

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | SUNDAY | 10 JANUARY 2021

WEATHER
Max: 29.2°C
Min: 20.4°C
RH: 46%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Partially cloudy.
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 30/18 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+21,009)	(+248)
1,04,51,339	1,51,048
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+298)	(+2)
TS: 2,89,433	1,563
(+199)	(+1)
AP: 8,84,689	7,128

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

8,97,22,702

DEATHS

19,28,240

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Margasira Bahula Dwadasi till 4.53 pm
Star: Anuradha till 10.49 am
Variyam: 4.02 pm to 5.31 pm
Durmuhurtam: 4.22 pm to 5.06 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
HUIJI CALENDAR
Jamadi-ul-Awwal 25, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.44 am
Zohar: 12.33 pm
Asar: 4.22 pm
Maghrib: 6.04 pm
Isha: 7.16 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.48 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.58 PM
MOONSET 3.14 PM
MOONRISE 3.44 AM

COUNTER POINT



No cock left for fight due to flu, sir!

SHORT TAKES

Dacoity charges on Bhuma Akhila Priya

Kurnool: Already facing kidnap charges, former minister Akhila Priya has been slapped with dacoity charges in the alleged kidnap of shuttler Naveen Rao. This will further dampen her hopes of getting a bail. Bhuma Jagath Vikhyat Reddy, the younger son of Bhuma Nagi Reddy, said the whole case is vitiated as on the day of the alleged kidnap, his sister Akhila Priya was in Vijayawada taking oath as the TD general secretary. Reddy said, "The whole case was built on allegations. The remand report also says 'may or may not be them'."

■ Report on Page 2

Chinese soldier strays into India

New Delhi: The Indian Army apprehended a Chinese soldier on Friday morning on the South bank of Pangong Tso lake in Eastern Ladakh where India and China are involved in a tense military stand-off from the last eight months. "The PLA soldier had transgressed across the LAC and was taken into custody by Indian troops deployed in this area," said Indian Army on Saturday. "The PLA soldier is being dealt with as per laid down procedures and circumstances under which he had crossed the LAC are being investigated," the Indian Army said in a statement.

■ Report on Page 4



WORLD | 7

Twitter suspends Trump permanently

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



SPORTS | 8

Siraj, Bumrah racially abused by spectator

TABLOID

Camaraderie over fashion



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10 newborns die in Maha hosp fire

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 9

At least 10 newborn babies died at the neonatal care unit of the district government hospital in Maharashtra, in the early hours of Saturday when a major fire broke out. The incident took place at around 2 am on Saturday at the Bhandara district hospital. The babies lost their lives due to burn injuries and suffocation after fire and smoke engulfed the building. They were aged between one day and one month.

State health minister Rajesh Tope said that three of the 10 infants died of burn injuries while seven suffocated to death because of the smoke. All the 10 infants, including eight girls, were underweight and needed to be given oxygen, he added.

District civil surgeon Pramod Khandate said there were 17 babies in the unit and seven were rescued. A nurse first noticed smoke coming out from the neonatal section of the hospital and alerted doctors and other staff who reached there in five minutes, he said.

Fire brigade personnel rescued seven babies from the "inbound ward" of the unit but could not save the 10 other babies, he said.

Dr Khandate said the ward where newborn babies are kept requires a continuous supply of oxygen. "There were fire extinguishers and staff used them while trying to douse the fire. There was too much smoke," he

added. The Maharashtra government has ordered a probe into the tragic incident.

The government has also announced a compensation of ₹5 lakh to the deceased's parents.

Former Maharashtra energy minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule of the BJP claimed that relatives of the infants had complained about power fluctuations in the ward last week. "I spoke with relatives of the deceased infants. They told me that power fluctuations had been happening in the hospital ward since the last seven days. The relatives had asked the hospital staff to check electric switches etc, but apparently no action was taken," Mr Bawankule said.

Demanding a high-level inquiry, he also alleged that the hospital didn't have proper fire safety and electrical equipment in place.

According to him, a proposal to purchase fire safety equipment worth over Rs 1 crore at the hospital sent to the principal secretary, health, and the director of health in the state government has been pending for approval.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Sandeep Kadam, Bhandara collector, said, "We have called state electrical inspectors, forensic laboratory, Nagpur and National Fire College to investigate the case. Let the agencies' reports come, then we will know what exactly happened."

HC: Release results of Mahesh Bank poll

VUJJINI VAMSHIHARA | DC HYDERABAD, JAN. 9

Ending the prolonged suspense over declaration of results following polling held on December 20, 2020, to elect 15 new Board of Directors for AP Mahesh Bank Cooperative Bank Limited, Telangana High Court has directed the Returning Officer to announce the results.

The court, however, also passed a directive that until further orders issue by it; the newly elected directors should not to take any policy decisions, which affect affairs of the bank, including dealing with funds of the society. The directors will serve to fulfill only the day-to-day needs of the society, apart from payment of salaries and allowances to bank staff.

Passing the orders, Justice Ponugoti Naveen Rao rejected the plea of certain Mahesh Bank members, who sought that the High Court order a re-election by declaring the earlier polls arbitrary.

The judge was dealing with five petitions related to elections held for choos-

THE COURT also passed a directive that until further orders issue by it; the newly elected directors should not to take any policy decisions, which affect affairs of the bank, including dealing with funds of the society.

ing the new Board of Directors for Mahesh Bank, which is multi-state cooperative bank with operations in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan.

Elections were held as per the notification on December 20 but counting of votes was abruptly stopped the next day by the Returning Officer.

Following that, three of the contestants Srinivas Asawa, Ramesh Kumar Bung, and Srikanth Inani approached the High Court challenging the withholding of counting. They sought directions that counting be completed and results declared.

■ Page 2: Court posts matter to February 9

CBI books Coastal Projects for ₹4,736 crore bank loan fraud

Hyderabad-based firm, homes of directors searched in city, Vijayawada

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 9

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday booked Hyderabad-based Coastal Projects Limited and its directors in connection with ₹4,736 crore bank fraud in a consortium of banks led by the State Bank of India (SBI).

The SBI in its complaint (which is now a part of the FIR), alleged that the accused construction company, during the five-year period between 2013 and 2018, falsified account books and financial statements to show unrealisable bank guarantee



Sabbineni Surendra

● The SBI alleged the accused construction firm, during the five-year period from 2013 and 2018, falsified account books and financial statements to show unrealisable bank guarantee investments.

amounts as realisable investments.

CBI spokesperson R.C. Joshi said, "The company also allegedly gave wrong

information on promoters' contribution, converted receivables from related parties to investments to siphon off bank funds."

TS seeks jab for politicians first

Writes to Centre; netas do not want to be left behind for vaccine

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, JAN. 9

Political leaders, particularly the elected kind, appear to be hoping that they can make their way into the Covid-19 vaccination priority list. Influential to say the least, elected representatives in Telangana appear to have made their decision.

They do not want to be among those left behind for the second, third or later phases of Covid-19 vaccination.

They, it appears, want to be included as priority candidates, as "frontline warriors", on par with medical professionals who the Government of India has said should be the first ones to be inoculated against the Novel Coronavirus. The state government has already

139 centres in TS to give vaccination

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 9

Telangana state is gearing up for the start of the Covid-19 vaccination drive from January 16 with health minister Etala Rajendar announcing that 139 special counters will be set up for vaccinating the identified beneficiaries in the first phase of

the drive. Rajendar, had previously said that he will take the first Covid-19 vaccine in the state. The minister's announcement came in the wake of apprehensions from within the medical community in the government sector on the safety of the vaccines.

■ Page 2: Every district to have around 3 centres

informed the Centre that 2,90,000 doctors and other health care workers, including staff, and working in both government and private hospitals, have been identified and

registered their names to be vaccinated in the first phase set to begin from January 16.

■ Page 2: 'Request' made on Saturday

2BHK houses delivered



Minister for municipal administration and urban development K.T. Rama Rao, Union minister of state for home affairs G. Kishan Reddy and TS home minister Mahmood Ali hand over the papers to a beneficiary during the 2BHK scheme's inauguration at Lambada Thanda, Baghlingampally, in Hyderabad on Saturday. — S. SURENDER REDDY

CAMPUS | RUMPU

Petitioners urge TS High Court to hold counselling afresh as per GO No. 114

HC directs Kaloji to file counter on counselling

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 9

The Telangana High Court has directed the Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences to file a counter affidavit in a case filed by a few students questioning the counselling procedure that allowed less meritorious students, majority of whom are from Andhra

Pradesh, in the otherwise meritorious "unreserved open category".

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice M.S. Ramachandra Rao on Friday directed the petitioners' counsel to implead 43 students from Andhra Pradesh, who according to petitioners, are ineligible to get admission in Telangana state medical

THE UNIVERSITY, for the first time, has to openly explain the procedure it followed for counselling

colleges. The petitioners urged the court to scrap the counselling and hold it afresh in strict compliance with the G.O. Ms No. 114. The Bench posted the case for next hearing on

February 19. With the High Court directive, the university for the first time has to openly explain the procedure it followed for counselling and the same would be put to legal scrutiny. According to the petitioners — G. Apoorva and A. Harshita — the KNRUHS implemented the GO and filled the meritorious 'unreserved open category' first and later the 85

per cent local quota. But, it deviated from the procedure in the Phase 2 and in the subsequent phases of counselling because of which less meritorious students from Andhra Pradesh got admission.

Petitioners' counsel Vedula Srinivas explained to the Bench that in any phase, irrespective of the students applying for Phase 2 or not, the merit

order should always be such that top meritorious students should occupy the unreserved open category. Had the university implemented the GO in subsequent phases of counselling, the less meritorious students from AP will not have secured admission.

■ Page 2: Seats vacated by non-locals for TS students

directors Sridhar Chandrasekharan Nivarthi, Sharad Kumar, Guarantor K. Ramuli, K. Anjamma, another company Ravi Kailas Builders Pvt Ltd, its directors Ramesh Pasupuletu and Govind Kumar Irani.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is also preparing to start its separate probe against the construction firm and its promoters under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

"The ED will soon register a case against the firm and its directors. ED officials are in touch with CBI sleuths".

INDONESIA FLIGHT WITH 62 FEARED TO HAVE CRASHED

Jakarta, Jan. 9: A jet carrying 62 people lost contact with air traffic controllers minutes after taking off from Indonesia's capital on a domestic flight on Saturday, and debris found by fishermen was being examined to see if it was from the missing plane, officials said.

Transportation minister Budi Karya Sumadi said Sriwijaya Air's Flight SJ182 was delayed for an hour before it took off at 2.36 pm. The Boeing 737-500 disappeared from radar four minutes later, after the pilot contacted air traffic control to ascend to an altitude of 29,000 feet, he said. The airline said in a statement that the plane was on an estimated 90-minute flight from Jakarta to Pontianak, the capital of West Kalimantan province on Indonesia's Borneo island.

The plane was carrying 50 passengers and 12 crew members, all Indonesian nationals, including six extra crew for another trip. Sumadi said a dozen vessels, including four warships, were deployed in a search-and-rescue operation centered between Lancang island and Laki island, part of the Thousand Islands chain just north of Jakarta.

Bambang Suryo Aji, the National Search and Rescue Agency's deputy head of operations and preparedness, said rescuers collected plane debris and clothes that were found by fishermen.

They handed the items over to the National Transportation Safety Committee for further investigation to determine whether they were from the missing plane.

— AP

ED COURT ISSUES SUMMONS TO JAGAN ON ASSETS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 9

The designated special court for Enforcement Directorate cases in Hyderabad on Saturday issued summons to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to appear before it on January 11 in connection with his disproportionate assets case.

■ Page 2: ED filed 6 chargesheets on Jagan

IN BRIEF

ED FILED 6 CHARGESHEETS AGAINST JAGAN

From Page 1

The special court has issued summons in the case wherein Hetero and Aurobindo Pharma have been accused of investing crores of rupees in Jagathi Publications, the media house floated by Jagan. The investments were allegedly in lieu of 150 acres land allotted to them in the Pharma Special Economic Zone at Jachherla in Mahabubnagar district by Jagan's late father Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, who was then Chief Minister of united Andhra Pradesh between 2004 and 2009.

While CBI filed 11 chargesheets, ED filed six chargesheets against Jagan, who is also chief of the YSR Congress party. All the cases are related to investments made by certain persons and companies in Jagathi Publications.

Allegations are that Hetero Group of Companies, popularly known as Hetero Drugs, invested ₹4.5 crore in Jagathi Publications by buying shares of ₹10 at a premium of ₹350 per share. It also invested ₹13.25 crore in Janani Infrastructure by buying its shares at a premium of ₹102. Aurobindo Pharma invested ₹10 crore in Jagathi Publications and Janani Infrastructure.

SCR UPS SPEED OF ITS TRAINS TO 130 KMPH

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 9

South Central Railway (SCR) has enhanced the speed of its trains to 130 kmph on the Golden Quadrilateral and Golden Diagonal (GQ-GD) routes covering 1,280 km of total 1,612 km on these sections. Only Vijayawada Duvvada section has been left out, where signal system upgrade work is in progress. Golden Diagonal or Grand Trunk is of 744 route km – from Ballarshah to Kazipet 234 km and Kazipet-Vijayawada-Gudur involving 510 km. Golden Quadrilateral is from Chennai to Mumbai section over 536 route km – Renigunta to Gooty 281 km and Gooty to Wadi 255 km.

