


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | SATURDAY | 9 JANUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 33.0°C
Min: 19.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Clear.
Max/Min temp.
33/19 °C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+17,626)	(+208)
1,04,30,330	1,50,800

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+346)	(+2)
TS: 2,89,135	1,561
(+319)	(+1)
AP: 8,84,490	7,127

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

8,88,93,141
DEATHS
19,13,630
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana

Tithi: Margasira Bahula Ekadasi till 7.16 pm

Star: Vishakha till 12.31 pm

Variyam: 4.14 pm to 5.43 pm

Durmuhurtam: 6.52 am to 8.20 am

Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am

HIJRI CALENDAR

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 24, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

(ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5.30 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 4.15 pm

Maghrib: 5.38 pm

Isha: 8.30 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.34 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5.45 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 2.27 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 3.01 PM

COUNTER POINT



Can't we add our party colour to the vaccine?

SHORT TAKES

More than half of Army stressed out

New Delhi: The Indian Army is losing more personnel every year in suicides, fratricides and untoward incidents than in any enemy action and over half of its soldiers seem to be under severe stress, said a study by think tank United Service Institution of India (USI). "Prolonged exposure to CI (counter-insurgency)/CT (counter-terrorism) environment has been one of the contributory factors for increased stress levels," said the research.

PFIZER VACCINE WORKS AGAINST NEW MUTATIONS

Washington, Jan. 8: New research suggests that Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine can protect against a mutation found in two contagious variants of the coronavirus that erupted in Britain and South Africa.

Both the variants share a common mutation called N501Y, a slight alteration on one spot of the spike protein that coats the virus. That change is believed to be the reason they can spread so easily.

Most of the vaccines being rolled out around the world train the body to recognise that spike protein and fight it. Pfizer teamed with researchers for laboratory tests to see if the mutation affected its vaccine's ability to do so.

—PTI

NATION | 4

Budaun case: Main accused held




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Trump not to attend Biden inauguration

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Smith saves Australia with a century



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SEC calls 4-phase local polls in Feb, AP objects

AP says it will be busy with vaccination, polls from Feb. 5 to 17

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 8

State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar on Friday said that the gram panchayat polls would be held in four phases from February 5 to 17. Voting will be from 6.30 am to 3.30 pm. Counting of votes will also be done over four phases. The government has said that it will be busy with the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

As per the schedule, the SEC will issue the election notification on January 23 for Phase-I, January 27 for Phase-II, January 31 for Phase-III and February 4 for Phase-IV. The last date for nominations is January

27, 31, February 4 and 8 respectively. Polling where necessary will be held on February 5, 9, 13 and 17. Counting of votes and declaration of results are scheduled for Feb. 5, 9, 13 and 17 from 4 pm. The election of upa sarpanch after declaration of results to be held on February 5, 9, 13 and 17.

While issuing the schedule here on Friday, the SEC said that it had intended to hold elections in the second or third week of February but that would extend election process into March. Ramesh Kumar said that the State Election Commission has advanced the schedule which will commence on

January 23 and will conclude on February 17.

The SEC has opted for the four-stage gram panchayat elections keeping in view the Covid safety protocols, he said. The SEC expressed its fullest confidence in the state government machinery to help it conduct polls. On the other hand, Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das, principal secretary, health, Anil Kumar Singhal and principal secretary, panchayat raj, Gopala Krishna Dwivedi met Ramesh Kumar and explained the importance of taking up Covid vaccination programme to save the lives of the people and asked him to defer the polls until the completion of the first

phase of vaccination programme. The government is of the opinion that the SEC took a unilateral decision to defer the polls earlier when only one case of Covid-19 was registered on March 15, 2020, without consulting the state government. When the state moved the SC on the issue, the apex court directed the SEC to resume the election process only after consulting the state government.

Though the state government informed the SEC that the government machinery was engaged in getting ready to take up Covid vaccination, the SEC is going ahead with polls reportedly as per its predetermined plan.

Ghar wapsi after law wapsi: Farmers

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN 8

Thousands of protesting farmers and their supporters will end up celebrating two harvest-related festivals — Lohri and Makar Sankranti — in freezing cold at Delhi borders this year as the eighth round of talks between their 41 union leaders and the Centre on Friday failed to end the deadlock over the new farm laws.

Holding their ground on the repeal of the three laws, the farmers told the government that their “ghar wapsi” can take place only after “law wapsi”.

But the Centre told unions that it cannot and will not repeal these laws, asserting the laws have been welcomed by a large



Women family members of a farmer practice driving a tractor on the outskirts of Amritsar on Friday. Women are training to take part in a tractor rally on Republic Day in Delhi against the Centre's farm laws.

— AFP

section of farmers in other states across the country, and asked the unions to think about the interests of the entire country. There was palpable disap-

pointment on the faces of the farmers' leaders returning where, many said, the discussion between the two sides was “heated”.

CM lays foundation to rebuild 9 temples

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 8

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy performed “bhumi puja” before laying the foundation stone for reconstruction of nine temples demolished on banks of Krishna River here on Friday.

The CM started with performing puja for development and expansion of Kanaka Durga Temple at an estimated cost of ₹77 crore. Foundation stones for eight other temples followed, while he unveiled two separate plaques at a place where Saneeswara Swamy temple is to be constructed.

AP FORMS SIT ON TEMPLE ATTACKS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 8

The AP government on Friday formed a Special Investigation Team headed by additional director ACB, G.V.G. Ashok Kumar, to probe attacks on temples, including desecration of idols from September 2020 across AP.

■ Page 2: DGP issues memo to create SIT

Later, Jagan Mohan Reddy reached atop Indrakeeladri hill and

had darshan of Goddess Kanaka Durga amid chanting of Vedas by pandits. The CM was presented a memento and portrait of Goddess Kanaka Durga as well as prasadam by temple priests.

The CM released a Endowments Department calendar with images of all prominent temples and another calendar by Durga Malleswaram Swamy Varla Devasthanam.

Ministers Vellampalli Srinivasa Rao, Botsa Satyanarayana Rao, Perni Nani, Kodali Nani, temple executive officer M.V. Suresh Babu and public representatives and officials were present.

INTER 1ST YEAR CLASSES FROM JANUARY 18

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 8

Intermediate first-year classes will start on January 18 in Andhra Pradesh. Education minister Adimulapu Suresh announced this here on Friday.

The minister said that based on directions from the AP High Court, first-year admissions were done offline and the process would be completed by January 17. Admissions would be taken up online in the next academic year.

The academic year for 2020-21 would continue up to May, 2021. The schedule for examinations will be announced shortly. Some 30 per cent of the intermediate syllabus was reduced due to the prevalence of Covid-19 regulations. Subject-wise details were sent to the respective colleges. Practical examinations for inter students would be held as usual.

■ Page 2: Stern action for classes sans permission

SC wants Centre to arm foresters

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 8

The Supreme Court on Friday expressed serious concern over brutal assaults by poachers on unarmed rangers and guards in forests and suggested that the force be equipped with arms and bulletproof jackets as is done in Assam.

Heading a bench, Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde said it was sad and distressing to see forest guards wearing slippers and armed with lathis while on duty to protect huge tracts of forest land. “With little of protective gear in them to meet threats from armed poachers, their plight is sad. Also, they being inside the forest, they cannot even seek urgent help.”

“We think the situation is serious. Forest guards would have difficulty protecting vast tracts of uninhabited land. It is difficult to imagine how law can be enforced by

● CHIEF JUSTICE Sharad A. Bobde said it was sad and distressing to see forest guards wearing slippers and armed with lathis while on duty to protect huge tracts of forest land.

● THERE IS little protection for them against armed poachers

unarmed forest staff facing poachers carrying arms with them,” CJI Bobde said. Sitting with Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian, the CJI also suggested that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) expand its footprints to deal with the illegal trade in wildlife.

Appearing for the central government, solicitor general Tushar Mehta agreed to look into the proposal for arming the forest guards and expanding the role of ED.

HUNTING | CURE

Rare snake with ‘medicinal’ properties being increasingly caught over last few years

Illegal trade hastens sand boa extinction

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 8

Despite a ban on illegal wildlife trade in India, the underground business in rare creatures is continuing unabated in several parts of the country, including Andhra Pradesh, posing one of the gravest threats to biodiversity.

Supposed medicinal properties of sand boa, apart from myths and beliefs surrounding this rare snake,



The sand boa which was seized in AP on Friday.

has led to their illicit hunting and capture over the past few years; not only in

AP but also several parts of the country, putting this species to the risk of

extinction. This non-venomous snake has attracted a lot of attention in recent times. It is one of the costliest creatures in international black market with the price of a single sand boa ranging from lakhs to crores of rupees.

More so, the demand for Indian Sand Boa in the world market, especially in Malaysia, China, and a few south-east Asian countries is high. They are used in making medicines, aphro-

disiacs, cosmetics and black magic. There is also belief among Chinese and Malaysians that owning this reptile can bring immense luck and wealth.

In this backdrop, sand boas are being extensively trafficked from various Indian states, especially AP, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Forest and police officials say smuggling of sand boa is rampant across the southern states, with two

to three incidents of people being caught with the reptiles being reported monthly. There is no estimate of the number of snakes that may have already been smuggled. Last year, three youth from Pudupattu village in Karvetinagaram mandal of Chittoor district were nabbed by police when they tried to sell a sand boa.

■ Page 3: Many traps for rare species surface



Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi

INDIA SCOFFS AT LAKHVI GETTING 5 YEARS IN JAIL

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
LAHORE, DELHI, JAN. 8

Mumbai attack mastermind and Lashkar-e-Taiba operations commander Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi was sentenced to five years in jail on Friday by a Pakistani anti-terrorism court here in a terror-financing case, amidst growing international pressure on Islamabad to bring to justice terrorists roaming free in the country.

Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore Judge Ejaz Ahmad Buttari sentenced Lakhvi, a UN proscribed terrorist, on three counts with a fine of PKR 100,000 (\$620).

His punishment will run concurrently. India dismissed it as a farcical action and said that “the timing of these actions clearly suggests the intention of conveying a sense of compliance ahead of the Asia-Pacific Joint Group meeting and next Financial Action Task Force (FATF) plenary meeting in February 2021”. “It has become routine for Pakistan to come up with such farcical actions prior to important meetings,” said the MEA.

SHORT TAKES

Prashant Kishor meets Jagan

Vijayawada: Indian political strategist Prashant Kishor met Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at his Camp Office here on Friday. Sources said that Prashant Kishor is learnt to have discussed several issues with the CM in the wake of AP witnessing a series of attacks on temples while the Opposition parties targeting the state government for failing to protect them. As Tirupati bypoll for Lok Sabha seat is on anvil, the state government learnt to be taking it seriously to win it back as the vacancy arose following the death of its MP Balli Durga Prasada Rao as he succumbed to Coronavirus in September last.

CM TO LAUNCH AMMA VODI 2ND PHASE ON JAN. 11

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 8

Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, adviser to the AP government (Public Affairs) said Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will launch the second phase of Amma Vodi programme along with tens of thousands of mothers at Nellore on January 11.

Speaking to the media at Nellore on Friday along with ministers M. Goutham Reddy and P. Anil Kumar Yadav, Sajjala said that elaborate arrangements were being made for the launch of Amma Vodi second phase in Nellore. "For the past one and half year, CM Jagan has been implementing various welfare programmes for the uplift of the poor and they are giving positive results. Despite Covid-19 pandemic creating a lot of hardships in the implementation of various programmes, Jagan, who is very keen on resolving problems of mothers, is launching the second phase of Amma Vodi", he added.

The CM will reach the Police Parade Grounds in the city on January 11 at around 11.30 and further proceed towards the venue at SVGS grounds.

STERN ACTION FOR CLASSES SANS PERMISSION

From page 1

The minister warned of stern action against junior college managements if they conducted classes without government permission. He said recognition would be withdrawn if any junior college failed to follow directions from the government, be it on collection of fees or on compliance with guidelines on Covid-19. He urged parents to alert the government on any irregularity, via whatsapp number 9391282578 or by email at our-beap@gmail.com.

In view of the Covid-19 situation, the state government would not enhance Intermediate examination fee. Students can pay the fee as per last year's structure, like ₹500 for the first year and ₹680 for the second year.

The minister also advised the managements against acts like not releasing certificates to students after admission-time verification.

PREPARE ACTION PLAN ON TOURISM, SAYS MINISTER

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 8

Minister for tourism and culture Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao asked the officials of tourism and APTDC to prepare an action plan within a week on the progress made by their departments to increase the footfall of the tourists in the region. The minister held a meeting with these officials in Visakhapatnam on Friday.

He said tourism was affected in the state due to the Covid-19 pandemic and since the situation was becoming normal, the officials should make special packages to attract the tourists.

The minister suggested the officials make special arrangements which include accommodation for the people coming from Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam rural. He also said a special package to historic temples like Sun temple in Srikakulam town and Srikrumam in Srikakulam district was desirable.

He told the APTDC officials to set up a tourism information centre at RK Beach in coordination with the GVMC officials.

Attacks on temples should not be given political colour: Kona

Deputy Speaker says Opposition parties are trying to gain political mileage out of it

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JAN. 8

Deputy Speaker of AP Legislative Assembly Kona Raghupathi exhorted all on Friday that the incidents of attacks on temples should not be given a political colour. He stated so after taking darshan of Lord Sri Venkateswara Swamy of Dwaraka Tirumala in West Godavari and participating in the Dappu Kalakarula Sangam meeting.

