

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | TUESDAY | 26 JANUARY 2021

## WEATHER

Max: 33.2°C  
Min: 18.4°C  
RH: 41%  
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Mist/haze in the morning. Max/Min temp. 33/18 °C

## COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+8,631)	(+106)
1,06,76,963	1,53,608

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+148)	(+1)
TS: 2,93,401	1,590
(+56)	(+2)
AP: 8,87,066	7,149

### CASES AROUND THE WORLD

9,99,60,697
<b>DEATHS</b>
21,43,258
<b>COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES</b>
219

worldometers.info/coronavirus

## COUNTER POINT



Footproof security arrangements, sir... no threat even from tractors!

## SHORT TAKE

### WhatsApp treats Indians differently

**New Delhi:** WhatsApp is treating Indian users differently from Europeans over opting out of its new privacy policy which is a matter of concern for the government, the Centre informed the Delhi High Court on Monday.



## NATION | 4

**Didi warns of reply to her 'insult'**



## WORLD | 5

**US to reimpose travel ban**

## SPORTS | 8

**League champs Liverpool out of FA Cup**



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Vol. 20 No. 240 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

### Republic Day Regatta



The national flag stands tall as colourful boats line up in the foreground at Hussainsagar lake in Hyderabad ahead of the Republic Day Regatta being conducted by the Yacht Club of Hyderabad.

## Ministerial aspirants push to impress next CM KTR

### Senior MLAs, younger ones trying their luck

**IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC**  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 25

With the inevitability of the *de jure* rise and anointing of minister and TRS working president K.T. Rama Rao as the next Chief Minister of Telangana setting in, party leaders and ministerial aspirants have started die-hard efforts to get his attention and push for their Cabinet candidature.

With a plethora of strategies, including media leaks, name dropping and trying to send feelers to the new leader of the state, everyone from TRS ministers to MLAs, MLCs and others are trying to stand apart as ministry-worthy. Gossip is abuzz and grapevines are feeding all manners of "news" about who is in and who will be out. Amidst the intertwined emotions of insecurity and hope, TRS

● **WITH A** plethora of strategies, including media leaks, name dropping and trying to send feelers to the new leader of the state, everyone from TRS ministers to MLAs, MLCs and others are trying to stand apart as ministry-worthy.

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leaders are asking – "am I in? Will I make it? What does KTR really want?" In the hot race are several senior MLAs and younger ones trying their luck for a Cabinet post in the upcoming 'KTR Cabinet' are also increasing their tryst with religious approval and promises to the divine for blessings.

Sources close to Rama Rao concede, with a veneer of wilful doubt, that "indeed if the case is that he will become Chief Minister, there is scope for appointing two Deputy Chief Ministers in his Cabinet."

Senior TRS leaders are building bridges in their hearts from this only real statement of intent. Some argue that is a given that Rama Rao will have one deputy CM each from the BC and Dalit communities. Senior leaders, including health minister Etala Rajendar and Koppula Eshwar are betting and hoping they are appointed Deputy CMs.

Mahmood Ali, currently handling the ministry of home, leaders speculate, shall continue but chances are that the new CM will shuffle his department.

■ **Page 2: KTR Cabinet unlikely to diminish**

### SC DISMISSES AP PLEA TO DEFER LOCAL ELECTIONS

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 25**

The Supreme Court dismissed the Andhra Pradesh government's plea to postpone the gram panchayat polls and cleared the decks for going ahead with the elections as per schedule.

A division bench comprising justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Hrishikesh Roy held a hearing on Monday.

Justice Kaul observed, "Ego problems between two authorities are causing all this lawlessness. This cannot be allowed. The court will not be a party to an ego clash. Some decisions are political while some are administrative. We will not assume everyone's functions. Some decisions have to be taken by the SEC. We feel that the real issue is actually something else and not what is being argued here."

■ **Page 2: Elections being held all over India: SC**

## India, China troops clash near Sikkim

### Army plays down incident as 'minor face-off'

**DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs**  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 25

Amid their tense standoff in eastern Ladakh, Indian and Chinese troops were involved in a physical clash in the high-altitude Naku La region in Sikkim on January 20, an incident the Indian Army described as a "minor face-off" on Monday.

The Indian Army, playing down the incident, said it was resolved by local commanders and there was no use of weapons.

"It is clarified that there was a minor face-off at Nakula area of North Sikkim on 20 January 2021 and the same was resolved by local commanders as per established protocols. Media is requested to refrain from overplaying or exaggerating reports which are factually incorrect," said Indian Army.

"It is learnt that troops from both sides sustained minor injuries in the physical brawl in Naku La," a PTI report said.

People familiar with the developments along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in north Sikkim said the Chinese troops attempted to transgress into the

### MAHAVIR CHAKRA, WAR-TIME MEDAL, FOR SANTOSH BABU

**PAWAN BALI | DC**  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 25

Col. Bikumalla Santosh Babu, Commanding Officer of 16 Bihar who lost his life while fighting Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley on June 15 has been awarded the second-highest wartime gallantry medal Mahavir Chakra posthumously on the Republic Day this year.

India had lost 20 troops in the fiercest clash with the Chinese.

■ **Report on Page 4**

Indian side of the frontier in Naku La but were stopped by the Indian military personnel.

They said both sides brought in additional troops to Naku La following the brawl and the situation was under control so far.

It is also learnt that defence minister Rajnath Singh and the top military brass were apprised about the incident. The incident

at Naku La became public on Monday hours after senior commanders of both the armies concluded a nearly 16-hour-long meeting in an attempt to defuse tension in eastern Ladakh.

Naku La, located at an altitude of 16,000 feet, is the same site where Indian and Chinese troops had engaged in a fierce clash in May last year days after a violent face-off between the two sides in Pangong lake area in eastern Ladakh. Nearly 150 Indian and Chinese military personnel were engaged on May 9. At least 10 soldiers from both sides sustained injuries.

The incident in the Pangong lake area triggered the now nine-month-long military standoff in eastern Ladakh between the two sides.

When asked about the incident in Naku La, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said: "On the specific incident you mentioned, I don't have any information to offer."

Mr Zhao told a media briefing in Beijing that the Chinese border troops are committed to upholding peace and tranquillity along the border with India.

## Troops ready for threat: Prez

**New Delhi, Jan. 25:** President Ram Nath Kovind on Monday asserted that India's armed forces are "adequately mobilised" in a "well-coordinated" move to thwart any attempt to undermine national security, and recalled how its valiant sol-

diers foiled the "expansionist" plans by China in Ladakh last year. "Our national interest will be protected at all costs," the President declared in his address to the nation on the eve of the 72nd Republic Day during which he also said every Indian saluted

the farmers and sought to allay their fears over the three contentious farm laws. Kovind's remarks come amid the nine-month military standoff with China in Ladakh and the deadlock between the Centre and farmer unions over the farm laws. — *PTI*

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### 15 lakh took vaccine in India

## 10k pvt health staff take jab

**KANIZA GARARI | DC**  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 25

More than 10,000 health-care workers in the private sector were vaccinated on Monday — the day seeing cent per cent participation as safety of the vaccine is by now somewhat assured.

The first-dose vaccination drive will continue in private hospitals till January 30. Fifteen lakh people across the country have taken the first dose in recent days. The state government said that five adverse effects were noted in private hospitals on Monday.

There was palpable anxiety in the first week of the inoculation drive.

■ **Page 2: Only 57% turnout in govt hospitals**

### JAGTIAL DOC MLA IS FIRST TO GET COVID VACCINE

**DC CORRESPONDENT JAGTIAL, JAN. 25**

While many people in public life are hesitant to take the Covid-19 vaccination, following reports of side effects, Dr Sanjay Kumar became the first MLA in Telangana state to take the shot at Government Main Hospital in Jagtial district on Monday.

The vaccination programme has been going on briskly in undivided Karimnagar district.

■ **Page 2: MLA took jab to boost health personnel**

## SPB Vibhushan, Padma for Adivasi dance guru

**PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC WITH AGENCY INPUTS**  
ADILABAD / NEW DELHI, JAN. 25

Singer S.P. Balasubramaniam was posthumously conferred the Padma Vibhushan on Monday, the eve of Republic Day. The nation's second highest civilian honour was also conferred on former PM of Japan Shinzo Abe.

■ **Page 2: Marlavai village celebrates win**

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## ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttarayana

Tithi: Pushya Shuddha Trayodasi till

1.08 am (Wednesday)

Star: Ardra till 3.09 am (Wednesday)

Varjyam: 10.43 am to 12.24 pm

Durmuhurtam: 9.07 am to

9.52 am; 11.11 pm to 12.02 am

Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Jamadi- ul- Akhir 12, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.47 am

Zohar: 12.39 pm

Asar: 4.32 pm

Maghrib: 6.14 pm

Isha: 7.24 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.08 AM

SUNSET TODAY 6.49 PM

MOONSET 4.46 AM

MOONRISE 3.55 PM

## IN BRIEF

## Owaisi appears in special court

**Hyderabad:** AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi, the Hyderabad MP, on Monday appeared before the special court dealing with criminal cases related to MPs and MLAs in compliance of a non-bailable warrant for his failure to appear in a case of an attack on former Congress minister Mohammed Ali Shabbir and others during the GHMC elections in February 2016. Owaisi's counsel M.A. Azeem said the MP could not attend the previous hearings due to his schedule. Owaisi attended the court on Monday and completed the formalities of recalling the bail. The case is posted on February 3. The warrant was recalled on previous surety itself. The Second Metropolitan Sessions Judge who is designated to deal with the cases related to MPs and MLAs had issued the warrant on Friday. The incident occurred when Congress leaders including TPCC president Captain Uttam Kumar were about to leave the Mirchowk police station after the release of a Congress candidate on bail. MIM workers allegedly thrashed Congress leaders and damaged their vehicles.

## TS records 148 new Covid cases

**Hyderabad:** The state recorded 148 Covid-19 cases and one death on Sunday. The toll now stands at 1,590 and the caseload 2,93,401, according to the daily bulletin issued by the state health department. Recording 35 cases, the GHMC contributed a maximum number of cases in 24 hours, followed by Ranga Reddy (11) and Karimnagar district (10). Other districts recorded new cases in single digits. As many as 302 people recuperated from Coronavirus between Saturday and Sunday, pushing the total number of recoveries to 2,88,577. The state now has 3,234 active cases, including 1,697 individuals in home or institutional isolation, it said.

## Hyderabad set to celebrate Republic Day



(1) The War Memorial in Secunderabad is decked up for the Republic Day. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and (2) Hyderabad MP, on Monday appeared before the special court dealing with criminal cases related to MPs and MLAs in compliance of a non-bailable warrant for his failure to appear in a case of an attack on former Congress minister Mohammed Ali Shabbir and others during the GHMC elections in February 2016. (3) Moazzam Jahi Market is decorated with lights on the eve of Republic Day on Monday.



## Hotels offer special attractions on R-Day

## Prominent buildings also lit up with decorative lights

**SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL I DC**  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 25

A display of culinary skills from various states added to the festive flavour of Republic Day eve celebrations here this time. Hotels and restaurants decorated themselves with Tricolour themes on a variety of food while a residential colony saw a torchlight march on Monday.

Schools organised essay-writing competitions with Republic Day as central theme. Musicians held a

programme in the evening, singing their favourite songs linked to the freedom struggle and unity of India, and worked the crowds to a frenzy.

The city's prominent buildings were lit up with decorative lights. The Moazzam Jahi Market was among the historical structures lit up with the spirit of patriotism and there also was a musical

evening with the Warsi Brothers rendering qawwalis. Bhage's High School at Goutam Nagar, Malkajigiri, organised an essay-writing competition for students. Since schools are not open, the essays were received online and the best among them will get prizes soon, said its correspondent and physical director, Timothy Rodriguez. The 'Kashmir to Kanyakumari' concept found eloquent display by Mercure KCP eatery at Banjara Hills. "We served our clients with a spread of delicacies from across

India," said chef Suman. The Novotel, Hyderabad Airport, geared itself up to the occasion by arranging food varieties representing all parts of India. "We have seen to it that organic vegetables are brought from different states for the recipes," said its representative M.B. Varun. It was the residents of Gunfoundry who took out a torch rally after sunset, singing patriotic songs. "The burning torches and partotic songs gave us a thrill and reminded us of the freedom struggle," said Pawan Kumar.

## KTR Cabinet unlikely to diminish

From Page 1

Ali was Deputy CM in the first TRS government. Some 'data driven' leaders speculate that since social balancing will be crucial, Balka Suman or Guvvala Balaraju will likely get into the Cabinet as "strong representatives" from the SC group. Ajmeera Rekha Naik and Atram Sakku are similarly making attempts from the Schedule Tribe category, believing the rumours that minister Satyavathi Rathod will be dropped.

Some insiders say that while it will be the 'KTR Cabinet', the influence of Chandrashekar Rao will be far from diminished,

and therefore ministers G. Jagadish Reddy and Niranjan Reddy, considered very close to the TRS supremo, are bound to be continued. Analysts and leaders betting on sub-regional representation argue that since there has been only minister from Khammam, Puvvada Ajay Kumar, he is expecting to be continued but is striving to ensure that is indeed the case. Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, a former MP from Khammam and deemed a close associate of Rama Rao, may also get a Cabinet post, some speculate. MLAs from the Ranga Reddy and Hyderabad are

trying to get into the good books of Rama Rao: Former minister Patnam Mahender Reddy, Quthbullapur MLA K.P. Vivekananda and Khairatabad MLA Danam Nagender. Warangal senior MLA Vinay Bhaskar is trying his luck, hoping Rama Rao will replace minister Gangula Kamalakara from Karimnagar. MLA Rasamayi Balakishan is also trying hard for a place in the Cabinet. There are several aspirants in the race from Nizamabad district, including Bodhan MLA Shakeel, Armoor MLA A. Jeevan Reddy, Nizamabad Rural MLA Bajireddy Govardhan, Kamareddy

MLA Gampa Govardhan. But since only one of them is likely to make it, the competition to appease the gods and please Rama Rao is increasing. Former minister and Jadcherla MLA Laxma Reddy is betting on the caste composition and message that Rama Rao needs to send to the important community comprising the electorate. With 15 to 20 MLAs trying to prove their luck, the season of political court-ing, and one-upmanship is just getting started. But as one leader put it bluntly, "except KTR, and Harish Rao, all other names are just that... speculation and hope."

