

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
VISAKHAPATNAM | THURSDAY | 21 JANUARY 2021

## WEATHER



Max: 29.4°C  
Min: 19.0°C  
RH: 98%  
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Fog.  
Max/Min temp.  
29/19 °C

## NATION | 4

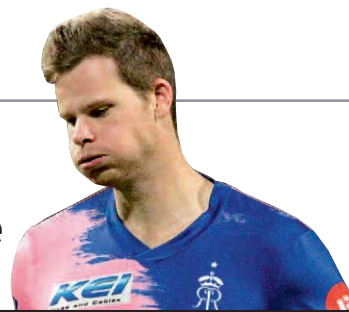
**Gujarat renames  
dragon fruit Kamalam**

## WORLD | 5

**Trump pardons Bannon,  
73 others in last minute**

## SPORTS | 6

**Rajasthan Royals release  
captain Smith**



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## COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+14,366)	(+143)
1,06,10,473	1,52,743
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+267)	(+2)
TS: 2,92,395	1,583
(+173)	(+0)
AP: 8,86,418	7,142

### CASES AROUND THE WORLD

9,68,87,732
DEATHS
20,73,167
219
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

worldometers.info/  
coronavirus

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Uttarayana  
Tithi: Pushya Shuddha Ashtami  
till 3.50 pm  
Star: Ashwini till 3.35 pm  
Variyam: 11.06 am to 12.54 pm;  
2.24 am to 4.13 am (Friday)  
Durmuham: 10.36 am to  
11.20 am; 3.03 pm to 3.47 pm  
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm  
HIJRI CALENDAR  
Jamadi- ul- Akhir 7, 1442 AH  
PRAYERS  
Fajar: 5.50 am  
Zohar: 1.30 pm  
Asar: 4.45 pm  
Maghrib: 6.15 pm  
Isha: 8.15 pm  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.31 AM  
SUNSET TODAY 5.45 PM  
MOONRISE TODAY 11.59 AM  
MOONSET TOMORROW 00.01 AM

## COUNTER POINT



Welcome to your  
office, Mr President!

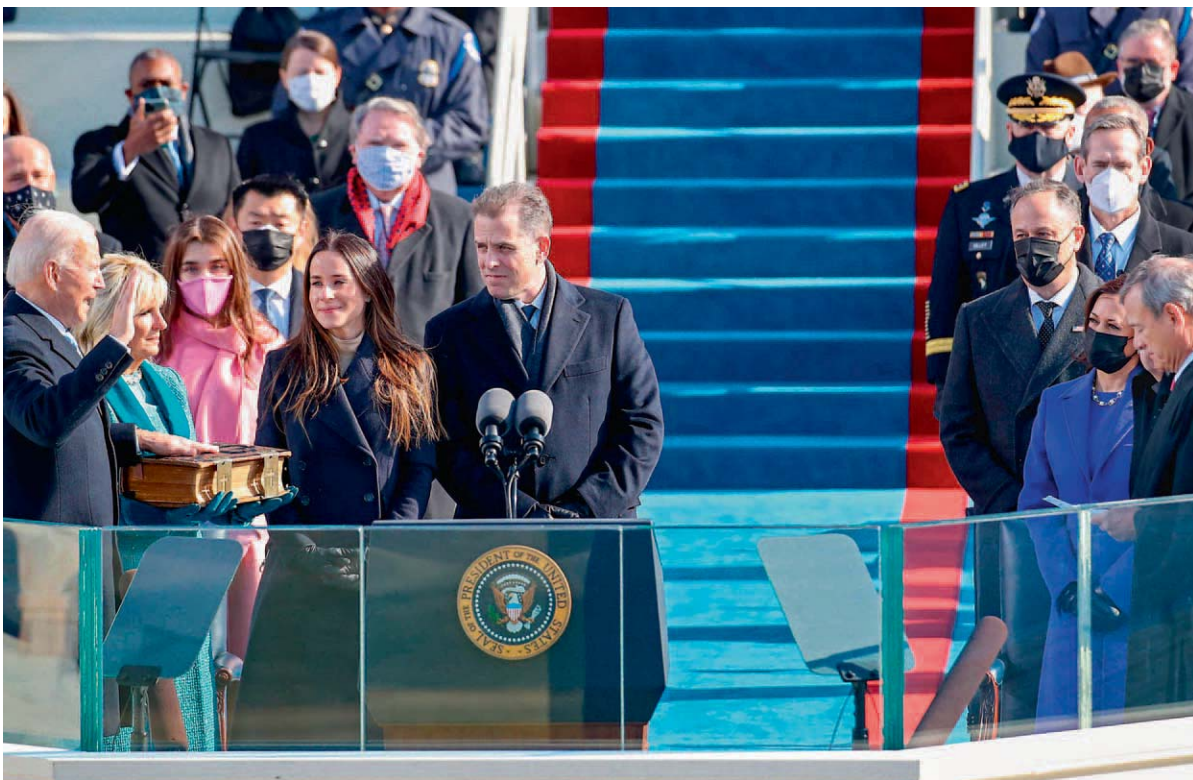
## SHORT TAKES

### CBI's DSP held for corruption

**New Delhi:** The CBI has arrested one of its deputy superintendents of police R.K. Rishi and inspector Kapil Dhankad along with an advocate in connection with an alleged bribery ring run by them within the agency to help companies accused of siphoning off bank loan funds worth ₹4,300 crore, officials said.

### FIR filed against Tandav makers

**Mumbai:** Police on Wednesday registered an FIR against the makers and cast of Amazon Prime's web series *Tandav*, based on a complaint lodged by a BJP MLA in the city.



Joe Biden is sworn in as US President by US Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts during his inauguration on the West Front of the US Capitol on Wednesday in Washington. Biden took the oath of office by placing his left hand on his large 127-year-old family Bible, which was held by his wife Jill. Kamala Harris (who looks on at Biden on the right) was sworn in as Vice-President,

becoming the first woman, the first woman of Indian origin and the first person of colour to occupy the second-most important position in the US. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Biden and Harris and said he was committed to working with them to take the India-US partnership to greater heights.

— AFP

■ More reports on Page 5

# It's a new day in America

## Biden to end country cap on H1B visas with his first orders

**Washington, Jan. 20:** In his first hours as US President, Joe Biden will aim to strike at the heart of President Donald Trump's policy legacy, signing a series of executive actions that will reverse his predecessor's orders on immigration, climate change and handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Biden, who began his day by tweeting, "It's a new day in America", will send a comprehensive immigration Bill to Congress which among other things proposes to eliminate the per country cap for employment-based green cards, a move that would benefit hundreds and thousands of Indian IT professionals in the US.

● **THE NEW BILL** provides an immediate pathway to green cards for individuals who meet certain criteria as they were dreamers or have been recipients of the Temporary Protected Status and meet certain criteria.

Called the US Citizenship Act of 2021, the legislation modernises the immigration system, according to an incoming White House official.

It prioritises keeping families together, grows the country's economy, responsibly manages the border with smart invest-

ments, addresses the root causes of migration from Central America, and also ensures that the US remains a refuge for those fleeing persecution, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Describing this as a common-sense approach to solving immigration challenges, focusing on what works, the US Citizenship Act 2021 creates a roadmap to citizenship for a population that lives and works in the United States.

January 1, 2021 is the cut-off date for those undocumented workers. Two-thirds of undocumented immigrants have been in the US for 10 years or longer. It provides an immediate pathway to

green cards for individuals who meet certain criteria as they were dreamers or have been recipients of the Temporarily Protected Status, or are farm workers and meet certain criteria. They can apply for citizenship three years later. For those who don't meet those qualifications, there will be another path to citizenship, where they would be in an interim status for five years. Afterwards they would be eligible to apply for citizenship within three years after becoming green card holders.

According to the incoming White House official, the Bill reforms the family-based immigration system.

— PTI

## TD LEADER HELD FOR ATTACK ON VIJAY SAI CONVOY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
SRIRAKULAM, JAN. 20

Sriakulam district police arrested senior TD leader Kala Venkata Rao from his home in Rajam Wednesday evening.

Nellimarla police registered cases against Rao and some party activists following a complaint by Rajya Sabha member V. Vijaya Sai Reddy.

Reddy complained that TD leaders and cadre threw stones and footwear and damaged vehicles of his convoy at Ramateertham in Vizianagaram district on January 3.

Reports said that the police did not mention where Rao was being taken when the family members questioned.

■ Page 2: Cops deployed after Rao's arrest

# AP to start door delivery of PDS ration from today

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

In a first of its kind programme in AP, YSR Congress government is starting on Thursday door delivery of rations made available under the Public Distribution System.

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will formally launch 2,500 door delivery vehicles in Krishna, Guntur and West

Godavari districts at a function being held at the iconic Benz Circle in Vijayawada on the day.

The scheme will benefit 26,39,363 cardholders throughout the state.

Door delivery of rations is part of Jagan's promise during his 3,648-km-long padayatra as then opposition leader, when he witnessed the plight of elderly and differently-abled people who had to wait in long

queues to get their supplies.