Kona Raghupathi told the media that at a time when the state government was taking up many programmes to uplift the downtrodden sections, it was unfortunate such incidents of attacks on temples took place. He said the Opposition parties were trying to gain political mileage out of it. "They are misleading the people."

Rising above caste, creed and religion, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy was implementing welfare schemes and providing housing to the homeless poor. "Jagan is doing this with a great sense of commitment to the people. He is doing more than what his father Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy did as CM," the deputy speaker said.

The deputy speaker said governance has been made easier by the setting up of village and ward secretariats. "Now, the administration and the fruits of the welfare schemes are reaching out to the people. Many laws have been enacted for welfare of the people," he said.

Gopalapuram MLA Talari Venkatrao, AP Brahmin Seva Sangham president Satyavada Durga Prasad, chief adviser V.S. Madhubabu and others were present.

Meanwhile, the Andhra Pradesh Archaka Samakhya hailed the decision of CM Jagan to reconstruct the temples demolished during the Krishna Pushkaralu season. The Samakhya state organising secretary Peddinti Rambabu and the general secretary A. Atreya Babu said when Chandrababu Naidu was the chief minister, he had demolished 43 temples. The idols of the gods and goddesses were carried in municipal tractors in those times. They said Jagan, in a revival spirit, laid stone for some such important temples in Vijayawada on Friday.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, minister Velampalli Srinivasa Rao and others release Kanakadurga Temple Calendar after darshan of Goddess Kanakadurga atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Friday.

Communal harmony is priority, assures Botsa

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 8

Minister for municipal administration Botsa Satyanarayana called upon the people to expose the culprits involved in a series of attacks on temples as they were trying to thwart the efforts of the state government to go ahead with implementation of welfare schemes and developmental works in the state. Addressing the media along with a host of leaders from all faiths and deputy Chief Minister Amjad Basha and ministers Mekathoti Sucharita and Vellampalli Srinivas here on Friday, he alleged that as the culprits were aware of the visit of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to Vizianagaram district to distribute house site pattas to 12,000 beneficiaries, they resorted to desecration of the idol of Lord Ram at Ramath-eertham as a diversionary tactic. He said that the state government was making all efforts to safeguard the secular fabric of the state and made a fervent appeal to the political parties and others not to instigate religious hatred among people.

The minister said that after holding consultations with leaders from all faiths, the state government had come up with an unanimous resolution to promote religious tolerance by all means.

● Botsa Satyanarayana said that after holding consultations with leaders from all faiths, the state government had come up with an unanimous resolution to promote religious tolerance by all means.

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams chief archaka Venugopala Deekshitulu said, "People from all faiths are leading their lives peacefully and we call upon them not to fall prey to the misinformation campaign on attacks of temples."

Syed Ahmad Peer Shahmiri from Sajjala Nasheed of the Khalkha-E-Shahmiria said, "We appreciate the state government for forming committees to promote communal harmony and religious tolerance. We are deeply hurt as vested interests are attacking temples. I appeal to every citizen in the state to live in harmony."

A Christian leader stated that the state government was treating all the citizens equally without showing any discrimination on the basis of caste and religion.

GANESHA IDOL STOLEN FROM TEMPLE IN VEMULA

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JAN. 8

Unidentified assailants abducted a statue of Lord Ganesha at a temple in Chagaleru village in Vemula mandal of Kadapa district's Pulivendula constituency on Thursday night.

Pulivendula sub-divisional police officer E. Srinivasulu told *Deccan Chronicle* said that they have received a complaint that an idol was missing from the temple. He said two special police teams were immediately deployed to investigate. He revealed that on Friday morning the Clues team and dog squad also came and inspected. Fingerprints were taken for further investigation.

Meanwhile, APCC president Dr. N. Tulasi Reddy speaking to reporters in Vempalle on Friday, criticized that even gods did not have protection in Pulivendula constituency, which is represented by the Chief Minister himself.

It is said that an ancient Ganesha idol has disappeared in Chagaleru in Vemula mandal. He said the hundi was smashed by thugs 20 days ago at the Gangamma temple in the same village. He appealed to the government to respond to the atrocities on temples and catch the thugs and punish them severely.

They faced crop loss and there was the lack of input subsidy. Balakrishna visited agriculture fields and interacted with farmers during his tour.

The MLA extended support to the Super Spinning Mill workers who were on a protest against lay off by the management.

HC allows AP Green Energy to go ahead with bidding process

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 8

Andhra Pradesh High Court issued an interim order, allowing AP Green Energy Corporation to go ahead with the bidding process and finalise the successful bidders and asked it not to enter into agreement with them until further hearing in the case is taken up, scheduled to be held on February 15.

Tata Power Renewable Energy challenged the issue of 'Request For Selection' and Power Purchase Agreement by APGEC for taking up 6,400 MW ultra mega solar power project stating that they were against the norms earlier.

High Court Judge Justice M. Ganga Rao held the hearing on Friday and issued interim orders allowing the APGEC to go

ahead with the bidding process.

Petitioner's senior counsel Desai Prakash Reddy argued that the APGEC's issue of RFS and PPAs were against the norms of the Central Electricity Act and informed the court that in case of any dispute as per the act, it has to be resolved at the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission. He argued that such norm was removed so that in case of any dispute, the government would resolve it.

Advocate-General S. Sriram informed the court that the issue of RFS and PPA was as per norms and asked as to why Tata Power Renewable Energy was raising objection even though it did not take part in the bid while those who took part in the bid were not raising any objections.

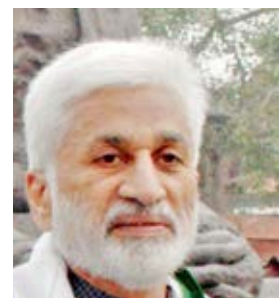
Ganta, aides grabbed land: Vijaya Sai Reddy

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 8

Rajya Sabha member and north Andhra incharge of YSRC V. Vijaya Sai Reddy alleged that former minister in the TD government and present MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao and his associate Lalam Bhaskar Rao grabbed huge parcels of government land.

Addressing a public meeting at Yelamanchili during distribution of houses and house pattas, Vijaya Sai Reddy said that only Opposition parties resorted to government land grabbing in Visakhapatnam and there was none in the ruling YSRC government or leaders of the party.

"Some forces are trying to come in the way of distribution of houses and pattas to the poor but the YSRC government had overcome these obstacles with the support from the people," the Rajya Sabha



V. Vijaya Sai Reddy

member said.

Minister for tourism Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, who was also present, said Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had promised 22 social welfare schemes for the poor before the elections and after assuming power, he launched more winning the hearts of the people.

The leaders later addressed another meeting in Anakapalle where they distributed 18,720 pattas.

Hafeezpet assets belonged to Bhuma kin

From page 1

J.V. Reddy said Praveen Rao's father was an advocate and worked for his father, the late Bhuma Nagi Reddy. It was well known that the property in Survey No 80 of Hafeezpet belonged to the Bhuma family.

"After my father and Praveen Rao's father died, the three brothers hatched a conspiracy along with A.V. Subba Reddy to take away all our properties," he alleged.

Jagat Reddy told the media that Praveen Rao had entered into an agreement with MyHome and lent the property.

"There is involvement of big shots including an MP and a business magnate. They want to threaten us and take away our properties," alleged Jagat Reddy.

He appealed to the TS Chief Minister to get the case investigated thoroughly and render justice to the family.

A similar demand was made by Naga Mounika, sister of Akhila Priya, who went a step ahead and urged TS Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu and minister K.T. Rama Rao to settle

● Naga Mounika, sister of Akhila Priya, alleged that Praveen Rao's agreement with My Home had triggered the arrest of her sister.

the dispute based on the merits of the case.

She alleged that Praveen Rao's agreement with My Home had triggered the arrest of her sister. "We own the property," she claimed. It is learnt that Praveen Rao offered some money to the Bhuma family but the latter did not agree for a compromise as the amount offered was "very meagre".

Meanwhile, knowledgeable sources said Akhila Priya had made desperate attempts to reach out to MLC K. Kavitha. When her attempts failed, Akhila Priya drove up to Kavitha's residence but the two could not meet. Sources said Kavitha did not want to intervene in the land dispute.

Akhila Priya also tried to reach out to AP ministers M. Sucharita and B. Rajendranath Reddy but failed. TD Telangana president L. Ramana coordinated with her, sources close to the former minister said.

Farmers condition is bad: Balayya

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 8

Actor and Hindupur MLA Nandamuri Balakrishna lashed out at the YSRC government over its "apathetic policies" towards farmers and its "encouragement" to illicit activities. He alleged that there were large scale irregularities in land acquisition for house sites in his

assembly segment.

"At least five municipal commissioners were changed in Hindupur municipality within a two-year period," Balakrishna observed while on a three-day visit of his constituency. Among other places, he visited the area of Hudco houses, where work was pending after the YSRC was voted to power.

Speaking to the media,

Balakrishna alleged that the YSRC government has failed in all fields. The filmstar-turned politician expressed gratitude to the people for showing affection towards his family for the past three decades. He urged the government to consider Hindupur as the new district headquarters.

Balakrishna said farmers in the region were in distress and the government was not of any help to them.

They faced crop loss and there was the lack of input subsidy. Balakrishna visited agriculture fields and interacted with farmers during his tour.

The MLA extended support to the Super Spinning Mill workers who were on a protest against lay off by the management.

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The MLA extended support to the Super Spinning Mill workers who were on a protest against lay off by the management.

HIGH | CHARGES

Fee structure is 10 times more than other Central Universities for same programmes

CUAP students boycott classes against high fee

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 8

Students of all departments at Central University of Andhra Pradesh (CUAP) have started boycotting their online classes protesting over charging of enormous fee by authorities of the institution.

"CUAP is a central university established as per AP Bifurcation Act, 2014 for development of the backward Anantapur district. Though being a public

university, it is charging highly unreasonable fees for social sciences and humanities courses, which do not require any infrastructure like science or computer labs and other sophisticated facilities. High fee will have a negative impact on students as well as university's future, as students will prefer other central universities," pointed out Sai Ram Macha, a final year student of B.A Honours in Political Science. Student organisations

● For example, they say Hyderabad Central University (HCU); the mentor university for CUAP, has fixed ₹510 as fee for under-graduation courses while CUAP is collecting ₹6,175 for BA Honours and B. SC. Further, the Gujarat Central University collects only ₹500 for these courses while Kerala Central University charges ₹545, the student bodies maintain.

claim fee structure of under-graduation and post-graduation courses at Central University of Andhra Pradesh is 10 times more than the same programmes at other central universities.

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University (HCU); the mentor university for CUAP, has fixed ₹510 as fee for under-graduation courses while CUAP is collecting ₹6,175 for BA Honours and B. SC.

Further, the Gujarat Central University collects only ₹500 for these courses while Kerala Central University charges ₹545, the student bodies maintain.

Further, they say the Central University in AP has fixed ₹6,890 as fee for B. Voc programmes. For these very programmes, the Rajasthan Central University charges only ₹630, Himachal Pradesh CU ₹500 and Jammu and Kashmir CUs collect only ₹1,500 as tuition fees.

The Anantapur central university students say similar is the case with

post-graduate courses being offered by the university, which are far higher than those charged by other central universities in the country.

Even though students have submitted numerous representations to Prof. Appa Rao, vice-chancellor of University of Hyderabad, who was the chairman of CUAP Society, the issue is still pending.

When contacted, CUAP authorities maintained that the matter will soon be taken up and resolved.

OTHER STORIES

WEST GODAVARI
COPS INFORM
I-T OFFICIALS

FROM PAGE 1

West Godavari police officials said that they have informed IT teams to conduct raids on participants.

West Godavari Superintendent of Police K.N. Naick gave strict instructions to the police to take preventive steps against organising cockfights. The police got bind-over cases on 3,000 persons recently and are conducting raids on cockfight-knife manufacturers and arresting them. They have considered the previous history of organizers and participants and counselling them.

They gathered the phone numbers of the visitors who have already booked rooms in hotels and lodges. Meanwhile, joint teams have been formed with police and revenue officials in villages to trace those promoting gambling in the name of traditional sports.

East Godavari Superintendent of Police Adnan Nayeem Asmi told this reporter that Sections 144 and 30 are in force. He said that bind-over cases are being booked on organizers.

He said that a plan of action has been prepared to curb such gambling events during Sankranti and those found violating the orders would be sternly dealt with.

● **SP K.N. Naick gave strict instructions to the police to take preventive steps against organising cockfights. The police got bind-over cases on 3,000 persons recently and are conducting raids on cockfight-knife manufacturers and arresting them.**

TWO CHILDREN
FOUND DEAD IN
WELL IN CHITTOORDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 8

In a shocking incident, two children were found dead in a well, while their mother was missing at Obana Palli area under Santhapet in Chittoor City on Friday.

According to police, Baby, aged 28 years, and her daughter Jhansi, aged eight years and son Uday, aged five years, were missing for the last two days. Family members searched all the surroundings and their relatives and friends were also involved in the search operations.

However, on Friday early morning, the dead bodies of the children were found inside an agri-well at Obana Palli area. The owner of the field found the bodies floating in the well and informed the police about the matter.

