His grip on the public imagination is clear — and political leaders know better than to ignore that was a sentimental topic of $\underline{conversation}$

Cameron's final appear-

ance in Parliament as prime minister when he said he wanted to quash a rumour that — perish the thought — he didn't like Larry. And just to prove it, he whipped out evidence: A picture of Larry lying on his lap.

"He belongs to the house and the staff love him very much — as do I," he said at the time, explaining why he wasn't taking Larry with him after leaving office. After the December 2019 election. rumours swirled that Larry might be headed for retirement with the news that the new prime minister, Boris Johnson, was a



Chronicle

16 FEBRUARY 2021

21-year activist's arrest is a blot on India's democracy

hile it's in the fitness of things to expect the judicial system to speak up to protect a citizen against the State's over-reach and high-hand-edness, it is no surprise that civil society across the country should be furious over the arrest of the 21-year-old Bengaluru climate activist Disha Ravi by the Delhi police over the weekend.

In a Kafkaesque act, a Delhi police team swooped on Ms Ravi at her home in the southern metropolis, whisked her to Delhi without even informing her parents, and produced her before a magistrate without the benefit of counsel, a legal requirement. The activist was charged with being part of a conspiracy with "Khalistan" proponents and is being held for sedition and causing disaf-

Ms Ravi appears to be a supporter of the ongoing farmers' agitation in the country. In support of this and to oppose the high-handed police action over it, global celebrities, including teenaged Swedish environment activist Greta Thunberg, sent out tweets, unleashing a ferocious campaign, much to the discomfort of the government. FIRs were filed against Ms Thumberg and others for sedition. In the government's eyes, she is guilty of spreading the idea of a "toolkit" to back the farmers' agitation.

In order to understand the maliciousness, indeed the enormity, of what the Indian State has done by arresting Ms Ravi (and two others), making itself a laughingstock among democracies, it is important to be aware that this so-called "toolkit" is not a handbook of terrorism.

In fact it's no more than guidelines on ways to propagate the farmers' cause through the social media, and is a common expression among activists of all kinds. Indeed, it's no more than what the Hindutva brigade, including the ruling party, have been doing. The difference is that the causes of the climate activists and the Hindutva group are vastly different, with the latter identifying with vile ones like the so-called "love jihad", false propaganda of cow killing against Muslims and dalits, spreading fabrications against their political opponents, and disseminating hate against all voices that call for social

Ms Ravi's "crime" is that she edited two lines of Ms Thunberg's "toolkit". It is for this that the Delhi police is calling her an "editor" of the "toolkit". Since an outfit called the Poetic Justice Foundation, which apparently supports the idea of "Khalistan", a woolly-headed thought in the minds of some persons of Indian origin in the West, also backs the farmers' cause, all supporters of Indian farmers are being mischievously sought to be equated with "Khalistan" supporters. The practice of such sleight-of-hand by the government is clearly meant to discredit the farmers' agitation. This is a sign of the government running out of ideas about how to contain it. It is not inconceivable that the ground is also being prepared to play the State violence card against the farmers and their leaders, and Ms Thunberg or Ms Ravi, and others like them, are just collateral damage.

But taking unlawful actions against a young woman barely out of her teens can backfire. To many ordinary people, it seems that the Delhi police, which directly operates under the Union home ministry, is degenerating into becoming the praetorian guard of the government in power.

Trump escapes conviction

ormer US President Donald Trump may have escaped conviction by the Senate, but history will judge him culpable for the attack on democracy. Only seven Republican Senators voted to convict, like 10 Congressmen had done in the House of Representatives vote to impeach him for the second time. The action of 43 other Republican senators to vote against his conviction wasn't due just to partisanship. Self-preservation was their primary motive, petrified as they were by the prospect of a backlash by the Trump loyalists of a party that has been hijacked by the far right and swears blind loyalty to a President who sub-

verted hoary democratic norms that embroiders American history.

The impeachment managers had built a compelling narrative in the House and laid before the Senate a body of irrefutable video evidence of the armed insurrection on January 6 that Mr Trump may have helped unleash through his bizarre hold on a highly motivated section of conservatives. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell chastised Mr Trump in a telling comment after the vote but hid behind a fig leaf of technicality in the presumed illegality of putting on trial an ex-President. The law may still get Mr Trump for his big lies on the election result, his overt canvassing of officials to overturn the popular verdict and his open embrace of retaliatory violence in egging on supporters.

Evidence has it that Mr Trump did little to act as legislators in the joint session of Congress at Capitol Hill and his own vice-president, Mike Pence, were scared for their lives. It is a comment on the popular vote in today's America that Mr Trump drew 76 million votes, the most after Joe Biden. Truth may have caught up with Mr Trump already. It is also reflected in the world's highest death toll as the President abdicated his responsibility in dealing with the coronavirus as he stood for re-election. What we have to fear is the Trump legacy of alternative facts, conspiracy theories and brazen thuggery. Democracy may have to face many more battles for survival against Trumpism.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Vijayawada: No. C 3 & 4. Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.). Phones: (0866) 2555284/ 2555287, Fax (0866) 2555234

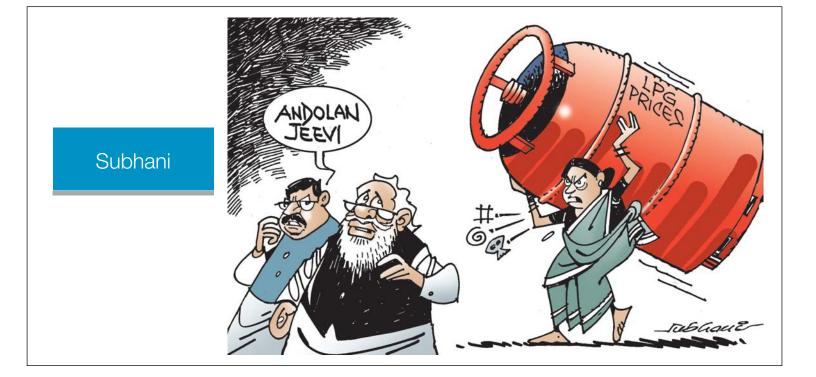
Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd. Rajahmundry 533125, Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618 Anantapur: Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur: 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904

Fax: 08554-276904
Nellore: Survey No. 527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/82, Telefax (0861) 2348580
Karimnagar: Survey No. 1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar 505 001.
Phone: (0878) 2228908; Telefax (0878) 2220433

Kochi: No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408

г и. 0464-4039408 **Kozhikode:** No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001 Fax : 0495 4019018

Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph Press Thycaud post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/6/7, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006 Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08ss



How PM can win hearts, keep bills, end protests



Sriram Karri

nium, sees no third

There are several

hostages to the etched in

stone binary: the first is truth. The second is

India's farmers' future.