CONG: DEMANDS TO WITHDRAW THREE FRAM LAWS

DC CORRESPONDENT JAGTIAL, JAN. 9

Mr Laxman alleged that both the TRS and BJP parties are playing with the farmers' lives by adopting policies against the farming sector. Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao boasted that unlike any other government in the country, the TRS government is procuring the food grains from the farmers, and took the decision to close procurement and IKP centres, he questioned.

After facing many problems, the people of Telangana including achieved separate state expecting good days for them.

But when the farmer who will feed the nation is not treated properly and looked after well then what would be the situation of remaining, he expressed worthy.

COURT POSTS MATTER TO FEBRUARY 9

From Page 1

Amid this, AP Mahesh Cooperative Urban Bank Shareholders Welfare Association approached the High Court with a plea to declare elections as arbitrary, alleging that voters' list had more than 800 bogus voters.

Apart from these four petitions, Shaligram Dhoot and Mala Dhoot, members of the bank, filed a plea urging the court to direct re-elections in accordance with the bank's bye-laws.

Post hearing all these petitions, the High Court directed the Returning Officer to complete the counting and submit details to the court in a sealed cover, which the RO did. The court reserved its orders on December 30.

The High Court has now directed the Returning Officer to announce the results, but has restricted the directors not to take any policy decisions until further orders. The court has posted the matter to February 9.



TPCC president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy along with senior Congress leaders including Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, V. Hanumantha Rao, Sridhar Babu, Jeevan Reddy, protest in support of the farmers at Dharna Chowk on Saturday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Congress: Both Modi, KCR are anti-farmer

TPCC holds 'Rythu Deeksha' in support of agitating farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 9

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president and MP N. Uttam Kumar Reddy demanded that the BJP government at the Centre withdraw the three contentious agriculture laws without any further delay.

Addressing the day-long 'Rythu Deeksha', organised by Congress Legislature Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka at Dharna Chowk here on Saturday, Reddy said that lakhs of farmers have been protesting against the new farm bills for the last 44 days braving the cold wave in Delhi.

However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is not considering the demands even on humanitarian grounds and actually trying to crush the agitation by prolonging

the discussions.

The Congress leader pointed out that the Modi government was willing to give a constitutional guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP) for agricultural produce despite holding nine rounds of talks with farmers' organisations. He said that the Union Government was not sincere in its approach and had mortgaged the interests of farmers to benefit billionaires like Adanis and Ambanis.

Reddy slammed Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao for his U-turn on the new laws, despite having earlier extended overwhelming support to the farmers' agitation and having actively participated in the Bharat Bandh organised against the laws. He said Rao not only announced open support

to the anti-farmer laws, but also decided to scrap IKP and procurement centres for purchasing agriculture produce. He said that the Centre was not willing to guarantee MSP and Rao has decided not to purchase agricultural produce. This situation will expose farmers to extreme exploitation by a few corporates as they will be forced to sell their produce at whatever price is offered to them, he cautioned.

The PCC chief said that the Congress party was holding 'Rythu Deeksha' to support the ongoing farmers' agitation. He accused Rao government of pursuing anti-farmer policies with the Chief Minister ruling like 'Tughlaq'. He said that Rao has caused heavy losses to lakhs of farmers by forcing them to adopt regulated farming. The Chief Minister did not pay any compensation to the farmers who suffered extensive losses after growing superfine varieties of paddy, instead of the regular varieties.

Instead of being apologetic, Rao made a U-turn and silently withdrew regulated farming. He said that procurement centres and cooperative societies were established by the earlier Congress regimes to help farmers. Therefore, he said that the incumbent government has no right to abolish systems that benefit farmers. Reddy disputed Rao's claims of having suffered losses to the tune of ₹7,500 crore after procuring agricultural produce. He wondered how the government will suffer losses when the produce is purchased by Food Corporation of India (FCI).

'Request' made on Sat.

'From Page 1

The "request" for including elected representatives from Telangana state in the priority list of vaccine recipients, was made on Saturday, by Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, during a video conference on vaccination drive preparedness, with Central Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba.

According to a news release issued by the state government on the meeting, Somesh Kumar requested Gauba to "consider including elected representatives for priority vaccination as per the

● THE CS also urged Gauba to include panchayat raj workers and officials.

request made earlier during a previous video conference by health minister Etala Rajendar".

The Telangana Chief Secretary, according to the press release, also urged Gauba to include panchayat raj workers and officials and consider them as frontline warriors as they are part of the first line of defence when it comes to Covid-19 control.

The accepted plan as of now and one that was prescribed by the Central

Government for the Covid-19 vaccination drive is that the first section of the society to get the vaccines will be healthcare workers. Once this section gets their two doses of vaccines, it will the turn of those over 50 years of age to be followed by those who are younger than 50 but with co-morbidities that might make them vulnerable to undesirable outcomes if infected by the Coronavirus. It is only after that other sections of the population would be vaccinated, but under the current plans, only if they register themselves on CoWin app.

TS records 298 new Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 9

Telangana state recorded 298 fresh Covid-19 cases and two more deaths from the disease taking the total cases to 2,89,433 and the deaths to 1,563 in the state so far. According to the state health department, 474 persons were declared as recovered from the disease on Friday taking to 2,83,048 the number of people in this category. There were 4,822 persons

till listed as active cases of whom, 2,614 were in either home or institutional isolation. The department said 31,187 tests were conducted in the state on Friday with 26,693 tests conducted by the government and 4,494 tests conducted by private hospitals and diagnostic labs. The highest cases for the day — 61 — were reported from the GHMC area, followed by 28 in Ranga Reddy, 25 in Medchal-Malkajgiri.

Akhila Priya slapped with dacoity charges

DC CORRESPONDENT KURNOOL, JAN. 9

Already facing kidnap charges, former minister Akhila Priya has been slapped with dacoity charges in the alleged kidnap of shuttler Naveen Rao. This will further dampen her hopes of getting a bail.

Bhuma Jagath Vikhyat

Reddy, the younger son of Bhuma Nagi Reddy, said the whole case is vitiated as on the day of the alleged kidnap, his sister Akhila Priya was in Vijayawada taking oath as the TD general secretary. Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Reddy said, "The whole case has been built on allegations. The remand report also says 'may or may not be

them'. The charges are baseless, concocted and fabricated," he said.

Following court directions, her medical examination was done at Osmania General Hospital, including a sonogram as she pleaded that she was pregnant. But it is learnt that the medical examination report certified that she was healthy

and does not warrant any medical treatment. Even claims of pregnancy were also not confirmed, a source said.

Jagath Vikhyat Reddy said, "My sister was not treated well at the hospital. She was not provided a wheelchair. She had seizures four times but there was no relief for her. The doctors advised the

police to take her, which was painful."

When asked about the genesis to the crisis pertaining to Hafeezpet lands, Reddy said that 60 acres of land was transferred to a special purpose vehicle (SPV) with several partners, including Naveena Rao brothers, A.V. Subba Reddy, and the Bhuma family.

Print Ambedkar's image on currency notes: Kodandaram

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, JAN. 9:

Telangana Jana Samithi (TJS) chief Prof. M. Kodandaram demanded Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's image on the currency. He said that Ambedkar's book 'Problem of the Rupee - Its Origin and Its Solution' has influenced the then British rulers in the conceptualisation of Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Speaking at a rally organised by the Ambedkar Photo Sadhana Samithi in Jangaon on Saturday, the TJS chief said that Ambedkar's book depicted the problems faced by Indian currency and argued for the stabilisation of monetary affairs and exchange rates during British Raj; and it eventually led to the formation of RBI.

Babasaheb, a multi-

faceted personality as an economist, politician and social reformer, who advocated political rights and social freedom for Dalits deserves his photo on Indian currency. Further, Prof. Kodandaram demanded the Central Government to print Babasaheb's image on new currency notes. Ambedkar Photo Sadhana national president Jeripothula Parashuram, Parliamen-

CM TO TALASANI: RESTART SHEEP SUBSIDY SCHEME

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 9

The scheme to distribute sheep at a subsidy in the state, that was stalled for sometime now, should be resumed immediately, as per instructions issued by Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao on Saturday.

The programme provides sheep — at a cost of ₹1.25 lakh per unit of animals — with the state footing 75 per cent of the cost of each unit — 20 sheep and one ram — and the rest being borne by the beneficiaries from the Golla Kuruma community.

The Chief Minister instructed minister for animal husbandry Talasani Srinivas Yadav to restart the scheme's implementation and complete it immediately. The completion of the first phase of the scheme was put on hold with the government focusing on its efforts to control the Covid-19 pandemic in the state.

While nearly 30,000 beneficiaries have already submitted their share of the unit cost, and are waiting for sheep to be delivered to them, CM instructed Yadav and officials of the animal husbandry department to crack on the programme.



Veterinarian Dr Ch. Praveen examining the dead body of Leopard Sravanthi.

18-year-old Leopard dies at Kakatiya Zoo

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, JAN. 9:

An 18-year-old leopard at the Kakatiya Zoological Park died on Saturday after a prolonged illness. Leopards, on average, live between 12 and 17 years.

Zoo Veterinarian Dr Ch. Praveen Kumar said he and Dr Vamshi conducted a post-mortem examination on the leopard before putting her to rest.

Sravanthi, along with another leopard Deva have been residents of the Kakatiya Zoological Park since February 2017. Sravanthi took birth in the Nehru Zoological Park in

2003 and shifted to the CCMB - LaCONES in 2014.

Deva was found in the wild by the forest officials of Nizamabad when he was 15-days-old and handed over to the Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad. Later, he was moved to the Centre for Molecular Biology (CCMB)'s Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES). Both the leopards amused the visitors to the zoo from the leopard enclosure specially built for them. Caretakers said Sravanthi was aggressive of the two leopards and expressed displeasure at any small inconvenience.

No planing in Smart city: Cong

DC CORRESPONDENT KARIMNAGAR, JAN. 9

The City Congress Committee leaders took out a padayatra on Malkapur road in Vidhyanagar to protest against the TRS government for delaying the smart city works and not maintaining quality in road laying works under the project here in Karimnagar on Saturday.

The president of the City Congress, Komatireddy Narendar Reddy alleged that without proper planning, the smart city works are going on at snail's pace from the past two years onwards that too unscientifically. They are digging the roads irregularly and laying roads at one place 60 feet and other places 50 to 40 feet without maintaining proper standards.

In the name of smart city works, the ruling party leaders are looting the public money by diverting the funds to other works and indulging in the corruption due to lack of proper supervision.

Demanding to complete smart city works as early as possible since the people face many problems.

BJP leaders boasted that they were responsible for sanctioning funds under Smart City Project (SCP) and alleged that the TRS government is not releasing its share of funds under the project for completing the various developmental works. While the TRS party leaders are showing the funds that are allotted for other developmental works under Smart city project and are diverting the people's attention.

Three centres in each district

From Page 1

Every district will have two to three vaccination centres while the rest will be in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits. Health department officials who attended a video conference with Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, briefed Rajendar later.

They informed the minister that arrangements were in place for vaccinating 13,900 people at the 139 centres. So far, 2,90,000 health care professionals and workers in the government and private sector have

been identified for the vaccination in the first phase.

It is also expected that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with staff at a couple of vaccination centres on January 16.

The first round of the initial phase of vaccination is focused on healthcare workers — doctors, nurses, hospital staff. The state has already done two rounds of practice runs, one on January 2 and again on January 8 to identify any possible glitches in the vaccination process and correct them immediately.

High Court questions 15% unreserved quota

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC HYDERABAD, JAN. 9

The Telangana High Court has raised questions over the continuance of Article 371D and Presidential Order that stipulated 15 per cent unreserved open quota for Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana regions of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh and 85 per cent quota to locals of the respective regions in employment and educational institutions.

Hearing a batch of petitions filed against the Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences questioning its illegal counselling procedure, a Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice

M.S. Ramachandra Rao wondered how the Presidential Order could be implemented when courts had earlier ruled against it.

However, the AP Reorganisation Act 2014 categorically said Article 371D, from which the Presidential Order took its origin, will be continued for 10 years after the bifurcation. The Reorganisation Act and its provisions never came under judicial scrutiny nor have any court struck them down.

During the course of arguments Justice Ramachandra Rao had repeatedly referred to Justice Ramasubramanian order in Dr. B. Satish Kumar vs Union of India and observed that the judg-

ment was against the continuance of 371D and Presidential Order. At one stage, he announced that the court would not get into the 15 per cent unreserved category and restrict itself to see if any less meritorious student was accommodated in the 85 per cent quota.

A closer look into the Justice Ramasubramanian order reveals that it never went against the Presidential Order. It indeed observed that "the challenge to the reservation created in terms of Article 371D was rejected by the Supreme Court" and that "we have no alternative except to follow the law as it stands today". It only paved way for pan-India counselling for Post

Graduate and Super specialty courses by withdrawing an earlier interim stay and the case status still shows as "pending".