The police rushed to the spot and collected details. A case of accidental death has been registered by them and further investigation is on. The reason behind the deaths is yet to be ascertained and the police have launched a search operation for their mother.

MAN INJURED
IN ELEPHANT
ATTACKDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 8

A 50-year-old man from Bangarupalem mandal in Chittoor district was injured in a lone elephant attack in Tekumanda forest area, close to Bandaladoddi village late on Thursday night.

According to the reports reaching here, the victim Chandra Achari has left his cattle in the morning in the nearby Tekumanda forest area for grazing. The cattle used to return to the village by the evening, but on that day they didn't return.

When Chandra and his friend Kuppaiah were about to enter the forest in search of their cattle, they were attacked by a lone elephant which was already destroying crops in the fields on the outskirts of the village. In the attack Chandra sustained injuries, while his friend Kuppaiah however managed to escape.

On being informed, villagers reached the spot and by that time the elephant had left the place. The victim was taken to a hospital in Chittoor and later to Tirupati for better treatment. Chandra's ribs and arm were injured in the attack and his condition is said to be critical.

● **They were attacked by a lone elephant which was already destroying crops in the fields on the outskirts of the village**

319 Covid cases,
one death in AP

Virus still active in 2,832 patients in state

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 8:

Andhra Pradesh registered 319 new Covid-19 cases scaling up tally to 8,84,490 and one death taking toll to 7,127 in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities released Covid-19 bulletin here on Friday reporting that out of 59,671 samples tested, 319 persons were found infected with Coronavirus. Out of a total number of 1,22,24,202 samples tested so far, 8,74,531 infected patients were recovered while 2,832 infected patients were still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of confirmed Coronavirus, Krishna topped the state with 46 followed by 44 in Chittoor; 39 in Guntur; 27 in West Godavari; 26 each in East Godavari and Kurnool; 25 in Visakhapatnam; 23 in Nellore; 22 in Anantapur; 14 in Kadapa; 12 in Srikakulam; 10 in Prakasam and five in Vizianagaram.

Nellore district reported the highest number of cumulative active cases of

TECHNICAL GLITCHES FOUND IN
COVID-19 VACCINE DRY RUNDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL JANUARY 8

Technical snags continue as the Covid vaccine administration dry run in Kurnool struggles to resolve the issues. Internet connectivity, lack of mobile signals had delayed receipt of One-time password (OTP) to enter the details of patients was observed on Friday when 85 of the 87 Primary Health Centers were checked their preparedness for vaccine administration said.

Coronavirus with 444 followed by 432 in Krishna, 407 in Guntur; 273 in Chittoor; 243 in East Godavari; 223 in West Godavari; 216 in Visakhapatnam; 166 in Kadapa; 136 in Anantapur; 97 in Kurnool; 80 in Srikakulam; 73 in Prakasam and 42 in Vizianagaram.

AP registered single death of Covid-19 infected patient at Krishna district. Among cumulative cases of deaths,

DMHO Dr. Rama Giddaiah,

He said most of the PHCs depend on BSNL towers for mobile connectivity and the Friday experience shows that glitches were found at multiple locations. Particularly in Nallamala forest fringe areas, hilly areas, Mahanandi Mandal villages abutting the forest faced problems, Giddaiah said. Enhanced signal strength is required across the district to make seamless vaccine administration, he pointed.

Chittoor reported 845 followed by 670 in Krishna, 667 in Guntur; 636 in East Godavari; 597 in Anantapur; 580 in Prakasam; 554 in Visakhapatnam; 539 in West Godavari; 506 in Nellore; 487 in Kurnool; 461 in Kadapa; 347 in Srikakulam and 238 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities discharged 308 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery from several hospitals in the state.

Sand boa racket busted in
Nellore, reptile rescuedDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 8

The Nellore District Forest wing in a joint operation with South India Region Central Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has busted an interstate gang involved in the illegal trade of Red sand boas. They have arrested seven members of the gang and rescued one reptile.

According to the DFO Shanmukha Kumar, the arrested accused were identified as D. Ashok Reddy, 22, B. Ravindra Reddy, 24, V. Vamsi Sekhar, 23, R. Jeevan Kumar, 22, G. Govardhan Reddy, 24, N. Munikrishnamachari, 38 and K. Bhaskar, 28.

"A team led by B.

Many traps for rare
species surface

FROM PAGE 1

Many cases of trapping, smuggling or trading in this rare species have come to light in the recent past. The latest is arrest of an inter-state gang involved in this trade at Naidupeta in Nellore district on Friday. "Sand boa

NSTL IS A
VIBRATING LAB:
DRDO CHIEFDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JANUARY 8

Chairman of DRDO Dr G Satish Reddy described the Naval Science and Technological Laboratory, a vibrating lab while addressing a gathering through video conference to mark the occasion of NSTL 51st Foundation Day held in Visakhapatnam on Friday.

He appreciated the team members who went to Ulan and succeeded in heavy weight torpedo trials.

He expressed his faith that NSTL will become one of the best naval labs in the world and the world will certainly follow NSTL in the nearby future. NSTL was established on August 20, 1969.

The guest of honour Vice Admiral Kalidoss Srinivas appreciated NSTL for giving importance to user requirements and congratulated NSTL for becoming a one-stop solution in research.

Outstanding scientist and director of NSTL Dr OR Nandagopalan and DR Rajeswari Devi, Scientist-G and chairperson of the Raising Day Celebrations spoke on the occasion.

is endemic to three countries – India, Pakistan and Iran. This non-venomous snake is widely trafficked in the international black market because of the myths and beliefs surrounding them. The price of the snake is decided by its weight.

team and nabbed a gang of seven red handed at Naidupeta on Friday.

The cost of the snake is around ₹70 lakh in the open market.", the DFO said.



Fisherfolk gather at the Pedajalaripeta beach and stage a protest against some fishermen who tried to venture into the sea with ring nets for fishing, despite the ban on fishing using the ring nets in Visakhapatnam on Friday.

— DC

ARRANGEMENTS
MADE FOR COVID
VACCINATIONDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JAN 8

East Godavari collector D.Muralidhar Reddy said that all arrangements were made to administer Covid-19 vaccination and as a precautionary measures, Medical and Health Experts have been deployed and emergency medical treatment centres have been arranged in Kakinada and Rajamahendravaram areas. He participated in ₹covid-19 dry run" vaccination programme on Friday at Government General Hospital at Kakinada along with the medical and health officials. He said that stringent arrangements were made for not arising any problems during the vaccination programme and help desks have been set up to give actual information to the higher officials. He said that the covid-19 vaccination programme would be begun soon and the people can make use of the programme without any doubts and rumours. He said that there will be no side-effects and dangers, if the people administer the vaccine.

The GGH Superintendent Dr. M.Raghavendra Rao said that two vaccination centres would be set up in the GGH as per the need.

NRI TO DONATE
SALE PROCEEDS
HIS FIRST BOOKDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 8

Venkata Vinod Parimi, an NRI from Singapore, who wrote his first book titled "Daivam tho Naa Anubhavalu", which reads in Telugu - My experiences with the God, has announced that he will donate the entire sales proceeds of the book to TTD's Go Samrakshana trust.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle* over the phone, Vinod, who works as the regional director (Asia Pacific) at Miele Pvt. limited in Singapore, said that he had travelled across the length and the breadth of India over the last thirty years, chasing his passion to visit sacred Hindu temples across the country.

He quotes his book as a compilation of his mystic experiences with the god in the form of a set of 35 short stories. "I'm an ardent devotee of Lord Venkateswara and I used to visit the Tirumala temple at least once every single month, no matter where I'm. The outbreak of Covid-19, coupled with lockdown and closure of international borders, however, obstructed me from visiting the Tirumala temple since January last year. And that is when I have decided to write a book on all my mystic experiences with God at the age of 48", he said. "During my journeys I have met many sages, who have walked into my life to get to the bottom of my life. The book is all about my experiences with God and will unfold mind altering and unbelievable experiences for the reader. The book was released in India in October last year with the help of my childhood friend M. Ramesh Kumar", he added.

Fishermen clash at sea
over use of ring netsDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN 8

Rival groups of fishermen clashed over use of ring nets in the sea close to Peda Jalaripeta here on Friday. Last week, fisheries minister Sidiri Appalaraju and tourism minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao had held a meeting with their associations in the presence of officials and announced a ban on use of ring nets.

Minister Raju had said a committee was appointed to issue guidelines on the use of banned nets. He stressed that use of ring nets was banned within a range of 8km from the shore.

Friday morning, the fishermen in Peda Jalaripeta found 10 boats from Endada, Uppada and Mangamaripeta fishing with ring nets in the banned 8km range.

Hundreds of fishermen along with their families rushed to the shore. Of them, some 50 fishermen went into the sea on their

boats and seized the nets. Heated arguments ensued, which resulted in minor clashes.

A police team led by ACP of Dwaraka Zone AVVS Murty rushed to the spot and restored peace. The ACP said the issue would be taken up with higher officials.

Peda Jalaripeta fisherman Paredsi said that while fishermen from 14 villages in Visakhapatnam were following the ban orders, the fishermen from only three villages – Endada, Uppada and Mangamaripeta – were defying the ban.

"These three villages come under Bhimili constituency and enjoy the support of state minister Avanti Srinivasa Rao," Paredsi said.

Paredsi and his associates said if these fishermen used ring nets, a majority of the region's fisherfolk with traditional nets would be left with no catch. This is the third time the fishermen clashed over this issue in the last one month.

2 persons arrested, ₹35 lakh
worth property recoveredDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JAN. 8

Sarpavaram Police arrested two persons- Chukkala Mahesh (32) and Rustum Khan of Sambhamurthy Nagar - on charges of stealing gold ornaments and electronic goods by breaking houses.

East Godavari superintendent of police Adnan Nayeem Asmi told the media here on Friday that with a view to earn money for their luxuries, both the accused have planned and started house breaking during nights by breaking open the locks of

the doors and committing theft of gold, silver and home appliances for the past one and half year. They have never been caught by police so far. Mahesh worked as a Television mechanic and Rutum Khan is a painter and they are close associates.

The police recovered 553 grams of gold, 1628 grams of silver, 4 smart LED TVs, three laptops and other electronic goods like computer printers, projectors, microphones, cameras, DVD players, hair dryers and others under Sarpavaram and Indrapalem police station limits.

MAJ GEN (RETD) S.N. BHASKAR DIES AT 96

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 8

Major General S.N. Bhaskar (retd) from to Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers, and former chairman and managing director of Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEM), passed away here on Thursday. He was 96.

Maj. Gen. Bhaskar (retd) was born on November 20, 1924 and was commissioned into the Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers at the age of 24. He was awarded the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal in 1979

and retired with distinguished service in 1980.

After retirement from the Army, he led BEM as its chairman and managing director and improved the company's efficiency and production. He is credited with turning BEM into a success story for which he was awarded the Padma Shri in 1984.

According to a news release, Maj. Gen. Bhaskar (retd) passed away at his residence in Banjara Hills due to old age and the last rites were performed on Friday at Swarg Vatika crematorium.

KCR, his family involved
in land scams, says BJPDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 8

BJP senior leader and former MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar alleged that Telangana State Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's family was involved in the land scams in Hyderabad.

Addressing a press conference at the state party office

here, Prabhakar accused minister K.T. Rama Rao and his followers of being involved in the Hafeezpet land issue. He alleged that with the support of Rama Rao, the mafia was occupying land parcels. He accused the leaders of the ruling party of misusing powers to create fake documents and encroaching lands.



Bulls at the Race in National wide competitions at Siddhartha Engineering College in Vijayawada on Friday. — DC

SHORT TAKES

MAJOR MAOIST HIDEOUT BUSTED IN ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 8

Security forces on Friday seized huge haul of arms and ammunition, including hand grenades and other explosives, after busting a major Maoist hideout in Kandhamal district.

Kandhamal superintendent of police Vinit Agarwal said the Maoist camp was busted during a joint combing operation by Special Operation Group (SOG) jawans and district voluntary force.

“Based on reliable Intelligence inputs, an anti-Naxal operation was launched in the region on Thursday by a joint team of SOG and DVF. During the combing exercise, Maoists opened fire at the security forces and the latter also retaliated. We seized a huge cache of ammunition from the spot after the exchange of fire,” said Agarwal. The SP also informed that grenades, detonators, splinters, explosives, batteries and other various literature and camp articles used by the Maoists were seized from the hideout.

Taking advantage of dense forest cover and hilly terrain, the ultras however managed to escape from the spot.

“The exchange of fire lasted for over 30 minutes and 15-20 Maoists suspected to be inside the camp managed to flee and save their lives. We have intensified combing operations in the region and are trying to apprehend the ultras,” Agarwal added. On October 26, a country-made revolver, claymore mine and other explosives were seized from a Maoist dump in Malkangiri district.

BENGAL GOV. TO MEET AMIT SHAH IN DELHI TODAY

Kolkata, Jan. 8: Amid the growing political turbulence in poll-bound West Bengal, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar will be meeting Union home minister Amit Shah in Delhi on Saturday.

He had last met Shah in October 2020.

“Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar will fly to New Delhi on Friday night. His engagements include calling on the Union home minister Amit Shah on January 9,” Raj Bhavan sources said.