The third is the start of a

resolution and solution,

which can never be ours unless we set aside the mistaken notion that in

the pitched battle on Delhi's borders, only one

of the two — protesting farmers or the Narendra

Modi government — can

win. One must step down, after defeat, to

ensure the other side

But there is another

possibility — the farmers can ensure Mr Modi wins, and the PM can

strive to make the protesting farmers tri-

umph — without either

side having to make a

position of common

belief, since we lost sight

of it: there is an accumu-

lating agrarian crisis in

landholdings,

unabatingly steep agfla-

tion (inflation of agri

inputs like the price of

seeds, fertilisers, urea,

pesticides), transmis-

sion losses and unviable

costs of financing (most

farmers don't get bank

loans, private money

rates are backbreaking),

self-defeating subsidies (loan waivers not applic-

able to most small farm-

ers and landless tenant

farmers), the impact of

climate change in a largely rain-fed agri-sec-

tor, and unviable farm-

ers (even rich farmers

don't have cash to pay

for health, education).

With the acknowledgment of a common prob-

lem comes an alignment

of purpose — to solve the

problem, reducing farm-

ers' costs, reducing over-

all costs of production

eliminating waste, and

incomes without making

increasing

hv small

an

moral compromise. Let's begin with the

option now.

political stalemate deadlocked in binary is dangerous. It is erroneous, an optical illusion, which often arises out of a bankruptcy of ideas premised in possibilities, leaves both sides strongly entrenched in a zero-sum game. The binary has left its predictable trail of bitterness on both sides of the current battlelines.

Hail George W. Bush, the modern proponent of the equation: You are with us or against us! But this is actually from a more ancient playbook.

It was the general-aristocrat from Athens who would famously terrorise opponents and convert every debate into a seesaw for testing loyalties as he would thunder: Whose side are you one? Cleon, clearly, in 430 BC, was ready for Twitter trolling.

farmers, a monolith, with one voice and demand, or with the government — says the modern commandment no debate or amendment. This law limiting our positions and possibilities for a resolution to a mere binary isn't

going away.
What follows is stereotyped playing the player, not the ball. You are a Khalistani anarchist, anti-Indian, out to destroy India's sovereignty at the behest of a neo-international cabal or a puppet of a fascist Hindutva government, out to pledge the farmers' destiny to a corporate crony club.

Even Arundhati Roy, who famously opposed Mr Bush's binary of having to choose between a "malevolent mullah or a mad Mickey Mouse" in the war against terror early in the new millennation of over 1.3 billion. A benevolent surgical strike on

farmers' hearts Enough commentary has flowed through editorials, columns, feisty television debates and vituperous social media exchanges about the transformed nature of the agitation. Not just Sikhs from Punjab but Jats, predominantly BJP voters and building blocks of Hindutva, are now resolved to stay put on the ground till the

bills are withdrawn. After Republic Day and the tearful breakdown of Rakesh Tikait, the bills have been reduced to a backdrop, an excuse. The protests are no longer primarily about fears around the potential reduction or doing away with minimum support prices (MSPs), or ending of the mandi system, or the visceral paranoia around corporates getting legal backing to do contract farming or store grain — it is now about hurt farmers set against the hubris of

the government. If the farmers were not emotionally hurt, their pride not invested in staying put on the ground, they would have convinced Narendra defence in Parliament of the three bills. Mr Modi has put the cart ahead of the horse in trying to logically convince people who are plain angry and see the government as arrogant. The resolution can only begin by appealing to the hearts of the Jat farmer protest-

not arrogant. In the next many days, on any day and at any hour of his choosing, Mr Modi should just walk into a protest site and spend several hours. Let him make some rotis at

ers with an act to show

that the government is

In the next many days, on any day of his choosing, Mr Modi should just walk into a protest site and spend several hours.

food too expensive for a the langar, let him listen and to the ladies cutting vegetables, sit on the ground with the leaders as they pass the hookah. Ask them if they are comfortable, if they have everything they need for now. Let him break bread with them, the ice

will break on its own. Yes, that's all it might end up taking to end these protests. Just that. Mr Modi is capable of magic with some sections of people and the protesting Jat and Sikh farmers are part of that section. Once they are no longer angry, and his humble arrival at the protest site will convince them that neither he nor his government is actu-

ally arrogant, the stalemate will lead to a thaw.
It is then that Mr Modi can explain that the existing policies have failed the farmer for 50 years and expecting a different result with the same policies would be an Einsteinian measure of insanity. The BJP can talk about how corporate and cooperative procurement of milk have enriched farmers in the dairy sector; and how this policy wishes to replicate the same suc-

cess for grain. Prime Minister Modi in their midst will be a visual story for all farmers, the soothing touch needed, the surgical strike on their hearts. It will calm farmers in all protest sites and those elsewhere simmering with anger with a new belief in his leadership, and that his government cares for farmers everywhere. Before he leaves the protest site, having told the world he was there himself, he can throw in a final gesture of affection by asking for some jalebis and rotis to be packed for his dinner

— the entire gamut of security and Covid-19 precautions set aside and he will leave with their hearts.

A little haggling, a little willingness to give in on an odd thing here or there; and the farmers will be happy to leave, with the optics of victory, their pride intact, and return home, their heads held high.

TTV ALL OUT FOR SASI

Apropos your report Exploring legal options for Sasi to contest polls: TTV (Feb. 15). Sasikala's nephew and AMMK leader TTV Dhinakaran is trying hard through legal forces, to make his aunt contest the upcoming elections. In the field of politics, it is never rare or surprising for any politician, however corrupt he/she may be, to find loopholes in making a re-entry into the arena. Whether Sasikala will be supported or not is secondary but making blind guesses by the fanatic crowd and the reception she received may not be a sure-shot prospect of winning the polls if given a chance. Dravidian politics can never be foretold as the pulse of the people cannot be estimated or underestimated.