"Lot of changes came into force after the Justice Ramasubramanian order including Telangana state and AP offering 15 per cent seats to all India quota in MBBS," a senior official told *Deccan Chronicle*.

For the last few years, 15 per cent seats are offered to All India Quota and in the remaining 85 per cent seats, the first 15 per cent seats are filled under "unreserved open category" and 85 per cent local quota. "The present case pertains to alleged irregularities in filling the unreserved open category," the official pointed out.

SEATS VACATED BY NON-LOCALS FOR TS STUDENTS

From Page 1

Once the TS students who were allotted seats in the local quota in the first phase of counselling are upgraded into unreserved open category based on their merit, the seats vacated by them in local quota would have to be filled exclusively with Telangana state students. Several Telangana state students either lost the opportunity to study medicine or study in better colleges.

OTHER STORIES

UNABLE TO REPAY
LOAN, STUDENT
DIES BY SUICIDEDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JAN. 9

Unable to bear the harassment of organisation of a loan app, a 22-years-old, graduate student died by suicide in Galipally village of Ellanthakunta mandal in Karimnagar district.

According to the Assistant Sub-inspector of Police, Venkateshwar Reddy, Mallugari Pavan Kumar Reddy who was pursuing graduation in a Degree college at Karimnagar. As the college remained closed with the outbreak of Coronavirus pandemic, He was residing with his parents Raji Reddy and Mangavva along with his sister in the Galipally village.

Meanwhile, he took some amount on loan through an online loan app. Few days back he paid around ₹10,000 by taking money from his sister. But the loan app organizers started harassing Pavan Kumar Reddy to pay the remaining amount. It is also learnt that they even made a call to his sister. Fearing that his parents will scold him if they come to know about the issue, Pavan Kumar committed suicide hanging self at his house when his parents were out. "How much amount of money does Pavan Kumar took loan through online loan app yet to be known," said the ASI Venkateshwar Reddy.

BJP determined to end TRS rule: Chug

TRS is spreading false propaganda that BJP has a soft corner towards TRS

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JAN. 9

The BJP is working committedly to bring down the corrupt TRS government in Telangana and give good governance to the people, said BJP national general secretary and in-charge of Telangana, Tarun Chug.

Addressing the media on Saturday, he played down the rumours that BJP and TRS joined hands. He said there is no understanding whatsoever between the two parties.

KCR went to Delhi to meet Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah to protect his MLAs and ministers, many of whom are looking up to BJP. Some TRS leaders are deliberately spreading false propaganda that BJP has got a soft corner towards TRS which is false, he said.

He said CM KCR used the separate Telangana sentiment to become chief minister that benefited his family alone. However, the aspirations of people of Telangana remain unfulfilled. The BJP would strive to dislodge him from power soon and people were also waiting for a chance to teach a lesson to KCR, he said.

Chugh and BJP state president Bandi Sanjay



BJP national general secretary Tarun Chug, addresses the media conference in Warangal on Saturday as BJP Telangana state president Bandi Sanjay along with other leaders are also seeing,

were here in Warangal to oversee the party's preparations for ensuring MLC election and Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) elections. Chugh also described KCR as the most inefficient chief minister any state had who never went to the secretariat. The people of Telangana now realised that they had the worst chief minister ever.

Bandi Sanjay lashed out

● **BJP would strive to dislodge him from power soon and people were also waiting for a chance to teach a lesson to KCR.**

at KCR describing him as the most corrupt chief minister exploiting the people. The BJP would take to task the TRS leaders who resorted to funding diversion and corruption.

He said the party would win the GWMC elections and even secure the Mayor seat. He accused the state government of not utilising the central funds and projects only because KCR did not want to give Mr Modi and his government credit. "KCR wants to demolish everything and build anew.

He alone wants to take credit but now people realised his true colours," he said.

ABSENCE OF PM, MP
PHOTOS ON POSTER
IRKS BJP CADREDC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, JAN. 9

A tense situation prevailed in Sonala village in Boath mandal when BJP activists and leaders have objected to the absence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's images on the Rythu Vedika when minister for Forest Alloia Indrakaran Reddy arrived to inaugurate the Rythu Vedika on Saturday.

The BJP leaders and activists had tried to obstruct the collector and Ministers' vehicles.

The BJP leaders questioned why the officials concerned have failed to ensure the MP Soyam Bapurao's and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's images on the Rythu Vedikal since the central government is funding the construction of the Rythu Vedikal.

The police present there had intervened and tried to control the situation and took the BJP leaders into custody.

Success of Bodhan
meeting boosts
morale of BJP cadreDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JAN. 9

The success of BJP meeting in Bodhan is boosting up the morale of party cadre and leadership in undivided Nizamabad district. BJP leaders are in a jubilant mood for people on a large scale attended the meeting. Reportedly, BJP national general secretary and Telangana state in-charge Tarun Chug, BJP stage president Bandi Sanjay apricated BJP leaders for the success of Bodhan meeting. Senior leader Medapati Prakash Reddy and his followers joined BJP Thursday. Congress, TRS and Telugu Desam leaders joined BJP. Prakash Reddy had contested as MLA from Bodhan Assembly constituency in 2014, and he has a strong base in the constituency. Reportedly, he readied to contest as Congress candidate in coming Assembly elections, and political equations changed the situation. In this context, Prakash Reddy joined BJP in the presence of the party national and state leadership. For the first time, BJP national general

secretary and party state in-charge Tarun Chug and state president Bandi Sanjay visited Nizamabad district. They took part in a motorbike rally from Indalwai toll plaza to Madhavanagar and participated in a public meeting at Bodhan.

BJP leaders from nine Assembly constituencies in undivided Nizamabad district took part in the Bodhan meeting. Mass gathering at the meeting and inspirational speeches by party top leaders boosted the cadre's morale. Former Nizamabad agriculture market committee chairman K. Divya, former ZPTC K. Dinesh joined BJP. Surprisingly, ruling TRS party sarpanches also joined BJP along with Dinesh. Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, K. Dinesh Kumar said that they joined BJP for development of the Nizamabad rural Assembly constituency. Considering the people's mood, we switched over our loyalties from TRS to BJP, he said. "We are not against Nizamabad rural MLA Bajireddy Govardhan or TRS party, we respected the mood of the people and cadre", he explained.

Turmeric farmers
stage stir, seeks MSPDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JAN. 9

Turmeric farmers staged a rastaroko on National Highway 44 near Armoor on Saturday, demanding turmeric board and minimum support price. Farmers from undivided Nizamabad and Karimnagar districts took part in the agitation. Due to the farmers stir, vehicular traffic was affected on NH-44 on Hyderabad-Nagpur highway.

Former MLC, Prof. K. Nageshwar said that the central government should immediately set up turmeric board. "There are boards for different spices in the country, and why not the central government initiated steps for turmeric board, he said.

Regional Spices Board office is not enough for farmers," he opined. Mr Nageshwar said that farmers would export turmeric for foreign countries including Sri Lanka, where

demand for turmeric is high. He called upon farmers to fight unitedly to achieve MSP and Turmeric board.

Prices of turmeric are increased in the retail market, but turmeric's price has been reducing in the last ten years, and ₹15,000 per quintal should be paid for turmeric, he said.

On the other hand, few BJP, TRS sympathisers tried to criticise each other during the rastaroko on NH-44. Farmers pointed out that Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Arvind had assured turmeric board during the election campaign, but cheated later. BJP supporters criticised TRS government over turmeric prices. Rythu Ikya Vedika leaders pacified the situation.

Police forces were heavily deployed to prevent any untoward incident during the rastaroko, police forces were deployed on National Highway 44 and Armoor town.

‘Pirengan Patar’
yet to be exploredDC CORRESPONDENT
KANCHANPALLI
(KOMARAM BHEEM ASIFABAD), JAN. 9

The historical place Pirengan Patar (foreigner or white people's plateau) is yet to be explored by the tourists and nature lovers where famous anthropologist Christoph Von Furer Haimendorf and Betty Elizabeth used to spend their winter sojourn at this place from 1950s to 70s. The place is unique in various aspects.

The local people had named the place after the 'foreign couple' who had developed a close association with the local Adivasis. The hilly area is located in Sahyadri hills on the outskirts of Kanchanpalli in the present Lingapur mandal in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. The place is 130 km from the Adilabad district headquarters.

Kanchanpalli Gond Raja's family member, Atram Bheem Rao, recollects that being a child he used to go to the Pirengan Patar along with his family members till 1970's when Haimendorf and Betty visit the place whenever they come to Kanchanpalli to have a discussion with Raja. They would collect the information about Adivasis' culture, traditions and their problems as part of their research. The place is located

atop the hill from where one can see the Adivasis gudums Islampur, Dongachintha, Rampur and Kawal and even the flowing Godavari.

One can see the series of hills and ghats from the 'Pirengan Patar' and cover an excellent view of the nature. The foggy weather conditions and flowing clouds and touching the sky.

Especially, the place would be more attractive from December to February in the winter season. The tourists can explore the area with the having sensibility and respect of local culture and Adivasis ethos.

Gradually the historical place is losing its importance with the new generations don't know about it and not showing interest in exploring the history of their own.

Bheem Rao said "Many Adivasi youths are busy browsing cell phones and less interested in learning things of historical importance for the Adivasis".

Kanaka Ambaji Rao of the area said, "It is high time Adivasis youth read their own history and issues related to traditions and culture." Few Adivasi had settled there at the Pirengan Patar until the 1970s but the families came down from the hill to Kanchanpalli village since they faced many hardships due to lack of water facility over there.

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IN BRIEF

MP ENFORCES 'LOVE JIHAD' ORDINANCE

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JAN. 9

Madhya Pradesh government on Saturday brought into force the contentious Freedom of Religion ordinance, known in political parlance as 'Love Jihad' law, providing a maximum jail term of 10 years for forcible marriage of a girl for the purpose of changing her religion.

The ordinance was enforced 2 days after the governor Anandiben Patel gave her assent to it on Thursday.

Earlier on December 29, the state cabinet gave a nod to the ordinance in the wake of suspension of the winter session of the state assembly, scheduled to commence on December 28.

The state cabinet had last month given approval to the Freedom of Religion Bill, 2020, which was scheduled to see passage in the state assembly in the now-suspended winter session.

The ordinance has provided a maximum of 10 years' imprisonment for forcible marriage of a girl for the purpose of changing her religion.

It has been made mandatory for the bride and the groom to notify the local district magistrate 2 months ahead of their conversions, failing which the marriage would be nullified.

The ordinance has provided 5 years' jail term for the religious leaders and priests involved in the forcible marriages. Onus would be on the accused to prove his or her innocence.

MODI OPENS PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 9

The 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention - the flagship event of the Ministry of External Affairs that provides an important platform to engage and connect with "the 31 million strong Indian diaspora" was held on Saturday.

The PBD convention — the theme of which was "Contributing to Aatmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India) — was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and featured a keynote address by the President of the Caribbean nation Suriname Mr. Chandrikapersad Santokhi who was the chief guest at the event.

Modi hailed the contributions of Suriname President as "a shining example" of the service of the Indian diaspora to the world.

On the occasion, 30 individuals and organisations were conferred the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award - the highest honour for overseas Indians/persons of Indian origin- by President Ram Nath Kovind in recognition of their outstanding achievements both in India and abroad in various fields.

FARMER ENDS LIFE AT PROTEST SITE

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, JAN. 9

As stalemate continues over farm laws, with both government and farmer refusing to blink, a petition was filed in the Supreme Court on Saturday seeking removal of farmers from protest sites on Delhi border on the grounds that the protesters were blocking roads causing inconvenience to people.

The petitioner has also mentioned that violent protests have taken in place in some places and they have destroyed telecom towers causing inconvenience and financial loss to the public. The Supreme Court is expected to hear a bunch of petitions relating to the new Farm laws on January 11. The next round of talks between the farmers and government is to be held on January 15.

Meanwhile, a 72-year-old farmer allegedly died due to suicide at a protest site in Ghaziabad. "The deceased was found hanging at one of the mobile toilets at the protest site. He has also left behind a note which is written in Punjabi," said a police officer. Shamsher Rana of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) said that the farmer had blamed the union government for not accepting the demands of the protesters.

BJP LAUNCHES FARMERS OUTREACH DRIVE IN WB

Katwa (WB), Jan. 9: Amid ongoing protests over the new farm laws, BJP president J.P. Nadda on Saturday launched a new campaign to woo the farmers of West Bengal and said the BJP government at the Centre has increased the agricultural budget six-fold and the Minimum Support Price by 1.5 times.

Nadda, who launched the *Krishak Suraksha Abhiyan* and 'Ek Mutti Chawal' (a fistful of rice) to woo farmers in the poll-bound state, said the Modi government has worked more for the farmers community than the previous governments at the Centre.

He also mocked at West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for agreeing to implement the PM Kisan Yojna only after realising that her party is fast losing ground among the farmers in the state.

Nadda, said it is "too late" for the TMC government to agree to implement the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi.

"Since coming to power, the Modi govt has increased budget on agriculture by six times. In 2013-14, the budget on agriculture was only ₹22,000 crore. Today, it stands at ₹1,34,000 crore," Nadda said here. Nadda said its Prime Minister Narendra Modi who implemented the Swaminathan Committee report on Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops.