Dhankhar, who had been at loggerheads with the TMC government since taking charge as the Bengal governor, has criticised the Mamata Banerjee dispensation on several occasions over the “worsening” law and order situation in the state.

BJP leaders in Bengal have been demanding imposition of President’s Rule in the state, citing “breakdown of the rule of law” as reason.

Elections to the 294-member Bengal Assembly are likely to be held in April-May.

RAUT DEFENDS UDDHAV’S POST ON ‘SAMBHAJINAGAR’

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 8

Even a day after Congress’ protest, the reference to Aurangabad as ‘Sambhajnagar’ on Maharashtra CM’s official Twitter handle remained unchanged. Shiv Sena spokesperson and the Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut defended the Maharashtra CM’s official post, while Congress leader Ashok Chavan reminded the Uddhav Thackeray-led party that it was leading a coalition government.

In Nashik, Raut said that popular demand is above the Common Minimum Programme (CMP). It should not be necessary to run the government only as per what is written in the CMP, which is meant for ensuring food, clothes, and shelters. “It is not mentioned in the CMP to not make a decision over the popular demand,” Raut said.

The Congress has been contending that as it is not a part of the CMP, therefore, such issues should be avoided in order to ensure smooth functioning of the government.

Rebutting to Sena’s popular demand, Chavan, who is also PWD minister in Thackeray led government, said that it is a coalition government. Personal agenda can not be implemented. “This subject (name changing) is not on our priority list. Whenever such controversial issues come before the MVA government, all the constituents of MVA must sit together and resolve the issue,” he added.

Budaun case: Main accused held

The mahant was arrested in a late-night crackdown that ended his 5-day run

Budaun (UP), Jan. 8: A priest, who is the main accused in the alleged gangrape of an anganwadi worker in this Uttar Pradesh district, was quizzed throughout Friday night after his arrest in a late-night crackdown that ended his five-day run.

The “mahant”, Satya Narayan, was hiding in a forest area near the house of one of his followers in Mewali village under the Ughaiti police station, from where he was picked up, the police said.

The priest, who is in his 50s, was immediately arrested and interrogated by a police team.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Sankalp Sharma said the sub-inspector in-charge of the area, Amarjit Singh, was suspended on Friday.

The station house officer (SHO) of the Ughaiti police station, Raghvendra Pratap, was suspended earlier for a “delay in informing higher authorities, laxity in taking action, dereliction of duty and failure in taking

speedy action” and a case under IPC section 166A (public servant disobeying law) has been registered against the two officers.

They had informed senior officials about the incident after a delay of 17 hours, the SSP said.

He said the priest is being questioned and further action will be taken in accordance with the information provided by him.

Some more people are on police radar and they are also being questioned, the SSP said, adding that all the angles are being looked into and the case will be solved soon.

The priest will be taken for a medical examination and produced before a local court for seeking remand later in the day, the police said.

The 50-year-old woman, who had gone to a temple, was found dead under mysterious circumstances on Sunday. Her family members accused the temple priest and his accomplices of raping and killing her.

A case was registered against the accused and

HORRENDOUS INCIDENT

● THE 50-YEAR-OLD WOMAN, who had gone to a temple, was found dead under mysterious circumstances on Sunday.

● HER FAMILY members accused the temple priest and his accomplices of raping and killing her.

● THE PRIEST is being questioned and further action will be taken in accordance with the information provided by him.

● SOME MORE people are on police radar and they are also being questioned and all the angles are being looked into.

● CHIEF MINISTER Yogi Adityanath has ordered ‘strongest possible action’ in the case even as opposition parties have launched an attack on his government, terming the incident ‘horrific’ and ‘shameful’.

two of them — Vedram and Jaspal — were arrested on Tuesday night.

The incident triggered an opposition outcry and a comparison with the 2012 Nirbhaya case in Delhi after the post-mortem report confirmed rape, a broken rib cage, a fractured leg and injuries in the victim’s private parts.

The incident took place on Sunday and the matter came to light that night itself when the priest and his accomplices took the

victim’s body to her house, saying it was found in a dry well on the temple premises.

The FIR was registered on Tuesday after an autopsy confirmed rape and the two accomplices of the priest were nabbed.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has ordered “strongest possible action” in the case even as opposition parties have launched an attack on his government, terming the incident “horrific” and

“shameful”, with the Congress comparing it to the Nirbhaya case.

Following the incident, Bareilly ADG Avinash Chandra had visited the crime spot and announced a reward of ₹50,000 on the priest’s arrest.

“Based on complaints from the family members and the post-mortem report, a case has been registered under sections 376D (gang-rape) and 302 (punishment for murder) of the IPC,” he had said.

The ADG had said a second opinion on the post-mortem report was being sought from medical experts and only after that, any conclusion could be drawn.

Budaun Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Yashpal Singh said the woman died of trauma and excessive bleeding.

Endorsing the CMO’s opinion, District Magistrate Kumar Prashant said, “Whatever help can be given from the department will be given.

She was an anganwadi *sahayika* (helper). We are also paying attention to

the security of the family.”

The victim’s son said his mother had gone to offer prayers at the temple on Sunday but did not return home within the expected time.

Around 11 pm, the priest and two of his aides came to their house and handed over the body, he added.

Before the family members could ask them about the cause of her death, the accused left the house saying she had fallen into a dry well and the body was pulled out subsequently.

The victim’s son said the police were informed of the incident on Monday.

Amid the opposition uproar, the Chief Minister’s Office (CMO), in a tweet, said: “The UP CM @myogiadityanath has taken cognisance of the Badaun incident and instructed to take strongest legal action against the accused.”

The CM has also instructed the ADG, Bareilly zone to submit a detailed report on the incident and directed the Special Task Force (STF) to assist in the probe, it said. —PTI

Kerala oppn stages noisy stir, boycott Gov’s address

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN. 8

The Opposition Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) on Friday boycotted Governor Arif Mohammad Khan’s address on the opening day of the budget session of Kerala Assembly.

The opposition members staged a noisy demonstration inside the House before boycotting the Governor’s speech. The UDF MLAs came to the House carrying banners and posters demanding the resignation of Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan in connection with the allegations related to the gold smuggling case. They also leveled serious charges against the Chief Minister alleging that his office had become the epicenter of gold smuggling case.

The opposition protest against the Speaker took place on a day when his additional private secretary K. Ayyappan was questioned by Customs in connection with the statements given by the accused in the gold smuggling case.

Though the Governor requested the Opposition members to allow him to discharge his constitutional obligation, they continued the protest near his podium. However, undeterred by the opposition protest the Governor continued his address.

Later the opposition members walked out of the house and staged a sit-in outside the hall.

In his address Khan spoke about acute fiscal crisis being faced by the state. He said the state was facing a loss of

● THE UDF MLAS demand resignation of Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan over gold smuggling case

₹80,000 crores on account of pandemic and related issues.

He praised the LDF government’s handling of Covid pandemic.

“My government has taken up this challenge squarely and promised that no one will go hungry during the lockdown. The government had started community kitchens during the lockdown, ensured free treatment for Covid 19 patients and distributed kits to all ration card holders.”

The Governor said almost nine per cent of the state’s population was living abroad and with nearly six lakh immigrants returning due to the impact of Coronavirus, the flow of remittances would be seriously affected causing severe impact on the state’s economy.

Khan said the actions of certain central agencies have overstepped the constitutional contours and are impeding the development activities and flagship programmes undertaken by the state.

His reference was to the cases of gold smuggling and money laundering being investigated by a slew of central agencies. There have been allegations that the central agencies were acting against the government with vengeance.

Meanwhile the last budget of the CPI(M)-led LDF government would be a vote on account, to be presented by finance minister Dr. T.M. Thomas Isaac on January 15.

Scramble for water



Village women collect snow to melt for water, due to non-supply of drinking water in their village, in Bhaderwah of J&K on Friday. The women claimed that the water supply department had not restored the frozen pipes for the last two months. —PTI

Culling continues in bird flu affected areas of Kerala

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN. 8

Culling of poultry including ducks and chickens continued in Alappuzha and Kottayam districts of Kerala where bird flu cases were reported recently.

The animal husbandry department officials said more than 80,000 birds have been culled so far including 62,000 in Alappuzha district. A central team visited the affected areas of Alappuzha and Kottayam

districts to study the outbreak of avian influenza the other day.

The three-member team of the Union health and family welfare ministry comprising experts from National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and institute of virology visited the hotspots in Alappuzha district.

The experts are examining the possibility of mutation of the H5N8 virus and whether it posed any risk to the human beings.

Samples collected from the affected areas are

being subjected to lab investigations at the central institutes.

The team members held discussions with the district collectors and expressed satisfaction over the preventive steps taken so far. A health survey has been undertaken in the bird flu affected areas to find out if people residing in these places have complained of fever, influenza like illnesses or any other symptoms.

The workers engaged in culling operations have been given H1N1 preventive medicine.

MP honeytrap case: Seized CDs authentic

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JAN. 8

The sensational honey trapping and blackmailing scandal that came to light in September 2019 is set to return to haunt some high-profile people of the state after the Hyderabad-based Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) confirmed the authenticity of the sleaze CDs seized from the accused.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted by Madhya Pradesh police to probe the matter has received forensic test reports of the hard disk and CDs seized from some members of the alleged racket from the CFSL a couple of days ago.

“CFSL reports have confirmed that the hard disk and sleaze CDs and audios seized from some members of the racket

were authentic. We are examining the report. The CFSL report will help strengthen our case against the accused,” a senior police officer in the know of the things told this newspaper on Friday requesting not to be quoted.

Sources said the Central Forensic Science Laboratory report has indicated that no sex videos and sleaze audios examined by the laboratory are tampered with or morphed. All of them have been found to be authentic.

Around 4,000 sleazy videos and audios, sex chats and photographs showing some influential bureaucrats and politicians in compromising positions were recovered from the laptops, pen drives and mobile phones seized from members of the alleged racket following police raids in 2019.

VISVA-BHARATI SUSPENDS PROF. OVER APPOINTMENT ALLEGATIONS

Kolkata, Jan. 8: Visva-Bharati authorities have suspended a professor who recently alleged irregularities in the appointment of a colleague and even wrote to President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi about it.

The professor also made derogatory remarks against his colleague in the allegations, the varsity said.

The decision to suspend him was taken at an executive council meeting of the varsity late on Thursday.

“The Visva-Bharati

executive council... decided that disciplinary proceedings is to be initiated following applicable rules against Prof. Sudipta Bhattacharya and also decided to place him under suspension with immediate effect,” the notice said.

Bhattacharya, who is also the president of Visva-Bharati University Faculty Association, had shared allegations against the colleague about “irregularities” in his appointment as a ‘*patha bhavana*’ (open-air school) head on a WhatsApp group. —PTI



SHORT TAKES

POLICE CHIEF
QUITS AFTER
MOB INVASION

Washington, Jan. 8: The US Capitol police chief handed in his resignation Thursday, a day after Congress was invaded by a mob egged on by President Donald Trump, a source close to the agency said.

Steven Sund "is resigning effective January 16, 2021," the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, hours after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called for his resignation, following sharp rebukes for what many criticised as a lack of preparation.

POMPEO SAYS
US NOT 'BANANA
REPUBLIC'

Washington, Jan. 8: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday hit back at assertions that a mob attack on the Capitol showed the United States to be a "banana republic." A number of foreign critics as well as former US president George W. Bush made the analogy after rioters stirred up by President Donald Trump rampaged through a session of Congress that certified his loss to Joe Biden.

"The slander reveals a faulty understanding of banana republics and of democracy in America," said the top US diplomat, a staunch Trump loyalist, as two other members of the cabinet resigned over Wednesday's violence.

"In a banana republic, mob violence determines the exercise of power. In the United States, law enforcement officials quash mob violence so that the people's representatives can exercise power in accordance with the rule of law and constitutional government," Pompeo wrote on Twitter. Bush in a statement Wednesday made veiled criticism of the "reckless behavior" of members of his Republican Party in fueling the "insurrection." "This is how election results are disputed in a banana republic -- not our democratic republic," Bush wrote.

STAY ON,
LAWMAKERS TO
WH STAFF

Washington, Jan. 8: US lawmakers urged White House staff to stay in their jobs amid a spate of resignations in protest at President Donald Trump's support for the attack on Congress by his followers.

Senior Republican Senator Lindsey Graham urged top Trump aides to keep working for the final 14 days of the administration, naming chief of staff Mark Meadows, White House Counsel Pat Cipollone, and National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien.

"Most Americans will never know the service that Mark Meadows and Pat Cipollone and those under their charge provided to this country over the last year," Graham said in a press conference.

"To those who believe you should leave your post now to make a statement, I would urge you not," he said.

"To Robert O'Brien: you have been a good counsel to the president, you have been a steady hand. I've been missing your phone calls; Robert, stay on." "To those in the national security apparatus, we need you now more than ever." It was "a traumatic and entirely avoidable event as supporters of the President stormed the Capitol building following a rally he addressed," said Chao, the wife of Senate majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Earlier Thursday, former chief of staff Mick Mulvaney said he was quitting his diplomatic post.

COPS REJECTED OFFERS FOR HELP

Pentagon asked if National Guard was needed, Justice Dept reached out with FBI

Washington, Jan. 8: Three days before supporters of President Donald Trump rioted at the Capitol, the Pentagon asked the US Capitol Police if it needed National Guard manpower.