Jacquelene Netto,

MIRED MYANMAR

ARMY MADE a blunder in Myanmar by declaring an emergency and arresting all democratically elected leaders including the Nobel laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi (Protests again rock Myanmar, Feb.15). The entire population including stu-dents, railway workers and office going staff are on the streets, in the face of brazen threats of brutal army power. The country was under harsh regime of Gen. Ne Win for close to three decades and the people are fed up. Except for China, all the countries spearheaded by America want Suu Kyi be reinstated or face harshest sanctions. India needs to take a pro-active stand and activate its diplomatic channels to make Gen ne writing on the and in a dignified manner restore democracy as soon as possible. Parthasarathy Mandadi, Tirupati

WITHDRAWAL AT LAC

THE PHASED disengagement of troops of India and China from their earlier posts along the LAC will be welcomed by all those who desire a peaceful settlement of the border dispute (PM a coward, ceded land, alleges Rahul, Feb. 13). When the military commanders assert that India reserves the right to patrol on traditional routes in eastern Ladakh, Rahul Gandhi must take the Prime Minister and the military commanders at their word. On the contrary, he denigrates the Prime Minister as a coward who has ceded territory to China. Rahul must learn from history. He must recall Winston Churchill's insight: "The further backward you look, the further forward you can see". His great grandfather Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had ceded thousands of sq. km of India's territory to China in the 1962 India China

Kangayam R. Narasimhan,

Aakar Patel



Vital areas in kids' health left ignored in Budget 2021

he Union Budget delivered earlier this month was praised for two things. First, that it was spending money in the right place: capital expenditure, which would create value over the long term. And second, that it was transparent. The deficit is three times what it should be, but at least the government has accepted it. Perhaps these two things are enough to make it a good Budget, though one doesn't know. There has not really been any Budget I can remember that made any difference to most people's lives, except perhaps one, and that

However, it is clear the Budget has ignored something that was really urgent. The National Family Health Survey 2019-20, conducted by the government, revealed some terrible

On four key metrics which represent the nutritional status of children, states recorded a significant fall in 2019-20 compared to the levels in 2015-16. In states like Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal, the share of anaemic and wasted (low weight for height) children was significantly higher than the levels recorded 15 years earlier in 2005-06.

This indicated a reversal of progress that had been hard to win. Even in states such as Kerala, which continued to lead in these indicators, the levels recorded in 2019-20 were poorer than the 2015-16 figures

The survey put out data for 22 states and Union territories and an analysis of 10 major states was conducted. Anaemia among children was higher in all the 10 states in 2019-20 compared to 2015-16. In Gujarat, Himachal, Maharashtra and West Bengal, a higher percentage of children were anaemic in 2019-20 than were in 2005-06. The percentage of wasted (low weight for height) children was higher in half of the 10 states. In Assam, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra and West Bengal, a higher percentage of children were wasted in 2019-20 compared to 2005-06. In 7 of the 10 states analysed, a higher percentage of children were underweight (low weight for age) in 2019-20 compared to 2015-16.

Stunting (low height for age) was higher in six out of the 10 states compared to 2015-16. The study also found that the incidence of diarrhoea had increased in half the states, including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat,

Bengal. In Bihar it was up from 10.4 per cent in 2015-16 to 13.7 per cent in 2019-20. This is the reality of the situation. We can debate what has caused this and that can wait for another day. The problem is that the Budget that was presented by Nirmala Sitharaman did not acknowledge and therefore didn't accommodate this problem. The mid-day meal scheme, on which crores of children depended for their one good meal of the day, found its budget cut from ₹13.400 crore in FY 2021 to ₹11,500 crore in 2022. This was lower in nominal terms than what it had been seven years earlier. Inflation adjusted, it was 38 per cent lower. The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), meant to provide pre-school children with food, education, primary healthcare, immunisation, health checkups and referral services to children under six and their mothers, was also lower in nominal terms, at ₹16,888 crore in FY 2022 versus ₹18,691 crore in 2014-15. The programme, running rural anganwadis or creches, is meant to improve the nutritional and health status of children "to lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child", to "reduce the incidence of

mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropouts", and "to enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education"

Inflation adjusted, this figure was 36 per cent lower for 2022 than it had been the year Prime Minister Narendra Modi took over.

Poshan Abhiyan, the flagship programme meant to improve nutritional outcomes by 2022, was also damaged. The government had released only 46 per cent of the annual outlay by October 31, and for 2022 the budget

was cut by 27 per cent. The drinking water and sanitation department saw its budget officially rise from ₹21,000 crore to ₹60,030 crore, but of that ₹50,000 crore was for the "Central road and infrastructure fund", suggesting a fudge to avoid embarrassing questions. The numbers seemed deliberately made hard to compare with previous spends. ICDS was clubbed with Poshan Abhiyan, the Scheme for Adolescent Girls and the National Creche Scheme, and the whole thing was called Saksham. Its budget for 2022 was less than the previous year's

budget for ICDS alone. The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, the Centre's maternity benefit programme, was clubbed with the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme for girls' education, the Mahila Shakti Kendra and other general gender budgeting. and the whole thing was called Samarthya. It received ₹2,522 crore for 2022, less than the ₹2,858 crore allocated in 2021.

The allocation for Ayushman Bharat (dubbed "Modicare" by Amit Shah) was the same for 2022, ₹6,400 crore, as it was for the year before. There was no provision for minimum wage and health insurance for the Anganwadi and Accredited Social Health Activist (Asha) workers, the individuals whom Mr Modi had called "Covid warriors"

The numbers are not going to improve themselves. They will need external intervention from the government, but that has not happened in this Budget. Whether it was wise on an issue that concerns crores of our children we will not know till the government conducts the next sur-

The writer is a columnist and a

INDICATOR	S	%
Sensex	52,154.13	1.18
Nifty 50	15,314.70	1.00
S&P 500*	3,934.83	0.47
Dollar (₹)	72.68	0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.02	-0.69
Euro (₹)	88.19	-0.12
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,826▼19	0.04
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	63.13	1.12
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.022	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.210	0.00
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

Exports rise 6% in Jan; trade deficit narrows

Growing for the second consecutive month, the country's exports rose 6.16 per cent yearon-year to \$27.45 billion in January following healthy growth in pharma and engineering sectors. Commerce ministry data showed trade deficit narrowed to \$14.54 billion from \$15.3 billion a year ago. The deficit was \$15.44 billion in December. Imports in January 2021 rose 2 per cent to

WPI inflation rises to 2.03%, food prices ease



The wholesale price-based inflation rose sharply to 2.03 per cent in January on costlier non-food manufactured items and experts are projecting further uptick in the rate of price rise in the next few months. The WPI inflation was 1.22 per cent in December 2020 and 3.52 per cent in January last 'ear. Food inflation in January stood at (-) 2.8 per cent, against (-) 1.11 per cent in the previous month.