The Chief Minister also promised that quality rice will be delivered to cardholders, thereby removing irregularities within the PDS system.

The door-delivery system will cost the state government an additional ₹830 crore per annum.

■ Page 2: Swarna variety rice being supplied: Nani

## HIDDEN DANGER

### 29 people lost consciousness, turned dizzy

# Pesticide hand in mystery illness

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

Pesticide residues in vegetables are suspected to be one of the major causes for the mystery illness that affected 29 persons, who lost consciousness, suffered dizziness and convulsions at Pulla village in West Godavari's Bhimadole mandal. The incidents were reported from January 17 to 19, although no fresh case was reported on Wednesday.

A majority of people of all ages living in several localities in the village suffered from loss of consciousness for two to three minutes or giddiness while a few suffered seizures.

● **HORTICULTURE** authorities say that local farmers raise paddy at Pulla village and vegetables are being brought from other places.

● **WATER SAMPLES** from an overhead water tank in the village have been sent for analysis.

● **A MAJORITY** of people of all ages living in several localities in the village suffered from loss of consciousness for two to three minutes

Local health authorities maintain that unlike the mystery illness that affected over 600 people in Eluru

located nearly 30 km away from Pulla in December where a majority of them suffered seizures, in Pulla case only a few of them showed such symptoms. Of the total affected persons, four are undergoing treatment at the government hospital in Eluru while the rest were discharged. Pulla primary health centre medical officer Dr Leela Prasad said, "Though both Eluru and Pulla cases of mystery illness are having some similarities but in Pulla only a few affected suffered seizures while in Eluru, a majority of them exhibited such a symptom. "We suspect that pesticide residues in vegetables

might be affecting the brains gradually. Even though all the family members eat the same cooked vegetables, only those who are weak might be vulnerable. However, we are awaiting analysis reports of the samples to find out the exact cause for such illness."

Samples of rice, vegetables, water, milk and pulses have been sent to IICT, Hyderabad and to other labs for analysis.

Director of health Dr T. Geetha Prasadini said, "No fresh case of illness is reported at Pulla on Wednesday. We are awaiting test reports of food and water samples to ascertain the reasons."

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed the officials to create awareness, give training, and conduct tests to improve the efficiency of village/ ward secretariat staff on Comprehensive Land Survey.

During a review meeting on the YSR Jagananna Saswatha Bhoomi Hakku-Bhoomi Rakshana scheme held here on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said tests should be conducted at regular intervals to improve knowledge and efficiency among the staff on issues related to comprehensive survey so that they can serve the people better.

CM Jagan said the new colonies to be built for the

poor should be included in the survey and taken into account in the preparation of maps. Every house in the colonies should be given a unique ID. Employees of village secretariats participating in land survey should set apart two hours daily for listening to grievances and solving them.

The CM directed officials to prepare standard operation procedures (SOPs) for the survey process from surveyor to joint collector, and said they should be responsible for the work. Prepare SOPs on mobile tribunals, he said. Jagan said the house site pattas distribution programme has been extended till January 30.

■ Page 2: Ensure pattas to eligible in 90 days: CM

## MANTRI BALINENI DONATES ₹3 LAKH FOR RAM TEMPLE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, JAN. 20

AP energy and forests minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy contributed ₹3 lakh on Wednesday for construction of the Ram mandir in Ayodhya.

A team of senior RSS members met the minister at his home in Ongole and urged him to be a part of the mega exercise to build a shrine for Lord Ram. Reddy said this was a great opportunity for his family to make a donation and urged all people to make the endeavour a success. He appreciated the RSS for seeking donations from everyone.

not allowing the rally, Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde, heading a three-judge bench that included Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian, asked them to withdraw the application the seeking restraint order, which they did.

The court also turned down a plea by the attorney-general and solicitor-general to keep the application pending and consider it on January 25 depending on the situation.

"No, no. This is not a matter for the court to decide. You have the powers under the law", CJI Bobde said, reiterating: "We have told you it is for the police to decide. We won't pass orders. We will allow you to withdraw this application. You are the authority. You decide."

three farm laws. While staying the three farm laws, the Supreme Court appointed a four-member panel to talk to farmers to end the stalemate. But the farmers union objected to the make-up of the panel.

## HC QUASHES PART OF FIR AGAINST THREE DALIT FARMERS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Wednesday quashed a part of the first information report (FIR) registered against three farmers, belonging to Scheduled Caste, hailing from Krishnayapalem in Guntur district.

The single-judge bench headed by Justice M. Satyanarayana Murthy observed that registration of crime by the police on the basis of a complaint lodged by Ravi Babu against the petitioners belonging to SC was a serious illegality.

The court said that in the absence of any allegation to constitute criminal conspiracy, the proceedings against the petitioners for the offence punishable under Section 120 B were liable to be quashed.

So was the case with offences booked under sections 3(1) (r)(s) and 3 (2) of the SC/ST Act as the accused belonging to SC, the high court observed.

The court also did not accept the offences like unlawful assembly punishable under Section 143 of IPC and also wrongful restraint punishable under Section 340 of IPC and others as the petitioners were booked for such offences.

However, the court observed that the plea was partly allowed and permitted the police to proceed against the petitioners to investigate the crime for the offence punishable under Section 506 (2) of IPC.

■ Page 2: Registering crime was illegal: Counsel

# HC halts SIT probe into Waltair Club

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 20

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Wednesday stalled inquiry by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) into the prestigious Waltair Club.

Advocates N. Ashwini Kumar and D. V. Sitharam Murthy, who filed a writ peti-

tion, contended that the club was allotted the Settlement Patta way back in 1964. Various revenue authorities had also pointed out that the property of Waltair Club was purely private in nature and government has no claim over the same.

■ Page 2: State tried to take club in 1913: Advocates



## SHORT TAKES

## EX-INTELLIGENCE CHIEF GETS RELIEF ON ARREST

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

The AP High Court issued an order, directing the police not to take any hasty decision to arrest former intelligence chief A.B. Venkateswara Rao for three weeks.

Single bench judge Justice K. Lalitha continued the hearing on the petition filed by Rao on Wednesday and issued an order extending the interim order issued earlier, directing the police not to arrest Rao, by three more weeks.

Earlier, Rao who was allegedly involved in a scam in purchase of security equipment, had filed a petition in the court alleging that the state government was trying to arrest him and pleaded the court to issue directions not to arrest him.

As the public prosecutor asked for two weeks time to file a reply on the issue, the judge accepted it and posted the next hearing in the case after two weeks.

## REGISTERING CRIME WAS ILLEGAL: COUNSEL

FROM PAGE 1

Earlier, Epuri Ravi Babu had lodged a complaint with the police alleging that when he tried to settle a quarrel as some people parked a tractor across the Krishnayapalem bridge disrupting passage of vehicles on October 23, 2020, he was abused by caste and even threatened to be trodden with the tractor.

He named 11 persons in the complaint. Based on it, police booked them under Sections 120 (B), 143, 341, 506 read with 149 IPC and other sections of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

Subsequently, three farmers filed a petition in the High Court seeking quashing of the FIR registered against them. Their main grievance was that though they belonged to SC, they were booked under SC/ST Act, 1989.

Petitioners' counsel Karumanchi Indraneel Babu argued that registration of a crime against a SC based on a complaint lodged by another SC, was a grave illegality.

## GALLA TO RAISE AMARAVATI ISSUE IN LOK SABHA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

Guntur MP Galla Jayadev of Telugu Desam said he will raise the issue of Amaravati being the only capital of the AP state in the forthcoming session of the Parliament. He was speaking after participating in the Amaravati Sankalpa Rally organised to coincide with 400 days of continuous protests by people of the city for retaining Amaravati as the sole capital.

Activists of Telugu Yuvatha, Communist parties and farmers joined the procession taken out on the occasion in which the TD Lok Sabha member drove a tractor in support of Amaravati farmers. Recalling the High Court verdict on alleged insider trading in Amaravati lands, Jaydev pointed out that YSRC government's campaign alleging such trading is totally false. He observed that judges can be changed but justice cannot change. He expressed confidence that Amaravati farmers will get justice from courts.

## COURT RULED OUT PROPAGANDA BY RULERS: TD

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, JAN 20

Reddeppagari Srinivasa Reddy, TD politiburo member, wanted to know what the government had to say in response to the High Court verdict that there was no insider trading in the capital.

Welcoming the High Court single bench verdict on the issue of panchayat elections, he said ministers and YSR Congress MLAs should welcome the verdict.

The court ruled that all the propaganda made by the rulers that insider trading was taking place in the capital Amaravati was fabricated. He said that Jagan Mohan Reddy was using his powers to make false allegations against opposition leaders.

He said that if the Chief Minister had any respect for the High Court, he would have to resign from his post immediately.

## TD leaders trying to fan communal feelings: Min

## Appalaraju says Naidu hatching conspiracy against Jagan govt

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

Minister for animal husbandry Dr Seediri Appalaraju alleged on Wednesday that the opposition Telugu Desam was trying to fan communal feelings by indulging in a series of attacks on temples.