"MSP according to Swaminathan Committee has been implemented only by PM Modi, increasing it nearly by 1.5 times," he said.

Later in the afternoon Nadda launched 'Ek Mutti Chawal' (a fistful of rice), a programme under which he would collect rice from farmers' homes and brief them about the benefits of the new agri legislations, as part of efforts to blunt the opposition "anti-farmer" allegations against the BJP-led Central government following farmers protests.



Charred remains of furniture and other equipment inside the new born babies care unit of the Bhandara District General Hospital after a fire which broke out in the wee hours, in Bhandara district on Saturday.

- PTI

Soot and smoke telltale signs of fire that claimed 10 lives

Bhandara, Jan. 9: The families of some of the 10 infants killed in a hospital fire here had complained about power fluctuations but no action was taken, alleged a former minister, as the blackened walls and charred furniture inside the ward told their own story of the ferocity of the blaze that broke out early Saturday.

Access to the Bhandara district hospital was barricaded to keep the media away and restless crowds milled around outside, anxious for any information on the deaths of the 10 infants, aged between one and three months, inside the Special Newborn Care unit.

The scale and nature of the incident left the people of this east Maharashtra city shaken and condolences poured in from various sections of society.

While politicians, including current and former ministers, were allowed inside the build-

● A NURSE first noticed smoke coming out from the neonatal section of the hospital and alerted doctors and other staff who reached there in five minutes

ing, scarcely anybody else was. Hospital authorities were tightlipped, refusing to divulge any information on the tragedy that had made national headlines.

As anxiety mounted, speaking to those allowed inside was the only way for reporters to get information and try and piece together a narrative.

Former Maharashtra energy minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule of the BJP claimed that relatives of the infants had complained about power fluctuations in the ward for the last week.

"I spoke with relatives of the deceased infants. They told me that power fluctu-

ations had been happening in the hospital ward since the last seven days. The relatives had asked the hospital staff to check electric switches etc, but apparently no action was taken," Bawankule said.

Demanding a high-level inquiry, he also alleged that the hospital didn't have proper fire safety and electrical equipment in place. According to him, a proposal to purchase fire safety equipment worth over ₹1 crore at the hospital sent to the principal secretary, health, and the director of health, in the state government is pending for approval.

While most people were not allowed inside, photographs from the ward gave an indication of intensity of the fire and its aftermath of soot and smoke.

The walls were blackened, only the occasional patch of yellow showing through, the floor was thick with ash and dust and much of the furniture

was charred. The metal stretchers and a few other accoutrements of a special hospital care unit such as the drip stand survived the fire, which broke out around 1.30 am.

In the midst of the gloom shone a bright blue and white sign saying LED. State health minister Rajesh Tope told reporters that at least three of the 10 infants died of burn injuries while seven were suffocated to death because of the smoke.

District civil surgeon Pramod Khandate said there were 17 babies in the unit and seven were rescued.

A nurse first noticed smoke coming out from the neonatal section of the hospital and alerted doctors and other staff who reached there in five minutes, he said. Fire brigade personnel rescued seven babies from the 'inbound ward' of the unit but could not save the 10 other babies, he said.

- PTI

Vaccination set to begin from Sat

World's biggest inoculation drive to curb Covid to begin

DC CORRESPONDENTS NEW DELHI, JAN. 9

Putting an end to the long wait for the Covid-19 vaccination, the union government on Saturday announced that the nationwide inoculation drive will begin from January 16.

The date has been decided keeping in mind the forthcoming festivals like Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Magh Bihu etc.

India till date has over 1.04 crore cases and over 1.50 lakh fatalities due to Covid-19. In the last 24 hours 18, 222 fresh cases and 228 new deaths have been recorded. The total number of people with the new mutated strain of UK virus has now reached 90.

India is ready to protect humanity with not just one but "two made in India Corona vaccines" and the world "is also eyeing how India runs the world's largest vaccination programme", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday while addressing the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

"Today, India is ready to protect humanity with not one but two Made in India vaccines. Being the pharmacy of the world, India has done the work of delivering essential medicines to every needy in the world and is still doing it today. Today, the world is not only waiting for India's vaccine, but it is also eyeing how India runs the world's largest vaccination programme," he said.

"In this era of pandemic, India again showed what our potential is. ... Be it PPE kits, masks, ventilators, testing kits, all these were (earlier) sought from outside India. India has today not only become self-reliant in them but has started

● MORE THAN 61,000 programme managers, 2 lakh vaccinators and 3.7 lakh other vaccination team members have been trained for the drive.

● EMERGENCY USE Authorisation has been granted for Covishield (by SII) and Covaxin (Bharat Biotech).

exporting many of these products as well. Today India is one of the countries with the lowest Fatality Rate and Fastest Recovery Rate in the world," he added.

Emergency Use Authorisation or Accelerated Approval has been granted by the Drug Controller General of India for Covishield (by SII) and Covaxin (Bharat Biotech).

Central government is in the process of procuring the vaccines that will be delivered to main hubs in each zone and taken to different parts of the country from there. Priority will be given to the healthcare workers and the frontline workers, estimated to be around 3 crores in number, followed by those above 50 years of age and the under-50 population groups with co-morbidities numbering around 27 crore.

According to officials, the vaccination exercise will be conducted utilising experience of elections (booth strategy) and Universal Immunization Program without compromising of existing healthcare services, especially national programs and primary health care.

The PM was also apprised about the Co-WIN Vaccine Delivery Management System that will provide real time

PDP leader released on bail

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, JAN.9

People's Democratic Party (PDP) youth leader Waheed Ur Rehman Parra was on Saturday released from over six week long detection after a special court of National Investigation Agency (NIA) at Jammu granted him bail.

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

Since the arrest had come merely two days after Mr. Parra's filing his nomination papers for J&K's maiden District Development Council (DDC) elections, the PDP

● THE NIA HAD arrested Parra on November 25 for his alleged "close links" with Kashmiri lawyer Irfan Shafi Mir, who was arrested by the police along with Hizb-ul-Mujahideen commander Syed Naveed Mushtaq, another militant Asif Ahmed Rather and tainted J&K police officer Davinder Singh.

had termed the NIA's action as a political blackmail of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

Mr. Parra subsequently won this election with a significant margin of votes from a segment of home district Pulwama while still in NIA custody. However, he wasn't allowed to take the oath as a member even via online mode despite a directive from the court.

The NIA had, however, maintained that Mr. Parra was arrested by it "in con-

nection with the Naveed Babu-Davinder Singh case for supporting Hizb-ul-Mujahideen in conspiracy with the other accused persons."

Mr. Parra was on December 20 sent to a 30-day judicial remand by a special judge of the NIA. A team of Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK), a wing of J&K police, carried out a raid at his home in Pulwama on December 30.

Late Saturday night, PDP president and former chief minister, Mehbooba Mufti, informed that Mr. Parra has been detained by an Intelligence wing of the J&K police now and while questioning it's legality she sought Lt. Governor, Manoj Sinha's intervention in the matter.

She tweeted, "Despite NIA Court granting bail to @parawahid after thorough court proceedings, he has now been detained by CIK in Jammu. Under what law & for what crime

has he been arrested? This is brazen contempt of court. Request @manoj-sinha_ji to intervene so that justice is served."

Earlier this week, the NIA had sought the details of his properties in Srinagar from the J&K police.

According to the agency, during the investigations into Singh's association with the Hizb militants, it came across phone records of Mir which showed that he was in close contact with Mr. Parra. The NIA sources had added that Mir had claimed during questioning that Mr. Parra sought his support during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections for his party candidate Mehbooba Mufti.

Singh who last served as Deputy Superintendent of Police at the Anti-Hijacking Squad at the Srinagar International Airport is facing charges under various anti terror laws for helping separatist militants back home.

Idea of forming anti-BJP alliance in Assam fades

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JAN. 9

The idea of forming a grand alliance of anti-BJP parties by Congress in Assam has started fading with two newly formed regional parties rejecting the offer and a month after contesting the Bodoland Territorial Council elections together the Congress has denied having any tie up with the All India United Democratic Front for assembly polls in April.

Confusion over the proposed alliance between Congress and AIUDF started after AICC general secretary and party's state in-charge Jitendra Singh said that the Congress high command will not bypass the opinion of ground level workers before finalising an alliance with AIUDF for the 2021 Assam elections. "There is nothing

regarding the alliance. I have not met Mr. Badruddin Ajmal and nobody is in touch (regarding the alliance with AIUDF)," Mr. Singh told reporters. "I don't think there have been any talks between the Congress high command and AIUDF leaders. Any discussion on alliance politics has to go through the general secretary, in-charge for the state," said Mr. Singh

The remarks of the AICC general secretary came soon after AIUDF supremo Badruddin Ajmal said that an alliance between the two parties was going to be finalised soon.

"Talks on Congress and AIUDF ties are at the final stage," said Mr. Ajmal. In fact the idea of forming a grand alliance of all the anti-CAA forces was floated and stitched by late chief minister Tarun

Gogoi. Two newly formed regional political parties - Assam Jatiya Parishad and Rajior Dal have also rejected the idea of grand alliance with the Congress party.

"Since the beginning, our stand is clear. We will try to unite all regional forces and maintain distance from the national parties. We are firm on this and so we have decided to form an alliance with Rajior Dal. An agreement in this regard will be signed very soon," AJP president, Lurinjyoti Gogoi told reporters.

Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) led by Lurinjyoti Gogoi, former All Assam Students' Union (AASU) leader and Rajior Dal led by jailed farmers' leader Akhil Gogoi came into being following the anti-CAA agitation in December 2019, which turned violent.

SECURITY | MATTERS Army says the apprehended soldier is being dealt with as per laid down procedures

Amidst stand-off, Chinese soldier captured in Ladakh

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 9

Indian Army apprehended a Chinese soldier on Friday morning in South bank of Pangong Tso lake in Eastern Ladakh where India and China are involved in a tense military stand off for last eight months.

The soldier was caught near Gurung Hill, which is one of the peaks in Kailash range, which Indian Army had pre-emptively occupied in August in tit for tat action against Chinese aggression on North bank of Pangong Tso. The move meant that

Indian soldiers dominated peaks in the area and had choked PLA movement in the sector.

The Indian Army move had caught Chinese by surprise and they had made several unsuccessful attempts to occupy these peaks. The area had also witnessed firing incident for the first time in four decades between the two armies as tensions had escalated.

"The PLA soldier had transgressed across the LAC and was taken into custody by Indian troops deployed in this area," said Indian Army on Saturday.

In a strong statement Indian Army said that troops from either side are deployed along the LAC since friction erupted last year due to unprecedented mobilisation and forward concentration by Chinese troops.

"The PLA soldier is being dealt with as per laid down procedures and circumstances under which he had crossed the LAC are being investigated," said Indian Army.

Sources said the Chinese soldier is being questioned to know whether he accidentally crossed over or was trying to spy.

Earlier in October Indian

Army had apprehended a Chinese soldier in Demchok sector of Eastern Ladakh, who was returned.

Chinese state owned media *Global Times* said that China has called for an immediate return of the soldier, who it claimed went missing due to "darkness and complicated geography".

It further claimed that China had informed India as soon as the incident occurred, and sought help from the Indian side.

The incident has happened at a time when there has been no breakthrough in talks on disen-

23 SAILORS STUCK IN CHINA TO RETURN ON JAN. 14

New Delhi, Jan. 9: Twenty-three Indian sailors stuck in China will return on January 14, Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Saturday.

The cargo ship MV Jag Anand is set to sail towards Chiba in Japan, Mandaviya said.

"Our seafarers stuck in China are coming to India. Ship MV Jag Anand, hav-

ing 23 Indian crew, stuck in China is set to SAIL toward Chiba, Japan, to carry out crew change, will reach India on 14th January," the ports, shipping and waterways minister said in a tweet.

He said this could be made possible only due to the strong leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Mandaviya also acknowledged "the

humanitarian approach of the Great Eastern Shipping Company towards the seafarers and standing by them in this crucial time!"

On December 30, 2020, he had said that Indian sailors stuck in China will be brought back soon as diplomatic talks are on with the neighbouring country.

- PTI

gement between India and China despite eight round of Corps

Commanders meeting between the two sides. Due to differences there has

been no further rounds of Corps Commanders meeting since November 6.

SHORT TAKES

English course for teachers launched

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 9

Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia launched TESOL Core Certificate Programme for Delhi government school teachers. The programme is conducted by the US Embassy's Regional English Language Office. The program will enhance English language teaching competency of the participant teachers which will improve English teaching in government school classrooms. The current batch is of 50 teachers. "It is important for the teachers to keep enhancing their skills. We want our teachers to do the things they already know differently. This course will bring more creativity in classrooms," said Mr Sisodia. Regional English Language Officer Ruth Goode from the US Embassy in India was also present during the launch. She acknowledged the long association of the US Embassy with the Delhi government and appreciated the efforts taken by the deputy chief minister in ensuring that Delhi government teachers learn from the best. "We really value our relationship with the Delhi government. We have trained around 800 teachers in the past and will continue to support more in the future," she said. The Regional English Language Office of the US Embassy has trained around 800 teachers from Delhi government schools since 2017. They have worked on creating a pool of master trainers who have subsequently trained primary and secondary school teachers on innovative English teaching in classrooms. "We will provide all kinds of support to the teachers for learning new ways of teaching," Mr Sisodia added.