And as the mob descended on the building Wednesday, Justice Department leaders reached out to offer up FBI agents. The police turned them down both times, according to senior defence officials and two people familiar with the matter.

Despite plenty of warnings of a possible insurrection and ample resources and time to prepare, the Capitol Police planned only for a free speech demonstration. Still stinging from the uproar over the violent response by law enforcement to protests last June near the White House, officials also were intent on avoiding any appearance that the federal government was deploying active duty or National Guard troops against Americans. The result is the US Capitol was overrun Wednesday and officers in a law enforcement agency with a large operating budget and experience in high-security events protecting lawmakers were overwhelmed for the world to see.

Four protesters died, including one shot inside the building. A Capitol Police officer died Thursday after being injured in the Wednesday melee. The rioting and loss of control has raised serious questions over security at the Capitol for future events. The actions of the day also raise troubling concerns about the treatment of mainly white Trump supporters, who were allowed to roam through the building for hours, while Black and brown protesters who demonstrated last year over police brutality faced more robust and aggressive policing.

"This was a failure of imagination, a failure of leadership," said Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo, whose department responded to several large protests last year following the death of George Floyd. "The Capitol Police must do better and I don't see how we can get around that."

Acevedo said he has attended events on the Capitol grounds to honour slain police officers that had higher fences and a stronger security presence than what he saw on video Wednesday. Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy said that as the rioting was underway, it became clear that the Capitol Police were overrun. But he said there was no contingency planning done in advance for what forces could do in case of a problem at the Capitol because Defence Department help was turned down.

"They've got to ask us, the request has to come to us," said McCarthy. US Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund, under pressure from Schumer, Pelosi and other congressional leaders, was forced to resign.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell asked for and received the resignation of the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, Michael Stenger, effective immediately. Paul Irving, the longtime Sergeant at Arms of the House, also resigned. — AP



Demonstrators hold a banner calling for impeachment of US President Donald Trump during a protest outside the Barclays Centre in Brooklyn, New York on Thursday, a day after pro-Trump mob stormed and trashed the Capitol. — AFP



LIKE ALL Americans, I am outraged by the violence, lawlessness and mayhem. I immediately deployed the national guard and federal law enforcement to secure the building and expel the intruders.

DONALD TRUMP, US Prez



THE STORMING of the US Congress by Donald Trump's supporters is a disgrace that has "shocked humankind".

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN, Turkish President



THE MOB attack by his supporters on the US Capitol was the "ugly ending" to Trump's time at the White House.

SILVIO BERLUSCONI, Former Italian premier



WE CALL on the president of the United States, to disavow false and dangerous narratives, and encourage their supporters to do so as well.

MICHELLE BACHELET, UN rights chief

THEY WEREN'T protesters. They were a riotous mob, insurrectionists, domestic terrorists. The past four years we have had a Prez who has made his contempt for our democracy, our Constitution, the rule of law, clear in everything he has done.

JOE BIDEN, President-elect

VP: No radical move to oust Don

Washington, Jan. 8: US Vice President Mike Pence is opposed to using the constitution's 25th Amendment to force President Donald Trump from office, despite pressure from Democrats and some Republicans, the *New York Times* reported Thursday.

While Pence has not spoken publicly about invoking the mechanism, never used before in US history, the newspaper

cited a person close to the vice president saying he is against the radical move.

The calls to remove Trump came after supporters who he had encouraged invaded and shut down the US Congress Wednesday as it was poised to certify the election victory of Trump's rival, Democrat Joe Biden.

Democrats demanded action even though Trump only has 13 days left in office.

"This is an emergency of the highest magnitude," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

"By inciting sedition, as he did yesterday, he must be removed from office." The Times said Pence's stance is supported by several cabinet members, whose backing would be necessary to carry out a 25th Amendment removal.

Democrats in the US House of Representatives said that if the

25th Amendment is not invoked they will move quickly to impeach Trump.

"We have a limited period of time in which to act," said House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler, who led the successful impeachment of Trump a year ago, before the president was ultimately acquitted by the Republican-led Senate.

— AFP

Cop's death
takes unrest
toll to five

Washington, Jan. 8: Flags over the US Capitol were lowered to half-staff Friday after the death of a police officer took to five the number of people who died after President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the legislature.

US Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick was reportedly struck in the head with a fire extinguisher on Wednesday while struggling with the rioters who swarmed through the halls of Congress.

The 42-year-old member of the force that protects the ground of the Congress returned to his division office where he collapsed and was taken to the hospital, according to the Capitol Police.

He died of his injuries late Thursday, they said. According to reports, the FBI will open a murder investigation into his death.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ordered flags over the Capitol lowered in his honour.

"The violent and deadly act of insurrection targeting the Capitol, our temple of American Democracy, and its workers was a profound tragedy and stain on our nation's history," she said. — AFP

Cops lenient with mob,
severe with anti-racists

Los Angeles, Jan. 8: Like many Americans, President-elect Joe Biden on Thursday accused US authorities of treating a pro-Trump mob that stormed the Capitol more leniently than last year's anti-racism demonstrators.

"No one can tell me that if it had been a group of Black Lives Matter protesting yesterday... they wouldn't have been treated very, very differently than the mob of thugs that stormed the Capitol," Biden said in an address from his hometown in Delaware.

"We all know that's true, and it is unacceptable," said Biden, who will take over the White House on January 20, after winning November's election in part due to strong support

from Black voters.

On Wednesday thousands of protesters — spurred on by a speech given by President Donald Trump — marched to the seat of the US legislature, where some broke down barriers and doors to invade the building in an unprecedented act that played out on live television.

But police officers in charge of security held off using tear gas until intruders had reached the heart of the building, where they roamed freely, ransacking offices.

US media reported that some law enforcement officials even opened doors for them.

The scene stood in stark contrast to last year's anti-racism protests in the nation's capital and beyond. — AFP

Capitol storming: Two
Cabinet members quit

Washington, Jan. 8: Two members of Donald Trump's Cabinet resigned Thursday with days left in the administration in protest over the storming of the Capitol by a mob of the president's supporters.

The education secretary and transportation secretary — the only two women in Trump's inner Cabinet — both said they could no longer remain in office after the violent rampage on a ceremonial session of Congress that certified President-elect Joe Biden's victory.

"That behaviour was unconscionable for our country. There is no mistaking the impact your rhetoric had on the situation, and it is the inflection point for me," said Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, a conserva-

tive stalwart who had served throughout the administration.

"Impressionable children are watching all this, and they are learning from us," she said in a letter to Trump.

"They must know from us that America is greater than what transpired yesterday." Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, who is married to Republican Senate majority Leader Mitch McConnell, earlier said it was "a traumatic and entirely avoidable event as supporters of the president stormed the Capitol building following a rally he addressed." "It has deeply troubled me in a way I simply cannot set aside," she added. — AFP

Sedition charge
likely for rioters

Washington, Jan. 8: The top federal prosecutor for the District of Columbia has said that "all options are on the table" for charging members of the violent pro-Trump mob that stormed the US Capitol — including sedition charges.

Michael Sherwin, acting US attorney for DC, said prosecutors plan to file 15 federal cases on Thursday for crimes including unauthorised access and theft of property, and investigators are combing through reams of evidence to bring additional charges. "All of those charges are on the table. ... We will bring the most maximum charges we can," he said. — AP

Trump considering
self-pardon: US media

Washington, Jan. 8: Embattled President Donald Trump has discussed with his close aides the possibility of pardoning himself before leaving the office on January 20, US media reports have said, amid growing calls for his removal from the White House. According to CNN, some of those conversations happened in recent weeks, and Trump has asked about the legal and political consequences of a self-pardon.

The news comes as Democratic and Republican lawmakers alike rebuked Trump's conduct as thousands of his supporters stormed the US Capitol building on Wednesday and clashed with police, resulting in four deaths and interrupting a constitutional process by Congress to affirm the

victories of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris in the November 3 election.

It is not clear if the issue has come up since Wednesday's mayhem at the Capitol building fomented by the President's rhetoric or after his recent controversial call with the Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger; the report said, citing multiple sources.

The president has also asked for legal opinions on whether he has the authority to issue a self-pardon and has been advised on the potential political fallout, it said. The *New York Times* reported on Thursday that Trump has suggested in conversations since Election Day that he wants to pardon himself. — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

9 JANUARY 2021

True picture of economy emerges in official data

In the wake of the information revolution, governments, too, are becoming savvy in the art of sophisticated media management that enables them to have their say in direct interaction with the people beyond the traditional print and TV media. However, such management also leads to the sowing of doubts in the minds of people as they struggle to sift real facts from managed news. Something similar may have happened in the case of the official Indian narrative about the economy.

The lockdown — the toughest in the world — had wiped out nearly 25 per cent of the country's productivity, but there was no official admission. Government officials did not directly comment on the sorry state of economic affairs even though several agencies, including the Reserve Bank of India, had painted a grim economic scenario. The moment of truth may have come when the National Statistical Office (NSO), a statistical body under the Union ministry of statistics and programme implementation, released its report on the economic outlook.

On Thursday, NSO projected a 7.7 per cent contraction for the Indian economy in 2020-21, highlighting the damage that the coronavirus has inflicted on the Indian economy. Though the contraction has become slightly milder after September 2020, making many analysts suggest a V-shaped recovery, the real picture has not become any better.

According to NSO data, the business of services like trade, hotels, transport, communication and broadcast is expected shrink by 21.4 per cent, construction sector which has a multiplier effect on other industries is expected to shrink by 12.6 per cent, mining and quarrying are projected to witness a degrowth of 12.4 per cent, and manufacturing is projected to lose productivity by 9.4 per cent. When such key segments of the economy are witnessing a degrowth, the economy can never be said to be in pink of its health. The impact of such widespread deceleration in the economy is evident in unemployment that has been left undressed for a long time.

In a recent report, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) said the unemployment rate in the country rose sharply to 9.1 per cent in December 2020, which is the highest since the beginning of India's recovery from the lockdown in June. The jobless rate stood at 10.99 per cent in June 2020. Unemployment in urban India rose from 7.1 per cent to 8.8 per cent.

While there is an improvement in hiring intentions in some sectors, a survey conducted by Manpower Group claims that it would take at least nine months for the country to reach pre-Covid levels. This scenario presents a tightrope walk for the government, as jobs will not increase unless economic output rises. Higher economic output and consumer confidence, however, are mutually dependent. People will not splurge unless they are confident about their financial future, which once again depends on the country's economic growth. Therefore, the role of the government and rich corporations assumes greater significance to spur economic growth of the country.

FB, Twitter: Action too late

Facebook and Instagram have banned Donald Trump "indefinitely", or at least until the end of his term. He will be denied access to his 35 million followers on Facebook but retains the key to addressing 88 million followers on Twitter because that platform has not taken as bold a stand and had locked him out only for 12 hours on the fateful day. Of course, social media, often criticised for being the publicity megaphone for the likes of the obstreperous US President, had acted belatedly and only after all that distressing violence had taken place on Capitol Hill. They were clearly guilty of bolting the doors after the horses had fled.

The action against Mr Trump is a warning shot that should have come long ago when he was blatantly misusing the social media after having built up his influence on them and misused the platforms to challenge the election results. The influence that the likes of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube wield as a platform linking people in the US, Europe, India and many other countries is huge. It is on record that the social media have been used as a vehicle for hate and not only in the obvious case of Trump and his acolytes. However, the conspiracy theorist QAnon also used other sites like Gab and Parler to gather members for the attack on democracy.

The point is social media has been guilty of allowing extremism to grow. Its lackadaisical attitude to curbing toxic content while chasing advertisement revenue based on number of users has led us to such a pass. It was never in the public interest to allow hate to come to a boil and let violence result from people operating in closed social media networks. By his perverse actions Mr Trump has become a stark warning to those who use the social media for nefarious purposes. In India, Facebook and others have been as reluctant to shut down unacceptable use to whip up communal passions and outright hate based on religion despite warnings from the government and civil rights groups. Will they reform at least now?

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Subhani



Reassert 'core' values & halt democracy's decay



Ashwani Kumar

In his book *The Age Rights (1990)*, Prof. Louis Henkin, a celebrated scholar of international law, had claimed "human rights is the idea of our time, the only political-moral idea that has received universal acceptance". However, an objective analysis of the situation throughout the world, including India, belies that claim.

This disquieting conclusion flows from a distressing institutional response to the egregious infraction of human rights, raising a profoundly important question on the functioning of our democratic institutions. Repeated abuse of several stringent laws with punitive consequences has resulted from a reversal of the presumption of innocence in favour of the accused, declared by the Supreme Court as a human right. (Bhramajeet Singh Sharma, 2005)

Demonstrated arbitrariness in investigative processes and the failure of the Indian State to enact a comprehensive anti-custodial torture law question our willingness to civilise ourselves in the use of State power. Denial of basic human rights to undertrials, poignantly exemplified in the refusal of a sipper to an 80-year-old undertrial priest suffering from Parkinson's disease and the refusal of jail guards to allow an incarcerated public intellectual access to a pair of spectacles must shame the nation. This, despite Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer's binding edict in the Sunil Batra case as early as 1978, that fundamental rights "do not part company with the prisoner at the prison gates..." Indiscriminate arrests of citizens on charges of sedition are etched in public memory as a repressive act of State power intended to crimi-

nalise dissent. Unconscionable arrests for inter-faith marriages mischievously labelled as "love jihad" have scarred the constitutional conscience. Heart rending sights of a dog nibbling at a dead woman's body inside a hospital, and the reported beating to death of a dalit worker just because he had served himself a mouthful of food while clearing the leftovers, condemn us irretrievably as a heartless society. Are we then really a people who can claim that they live in the shelter of each other? Despite the Supreme Court's repeated directives, trials by the media continue to infract the citizens' right to liberty, fair trial and reputation. As the highest forum of democracy, Parliament too cannot escape its share of responsibility for our faltering record on human rights. The three controversial agricultural reforms laws affecting the economic condition and dignity of millions of India's farmers, passed in both Houses of Parliament without any discussion by a voice vote, is a recent illustration. The enactment of often abused "broad" laws without thoughtful deliberation have had grave consequences for the liberty and dignity of citizens.