RBI sets up panel on urban coop banks

The Reserve Bank set up a committee to draw a vision document for strengthening urban cooperative banks and exploring the potential of consolidation in the sector. The committee, to be headed by former RBI deputy governor N. S. Vishwanathan, will suggest effective measures for faster rehabilitation and resolution of UCBs and also assess their potential for consolidation in

IT industry to grow by 2.3% in FY21: Nasscom

The Indian IT industry revenues are set to grow by 2.3 per cent to \$194 billion in FY21 and the exports will go up by 1.9 per cent to \$150 billion, industry lobby Nasscom said. The industry remained a net hirer in the fiscal year, with 1.38 lakh new jobs added to take overall employment to 44.7 lakh. "We have emerged more resilient and more relevant from the crisis,"the body's president



■ JLR to spend \$3.5 bn annually on electrification

Jaguar cars to become all-electric from 2025

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, FEB. 15

Tata Motors-owned British luxury car maker Jaguar Land Rover, or JLR, plans to make its coveted Jaguar brand to be an 'all-electric luxury brand' to rival Tesla from 2025.

The move will see Jaguar completely axe the petrol engines that made its name within the next four

JLR will invest about 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.5 billion) annually into electrification and related connected technologies, the company said on Monday.

It plans to introduce six fully electric Land Rover variants in the next five years and aims to electrify all its models by 2030, it

JLR's new chief exectutive officer Thierry Bollore made the announcement on Monday, with the new 'Reimagine' strategy also committing to retaining its production facilities in the UK. Bollore said Land Rover will phase out diesel engines from 2026 and invest more heavily in hydrogen fuel cell technol-

ogy.
JLR said it will have prototypes using hydrogen fuel cells on Britain's roads within the next year, as part of a long-range investment plan.

JLR has introduced plugin hybrid variants of models, including the Range Rover Sport and new Defender, but its only fully electric vehicle is the I-Pace SUV, which it started selling in 2018.



RENAULT KIGER STARTS AT ₹5.45 L

MICHAEL GONSALVES

French car giant Renault has introduced its allnew Kiger, compact SUV at Rs 5.45 lakh at pan-India showroom, disrupting the growing B-SUV segment in Asia's third biggest car market. Renault's first compact

SUV is sold in four trim levels and four enginegearbox combinations in the Rs 5.45 lakh to Rs 9.55 lakh range.

Renault's aggressive pricing means that the new Kiger undercuts all its compact SUV rivals. Apart from its Nissan sibling, the Magnite, the Renault Kiger rivals

Car companies the world over are following zeroemission strategies to meet tough carbon dioxide emission targets in Europe and China.

Jaguar Land Rover is one of the hardest hit by the downturn in demand for Renault Kiger is designed with collaboration of France and India teams. It is developed and produced in India, for Indian customers first, before it is taken

other sub-4m SUVs like the Hyundai Venue, Kia Sonet, Mahindra

XUV300, Tata Nexon,

Ford EcoSport, Maruti

Suzuki Vitara Brezza and Toyota Urban

Cruiser.
"With this outstanding

pricing, Renault Kiger is

surely set to radically

alter the dynamics in the

B-SUV segment," Venkatram Mamilla-palle, country CEO & MD

at Renault India, said.

diesel vehicles in recent Its range of models across both brands relied heavily on diesel engines, which have seen sales tumble in the years since the German Volkswagen emis-

TESLA EYES PLANT NEAR BENGALURU

SARITHA RAI

Tesla Inc is closing in on an agreement to make electric vehicles in India, opening up a new growth front after founder Elon Musk set up plants in the US and China. Tesla has picked Karnataka for its first plant, the state's chief minister said over the weekend. The automaker has been negotiating with local officials for six months and is considering car assembly in suburbs Bengaluru, people famil-

iar with the matter said. Tesla is conducting due diligence for office real estate in the region and plans to set up an R&D facility. Tesla has focused on Bengaluru because it's shaping up to be a hub for electric vehicles and aerospace manufacturing talent, they said. —*Bloomberg*

tled the industry in 2015. Ballore was drafted into JLR last July.

JLR said it was a "on a path towards" a double-digit operating profit and positive cash flow, and aims to achieve positive cash without debt by 2025.

Babus out? Govt mulls new panel to speed privatisation

SIDDHARTHA SINGH

India is considering setting up a body comprising independent experts that will take over the role of privatising state-run companies once the government decides to divest, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

The panel will replace bureaucrats, who currently manage privatisation, as well as minority stake sales, the people said asking not to be identified because the discussions are private. The proposal is at an early stage and a final decision hasn't been taken, they said.

An external panel will help accelerate the asset sale process and bypass red tape, according to the people. India still hasn't manage to find a buyer for debt-ridden Air India Ltd even after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet approved the sale in 2017.

A finance ministry spokesman declined to comment.

The government earlier this month said it will

presence" by running companies in atomic energy, space & defence; transport & telecommunications; power, oil & coal; banking & financial services, according to the Department of Investment Public Management.

India plans to raise 1.75 lakh crore (\$24 billion) selling stakes in state-run firms next fiscal, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said while presenting the budget.

_Bloomberg

Smartphone sales clock record growth in Q4

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 15

The fourth quarter of vear 2020 saw record sales of smartphones in India at 45 million units. However, for the year as a whole, the smartphone market de-grew 1.7 per cent—the first decline after several years of runaway growth. But the online channel continued to grow even during the pandemic-hit year.

According to global market intelligence firm IDC, October-December quarter posted record fourth-quarter phone shipments of 45 million devices, growing 21 per cent over the same quarter in 2019.

A total of 150 million smartphone units were sold in 2020, which was 1.7 per cent less than what was sold in 2019. Stay-at-

work, remote education, travel restrictions and manufacturing downs led to a sluggish H1'20, which saw a 26 per cent decline over the same

period in 2019. However, H2'20 recovered with 19 per cent growth as markets reopened gradually. Lockdowns and restrictions rendered an urgent need for devices supporting activities such as entertainment, work from home, and remote learning, resulting in more devices per household, and leading to a resurgence in demand for consumer devices including smartphones, consumer notebooks, and

tablets in 2020. The online channel outpaced the overall market, growing by 12 per cent annually, with a 48 per cent market share in 2020. The segment clocked a record 51 per cent share in

Further, the market saw 5G smartphone shipments crossing 3 million in 2020, with Chinese OEMs rolling out aggressivelypriced devices. But adoption was limited due to higher prices and the lack of a 5G network.

Xiaomi continued to lead the smartphone market in volume terms with a market share of 27 per cent. But the brand registered a 6 per cent drop in sales . Samsung held 20 per

cent market, but sales declined by 4 per cent. Online channel registered strong 65 per cent growth, while the offline channel shipments declined by 28 per cent.