## President's Medal for state cops

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 25

Senior police officials Shikha Goel and N. Shivashankar Reddy were awarded the President's Police Medal for distinguished service on the eve of Republic Day, while 12 Police Medals for meritorious service were awarded to TS police personnel.

Shikha Goel is additional commissioner of police, crimes and Special Investigation Team, Hyderabad, and Shivashankar Reddy is Inspector-General of Police. Shivashankar Reddy entered police service as a DSP in 1990 and worked as SP of Karimnagar, Nalgonda and East Godavari in undivided AP.

He took charge as DIG of Nizamabad range on April 12, 2017 got promoted as IGP in April last year. He is also supervising Hyderabad range.

Those conferred the Police Medals are: Rajesh Kumar, Inspector General of Police, CI Cell, Intelligence, Hyderabad; Mohammed Sharfuddin Siddiqui, DIG, Commandant. TSSP; K. Narsing Rao, DSP, Bhainsa sub-division, Nirmal; Somagani Suryanarayana, DSP, ACB, RR range; T. Govardhan, ACP, Panjagutta, traffic; Ramesh, Dy Assault C o m m a n d e r / R I , Operations/Greyhounds; M. Uddav, reserve inspector; and Batturaju Mohan Raju, AR sub-inspector of police, both from 13th Bn.,



Shikha Goel



N. Shivashankar Reddy



T. Govardhan



Kothapally Karunakar Reddy

TSSP (IR), Mancherla; B. Govardhan, SIP, CI Cell, Intelligence, Hyderabad; Kothapally Karunakar Reddy, ASI, She Team, Rachakonda; D. Mohan Reddy and Md Nayeemuddin, CI Cell, Intelligence, Hyderabad.

## COVID VACCINE MUST FOR HAJIS

**Hyderabad:** Select Haj pilgrims will be administered the Coronavirus vaccine along with other regular vaccines. Sources said a draw to select the pilgrims is likely to be held next month.

Officials of the State Haj Committee said usually the process of draw starts on the completion of an agreement between the Indian and Saudi Arabia authorities. Normally, this agreement is completed six months before the commencement of Haj rituals. Officials said this agreement is likely to be signed on February 10.

There is an apprehension that Saudi Arabia may clear only 25-30 per cent of the strength that is normally associated with the annual pilgrimage. They said if there is further delay in completing the process, it will be very difficult to make arrangements, including for administering Covid and other regular vaccines.

## POLLS BEING HELD ALL OVER INDIA: SC

From Page 1

He pointed out that elections were held in several parts of the country even during the pandemic. Kerala conducted elections though it witnessed a major spike.

The court took a serious view of interveners like the AP Government Employees Federation, doctors and bureaucrats and opined that it was uncalled for. Government senior counsel Mukul Rohatgi argued that holding the elections were difficult as the government was preoccupied with Covid-19 vaccination programme and more than five lakh persons were to be vaccinated. He asked whether the government should allow its employees to conduct polls without undergoing vaccination. Rohatgi said Goa had deferred the polls for the same reason. He informed the court that polls could be held from March 1 considering that by the end of January, all health-care workers could be vaccinated.

## ESIC HOSPITAL DEVELOPS POWDERED PLASMA

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 24

Convalescent plasma therapy for Covid-19 victims that required collected plasma to be stored at extremely cold temperatures, can soon be a thing of the past with the development of powdered plasma by the city-based ESI Corporation Hospital that worked with a private firm to produce India's first lyophilised (powdered) plasma. The powdered plasma, can be easily reconstituted using saline liquid and administered to Covid-19 patients who might benefit from an infusion of convalescent plasma.

## Marlavai village hails Raju's success story

From Page 1

As the news spread on Monday, the entire Marlavai village celebrated the success story of Kanaka Raju and distributed sweets among themselves.

Kanaka Raju and Lachu Patel were popular dance masters or trainers in their traditional Gussadi and Dhimsa dances respectively. Lachu is no more.

This is probably the second Padma Shri award given to someone from erstwhile Adilabad, after the honouring of internationally famous Kuchipudi dancer Raja Radha.

*Deccan Chronicle* had highlighted Kanaka Raju's contributions to traditional Gussadi dance and carried

a report on him in December, 2018.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Kanaka Raju expressed happiness on being conferred with Padma Shri and said this came as a recognition to the hard work he did to keep alive this dance form. He thanked the state and Central governments for recognising his services as a traditional dance trainer.

Kanaka Raju has strived hard to make Gussadi dance unique in the past 50 years. He had spent long years in the old Adilabad district and in bordering Maharashtra. With his efforts, Gussadi dance has emerged as a popular and unique dance form not only among the Adivasi commu-



Kanaka Raju

nities but also non-tribals and foreign tourists.

Gussadi dance was shown prominently in the movie 'Baahubali'. Kanaka Raju is a popular dance masters in traditional Gussadi.

Lachu is no more but Kanaka Raju, 80, of

● **GUSSADI DANCE** was shown prominently in the movie 'Baahubali'. Kanaka Raju is a popular dance masters in traditional Gussadi.

Marlavai of Jainoor is popular even today as the Gussadi master among the Adivasis in the region where he has been training hundreds of Adivasi teenagers. With this, Adivasi festivals are rich with the preserved dances and traditions and the rituals they perform on special occasions.

Kanaka Raju had led a Gussadi cultural troupe to Delhi and performed before the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and

President Zail Singh. Kanaka Raju said that after performing the Gussadi dance before Indira Gandhi, he presented her a 'topi' (cap made of peacock feathers) and 'Rokal' (a wooden stick) to her as gift in 1981.

The then ITDA assistant project officer, the late Madavi Thukaram, an Adivasi, had shown special interest in tribal traditions and cultures and made serious efforts to preserve them for future generations.

Former Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan, former chief ministers Tarun Gogoi of Assam and Keshubhai Patel of Gujarat were posthumously conferred the Padma Bhushan, as also prominent Islamic scholar Kalbe Sadiq.

## BAL | PURASKAR

## Hemesh developed a wearable device that helps Alzheimer patients

## City teen relishes date with Modi

**T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC**  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 25

For 13-year-old Hemesh Chadalavada, a resident of Ranga Reddy district, Monday would have to be among the best days of his life. His dream of meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi came true, albeit virtually. He was one of the 32 awardees of the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar.

"It was very heartening to be in the presence of the PM. He spoke to us about how the youth of the coun-

try could make an impact on the world. He spoke to us for an hour. Since there were 32 people on the video call, he could not speak to us individually," Hemesh told *Deccan Chronicle*.

Hemesh won the award for developing a wearable device that helps those afflicted with Alzheimer's.

The device monitors the health of the patient such as wandering, pulse, and BP. If the patient starts wandering, or if the patient has abnormal health conditions, an alert is sent to the caregiver and the doctor.



Hemesh Chadalavada

The Prime Minister took to a prominent micro-blogging website to say, "I truly admire Hemesh

Chadalavada's sensitivity. Seeing his grandmother suffer from Alzheimer's, he decided to work on a 'Smart Wristband' that would help monitor aspects that relate to this disease. Congratulations on being conferred the Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2021!"

Inventing was something that he took a fancy to. "I took part in Ideate for India in January last year. I was awarded by Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. Then, in February, I took part in a competition named 'Eureka Junior' in

IIT Bombay," he said. Prior to this invention, he had come up with a device that could make car rides safer.

"I had taken up a small project in which I came up with a device that could be attached to the seat belt buckle of a car. If an accident takes place the device would alert the authorities," he said.

In the future, the young innovator plans on starting his own company which would come up with more such devices and innovations.

From Page 1

In the first phase, vaccines are being administered to healthcare personnel, including anganwadi and sanitation workers.

After inaugurating the Covid-19 vaccination in private hospitals of Jagtial district, Dr Sanjay, the TRS legislator from Jagtial constituency, took vaccination to encourage health personnel to take the vaccine without succumbing to fears. He will take the second dose after 28 days. A doctor by profession, the MLA had made it a point to treat

● **Corporate and small private hospitals got more than 100 employees vaccinated.**

Coronavirus patients during the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.

"After frontline warriors are administered the vaccine, it will be the turn of all sections of people," he remarked after taking the first dose of the vaccine.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Dr Sanjay said, "Being a doctor by profession and MLA, I have remained in contact with

several people every day. As a doctor, I enrolled my name in the Co-WIN app and took the vaccination along with other staff. People should come forward to take the vaccination without believing in any rumours," the MLA observed.

He maintained that whenever a medicine is taken, there is likelihood of some side effects on the body. That does not mean one stops taking the vaccine. "I strongly recommend all people to take their vaccination without any hesitation," he stated.



## OTHER STORIES

## LOVERS DIE BY SUICIDE IN NANDIPET

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, JAN. 25

In a tragic incident, a couple die by suicide in Nandipet mandal in the early hours of Monday over differences in their thoughts on marriage. According to the police, Prem, 22, of Ilapur village, fell in love with Sukanya, 21, of Khudvanpur village in the same mandal. The couple decided to get married but did not inform their parents.

Sukanya's parents, were, however, searching for marriage proposals for her. The couple belongs to Naikpodu (Scheduled Tribe) community. Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, the Nandipet police sub-inspector Shobhan Babu said that Prem wanted to marry after getting a job. Reportedly, Sukanya feared about her marriage with another person and committed suicide, he said.

Hearing about Sukanya's death, Prem had also resorted to extreme step by hanging himself in Ilapur village on Monday, SI explained. The couple's parents wept inconsolably as they would have agreed to their marriage if they had informed them. A pal of gloom descended in Khudvanpur and Ilapur villages on Monday. The Nandipet police rushed to the spot and shifted bodies for a post-mortem.

## YOUTH CHEATED OVER JOBS IN GULF COUNTRIES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, JAN. 25

Gulf agent in Nizamabad cheated around 40 youngsters of three districts. Allegedly, the agent duped them for ₹32 lakh and is absconding. Offering employment opportunity in Dubai, Bahrain and Afghanistan countries, he collected money from the youths. The victims reached collectorate in Nizamabad on Monday to complain against the Gulf agent.

According to victims, Pitla Avinash of Venkateshwara colony in Armour assured them jobs in Gulf countries and collected money ranging ₹40,000 to ₹1 lakh from each candidate. The agent provided fake visa and travel tickets cheated the unemployed youth, they said. "We urged the agent to return our money, but he refused to do so," they lamented.

Victims submitted a memorandum to district collector C. Narayana Reddy and additional DCP Aravind Babu in Nizamabad on Monday.

## THREE SUSPENDED FOR NEGLIGENCE IN DUTIES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
MANCHERIAL, JAN. 25

Collector Bharati Hollikeri, on Monday, issued suspension orders to Sanke Laxmi, sarpanch of Ponnaram village in Mandamarri mandal, Thummala Mahender Reddy, upa-sarpanch of Somanpalli village in Chennur mandal and A. Jagadeesh, of village secretary of Ankusham village in Bellampalli mandal on the charges of negligence in performing duties in taking up developmental works in their respective villages in the Mancherial district. It is learnt that collector took a serious note of negligence in duties by the elected public representatives of local bodies and the village secretary.

## SPEAKING OUT

## Warangal traders told to support cops to curb crime

Council to install 25,000 CCTVs, to be monitored in Commissionerate

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JAN. 25

The Warangal Police Commissioner called on the business community to make Warangal a crime-free city in the coming days. A plan has been drawn up to set up a Society for Warangal Security Council to make Warangal, the second-largest city in Telangana state, a crime-free city.

As part of this, the Warangal Police Commissioner, P. Promod Kumar, arranged a meeting with businessmen in the Warangal Tricity area at the Police Commissionerate office on Monday. Earlier in the meeting, Central in-charge DCP Pushpa briefed the traders on how peace and security in the city would be regulated by the Warangal Security Council, which will be set up with police and traders' participation.

The police commission-



Warangal commissioner of police P. Promod Kumar addressing the meeting in Warangal on Monday.

er later said plans to form the council were made last year, but the council's formation was delayed due to coronavirus pandemic. "The Warangal Commissionerate of Police is actively involved in traffic control, cybercrime control, especially crime detection and identification of

criminals, along with measures taken by the Warangal Police to provide security especially to women. The Warangal Security Council will be set up to ensure that the police need the people's co-operation to excel in their duties.

In particular, the council plans to install 25,000

CCTV cameras by the end of this year. The CCTV cameras to be set up in the coming days will be fully integrated and monitored by the Command Control in the Commissionerate office," he said.

In particular, the commissioner asked the businessmen of the city to

come forward voluntarily in raising the necessary funds for the council. In addition to the purchase of CCTV cameras, their maintenance can be awarded through a contract to an agency to oversee CCTV cameras' repair.

Promod said the need to install CCTV cameras has increased as more than 18 cases have been registered under the Warangal Police Commissionerate in recent times with evidence collected from the cameras.

Later, with the new Warangal Security Council's formation, businessmen and representatives of various organizations who attended the meeting volunteered to come forward and announce their donations.

ACPs Jitender Reddy, Girikumara and Ravinder Kumar along with inspectors from Tricity and IT core were present.

## TEKULATHANDA GPPS GIVES UNIFORMS TO KIDS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, JAN. 25

The students of Girijana Prathamika Patasala in Tekulathanda in Kamapalli mandal attended the school wearing masks.

The kids were called to the school to get school books, uniforms, belts, masks and notebooks. Headmaster S. Kishan said that the government decided to distribute the material to the wards. He said that the kids were asked to study the books in their school and ask the teachers for doubts through phones. "Though the distribution was delayed due to the Covid-19 situation, the kids showed interest in taking their textbooks. They felt that the academic year could be continued with it," he said. (eom)



CPM politburo member Brinda Karat is addressing adivasi Maha Pradarshana in Kothagudem on Monday.

cleared only one lakh acres for the purpose so far. "At the same time, forest officials are driving out adivasis from their land on advice from government. KCR is unleashing government machinery on adivasis to promote the interests of corporate forces," she alleged.

Brinda Karat said forest officials are taking away thousands of acres of land from the adivasi

in the name of Haritharam project launched by KCR. "KCR and Modi are brothers" when it came to changing their stands at every turn, she said.

The CPI(M) leader said the farmers' agitation was drawing the attention of world leaders. "The Modi government will have to bow before the farmers' will."