"TD leaders were involved in the desecration of the Nandeeshwar (Nandi) idol," the minister said, adding there was evidence about a political conspiracy to defame the YSRC government, including video footage of TD leaders forcibly shifting the Nandi idol from the temple to the nearby road.

The minister said this was part of a conspiracy hatched by TD leader Chandrababu Naidu against the Jagan government. A case should be filed against Naidu under section 153A for sensationalizing religious matters, and under sections 499, 500 for defaming a political party or individual, just as it was done during the Gujarat riots, he said.

Appalaraju asked as to why the TD leaders remained silent on the Santhabommali incident, while they created a huge ruckus over the Ramatheertham issue. "The desecration of the Nandeeshwar idol was clearly recorded by CCTV cameras. TD AP state president Atchannaidu's men, including some TD activists and a journalist from their favoured media

## SAVE DEBT-RIDDEN FARMERS, LOKESH TELLS GOVT

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

Telugu Desam MLC, Nara Lokesh, on Wednesday alleged that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government for 'not taking remedial measures' to prevent farmers' suicides on account of rising debts and crop failures.

He expressed concern over how tenant farmer Katta Lakshminarayana ended his life at Chandralapadu in Krishna district and left behind a letter narrating his woes. He stated the deceased farmer was a YSRC supporter. Lokesh said that though 753 farmers had committed suicide, the government was not taking steps to prevent the crisis. He alleged the anti-farmers policies of the Jagan Mohan Reddy regime has been causing distress among the cultivators. He lamented that the Chandralapadu farmer mentioned that he was unable to resolve his mounting debt problem.

The MLC said that the Chief Minister made countless promises to tenant farmers but there was no on-the-ground relief as yet.

Meanwhile, he lauded Amaravati farmers for continuing their agitation for the past 400 days despite government harassment and false arrests. He asserted that Jagan Mohan Reddy's vicious propaganda on Amaravati capital was exposed with the order of the High Court.

## KODALI NANI IS A MENTAL PATIENT: SAINATH SARMA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, JAN. 20

Telugu Desam state secretary Kasibhatla Satyasainath Sharma described civil supplies minister Kodali Nani as a mental patient because of the fear that he will lose his ministership in another eight months.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday at Kamalapuram, Satyasainath Sharma said YSRC leaders are unable to bear the rising popularity of Chandrababu Naidu. Some of them like Kodali Nani are criticising their party chief "without rhyme or reason."

## Govt appoints nodal officer to reconstruct demolished temples

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

Minister for endowments Vellampalli Srinivas Rao said the government has appointed a nodal officer to start reconstruction of nine temples in Vijayawada which were demolished during the term of the Telugu Desam government. The government has sanctioned funds for the reconstruction and works would start very soon."

Srinivas Rao said endowments additional commissioner-2, K Ramachandra Mohan, has been appointed as nodal officer for the temples' reconstruction project. The CM recently laid foundation for reconstruction of the demolished temples and the endowment department took measures to resume the reconstruction process.

He said the demolished Rahu-Kethu temple would be reconstructed at a cost of ₹70 lakh, the Seethamma Padalu with

house, were involved in the act."

The minister said all these incidents hinted that Naidu himself gave the orders to incite religious feelings and hatred in the state. "The police s filed cases against 22 per-

₹9.50 lakh, the Dakshin-amukha Anjaneya temple with ₹31.50 lakh, the Saniswara temple with ₹2 crore, the Anjaneya temple below the Durga temple with ₹20 lakh, the Seetarama Lakshmana Dasanjaneya temple with ₹10 lakh, the Veerababu temple with ₹10 lakh and the Gosala Venugopalakrishna Mandiram with ₹20 lakh.

Srinivas Rao recalled that Naidu "mercilessly demolished temples during TD government's term but the BJP did not object to such heinous action though its leader was minister for endow-

Naidu, he said, was staging dramas to gain votes for his party in the byelection via resort to the Hindutva agenda. "But, the people are seeing through such games."

The minister affirmed that the YSRC government would complete the reconstruction of all demolished temples without any bias.

sons in relation to the Santhabommali incident, including men of Atchannaidu and some other TD activists. TD is fully responsible for the incident."

Appalaraju said Naidu has been evolving strate-

● A case should be filed against Naidu under section 153A for sensationalizing religious matters, and under sections 499, 500 for defaming a political party or individual, just as it was done during the Gujarat riots, he said.

● Appalaraju asked as to why the TD leaders remained silent on the Santhabommali incident, while they created a huge ruckus over the Ramatheertham issue.

● Appalaraju said Naidu has been evolving strategies to divert the people's attention every time the government undertook some activity for public welfare.

gies to divert the people's attention every time the government undertook some activity for public welfare. "As CM Jagan Mohan Reddy is launching a scheme on Thursday for door-to-door delivery of ration supplies, TD leaders are getting impatient and hatching conspiracies to divert people's attention, he said.

The minister said Chandrababu Naidu's only ambition is to make his son Lokesh the CM. "This is highly impossible, considering his (lack of) abilities," he said and added that Lokesh had no locus standi to comment on the CM's visit to Delhi this week.

## COPS DEPLOYED AFTER RAO'S ARREST

FROM PAGE 1

A large number of police personnel were deployed at Kala Venkata Rao's residence after his arrest. After the news spread like a wildfire, a large number of TDP leaders rushed to his house and demanded his immediate release. They also raised slogans against the government.

It may be recalled that TD activists and few leaders allegedly attacked the convoy of Vijaya Sai Reddy while he was returning from Sri Kodandarama Swamy Temple in Ramateertham. The incident took place after Vijay Sai Reddy inspected the beheaded idol of Lord Rama at the temple and performed pujas along with some YSRC leaders.

Reddy said in his complaint that one of his bodyguards Hari sustained injuries in the assault launched by Venkata Rao and his henchmen as per the directions of TD chief N Chandrababu Naidu and TD leader K Atchannaidu, who also had visited Ramateertam on that day.

## Give pattas to eligible within 90 days: CM

FROM PAGE 1

He directed officials to ensure house site pattas are allotted to the eligible within 90 days.

Officials told the CM that the distribution programme is delayed because they are showing the house site to the beneficiary besides giving the patta.

The officials explained to the CM about the workflow of the registration process of land in village secretariats.

The CM said registration services should start in village secretariats once the comprehensive land survey is completed. Officials must prepare an action plan for village secretariat staff to enable them learn the registration process directly from registration offices.

He said a call centre must be set up with experts and senior officials to clear the doubts of employees of village secretariats once they start the registration process at village / ward secretariats so that there won't be any disturbance to the registration process.

## State tried to take club in 2013: Advocates

FROM PAGE 1

The advocates pointed out that in 2013, an attempt was made by the then state government to take over the Waltair Club land. But the High Court in W.P. No. 13227 of 2013 vide an order dated April 13, 2013 stayed it. After that, till date, no AP government filed any counter affidavit setting out its claim. Ashwani Kumar, supplementing submissions of his senior Sitharam Murthy, submitted that the term of SIT had ended. Moreover, the SIT lacked jurisdiction to enquire into properties of

Waltair Club. This is because the alleged original lessees – the Perla family – claim to have filed a civil suit for resumption of the land. As such, SIT has no jurisdiction to entertain any petition in a private civil dispute, the advocate contended.

Thus, the whole process of SIT undertaking an enquiry is unlawful, without jurisdiction, and without power. It is thus liable to be interdicted by the High Court, the advocates maintained.

Additional advocate general P. Sudhakar Reddy, appearing for SIT, argued

that the Special Investigation Team is within its term and has the power to examine any dispute.

The High Court, however, expressed displeasure with these submissions. It passed an order that the High Court is prima facie satisfied that interests of petitioner Waltair Club are to be protected.

It thus granted a stay on all further proceedings before SIT. The court further directed SIT not to interfere with the title, possession, occupation and affairs of Waltair Club.

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 20

Calling the forthcoming Tirupati parliamentary by-election a battle between good and evil, justice and injustice; Telugu Desam state president Kinjarapu Atchannaidu exhorted party workers to work towards TDP's victo-

ry for teaching AP Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy a lesson on performing well.

Addressing a meeting after inaugurating TD's Tirupati by-poll office near Renigunta on Wednesday, Atchannaidu said, "Keep aside politics for some time. Let us teach the Andhra CM a lesson to

perform well for rest of his time. If we make Telugu Desam win this by-election, Jagan will be forced to behave well, whether he rules for three or six months. But eventually, he will have to face jail," he observed. TD state president alleged that AP CM is desperately trying to divert people's attention

## Housing scheme



TTD chairman Y. V. Subbaredy distributes House site pattas to Beneficiaries under Navaratnalu-Pedalandarikil Illu programme at Nemam near Kakinada on Wednesday.

– DECCAN CHRONICLE

## SWARNA VARIETY RICE BEING SUPPLIED: NANI

FROM PAGE 1

Civil supplies minister Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao alias Nani said under the Chandrababu Naidu regime, percentage of husk and coloured grains was high in ration supplied to cardholders. But now, they are supplying Swarna variety of rice with zero percent stones and less than one percent of coloured or damaged grains.