Javadekar launches digital calendar

New Delhi: Union minister for information and broadcasting Prakash Javadekar on Saturday launched the digital calendar and diary of Government of India. In a ceremony held at National Media Center, Mr Javadekar, with the click of a button unveiled the Android and iOS mobile applications of the calendar and diary. On the occasion, the minister said that the government calendar that adorned the walls in the past will now adorn mobile phones. Highlighting the features of the app, Mr Javadekar said: "The app was free and will be available in 11 languages from 15th January, 2021. The app will do away with the need for a new calendar every year". He further added: "Each month will carry a theme and an accompanying message and will feature one famous Indian personality. The app will also inform people about the timeline of launch of various government programmes so far". Speaking on the diary feature of the app, the minister said "because of the diary feature the calendar is more advanced, more feature laden and easier compared to other digital calendar apps". The Digital Calendar of Government of India is in line with Prime Minister's Vision of "Digital India" and can be accessed at click of a button on any smart phone. The app is available for download on both Google Play store and iOS app store. The app has been designed and developed by Bureau of Outreach and Communication, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in collaboration with National Informatics Centre (NIC). The application is currently available in Hindi and English language, and will be soon made available in 11 other Indian regional languages.

Decomposed body of woman found

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has recovered a highly decomposed body of a woman from near a drain in east Delhi's New Ashok Nagar area, officials said on Saturday. The age of the woman is around 25 to 30 years, they said. On Friday at 2.45 pm, information was received regarding a body of a woman near Chilla Regulator drain. In the garbage lying near the drain, a highly decomposed body of a woman, height about 5'2" has been found. There was no physical injury seen on the body, a senior police officer said, adding that investigation is underway to identify the body.

■ Import of live chicken into city banned in view of bird flu scare
Ghazipur poultry market in Delhi closed for 10 days

New Delhi, Jan. 9: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, on Saturday, announced a ban on import of live birds in the national capital and closure of Ghazipur poultry market for the next 10 days in view of the bird flu scare. Noting that there is no confirmed case of avian influenza in Delhi so far, the chief minister said samples have been sent to Jalandhar laboratory. He also said that a 24-hour helpline has been set up for the assistance of people. "In the last few days, there have been several cases of bird flu across various parts of the country, which is a cause of worry. Cases of bird flu have been registered in Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Rajasthan. "No confirmed case of bird flu has been registered in Delhi until now. We have collected around 104 samples until now,

which have been sent to Jalandhar for testing and examination in a laboratory," Mr Kejriwal said at a press conference. He said Delhi is taking several steps to control the spread of bird flu as a precautionary measure. "Upon receiving the results on Monday, the Delhi government will take all decisions and measures based on the results. The import of live birds is being completely banned from Saturday onwards. Secondly, the Ghazipur poultry market in Delhi will remain shut for the next 10 days," Mr Kejriwal added. He said the Delhi government is following all guidelines and directions issued by the Central government with regard to bird flu. "Rapid response teams have been formed in every district to contain the spread and conduct proper surveillance. "They will function under the district magistrates. Our veterinary offi-



10 ducks die at Sanjay Lake, 24 crows found dead in Jasola park

New Delhi, Jan. 9: Three recreational parks and famous Sanjay Lake in Delhi were closed by authorities on Saturday amid an avian flu scare in the city as several birds were found dead on their premises in the last couple of days, officials said. Besides, the popular Hauz Khas Park in south Delhi, which is a huge water body and attracts a large number of crowd every day, has also been shut, they said. At least 24 crows have been found dead at a district park in south Delhi's Jasola in the past three days and 10 ducks have died at the famous Sanjay Lake, officials said on Sunday. The DDA, which owns a large number of parks in the city, said authorities are monitoring the situation closely. "The samples of ducks found dead have been taken by the veterinary department authorities to ascertain if the cause of death was bird flu or not," a senior DDA official said. On the death of crows, the DDA has informed the Delhi government's forest department, he said. "We are monitoring the situation very closely as DDA owns a large number of public parks many of which have water bodies," the official said. — PTI



519 Covid-19 cases, 12 deaths in city in 24 hours

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 9

Delhi recorded as many as 519 fresh coronavirus cases on Saturday. With this, the tally of Covid-19 cases in the national capital has reached over 6.29 lakh while the death toll mounted to 10,666. Twelve fatalities have been recorded in the last 24 hours. According to a health bulletin issued by the Delhi government, 80,275 Covid-19 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours. The case tally stands at 6,29,801 in the national capital, including 6,15,452 patients who have either been discharged or have migrated or recovered. The number of active cases is 3,683, of which 1,652 are in home isolation. Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, on Saturday, appealed to the Centre to provide free Covid-19 vaccine to everyone.

Delhi govt school teachers in frontline workers list for Covid vaccine rollout

New Delhi, January 9: Teachers of government schools in the national capital engaged in Covid-19 duty will be placed in the category of frontline workers and will be vaccinated on priority, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said on Saturday. Sharing an article from a newspaper Sisodia tweeted, "Teachers of Delhi have played a role in the fight against Corona, step by step with the government. Quarantine centers, Containment zones, Surveys, Mask checking duties and online studies - they have been ahead." This is why the government has also placed

NDMC starts drive to remove hoardings from public places

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 9

New Delhi Municipal Council's (NDMC) enforcement department has initiated an intensive drive to remove posters, banners, and illegal hoardings or advertisements installed at public places and busy markets in areas falling under the civic body. "The team has conducted an intensive inspection of the area around Gole Market, Connaught Place, Janpath, Shivaji Stadium, Regal, Rivoli, Shankar Market, K.G. Marg, Barakhmbha Road, and Bengali Market and removed all types of defacement of property items," a senior NDMC official said. "The civic agency officials are also creating awareness by meeting several market associations and asking them to immediately remove unauthorised advertisements, self-signage, flexes, and hoardings that have been erected in violation of the Delhi Outdoor Advertising Policy, 2017,

40% drop in vector-borne diseases, claims SDMC

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 9

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation has claimed a 40 per cent drop in vector borne diseases. "During a year, a total of 41,73,769 house visits were done by the field staff out of which 24,528 houses were found positive for breeding of mosquitoes. Even our staff used PPE kits besides taking other precautionary measures when found mosquito breeding in houses/areas where Covid-19 cases were reported," said Mr Chawla. The field staff, despite Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, visited every household and public place for prevention of control of vector-borne diseases in the SDMC area. "During a year, a total of 41,73,769 house visits were done by the field staff out of which 24,528 houses were found positive for breeding of mosquitoes. Even our staff used PPE kits besides taking other precautionary measures when found mosquito breeding in houses/areas where Covid-19 cases were reported," said Mr Chawla.

"Self-signage will not be allowed beyond the length of the shop or exceeding 2.5 square meters as per the policy. In case self-signage is beyond the total area of 2.5 square metres, the same requires prior permission from the chairman of NDMC," the official said. "As per the Outdoor Advertisement Policy, prior permission of the chairman of the NDMC is required to display any advertisement to public view in any manner. The Delhi Prevention of Defacement of Property Act, 2007," the official added. As per the Outdoor Advertisement Policy, prior permission of the chairman of the NDMC is required to display any advertisement to public view in any manner.

10-yr-old boy killed for ransom, 2 juveniles nabbed

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 9

The body of a 10-year-old boy was recovered from a mosque in northeast Delhi's Khajuri Khas area, police said on Saturday. Police have arrested two juveniles — 17-year-old and 12-year-old — for killing the victim. The accused wanted to extort money from the deceased's father by kidnapping him, they said. According to police, one Shamim, a resident of Shri Ram Colony, lodged a missing report of his 10-year-old son at Khajuri Khas police station on Friday. The minor boy was missing since the intervening

night of Thursday and Friday. Shamim said that on Thursday around 6:50 pm, his son went to Madina Masjid of Shri Ram Colony, but did not return, police said. During investigation, joint search was conducted by police and the parents of child in the nearby areas of their house. Police found the body of a boy buried under the debris in a corner on the second floor of the Madina Masjid. Shamim identified him as his son Farhan, they said. Police analysed the CCTV footages of the area. All the persons present in the Madina Masjid at the time of 'Isha nama' around 7.15 pm were examined and it was found that the victim Farhan was last seen with his two minor friends.



Plea in SC seeking removal of farmers from protest sites

'Protesters blocking roads, causing inconvenience to people'

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JAN. 9

As stalemate continues over the farm bill, with both government and farmer refusing to blink, a petition was filed in the Supreme Court of India on Saturday seeking removal of farmers from protest sites on Delhi border on the grounds that the protesters were blocking roads causing inconvenience to people. The petitioner has also mentioned that violent

protests have taken place in some places and they have destroyed telecom towers causing inconvenience and financial loss to the public. The Supreme Court is expected to hear a bunch of petitions relating to the new Farm Bills on January 11. The next round of talks between the farmers and government is to be held on January 15. Meanwhile, a 72-year-old farmer allegedly died due to suicide at a protest site in Ghaziabad. "The deceased was found hang-

ing at one of the mobile toilets at the protest site. He has also left behind a note which is written in Punjabi," said a police officer. Shamsheer Rana of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) said that the farmer had blamed the union government for not accepting the demands of the protesters. Congress party has decided to stage protests outside all Governor Houses across the country on January 15, in support of farmers' agitation against farm laws.

Cop suspended in Noida for assaulting, looting 2 persons

DC CORRESPONDENT
NOIDA, JANUARY 9

A policeman deployed in Noida has been suspended for "indecent" after being accused of assaulting and looting two people, who had given him a lift in their car, officials said on Saturday. A senior police official said the accused head constable, who is attached with the Dadri police station, has been suspended for "indecent" as the allegations of loot and assault have not been proved. According to the complainant, he and his brother were headed to Bulandshahr from Noida around 3 pm on Friday when Head Constable Ombir Bhati hitchhiked a ride in their car. The complainant has alleged that during the ride, the policeman threatened them with his firearm and took away some documents and cash from them. "Head constable Ombir Bhati has been found guilty of indecent and has been suspended from service. A departmental inquiry has been initiated into the matter. Other allegations, including firing and loot, have not been confirmed," deputy commissioner of police, Greater Noida, Rajesh Kumar Singh said. Around a dozen policemen have been shunted or suspended for assaulting, manhandling or harassing people across Noida and Greater Noida in Gautam Buddha Nagar district since May 2020.

11 men detained for defacing signboards in Lutyens Delhi

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 9

Delhi Police on Saturday detained 11 people for allegedly defacing two Aurangzeb Lane signboards in Lutyens Delhi on Saturday. According to a senior police official, a police control room (PCR) call received information at 5.40 AM that a few people have gathered at Aurangzeb Lane, Tughlaq Road following which a police team was dispatched for the spot. "After reaching the spot, police personnel found that 11 people led by Anuradha Bhargava (30), a resident of Karnal and an advocate by profession, had defaced an Aurangzeb Lane signboard and pasted a poster saying Guru Teg Bahadur Lane," said the senior police official. "They were detained and taken to Tughlaq Road police station," the official said, adding that a probe into the matter is underway.

Delhi Police on Saturday detained 11 people for allegedly defacing two Aurangzeb Lane signboards in Lutyens Delhi on Saturday. According to a senior police official, a police control room (PCR) call received information at 5.40 AM that a few people have gathered at Aurangzeb Lane, Tughlaq Road following which a police team was dispatched for the spot. "After reaching the spot, police personnel found that 11 people led by Anuradha Bhargava (30), a resident of Karnal and an advocate by profession, had defaced an Aurangzeb Lane signboard and pasted a poster saying Guru Teg Bahadur Lane," said the senior police official. "They were detained and taken to Tughlaq Road police station," the official said, adding that a probe into the matter is underway.

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10 JANUARY 2021



Sanjeev Ahluwalia

Off the beaten track

C-virus funk? Relax, and respect the kids

Parenting is a thankless job except when your child flashes you an admiring look of appreciation and love or envelopes you in a warm, spontaneous hug. But most of the time, you — the parent — are under scrutiny, by your children, your parents and relatives, society and indeed the law — with everyone expecting you to trip up.

The job comes with perks. You get to make the rules — mostly. But more commonly parents are running up the down escalator — coping with their own personal disasters and ghosts, pretending to be in control of the situation or just making do with paying the daily bills.

The most challenging scenario is when “special children” are born. So steeped are most of us in the quicksand of the “norm” that anything out of that spectrum imposes extreme stress. The wonder is that most parents do eventually cope with the daunting task of loving and serving unconditionally.

But parenting is never easy. Nor does one fall automatically into it — at least not well enough. It is fairly straightforward to make babies. Sadly, it is never straightforward to nudge them to grow up to be humane, empathetic, caring siblings, mothers or fathers, responsible citizens and productive members of society.

Even in ordinary times, parenting is a formidable task. It becomes much harder in extraordinary times. Think long wars or extended violence — there are fifty-five such events happening across the globe. Add to that periodic drought, famine, economic distress or the pandemic we are struggling through.