CPI-M state secretary T a m m i n e n i

Veerabhadram said the Forest Rights Act came into existence due to pressure from the two Communist parties. "Forest officials are filing cases against the farmers by alleging they were occupying 'podu' lands.

I am ready to go to jail to protect the rights of adivasis on the podu lands issue. KCR lied in the assembly on the forest act," he said.

Veerabhadram demanded that the government give DBR houses to all those who have applied for it.

A Maha Pradarshana was organised by adivasis from Market Yard to Collectorate in Kothagudem. A public meeting was held at which former MP M Babu Rao and CPI-M district secretary Annavarapu Kanakaiah spoke.

## BJP turns Mandir collection drive into mass contact plan

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, JAN. 25

The BJP is reaching out to all areas, including interior villages, as part of its present nationwide drive for voluntary donations for the Lord Ram Temple construction in Ayodhya under the auspices of the Ram Mandir Trust.

Notably, people irrespective of their political affiliation are donating funds.

The event has been turned into a mass contact programme for the party, especially in Telangana State. This would also help unify all segments of Hindus and make political capital

out of it, BJP leaders reckon. Leaders of other political parties are being careful not to criticise the collections after the Korutla MLA's controversial comments on voluntary donations for the Mandir drew sharp criticism.

Among other notables, Padwal Vijaysingh's children donated ₹1,100 for the purpose.

Leaders of other political parties are being careful not to criticise the collections after the Korutla MLA's controversial comments on voluntary donations for the

Mandir drew sharp criticism.

Among other notables, Padwal Vijaysingh's children donated ₹1,100 for the purpose at Emaikunta village in Indravelli mandal.

Many teams from the trust are seen moving about even in interior areas of the erstwhile Adilabad district, collecting funds.

A senior political leader said, "There is no need to oppose the construction of Ram Mandir. Collecting voluntary donations for a purpose is fine as long as the intention behind it is good. This is also a matter of religious sentiments."

## MLA rues he has lost his freedom in TRS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JAN. 25

Manakondur MLA and noted singer Rasamai Balakrishna made several interesting comments about how it is like to be an MLA with the Telangana Rastra Samithi (TRS) indirectly.

Expressing his inability to speak on certain issues, he said it is like working in a private company, and he needs to work within the company guidelines. If he expects a change, he will have to leave his company of employment.

Addressing a gathering at a private function in Mahbubabad, he said he is forced to keep his words and songs under check. Terming the situation unfortunate, he said that the silence of pens, poets and artists in the society is more dangerous than cancer. He commented that his freedom was lost and that he did not want to lead such a life. He said that he had

"I GREW up in an atmosphere which taught me to kill my hunger but not my self-respect. Nowadays, songs on rebellion too have become extinct," several people had distanced themselves from him after he became a TRS MLA.

lost his natural self as an MLA of the ruling party. "I grew up in an atmosphere which taught me to kill my hunger but not my self-respect. Nowadays, songs on rebellion too have become extinct," he said.

He said several people had distanced themselves from him after he became a TRS MLA because of this situation. He pointed out the artists were angry because he was unable to provide employment to the artists who wrote and sang songs during the agitation for a separate state.

These comments have garnered interest in the political circles.

## TS ahead of BJP ruled states: Palla

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JAN. 25

Telangana ranks third in the country with an economic growth rate of 14.3. The BJP ruled states are well behind us. The BJP is making false propaganda despite Telangana being the fastest-growing state in the country, said Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda graduates constituency MLC Palla Rajeshwar Reddy.

As part of his campaign to re-contest the seat, he was in Warangal on Monday and met morning walkers at O city ground and met the people.

Speaking at a meeting later in the day at a private function hall, he noted that Telangana was ahead of BJP-ruled states regarding per capita income. He lashed out at the BJP leaders for making comments that jobs were denied in the new state. "The Telangana government has provided 1 lakh 31,000 jobs. I challenge

the BJP leaders to prove that this calculation is wrong. We have increased salaries for all types of employees."

the BJP leaders to prove that this calculation is wrong. We have increased salaries for all types of employees," he said.

Minister for Panchayat Raj, Errabelli Dayakar Rao said that the BJP government at the Center was discriminating against Telangana. He said that projects in Telangana were not given national status.

Warangal East MLA Nannapuneni Narendar asked party workers to create awareness among the people regarding the development and welfare works taken up by the TRS government in the last six years, which were not made possible in the last 60 years.

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TS govt did not ask people to donate money for renovation of Yadadri temple

## RSS more vicious than terrorist groups, says Kantham

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, JAN. 25

The chairman of the Telangana State People's organisations Joint Action Committee, Gajjala Kantham, made some sensational comments on Monday against the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological inspiration for the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Speaking to the media here, Kantham alleged that RSS is more dangerous than terrorist groups and demanded that the government ban the organisation. "The Supreme Court has appointed a committee for construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. The

committee will look after the construction works. What is the need for the BJP to interfere in such matters and collect funds? Is the RSS exerting pressure on the BJP to take up the construction works," he asked.

"When the BJP is collecting donations for the Ram Mandir, why did it not do the same for the Yadadri temple in Telangana? The state government did not ask people to donate money for renovation of the Yadadri temple. Why is the BJP collecting donations from the public for the Ram Mandir," he wanted to know.

"In the name of Lord Rama, the BJP leaders are



Chief of the 'Telangana State People's organisations Joint Action Committee', Gajjala Kantham speaking in a press conference in Karimnagar on Monday. —BY ARRANGEMENT

trying to pocket money. They are doing this as a business and spoiling the name of God. Why is the BJP not taking the name of Sita Devi along with the

lord," he asked.

If the central government is keen on construction of the Ram Mandir, it should sanction Rs.1,000 crore immediately, Kantham pro-

posed. "Are the people from SC, ST, BC communities not Hindus? In the name of religion, the BJP is trying to grab votes from the faithful. In the process, the party and its leaders are dividing the people. The BJP is encouraging communalism. There is no difference between the RSS, the BJP and the terrorists," he said. He asked: "Why is the central government not doing justice to farmers. When farmers are demanding that the government fix minimum support price for their produce, why is the BJP government not resolving their issues?"

He alleged that there is a threat from the RSS,

Narendra Modi and Amit Shah to the people of the SC, ST, BC and minority communities and to democracy. "They are trying to create a wedge between those who support BR Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotibha Phule and killing democracy in the country," he alleged.

Kantham said that in order to save democracy, there is the need to bring all caste and communities under one platform to unitedly fight against the Modi government. Several meetings will be held in all districts in the coming days, as also a massive public meeting in Karimnagar on May 29 and in Hyderabad later, he said.



## SHORT TAKES

COVID-19 CASES  
SHOW NO SIGNS OF  
LET UP IN KERALAGILVESTER ASSARY | DC  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
JAN. 25

With 72,891 total active cases, 6,000 plus cases reported during the last five consecutive days and a test positivity rate of 12.48 per cent, the Covid-19 situation in Kerala continues to be worrying.

The state is recording the highest number of daily cases in the country at the moment. Ernakulam and Kozhikode districts have reported more than 1,000 cases daily over the past few days.

If the situation continues in this manner, various affected districts might face shortage of ventilators and ICU beds. While schools (higher classes), colleges, cinema, theatres, bars have all started functioning, there is laxity in enforcing safety protocols.

The effective break-the-chain campaign that was witnessed in the state for many months, too has slackened now. Though a majority of people are wearing masks in public places, there is crowding in malls, shopping centres, social gatherings including marriages and parks which is a cause of concern.

But the government sources maintain that the situation is under control. Dr Mohammad Asheel who is part of the government's high level Covid management team, said the current cases in the state were on the expected lines. Unlike many other states, Kerala had delayed the peak of Covid-19 pandemic, due to stringent restrictions and effective infection control measures. This is one of the reasons that the state is continuing to report a high number of cases.

STATES TOLD TO  
CHECK 'VACCINE  
RUMOURS'DC CORRESPONDENT  
with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 25

The Centre has asked state governments to "check vaccine rumours" and take penal actions against those indulging in spreading falsehood over the efficacy and safety of the Covid-19 vaccines.

"Such kind of rumour mongering, particularly by vested interests, can create unwarranted doubts among people at large, and there is, therefore, a need to check all kinds of unfounded scare-mongering relating to the safety and immunogenicity of the vaccines," Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla has told the state governments. He added penal action may be taken against the persons or organisations found to have been indulged in rumour mongering under the relevant provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

On Monday, the 10th day of the vaccination drive, close to 3.35 lakh healthcare and frontline workers got inoculated. So far more than 19.5 lakh people have got the jab. There were 13,203 fresh cases of Covid-19 detected in the last 24 hours and 131 deaths were reported.

As per Union health ministry, India's active caseload has fallen to 1.84 lakh and the share of active cases in the total positive cases has further shrunk to 1.73%. "A bulk of the active cases are contributed by merely two states, Kerala and Maharashtra alone account for more than 64.71% of the total active cases. Kerala accounts for 39.7% of the active cases whereas Maharashtra contributes 25% of the total active cases," the health ministry said.

Mahavir Chakra for  
Col. Santosh Babu

Babu led his troops against the Chinese attack in Galwan

PAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 25

Col Bikumalla Santosh Babu, Commanding Officer of 16 Bihar who lost his life while fighting Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley on June 15, has been awarded the second-highest wartime gallantry medal Mahavir Chakra posthumously on the Republic Day.

India had lost 20 troops in the fiercest clash with the Chinese who also suffered casualties in the Galwan Valley.

Five soldiers have been given third highest war time gallantry award Vir Chakra for their bravery in the Galwan Valley clash, out of which four are posthumously. 14 have been awarded Sena Medal (Gallantry) posthumously for their bravery against Chinese troops.

Those who have been awarded Vir Chakra posthumously are Naib Subedar Nuduram Soren (16 Bihar), Hav K. Palani (81 Field Regiment), N.K. Deepak Singh (16 Bihar) and Sep Gurtej Singh (3 Punjab). Hav Tejinder Singh from three Medium Regiment has also been awarded with Vir Chakra

PREZ APPROVES JEEVAN RAKSHA  
PADAK AWARDS FOR 40 RESCUERS

New Delhi, Jan. 25: President Ram Nath Kovind has approved the conferring of Jeevan Raksha Padak awards for meritorious acts of saving lives to 40 people, including a Kerala man who will be honoured with the Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak posthumously.

According to a Home Ministry statement, Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak will be conferred to eight persons and Jeevan Raksha Padak to 31 others.

Jeevan Raksha Padak series of awards are given in three categories namely Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak, Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak and Jeevan Raksha Padak. Muhammed Muhsin (posthumous) of Kerala has been named for the Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak 2020.

Persons from all walks of life are eligible for these awards, given for meritorious acts of human nature in saving the life of a person, the statement said. — PTI

for his bravery during Galwan Valley clash with PLA soldiers.

Colonel Babu was deployed in Galwan Valley (Eastern Ladakh) during Operation Snow Leopard on June 15 last year and was tasked to establish an Observation Post in face of the enemy.

"Organising and briefing his troops about the situation with a sound plan, he successfully exe-

cuted the task," said the citation. While holding the position his column faced stiff resistance from the adversary who attacked using lethal and sharp weapons along with heavy stone pelting from adjoining heights.

"Undaunted by the violent and aggressive action by overwhelming strength of enemy soldiers, the officer in true spirit of service before self, continued

to resist the enemy's attempt to pushback Indian troops," it said.

"Despite being grievously injured, Colonel Babu led from the front with absolute command and control despite hostile conditions to deter the vicious enemy attack at his position. In the skirmish that broke out and ensuing hand to hand combat with enemy soldiers, he valiantly resisted the enemy attack till his last breath, inspiring and motivating his troops to hold ground," it said.

Havildar Palani who has been awarded Vir Chakra (posthumous) was also deployed in Galwan Valley.

On night of 15 June 2020, he was part of patrol of 16 Bihar tasked to establish an Observation Post. In a close hand to hand fight he fought valiantly and saved his subordinates from the aggressive action of the enemy soldiers.

However, suddenly, the adversaries outnumbered and encircled him. With utter disregard to his personal safety, he stood bravely and tried to defend his comrades even when the enemy attacked him with sharp weapon injuring him seriously."

India, China to push for  
an early disengagementDC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 25

In what seems to be a breakthrough, India and China on Sunday during Corps Commanders level talks "agreed to push for an early disengagement of the frontline troops" in the Eastern Ladakh, according to a joint statement issued by Indian Army and PLA.

Both sides agreed to "hold the 10th round of the Corps Commander level meeting at an early date to jointly advance de-escalation."

India and China on Sunday held the 9th round of Corps Commanders level talks to resolve the military stand-off in the Eastern Ladakh. The meeting which started at around 11 am in Moldo on the Chinese side of LAC went for nearly 16 hours till 2:30 am.

"The two sides had a candid and in-depth exchange of views on disengagement along the Line of Actual Control in the Western Sector of China-India border areas," said the joint statement.

It said that the two sides agreed that this round of meeting was positive, practical and constructive, which further enhanced mutual trust and understanding.

"The two sides agreed to push for an early disengagement of the frontline troops. They also agreed to follow the important consensus of their state leaders, maintain the good momentum of dialogue and negotiation, and hold the 10th round of the Corps Commander Level Meeting at an early date to jointly advance de-escalation," it said.

The two sides also agreed to continue their effective efforts in ensuring the restraint of the frontline troops, stabilise and control the situation along the LAC in the Western Sector of the China-India border, and jointly maintain peace and tranquility.

The Indian delegation was led by 14 Corps commander Lt-General PGK Menon and also included a joint secretary from the external affairs ministry.

India and China have been involved in a military stand-off in Eastern Ladakh from last nine months where each side has deployed around 50,000 troops along with tanks, and artillery.

Despite temperatures dipping to minus 30 degrees Celsius in the region, both India and China have maintained troops at forward posts

this winter at LAC in Ladakh.

Earlier in June and then in July, India and China had agreed to mutually move back from Galwan Valley, Gogra Post, Hot Springs and Pangong Tso.

However, it was only in Galwan Valley that both troops had moved back to some extent.