Nani said quality rice will be distributed in reusable bags at doorsteps by taking the cardholders' fingerprints. Every bag of rice will be sealed and tagged with a unique code, giving zero scope for adulteration.

All mobile vehicles will have a GPS system fitted to track PDS deliveries in real-time. Each vehicle will deliver goods for an average of 18 days per month.

For purpose of door delivery, the state government has distributed 9,260 subsidised vehicles to eligible unemployed youth, incurring a cost of Rs. 539 crore. The quantum of subsidy is as much as 60 percent subsidy under the Employment Guarantee Scheme of various corporations.

The value of each vehicle is ₹5.81 lakh of which ₹3.48 lakh is government subsidy. ST corporation has subsidised approximately 700 vehicles, SC corporation 2,300, BC corporation 3,800, Minorities corporation 660, and EWEBC corporation 1,800 vehicles.

Jagan Mohan Reddy government has also started offering ration cards to all eligible people across the state in just 10 days from the date of filing their applications under five categories – issuing of new ration card, division of a ration card, adding members to a rice card, removing members from a rice card and surrendering the rice card.

In the process, 4,93,422 new ration cards have been issued from June 2020 till date.

## ₹1,000 cr for road repairs in AP: Min

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 20

The Andhra Pradesh government will spend ₹1,000 crore for road repairs, Roads and Buildings minister M. Sankara Narayana has said. He and principal secretary M.T. Krishnababu held a regional review meeting here on Wednesday and said three more such meetings would be held in the state – in East Godavari, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam.

The minister told the media that the meetings would take stock of the prevailing road conditions. A total of ₹1,000 crore would need to be spent for repairs before the end of the current financial year, meaning March 31. Recently, ₹200 crore had been sanctioned for repair of roads destroyed in Cyclone Nivar.

The AP Road Development Corporation would spend ₹2,200 crore in the next three years. It would collect a cess of ₹1 per litre of diesel and petrol and this fund would be used for road development.

Similarly, the New Development Bank (NDB) is set to sanction ₹6,000 crore for the state, which would be used for developing double lane roads from district headquar-



M. Sankara Narayana

ters to mandal headquarters. As part of this project, 450 bridges would be rebuilt.

Tenders have already been invited for projects using NDB fund. About ₹85 crore could be saved from these works due to the reverse tendering process. This apart, NABARD would be sanctioning ₹1,150 crore for road development under the Infrastructure Development Assistance (NIDA) programme.

"Chief Minister Jagan prevailed on Union road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari for sanction of ₹12,500 crore for development of national highways in the state," Sankar Narayan said.

Principal secretary MT Krishnababu said land acquisition was a key requisite in roads development and widening. With the coordination of district officials, the process was being taken up.

## IT MINISTER GAUTAM INAUGURATES SKILL VIGNAN CENTRE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 20

Minister for industries and IT Mekapati Gautam Reddy inaugurated Skill Vignan Centre at APMediTech Zone in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday. Skills, based on biotechnology, would be imparted in this Centre. Addressing a small gathering, the minister said Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy

has been focussing on the learning of skills at a very young age with discipline and dedication. He said the state government has been encouraging the entrepreneurs coming forward to manufacture high end technical equipments in the state.

The minister later visited the facilities at the zone and examined the medical equipment being assembled/manufactured on the premises.

## MINISTER SEEKS COOPERATION OF STAFF TO COMPLETE POLAVARAM

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

State water sources minister P. Anil Kumar Yadav has said the Polavaram project should be completed by 2022 and called for full cooperation from employees to achieve this objective.

The minister released the 2021 diary of the irrigation department NGOs association at the water resource department office here on Wednesday. He said Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy was giving top priority to the Polavaram project. "The government is taking all steps to complete Polavaram."

Praising the efforts of irrigation employees in implementation of the irrigation schemes, the

minister appealed to them to help the government in a time-bound completion of projects including Polavaram. He promised to resolve their issues sympathetically.

Irrigation department NGOs association state president Bandi Srinivas Rao lamented that the previous government wasted crores of funds by sending people on visit to project sites and put huge work burden on the employees. The employees are ready to render their cooperation for timely completion of the Polavaram project, he said.

APNGOs association state president N. Chandrasekhar Reddy, irrigation department officials and other leaders participated in the programme.

## TD win in Tirupati bypoll is necessary: Atchannaidu



## SHORT TAKES

## No adverse reaction to vaccine

**Nellore:** Claiming that there are no adverse effects because of vaccination among 6,000 people who took the vaccine in Nellore district, District Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu has appealed to the public to join the mega exercise without any apprehensions. He was addressing a large gathering during the distribution of house sites at Gummalladibba village.

## NTR VARSITY INVITES ONLINE APPLICATIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

NTR university of health sciences invited common application form and uploading of documents for admission into several under-graduate courses under competent authority quota for the academic year 2020-21 from 6 pm on Jan. 21 to 4 pm on Feb. 5 in AP.

In a release issued by the registrar here on Wednesday, common online application form for admission into several courses in the colleges affiliated to Dr NTR university of health sciences, Vijayawada, is invited from the eligible candidates. The courses being offered include: BSc nursing four years degree course, BPT, BSc paramedical, Post Basic BSc (nursing) two years degree course.

Eligible candidates are asked to apply online at the university website: <https://apparamed.apntruhs.in>.

## PROTECTING CONSUMERS: APERC CHAIRMAN

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 20

Andhra Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission chairman Nagarjuna Reddy said the commission was protecting the interests of the consumers. He was speaking at the public hearing on Aggregate Revenue Requirement & Tariff filing for financial year 2021-22 which concluded in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

A total 68 persons participated in the video conference and 20 persons objected on tariff issues. Most of them opined that optimum utilization of renewable source of energy was necessary and many objected to installation of meters to agriculture sector.

APERCDCL CMD Nagalakshmi Selvarajan said policies will be implemented to provide financial benefit to the farmers.

CMD/APSPDCL H. Haranatha Rao, said that distribution company was thankful to the APERC for the approvals on true-ups collection of DTR cost and vigorous pursuance with Government of Andhra Pradesh on realisation of Government arrears.

APERCDCL CMD J. Padmajanardhana Reddy said that compensation for electrical accidents is being paid as per Regulation 2 of 2017.

Energy deputy secretary B.A.V.P. Kumar Reddy said that the State Government is committed to provide uninterrupted 24/7 electricity at affordable prices.

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## AP records 173 cases of Covid-19, no deaths

Chittoor registers 46, followed by 27 in Visakhapatnam

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

Andhra Pradesh registered 173 fresh cases of Covid-19 and no death in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin here on Wednesday reporting that out of 46,852 samples tested, 173 were found infected with Coronavirus. Out of a total number of 1,26,90,165 samples tested so far in the state, 8,86,418 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 8,77,639 were recovered while 1,637 are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of confirmed Coronavirus, Chittoor registered the

## COVID-19 VACCINATION DRIVE STARTS IN ANDHRA HOSPITALS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 20

Krishna district Collector AMd Imtiaz asserted on the need of administering Covid-19 vaccine to staff by the hospitals to restrain the pandemic. The Collector inaugurated administering of Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin in the Andhra Hospitals at Vijayawada which is the first private hospital in the city to start vaccination to its staff. Dr P.V. Ramana

highest 46 followed by 27 in Visakhapatnam, 19 each in Krishna and

Murthy, managing director, Andhra Hospitals took the first vaccine.

Mr Imtiaz said that the government started vaccination in three phases in the State and said that first priority is given to health workers and staff. Dr Ramana Murthy said that as many as 1,084 staff would get vaccinated in two days on Wednesday and Thursday. He said that hospital made arrangements for 18 cubicles.

Guntur, 12 in East Godavari, 11 in Kadapa, eight in Anantapur,

seven each in Kurnool, Prakasam and Vizianagaram, four in Nellore and three each in Srikakulam and West Godavari.

Krishna district registered the highest number of cumulative active cases of Coronavirus with 259 followed by 248 in Guntur, 201 in East Godavari, 192 in Kadapa, 143 in Chittoor, 137 in Visakhapatnam, 131 in Nellore, 74 in Prakasam, 58 each in West Godavari and Kurnool, 54 in Anantapur, 45 in Srikakulam and 37 in Vizianagaram.

No case of death of Coronavirus infected patient reported throughout the state keeping the death toll constant at 7,142.

## ATTACK ON CRUSHING UNIT BY MLA AIDES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, JAN.20

A tense situation prevailed at Chadam village in Rayadurgam mandal where some 50 aides of YSRC MLA Kapu Ramachandra Reddy attacked workers of a stone crusher unit on Wednesday.

At least six workers and four others were seriously injured in the attack and two of them were in critical condition in a hospital.

According to police, Lakshmi Devi is running the stone crusher unit in Rayaduregam area for the past 9 years, a group of men close to the MLA were threatening her and workers to exit from the site. "The MLA's close aides and his son wanted to grab the unit," she said. The woman said she refused to hand over the unit.