What should parents do if carefully formulated plans collapse into mere physical survival? Look back to the “hunter-gatherer” age for role models? Is it even sensible to bring up a child believing in the “nice” social lessons of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, learnt over the last century, when society itself seems to be hurtling back to where we began?

More than 90,000 people died in 2020 in continuing conflicts across the globe — some of these started as early as 1947 and continue glowing like the embers of a major fire. Covid-19 has devastated human life and social norms more decisively than any other calamity and more confusingly so since there is no one to blame but ourselves.

Perhaps there is a lesson there for us and our children. An old one. Just one rotten apple destroys an entire pile. We should change our rotten ways if our children are to identify and shun rot. The maxim of survival of the fittest is the “learnt knowledge” born out of uncaring times. If society thrives so do, we. The impending disaster from climate change illustrates this truism.

The difficult part is how to embed these noble notions into a workable social ethic which preserves the spirit of competition without impeding collaboration; recognises the human impetus for acquisition but tempers it with a notion of relative equality; acknowledges that humans are not saints but nor are they Hobbesian creatures of dystopia.

When faced with a conundrum, parents assume that role modeling will do the trick — being the person you want your child to be. This is an honest way to go — you can’t expect your child to be honest, fair and just if you aren’t. But even this doesn’t guarantee success. No child is a clone of their parents. And force fitting them into narrow roles has an even chance of success or disaster.

Parenting is a high-risk venture. There are so many moving parts, any of which could pitch the game against the parent or the child. Covid-19 is one such. It has also taken away the relief that external actors — teachers, friends, extended family — gave hard pressed parents via “me time”. “Family time” is all we have for those working from home. This is what most parents wished for. Many might now be having second thoughts. Possibly children too feel similarly. Too much of a good thing is never as good as when it is rationed out in dribbles.

Here are three survival strategies to get you through Covid-19 with your sanity intact.

First, quit role modeling. It’s stressful to keep up an act 24x7. Being yourself can bring surprisingly good results. Children are very resilient. They know that adults are fallible and can be surprisingly responsible when asked for help. It is we, adults, who force them into infantile irresponsibility well beyond the initial years when this assumption is valid.

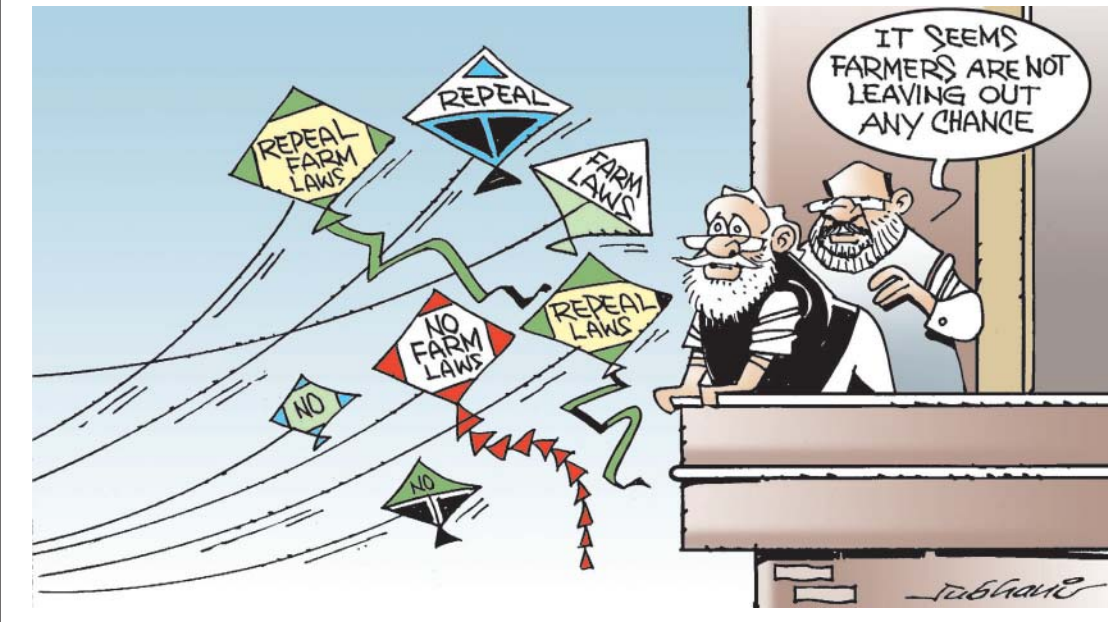
Second, imagine what you always wanted your boss to do — to quit micro-managing you. Become your ideal boss. Lay out fair rules on how your lives will run. Encourage your children to become equal partners in fleshing out what this means in practice — who does what, when and why. Things will probably not work like clockwork. The house will become messy. The kids may need time to discipline themselves about homework or time spent on social media. Your spouse might resent the change just as much as the kids. But in the end, there is a good chance everyone will sort themselves out per their natural inclinations and capacities.

Third, avoid dreaming of the future. “*Que sera sera*” remains the motto. The only thing real is the present — remain in it. This doesn’t mean that planning should be junked. But a future directed by you is as dead as the Planning Commission. Shape your children into commandos — street smart but equipped with the attributes for happiness and success — good health, a head for languages and code, music and art, digital capability and high social and human capacity. The rest will unfold as challenges and opportunities present themselves.

Children are born pure and unsullied. It is we who contaminate them with backward looking limitations. Now is a good time to shed the patrimonial legacy of parenthood and discover the joy of surviving together — the good news being — no one is watching, excepting you.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

Subhani



Why J. Khanna dissented from Central Vista ruling



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya’s View

The Supreme Court (SC) has in a two-against-one judgment given a conditional green signal to the government’s plans to massively rebuild the central core of the capital of the Republic. We have no option but to accept the view of the highest court of the land, but the dissenting judgment of Justice Sanjiv Khanna raises issues which, if brushed under the carpet, would sanctify the government’s predilection to rule by law rather than that by rule of law.

The old saying, the way to hell is paved with good intentions, has a new resonance to the manner in which our current government acts. The end goal is often good, but the manner in which it is sought to be achieved is sorely wanting. The recent farm laws provide an illustrative example. No one can question the proposition that the agricultural sector needs reforms. But there is something inherently undemocratic if the reforms are pushed through without adequate consultations.

The farm bills were passed by blatantly violating every procedure and protocol of Parliament; they were hurriedly cleared on a Sunday, without sufficient discussion, by a voice vote, and without referring them to a Select Committee where the views of stakeholders could be taken on board in an organized and transparent manner. The farmers massed on the borders of Delhi are basically saying that there was no conversation with them.

This is precisely what a great many concerned citizens, members of civil society, architects,

town planners, environmental experts, landscapers, conservationists, and heritage specialists are saying about the rebuilding of New Delhi. Justice Sanjiv Khanna, in his dissenting judgment, used a very telling expression to describe the undemocratic opacity of the government. He said that there was a lack of “adequate and intelligible disclosure”.

This was especially important, Justice Khanna said, because the proposed changes to the heart of New Delhi’s heritage core are not only massive, but irreversible. Physical construction or demolitions cannot be undone, and have permanent consequences. The argument, it must be reiterated, is not against change. Cites are not fossilised in the past. The government is within its rights to make changes. Nor is Lutyens’ legacy writ in stone. In any case, as a person,

Why was an open design competition not held? On what criteria did the government’s in-house committee decide that a Gujarat based firm, which may have done the redevelopment of the Sabarmati river front, had the best design even when its bid was the most expensive?

Justice Sanjiv Khanna, in his dissenting judgment, used a very telling expression to describe the undemocratic opacity of the government. He said that there was a lack of ‘adequate and intelligible disclosure’.

Lutyens was an incorrigible racist, with a deep sense of contempt for Indians and all things Indian. But the city he designed with Herbert Baker has been part of our history for the last seven decades and more. If we wish to change our architectural past, should not that process be fully transparent, and informed by adequate and intelligible information put out in the public realm?

The answer, of course, is yes. But was this done? Many questions hang unanswered in the air. Why was the original brief for the project marked by such uncommunicative brevity? Why were all the drawings, layout plans and explanatory memoranda, inviting suggestions and objections, not put on a public website? Why was an open design competition not held? Why was a public jury of well-known non-governmental experts along with government nominees not constituted to decide the best bid? On what criteria did the government’s in-house committee decide that a Gujarat based firm, which may have done the redevelopment of the Sabarmati river front, had the best design even when its bid was the most expensive? Why have the criteria for this subjective and secretive selection not been made public even now? Why was the permission of the Heritage Conservation Committee not obtained? Why was the environment clearance granted by the Expert Appraisal

Committee not a speaking order, clearly giving reasons, and as Justice Sanjiv Khanna observed, showing application of mind? Why was a detailed report showing why our current Parliament needs to be junked, and is beyond all retrofitting to suit future needs, not made public? Since the changes involved building a new Parliament, could not there have been a discussion in Parliament, rather than merely briefing representatives of political parties?

The BJP may have an absolute majority in Parliament, but that does not mean that the process of democratic consultation, and the imperative of transparency, can be dispensed with. When governments behave as if they know best what is good for the people, and treat the views of the people themselves as unimportant, the consequences lack credibility and legitimacy. On a TV debate the other day, Mohandas Pai said that democracy cannot mean checking out every decision with all the people. My only response to him is not to trivialise the democratic process. Obviously, not everyone can be consulted, but there are standard and institutionalised ways in which the government can attempt to gauge what is best for the people. When this is not done through intelligent and adequate disclosure, and a transparent process of consultations, the result is contentious and counter-productive. This is what the angry farmers are saying, and this is what those who are distressed at manner of the remaking of New Delhi, are reiterating. Their views are best summed up in this couplet: *Yun dikhatu hai aankhen mujhe baaghbaan, jaise gulshan pe kuch haq har-mara nahin*: The caretaker of the garden looks at me such, as though I have no say in the well-being of the garden.

The writer, an author and a diplomat, is in politics

LETTERS

RESOLUTE FARMERS

The resolute farmers are ready to forego Lohri and spend time in freezing Delhi (*Farmers dig in heels, say ready for Lohri in Delhi, DC, Jan. 9*). They see no hope in approaching judiciary when they say they will not go to court but want repeal of farm laws.

P.R. Ravinder
Hyderabad

DON'T RELAX

While the number of Covid-19 cases is fluctuating, people should not take risk. They must observe all preventive measures strictly (*Covid-19 norms go for a toss, DC, Jan. 9*). Our experience shows Coronavirus attacks people from where they least expect it and spreads making things worse.

G.V.N. Murthy
Hyderabad

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms have a social, moral and legal responsibility to monitor posts of high-profile users so that they do not incite followers/supporters to commit crimes. They must act fast to deactivate such accounts.

Sayed Nooruddin
Hyderabad

KILLING ANIMALS

Youths killing an endangered dolphin in UP shows us the evil side of humans. We are killing animals and destroying their homes and now killing the innocent beings without mercy. Though the government takes steps to stop these brutal acts, they still continue. It is time to spread awareness on protection of animals among humans. The government on its part must take strict action on those who commit such crimes.

Rashmi Bhumi Reddy
Hyderabad

PUBLIC TOILETS

The “QR Code System” for cleanliness is a good step (*Public toilets to have QR Code system feedback, DC, Jan. 7*). I request the GHMC commissioner to also provide cleaning equipment and staff to keep toilets clean in public spaces. Cleaning them thrice a day is mandatory. The ‘Pay & Use’ toilets are always unhygienic. I request GHMC commissioner take action.

Om Vishal Raj
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Abdullah externed from J&K

NEW DELHI, JANUARY. 9 AN order of externment was served on Sheikh Abdullah early today for bidding him from entering the State of Jammu and Kashmir for a period of three months.

Sheikh Abdullah is currently in Delhi. A similar order was served yesterday on Mirza Afzal Beg, Plebiscite Front Leader.

Sheikh Abdullah, it is clarified, is not under arrest. But, he cannot enter the State under the externment order issued under the Jammu and Kashmir Maintenance of Public Order.

The externment orders, under the Public Maintenance of Public Order Act of Jammu and Kashmir were served on the Sheikh and his son-in-law G. M. Shah, who is General Secretary of the Plebiscite Front, at the Sheikh’s New Delhi residence No. 3 Kotla Lane.

The order was served on Mirza Afzal Beg, President of Front, last evening while he was proceeding from Jammu to Srinagar by car.

Anita Katyal
Political Gup-Shup



Divide and win Sikh farmers; artist’s mighty snub to govt

The Akali Dal-controlled Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has announced that it will not be inviting Prime Minister Narendra Modi for Sikh centenary events in protest against the Centre’s “anti-farmer” stand but it has not stopped informal contacts between the government and Akali Dal leaders as both sides attempt to resolve the ongoing farmers’ stir. Akali Dal’s Rajya Sabha MP Naresh Gujral is said to have called up urban development minister Hardeep Puri recently to draw his attention to the number of Sikh farmers who have died in the last month and urged him to find an early solution to the protests. Mr Puri apparently showed no remorse and instead asked the Akali MP to ensure that the Leftists are kept out of the picture. The BJP is convinced that the protests are being led and managed by Left-leaning activists and cannot countenance dealing with or yielding to their demands. In any case, Mr Puri is also said to have told Mr Gujral that the Modi government has no intention of

repealing the farm laws but is willing to tweak certain clauses to provide a face-saver to the farmers.