In Pangong Tso, the Chinese army had refused to move back from the ridgelines of Finger 4 and whole of Finger 5 to 8 area which it had illegally occupied in May. In Gogra Post and Hot Springs also there was no clarity on China disengagement. Besides, in Depsang Plains Chinese troops have been preventing Indian army from patrolling.

China had been pushing India to vacate strategic heights which Indian army had occupied on the South bank of Pangong Tso in a surprise action in August.

This gives Indian Army a strategic advantage and choked Chinese army movement in the sector. China has been mainly interested in getting India vacated these strategic heights.

However, India's stand was that it will discuss disengagement of the whole Eastern Ladakh and not just few points.

## Pawar slams Modi over farmers' stir, asks do they belong to Pak?

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC  
MUMBAI, JAN. 25

NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Monday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of turning a blind eye towards the farmers' protest at Delhi asking "Do they belong to Pakistan?" He also slammed Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari for not meeting the farmer's delegation in Mumbai.

Addressing a huge rally held at the historic Azad Maidan on Monday, Pawar said, "For the past 60 days, the farmers from UP, Haryana and Punjab are protesting near Delhi braving the cold, the sun and rains. But has the PM enquired about them? They (Centre) say they are only Punjab farmers. Are they from Pakistan? They are our own."

Pawar also lashed out at Koshyari saying Maharashtra has never seen such a Governor before. "He has the time to meet Kangana (Ranaut), but not the farmers. It was the moral duty of the Governor to meet the farmers, who were seeking to submit a memorandum to him against the farm laws. But he did not even show the courtesy to remain in Raj Bhavan," he said.

However, the Governor's office clarified that the farmer leaders had been informed that Koshyari, having the additional charge of Goa Governor, had a pre-arranged programme to address the neighbouring state's Assembly and that the principal secretary would receive the delegation.



Farmers sit on tractors during their ongoing agitation against the Centre's farm reform laws, at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Monday. Thousands of farmers will enter the national capital on their tractors under heavy security on Republic Day, even as they announced a foot march to Parliament on February 1, when the annual Budget is presented, to press for their demands including a repeal of the three new agriculture laws. — PTI

DIDI WARNS OF  
BEFITTING REPLY  
TO HER 'INSULT'RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, JAN. 25

Branding the 'Jai Shree Ram' sloganeers as "religious fanatics" for "teasing" her in presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Centre's Parakram Diwas celebration in Victoria Memorial, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday warned the BJP of her retaliation with a "befitting reply" to her "insult" in the Assembly election.

The Trinamul Congress supremo also made it clear that she would prefer to "slit her throat" by herself instead of bowing down to the saffron party. At Purshura in Hooghly she alleged, "Netaji belongs to all. When I attended the event on him, some religious fanatics and illiterate teased me in front of the PM. How dare they? They do not know me."

Warning the BJP of her retaliation, the angry CM said, "I will pay them back with a befitting reply through politics instead of guns. At the event I expressed gratitude on my part. Had they chanted Netaji, I would have given them a salute. Instead, they insulted Bengal and Netaji. Earlier they disrespected Rabindranath Tagore and Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar also."

She claimed, "As long as I live, I will fight keeping my head high. If I have to bow down, I will do it in front of the mass. Rather than bowing down to the BJP, it is better for me to slit my throat."

Describing the TMC turncoats as "thieves", Banerjee argued that they defected to the BJP to stash their ill-gotten wealth because they knew her party would not give them tickets this time to contest the polls.

HC's skin-to-skin  
verdict: Maha govt  
urged to file appealSHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, JAN. 25

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) asked the Maharashtra government on Monday to file an urgent appeal against a recent Bombay High Court judgment that said an act cannot be termed as sexual assault if there is no "skin-to-skin" contact.

A single Judge bench of the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court in its judgment passed on January 19, ruled that groping without 'skin-to-skin' contact is not sexual assault as defined under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (PoCSO) Act. According to this judgment an act cannot be termed as sexual assault if there is no "skin-to-skin contact".

The court opined that touching a minor's chest would not amount to sexual assault unless the accused removed the top worn by the child or slid their hand

within the child's garment.

Following this judgment Priyanka Kanoongo the chairperson of the NCPCR wrote a letter to the state chief secretary. In her letter she has asked the government of Maharashtra to file an urgent appeal against the HC order. She has stated that the words "skin-to-skin touch with sexual intention without penetration" mentioned in the judgement also need to be reviewed and the state should take note of this as it seems to be derogatory to the minor victim in the case.

The judgement has drawn the ire of child rights bodies and activists across the country.

Kanoongo in her letter has also stated that considering the seriousness of the issue, the commission being the monitoring body under section 44 of the POCSO Act, 2012 requests you to take necessary steps in the matter and file an urgent appeal against the aforesaid impugned judgment of the High Court.

India's 1st snow igloo  
café comes up in J&KYUSUF JAMEEL | DC  
SRINAGAR, JAN. 25

India's first snow igloo café has come up at Gulmarg, one of the Asia's premier ski resorts situated in the Pir Panjal Range of the Himalayas at an altitude of 2,650 m (8,694 ft) and about 56 km from capital Srinagar.

Set up by a local group of hotels on the lawns of its property in the cup-shaped valley, the igloo is 22 feet wide and 12.5 feet high from inside and can accommodate 16 people at any given time for lunch or dinner or just to have coffee or tea. The owners claim the café can make to the Limca book of records for it being Asia's biggest igloo.

An igloo, also known as a snow house or snow hut, is a type of shelter built of 'suitable' snow. Gulmarg like many other parts of the Valley received several spells of major snowfall in recent weeks and has recorded below-freezing temperatures constantly since mid-November last.

Waseem Shah, managing director of Kolahoi Green Group of Hotels and Resorts, said that the idea to set up Kashmir's very first igloo café crept into his mind after the family built a small (8x7 feet) igloo at its Srinagar home. "The idea of building an igloo café

emerged after we built one at my home during the snow season in Srinagar. It garnered a lot of attention and we all got excited. Soon thereafter we decided to build one outside our Gulmarg hotel," he said. He added, "Its outside dimensions are 26 feet wide and 15 feet high. And we are already in talks of getting it recorded as Asia's biggest igloo".

Shah said, "The concept of a snow restaurant is very new to India although it has been tested successfully in Finland, Canada, Switzerland and some other countries. We wanted to do something dramatic for our guests and patrons and hence we came up with an idea of a snow restaurant". The task was accomplished with a team of 20 members working in two shifts in 15 days.

Snow igloos are normally built in a catenary curve, a shape more closely resembling a paraboloid and are necessarily not spherical. This is done so that the stresses of snow, as it ages and compresses, do not cause to buckle because in an inverted paraboloid or catenoid the pressures are nearer to being exclusively compressive. "We threw it open for the public today (Monday). The response has been mashaAllah (what God has willed) tremendous," he added.

## HIGHEST HONOURS

## Archaeologist Lal known for his 'pillar base theory' at Babri gets Padma Vibhushan

## 16 get Padma award posthumously this year

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 25

The government on Monday announced the Padma Awards on the eve of the Republic Day. This year, the President has approved 119 Padma Awards. The list comprises 7 Padma Vibhushan, 10 Padma Bhushan and 102 Padma Shri Awards. As many as 29 of these awardees are women and the list also includes 10 persons from the category of Foreigners, NRI, PIO and OCI while were 16 are Posthumous awardees and one transgender awardee.

The prominent awardees this year include former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe and singer S.P.



S.P. Balasubramaniam

Shinzo Abe

Balasubramaniam among the Padma Vibhushan recipients.

Noted archaeologist B.B. Lal has also been given the Padma Vibhushan. He had floated the "pillar base theory" at the disputed Babri Masjid site claiming that these pillars were identi-

fied as those of temples. Padma Bhushan was given posthumously to former Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, former Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan, former Gujarat CM Keshubhai Patel, Former Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan, religious

leader Kalbe Sadiq and former Principal Secretary to PM. Nripendra Mishra have also been awarded the Padma Bhushan.

Former Governor of Goa Mridula Sinha has been awarded Padma Shri posthumously. 1971 Bangladesh war vet-

eran Lt Col Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahid and Bangladeshi artist Sanjida Khatun were awarded Padma Shri.

Other Pasma Shri awardees include P. Anitha for sports, Rajni Bector for Trade and Industry, Peter Brook from United Kingdom for Art, Nicholas



Sumitra Mahajan

Ram Vilas Paswan

Tarun Gogoi

Sindhutai Sapkal

Kazanas from Greece for Literature and Education. The list of Padma Shri awardees has a maximum of 102 people both from India and abroad which also includes some posthumously in different fields like medicine, arts, culture.



SHORT TAKES

19 CHARRED BODIES FOUND IN MEXICO

Ciudad Victoria, Mexico, Jan. 25: At least 19 charred corpses have been discovered in Mexico near the US border in an area where drug cartels often clash, the Tamaulipas state prosecutor's office said.

Police on Saturday found two burnt-out vehicles containing human remains on a country road near the town of Camargo. Preliminary investigations suggested the victims had been shot, then their bodies set alight. Because no bullet casings were found at the scene, police said it was possible the victims were killed in a different location.

Autopsies are underway, but identification of the corpses will be complicated due to their condition.

A prosecutor's office official said that an investigation has been launched to determine whether the victims were undocumented migrants.

AID GROUPS WANT YEMEN REBELS' 'TERROR' LIST OUT

Dubai, Jan. 25: Twenty-two aid groups working in Yemen urged US President Joe Biden on Sunday to remove the war-torn country's Huthi rebels from a terror blacklist, saying it could put millions of lives at risk. The Trump administration's move against the insurgents had come into effect the day before Biden took office, to resounding criticism from experts, the United Nations and aid groups.

"This designation comes at a time when famine is a very real threat to a country devastated by six years of conflict, and it must be revoked immediately," said a joint statement Sunday by 22 groups.

"Any disruption to lifesaving aid operations and commercial imports of food, fuel, medicine and other essential goods will put millions of lives at risk."

The Iran-allied Huthis seized the capital Sanaa and much of northern Yemen in 2014, sparking a Saudi-led intervention the following year.

SURROUNDED, U.S. POLICE CAR HITS CROWD

Washington, Jan. 25: A police officer surrounded by a crowd in the US state of Washington struck and injured at least one person with his car as he sought to drive away, authorities said.

About 100 people and several cars were blocking an intersection, reportedly for an illegal car rally, on Saturday night in downtown Tacoma when police were called to the area.

After an officer in his car tried to clear the area, a crowd began hitting the vehicle's body and windows, Tacoma police said in a statement.

"While trying to extricate himself from an unsafe position, the officer drove forward, striking one individual and may have impacted others," the police said, adding that the person was taken to a hospital in unknown condition. Tacoma resident Sarah Jones told CBS she witnessed the scene that included a "mountain of people" being hit.

"I don't know if he panicked or what but his car was surrounded," Jones said.

GREECE, TURKEY IN FIRST CRISIS TALK SINCE 2016

Istanbul, Jan. 25: Greece and Turkey bowed to EU and NATO pressure on Monday and opened the first direct talks in nearly five years over their explosive eastern Mediterranean standoff.

The Istanbul meeting is not expected to make major headway after the two NATO neighbours' gunboats collided in August as their dispute over energy and borders threatened to spiral out of control.

But it adds to the positive tone Turkish President Recep Erdogan has been setting as he tries to repair damaged relations with Europe in the face of a potentially more hostile US administration under President Joe Biden.

And it could lay the groundwork for the eventual delineation of one of the world's most recently discovered regions of proven natural gas reserves. Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias said over the weekend that Athens was entering the so-called exploratory talks "in good faith" — a comment echoed by Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu.

GOP opposes Don impeachment trial

Washington, Jan. 25: As the House prepares to bring the impeachment charge against Donald Trump to the Senate for trial, a growing number of Republican senators say they are opposed to the proceeding, dimming the chances that former president will be convicted on the charge that he incited a siege of the US Capitol. House Democrats will carry the sole impeachment charge of "incitement of insurrection" across the Capitol late Monday evening, a rare and ceremonial walk to the Senate by the prosecutors who will argue their case.

They are hoping that strong Republican denunciations of Trump after the Jan. 6 riot will translate into a conviction and a separate vote to bar Trump from holding office again. But instead, GOP passions appear to have cooled since the insurrection. Now that Trump's presidency is over, Republican senators who will serve as jurors in the trial are rallying to his legal defense, as they did during his first impeachment trial last year. "I think the trial is stupid. I think it's counterproductive," said Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla..

He said that "the first chance I get to vote to end this trial, I'll do it" because he believes it would be bad for the country and further inflame partisan divisions. Trump is the first former president to face impeachment trial, and it will test his grip on the Republican Party as well as the legacy of his tenure, which came to a close as a mob of loyal supporters headed his rally cry by storming the Capitol and trying to

BIDEN TO DROP TRANSGENDER BAN IN MILITARY

Washington, Jan. 25: President Joe Biden is set to issue an executive order to reverse a Pentagon policy that largely bars transgender individuals from joining the military, dumping a ban ordered by President Donald Trump in a tweet during his first year in office.

Biden has been widely expected to overturn the Trump policy in his early days in office. The White House could announce the move as early as Monday, according to the person briefed on the decision who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the order. The move to reverse the policy has the support of Biden's newly confirmed defence secretary, retired Army Gen. Lloyd Austin, who spoke of the need to overturn it during his Senate confirmation hearing last week. — AP

overturn Joe Biden's election. The proceedings will also force Democrats, who have a full sweep of party control of the White House and Congress, to balance their promise to hold the former president accountable while also rushing to deliver on Biden's priorities.

Arguments in the Senate trial will begin the week of Feb. 8. Leaders in both parties agreed to the short delay to give Trump's team and House prosecutors time to prepare and the Senate to confirm some of Biden's Cabinet nominees. — AP

'Made in America' goods get US nod

Washington, Jan. 25: US President Joe Biden will sign a series of executive orders on Monday to promote "Made in America" products and strengthen supply chains, senior officials said, asserting that the new administration remains committed to working with partners and allies to modernise international trade rules.