The offices of the Lokpal, the Central Information Commission and the National Human Rights Commission have remained largely dormant in practice, except for the occasional and unenforced interventions. Our national leaders, captive to personal animosities and dwarfed by timidity in the face of power, remain obsessed with a "manipulative conversation about our future", with little time to address themselves to the defining challenges of our times. Thus politics,

denuded of its larger purpose, thrives on the tyranny of the strong over the weak and is bereft of any inspiring moral appeal.

However, the nation's greatest regret is that having declared human dignity anchored in deference to human rights as a core constitutional value (Common Cause, 2018), the Supreme Court has failed to lean consistently in favour of individual rights against the State. Given the national context, Chief Justice S.A. Bobde's recent suggestion of a restricted recourse to Article 32 in bail matters is rather unfortunate and in some ways is a denial of its *raison d'être*. Citing with approval Ronald Dworkin's assertion of a right to individual dignity against the government in Puttaswamy (2017), the court's recent record in enforcing this right is, at best, mixed.

The continuing incarceration of public intellectuals, political leaders, academics and dissenters, even where the weight of evidence against them is *prima facie* weak, has regrettably blemished the court's otherwise sterling record as the sentinel of our fundamental rights. The Supreme Court's profound pronouncements in Shreya Singhal (2015), Shabnam (2015), Puttaswamy (Supra), Nambi Narayan (2018), Navtej Johar (2018), Anuradha Bhasin (2020) and several earlier decisions notwithstanding, its inability to enforce its own judgments has dented its standing as a designated guardian of constitutional principles. Deference of its hearing on the Rohingya petitions, the challenge to the Citizenship

Clearly, this is our moment of reckoning. We must acknowledge the truth of a diminished Indian democracy and our collective failures. Hopefully, the process of democratic erosion can be arrested...

Amendment Act's validity and on the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution, the petitions concerning the plight of the elderly and their right to dignity, a hesitant intervention in aid of the coronavirus migrants and misplaced priorities in the hearing and disposal of cases have added to the blemish.

The need to reclaim a consistent vocabulary of constitutional discourse rooted in intellectual integrity is self-evident. The highest court has itself reminded us that the majesty of courts lies in the objectivity, consistency and wisdom of its judgments, not in the "coercive power of judges, but the deference and respect which is paid to them and their acts from an opinion of their justice and integrity" (Baradakanta Misra, 1974).

Clearly, this is our moment of reckoning. We must acknowledge the truth of a diminished Indian democracy and our collective failures. Hopefully, the process of democratic erosion can be arrested with the citizens' collective assertion of our core constitutional values. Despite the disappointments, we can take comfort in history's abiding lesson — that the ideals of freedom, equality and justice are best secured in the consciousness of an enlightened people and that no one can diminish the appeal of dignity or extinguish the flame of liberty as long as it burns brightly in our hearts. We know that "the history of the world is none other than the progress of consciousness of freedom" and "the arc of the moral universe bends towards justice". In these testing times, when the centre have ceased to hold, a relentless pursuit of human dignity admits of no bystanders. To recall Thomas Paine's felicity: "When my country... was on fire about my ears, it was time to stir. It was time for every man to stir."

The writer is a former Union law minister. The views expressed here are personal.

LETTERS

BLACK DAY FOR US

January 6th will be remembered as a black day for American democracy. That Trump's supporters went to attack Capitol Hill is the height of absurdity. Trump has never shied away to foster and use divisions and prejudices to pursue his own interests. His tenure is not known for respecting democratic norms. Now the emboldened mob attack shows the deep-rooted malaise and divisions along party lines in American society.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

Trump should be impeached and tried for criminal instigation leading to attempted seizure of Capitol Hill and arson by his hired goons. Narendra Modi should also publicly apologise for his unsavoury shenanigans with Trump during 'Howdy Modi in the US and 'Kem Chho?' in Ahmedabad.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

BJP'S FAILURE

It is surprising that in spite of AP BJP leaders best efforts to cash in on Sri Kodandarama Swamy temple issue, they couldn't (BJP leaders detained over attempt to visit Ram temple, DC, Jan. 8). BJP state president Somu Veeraju who fainted, failed to make an impact on general public as they might have thought that these protests of BJP leaders are fake. It is very clear that BJP cannot succeed in AP until unless they change their attitude and political policies.

P. Govardhana Rao
Kankipadu, Krishna

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Ram to open Dundigal Air Force Academy

HYDERABAD, JANUARY. 8 The ₹35-crore Air Force Academy at Dundigal, about 30 km from here will be formally inaugurated on January 16 by Union Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram.

The Academy is intended to centralise the training facilities to Air Force personnel at one integrated establishment. At present the training centres are situated at Jodhpur, Bidar, Bangalore and Madras.

Farukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



"Now the new year reviving old desires
The thoughtful soul with his bottles retires
With good wishes for friend and foe alike
And for saints and even for consummate liars."

— From Rubaiyat of Bachchoo Ka Adda

Of Chinese virus, Spanish flu, UK strain: Do points of origin matter?

The soon-to-be ex-President Donald Trump insists on calling the Covid-19 plague the "Chinese virus". Very many viruses have been given adjectival and territorial names. The least antagonistic is "common cold". It blames no nation, continent or species as do the descriptions like "Spanish flu", "Asian flu", "swine flu" and "bird flu".

The last two are comparatively innocuous but Mr Trump's insistence on calling this worldwide pandemic "Chinese" is part of his nastiness and his attempt to deepen the antagonism between Americans and all things Chinese.

I don't know if there was any malignant intention on the part of Britons who christened that infliction "Spanish". Just part of British xeno-

phobic contempt. I have no doubt that if Mr Trump is challenged, he will produce evidence that the Covid-19 pandemic originated in Wuhan. He might even say that it was deliberately set free from a laboratory there in accordance with some devilish Chinese world domination strategy.

Incidentally, there is now an invitation from Wuhan scientists for objective observers to re-examine the common claim that the epidemic originated in that city. What the result of this challenge will be is yet to be seen.

Britain is, as I write, gentle reader, under a severe lockdown. The last two weeks have seen an exponential rise in the number of cases of infection and the number of deaths as a result. I use the word exponential literally, as the graphs of the spread that are plastered on the TV screen each day and night are the shape of the ones that we studied for our Pune University maths degrees.

The increase in person-to-person transmission of the pandemic, scientists say, is owing to the virus having mutated. The mutation is, the epidemiology and science tell us, is much more easily transmitted through the air. And now this mutat-

ed organism, is with some justification, known in Spain as the "British virus".

Referring to it as such is possibly motivated by Spanish revenge.

The phrases "British variant", "British mutant virus" and other such descriptions are spreading through the world media and, of course, occasioning a backlash in Britain, even though the fact stands that the mutant strain and its effects were first noticed in this country. Nevertheless, there is a sense of shrill protests of victimisation from those who challenge the description.

One of the shrillest protesters is a character called Roger Helmer, who used to be a British Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and is a supporter of the jingoistic United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)

His tweet, reported in *Private Eye*, says "it was FIRST IDENTIFIED in the UK" and that is not tantamount to it originating in the UK. Earlier last year, Mr Helmer had objected to the characterisation of Mr Trump's contention that this pandemic was a "Chinese virus" as racist.

"So, is it racist to mention 'Chinese food' or 'Indian curry' or 'Korean Kimchee' or 'German Sauerkraut'?

So why not 'Chinese virus'?" he tweeted to his followers.

One may wonder how many of his followers have now noticed a flaw, dissension or even hypocrisy in his statements.

I don't tweet (though I can whistle inefficiently), but if I did, I might point out to poor Roger that if a virus first identified in China can be called the "Chinese virus", then a variant of it which was first identified in Britain... "Geddit Roj, me ole fruit-cake!"

And then there is the question of what characterises a flu as Spanish. Does it say, "tonight we drink, tomorrow we kill the gringos!" as it threatens to infect another human, or "hasta la vista?" as it is expelled or killed by a vaccine?

The gaping flaw in poor Roger's argument is that "Indian curry" carries in its flavour everything that characterises Indian cuisine. If I want, which I frequently do, a "Goa sausage", I want it not just because it originates in Goa, but because it contains the ingredients and flavours particular to that region — a bratwurst or a Polish-garlic sausage won't do just as well. Whereas Covid-19 doesn't carry the characteristics of anything Chinese and its variant,

apart from infesting places where the sun never sets, has nothing British about it.

Of course, viruses, just like us Parsis, are sometimes named after the things we do and sometimes after the places from which we come. So, a Parsi called Batliwalla must have ancestors who dealt in bottles — and it should be quite clear what my distant relatives Russi Immoralearningswalla and Imoji Feromonereplacementwalla do for their living.

And moving on to places, Satarawalla and Poonawalla come from the places with those names. What has always been a dilemma for my family is the origin of our surname "Dhondy". It certainly doesn't derive from the town of Dhond in Maharashtra, so eliminating geographical origins, we come to professions. Now in some Gujarati dialects the word might mean stonebreaker, which points to the option that my ancestors could have been stone masons.

The other possibility, which we pointedly disregard, was that they were perhaps put to breaking stones in an institution as guests in the colonial era of His Imperial Majesty, the King Emperor.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,782.51	1.43
Nifty 50	14,347.25	1.48
S&P 500*	3,811.72	0.21
Dollar (₹)	73.24	0.10
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.61	0.06
Euro (₹)	89.64	0.36
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,763*614	1.23
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.52	2.10
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.892	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.088	0.017

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Gold bond issue price fixed at ₹5,104 per gm

The issue price for the Sovereign Gold Bond has been fixed at Rs 5,104 per gram of gold, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said. The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2020-21-Series X will be open for subscription from January 11 to January 15. "The nominal value of the bond...works out to Rs 5,104 per gram of gold," the RBI said. Investors applying and paying online will get a discount of Rs 50 per gramme.

Forex reserves swell \$4.48 bn to record \$585.32 bn



The country's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$4.483 billion to touch a record high of \$585.324 billion in the week ended January 1, RBI data showed. In the previous week ended Dec. 25, the reserves had declined by \$290 million to \$580.841 bn. Foreign currency assets climbed by \$4.168 bn to \$541.642 bn. Gold reserves rose by \$315 million to \$37,026 bn. The Special drawing rights with the IMF stood at \$1,510 bn.

Manipal buy of Columbia Asia gets CCI nod

The Competition Commission of India approved acquisition of Columbia Asia Hospitals by Manipal Health Enterprises. The approval came after Manipal Hospitals in November 2020 said it has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire Columbia Asia Hospitals in India. The acquisition will be for Rs 2,100 crore, sources had earlier said. The combined entity will have a presence of 27 hospitals across 15 cities.

MG Hector SUV facelift launched at ₹12.89 lakh

MG Motor, the British iconic car brand now owned by Chinese giant SAIC Motor, has rolled out the all-new seven-seater version of the Hector Plus SUV and the MG Hector SUV facelift with prices starting at Rs 13.34 lakh and Rs 12.89 lakh, respectively. The facelift for the Hector-introduced about 18 months after the mid size SUV's launch in India-and updated Hector Plus get a few cosmetic and equipment upgrades.



Lower margins, higher loan growth seen Q3 to be a mixed bag for lenders

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JAN. 8

Third quarter (Q3FY21) earnings for banks are expected to be a mixed bag this season. While credit flow and collection efficiency could slightly improve quarter-on-quarter (QoQ), driven by a bounce back in the retail sector and sustained momentum in agriculture, the asset quality recognition could be delayed again by a quarter due to the Supreme Court's impending decision on loan recast. Hence, gross non-performing asset (GNPA) ratios might be a tad better QoQ, with lenders reporting asset quality adjusted for the SC verdict. Other income may dip sequentially due to lower treasury gains and fee income.

The Supreme Court in its order last year had banned banks from marking defaulted loans as non-performing assets (NPAs). The apex court had earlier directed banks not to recognise fresh NPAs, till further orders in the interest on interest case. A public interest litigation (PIL) was earlier filed in the Supreme Court to waive off interest on interest for borrowers during the March to August moratorium period.

Provisional data released by private banks showed slight improvement in loan growth sequentially during the December quarter compared to the September quarter. According to analysts,



large banks are likely to report better credit growth. The country's largest private sector lender, HDFC Bank, reported a loan growth of 16 per cent for the quarter ended December 2020. In a BSE filing, HDFC Bank said, its advances aggregated to about Rs 10.82 lakh crore as of December 31, a growth of around 16 per cent. The total loans and advances for Yes Bank grew by 1.8 per cent to Rs 1.69 lakh crore.