As the only Sikh minister in the Modi government, Hardeep Puri has been fielded in the media regularly after farmers from Punjab and Haryana began their protest at the Delhi border. On his part, Mr Puri is doing his bit to appease and mollify the angry Sikh community. It was, therefore, not surprising that the minister made time last week, despite his hectic schedule, to release a coffee table book on the life and teachings of Guru Nanak Dev, authored by Harminder Kaur. Mr Puri later posted photographs of the release function held in his office with a short message mentioning the author’s name and that the paintings in the book were by artist Arpana Caur. However, Arpana Caur was missing from Mr Puri’s photographs. According to the grapevine, Ms Caur refused to attend in protest against the Modi government’s Central Vista redevelopment plans. Arpana Caur is among the large number of

artists, architects and conservationists who have petitioned the Centre against the demolition of the buildings housing the National Museum and the Indira Gandhi Centre National Centre for the Arts.

Stand-up comedian Munawar Faruqui, who was arrested recently in Indore for allegedly making indecent remarks against Hindu deities, seems to have fallen victim to longstanding rivalry between BJP leaders. Mr Faruqui was taken into custody following a complaint by Eklavya Singh Gaur, son of local BJP legislator Malini Laxman Singh Gaur, who is a camp follower of Sumitra Mahajan, former Lok Sabha Speaker and former Indore MP. Ms Mahajan is known to be a long-time rival of BJP general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, also from Indore. According to reports from Madhya Pradesh Eklavya Gaur had been chafing ever since Kailash Vijayvargiya’s son and BJP legislator Akash grabbed headlines last year when he beat up a civic body officer with a cricket bat,

Not only did he get away with it but the incident enhanced Akash’s political profile. Eklavya Gaur is hoping Mr Faruqui’s arrest will win him brownie points with the BJP bosses.

It would seem that the BJP is playing a cat-and-mouse game with former Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, who joined the saffron party last March. After making him wait for nearly two months, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan finally expanded his Cabinet last week and re-inducted two Scindia loyalists — Tulsiram Silawat and Govind Raju — in the ministry. While appeasing Mr Scindia, the chief minister was also quick to send out a message that the former Congress leader cannot dictate terms to him. Two days after the Cabinet expansion, the Chouhan government ordered the transfer of Commissioner, Gwalior Municipal Corporation, Sandeep Makin, known to be close to Mr Scindia. In fact, Mr Scindia has been so protective about Mr Makin that even Kamal Nath could not touch the officer despite several

attempts to move him out.

Though the election for the Congress president’s post is yet to be announced and there is no formal word from Rahul Gandhi about his future plans, it is being assumed that the Nehru-Gandhi scion will return as party chief again. Word to this effect is doing the rounds in the Congress. Consequently, everyone, including senior Congress leaders, has started courting Rahul Gandhi’s team members. There is no “Ahmed Patel” in his office but Kaushal Vidyarthi is among those who is said to be a member of the Congress leader’s core team. It is, therefore, not surprising that he is much in demand with the Congress leaders who vie to get a word with him. One leader went as far as to suggest that Mr Vidyarthi’s role in Rahul Gandhi’s office can be compared to that of R.K. Dhawan and V. George in the offices of Indira Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, respectively.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

SHORT TAKES
EASTER ATTACKS:
U.S. CHARGES 3
SRI LANKANS

Washington, Jan. 9: The US has charged three Sri Lankan nationals for allegedly being part of a group of ISIS supporters responsible for the 2019 Easter attacks. Mohamed Naufar, Mohamed Anwar Mohamed Riskan and Ahamed Milhan Hayathu Moahmed are currently in custody in Sri Lanka.

The criminal case was filed on December 11, in the US District Court in Los Angeles. Naufar, the "second emir" for the group of ISIS supporters that called itself "ISIS in Sri Lanka" who allegedly led the group's propaganda efforts, recruited others to join ISIS and led a series of multi-day military-type trainings.

Riskan allegedly helped manufacture the IEDs used in the Easter Attacks; and Moahmed allegedly executed a police officer in order to obtain the officer's firearm, shot a suspected informant, and scouted a location for a separate terrorist attack.

INTEL OFFICIAL
'HURT' AFTER
OUSTER BY DON

Washington, Jan. 9: The ousted inspector general of the intelligence community says he is "disappointed and saddened" that President Donald Trump fired him, but he also encouraged other inspectors general to continue to speak out when they are aware of wrongdoing.

Trump notified Congress late Friday evening that he intended to fire Michael Atkinson because he had lost confidence in him. On Saturday, Trump made it clear that the move had been retaliatory, telling reporters that Atkinson was a "disgrace" and had done "a terrible job" because he had provided an anonymous whistleblower complaint to Congress — a move that was required by law.

Atkinson was required by law to notify Congress of the complaint, which was written by an anonymous intelligence official and detailed Trump's pressure on Ukraine to investigate Democrats.

GOOGLE BANS
PARLER FROM
PLAY STORE

Washington, Jan. 9: Internet giant Google has suspended US-based microblogging platform Parler — where most of the supporters of outgoing President Donald Trump are shifting their base — from its app store, citing posts inciting violence and demanding "robust" moderation for "egregious" content from the social networking service.

Simultaneously, Apple also warned Parler on Friday that it will ban the service from its app store if it doesn't start to moderate its content better.

The move by the two Silicon Valley companies came the day when Twitter permanently suspended Trump's account due to "risk of further incitement of violence".

"In order to protect user safety on Google Play, our longstanding policies require that apps displaying user-generated content have moderation policies and enforcement that removes egregious content like spots that incite violence," Google said in a statement.

FBI SEARCHES
LAWMAKERS'
OFFICES, HOMES

Nashville, Jan. 9: Federal prosecutors in Tennessee have said that FBI agents have searched the homes and offices of several state lawmakers.

US Attorney's Office of Middle Tennessee spokesman David Boling on Friday confirmed the searches included the homes of former GOP House Speaker Glen Casada, state Rep. Robin Smith and Casada's former chief of staff, Cade Cothren. The office of Republican Rep. Todd Warner also was searched, according to House Speaker Cameron Sexton.

Boling declined to provide any further information regarding the nature of the searches and how many lawmakers were involved.

A spokesman for the FBI referred all questions to the US Attorney's Office. Republican Gov. Bill Lee told reporters Friday that he had spoken to Sexton, a Republican from Crossville, about the searches, describing them as "FBI raids."

"It's certainly very concerning. I know very little about that. There's been no FBI outreach to us," Lee said.

15 charged over Capitol violence

Legal action against Trump demanded

Don impeachment is for Congress to decide: Biden

Washington, Jan. 9: The US Justice Department announced Friday that it has charged 15 people involved in the assault on Congress, including one man accused of possessing bombs made to act like "homemade napalm." But Ken Kohl, a federal prosecutor with the Washington US attorney's office, said they did not expect to charge anyone with "incitement" or "insurrection" in Wednesday's violence, amid calls for legal action against President Donald Trump, his lawyer Rudy Giuliani and others for encouraging it.

The department unveiled the cases against 13 people, including Richard Barnett, a Trump supporter who invaded the office of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and Lonnie Coffman of Alabama, who was found carrying two handguns and had 11 Styrofoam-enhanced Molotov cocktails in his truck.

Others whose charges were unsealed include Christopher Albert of Maryland, who allegedly entered the US Capitol with a loaded handgun; and Mark Leffingwell, charged with punching an officer. Most of the 13 were charged with illegal entry into restricted buildings of Congress, and violent or disorderly conduct.

They were also charged with impeding government functions after forcing the shutdown of a joint meeting of Congress to officially certify that Trump rival Joe Biden had won the November 3 election, which Trump had until Thursday refused to accept. Barnett, famously photographed with his feet on a desk in Pelosi's office, was charged with theft of stationery.

"The lawless destruction of the US Capitol building was an attack against one of our nation's greatest institutions," said Acting US Attorney Michael Sherwin in a statement.

Kohl said that not all the charges filed over Wednesday's violence had been unsealed, and that more were in the pipeline as the FBI investigates.

"This investigation has the highest priority," he said, with "hundreds" of Justice Department investigators working the case.

Around 40 people were arrested and charged by

Wilmington, Jan. 9: President-elect Joe Biden on Friday strongly indicated he does not back moves to impeach President Donald Trump, saying the quickest way to get him out of office is through the transition in two weeks. "The quickest way that will happen is us being sworn in on the 20th," said Biden, who will take the oath of office on January 20.

"What actually happens before or after, that is a judgment for the Congress to make. But that's what I am looking forward to: him leaving office."

The President-elect was addressing reporters in his hometown of Wilmington two days after Trump encouraged a mob of supporters to march on Congress.

Democratic leaders in Congress have growing momentum for attempting to impeach Trump for the second time in his

presidency.

There is little support so far among Republicans, although they too have loudly condemned Trump's behaviour.

This was Biden's first extended reaction to the talk of impeaching Trump or trying to persuade Vice President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th amendment removing the president from office.

Biden's hesitancy to support his party on impeachment reflects the fact that he already faces a mammoth task in working to heal divisions in US society.

"We're going to do our job and Congress can decide how to proceed," Biden said.

"The idea that I think he shouldn't be out of office yesterday is not an issue. The question is what happens with 14 days to go, 13 days left to go?"

— AFP

The lawless destruction of the US Capitol building was an attack against one of our nation's greatest institutions.

— MICHAEL SHERWIN
Acting US Attorney

Washington police, mostly for curfew violations, weapons offences and unlawful entry. But the charges announced by Kohl Friday were on the federal level and potentially carry heavier punishment.

He said the FBI was not investigating anyone on possible "incitement" or "insurrection" charges.

Some people have called for Trump, Giuliani, Trump's son Donald Jr and others to be charged with incitement for openly encouraging the president's supporters to take action just hours before the mob stormed the Capitol.

"We don't expect any charges of that nature," Kohl said.

— AFP

Indo-American Sabrina is Harris' Dy Press Secy

Washington, Jan. 9: Indian-American Sabrina Singh would serve as Deputy Press Secretary to the Vice President in the White House, according to an announcement made by the Biden-Harris Transition. Singh was Press Secretary to Vice President-elect Kamala Harris on the Biden-Harris campaign. Prior to her role on the campaign, she served as senior spokesperson for Mike Bloomberg's presidential campaign and National Press Secretary for Cory Booker's presidential campaign.

She previously served as deputy communications director for the Democratic National Committee, spokesperson for American Bridge's Trump War Room and Regional

Communications Director on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign.

Singh has also worked at SKDKnickerbocker, served as Communications Director for Representative Jan Schakowsky and worked at various Democratic committees, said the Biden-Harris Transition as it announced additional members of the Vice President's Office at the White House.

Prominent among them being Yael Belkind, Assistant to the Chief of Staff to the Vice President; Vincent Evans as Deputy Director of the Office of Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs; Michael Fuchs as Deputy Chief of Staff; Kate Childs Graham as Director of Speech Writing and Dr Ike

Irby as Policy Advisor to the Vice President.

Deanne Millison has been named Deputy Policy Director to the Vice President; Rachel Palermo as Assistant Press Secretary; Mike Pyle as Chief Economic Advisor; Peter Velz as Director of Press Operations; and Herbie Ziskend as Deputy Communications Director.

These diverse, experienced, and talented individuals will join the Office of the Vice President. The appointments demonstrate that the president and vice president-elect are building an administration that looks like America and is ready to deliver results for the American people on day one, the transition said.

— PTI

WINTRY | WEATHER

Storm Filomena leaves many areas under a white blanket Spain sees heaviest snowfall in 50 yrs

Madrid, Jan. 9: Heavy snow continued to fall across much of Spain on Friday, causing chaos on the roads, particularly in the centre of the country, with the capital Madrid seeing its heaviest snowfall in 50 years.

By nightfall, the extreme weather brought by Storm Filomena had left many areas under a deep blanket of white in a rare bout of wintry weather not seen in decades to the Iberian peninsula.

As the snow showed no signs of letting up, Madrid's Barajas airport halted all incoming and outgoing flights. "For safety reasons, operations have been stopped at #Airport AS #Madrid-#Barajas, until visibility is improved. The work to clear the runways continues in order to resume operations as soon as possible #BorrascaFilomena," it tweeted.

The blizzard also caused havoc on the roads, with nearly 400 affected across Spain and hundreds of vehicles stranded in the snow and ice.

The worst-hit regions

were Castilla La Mancha, Valencia and Madrid, with the capital seeing its heaviest snowfall since 1971, Spain's public television said. Hours of intense snow which was still falling by 2100 GMT cut off the city's two main ringroads, the M30 and the M40, and a red alert was declared in the city centre where police struggled to help people stranded in vehicles.

The transport authority said the snow had disrupted traffic on almost 400 main roads, where in

many cases lorries and heavy goods vehicles were unable to pass, while many roads were only passable with snow chains.

On the secondary road network, more than 50 roads were impassable and around 170 roads required chains. And hundreds of lorry drivers were held up across the country.

The AEMET weather agency described the situation as "exceptional and most likely historic".