Prominent among the executive orders include a strict enforcement of procuring products made inside the country by federal agencies. This is very significant given that contracting alone accounts for nearly \$600 billion in federal spending. Biden is taking action to reset the US government's longstanding approach to domestic preferences to create an approach that will remain durable for years to come and grow quality, union jobs, according to a senior administration official. It is long overdue that the US government utilises the full force of current domestic preferences to support America's workers and businesses, strengthening the economy, workers, and communities across the country, the official said. — PTI

PIOs APPOINTED TO KEY ENERGY DEPT POSTINGS

Washington, Jan. 25: The Biden Administration has appointed four Indian-Americans to senior positions in the crucial Department of Energy. The administration appointed Tarak Shah as the Chief of Staff, making him first Indian-American to serve in that position.

Tanya Das has been named as the Chief of Staff to the Office of Science,

Narayan Subramanian will occupy the position of Legal Adviser in the Office of General Counsel, and Shuchi Talati has been appointed as Chief of Staff in the Office of Fossil Energy. "These talented and diverse public servants will deliver on President Biden's goal to tackle the climate crisis and build an equitable clean energy future," said Shah as the Department of Energy announced 19 senior-level appointments. — PTI

Kamala moves in to Blair House

Washington, Jan. 25: US Vice President Kamala Harris is temporarily staying at the historic Blair House here as her official residence is undergoing repairs, her spokesperson said. Across the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue, Blair House is the official guest house of the US President. The official residence of the vice president is located within the Naval Observatory Complex and is about seven kilometres northwest of the White House.

The vice president's chief spokesperson, Symone Sanders, told reporters here on Saturday that Harris moved in on Thursday. Born to a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, 56-year-old Harris made history on January 20 when she was

sworn in as the first female, first PoC and first Asian-American US vice-president. They (Harris and husband Doug Emhoff) are living there while repairs are done at the vice president's residence at the Naval Observatory," Sanders said.

The Washington Post reported Sunday that crews are working on new liners for the chimneys, among other changes in the 33-room official residence of the vice president, which was built in 1893. Blair House, built as a private house in 1824, is the guest house of the US President since 1942, where visiting foreign dignitaries normally stay. In recent years, PM Narendra Modi and several other Indian leaders have stayed in this historic building. — PTI

US to re-impose travel ban, says White House official

Curbs applicable on non-US citizens who went to UK, Brazil, most of EU

Washington, Jan. 25: US President Joe Biden will re-impose a Covid-19 travel ban on most non-US citizens who have been in Britain, Brazil, Ireland and much of Europe, a White House official said Sunday, as the new administration ramps up its pandemic response.

Biden will also on Monday extend the ban to travelers who have recently been to South Africa amid warnings that new, more transmissible coronavirus variants are already establishing themselves in the United States, the official said, confirming US media reports.

The new president last week tightened mask wearing rules and ordered quarantine for people flying into the United States, as he seeks to tackle the country's worsening coronavirus crisis.

Biden has said that the Covid-19 death toll would likely rise from 420,000 to half a million next month -- and that drastic action was needed.

"We're in a national emergency. It's time we treated it like one," he said on Thursday.

In his last days in office, Donald Trump announced that a Covid-19 ban on travelers arriving from much of Europe and Brazil would be lifted -- but the Biden administration immediately said it would reverse the order due to come into effect on January 26.

Trump had announced an initial ban on January 31, 2020 on non-American travelers entering from China to try to stop the spread of the coronavirus. The ban was extended to European countries on March 14 as the pandemic entered full force.

More than 25 million Covid-19 cases have been recorded in the US since the pandemic began, according to the Johns Hopkins University tally on Sunday.

The milestone was reached only five days after the US, the world's wealthiest and hardest-hit nation, recorded 400,000 deaths from the disease.

Biden has made fighting the coronavirus a priority and is pushing for Congress to approve a \$1.9-trillion relief package that would include billions of dollars to boost vaccination rates. The president, who was inaugurated on January 20, has said he wants 100 million people vaccinated within his first 100 days in office, and he has called for Americans to wear masks for 100 days. — AFP



A burnt out Covid-19 testing centre is seen after being set on fire in Urk, 80 kilometres (50 miles) northeast of Amsterdam. Dutch police have clashed with protesters demonstrating against the country's lockdown in the capital Amsterdam and the southern city of Eindhoven. — AP

Dutch protesters, cops clash

● IN THE Netherlands, a Covid-19 testing centre was burned in one village, while police used tear gas against demonstrators in Eindhoven, where cars were burned and businesses looted, and deployed water cannon and dogs in central Amsterdam.

try had topped 25 million cases, remaining the hardest-hit after almost 99 million infections and over 2.1 million deaths worldwide.

In the US, Johns Hopkins University said the coun-

was burned in one village, while police used tear gas against demonstrators in Eindhoven, where cars were burned and businesses looted, and deployed water cannon and dogs in central Amsterdam.

"The fire in a screening centre in Urk goes beyond all limits," Health Minister Hugo de Jonge said.

The clashes came on the first day of a new 9 pm to 4:30 am curfew, the country's first since World War II.

In Denmark, two men were arrested on Saturday

night for burning an effigy of Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen at an anti-restriction protest, while thousands marched against virus measures in Spanish capital Madrid.

France imposed a requirement for a negative PCR test for arrivals by sea and air from European Union neighbours — a measure required for non-EU arrivals since mid-January.

The rule does not apply to those travelling by land, including thousands of cross-border workers. — AFP

Israel targets flights, religious scofflaws as infections rage

Jerusalem, Jan. 24: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday said Israel will be closing its international airport to nearly all flights, while Israeli police clashed with ultra-Orthodox protesters in several major cities and the government raced to bring a raging Coronavirus outbreak under control. The entry of highly contagious variants of the virus, coupled with poor enforcement of safety ru-

les in ultra-Orthodox communities, has contributed to one of the world's highest rates of infections.

It also has threatened to undercut Israel's highly successful campaign to vaccinate its population against the virus. In just a month, Israel has vaccinated over a quarter of its 9.2 million people.

At the same time, the virus continues to race through the country, with authorities confirming an

average of over 8,000 new cases a day. Late Sunday, the Israeli Cabinet approved a tight closure on nearly all incoming and outgoing air traffic.

The government said it would make exceptions for a small number of humanitarian cases — such as funerals and medical patients — and cargo flights. "We are closing the skies hermetically, except for really rare exception," Netanyahu said. — AP

B'desh gets vaccines from India

Dhaka, Jan. 25: Bangladesh on Monday received the first consignment of the 5 million doses of Covishield vaccines from India under a procurement agreement, four days after New Delhi gifted 2 million doses of the vaccine to Dhaka.

A special Air India flight carrying the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine co-manufactured by Serum Institute of India reached the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport earlier in the day to be initially stored at a warehouse of private Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd ahead of their planned coun-

trywide distribution.

Bangladesh has so far purchased 30 million doses from the Serum Institute of India through private Beximco pharmaceuticals under a tripartite agreement. The vaccines are being transported to Beximco warehouses in Tongi on the outskirts of the capital Dhaka in special freezer vans, Beximco Pharma's managing director Nazmul Hassan told reporters after receiving the consignment at the airport.

Health officials said the government experts would check the vaccine samples to see if any temperature fluctuation affected

their efficacy and the expiry dates.

"Beximco Pharma will send the vaccines to civil surgeons at all of the 64 (administrative) districts after obtaining certificates from the Drug Administration," a health ministry statement said.

Bangladesh is expected to get 50 lakh of vaccines every month from India in the coming months, Health minister Zahid Maleque said earlier.

Bangladesh will start the nationwide Covid-19 vaccine distribution from early February. Officials say they have formed 7,344 distribution teams com-

prising six health workers while about 42,000 health workers are being trained. Bangladesh has reported more than 532,000 Coronavirus cases so far with over 8,000 deaths.

India is one of the world's biggest drugmakers and an increasing number of countries have already approached it for procuring the Coronavirus vaccines. In the last few days, India has sent consignments of domestically produced Coronavirus vaccines under grant assistance to Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Mauritius and Seychelles. — PTI

RELIGIOUS | CORRIDOR

Majestic architecture will have a distinct Arabian look

Dubai Hindu temple to open Diwali '22

Dubai, Jan. 25: A majestic new Hindu temple with a distinct Arabian look is expected to open its doors for worshippers in Dubai by October next year during Diwali, according to media reports here.

The new temple is being constructed adjacent to the Guru Nanak Darbar in Jebel Ali, making the locality a multi-religious corridor in the city. The temple is an extension of the Sindhvi Guru Darbar Temple in Souq Baniyas, Bur Dubai, one of the oldest Hindu temples in the

United Arab Emirates, open since the 1950s.

According to a report in *Khaleej Times*, the 25,000 sq ft temple will be built at an estimated cost of Dirham 75 million (Rs 1,48,86,24,396). Raju Shroff, an Indian businessman and one of the trustees of the Sindhvi Guru Darbar Temple, announced on Sunday that the construction of the temple is underway, and the basement of the structure is complete.

"Piling, shoring and casting of basements and two are complete as of

now. We are on track to open during Diwali 2022," *Khaleej Times* quoted Shroff as saying. The temple's foundation-stone-laying ceremony took place in February last year.

"Once complete, there will be several churches, the Sikh Guru Nanak Darbar, and a Hindu temple in the same location," Shroff said. The temple will be home to 11 Hindu deities, he added. The temple's architecture will have a distinct Arabian look.

"We want to give back to the local economy and this

our way to repay the gratitude we have for the UAE leadership for celebrating religious tolerance," Shroff said. He added that worshippers could use the spacious 4,000 sq ft banquet hall for cultural events, religious gatherings and community get-togethers.

The temple intends to display a subtle blend of contemporary Hindu and Arabic elements, *Gulf News* said. The temple is an east-facing structure, designed as per norms of Indian Temple Archite-

cture and Hindu Vastu Shastra.

The temple structure includes two basements, a ground floor and first floor. The total height of the temple is 24 metres, it said. The columns on the façade and interior take inspiration from the traditional columns of the Somnath Temple in Gujarat. The main dome is inspired by the Nagara style of Hindu temple architecture found predominantly in north India.

— PTI



## DECCAN Chronicle

26 JANUARY 2021

### A time to introspect, and tackle crises with vision

This Republic Day, which comes at the end of our *annus horribilis*, the miserable year of 2020 during which the world was devastated due to the novel Coronavirus pandemic, has to be one in which we must summon fortitude and determination in the face of great adversity, rather than prepare for the celebration of any achievement, for there are none.

The aftershocks of China's continuing invasion of Indian territory in Ladakh have still to be dealt with. This invasion has shown that our guard was down — diplomatically and militarily. The great farmers' uprising — the biggest since Independence — to protest against three agricultural laws is still ongoing.

If steps are not taken on an emergency basis, this can spin out of control. We urge the government to be practical for the sake of the country and show flexibility and compassion, rather than rigidity or exhibit the coercive powers of the State.

The world has fast-tracked the established procedures of science to deal with Covid-19 on an emergency basis and vaccines have at last become available. In India, we are manufacturing an international brand as well as a home-made one.

These bring hope, but also uncertainties. It is too early to judge the outcomes of vaccination being administered under emergency protocols.

The best hope is that the available vaccines will at least not cause damage to the human body even if they don't prove wholly efficacious or effective against the virus. After millions of deaths the world over and in India more than one lakh, we also don't know whether or not to expect a second wave.

The role of the government in India has raised many questions. Proactively, the government imposed the world's most severe lockdown to contain the virus' transmission and prayed for the rest. Not placing faith in science at the start, it condoned the transfer of blame for the virus on a communal basis to the country's largest minority. An already fragile social life was rendered more vulnerable. Due to some wholly irrational steps that were taken, the already battered economy now stands devastated. The rate of growth is at minus seven per cent, according to official data.

The hard to digest aspect of the government's response has been its stubborn refusal to release funds, except on the most perfunctory basis, to the vulnerable sections of the people and the economy in order to kickstart economic activity. This was the opposite of what other major nations did.

Ironically, in the pandemic period, the assets of billionaires in India have gone up 35 per cent, according to a recent Oxfam report, which refers to Covid-19 as the "inequality virus". At the same time, roughly 100 million Indians found themselves out of work. These were the seasonal workforce or workers in the informal sector, which is the biggest generator of employment outside agriculture.

The Budget is around the corner and the finance minister is on test. Will she take effective steps to ameliorate the conditions of the majority of the population or pay lip service to them while working principally for those who were the beneficiaries of the pandemic economy. The government must act as the first responder in any crisis. This Republic Day it must resolve to respond with vision and energy.

### Symbol of a noisy republic

The might of the Indian Republic and national pride will be reflected in the military precision of the traditional parade on New Delhi's Rajpath on Tuesday. Joining on this special day, as a democratic counterpoint to the State's pomp and pageantry, will be the solidarity of a collection of farmers fighting a battle against three contentious farm laws. A republic is defined as a system of governance that allows a country to be democratic. No great clash of principles, therefore, stands in the way of allowing this demonstration of the will of a section of the people. To keep the peace during the rally is, of course, the farmers' responsibility, while it's the State's duty to provide security.

There are multiple voices to be heard in a democracy and minor irritants like inspired campaigns, like the one the Delhi police is complaining of, said to be emanating from 300-plus Pakistani Twitter handles, shouldn't be allowed to disrupt the process of peaceful life. A nation that knows how to switch off the Internet for over a year in the Kashmir Valley due to fears of disruptive voices from across the border should be capable of taking on mischievous elements sprouting propaganda through social media disinformation. How long does it take to respond tactically to those who are inimical to the idea of a diverse and pluralist democracy that is India?

The threat from the stoking of divisive tendencies by reviving the idea of "Khalistan" may be real enough, but history tells us that India has come through such threats without being too badly burnt. It should be no different this time, when it is important for rulers to be able to lend an ear to various voices and address problems that are real. As 20,000-plus tractors roll on New Delhi's Outer Ring Road on Tuesday, they may be symbolic of a noisy republic that we may have become in 70-plus years since January 26, 1950. That is no reason to be distracted from the task of listening to our own people.

#### DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Editor

K. SUDHAKAR  
Printer & Publisher

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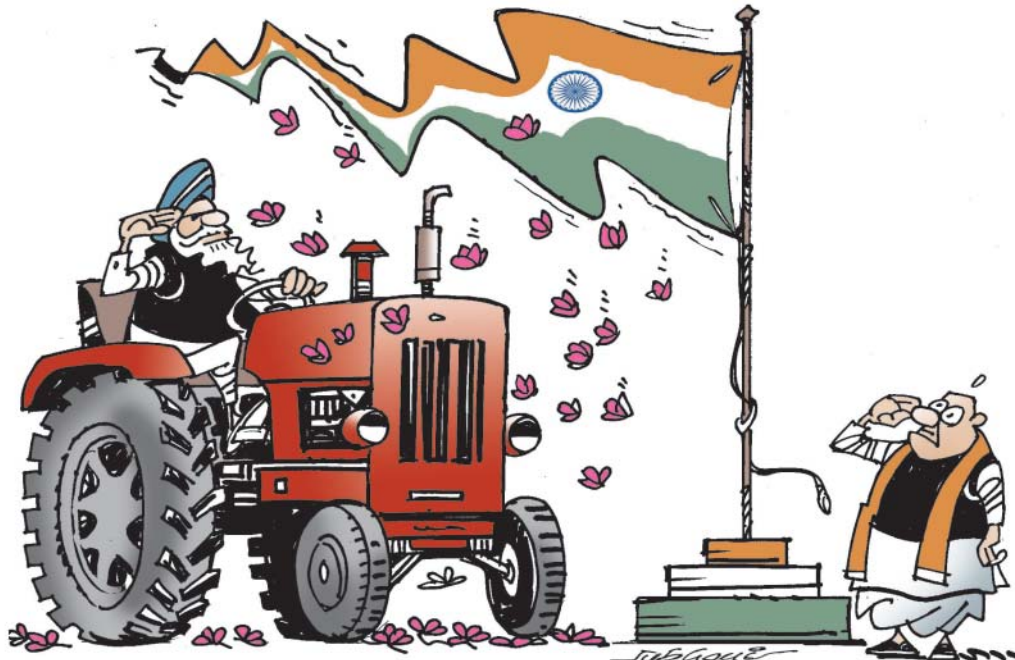
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Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



## Battle for Bengal: BJP to face hidden pitfalls

Shikha Mukerjee



Before it can defeat Mamata Banerjee, the BJP has to find a way of disarming the Bengali. As a target, Mamata Banerjee could be vulnerable if the grievances of the discontented were the only issue. But the Trinamul Congress and its leader are embedded in the tricky topography of West Bengal, which is peppered with hidden pitfalls.

Armed with its brand and its scorecard in elections across India, the BJP is anticipating a tough fight to attain its goal of fusing the state with the main body of a saffronised Bharat, of reaching the point where it can claim that the nation is governed by one party. Yet, the seemingly closer it gets to pulling off an election victory in West Bengal, the more elusive its target appears.

The Bengali spirit has insinuated itself between the BJP's hopes and Mamata Banerjee's fightback. It was this that was out in the open when Ms Banerjee launched the year-long celebrations of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's 125th birth anniversary on January 23, with a rally and a spontaneous burst of song, a surging crowd of people and finally a ringing assertion that Bengal was the crucible that crafted a new vision of a modern India, gave birth to the national movement and defined patriotism by the struggles and sacrifices of its mesmerising leaders. In contrast, the curated, organised and hygienically wrapped celebrations for an audience of essentially one, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and television viewers was a sanitised, lifeless, joyless programme, minus the exuberance and pride that is quintessentially Bengali.

Voters and their contradictory allegiances and

primordial attachments are whimsical and wayward; none more so than the Bengalis. Impressions matter; though not necessarily the first ones.

When Ms Banerjee declined to speak at Victoria Memorial at the spectacle organised by the Union government because she felt insulted by her hosts, she upstaged the Prime Minister, the hecklers and the BJP, by shrewdly turning it into a desecration of the spirit by bully boys primed to create trouble. Television and Twitter went into a frenzy of reactions. The BJP's army of defenders went on the offensive, asserting that Mamata Banerjee had insulted Shri Ram and Netaji. The Trinamul Congress went into overdrive, accusing the BJP and its leadership of intimidation, harassment and disrespect.

Having already paid her homage to Netaji by hitting the streets in a 6 km walk and a rally where she demanded a list of changes in his name, Ms Banerjee was ready to checkmate the BJP and Modi. In doing so she heavily underlined the difference between celebrating Netaji and his vision and rigid ceremonies. Her celebrations were a bigger, noisier version of the usual para (local) events; Mr Modi's was entirely alien to the Bengali tradition. While the jury is inclined to believe that the homage to Netaji was debased by petty politics, the verdict will be delivered sometime in May, when the ballots are counted for the state Assembly elections.

If the BJP had studied the traditions of the celebration of Netaji Jayanti in West Bengal over the decades, it would have discovered the facts and stopped itself from inventing a fiction. In the scramble to and cover up the mistimed and misdirect-

ed attack on Mamata, the BJP's IT cell boss Amit Malviya was so rattled that he declared she had walked out of the event in a huff. To cover that up, the BJP's army of defenders declared that Netaji's birthday had never been celebrated in style in West Bengal. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact that the All India Forward Bloc's headquarters are in Kolkata is incontrovertible evidence that Netaji's birth anniversary was dutifully and faithfully observed every year. As the party set up by the leader in 1939, when he asked members to swear a blood oath to devote themselves to the cause of a militant freedom struggle, the Forward Bloc's small presence in West Bengal politics is nevertheless a meaningful one.

For decades, rickety scaffolding was annually erected at the Netaji statue in Esplanade and at the Shyambazar five-point crossing, where generations of Forward Bloc leaders have ascended the steps to garland the icon, as have leaders from the Congress and the CPM and the CPI, as homage to a Bengali and a national hero, cruelly snatched by a mysterious death from becoming Independent India's tallest leader, be it as Prime Minister or as President.

The memory of Netaji lives on in humble homes as a framed portrait. It lives in the conspiracy theories written and reworked by generations of authors and amateur and professional researchers. In every Kolkata para (locality) Netaji Jayanti is a local affair; children practise marching to the drums weeks in advance and then the procession through the streets mimicking the Azad Hind Fauj progressing to free the nation from

**Voters and their contradictory allegiances and primordial attachments are whimsical and wayward; none more so than the Bengalis.**

imperial bondage. In consonance with this spirit, Ms Banerjee's celebration was inclusive and participatory.

Netaji's grand-nephew Sugata Bose, the eminent historian, led the concluding event.

It was the right occasion for Mamata Banerjee to invoke the injured aspirations of the Bengali people. She demanded that Kolkata should be returned to its former status as a national capital; the Planning Commission should be revived, because it was conceived by Netaji; a monument to the Azad Hind Fauj should be erected in New Delhi. These were sentiments that are the dull nagging ache in every Bengali heart, where the idea that Bengal was the birthplace of India's nationalism, its radical social reforms and its ideology of secularism, unity, communal harmony and diversity.

The distance between Bengali pride and the BJP's blunders can be measured in the last-moment inclusion of the visit to Netaji Bhavan in the Prime Minister's itinerary. To close the gaps in its knowledge of and familiarity with the Bengali mind, spirit, traditions and contradictions the BJP has a mere three months before the elections.

For the BJP to become local, it is neither necessary nor sufficient to poach "local" leaders from the Trinamul Congress and destabilise the party. It has to organically integrate. As is evident, this is an endeavour that would be difficult because of the contest between Bengali narratives of nationalism and its development over time and the BJP's hybrid version, enshrined in books — Hindutva, Hindu Rashtra Darshan — and now being translated into practice.

Steering between the simplistic and the messy complexities of identity politics in West Bengal, the BJP is travelling over a minefield.

*Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist based in Kolkata*

#### LETTERS

##### REPUBLIC DAY

On the Republic Day, the basic principles and laws were put in place. Every year we celebrate it in a cheerful manner. Let Covid not disturb the gala. We hope the tractor rally is successful and farmers are given importance by amending laws. Let us celebrate with enthusiasm every year.

**Sindhu Hyderabad**

The Republic Day once again brings to mind the role of the Constitution in keeping our country lawful. Lack of awareness about the Constitution will make India seem like a dark night even if it is a bright day.

**Md Tabrez Ahmed Hyderabad**

##### TRAFFIC CURBS

Yesterday while driving from Secunderabad to Khairatabad near the Traffic Police Station, the traffic was diverted all along. The police failed to lay barricades at Ranigunj to not allow traffic to proceed to Tank Bund. Many wasted time and fuel going round and round. If the traffic commissioner had planned the curbs earlier, people could have avoided the route.

**M.P. Venkat Rao Secunderabad**

##### VACCINATION

Apropos the hype on vaccination nationally, a decisive victory will depend on its ability to prevent Covid. The vaccine is only a precautionary measure to ward off the virus. With the present guinea pigs, we may know only if it is safe without any side effects but not its efficacy. In fact, randomly selected patients too should have been given the vaccine to know its efficacy.

**Thomas K.E. Hyderabad**

#### 50 YEARS AGO IN

##### DECCAN Chronicle

##### Giri's call to eschew violence

NEW DELHI, January. 25 President V.V. Giri today appealed to the country's voters and political parties to eschew bitterness, violence or abuse of the human person in their election campaign.

Broadcasting to the nation on the eve of the Republic Day, Mr. Giri at the outset of his speech made a reference to the Lok Sabha elections and said that "our democracy is on the eve of yet another milestone in its progress".

Aakar Patel



### Growth is just not picking up, but no end to triumphalism

We have entered the 13th consecutive quarter of economic slowdown in India. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP), meaning the total value of services and goods produced in this country in the last 12 months, has shrunk in 2020-2021, compared to 2019-2020. We made less than we did in the previous year. To return to where we were in January 2020, it will take perhaps another year. Perhaps longer, we do not know.

The problem did not begin with the Covid-19 pandemic; it existed much before that. Growth began declining from January 2018 and has declined sequentially, meaning every quarter since then. The government has tried to tweak some of the numbers, something that Americans refer to as "putting lipstick on a pig", but to no avail. It is a sequential decline over three years. The India growth story is over and has been over for a few years now. You can make all the speeches that you want, you cannot argue against 39 straight months of slowing down.

Speaking loudly of competing with China and America but then

falling behind even Bangladesh's per capita GDP does not inspire confidence. The fact is that even without the lockdown we were in a crisis, a word that is used loosely but can be said to be accurate here. The government has no idea why the economy began to stall from January 2018. There are theories from the outside, but they are not discussed or debated in the government — who will tell the king that his rule is incompetent? Nobody, unless they want to lose their head (or at least their job), and so we continue to stumble on, along the same path that has brought us to this disaster.

The signs of our decay are all around us. Work that has left China because of Donald Trump's trade war and Covid-19 has not come to India but to Vietnam and Bangladesh.

Our neighbour has crept ahead of us in per capita GDP because its exports (powered by high-labour garments manufacturing) are growing, while ours have not grown since 2014. We have six years of zero growth in exports. It is also ahead because it has a much higher participation of women in

the labour force. In India, the patriarchy is more concerned about who Indians marry rather than why they are not working. India is the most dangerous place for women in the world. According to the Thomson Reuters Foundation's World's Most Dangerous Countries for Women, we were at fourth place in 2011 and then fell to last place in 2018, where presumably we still remain.

The low participation of women in the workforce has many complex reasons, but the failure of the State and indeed the inability of this current government to stop the slide further, is also responsible.

We have more of the same to look forward to in 2021. We will not see the economy pick up, but we will see more bombast from the government about how well we are doing. The enormous hole in the economy that was created in the first quarter of last year (April-June) because of the lockdown will have been filled over the last few months. When results for the same quarter year on year appear sometime in the middle of 2021, Prime Minister Modi will exclaim that we are the world's fastest growing economy

and pretend that the 25 per cent increase is not just the filling up of a hole he had himself created but some miracle he has delivered to the Indian economy. *The Economist* has reported that Mukesh Ambani's wealth rose 350 per cent in 2020 and Gautam Adani's rose over 700 per cent, but we are at record unemployment, which is hovering around the nine per cent mark. And it is not higher still only because many crore Indians have removed themselves from the job market. Those who are not employed and are not actively looking for work are not considered unemployed. The real figure could be approaching 15 per cent, and perhaps even higher than that. On every conceivable metric that you can think of, from bank credit growth to automobile sales, the revelation is not only that there is no India growth story but there is a decline that has set us back years, perhaps a decade.

And yet the triumphalism carries on. The BJP won almost half the seats in West Bengal in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, and one will be very surprised if they do not win the Assembly election there later

this year. The amount of resources they have because of the electoral bonds and because of the broad support that Narendra Modi gets from Corporate India can't be matched by any other party and in fact can't be matched by all the other parties put together.

Another state will fall to the BJP, and if it doesn't this time then certainly it will the next.

Elsewhere, society has been torn apart, most likely in a way that cannot ever be repaired. I am not saying this out of despair, but one has to be realistic. This amount of poison being injected from the top cannot be detoxified without resistance and one sees no resistance to it.

On every parameter, from economic decline to national security failures to unemployment to social tensions, India will continue on the path that it has chosen for itself since 2014. But at least Narendra Modi will continue to be popular, making his daily sermons about how much better things are under him and how bad it was in the past.

*The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist*



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48347.59	-1.09
Nifty 50	14238.90	-0.93
S&P 500*	3,836.51	-0.13
Dollar (₹)	72.94	0.05
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.70	0.03
Euro (₹)	88.62	0.24
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,509	141 0.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.51	0.18
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.954	0.25
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.060	-0.031

RBI: No plan to pull out old ₹100, ₹10, ₹5 notes

The RBI refuted reports of withdrawal of old series of Rs 100, Rs 10 and Rs 5 currency notes. "With regard to reports in certain sections of media on withdrawal of old series of Rs 100, Rs 10 & Rs 5 banknotes from circulation in near future, it is clarified that such reports are incorrect," the RBI said in a tweet. While issuing new Rs 100 notes with base lavender colour in July 2018, RBI had said old notes would stay valid.

Janakiram takes over as director of IDRBT



Prof. D. Janakiram has taken charge as the director of the Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology. A Ph.D. from IIT Delhi, Prof. Janakiram has authored over 150 research papers and is the editor of six books. He was awarded the Boysscast Fellowship in 1997, the IBM Faculty Award in 2007 and Yahoo Faculty Grant in 2009. He is a board member of IIIT Kurnool and senate member of IIIT Trichy.

UBI completes IT integration of all Andhra Bank units

Union Bank of India said it has completed IT integration of all branches of erstwhile Andhra Bank with itself. In November, UBI had completed its IT integration with erstwhile Corporation Bank. The amalgamation of Andhra and Corporation banks with UBI came into effect from April 1. With this, the entire IT integration of erstwhile Andhra and Corporation Bank branches with UBI has been completed, it said.