"For our banks, we see better QoQ loan growth of 2 per cent versus one per cent in the last quarter, although net interest margin (NIM) may contract by 10 basis points to 3.4 per cent due to the flow through impact of lower deposit rates. Provisioning could remain elevated as banks might be conservative on future recognition. Consequently, net profit may decline by 17 per cent QoQ to Rs 9,280 crore," said Gaurav Jani, analyst, Centrum Broking, Motilal Oswal Institu-

tional Equities said, "higher credit costs, coupled with suppressed credit growth, are likely to put pressure on near-term earnings. Although slippages are likely to increase in 2HFY21, we expect heavyweights like Kotak Mahindra Bank/HDFC Bank to post a PAT growth of 20 per cent/11 per cent year on year. We expect net profit for IndusInd Bank/Federal Bank/Axis Bank/ICICI Bank to decline by 56 per cent/20 per cent/15 per cent/14 per cent year on year."

"PSU Banks are expected to deliver NIL/PAT growth of 2.8 per cent/around 18 per cent year on year, led by Bank of Baroda, which is expected to report a profit in 3Q," it added.

Sharekhan said, "even though overall credit growth has been weak on system levels, at 5 per cent over the previous year, larger and well placed banks such as HDFC Bank, ICICI, SBI are expected to report better advances growth."

SBI RAISES DISCOUNTS ON HOME LOANS BY 30 BPS

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JAN. 8

The country's largest lender, State Bank of India (SBI), on Friday announced further interest concession of upto 30 basis points (bps) on home loans and full waiver on processing fees. One basis point is one hundredth of a percentage point.

The higher interest concession would be based on the loan amount, the creditworthiness of the borrower and the location of the property and would be available till March 2021.

"The largest home loan lender has sweetened its past offers and now provides higher interest concession based on loan amount, the creditworthiness of the borrowers and the location of the property. SBI believes that it is important to offer better rates to customers displaying good repayment history. SBI home loan interest rates are linked to Cibil score and start from 6.80 per cent for loans up to Rs 30 lakh and 6.95 per cent for loans above Rs 30 lakhs. Interest concessions up to 30 bps is also available in eight metro cities for loans up to Rs 5 crore," the lender said in a statement.

Customers can also apply via Yono app or from homeloans.sbi/www.sbi.loans.in/59minutes.com and get additional interest concession of 5 bps, the bank said in a statement.

TCS beats estimates after Covid drives digital boom

SARITHA RAI JAN. 8

Tata Consultancy Services Ltd beat expectations after record deal wins underscored a global shift toward digitalization during the pandemic.

Asia's largest software outsourcing provider reported profit rose to Rs 8,700 crore (\$1.2 billion) in the quarter ended December, compared with the average estimate of Rs 8,590 crore. Sales climbed to Rs 42,020 crore.

India's top software companies like TCS and rival Infosys Ltd were expected to deliver their best December-quarter performance in a decade, defying a global downturn. Despite struggling with lockdowns that



forced hundreds of thousands of their employees to work from home, the IT services industry has largely experienced healthy order pipelines, steady revenues and expanding margins.

India's \$181 billion tech outsourcing industry is riding a wave of digital transformation that's expected to underpin deal signings and outlook revisions from its top players. Technology

emerged as the second-best performing sector in India's equity market last year, behind only healthcare, as the pandemic hastened a push toward digitalization and work-from-home activities spurred demand for video-conferencing, cloud services and e-commerce. Global banks and insurers are accelerating efforts to shed non-core assets, like in-house tech support, as they navigate through the economic uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bloomberg Intelligence said, a boost in spending on digital transformations and a need for deeper IT savings will be the main drivers that accelerate sales growth over the next "two-three quarters."

— Bloomberg

Indices inch up on rotational buying

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 8

The market closed at a new record high, led by buying in IT & auto stocks, with third quarter earnings expectations and global cues boosting investor sentiments.

The Sensex gained 689 points or 1.43 per cent to close at 48,782 while the Nifty-50 closed at 14,347.25, gaining 209.90 points, or 1.48 per cent.

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 6,029.83 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 2,372.54 crore.

"Global cues were positive as investors expected that a new Democratic-controlled US government would lead to heavy spending and borrowing to support the country's economic recovery," said Siddhartha Khemka, head-retail research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

"The rally was led by the IT stocks, BSE IT index was up by 3.55 per cent, on high expectation from TCS result, which was to be announced by the company after the market hours," he said.

TCS soared to a new life time high of Rs 3,127.55 on the BSE and finally closed

at Rs 3,120.35. Other gainers included Infosys (3.95 per cent), Wipro (5.75 per cent), Tech Mahindra (5.64 per cent) and HCL Tech (3.13 per cent).

"At present, the rotational buying across the sectors is helping the index to inch higher," said Ajit Mishra, vice president research, Religare Broking.

BSE Auto Index also gained 3.37 per cent, led by gains for Maruti Suzuki (5.94 per cent), Eicher Motors (4.23 per cent), Mahindra (3.51 per cent) and Hero MotoCorp (3.31 per cent) and Bajaj Auto (2.75 per cent).

Retail investors book profit in equity, hybrid MFs for sixth month

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 8

Equity and hybrid mutual fund schemes saw continued outflows worth over Rs 16,000 crore in December 2020 due to ongoing redemptions for the sixth month in a row, as per monthly data released by Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi). However, the rally in the equity market and inflows of over Rs 13,862 crore in the debt schemes helped the industry's total asset under management to top Rs 31 lakh crore in December, a new all-time high, at Rs 31,02,475 crore, as on December 31. In November, the total mutual industry AUM stood at Rs 30,00,904 crore.

N. S. Venkatesh, chief executive, Amfi, said, "while net-inflows in equity funds and hybrid are indeed negative, on the back of profit-led redemptions, the gross inflows are a healthy Rs 36,000 crore in these two categories."

Equity-oriented schemes saw outflow of equity

assets worth Rs 10,147 crore while hybrid schemes saw outflows worth Rs 5,932 crore. Barring sectoral/thematic fund (Rs 3,412 crore) and dividend yield fund (Rs 1,490 crore) all other equity-oriented schemes saw outflows.

Himanshu Srivastava, associate director-manager research, Morningstar India, said, "Outflows were witnessed across equity fund categories except for dividend yield and sectoral/thematic funds categories, given both these categories saw the launch of new funds, which managed to garner investor interest. These NFOs collected assets worth Rs 6,312 crore. Large-cap and multi-cap categories were the worst hit during the month. These two categories together witnessed a net outflow of Rs 7,417.16 crore in December."

In debt schemes, corporate bond fund (Rs 8,609 crore), short duration fund (Rs 3,953 crore), overnight fund (Rs 7,410 crore) and liquid fund (Rs 5,102 crore) saw inflows.

FPOs NO LONGER NEED MINIMUM CONTRIBUTION FROM PROMOTER

New Delhi, Jan. 8: Capital markets watchdog Sebi on Friday relaxed the framework for follow-on public offers (FPOs), a move that will help promoters of companies to raise funds more easily through this route.

The applicability of minimum promoters' contribution norm and the subsequent lock-in requirements for the issuers making FPO have been done away with by the regulator, as per a notification.

Earlier, promoters had to contribute 20 per cent towards a company's FPO. Besides, in case of any issue of capital to the public, the minimum promoters' contribution was required to be locked-in for three years.

The regulator said the relaxation would be available for companies which are frequently traded on a stock exchange for at least three years. Also, such firms should have redressed 95 per cent of investor complaints.

The issuer company needs to be in compliance with the LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosures Requirements) Regulations for at least three years, according to Sebi. —PTI

Hyundai stock turns red hot on reports of tie-up for Apple car

YOOJUNG LEE JAN. 8

A reported potential tie-up with Apple Inc is making South Korea's second-richest family even richer: Shares of Hyundai Motor Company jumped as much as 25 per cent in Seoul on Friday --the most since 1988--after the company said it's been receiving requests to cooperate on developing self-driving electric vehicles. An earlier report in local media named the US tech giant.

That boosted the combined fortune of Hyundai Motor Group chairman Euisun Chung and his father Mong-Koo, by some \$2 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

Euisun, who succeed his



Euisun Chung

father as the group's chairman in October, has been pushing for technologies, including electric and driverless vehicles to turn the carmaker into one of the world's leaders. Hyundai Motor will spend more than 60 trillion won (\$55 billion) in those areas over the next five years and in 2019 set up a \$4 bil-

lion autonomous-driving joint venture with a General Motors Co. spin-off. It plans to release its first electric vehicle this year.

Any collaboration with a big tech company could boost that push. Apple has said it will take at least five years to introduce an autonomous, electric vehicle, according to people familiar with the plans, meaning that it's in no hurry to decide on potential auto-industry partners.

With Friday's stock surge, Euisun Chung is now worth \$5 billion and his father's wealth has jumped to \$7.4 billion. The two directly hold about 8 per cent of Hyundai Motor.

— Bloomberg

CHINA ORDERS MEDIA TO CENSOR ALIBABA COVERAGE

SHIYIN CHEN & COCO LIU JAN. 8

China has ordered its domestic media to censor reports about an antitrust probe into Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, signalling how the issue has become a matter of national political sensitivity, the Financial Times reported.

A directive issued by the

government's propaganda arm toward the end of last year ordered news outlets to strictly invoke the official line on the investigation into the tech giant and prohibited them from engaging in extended analysis without permission, the FT said, citing two sources.

Jack Ma's empire has become the most promi-

nent target of China's campaign against the technology industry, which as so far torpedoed affiliate Ant Group Co's \$35 billion initial public offering and led to an antitrust investigation at the e-commerce giant. Ma, who hasn't been seen in public for months, has been advised by the government to stay in the country. — Bloomberg

GREEN | CONUNDRUM Vessel owners don't know which alternative technology to be adopted

Ship orders dip 50% over fuel use uncertainty

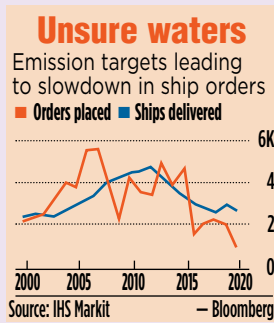
ELIZABETH LOW & JACK WITTELS JAN. 8

Ship owners facing looming deadlines to use less-polluting fuels have slashed the number of new vessels on order because they don't know which alternative technology to switch to.

Ammonia, hydrogen, biofuels and electrification are some of the many contenders to power the world's future merchant fleet, but most are only in the trial stage and won't be scalable for

at least a decade. With the life of a commercial ship averaging around 20 years, opting for a technology that doesn't take off could be very costly.

But owners are running out of time to make the choice. In 2018 the International Maritime Organization set a target to cut shipping's greenhouse-gas emissions in half by 2050 from 2008 levels. The deadline prompted some ship owners to hold off on new orders until it became clearer which new fuels would be the best option--a decline



that has turned into a slump with the subsequent global trade disputes and the pandemic. Orders fell almost 10 per

cent in 2019 and then more than 50 per cent in 2020 to the lowest in at least two decades, IHS Markit data show. If activity doesn't pick up, that could lead to a dearth of vessels and a spike in freight rates in a few years.

"People aren't ordering ships because we don't know what to fuel them with," said Morten Aarup, head of market research at Danish vessel owner D/S Norden A/S. "Engineers, ship designers need to come together" urgently to find the

best solution, he said in a recent panel discussion on shipping trends.

Ship owners who fail to switch to new, cleaner vessels could find themselves at a competitive disadvantage as more customers demand environmentally-friendly transport. About 12.3 per cent of vessels on order have alternative-fuel propulsion, compared with just 0.6 per cent of the current global fleet, according to data from Drewry Maritime Services.

But the use of alterna-

tive fuels in shipping is still in its infancy, with many of the big ship owners pursuing different alternatives. Trafigura Group, one of the world's biggest energy traders, has a stake in a company selling marine biofuels, vessel classification society Lloyd's Register has given approval in principle to several ammonia-fuelled ship projects and Swedish tanker line Stena Bulk AB is planning to run some of its vessels on used cooking oil.

— Bloomberg

KYC NOT MUST FOR JEWELLERY BUYING

New Delhi, Jan. 8: No new KYC disclosures have been mandated for cash purchase of gold, silver or precious gems and stones and only high-value cash transactions continue to require the filing of documents such as income tax PAN or biometric ID Aadhaar, finance ministry sources said on Friday. Clarifying a December 28, 2020 notification, the Department of Revenue in the ministry said "cash purchase" of jewellery, bullion and precious gems and stones of value more than Rs 2 lakh is not allowed without KYC in the country for the past few years.