## PROTEST OVER RETRENCHMENT

Nellore: CITU state president Ch. Narsinga Rao came down heavily against the management of Krishnapatnam Port for removing 500 workers from the job illegally during a protest before the Collectorate in Nellore on Wednesday.

**JAGADAMBA 4K DOLBY QUARTET SPEAKERS**

**DAILY 4 SHOWS**

**KRACHEN**

## Cops recover stolen gold worth ₹30 lakh

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 20

The Visakhapatnam police cracked a major gold theft that took place at a beach side resort and recovered 530 grams of gold worth ₹30 lakh. One burglar was arrested in this connection. The arrested person was identified as 29-year-old Pokathota Gangadhar.

Commissioner of police Manish Kumar Sinha told reporters that soon after being released from prison, Gangadhar had planned to scale the resort wall and steal ornaments and valuables during the marriage ceremony in the resort.

A clue left by the thief helped the police to crack the case after four weeks of manhunt. To solve the case, the cops had visited various

places in Andhra Pradesh and other states as well.

The burglary took place on December 24 in a well-known resort near Rushikonda beach in the early hours when the family members and relatives of the bride were asleep.

Sinha said that they have solved the case with technical evidence and appreciated the efforts of his team. The accused Gangadhar, an orphan, is a native of Vijayawada city but has been working as a waiter in a restaurant in Vizag. He took the crime route for easy money and was involved in 18 property offences in parts of Andhra Pradesh and was also arrested in the past.

On December 8, 2020, Gangadhar was released from the prison

and has been looking for another heist.

He came to know about a marriage at the noted resort.

He scaled the wall of the resort on December 24 in the early hours and took away the gold ornaments of over 600 gms of the bride from a room and jumped past the wall. Later, he took a cab and fled from the location.

ACP (Crime Wing) D. Sravan Kumar said that initially they didn't get any clue and the investigation took many days to identify the accused. Some clues helped the police to crack the accused.

Finally they nabbed the accused and recovered 530 gms of gold and have to recover over 60 gms of gold, which was pledged with a gold finance firm, he added.

## NGT takes up DC impact on KMC issue

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI |  
DC  
KURNOOL, JAN 20

The National Green Tribunal's south zone bench in Chennai took up suo motu a news report in *Deccan Chronicle* on December 10 last titled, 'Kurnool shocked by the quality of KMC water', and heard the matter via video conference on Wednesday.

About 22 respondents have been arrayed including secretary to the Union environment-forest-climate change ministry (MoEF). Notices will be issued to the respondents.

The failure of Kurnool Municipal Corporation (KMC) in providing safe drinking water to its citizens was highlighted in the DC report. KMC primarily depends on the Tungabhadra river which is polluted, but

● The failure of Kurnool Municipal Corporation (KMC) in providing safe drinking water to its citizens was highlighted in the DC report. KMC primarily depends on the Tungabhadra river which is polluted, but this has been glossed over by successive special officers

this has been glossed over by successive special officers, the report had noted.

Elected representatives, government officials and prominent citizens of Kurnool city thanked *Deccan Chronicle* for highlighting civic issues.

Pollution in Handri and Tungabhadra, the two rivers that flow across Kurnool city, has been causing health risks to people residing on the river bank. The

river needs to be cleared of plastic waste and other non-degradable material, as also lead and cadmium. Regional pollution control board officials say Tungabhadra waters showed marginally higher toxins after Pushkarams.

The RPCB has conducted a test on the quality of water in Tungabhadra at start of December after completion of the Tungabhadra Pushkarams and found that two parameters, namely biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and total coliform bacteria, were exceeding the standard limits.

Citizens of Kurnool hoped that the NGT order would help in supply of safe drinking water. "I think Kurnool may get a sewerage treatment plant with the latest amenities, said a senior citizen.

## BOY WHO STABBED GIRL FOUND DEAD

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 20

Dilli Babu, the 19-year-old who was at large after stabbing his 20-year-old girlfriend to death was found dead in the forest area near Thurpu palli village in Penumuru mandal of Chittoor district on Wednesday. He ended his life by hanging himself to a tree inside the forest area, police said.

Dilli Babu is the lone accused in the sensational murder case of G. Gayatri. The accused and the victim, who fell in love with each other some time ago.

## Shortage of carry bags at temple

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 20

Devotees on a visit to the world-renowned Srikalahastheeswara temple, located in Srikalahasti town of Chittoor district, are facing inconvenience due to the shortage of prasadam carry bags at the prasadam distribution counters.

The devotees are complaining about the temple administration's inaction in preventing the shortage in the first place at the most prominent Shaivite temple, which is famous for the Rahu-Ketu poojas performed here and is being thronged by more than 25,000 devotees a day.

The temple administration cooks various prasadam including Laddu, Vada, Jilebi and Pulihora and offers them to the presiding deities inside the temple. The prasadam were later sold to the devotees and the sales procedures have been outsourced to a private contractor.

The issue of shortage of carry bags was there for more than a week now. The devasthanam officials, however, realised the issue only after a few devotees, who faced inconvenience with the shortage of carry bags had been outsourced to a private agency, took the issue to the notice of the temple administration.

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SHORT TAKES

MUMBAI POLICE FILE FIR AGAINST ‘TANDAV’ TEAM

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 20

Mumbai police on Wednesday registered an FIR based on a complaint filed by BJP MLA Ram Kadam about web series *Tandav*. Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh said that action will be taken in the case as per law. Meanwhile, a four-member team of Uttar Pradesh Police arrived in Mumbai to conduct a probe into a case registered in Lucknow against the web series.

In a related development, the Bombay high court granted transit anticipatory bail for three weeks to Ali Abbas Zafar, the director of *Tandav*. He has been granted bail in connection with the FIR registered in the UP. The transit pre-arrest bail has been granted to enable him to approach the appropriate court for regular anticipatory bail.

The said FIR was registered at Hazratganj Police Station in Lucknow. Several people are named in the FIR and the team of cops from Lucknow intend to interrogate all those who were named in the FIR, before taking any action.

The UP police team, which has already reached the city, will first approach the Mumbai police for local assistance.

While several FIRs were filed across the country against the makers, Amazon Prime Video and the actors, the makers had also issued an unconditional apology on Tuesday for unintentionally hurting anyone's religious sentiments.

Despite that, a group of BJP supporters led by BJP MLA Ram Kadam held protests in Mumbai's BKC against the show.

OVER 7 LAKH BENEFICIARIES GET VACCINATED

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 20

In a significant achievement in India's Covid-19 trajectory, the active caseload slipped below two lakhs (1.97 lakh) after six months and 24 days. On Wednesday, India also registered one of the lowest daily new confirmed Covid-19 cases per million population in the last seven days. There were 13,823 new positive cases and 162 deaths in the last one day. This decline in daily new cases has also contributed to the shrinkage in active caseload.

On the other hand, 7,86,842 beneficiaries have been vaccinated for Covid-19 in the last five days, out of which 1,12,007 persons were vaccinated on Wednesday. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra are the few states where large number of vaccinations took place. On Wednesday, 82 cases of Adverse Effect From immunization (AEFI) were reported following the vaccination.

Ten people were hospitalised due to AEFI out of which three are under observation — one each in Delhi, Murshidabad (West Bengal) and Chitradurga (Karnataka) while others were discharged. So far four deaths of beneficiaries who took the jab have taken place ever since the vaccination drive began on Saturday. While the post mortem of a healthcare worker from Telangana is going on, officials said three others died due to other reasons not related to vaccination.

The 42-year-old Telangana healthcare worker was inoculated on Tuesday. He later complained of chest pain and died early on Wednesday. Out of the four deaths, three have suffered cardiac arrest while one died due to cardio-pulmonary disease.

Final checks



Indian Air Force Rafale jet and Jaguar aircraft fly past Rajpath during the rehearsals for Republic Day Parade 2021 in New Delhi on Monday.

— PTI

MP rocked by 4 rapes in 10 days

Cong slams Shivraj govt for having failed to check growing incidents of rape in state

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JAN. 20

Madhya Pradesh has witnessed barbaric rape of four girls in the last 10 days, triggering public outcry.

In a shocking incident, a 13-year-old girl was raped in her family's farmland in Jangda village under Ghodadangar police limits in Betul district by a local villager late on Monday evening. The victim had gone to the farm to switch off the motor.

On finding her alone, the accused Sushil Verma (45) raped her and then buried her under a heap of stones, Betul district superintendent of police Shilma Prasad said on Wednesday. The victim's sisters who came to the farm while searching her late on Monday night, had found her buried in a pit and alerted their father, who carried her to Ghodadangar hospital. She was later referred to Nagpur Medical College hospital. The accused has been arrested.

In another incident, a 13-year-old girl, resident of Umaria, had been raped for three days by nine people.

On January 11, the girl

● IN A SHOCKING incident, a 13-year-old girl, resident of Umaria, had been raped for three days by nine people.

was abducted and taken to Chhatan jungle in Umaria district by two youths, identified as Rahul Kushwaha and Akash Singh, where they allegedly raped her.

She was later taken to a nearby eatery where she was allegedly raped by the 'dhaba' owner Paras Soni and four of his associates, according to a complaint lodged by the victim in the local police station.