Vivo in the third slot with 18 per cent market share, recorded growth of 12 per cent. Realme too grew by 19 per cent and held a market share of 13

BYJU'S NEARS \$150 MN BUYOUT OF TOPPR

SARITHA RAI

India's biggest e-learning startup, Byju's, is close to signing a deal to acquire rival Toppr Technologies in a transaction valued at roughly \$150 million, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Toppr provides online learning materials to students in grades 5 through 12 and its backers include Saif Partners and Helion Ventures. It is the latest target for Byju's, which has been expanding aggressively in recent months to capture the surge in demand for online education triggered by the pandemic. In January, it agreed a \$1 billion deal to acquire brick-and-mortar test prep leader Aakash Educational Services Ltd.

Mumbai-based Toppr takes an app-based approach to education with video classes, mock tests, revision cards reminiscent of Instagram Stories and live support for students stuck on a question. It provides its services internationally and counts over 16 million students.—*Bloomberg*

Financials push Sensex above 52K

RAVI RANIAN PRASAD MUMBAI, FEB.15

Resumption of business activity close to the prepandemic level and positive global cues, macro data and earnings season triggered more than one per cent gains for market oenchmarks Sensex and Nifty-50.

The Sensex crossed 52000 for the first time, closing with 610 points, or 1.18 per cent, higher at 52154.13. The Nifty-50 closed at 15314.70, up 151.40 points, or 1 per cent.

"The Nomura India Business Resumption Index picked up to 98.1 (provisional) for the week ending

FARAH ELBAHRAWY

S&P Global Ratings said

Gulf Arab economies suf-

fered population losses as a

result of an "exodus" of

expatriate workers, warn-

ing the outflow could com-

plicate their diversifica-

tion in the long run.
The population across

the Gulf Cooperation

Council may have declined



14 February from 95.9 the preceding week, which suggests business activit is now only around 2 points below pre-pandemic levels, said the Japanese brokerage. Inflation and IIP data released last week were also encouraging for the market.

"After a brief pause last week, the market resumed upward momentum on the back of global optimism and encouraging macro

GULF EXODUS: S&P WARNS OF RISKS AHEAD

by 4 per cent last year,

according to a report on

The share of foreigners

relative to citizens is set to drop through 2023 "because

of subdued non-oil sector

growth and workforce

nationalisation policies,'

S&P credit analysts led by

"GCC countries' produc-

tivity, income levels, and

economic diversification

Zahabia Gupta said.

Monday.

numbers. Monday's move was mainly propelled by the financial space as the top seven contributors in Nifty were from this space only," an analyst said.

Even in the Sensex pack top nine gainers were from the financial space. The Nifty Bank Index

gained 3.32 top gainers included Axis Bank (6.21 per cent) and ICICI Bank (4.17 per cent). Realty, Telecom and Healthcare stocks also made sound gains.

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities by Rs 1,234.15 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 1,048.55 crore.

may stagnate in the long

term without significant

investment in the human

capital of the national pop-

ulation and improvements

in labour market flexibili-

The six nations compris-

ing the GCC—Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar,

Kuwait. Bahrain and

Oman—are fully depend-

ent on foreign workers in industries. —Bloomberg

ty," they said.

Japan sights recovery, Nikkei at 1990-high



GEAROID REIDY & TOSHIRO HASEGAWA

Japan's Nikkei 225 Stock Average touched 30000 for the first time since August 1990 on signs economic recovery is intact at home and on progress with the US stimulus package.

The gauge rose as much as 1.6 per cent on Monday, taking it a step higher on the climb back to its bubble-era levels. While equities globally have hit new heights in recent months, the Nikkei 225 still needs to gain almost another 30 per cent to surpass its record of 38915.87. That was reached in the final trading session of 1989, before the index went on to lose

more than half its value in three years after the economic bubble burst. The brief breach of the

30,000 shows "all sorts of investors are jumping in to buy Japanese equities with a totally bullish view," said Shoji Hirakawa, chief global strategist at Tokai Tokyo Research Institute. data announced

Monday, Japan's gross domestic product (GDP) grew an annualised 12.7 per cent from the prior quarter in the three months through December, as exports continued to roar back, businesses started to invest again and government stimulus fuelled consumer spending despite the coronavirus.

HUL expects Covid-hit products to rebound



New Delhi, Feb. 15: FMCG major Hindustan Unilever expects its "Covid impacted" product categories, such as ice-cream and vending solutions, to rebound strongly in 2021 with increase in mobility.

In an investor presentation, the company said categories such as skin care and colour cosmetics, which slowed down last year, will also rebound.

categories "These structurally remain attractive for us," HUL said in its presentation. On the other hand, the company said "Covid obsessive" categories such as hand sanitisers and hand wash, which saw a sharp surge during the pandemic, are expected to normalise this year. The hand sanitiser category surged 16 times in 2020 compared to 2019, while the hand wash category

Categories such as hand, body and face care, classified as "Covid resistant" items are expected "to normalise with increase in mobility in 2021.

grew 1.5 times.

From a peak decline of 73 per cent in the second quarter of the calendar year 2020 during the lockdown, these have recovered with the gradual unlocking that country through, to a decline of 51 per cent in the third quarter and 30 per cent in the fourth quarter.

Similarly, the company said "Covid impacted" categories, which include ice cream, food solutions business and vending business are expected rebound strongly in 2021 with increase in mobility".

OIL RALLIES AS TEXAS' WINTRY COLD HITS OUTPUT IN SHALE HEARTLAND

SHARON CHO & ROB VERDONCK

Oil rallied to a 13-month high as cold weather in Texas disrupted flows from America's largest shale patch, exposing the fragility of global supplies amid sharp cutbacks by Opec and its allies.

US West Texas Intermediate futures surged as much as 2.5 per cent and rose above \$60 a barrel for first time January last year. Brent crude in London, meanwhile, rose above \$63. Permian oil production has fallen by as much as 1 million barrels a day as temperatures fall to minus 1 Fahrenheit (minus 18 degrees Celsius) in Midland, Texas, the de facto capital of US shale

The Arctic blast gripping the US is threatening to

crimp crude supplies and unleash a rush for every thing from propane to heating oil, fuels that are used in mobile heating devices. In the past few weeks, harsh winter conditions across North Asia and parts of Europe have pushed some oil-product markets into a bullish backwardation structure.

There were signs some traders were caught off guard by the cold snap in the US, with the nearest futures contracts surging against the next month. That gauge known as the prompt timespread— surged by 15 cents at the open when on a normal day it would only move by one or two cents.