Larsen & Toubro Q3 net profit up 3% to ₹2,648 cr

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) posted a 3 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 2,648.33 crore for the December quarter. The increase in profit is largely attributed to higher profit from IT & ITES segment and sale of commercial property in realty. PAT also includes gain on divestment of Rs 209 crore from discontinued operations for the December quarter, the company said in a regulatory filing.



Budget may boost tap water for all plan ₹3-L cr piped water scheme in works

SIDDHARTHA SINGH JAN. 25

India plans to spend Rs 3 lakh crore (\$41 billion) to ensure tap water is delivered to every household in the next five years, people with knowledge of the matter said. The plan is still under discussion and is likely to be unveiled on February 1 as part of the government's budget for the year starting April 1, the people said, asking not to be identified as the proposal is not public.

The government plans to improve availability of water, modernise sewage treatment plants and better utilise the country's water resources, the people said.

The project will be part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Jal Jeevan mission.

A finance ministry spokesman was not immediately available for a comment.

Agencies add: In the run-up to the 2019 general elections, Modi promised that piped water will reach all Indian households by 2024.

According to latest Jal Jeevan Mission estimates, 66.16 per cent of the country's 19.17 crore households in villages is yet to be provided with piped water.

Providing drinking water to the country's 1.3 billion people is a pressing issue, as about 200,000 Indians die every year



UK-based charity WaterAid estimates that about 163 million people in India, or roughly 12 per cent of the population, do not have access to clean water close to home

due to inadequate access to safe water and 600 million face high to extreme water stress, according to the Niti Aayog.

UK-based charity WaterAid estimates that about 163 million people in India, or roughly 12 per cent of the population, do not have access to clean water close to home.

Every summer water shortages tend to be more acute in large cities such

as New Delhi, Chennai and Bengaluru.

The country has access to only about 4 per cent of the world's water resources, and farmers consume almost 90 per cent of the groundwater water available. Nearly 60 per cent of the irrigation for agriculture comes from ground water, mainly through electric water pumps.

Supplying clean drinking water to millions of poor people and reviving moribund irrigation projects were a key part of the Modi government's policies, since the country remains at the mercy of rain gods for drinking water and farming. The monsoon accounts for nearly 70 per cent of the annual rains needed to water farms and recharge aquifers and reservoirs.

—Bloomberg/Reuters

PROFIT TAKING, BORDER CLASHES BRING SENSEX DOWN BY 530 PTS

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 25

The Sensex fell 531 points, or 1.09 per cent, in a volatile session on news of clashes on the India-China border in the North Sikkim's Naku La area and profit taking in index heavy-weight Reliance Industries. RIL shares fell over 5 per cent after its third quarter results. The Sensex closed at 48,347.59 points.

The clashes in Sikkim took place last week and have been resolved, reports added.

The market saw profit taking by institutional investors for the third consecutive session after the Sensex hit the 50000-mark last week, ahead of the Union Budget on February 1.

The Nifty-50 fell 133 points or 0.93 per cent closing at 14,238.90. The broader market also fell with the BSE Mid-cap Index down by 1.14 per cent and the Small-cap, -1.15 per cent.

Foreign portfolio investors were net sellers of equities worth Rs 765.3 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 387.76 crore.

"The short term trend of the Nifty continues to be weak. The consistent decline of the last three sessions could be hinting at the possibility of a reversal in the market," said Nagaraj Shetti, technical research analyst, HDFC Securities.

Profit taking was seen in all sectoral indices barring Healthcare and Metals. Major sectoral losers included BSE IT Index (-1.31 per cent), Power (1.41 per cent) and Oil & Gas (2.16 per cent).

Amazon seeks arrest of Biyani, halting of RIL deal

New Delhi, Jan. 25: US online retailer Amazon has filed a petition in the Delhi High Court seeking detention of Future Group founders, including CEO Kishore Biyani, and seizure of their assets as it sought to block Future Group from selling retail assets to Reliance Industries.

In the petition, Amazon sought enforcement of the Singapore arbitrator's ruling in October against its partner Future's Rs 24,713 crore deal with Reliance.

Amazon sought the Biyani family to be directed to "disclose their assets, including movable and immovable property" and the same be attached.

Also, it sought "detention" of Biyani, his daughter Ashni and seven other members of the founder family as well as three other officials, including a company secretary.

Amazon, which wants

the deal to sell retail assets to Reliance to be stopped, also asked the court for a direction for "detention of the directors (of Future Group entities) in civil prison". Biyani had previously stated that he was forced to strike a deal with Reliance after help that the group sought from Amazon to wriggle out of piling debt burden wasn't forthcoming.

The petition by Amazon just days after the Future-RIL deal received the nod from market regulator Sebi and bourses.

In the petition, Amazon has said the interim injunctions granted by the Emergency Arbitrator (EA) are enforceable under the Indian laws under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act as the order is deemed to be an order of the court and is enforceable under the Code of Civil Procedure.

Amazon has prayed that

the court issue an injunction against the respondents (Future Group), in light of the directions passed by the EA, from relying upon any approval granted by any regulatory body or agency in India arising out of any application initiated or pursued by the respondents, contrary to the directions in the order, including without limitation, the no objection granted by the Sebi and as also approvals granted by the BSE, NSE and CCI.

The interim ruling by the Singapore International Arbitration Centre, which was valid till January 23, now stands extended till further modification.

"In view of the constitution of the Arbitral Tribunal, the Order stands automatically extended for the duration of the Arbitration Proceedings," the petition said. —PTI

RBI says open to digital currency

Mumbai, Jan. 25: Amid increasing popularity of virtual currencies in various parts of the world, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday said it is open to exploring the possibility of a digital version of currency notes.

A host of private digital currencies, virtual currencies and cryptocurrencies has gained popularity in recent years, though Indian authorities remain sceptical about them. "In India, the regulators

and governments have been sceptical about these currencies and are apprehensive about the associated risks.

"Nevertheless, the RBI is exploring the possibility as to whether there is a need for a digital version of fiat currency and in case there is, then how to operationalise it," the RBI said in its booklet on 'Payment Systems in India — Journey in the Second Decade of the Millennium'. Central bank digital cur-

rencies (CBDC) is a legal tender..It is in the form of electronic currency, which can be converted or exchanged at par with similarly denominated cash and traditional central bank deposits. Innovations are changing the payments space rapidly.

"This has made central banks around the world to examine whether they could leverage on technology and issue fiat money in digital form," the RBI's booklet said. —PTI

FDI inflows into India up 13% in 2020: Unctad

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JAN. 25

Foreign direct investment into India grew 13 per cent in 2020, bucking the global trend of 42 per cent decline. India and China were the only two countries among the top 20 recipients of 2019, which saw FDI growing in 2020, finds a report by UN'S body for trade and development.

India saw FDI rising by 13 per cent to \$57 billion as investment in the digital economy continued, particularly through acquisitions. "A notable deal was acquisition of 10 per cent stake in (Reliance owned) Jio platforms by Jaadhu owned by Facebook for \$5.7 billion, found Unctad.

Cross border mergers and acquisitions grew 83 per cent to \$27 billion. Infrastructure and energy deals also propped up M&A deal values in India. Indian IT firms like Wipro, Mastek and Tech Mahindra announced a rise in deals by 30 per cent, targeting European and other markets for IT services.

The growth in FDI inflows into India helped



South Asia witness a growth of 10 per cent to \$65 billion. Except for India, FDI inflows fell in other south Asian countries where investments are often tied to export-oriented apparel manufacturing, which suffered significantly due to slump in global demand.

China was the only other economy among the largest 20 recipients of 2019, which recorded a growth in FDI. The FDI inflows into China grew by 4 per cent to \$163 billion, making the country the largest recipient in 2020. The US was the second largest recipient with \$134 billion.

Globally, FDI fell 42 per cent to \$859 billion in 2020 from \$1.5 trillion in 2019. It was also 30 per cent lower than the invest-

ments in 2009 during the global financial crisis. The share of developing economies in global FDI reached 72 per cent-the highest share on record.

Developed countries saw heavy decline in FDI. Among the top recipients of the previous year, the UK and Italy suffered 100 per cent decline followed by Russia by 96 per cent.

Going ahead, in 2021 global FDI may remain weak, finds Unctad. Although the global economy is expected to initiate a hesitant and uneven recovery in 2021 and GDP growth and gross fixed capital formation and trade are projected to resume growth, investors are likely to remain cautious in committing capital to new overseas productive assets.

Merck junks Covid vaccine programme

RILEY GRIFFIN JAN. 25

Merck & Co is discontinuing development of its two experimental Covid-19 vaccines after early trial data showed they failed to generate immune responses comparable to a natural infection or existing vaccines.

The US drug giant, which has a long history of successfully developing vaccines, had adopted a different strategy from rivals Pfizer Inc, Moderna Inc and Johnson & Johnson, using a more traditional approach of focusing on shots based on weakened viruses. One, called V590, borrowed technology from Merck's Ebola inoculation, while the other, V591, is based on a measles vaccine used in Europe.

Both V590 and V591 were laggards in the vaccine-development race. Merck

finished recruiting the first participants for early-stage safety studies near the end of 2020, when front-runners Pfizer and Moderna were preparing to report late-stage data on their shots' effectiveness. Merck received interim results from its trials this month.

The results were "disappointing, and a bit of a surprise," said Nick Kartsonis, senior vice president of clinical research for infectious diseases and vaccines at Merck Research Laboratories. Both shots generated fewer neutralising antibodies to halt infection than other Covid-19 vaccines, and produced inferior immune responses compared with people who had naturally contracted the coronavirus.

"We didn't have what we needed to be able to move forward," Kartsonis said

in an interview on Sunday. After evaluating the data, Merck's senior leadership decided to discontinue the programmes and divert resources to the company's efforts to develop Covid-19 treatments.

Kenilworth, New Jersey-based Merck will record a pretax charge for the fourth quarter of 2020 for costs related to halting the programmes. It didn't disclose the amount of the charge on Monday. The early-stage trial results will be submitted to a peer-reviewed medical journal.

Two coronavirus vaccines have been cleared for use in the US, but a continuing surge in infections has highlighted the need for more treatment options. Merck will steer resources toward two drugs it has in late-stage development to combat the disease, according to Kartsonis. —Bloomberg

AADHAAR HOUSING FILES FOR ₹7,300-CRORE IPO

New Delhi, Jan. 25: Blackstone-backed Aadhar Housing Finance has filed preliminary papers with markets regulator Sebi to raise Rs 7,300 crore through an initial public offering.

The IPO comprises fresh issuance of shares worth Rs 1,500 crore and an offer

of sale of up to 5,800 crore by the promoter BCP Topco VII Pte Ltd, draft red herring prospectus filed with the Sebi showed.

The company proposes to utilise the money raised through fresh issue towards augmenting its capital base to meet future capital requirements.

Besides, the company expects to receive the benefits of listing the equity shares on the stock exchanges.

The firm, which caters to the low-income segment's home financing needs, is backed by a private equity fund managed by Blackstone. —PTI

BANK OF AMERICA GIVES PANDEMIC BONUS TO 97% OF ITS 1.7 LAKH STAFF



Mumbai, Jan. 25: Bank of America is rewarding its over 1.7 lakh staff worldwide, including over 24,000 in India, with a cash award of \$750 each to those earning under \$100,000 in annual compensation for the appreciation of their work through the pandemic.

Called 'delivering together' compensation awards, the bank expects over 97 per cent of its employees to get the special one-time cash bonus.

In an internal memo sent to the employees worldwide, which has been accessed by PTI, Bank of America chief executive Brian Moynihan said in appreciation for the outstanding efforts, the management team and board have decided to recognise employees with 'delivering together' compensation awards.

During the first quarter of 2021, all eligible employees with \$100,000 or less in annual total compensation will be paid a cash bonus of \$750 each. Those in the US will receive this award in late February and those outside the US will receive the payment in March, Moynihan said.

He pointed out that these awards build on the shared success cash awards of \$1,000 and related stock awards announced to employees in the fourth quarter of 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Moynihan also expects almost 97 per cent of employees who he calls as 'teammates' will receive the delivering together award.

In addition, all eligible teammates with greater than \$100,000 to \$500,000 in annual total compensation will receive a grant of 150-750 restricted stock units. —PTI

LENDING | A HAND Robot takes care of the sick and elderly, provides social simulation

Mass rollout of Sophia the robot on cards

MICHELLE HENNESSY HONG KONG, JAN. 25

"Social robots like me can take care of the sick or elderly," Sophia says as she conducts a tour of her lab in Hong Kong. "I can help communicate, give therapy and provide social stimulation, even in difficult situations." Since being unveiled in 2016, Sophia—a humanoid robot—has gone viral. Now the company behind her has a new vision: to mass-produce robots by the end of the year.

Hanson Robotics, based in Hong Kong, said four



models, including Sophia, would start rolling out of factories in the first half of 2021, just as researchers predict the pandemic will open new opportunities for the

robotics industry.

"The world of Covid-19 is going to need more and more automation to keep people safe," founder and chief executive David Hanson said, standing

surrounded by robot heads in his lab.

Hanson believes robotic solutions to the pandemic are not limited to health-care, but could assist customers in industries such as retail and airlines too.

"Sophia and Hanson robots are unique by being so human-like," he added. "That can be so useful during these times where people are terribly lonely and socially isolated."

Hanson said he aims to sell "thousands" of robots in 2021, both large and small, without providing a specific number.

Social robotics professor

Johan Hoorn, whose research has included work with Sophia, said that although the technology is still in relative infancy, the pandemic could accelerate a relationship between humans and robots.

"I can infer the pandemic will actually help us get robots earlier in the market because people start to realise that there is no other way," said Hoorn, of Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Hanson Robotics is launching a robot this year called Grace, developed for the healthcare sector. —Reuters



## SHORT TAKES

## Mouma among 6 to get Padma Shri

**New Delhi:** Veteran table tennis player Mouma Das was among six sportspersons who were awarded the prestigious Padma Shri by the Government of India on the eve of the country's 72nd Republic Day.