She was later taken to Chhatan jungle by them where she was gang-raped, she alleged.

According to her complaint, she was then bundled in a Katni-bound truck on January 12 by the accused.

The truck driver had raped her and then dropped her at Kala Badbara check gate. Later, she got a lift in a Umaria-bound truck in which she was raped by the truck driver.

The victim along with her family members filed FIR in the Umaria police station on January 15. While 7 accused were arrested, 2

others were absconding, police said.

On January 10, a widow was raped by three youths in the village of Umilia in Sidhi district. The three accused had then inserted an iron rod in her private parts.

She was battling for life in a hospital in Rewa. Two accused, Lalu kol and Bhailal Patel were arrested, while another accused was absconding, police said.

On Tuesday night, a girl was waylaid by two motorcycle-borne youths in Indore and then taken to nearby railway track where she was allegedly raped by them. Three other people who were waiting there also allegedly raped her.

They then bundled her in a jute sack and threw her on the railway track, police said.

She managed to free herself and called her friend who took her to the hospital. The girl has identified one of the accused as Akshaya. All the five accused were absconding, police said.

Senior Congress leader and former chief minister Kamal Nath slammed the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government for having failed to check growing incidents of rape in the state.

6 parties form ‘alliance’ in Assam

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JAN. 20

In what is set to give a formidable challenge to the ruling BJP-led alliance in forthcoming Assembly polls, six opposition political parties, led by the Congress, have formally announced the formation of a 'grand alliance' to take on the BJP-led NDA government in Assam.

Besides the principal opposition Congress, the All India

United Democratic Front (AIUDF), the Communist Party of India (CPI), the CPI(M), the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) Liberation, and the Anchalik Gana Morcha (AGM) led by Rajya Sabha MP Ajit Kumar Bhuyan are the part of the grand alliance.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, who is the senior observer of the All India Congress Committee

for the Assam elections made this announcement after several rounds of consultation with all the partners.

Among others present on the occasion were Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Ripun Bora, AICC general secretary in-charge for Assam Jitendra Singh, AICC general secretary and former Union minister Mukul Wasnik, senior Congress leader and AICC observer Shakeel Ahmed

Khan, leader of the state Congress Legislature Party (CLP) Debabrata Saikia, APCC vice-presidents Prodyut Bordoloi and Rakibul Husain, AIUDF leaders Aminul Islam and Hafiz Bashir Ahmed Kasimi, AGM president Ajit Kumar Bhuyan, CPI state secretary Munin Mahanta, CPI(M) state secretary Deben Bhattacharya, and CPI(ML) Liberation State secretary Rubul Sarma, among others.

SP TO HOLD JOINT RALLY WITH SENA, NCP IN MUMBAI

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 20

In a bid to stop the BJP from coming to power in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), the Samajwadi Party (SP) is planning to organise a grand public rally of north Indians in alliance with the Shiv Sena and NCP. SP leader Ram Charitra Nishad met Shiv Sena president and Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray in this regard.

The proposed meeting will be addressed by NCP chief Sharad Pawar, Thackeray and SP national president Akhilesh Yadav. Nishad said that the mega rally is likely to be held in Mumbai after Holi in March.

The BMC polls will be held along with UP Assembly elections in early 2022. Around 24 lakhs voters are north Indian in Mumbai.

Leaking secrets of military ops is treason: Cong

New Delhi, Jan. 20:

Leaking of official secrets of military operations is treason and those involved in it must be punished, the Congress said on Wednesday on the purported WhatsApp chats of *Republic TV* editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami and demanded that the Prime Minister must come clean.

The party said those involved in the "anti-national act" deserve no mercy and the government should immediately order an inquiry into the "information leak" about the 2019 air strikes.

The Congress fielded its top leaders — former defence minister A.K. Antony, leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, former home minister Sushilkumar Shinde and former law and external affairs minister Salman Khurshid to launch a scathing attack on the government at a joint press conference.

The Congress said it would raise the issue in a big way in Parliament during the budget session starting January 29 and garner support of other parties for a joint offensive against the government including a joint parliamentary committee probe.

It also accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and top ministers who

are members of the Cabinet Committee on Security of violating the Official Secrets Act and demanded that action be taken against them and ascertain who leaked the sensitive information.

"Leaking of official secrets is a criminal act. Leaking official secrets about military operation, national security matters, sensitive military operations especially military strike is treason, anti-national. They have to be punished for anti-national activities, for treason. They deserve no mercy," Antony said.

Referring to the WhatsApp chats between Goswami and ex-BARC CEO Partho Dasgupta, he said India's national security has never been compromised in such a way and never have the high offices of the prime minister, home minister and others been "brazenly compromised".

"Does the PM, Union home minister, in fact the entire government have any moral, political, Constitutional right to continue in office after such damning revelations? We demand that the PM should come clean on these accusations immediately in order to restore the severely damaged credibility of the highest office of the country," a joint statement by the leaders said. — PTI

India, EU hold online talks on maritime security

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 20

India and the European Union (EU) held their first-ever maritime security dialogue in a virtual format on Wednesday during which "developments in maritime security environment, regional cooperation activities, developments of mutual interest and opportunities for cooperation between India and the EU" were discussed.

It may be recalled that India and the EU had — during their 15th bilateral Summit in July last year — agreed to strengthen military-to-military relations and naval cooperation and establish a maritime security dialogue to preserve safety and stability in the Indian Ocean, in what was seen as a veiled but clear signal to China.

In a statement on Wednesday, the ministry of external affairs said, "India and the EU held their first maritime security dialogue in a virtual format on 20 January 2021. The consultations involved exchanges on developments in maritime security environment,

regional cooperation activities, developments of mutual interest and opportunities for cooperation between India and the EU."

The ministry of external affairs added, "The EU-India Maritime Dialogue was chaired by Director Joanneke Balfourt on the EEAS side and Joint Secretary Sandeep Arya on the Indian side. The dialogue seeks to develop mutual understanding and cooperation opportunities between India and the EU in the maritime security domain as another factor of the strategic partnership between the two sides consistent with the India-EU Roadmap to 2025."

It may be recalled that India, along with the United States, Japan and Australia, is a member of the four nation Quad, an arrangement that aims to preserve a "rules-based order" in the Indo-Pacific region. In a major move, EU-member nation France had on Tuesday announced that there would be a "strategic triangle" along with India and Japan "committed to a rules-based Indo-Pacific" region.

BARC ex-CEO's bail rejected in TRP scam

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 20

A Sessions court in Mumbai on Wednesday dismissed a bail application filed by Partho Dasgupta, former CEO of Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), who has been arrested in connection with the alleged Television Rating Points (TRP) scam case in December last year.

A graduate from IIM Calcutta, Partho Dasgupta was the CEO of Broadcast Audience Research Council ("BARC") between June 2013 and November 2019. He had moved the bail application after he was remanded to judicial custody. The Crime Branch has charged him under sections 409 (criminal breach of trust by a public servant), 420 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code.

He had filed the bail application through advocate Shardul Singh and Arjun Singh on the grounds that there was nothing more left to be recovered from him. The chats were not authenticated by a 65B certificate under the Indian Evidence Act hence it could not be considered as evidence. Moreover, an Oversight Committee has certified by their own report that TRPs cannot be tampered with manually.

Special public prosecutor Shishir Hire had vehemently opposed the bail application filed by Dasgupta on behalf of police.

He had read out several WhasApp chats between Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami and the applicant to show their proximity. He had also contended that as an ex-BARC CEO the accused has good resources and if released on bail he could influence witnesses in the case. He had pointed out that in one of the chats, which are part of the supplementary charge sheet, Goswami allegedly offered to mediate with the PMO's office on behalf of Dasgupta, while in another chat they speak about manipulating the TRPs of Republic to surpass Times Now.

Advocate Hirey argued that Dasgupta, in his capacity as the CEO of BARC, was supposed to be a neutral party and that the rise in TRPs of a channel was directly proportional to its ad-revenue.

Dasgupta's lawyer Singh had also sought bail on the ground of parity. He had argued that the co-accused who was allegedly directly involved in manipulation, according to the report, is already on bail.

India to despatch 20L vaccine doses to B'desh

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 20

After delivering one lakh doses of the Indian-manufactured Covishield (Oxford-AstraZeneca) vaccine to the Maldives and 1.5 lakh Covishield doses to Bhutan on Wednesday, India will step up its powerful display of neighbourhood vaccine diplomacy by despatching a massive 20 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine to Bangladesh and 10 lakh doses of the Covishield vaccine to Nepal on Thursday. The vaccines supplied have been manufactured by the Serum Institute of India at Pune. All four nations lie in India's immediate neighbourhood and the consignments are being seen as India's "gift" to these nations.

A consignment containing 20 lakh doses of the Covishield vaccine will reach Bangladesh's Capital Dhaka on Thursday. The vaccine delivery fulfils the assurance given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bangladesh

● THE VACCINE delivery fulfils the assurance given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during the bilateral Virtual Summit last month that India would facilitate supply of vaccines as and when ready.