"The cold snap, the additional Saudi cuts, the fresh US stimulus promise are all helping," said Vandana Hari, founder of Vanda Insights in Singapore.
— Bloomberg

Nestle SA is adding its first vegan milk chocolate to its products as the world's biggest food company expands beyond meat alternatives.

The Swiss food giant will start offering plantbased KitKat bars this year, called KitKat V, according to Alexander von Maillot, head of Nestle's confectionery business. The product will be for sale online and at selected stores in a including the UK as a test run before a possible wider rollout.

The bar, which uses a rice-based formula as a milk substitute, took about two years to devel-



op. The main challenge in making alternatives to milk chocolate is ensuring it blends well with cocoa and sugar for a creamy texture. Other substitutes, such as soy or almond formulas, can create off-notes, von Maillot said.

While there are quite a few small labels that make vegan milk chocolate, most

duced a vegan version of its Galaxy bars in the UK. Mondelez International

Inc's Cadbury has also

"Demand for plant-based food is growing everywhere," von Maillot said in a phone interview. "KitKat was a logical choice, as it's by far the biggest brand and a global brand."

Confectionery is one of Nestle's last categories to join the plant-based trend. Nestle Purina last year introduced a blended pet food line, adding insects and plant protein

announced plans to make

plant-based milk choco-

let to the meat protein. Nestle introduced sausage substitutes last vear and also makes plant-based mince and non-dairy ice cream and

- Bloomberg

MILK-FREE | CHOCOLATE | Demand for plant-based food growing Going Vegan: Nestle plans rice-based KitKat

CORINNE GRETLER

of the popular brands haven't yet joined in on the trend. Lindt & Spruengli AG, better known for its Easter bunnies wrapped in golden foil, has started selling oat milk-based chocolate bars under its Hello label. Mars Inc has intro-

from fava beans and mil-

coffee products

SHORT TAKES

Rahul climbs to 2nd spot in T20

Dubai: India's K.L. Rahul moved up a place to second, while his captain Virat Kohli retained the seventh spot in the latest ICC men's T201 rankings for batsmen released on Monday. With 816 rating points, Rahul is behind leader Dawid Malan (915) of England, while Kohli has 697 points in his kitty. Australia white-ball skipper Aaron Finch (808) also improved a rung to be placed third while Pakistan captain Babar Azam (801) slipped to fourth place. Rahul and Kohli are the only two Indians to feature in the top-10 among batsmen. No Indian also featured in the top-10 among bowlers and allrounders in the latest T201 rankings. Among bowlers, South Africa spinner Tabraiz Shamsi grabbed a career-best second position while Pakistan wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Rizwan has raced to 42nd place after standout performances in a series against Proteas. - PTI

Lukaku shines as Inter go atop

Rome: Romelu Lukaku scored twice to reach 300 career goals as Inter Milan moved above AC Milan to the top of Serie A with an impressive 3-1 home win over Lazio on Sunday. Lukaku's brace came in the first half as Inter made the most of their city rivals' surprising 2-0 loss at Spezia on Saturday. Inter, bidding for a first Scudetto since winning the treble under Jose Mourinho in 2010, are now one point clear of AC Milan. The stage is set for a mouthwatering Milan derby at the San

Siro next Sunday. "He (Lukaku) came back firing on all cylinders tonight and we need this Romelu. We need this determination and passion from everyone in the team," Inter coach Antonio Conte said.

Earlier, Roma beat Udinese 3-0 to climb back to third. — AFP **Monday blues**

for Mumbai City Goa: Mumbai City FC had 23 shots, the most they have had in the entire season but they just couldn't get the result they were looking for. Instead, it was a rejuvenated Bengaluru FC side that walked away with three points after an impressive 4-2 win in the Indian Super League at the GMC Stadium, Bambolim, on Monday. The night saw the best of BFC skipper Sunil Chhetri, who scored a brace (57', 90') in his 200th game for the club. Cleiton Silva also bagged his double (1', 22') while Adam Le Fondre (50', 72') scored for

Jokic on target as

Nuggets dominate

Washington: Nikola Jokic scored a triple double of 23 points, 16 rebounds and 10 assists to lead the Denver Nuggets to a one-sided 122-105 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers, who lost Anthony Davis when he aggravated an Achilles injury on Sunday. Canada's Jamal Murray scored 25 points, Zeke Nnaii had 16 and Facundo Campazzo tallied 15 for the Nuggets in the battle between the two teams that met in the Western Conference finals last

Jokic recorded his sixth triple double of the season LeBron James delivered 22 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists for the Lakers, who had their seven game winning streak halted.

Live on

Australian Open: Quarterfinals from 5.30 am, from 1.30 pm on on Sony Six, Sony Ten 2, HD

CRICKET

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

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Hyderabad FC vs Kerala Blasters from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Regd. No. TNENG/2010/35692

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A-SHHHH!

Ashwin silences pitch critics with batting masterclass

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR CHENNAI, FEB. 15

It was midway through the morning session. There was a sudden flurry of activity in the Indian dressing room. Having been reduced to 106 for six, India's second essay was expected to fold soon. When R. Ashwin, at No. 8, walked in to join his skipper Virat Kohli in the middle, the Chepauk crowd greeted their local hero with a rapturous welcome. Over the next few hours, the cheers only grew louder. The roar reached a crescendo when Ashwin celebrated his fifth Test century, punching the air and driving his arms aloft towards the spectators. It was a carnival at the

Chidambaram Stadium, post-tea, with chants of 'Ash-win...Ash-win' reverberating through the stands. His scintillating knock - 106 off 148 balls — not only brought India on the verge of restoring parity in the four-match series against England, but also silenced those who had criticised the

Set a target of 482, England were in a shambles at 53 for three in 19 overs at stumps. India have two more days to bag the remaining wickets and achieve what will be a roaring comeback.
A day after taking a

five-for to bowl England out cheaply, Ashwin delivered a masterclass on batting on turning tracks. It was the third time in his career that Ashwin bagged a fivewicket haul and scored a ton in the same match. Only the legendary England all-rounder Ian Botham has done it more

(five times). The intention was clear from the minute Ashwin took the guard. He swept off-spinner Moeen Ali for a boundary towards midwicket in the second ball he faced. After a couple deliveries, he played reverse-sweep for anothatted forehand to pun ish the bowlers. England were also guilty of giving three reprieves to Ashwin, who was dropped on 28, 56 and 70.

partnership between Ashwin and sweep off Ali h Kohli — 96 runs off 177 crowd on its feet.

five-for in a Test match.

Banglades's Shakib Al Hasan.