Earlier in the day, children in Madrid could be seen hurling snowballs or

Twitter permanently bans Don

San Francisco, Jan. 9: Twitter said Friday it has permanently suspended President Donald Trump's account, citing the risk of further violence following the assault on the US Capitol by his supporters.

"After close review of recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account," Twitter said in a blog post explaining its decision, "we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence." Twitter — Trump's favourite megaphone — blocked him for 12 hours after the deadly attack on the US Capitol on Wednesday and threatened permanent suspension if he continued breaking its rules.

Trump returned to Twitter late Thursday, posting a video message that seemed aimed at calming tensions after the mayhem

MY SUPPORT BASE, MYSELF WON'T BE SILENCED: TRUMP AFTER BAN

Washington, Jan. 9: Outgoing US President Donald Trump has slammed Twitter for permanently suspending him, vowing that he and his support base would not be silenced. The unprecedented move by the California-based microblogging site on Friday comes after Trump tweeted that he would not attend the inauguration of his successor Joe Biden on January 20.

At the time of suspension, Trump had 88.7 million followers and followed 51 people. In a statement

after he was banned, Trump said: "I predicted this would happen. We have been negotiating with various other sites, and will have a big announcement soon, while we also look at the possibilities of building out our own platform in the near future. We will not be SILENCED!"

"Twitter is not about FREE SPEECH. They are all about promoting a Radical Left platform where some of the most vicious people in the world are allowed to speak freely."

— PTI

caused by his supporters. He acknowledged his presidency was ending and promised a smooth transition to Joe Biden, although he did not go so far as to congratulate or even say the name of his successor.

Twitter said at the time it was continuing to watch Trump's social media activity to determine whether further action was needed.

The decision to suspend Trump's account came after a pair of tweets on Friday, according to the one-to-many messaging platform. In one of the tweets, Trump vowed that none of his supporters would be "disrespected," and in another, he said he would not be attending Biden's inauguration on January 20, as is customary. "These two Tweets must be read in the context of broader events in the country and the ways in which the President's statements can be mobilised by different audiences, including to incite violence, as well as in the context of the pattern of behaviour from this account in recent weeks," Twitter said.

— AFP



People queue for being tested for Covid-19 outside a municipal building on Saturday in Bagneux, a southern suburb of Paris, where a risk cluster of the mutant Coronavirus variant have been detected.

— AFP

China WHO trip: No timeline

Beijing, Jan. 9: China is ready to receive a WHO expert team to probe the origin of Covid-19 and has reached a consensus with the UN's top health agency, a senior Chinese official said on Saturday, but gave no specific timeline for the visit.

The exact time on when the WHO expert team will arrive in Wuhan, where the virus emerged in December last, and investigate into the Coronavirus origin is still under negotiation, Zeng Yixin, deputy head of the National Health Commission, said. China and the World Health Organisation have reached a consensus on specific arrangements of the investigation with four video conferences, Zeng was quoted as saying by state-run *Global Times*.

Chinese experts are waiting for their WHO counterparts, he said. Once the WHO experts complete their procedures and finalise the schedule, Chinese experts will go to Wuhan with them to conduct the probe, Zeng was quoted as saying by the state-run Xinhua news agency.

Zeng stressed that China's position on the WHO investigation is positive, open and supportive, and the country hopes such joint efforts would help deepen the understanding of the virus and better prevent infectious diseases in the future. In a rare instance of criticism from the global body, WHO chief

'Act like you have got it' drive in UK

London, Jan. 9: The UK government on Saturday began rolling out a series of stark advertisements as part of a new awareness drive that warns people to "Act like you've got it" because anyone can spread Coronavirus, especially the new highly transmissible variant that has seen hospitals being overwhelmed with Covid-19 patients.

The campaign — made up of television, radio and newspaper adverts as well as a social media blitz — comes as the latest daily death toll from the deadly virus hit a new peak of 1,325 deaths and infections rose to 68,053 cases. Around one in three people infected with the virus do not have any symptoms and could therefore be passing it on without realising, according to the government's messaging.

The UK PM Boris Johnson took to social media to urge people to strictly follow the stay-at-home lockdown as the disease continues to spread at an "alarming rate". "Our hospitals are under more pressure than at any other time since the start of the pandemic, and infection rates continue to soar at an alarming rate," he said in a Twitter statement.

"The vaccine rollout has given us renewed hope, but it's critical for now we stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives," he said. The warnings come a day after London Mayor Sadiq Khan declared a "major incident" in the UK capital because the coronavirus cases are "out of control" as latest figures revealed the infection rate in London has exceeded 1,000 per 100,000 people.

— PTI

Tedros Adhanom Gebrayesus, often accused of being pro-China, in a media conference in Geneva on Tuesday had expressed disappointment over China not finalising the necessary permissions for the experts team's arrival.

"I'm very disappointed with this news, given that

two members had already begun their journeys and others were not able to travel at the last minute, but had been in contact with senior Chinese officials," he said. Tedros said he "made it clear" that the mission was a priority for the UN health agency.

— PTI

Washington, Jan. 9: The United States hit a new record for Coronavirus cases Friday, notching nearly 290,000 in a span of 24 hours, according to a real-time tally by Johns Hopkins University.

The country, the hardest-hit in the world by the Covid-19 pandemic, also recorded 3,676 virus deaths in the same day, the Baltimore-based university said.

The day before, the US had recorded a record of nearly 4,000 deaths in 24 hours. Some 131,000 people are currently hospitalized in the US for Covid-19, according to the Covid Tracking Project.

The world's largest economy has recorded 21.8 million Coronavirus cases and more than 368,000 deaths since the start of the pandemic.

The country, where health restrictions vary drastically between localities, is ultimately counting on a massive vaccination campaign begun in mid-December to bring the health crisis to an end.

But the effort is running behind, with just under six million people having received the first of two injections in the country of 330 million.

— AFP

Court: Nab Masood Azhar by Jan. 18

Lahore, Jan. 9: UN designated global terrorist Masood Azhar, chief of the banned Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), should be arrested by January 18 in connection with a terror financing case, an anti-terrorism court in Pakistan has asked the Punjab Police, a court official said on Saturday.

The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Gujranwala issued an arrest warrant against Azhar in the terror financing case instituted by the CTD in the previous hearing on Thursday. ATC Gujranwala

judge Natasha Naseem Supra directed the case hearing on Friday directed the CTD to arrest JeM chief Masood Azhar by January 18 and present him in the court. In case of failure (to arrest him), the court may begin proceedings to declare him a proclaimed offender.

Following the Palwama terror attack in February 2019, Pakistan's Punjab police had launched a crackdown on terrorism financing and arrested six militants of the JeM in Gujranwala, some 130 kms from Lahore. — PTI

SLOW & UNSTEADY

Pujara's slowest Test 50 derails visitors momentum

Sydney, Jan. 9: Cheteshwar Pujara's singular lack of intent pushed an injury-ravaged India into a deep hole as Australia tightened the noose with a substantial 197-run lead on a forgettable on Saturday for the visitors in the third Test here.

Pujara's slowest Test half-century, a painstaking 50 off 176 balls, was soon followed by India being bowled out for 244 on the third day with the other batsmen feeling tremendous pressure of a dormant scoreboard.

A first-innings lead of 94 runs provided by the bowlers and some good fielding did help Australia's cause.

By stumps, Steve Smith (29 batting) and Marnus Labuschagne (47 batting) gave an exhibition of how to bat on slow tracks with Australia reaching 103/2.

Labuschagne, in particular, showed how to bat positively on a dead track hitting six boundaries in 67 balls.

As Shane Warne pointed out during commentary, it would be very difficult to chase any score in excess of 250 with variable bounce and the odd balls keeping low.



India's Jasprit Bumrah (right) is run out as Australia's Will Pucovski watches during play on the third day of their third Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Saturday. — AP

Pat Cummins (4/29 in 21.4 overs) was brilliant on an unresponsive track with some effective short-pitched bowling and got good support from Josh Hazlewood (2/43 in 21 overs) and Mitchell Starc (1/61 in 19 overs), having set up a leg-side trap.

To make matters worse for India, there were run-outs and two batsmen — Rishabh

Pant and Ravindra Jadeja — were hit on the left elbow and left thumb respectively.

While both might come into bat in the second innings, Jadeja, with a swollen left thumb, will find it difficult to even grip the ball.

Earlier, Pujara's ultra-defensive approach put tremendous pressure on his colleagues and India never

quite got the momentum going as Cummins, Hazlewood and Starc continuously attacked the batsmen — first with a leg-side field and short-ball strategy and then on the corridor of uncertainty.

Pujara doesn't play the pull or hook shot well and he wasn't allowed room to either cut or drive.

While he never tried to

rotate the strike, the likes of Ajinkya Rahane (22 off 70 balls) and Rishabh Pant (36 off 67 balls) felt the urge to break the shackles in the absence of any such intention from the other end.

"It may have looked like a flat pitch but it wasn't easy to score runs," Pujara told host broadcasters Channel 7 during post match snap interview. — PTI

SCORECARD

Australia 1st Innings 338
India 1st Innings (overnight 96/2): Rohit Sharma c and b Hazlewood 26, Shubman Gill c Green b Cummins 50, Cheteshwar Pujara c Paine b Cummins 50, Ajinkya Rahane b Cummins 22, Hanuma Vihari run out 4, Rishabh Pant c Warner b Hazlewood 36, Ravindra Jadeja not out 28, R. Ashwin run out 1, Navdeep Saini c Wade b Starc 3, Bumrah run out 0, Mohammed Siraj c Paine b Cummins 6.
Extras (lb-2, w-5, nb-2) 9. Total (all out in 100.4 overs) 244.
FOW: 1-70, 2-85, 3-117, 4-142, 5-195, 6-195, 7-206, 8-210, 9-216.
Bowling: Starc 19-76-1-1, Hazlewood 21-10-43-2, Cummins 21.4-10-29-4, Lyon 31-88-70-0, Labuschagne 3-0-11-0, Green 5-11-0-0.

Australia 2nd Innings: David Warner lbw Ashwin 13, Will Pucovski c (sub) Wriddhiman Saha b Siraj 10, Marnus Labuschagne batting 47, Steven Smith batting 29.
Extras (lb-1, nb-3) 4. Total (for 2 wks in 29 overs) 103.
FOW: 1-16, 2-35.
Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 8-1-26-0, Mohammed Siraj 8-2-20-1, Navdeep Saini 7-1-28-0, Ravichandran Ashwin 6-0-28-1.

Bumrah & Siraj racially abused

Sydney, Jan. 9: The BCCI on Saturday lodged a formal complaint with ICC match referee David Boon after Indian team players, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj, were allegedly racially abused by a drunk spectator here during the third day of third Test against Australia.

According to BCCI sources, Siraj was allegedly referred to as a "monkey" by a drunk spectator in one of stands at the Sydney Cricket Ground, reliving the infamous Monkeygate episode of the Indian team's tour of Australia in 2007-08.

"BCCI lodged a formal complaint with ICC match referee David Boon about two of their players Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj being abused by a drunk spectator," a Cricket Board source said.

Incidentally, the Monkeygate episode also took place during the Sydney Test when Andrew Symonds claimed Harbhajan Singh called him a monkey multiple times. But the Harbhajan was cleared after a hearing on the matter. It is learnt that a long discussion was

JADDU INJURES THUMB, IS OUT OF FOURTH TEST

Sydney, Jan. 9: Depleted India's injury woes worsened on Saturday with Ravindra Jadeja sustaining a left thumb dislocation and fracture which is likely to rule him out of the final Test in Brisbane.

"Ravindra Jadeja has suffered a dislocation and fracture on his left thumb. It will be very difficult for him to wear those gloves and bat," a senior BCCI source said.

However, Rishabh Pant's elbow injury is not serious and he will probably be available when India bat to save the Test match. — PTI

held between the senior players of the visiting contingent, including Ajinkya Rahane, the umpires and security officers at the end of the day's play.

The abuses were directed at the Indian duo while they were fielding. — PTI



Agnes Keleti, former Olympic gold medal winning gymnast, blows out the candles on her birthday cake in Budapest, Hungary, on January 4. — AP

Oldest living Oly champ turns 100

Budapest, Jan. 9: For Agnes Keleti, the oldest living Olympic champion, the fondest memory of her remarkable 100 years is simply that she has lived through it all. The Holocaust survivor and winner of 10 Olympic medals in gymnastics including five golds celebrates her 100th birthday on Saturday in her native Budapest, punctuating a life of achievement, adventure, tragedy and perseverance which, she says, passed by in a flash.

"These 100 years felt to me like 60," she said at a celebration in Budapest on the eve of her birthday.

Leafing through a copy of a new book about her life

"The Queen of Gymnastics: 100 Years of Agnes Keleti" her trademark modesty was on full display.

"The queen of gymnastics," she said, switching to English. And in Hungarian: "That's an exaggeration."

Keleti, who was born Agnes Klein in 1921, had her illustrious career interrupted by World War II and the subsequent cancellation of the 1940 and 1944 Olympics.

Forced off her gymnastics team in 1941 because of her Jewish ancestry, Keleti went into hiding in the Hungarian countryside where she survived the Holocaust by assuming a false identity and working as a maid. — AP

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