● 10 LAKH doses of the Covishield vaccine will be despatched to Nepal.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during the bilateral Virtual Summit last month that India would facilitate supply of vaccines as and when ready.

It is also being seen as reflective of India's strong commitment to "Neighbourhood First" Policy and Bangladesh's special place in it. A consignment of 10 lakh doses of the Covishield vaccine will also reach Nepalese Capital Kathmandu on Thursday.

The Nepalese Government had earlier requested for supply of Indian manufactured Covid vaccines and the request was reiterated during the recent visit to India by the Nepalese Foreign Minister.

Meanwhile, a consignment containing

1.5 lakh doses of the Covishield vaccine reached Bhutan's Thimphu on Wednesday. "VaccineMaitri" begins. Consignment arrives in Bhutan. Another example of #NeighbourhoodFirst," External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar tweeted. Also, a consignment containing one lakh doses of the Covishield vaccine reached the Maldivian Capital Male on Wednesday.

"Indian vaccines reach Maldives, reflects our special friendship," External Affairs Minister Jaishankar tweeted. Bhutan and the Maldives were the first two foreign countries to receive the Covishield vaccines, highlighting their close strategic proximity to India.

NAME | CHANGE

Gujarat govt applies for a patent to change nomenclature of dragon fruit

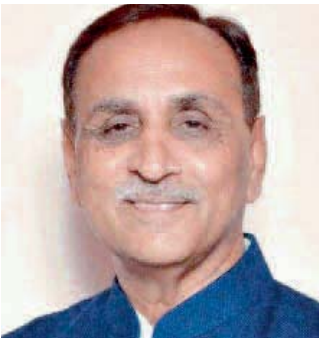
Guj to rename dragon fruit as ‘Kamalam’

Gandhinagar, Jan. 20: The Gujarat government has decided to rename dragon fruit as 'Kamalam'. Chief Minister Vijay Rupani has said.

The state government has applied for a patent to change the nomenclature of dragon fruit, which is largely grown in Kutch, Navsari and different parts of Saurashtra, to 'Kamalam'. Rupani told reporters on Tuesday.

"The name dragon fruit is not proper, and due to its name one thinks of China. So we have given it the name 'Kamalam'," he said.

Asked why the name 'Kamalam' has been given to the fruit, Rupani said, "Farmers say it looks like lotus and that is the reason we



Vijay Rupani

have named it 'Kamalam'."

Notably, 'Kamal', or lotus, is the poll symbol of the BJP and Gujarat party unit headquarters is named Shri Kamalam. There is nothing political

● CHIEF MINISTER Vijay Rupani said, "the name dragon fruit is not proper, and due to its name one thinks of China. So we have given it the name 'Kamalam'."

● THE FRUIT is found in arid areas of the state and it is known for its nutritional value, like it also helps in increasing the hemoglobin, Rupani said in reply to question on the need to rename it.

behind renaming of the fruit, Rupani said.

The fruit is found in arid areas of the state and it is known for its nutritional value, like it also helps in

increasing the hemoglobin, Rupani said in reply to question on the need to rename it.

The CM also said it is the most expensive fruit available in the market at this time. The change in nomenclature of the fruit is yet to find its way among the masses and farmers.

Ahmedabad-based housewife Gayatri Vyas, who regularly eats the fruit for its nutritional value, said she is not aware that it has been changed as it is available as 'dragon fruit' only in markets.

The fruit comes from several different cactus species and is recommended to be eaten as it can boost immunity.

Lately, cultivators from some of the state's arid regions like

Kutch have largely taken up farming of this fruit.

The NCP on Wednesday targeted the BJP over the Gujarat government's decision to rename dragon fruit as 'Kamalam', saying the time may not be far when the saffron party would start calling the country as "Kamalasthan".

The BJP has now started "branding itself on fruits also," NCP chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said in a statement.

Tapase said, "The BJP has now started branding itself on fruits also. We fear that the time may be not far when they would start addressing Hindustan as Kamalasthan." — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

2 SECURITY MEN  
KILLED IN PAK  
TERROR ATTACK

**Peshawar, Jan. 20:** At least two security personnel were killed and one injured when unknown terrorists riding a bike opened fire at a Security Forces Road Protection team in northwest Pakistan late on Tuesday night, local police said.

The incident occurred in the jurisdiction of Gomal police station in Tank district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering the South Waziristan tribal district. The policemen who died in the firing were identified as Sepoy Khalid and Sepoy Ayaz. The injured cop was identified as Sepoy Muhammad Ramazan.

Security forces rushed to the site, cordoned off the entire area and started a search operation to nab the fleeing culprits. No group claimed responsibility for the attack till the filing of this report.

LIBYA AMMO  
WAREHOUSE  
BLAST KILLS 3

**Cairo, Jan. 20:** A fire, followed by an explosion at an ammunition warehouse at a naval academy in western Libya killed three people, including two officers, a Libyan spokesman said Wednesday.

It was not clear what caused the overnight blaze at the academy in the town of Janzur, about 24 kilometres (14 miles) west of the capital of Tripoli, said Masoud Abdal Samad, the spokesman of the Libyan navy.

Four people were also wounded in the incident. Samad said the dead included Brig. Gen. Ahmed Ayoub, the head of the academy, and Brig. Gen. Salem Abu Salah, who ran the naval college.

The third person who died was not identified. Video footage that circulated online following the incident shows firefighters and ambulances rushing to the site where a building is engulfed in a huge fire.

2 BRITISH SIKHS  
CHARGED FOR  
STREET FIGHT

**London, Jan. 20:** Two British Sikh men have been charged following what Scotland Yard described as a large altercation involving swords and knives in Southall, west London. Sukwir Singh, 22, and Lakha Singh, 29, both residents of Southall here, appeared at the Willesden Magistrates' Court on Monday charged with affray and threatening a person with a blade/sharply pointed article in a public place.

"Police were called at around 00:20hrs on Sunday, 17 January, to reports of a large group of around 30 men fighting with various weapons, including knives and swords, in the area of King Street," the Metropolitan Police said in a statement. "Officers attended and arrested two males, both aged in their 20s, on suspicion of violent disorder and affray. There were no reported injuries," the statement added.

INDIAN JAILED  
FOR MOLESTING  
S'PORE WOMAN

**Singapore, Jan. 20:** A 26-year-old Indian painter in Singapore was sentenced to nine months in prison on Wednesday for molesting a pregnant woman after following her to a lift lobby, according to a media report.

Kota Durga Prasad molested the three-month pregnant woman who was visiting her husband in Singapore on the night of September 5 last year, reported the *Channel News Asia*.

## DEMOCRACY HAS PREVAILED: BIDEN

Newly inaugurated US Prez, in maiden speech, calls on Americans 'to defend the truth and defeat the lies'

**Washington, Jan. 20:** "Democracy has prevailed," newly inaugurated US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday in his maiden speech as he called on Americans "to defend the truth and defeat the lies". Speaking shortly after taking oath as the 46th President of the United States, 78-year-old Biden also pledged to repair America's global allies, which suffered during his predecessor Donald Trump's four-year regime. "This is America's day. democracy has prevailed," Biden said, apparently referring to his Trump's efforts to deny him victory in the November 3 election won by him.

"With unity we can do great things," he said referring to the challenges ahead of him from fighting the Coronavirus to addressing racial injustice. "Unity is the path forward," he asserted, laying out his vision to defeat the pandemic, build back better, and unify and heal the nation. Biden asserted that he will be the president for all Americans, all those who voted for him and those who did not vote for him. In his speech that lasted for 21 minutes, Biden praised Americans for rising to the challenge and reclaiming democracy. He mentioned the attempt to undo it at that exact location two weeks ago, and renewed his campaign goals of overcoming the pandemic, bringing racial justice and fighting climate change.

Biden also criticised those who have stoked anger and division, and asked those who opposed him to "hear me out." He called out those who lie for political power and profit. "There is truth, and there are lies," he added. In a message to the international community, Biden said that he would rebuild the alliances frayed over the past four years. "We can make America once again the leading force of good in the world." "We will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again, not to meet yesterday's challenges but today's and tomorrow's challenges," he said. "We will lead by the power of our example," he said in his message to the international community.

The 78-year-old veteran Democratic leader said: "We'll be a strong and trusted partner for peace, progress and security." "America has been tested, and we have come out stronger for it. We will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again. We'll lead, not merely by the exam-

READY TO SERVE,  
SAYS KAMALA IN  
1ST TWEET AFTER  
TAKING OATH

**Washington, Jan. 20:** Kamala Harris was on Wednesday sworn in as America's first woman Vice President during a historic inauguration at the West Front of the Capitol. Harris, 56, the 49th US Vice President, will serve as the deputy of President Joe Biden, 78, who also took the oath of office, becoming the 46th US President.

Harris took over the office of the US Vice President from 61-year-old Mike Pence. Biden succeeded President Donald Trump, 74. In her first tweet as Vice President from her official Twitter handle, she said: "Ready to serve."