NUMBERS GAME

ASHWIN'S THIRD ALLROUND DOUBLE IN TESTS

Ravichandran Ashwin recorded his fifth century

of the second Test against England on Monday. It

was his third century when batting at No. 8. Only

scored more hundreds when batting at No. 8 or

lower. He has four at No. 8 and one at No. 9.

one batsman - New Zealand's Daniel Vettori - has

Ashwin took 5/43 in the first innings. It was the

third instance when he scored a century and taken

England's Ian Botham hold the record. Botham

Three Indians who have achieved this double in a

Test are Vinoo Mankad (184 & 72 and 5/196 against

England at Lord's in 1952) and Polly Umrigar (172

not out & 56 and 5/107 against West Indies in Port-

has done it five times in his 102-Test career. Four

all-rounders have achieved this feat two times -

West Indian Garry Sobers, Pakistan's Mushtag

Mohammad, South African Jacques Kallis and

after scoring 106 off 148 balls in the second innings



balls — pushed India's lead past 400. It was one of those rare days when well-compiled Kohli's half-century — 62 off 149 — became a mere foot-note. Kohli fell to Ali for the second time this match. The skipper was not too pleased with Nitin Menon's lbw call even after the thirder boundary. He then umpire upheld the decipulled, cut and even sion. The way Ashwin nursea tan-enders Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Siraj en route to his century was entertaining. A straight punch past mid-on off Stuart Broad and a slogsweep off Ali had the

Earlier in the morning. it took Kohli 20 balls to get off the mark after he walked in following Cheteshwar Pujara's bizarre dismissal in the opening over of the day. Rohit Sharma's departure, after being stumped while stretching to defend a Jack Leach delivery, reduced India to 55 for three.

Rishabh Pant who tried take on Leacn ished soon. Ajinkya Rahane's back-to-back boundaries off Ali eased some pressure. But he eventually fell to the offspinner, giving a simple catch to a short-leg field-

COACH PRAISES ASHWIN KNOCK

England spin consultant er R. Ashwin who scored a brilliant century on a challenging track on day

"Ashwin was fantastic. The way he came out and

"Initially, Moeen showed signs of nerves and was maybe a touch anxious, but as the game got on, he became more positive about his per-formance. I'm stoked for him — just gutted that he didn't get a five-for. He probably deserved it, if not two. I thought he bowled enough good balls to be able to get that but it just didn't work out for

"I am sure Moeen will

ENGLAND SPIN

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 15

Jeetan Patel was all praise for India all-round-

started sweeping, we had to work our way through in this match. Kohli was fantastic, too, for the way he forced us to bowl in the areas he wanted us to, we can certainly learn a lot from that," said Jeetan.
Playing his first Test

after an 18-month break, England off-spinner Moeen Ali bagged a match haul of eight wickets — four in each innings. Jeetan said Moeen deserved a five-for.

him," said Jeetan.

be very pleased with that in his comeback Test. To bowl 60 overs, to contribute like he has. The one thing he's got left now is another contribution with the bat."

SCORECARD

India 1st Innings: 329
England 1st Innings: 134
India 2nd innings (overnight 54/1): Rohit Sharma st Foakes b Leach 26, Shubman Gill Ibw b Leach 14, Cheteshwar Pujara run out (Ollie Pope/Foakes) 7, Virat Kohli Ibw b Moeen 62, Rishabh Pant st Foakes b Leach 8, Ajinkya Rahane c Ollie Pope b Moeen 10, Axar Patel Ibw b Moeen 7, Ravichandran Ashwin b Olly Stone 106, Kuldeep Yadav Ibw b Moeen 3, Ishant Sharma c Olly Stone b Jack Leach 7, Mohammed Siraj not out 16. Extras (b-5, Ib-15) 20. Total (all out in 85.5 overs) 286.

FoW: 1-42, 2-55, 3-55, 4-65, 5-86, 6-106,7-202,8-210, 9-237, 10-286. Bowling: Olly Stone 6.5-1-21-1, Jack Leach 33-6-100-4, Moeen Ali 32-7-98-4, Joe Root 4-0-15-0, Stuart Broad 9-3-25-0, Danie

England 2nd Innings: Rory Burns c Kohli b Ashwin 25, Dom Sibley lbw b Patel 3, Dan Lawrence batting 19, Jack Leach c Rohit Sharma b Patel O, Joe Root batting 2. Extras (b-4) 4. Total: (for 3 wkts, in

FoW: 1-17, 2-49, 3-50. Bowling: Ishant Sharma 2-1-6-0, Axar Patel 9-3-15-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 8-1-28-1.

When Ashwin was dropped from team for playing sweep

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 15

R. Ashwin who swept his way to a brilliant century in the second Test against on Monday revealed that he was once dropped from a team for playing that cross-batted shot. "After the last Test, we were thinking of how to counter Jack Leach (leftarm spinner) and bringing sweep to the game. The last time I was sweeping was probably when I was 19 years old. I got dropped from the side for playing a couple sweep shots, and

sweep in the last 13-14 years," informed Ashwin who became the second Indian after Kapil Dev to score a 1,000-plus and 100wicket against

England. Ashwin credited India batting coach Vikram Rathour for his recent

improvement. 'Ĩ've been practicing that shot (sweep) for the last 10 days under the supervision of Rathour. I am really thankful that the plan has really paid off. Rathour has been very helpful in trying

to explore new options. He

(Maja 48, 65) SPANISH LEAGUE

(Benzema 12, Kroos 42)

express myself.'

After Kohli's dismissal. Ashwin had to protect his tailenders Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Siraj to complete his century. He forged a 27-run stand with Ishant, while Siraj and Ashwin put on 49 runs for the final wicket.

When Ashwin reached his triple-figure score, Siraj was more jubilant at the other end. "It was exciting to see how excited he was when I got my hundred and that says a few things about how the dressing room is

DEPLETED MADRID

Real Madrid are celebrating another win — and lamenting yet another injury. Real continued their recent good form with a 2-0 win over Valencia in the La Liga, but coach Zinedine Zidane saw his already depleted squad lose another player

due to injury.
Dani Carvajal got hurt before halftime in what had been his return to action after being sidelined since the beginning of the year. "There are too many injuries. I'm worried because when you lose a player, it upsets you," Zidane said.

- Agencies

Nadal closes in on Slams record

Melbourne, Feb. 15: Rafael Nadal outclassed Fabio Fognini to close in on the all-time Grand Slam titles record on Monday as Ashleigh Barty ramped up hopes of becoming the Australian Open's first home winner in 43 years.