This continues, the official said. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

IOC member not sure of Olympics

Tokyo: A senior member of the International Olympic Committee has said he can't be certain the postponed Tokyo Olympics will open in just over six months because of the surging pandemic in Japan and elsewhere. The comments by Canadian IOC member Richard Pound to British broadcaster the BBC came as Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga declared a state of emergency on Thursday for Tokyo and surrounding prefectures. I can't be certain because the ongoing elephant in the room would be the surges in the virus, Pound said speaking about the future of the Tokyo Games. Japan's emergency order, which is largely voluntary, will be in force until the first week of February. It's crunch time for Tokyo. Organizers say the Olympics will take place, but they are not expected to reveal concrete plans until spring. — AP

Fifa ex-president Blatter in hospital

Geneva: Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter has been taken to hospital, a Swiss newspaper said on Thursday, but media insisted the disgraced official's life was not in danger. "My father is in hospital. He's getting better every day. But he needs time and rest," his daughter Corinne Blatter Andenmatten was quoted as saying by Blick, which said the he was in a serious but non-life-threatening condition. "On behalf of my family, I ask for privacy," his daughter said. Blatter was removed from office in 2015 after 17 years at the head of world football's governing body. He was suspended from football for six years over a two million Swiss franc payment to then UEFA boss Michel Platini in 2011. Blatter and Platini are now being investigated for alleged "fraud" and "breach of trust" in Switzerland. — AFP

Colaco goals earn win for Hyderabad

Vasco: Hyderabad FC piled further misery on NorthEast United, extending the Highlanders' winless run to six games with a thumping 4-2 victory in the Indian Super League here on Friday. Hyderabad took the lead through goals from Aridane Santana (3rd minute) and Joel Chianese (36th) before a penalty from Federico Gallego (45th) and Benjamin Lambot's strike (45th) helped NEUFC draw parity before the break. Hyderabad settled the tie in their favour in the second half through late goals from substitute Liston Colaco, who scored in the 85th and 90th minutes. The first half was a dramatic and open-ended contest with both sides creating ample chances. The North East side fashioned more opportunities and despite a two-goal deficit, fought their way back with two goals late in the opening half. — PTI

Honda riders in third 1-2 at Dakar

Al Qaisumah, Saudi Arabia: With the opening third of the Dakar Rally completed, Monster Energy Honda Team riders now aim to consolidate positions which will allow them to attack in the second half of the race. Thursday saw another one-two for the Honda CRF450 RALLY, with Kevin Benavides and Jose Ignacio Cornejo occupying the top two places in fifth stage. Kevin Benavides claimed the day's victory spoils after a ferocious performance from start to finish. Cornejo also collaborated in the Honda one-two. The Chilean, who opened the track for much of the 456-kilometre special, finished second on the day, a minute behind his teammate.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia vs India: Third Test — Day Four from 5 am (Sunday) on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

Big Bash League: Perth Scorchers vs Sydney Thunder from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

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

FA Cup: Everton vs Rotherham United from 5.30 pm; Stoke City vs Leicester City from 8.30 pm; Arsenal vs Newcastle United from 11 pm; Manchester United vs Watford from 1.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD; Southampton vs Shrewsbury Town from 1.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

STEVE RUNSMITH

Smith scores century but Jadeja, Gill star for India

Sydney, Jan. 8: Steve Smith's typically gutsy hundred was neutralised by Ravindra Jadeja's four-wicket haul and rookie Shubman Gill's fluent half-century as a resolute India reached 96/2 after dismissing Australia for 338 on the second day of the third Test here on Friday.

The Indian bowlers, especially Jadeja (18-3-62-4) and the ever-dependable Jasprit Bumrah (25.4-7-66-2), were brilliant with their length on a flat SCG deck where Smith (131 off 226 balls) along with Marnus Labuschagne (91 off 196 balls) raised visions of a 450-plus total by taking the side to 206 for 2 at one stage.

But in the end, 338 was all they managed in a little less than 106 overs with none of the other batsmen making any telling contribution.

It was only fitting that Jadeja's split second brilliance from the deep found Smith short of his crease.

Then it was the calm and collected Gill (50, 101 balls), who was assured during those cover drives off Nathan Lyon and equally breathtaking while presenting his forward defence to Pat Cummins.

The 21-year-old and Rohit Sharma (26 off 77 balls) added 70 in 27 overs but more importantly set the stage for skipper Ajinkya Rahane (5 batting off 40 balls) and Cheteshwar Pujara (9 batting off 53 balls) to cash in on the batting-friendly conditions on the third day.

It was Gill's maiden Test half century in just his second match.

The Australian attack looked more insipid than ever and Rohit, playing his first game in nearly two months, did all the hard work for nearly two hours before failing to check an uppish drive that was pounced by the bowler.

But it was a day when India had two openers, who were both ready to pull the fast bowlers during their opening spells and dominate Nathan Lyon with precise footwork. — PTI

On-top Jaddu relishes field day

Sydney, Jan. 8: An exceptional all-rounder, India's Ravindra Jadeja was pretty chuffed about running Steve Smith out with a direct hit in the ongoing third Test against Australia and called it his "best ever" fielding effort which he can watch any number of times.

Smith, who was batting on 130 and was in a mood to slog every ball in company of No.11 batsman Josh Hazlewood, couldn't beat a direct throw from Jadeja, who sprinted from his deep square leg position and effected a direct hit with throw reminiscent of the great Kapil Dev during his heydays.

Asked what will he like to watch, the four wickets he got or the run-out, the senior all-rounder replied: "I will rewind and play this run-out as this is my best effort. A direct hit from outside the circle and that's like a moment that gives you that satisfaction."



Australia's Steve Smith celebrates after scoring a century against India on the second day of their third Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday. — AP

Smith laughs off form slump

Sydney, Jan. 8: Former Australia skipper Steve Smith dismissed talk of a form slump but credited a more positive attitude after his batting century against India in Sydney on Friday.

He reached three figures in a Test for the first time since 2019, smacking 131 for his 27th ton to help steer Australia to a first innings 338.

He bounced back after failing to reach double figures in the opening two Tests, which sparked a flurry of concern about his form among pundits

and the media.

But Smith said he was never worried, pointing out that he hit pulsating back-to-back centuries in the limited-overs series against India late last year.

"I read a lot of things and plenty of people said I was out of form so it was nice to come back into form, if that's what you want to call it," he said.

"I mean, it was only about three or four weeks ago that I scored two hundreds at the Sydney Cricket Ground. So yeah, it kind of just makes me

laugh sometimes when people say that kind of thing.

"I missed out in the first two Tests obviously and came back today and scored some runs and helped I guess put us in a decent position," the Australian star batsman further added.

Smith struggled against the spin of Ravi Ashwin in Adelaide and Melbourne and admitted he made some adjustments to his game, which helped him build his near-flawless score. — AFP

SCORECARD

Australia first innings (overnight 166 for 2): M. Labuschagne c Rahane b Jadeja 91, Steve Smith run out 131, M. Wade c Bumrah b Jadeja 13, C. Green lbw b Bumrah 0, T. Paine b Bumrah 1, P. Cummins b Jadeja 0, M. Starc c Gill b Saini 24, N. Lyon lbw b Jadeja 0, J. Hazlewood not out 1, Extras (b4, w1, nb5) 10. **Total (all out in 105.4 overs) 338**

FoW: 1-6, 2-106, 3-206, 4-232, 5-249, 6-255, 7-278, 8-310, 9-315. **Bowling:** Bumrah 25.4-7-66-2, Siraj 25-4-67-1, Ashwin 24-1-74-0, Saini 13-0-65-2, Jadeja 18-3-62-4.

India first innings: Rohit Sharma c&b Hazlewood 26, Shubman Gill c Green b Pat Cummins 50, C. Pujara not out 9, A. Rahane not out 5. Extras (w5, nb1) 6. **Total (two wickets, 45 overs) 96.**

FoW: 1-70, 2-85.

Bowling: Starc 7-4-19-0, Hazlewood 10-5-23-1, Cummins 12-6-19-1, Lyon 16-7-35-0.

NUMBERS GAME

● Steven Smith equalled the record of most Test hundreds against India by making 131 in Australia's first innings on the second day of the third Test match against India at Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday (January 8).

● It was his eighth hundred in 30th innings of 18 Test matches against India.

West Indian Garry Sobers (30 innings of 18 Tests) and Viv Richards (41 innings of 28 Tests) and Australian Ricky Ponting (51 innings of 29 Tests) also scored the same number of hundreds against India in Tests.

● The former Australian skipper also became the fifth Australian after Ricky Ponting (2,555 runs), Michael Clarke (2,049 runs), Matthew Hayden (1,888 runs) and Allan Border (1,567 runs) and the 19th batsman overall to score over 1,500 runs against India in Tests.

Steven Smith has scored 1,570 runs till the end of Australian first innings.

● Ravindra Jadeja recorded his best bowling in Australia by taking 4 for 62. It was his third best performance in away Tests after 6 for 138 against South Africa at Durban in 2013-14 and 5 for 152 against Sri Lanka at Colombo in 2017. Ravindra Jadeja's previous best in Australia was 3 for 82 at Melbourne in 2018-19.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

Non-compliance warning to NSFs

New Delhi, Jan. 8: National Sports Code is the law and the federations which are not complying with it cannot be granted recognition, the Delhi High Court on Friday made it clear while granting a last opportunity to the Centre to show that the 41 NSFs granted recognition were complying with the requirements of the code.

The high court said in case of failure of the Centre in complying with its direction, the secretary of sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports will have to be present before in the hearing.

"We grant one last opportunity to the Respondent (Centre) to comply with the order of November 6, 2020 failing which we direct the secretary (sports), Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to remain present during the next hearing. The affidavit shall be filed within 10 days," a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Najmi Waziri said.

The court listed the matter for further hearing on January 22.

The special bench was hearing a plea challenging the recognition granted to

● **The Delhi High Court granted a last opportunity to the Centre to show that the 41 National Sports Federations which were granted recognition were complying with the requirements of the national sports code.**

the 41 National Sports Federations (NSFs).

During the hearing, senior advocate Sachin Dutta and central government standing counsel Anil Soni, representing the Centre, sought some more time to file a reply in the matter.

This was opposed by petitioner lawyer and sports activist Rahul Mehra who said enough time has already been granted to the authorities who have filed an affidavit earlier and washed off their hands.

The bench said, "You need to change the game you are playing. You were playing soft ball, now you have to play hard ball. There is no compliance of the sports code. What is this happening?" — PTI

Ban on 3 shuttlers for match-fixing

New Delhi, Jan. 8: The Badminton World Federation (BWF) on Friday handed life bans to three Indonesian shuttlers for involvement in match-fixing, match manipulation and betting.

The sport's governing body said, "eight Indonesian players who knew each other, and competed in lower-level international competitions mostly in Asia up until 2019, breached BWF Integrity Regulations related to match fixing, match manipulation and/or betting on badminton."

"Three of them were found to have coordinated

and organised others into being complicit in the behaviour and have been suspended from all badminton related activities for life," BWF said in a statement.

"Five others were suspended for between six to 12 years and fined between \$3,000 and \$12,000 each."

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) said it was a report by a whistleblower which allowed its integrity unit to start a probe and interview a number of players about the matter, following which all eight players were provisionally suspended in January last year.

— PTI

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India's Ravindra Jadeja (left) celebrates after taking the wicket of Australia's Nathan Lyon during Day Two of the third Test match at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday. — AFP

"Three or four wicket hauls are fine but this run-out will stay with me," said the Saurashtra all-rounder.

Jadeja has been a live wire on the field during this tour with some fantastic catches like the one

he took running backwards at the MCG to dismiss Matthew Wade or this run-out at a crucial juncture when Smith could have added an extra 25 to 30 runs.

Jadeja also said that the plan was to vary pace of

his deliveries and create angles since there was not much turn on offer.

Jadeja returned with figures of four for 62 in 18 overs besides getting rid of centurion Steve Smith with a brilliant direct hit.

"The idea was to create pressure as this wasn't a wicket where you would get chance in every over. You can't bowl all deliveries at same pace on this wicket as there was no turn on offer. You had to mix and match and create angles," said Jadeja.

For India's top multi-skilled cricketer, the focus has also been on producing all-round performances.

"Not just last 12-18 months, from the time I started playing, that's what has been my role. Whenever I am playing, I try to contribute in both departments of the game. "And whenever I have been given opportunities, more often than not, I have delivered," Jadeja further added.

— PTI

Quarantine cloud over 4th Test

Sydney, Jan. 8: A new three-day lockdown in Brisbane has put Cricket Australia in a spot of bother as it makes desperate efforts to hold the fourth and final Test against India in the Queensland state capital from January 15.

The Lockdown was announced less than 24 hours after top cricket board officials from India and Australia were engaged in a discussion on relaxation of hard quarantine measures for the visitors.

"Cricket Australia executives are urgently trying to determine the impact of a three-day lockdown in Brisbane on next week's fourth Test at the Gabba, which was already under a cloud because of India's hesitation to fly north and be subjected to tighter bio-security restrictions," the Sydney Morning Herald reported.

"A hotel quarantine worker's positive test to the more contagious UK strain of Covid-19 is the latest spanner in the

works for CA's hopes to close out the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series at the Gabba," it added.

On Thursday, The BCCI wrote to CA seeking relaxation in hard quarantine protocol of Brisbane, reminding the host board that the visitors are done with the strict isolation that was agreed upon at the beginning of the tour.

SUNNY BATS FOR BCCI

Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar on Friday said that BCCI is only

"protecting its players" by seeking a quarantine relaxation ahead of the fourth Test, just like Queensland health authorities are entitled to shield their people in the wake of fresh Coronavirus cases in Brisbane.

"The Queensland government is fully entitled to protect its people. Similarly I believe the BCCI is fully entitled to protect its team. I think that's something we should never forget," Gavaskar said.

— PTI