Harris, the daughter of an Indian immigrant from Chennai, scripted history by becoming the first-ever woman Vice President of the United States. She is also the first female, first Black and first South Asian American vice president. Her husband Douglas Emhoff, 56, is the first "Second Gentleman" — the first male spouse of a vice president in the US. Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina member of the Supreme Court, administered the oath of office to Harris. She was sworn in on two Bibles — one that belonged to a close family friend named Regina Shelton and another that belonged to Thurgood Marshall — the country's first African American Supreme Court justice. — *PTI*

ple of our power, but by the power of our example. We'll be a strong and trusted partner for peace, progress and security," Biden said. Many world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have tweeted their congratulations to the new administration and expressed their optimism at working together. "My warmest congratulations to Joe Biden on his assumption of office as President of the United States of America. I look forward to working with him to strengthen India-US strategic partnership," Modi said. "My best wishes for a successful term in leading USA as we stand united and resilient in addressing common challenges and advancing global peace and security," he said. — *PTI*

## Kamala brings in new dressing style

**Washington, Jan. 20:** Vice President-elect Kamala Harris' understated and elegant signature style of blazers combined with sneakers signals a new way of power dressing. Harris, 56, made history as the first female, first Person of Colour and first South Asian American vice president on Wednesday.

Emerging as a woman of conviction and dedicated towards her work, Harris makes sure her approachable personality is reflected through her attire, several US media outlets reported. Her no-nonsense wardrobe often features sharp blazers, skinny

pants, pearls and Converse sneakers. Her style is understated, tailored, elegant, businesslike, with a touch of whimsy, said Susan E. Kelley, who runs the blog What Kamala Wore, in a report in the *New York Post*. The clothes don't wear her; she wears the clothes, Kelley said.

That professional polish mixed with West Coast nonchalance signals a new way of dressing for the corridors of power, it said.

Harris opted to wear a dress designed by two Black designers for her historic inauguration as the US Vice-president. In opting to wear the dress designed by Christopher



Vice President-elect Kamala Harris greets former US President Barack Obama ahead of Joe Biden's inauguration as the 46th President of the United States on the West Front of the US Capitol in Washington, on Wednesday. — *AP*

## 12 Guard troops pulled out

**Washington, Jan. 20:** Twelve US National Guard troops have been pulled from duty protecting the presidential inauguration of Joe Biden, partly due to an investigation of extremist sympathies in the ranks, the Pentagon said Tuesday. Two of the 12 were removed from duty for making "inappropriate comments or texts," said National Guard Commander General Daniel Hokanson.

The two were sent home, he said, declining to explain what was said in the comments. They were pulled from

BIDEN HOMELAND SECURITY PICK TO  
REOPEN ASYLUM FOR MIGRANTS

**Washington, Jan. 20:** President-elect Joe Biden's Homeland Security secretary nominee Alejandro Mayorkas promised Tuesday to apply US asylum laws to undocumented immigrants but did not say how he would deal with a caravan of Honduran migrants now bound for the US.

Mayorkas told a Senate committee vetting his nomination that the government would roll back departing President Donald Trump's tough measures to seal the southern US border. — *AFP*

duran migrants now bound for the US.

Mayorkas told a Senate committee vetting his nomination that the government would roll back departing President Donald Trump's tough measures to seal the southern US border. — *AFP*

ained, but was "unrelated to the events taking place at the Capitol or to the concerns that many people

Spy chief: 'Aggressive stance'  
to deal with China challenges

**Washington, Jan. 20:** Asserting that China is a "challenge" to the security and prosperity of the US, spy chief nominee Avril Haines has said she supports an "aggressive stance" to deal with the challenges that the country is now facing from Beijing.

America's approach to China has to evolve and essentially meet the reality of the particularly assertive and aggressive China that is being experienced now, Haines told lawmakers during her

confirmation hearing for the post of Director of National Intelligence on Tuesday. US President-elect Joe Biden has nominated Haines, who had served as White House Deputy National Security Advisor in the Obama administration, as his next spymaster.

If confirmed by the Senate, 51-year-old Haines would be the first woman to occupy this position. In this capacity she would oversee as many as 18 American intelligence agencies, including CIA

and FBI. "China is a challenge to our security, to our prosperity, to our values across a range of issues, and I do support an aggressive stance, in a sense, to deal with the challenge that we're facing. So I think that's the place that we are now, and one that is more assertive than where we had been in the Obama/Biden administration. And if I'm confirmed, I think frankly the intelligence community can do a lot to help in that respect," she said. — *PTI*

● **Kamala Harris on Wednesday opted to wear a dress designed by two Black designers for her inauguration. In opting to wear the dress designed by Christopher John Rogers and Sergio Hudson, Harris has sent her own message to the country that Black designers have arrived on the scene.**

Rouge, and lives in New York City. Hudson is a Black designer from South Carolina. Rogers has sold made-to-order designs from his Brooklyn studio since 2016, according to Forbes.

Harris' fashion sense dates back to the days when she was a lawyer in San Francisco. She had a big collection of sharp blazers in neutral tones along with accessories like boldly patterned scarves, colourful Converse or the jangly bangles she wears alongside a Cartier watch, the report said.

Harris has always maintained a simple yet graceful look, whether it is her

debut as the vice presidential candidate or her victory speech when the Democrats won the November 3 presidential election.

"She dressed in her usual work style of dark neutrals and simple lines. In the pictures, she doesn't look stiffly styled or glamorously made-over for her debut as a vice-presidential candidate. Her clothes do not look like they've been pulled fresh from a shopping bag," a report in the *Washington Post* said. She largely eschews the usual red, white and blue accents politicians generally employ to drive home their patriotism, the *New York Post* report said. — *PTI*

## GRANTING CLEMENCY

The commutations came in addition to actions Trump took after losing polls

## Trump's pardons include Bannon, 73 others

**Washington, Jan. 20:** Outgoing President Donald Trump has pardoned his former political strategist Steve Bannon, one of the key architects of his 2016 electoral victory, as he issued a wave of pardons using the final hours of his presidency to grant clemency to 143 people.

The record 73 pardons and 70 commutations came in addition to the dozens of similar actions that Trump took after he lost the November 3 presidential elections to Joe Biden of the Democratic Party.

Biden, 78, will be sworn in as the 46th President of the United States on Wednesday.

The White House in a statement issued on Wednesday said that Trump granted a full pardon to Bannon, who was in charge of the final months of his 2016 presidential campaign.

Bannon was indicted in August when New York federal prosecutors charged him and three others with defrauding donors of more than a million dollars as part of an online fundrais-

## FAREWELL ADDRESS: TRUMP'S 'BEST WISHES' TO NEW ADMIN

**Washington, Jan. 20:** Extending his "best wishes" and praying for the success of the new administration in keeping America safe and prosperous, outgoing US President Donald Trump in his farewell address has said that Americans must unify around their shared values

and rise above partisan rancour to forge their common destiny.

Trump has still not fully accepted the result of last November's election, which he lost to Democrat Joe Biden. Trump, a Republican, made no mention of Biden in his pre-recorded video address, but

did allude to the violence at the Capitol earlier this month.

In the video farewell message released by the White House on Tuesday, Trump, 74, said he embarked on a mission to make America great again for all Americans. — *PTI*

ing campaign purportedly aimed at supporting Trump's border wall.

The White House in its statement said Bannon has been an important leader

in the conservative movement and is known for his political acumen.

## Career Chronicle

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Rajasthan Royals release skipper Smith; Sanju new captain

New Delhi, Jan. 20: Sanju Samson replaced Steve Smith as Rajasthan Royals captain after the Australian batsman and some other under-performing stars were released by their respective IPL franchises even as Chennai Super Kings retained veteran Suresh Raina for the upcoming 14th edition of the league.

The deadline for the eight franchises to submit the lists of retained and released players for the next season ended on Wednesday.

Samson was appointed to the top job after RR decided against renewing former skipper Steve Smith's contract.

Smith's contract ended in October 2020.

The Australians, smarting from a Test series loss to an injury-plagued India, took a hit as the likes of the explosive Glenn Maxwell and opener Aaron Finch too were released by Kings XI Punjab and Royal Challengers Bangalore respectively.

Also released by KXIP were West Indies all-rounder Sheldon Cottrell, Afghanistan's Mujeeb-

ur-Rahman and New Zealand's Jimmy Neesham, who underwent a surgery recently to treat an injured finger.

CSK's Harbhajan Singh and Mumbai Indians' Lasith Malinga were among the other big names to be released by their respective sides ahead of next month's auction.

Harbhajan was joined by the

likes of Kedar Jadhav, Piyush Chawla and Murali Vijay who were also let go by CSK.

Also released by MI was Sherfane Rutherford, while Delhi Capitals decided to enter the next edition without English batsman Jason Roy, wicketkeeper Alex Carey, leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane and seamer Mohit Sharma.

Defending champions MI have released as many as seven including Sri Lanka speedster Lasith Malinga, Kiwi quick Mitchell McClenaghan, Australian Nathan Coulter-Nile and his countryman James Pattinson, uncapped leg-spinner Prince Balwant Rai, and fast bowler Digvijay Deshmukh.

— PTI

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