Nadal said his lower-back stiffness was continuing to improve after his 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 against the flamboyant Italian, which set up a quarter-final against Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Fognini had registered a five-set win over Nadal at the 2015 US Open, but the Spaniard cantered to victory after recovering from 2-4 down in the second set.

Nadal is now into his 43rd Grand Slam quarter-final, staying on course for a title match with eight-time winner Novak Djokovic who battled through an abdominal injury to reach the last eight on Sunday.

Next up for Nadal is world number six Tsitsipas, who through on a walkover after Italy's Matteo Berrettini pulled out with an abdominal strain.

As the action continued in front of empty stands, top-ranked Barty beat bighitting American Shelby Rogers in impressive fashion to reach the last eight.

Barty won 6-3, 6-4 to go into the quarter-finals without dropping a set as she bids to become the first Australian champion since Chris O'Neil in 1978. The former French Open

champion next plays Karolina Muchova, who came through two tight sets to beat Belgium's Elise Mertens 7-6 (7/5), 7-5.

RESULTS

Men's singles fourth round: Andrey Rublev (RUS x7) bt Casper Ruud (NOR x24) 6-2, 7-6 (7/3), 0-0 retired; Daniil Medvedev (RUS x4) bt Mackenzie McDonald (USA) 6-4, 6-2, 6-3; Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x5) bt Matteo Berrettini (ITA x9) walkover; Rafael Nadal (ESP x2) bt Fabio Fognini (ITA x16) 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

Women's singles fourth round: Ashleigh Barty (AUS x1) bt Shelby Rogers (USA) 6-3, 6-4; Karolina Muchova (CZE x25) bt Elise Mertens (BEL x18) 7-6 (7/5), 7-5; Jennifer Brady (USA x22) bt Donna Vekic (CRO x28) 6-1, 7-5; Jessica Pegula (USA) bt Elina Svitolina (UKR x5) 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

RUSSIANS ARE COMING

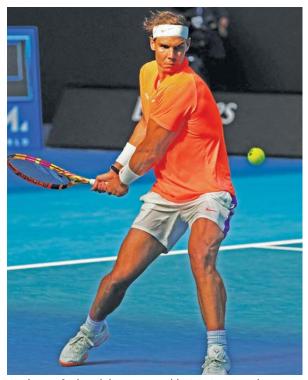
Earlier, unseeded American Jessica Pegula reached her maiden Grand Slam quarter-final with victory over Elina Svitolina, her first over a top-10 player. Pegula, whose billionaire

father owns the Buffalo Bills NFL team, overcame fifth seed Svitolina 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 to set up a meeting with fellow American Jennifer Brady, a 6-1, 7-5 winner against Croatia's Donna

Elsewhere, fourth seed Daniil Medvedev and seventh seed Andrey Rublev both won to ensure an all-Russian quarter-final.

Medvedev blew away American world number 192 Mackenzie McDonald 6-4, 6-2, 6-3 to extend his winning streak to 18 matches.

Rubley, who is also unbeaten this year, went through when Norway's Casper Ruud retired after losing the first two sets.



Spain's Rafael Nadalen route to his 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 win over Fabio Fognini of Italy in their Australian Open fourth round match in Melbourne on Monday.

FIR against Yuvraj over remarks against Chahal

Hisar (Haryana), Feb. 15: The Haryana Police has filed an FIR against former India cricketer Yuvrai Singh over his alleged casteist remarks against Yuzvendra Chahal during an Instagram chat last year, officials said on Monday.

It was during one of the Instagram live sessions with Indian vice-captain Rohit Sharma that Singh made the offensive comment about Chahal, while talking about his regular social media posts. Singh (39) had apologised

for the remarks, saying he "unintentionally" hurt hurt public sentiments.

"An FIR has been filed against Yuvraj Singh based on a complaint by lawyer Rajat Kalsan at the Hansi Police Station," Hansi Superintendent of Police, Nikita Gahlaut said on Monday. She said the case was

lodged on Sunday under various provisions of IPC and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. Kalsan had filed the

police complaint last year. Kalsan had alleged that Singh's comment had hurt the sentiments of the Dalit community, stating that a large number of people had watched the video on social media.

TEAM INDIA MAKE SOLID DEBUT AT ASIAN LE MANS

Dubai, Feb. 15: Racing Team India took their first step to become the first all-Indian squad at the 24 Hours of Le Mans with a solid debut at the opening

weekend of the Asian Le Mans Series in Dubai.
The JK Tyres-backed team's ORECA 07 LMP2 car, driven by Narain Karthikeyan, Arjun Maini and Naveen Rao, with technical support from reigning ALMS champions Algarve Pro Racing, finished fifth and fourth in the two four-hour races held at the Dubai

Autodrome on Saturday and Sunday respectively.

The team's car showed promising pace throughout the weekend. But their challenge was hampered by racing incidents and a penalty.

The team had to make an extra precautionary pitstop in Saturday's opening race which dropped the car down the order.

A five-second time penalty for exceeding the speed limit further set it back, forcing the drivers to claw their way back up to fifth, where they had qualified.

Man Utd falter, Auba wins it for Arsenal

London, Feb. 15: Manchester United's faltering Premier League title challenge suffered another blow in a 1-1 draw at struggling West Brom, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang hit a hat-trick in Arsenal's 4-2 win

against Leeds on Sunday. United have dropped points in five of their last seven league games to allow Manchester City to pull seven points clear, with a game in hand.

A point was enough to nudge Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men back above Leicester into second on goal difference.

But that was of little consolation to United

against a West Brom side

that had conceded 24 goals in taking just one point from their previous seven home games.

- S. PERVEZ QAISER

Emirates the Stadium, Aubameyang scored his first ever Aubameyang Premier League hat-trick to get the Gunners back on track after two successive defeats and three games without a win.

Aubameyang has endured a difficult season marred by poor form and his mother's which prompted him to take a leave of absence recently. "The hat-trick means a lot. It's been a tough time for me,"

Aubameyang said. Everton missed chance to move level with clear of the drop zone

PREMIER LEAGUE

THE RESULTS

Getafe

Valencia

Levante

Villarreal

league.

(Budimir 74)

(Gerard 65-pen) Real Betis

Southampton (Neves 53-pen, Neto 66) West Brom (Diagne 2) Manchester United (Fernandes 44)

(Aubameyang 13, 41-pen, 47, Bellerin 45) (Struijk 58, Costa 69)

neighbours Liverpool in fourth as they were well beaten 2-0 by Fulham Wolves moved 12 points (Fekir 45, Emerson Aparecido 52) after coming from behind for a 2-1 win that extended Southampton's six-game

streak in