Besides Mouma, basketball player P. Anitha, athletics coach Madhavan Nambiar, athlete Sudha Hari Narayan Singh, Deaf Olympics gold medalist wrestler Virender Singh, and a legendary dwarf athlete KY Venkatesh have also been awarded the prestigious award in the sports category for the year. Every year, the award winners are announced on the eve of Republic Day. The Padma awardees are felicitated by the President of India. — PTI

## Football matches on Republic Day

**Hyderabad:** The Telangana Football Association is holding a veterans exhibition football match involving former international and national players at Delhi Public School at 7.30 am on Republic Day.

Some of the players in action are Venkateshwar Reddy, G. P. Palguna, Yedukondalu, Syed Arif, Raj Kumar, Ch Srinivas Rao (Samuel), Eugene James, Prakash, Vincent Paul, P. Vijay Kumar, Zakir Hussain, K. E. Selucos, and I. Roshan. The Bolarum Sporting Club too is organising exhibition matches — Late Peter Thangaraj XI vs Late Bhaskar Reddy XI for Seniors footballers and Late Amar Chand XI vs Late George XI for Juniors Under 15 years — at Bolarum High School grounds, at which it will honour club stalwarts.

## Tarun, Chevika into 2nd round

**Hyderabad:** Top seeds Tarun Korar and Sama Chevika Reddy sailed into the second round of the AITA C7 Under-16 tennis tournament being held at Sania Mirza Tennis Academy in Murtuzaguda on Monday. Tarun beat Harsha Perla 6-2, 6-2 while Chevika tamed Tribhuvani 6-2, 6-3.

**THE RESULTS**

**Boys singles:** Tarun Korar bt Harsha Perla 6-2, 6-2; Arnab Bishoyi bt Chris Hamilton Ross 3-6, 6-3, 6-3; Thakur Arman Singh bt M. Hanock 6-0, 6-0; Mihir Parcha bt V. Dhiraj Reddy 6-1, 6-1; P. Sandilya bt Vivek Sriakshit Reddy 6-2, 6-1; Nikhil D'souza bt Farhaan Akhtar 6-3, 6-0; Dandu Trishant Reddy bt Saddam Husain 7-6 (7-2), 6-0.

**Girls singles:** Sama Chevika Reddy bt Tribhuvani 6-2, 6-3; S. Kaavya bt Charithakshaya 6-2, 6-0; Dandu Laxmi Siri bt Sai Sahasra 6-3, 6-1; Pushti Ladda bt Aparna Kandhare 6-2, 6-1; Rishitha Basi Reddy bt Malvika Reddy 6-2, 6-0.

## Big fight ends in a stalemate

**Hyderabad:** The much-anticipated super bantamweight bout between Savio Michael and Vinod Vanttedu ended in a draw in the Club Fights Pro Boxing event at the Lal Bahadur Stadium on Sunday night. Savio had to settle for a stalemate as the judges scored 39-36, 38-38, 37-39.

**THE RESULTS**

**Featherweight:** Singh bt Madunala Jayanth by unanimous decision — 40-36, 40-36, 40-36.

**Super flyweight:** Banagaram Sai Kumar bt Mohd Zahed by TKO.

**Super bantamweight:** Savio Michael drew with Vinod Vanttedu — 39-36, 38-38, 37-39.

**Super lightweight:** Clinton David drew with Gudimalle Niraj — 38-38, 39-37, 37-39.

**Super lightweight:** Nithin Raj bt Abhinay Kumar by unanimous decision — 40-36, 40-36, 40-36.

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

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

**Big Bash League:** Melbourne Renegades vs Hobart Hurricanes from 10.40 am; Melbourne Stars vs Sydney Sixers from 2.20 pm on Sony Six, HD

**Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament:** Quarterfinals — Punjab vs Karnataka from 11.55 am; Tamil Nadu vs Himachal Pradesh from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

## FOOTBALL

**English Premier League:** Newcastle United vs Leeds United from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1; West Brom vs Manchester City from 1.45 am (Wednesday) on Star Sports Select 1; Southampton vs Arsenal from 1.45 am (Wednesday) on Star Sports Select HD

## WWE

**Superstar Spectacle:** Bouts from 8 pm on Sony Ten 1, HD



Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes (left) shoots over the wall to score from a free kick in their English FA Cup fourth round match against Liverpool at Old Trafford in Manchester on Sunday.

## BRUNO BLASTS REDS

## Fernandes gem knocks Liverpool out of FA Cup

**Manchester, Jan. 25:** Bruno Fernandes's stunning free-kick inflicted more misery on Liverpool as Manchester United progressed to the fifth round of the FA Cup with a thrilling 3-2 win at Old Trafford on Sunday.

Firmino and Salah combined perfectly for the opener on 18 minutes as the Brazilian's pass opened up the United defence and the Egyptian provided a dinked finish over Dean Henderson.

Rashford's raking cross-field pass just evaded James Milner and Greenwood did not look like a striker lacking confidence as he fired past Alisson Becker for his first goal in 11 games.

Klopp has been forced to

field two midfielders in Jordan Henderson and Fabinho together at the heart of the defence in recent weeks and the performance of Rhys Williams showed why the German has been reluctant to rely on his young centre-backs.

Williams failed to cut out Greenwood's through ball for Rashford three minutes into the second half and the England international composed himself before slotting past the advancing Alisson.

This time, United's momentum was short-lived as Milner should have levelled for Liverpool when he spooned a glorious chance over from close range, but quickly made amends by teeing up

## THE RESULTS

**Manchester United** 3  
(Greenwood 26, Rashford 48, Fernandes 78)  
**Liverpool** 2  
(Salah 18, 59)

**Everton** 3  
(Calvert-Lewin 29, Richardson 59, Mina 62)  
**Sheffield Wednesday** 0

**Brentford** 1  
(Sorensen 7)  
**Leicester** 3  
(Under 46, Telemans 51-pen, Maddison 71)

**Fulham** 0  
**Burnley** 3  
(Rodriguez 31, 71-pen, Long 81)

Salah to smash home his second just before the hour mark.

Both managers turned to their match winners off the bench for the final half-hour as Klopp first turned to Sadio Mane before Fernandes made his entrance.

Trent Alexander-Arnold stung the palms of Henderson, who then saved twice from Salah as Liverpool's attack began to click back into gear.

But it was Fernandes who won the game with a brilliant free-kick 12 minutes from time. His strike was a worthy winner of a thrilling tie as he used Pogba to unsight Alisson and fired the ball low into the Brazilian's left-hand corner.

— AFP

## SUAREZ BANG ON TARGET FOR ATLETICO

**Madrid, Jan. 25:** Luis Suarez scored a brilliant team goal as Atletico Madrid came from behind to beat Valencia 3-1 on Sunday and move seven points clear at the top of La Liga.

After Real Madrid thrashed Alaves on Saturday, Barca had earlier followed suit with a scrappy win over Elche.

But Atletico were under-terred in the capital, as their considerable advantage was restored again, with a game in hand.

Suarez finished off a flowing move that had started almost on Atletico's goal-line before substitute Angel Correa capped another slick string of passes to end Valencia's resistance.

## BARCA WIN WITHOUT MESSI

Barcelona won again without the suspended Lionel Messi as goals from Frenkie de Jong and Riqui Puig were enough to secure a scruffy 2-0 win over Elche.

De Jong poked the ball over the line just before half-time at the Martinez Valero, which would have proved a suitably scrappy winner before Puig came off the bench to head in a second late on.

Despite an uninspiring performance, Ronald Koeman will be relieved to see Barca make it two consecutive victories without Messi.

— AFP

## Footballers die in plane crash

**Rio de Janeiro, Jan. 25:** Four football players from Brazilian club Palmas died in a plane crash while traveling separately from the team after testing positive for the coronavirus, the club said.

The club's president also died in the crash after the plane suddenly plunged to the ground at the end of the runway while on take-off in the northern state of Tocantins, the team reported. The pilot also died.

The players were on their way to Goiania, in the central region of the country, to play a match against Vila Nova.

"The players were traveling in a private plane because they had tested positive for Covid-19," club spokesperson Izabela Martins informed.

Martins said that Sunday would have been their last day of isolation and that the rest of the team would travel on a commercial flight.

"The victims were identified as president Lucas Meira and players Lucas Praxedes, Guilherme Noé, Rauline and Marcus Molinari," the club said. The pilot was not identified. There were no survivors.

Palmas Futebol e Regatas was founded in 1997 and plays in Brazil's fourth division. The cause of the accident was not immediately known.

Tocantins fire officials reported that the twin-engine Baron model had a capacity of six occupants. When firefighters arrived at the crash site, 500 meters from the runway, the aircraft was being consumed by fire. At least two explosions were registered, according to the official report.

The Brazilian Football Confederation expressed its solidarity with Palmas' family members and the club's fans in an official note, and it ordered a minute of silence in all matches played Sunday as a sign of mourning.

In 2016, a plane crash killed 19 players of the Chapecoense soccer club. Chapecoense's plane went down en route to the club's first-ever South American tournament final in Colombia after it ran out of fuel near Medellin.

"Unfortunately, we know what this moment of pain is like and we wish that no other group had to feel the same," Chapecoense said in a statement.

— AP



Four Palmas players and the club president have been killed after their plane crashed on take-off.

— TWITTER/BASIL FOOTBALL

## Jaweed, Shreyas &amp; Vinmukh best

## DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, JAN. 25

M. A. Jaweed, C. Shreyas Reddy and Vinmukh emerged top performers in the Hyderabad Cricket Association's A-2 Division two-day league matches played on Monday.

Jaweed ran through the RJCC line-up to bowl them out for a mere 130. The right-arm medium pacer returned with fabulous figures of 7 for 47. In reply, Canara Bank made 131 for no loss for an emphatic win.

In another match, Eklavya CC beat Rushiraj by six wickets riding on two good performances. First, off-spinner Shreyas got six wickets while con-

ceding 35 runs as Rushiraj were bowled out for 163. Then, Vinmukh slammed an unbeaten 110 that came off 123 balls and included 20 boundaries as his side overhauled the target losing four wickets.

**Brief scores:**

**A-2 DIVISION (TWO-DAY)**

■ RJCC 130 in 42.2 overs (Anshul 47, Shrunjith 47, M. A. Jaweed 7/47 — 14-4-47-7) lost to Canara Bank 131 for no loss in 23.4 overs (Arvind Shetty 78 n.o, Nikhil 41 n.o). Points: Canara Bank 5, RJCC 0.

■ Rushiraj 163 in 57.4 overs (B. Sai Chandra 65, C. Shreyas Reddy 6/35 — 14-4-6-35-6) lost to Eklavya 165/4 in 39 overs (Vinmukh 110 n.o — 123b, 20x4). Points: Eklavya 5, Rushiraj 0.

**London, Jan. 25:** Chelsea sacked manager Frank Lampard on Monday after 18 months in charge, with former Paris Saint-Germain boss Thomas Tuchel reportedly set to replace him at Stamford Bridge.

Sunday's 3-1 FA Cup fourth-round win against Championship side Luton was not enough to save Lampard, whose team have slumped to ninth place in the Premier League.

Chelsea said it had been a "very difficult decision" to part ways with the 42-year-old, who replaced Maurizio Sarri in July 2019.

"We are grateful to Frank for what he has achieved in his time as head coach of the club," Chelsea said in a statement.

"However, recent results and performances have not met the club's expectations, leaving the club mid-table without any



clear path to sustained improvement."

The club's Russian owner Roman Abramovich said: "This was a very difficult decision for the club, not least because I have an excel-

lent personal relationship with Frank and I have the utmost respect for him.

"He is a man of great integrity and has the highest of work ethics. However, under current circumstances we believe it is best to change managers."

Former PSG boss Tuchel, who was abruptly sacked by the French champions in December, is in line to take over, reports said.

Chelsea are struggling in ninth place in the Premier League table, 11 points behind leaders Manchester United.

They have lost five of their past eight Premier League matches after a good start to the season.

— AFP

## Chiran digs deep to win on debut

## DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, JAN. 25

The wind conditions at the Republic Day Regatta at Hussain Sagar continued to be poor but Race Officer Gautham Kankatla managed to squeeze in one race for the Sub Junior Green Fleet in which Chiran Deep Perelli of St Patrick's led from start to finish to clinch a win on his debut. He was closely followed by Daniel Israel of Valerian Grammar High School and Jampanna Arapu of Balamrai Government School.

Moutameen Mohammad of Udbhav School Rasoolpura who was the winner at all the races at the recently concluded training had a bad last leg and finished fourth overall after trailing Chiran in second position for most of the race and then was pipped at the finish by Daniel and Jampanna who managed to catch a gust of wind he had missed.

A colourful fleet of 42 sailors had to paddle back to the Yacht Club of Hyderabad under dead wind conditions.



Specially abled students after participating in the parasports screening camp conducted by the Aditya Mehta Foundation to unearth budding talent at Infinity Parasports Academy and Rehab Centre in Rasoolpura, Hyderabad, on Monday.

## AMF eyes para athletes

## DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, JAN. 25

Aditya Mehta Foundation — a non-profit organisation aiding those with disabilities to pursue sports while providing self-sustenance — held a parasports screening camp to unearth budding talent for specially-abled students from Kamareddy district on Monday at AMF's Infinity Parasports Academy and Rehab Centre in Rasoolpura, Hyderabad.

In all 21 students, 12 boys and 9 girls in the age group of 6 to 20 years took part in the camp and were screened for archery, taekwondo, volleyball, powerlifting, athletics, shooting, table tennis, rowing, shotput, javelin and other sports.

Most of the kids were extremely talented — two of the hearing-impaired students hit bullseye in every shot in shooting. About 60 per cent of the students did very well and the rest being a little weak,

require rehabilitation. The selected students will be provided with equipment to train and will be groomed in the sport they show promise along with schooling, boarding and lodging by AMF.

"We want to make a splash at Asian Games 2022, the Paralympics 2024 and make the nation proud," says Aditya Mehta. In the past AMF athletes have won more than 90 medals at national and international events.

Printed and Published from Karimnagar by K.Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Deccan Chronicle Press, H.No. 1-21/12/1, Cherlabhukur Road, Mugdumpur Village, Karimnagar - 505 186 - Telangana State

Regd. No. H/SD-2/2K RNI Registration No. APENG/2001/04766 Ph: 9121181123 Grams: CHRONICLE Editor: Kaushik Mitter