

Coldwave likely in Delhi again, minimum temp may drop by 4°C

New Delhi: Delhi is in for another coldwave with the minimum temperature likely to drop by four degrees Celsius over the next two-three days, the India Meteorological Department said on Monday. The maximum is likely to settle around 16 degrees Celsius. Dense-to-very-dense fog is also predicted during the period, said Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of the IMD's regional forecasting centre. "A cold wave is likely to grip the city over the next two-three days as icy winds from the snow-laden western Himalayas bring the mercury down to 4 degrees Celsius," he said. In the plains, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) declares a cold wave if the minimum temperature dips to 4 degrees Celsius. A severe cold wave is when the minimum is 2 degrees Celsius or less. On Monday, the minimum temperature stood at 7.4 degrees Celsius. Delhi had recorded a cold day on Sunday with the maximum temperature dropping to 15 degrees Celsius, six notches below normal and the lowest this month. A cold day is when the minimum temperature is less than 10 degrees Celsius and the maximum is at least 4.5 degrees Celsius below normal. Delhi recorded a "cold day" on Sunday, as the maximum temperature dropped to 15 degrees Celsius, six notches below normal and the lowest this month. — PTI

CM: Health infra didn't collapse during Covid

'Doorstep ration delivery, health cards for all soon'

New Delhi, Jan. 25: The AAP government will launch doorstep delivery of the ration scheme by March and provide health cards to everyone in the city by the year-end, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Monday. Speaking at a Republic Day function organised by the city government, he noted that Delhi faced an extreme level of coronavirus pandemic, but its health system did not collapse due to reforms in recent years and better management.

"I am glad that by March this year, our dream initiative of doorstep delivery of ration will be launched. Neatly packed wheat or its flour and rice will be delivered to your homes. You will not have to go to shops and stand in queues. I think this will be a revolutionary step in changing the entire ration system," Mr Kejriwal said.

Commending the role of hospitals, doctors, nurses and paramedical staff during the pandemic, he announced providing health cards to Delhiites by year-end.

"We are going to issue health cards for the people



Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal presents an award to headwarder of Tihar Central Jail No. 5, Shahid Ahmed, during the state level Republic Day celebrations at Delhi Secretariat in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

of Delhi this year. It will have all medical records of a person, and online or telephonic appointment with doctors will end waiting in queues," he said.

The chief minister said the Health Information Management System (HIMS) will be completed this year with the integration of government hospitals first. Later, private hospitals will be added to it, he said.

Mr Kejriwal noted that although Delhi faced an extreme stage of COVID-19 when the number of infected persons rose to 8,500 on November 11 last

year, the health system of the city did not collapse like in many developed countries.

In many developed countries and cities like New York, the health infrastructure collapsed, but in Delhi measures like home isolation prevented such a situation.

Over 3.12 lakh people recovered under home isolation that was started first in Delhi, he said.

Delhi was also the first in the world to open a plasma bank. So far, 4,929 people have received plasma therapy in the national capital, he said. — PTI

HC pulls up SDMC over requisitioning of educators

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 25

The Delhi high court Monday pulled up the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) and imposed a cost of ₹25,000 on it for not sending to the DSSSB the requisition of over 1,100 vacant posts of special educators in the schools run by the civic body. Justice Najmi Waziri said the authorities should show better alacrity for people who need special care but their conduct displays callous negligence for such citizens.

The court noted that on December 18, 2020, the corporation was directed to expedite the process and urgently send the requisition to Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board (DSSSB) so that the process for recruitment can be initiated and it was granted three weeks to do so. However, even after over four weeks today, the corporation has not sent requisition to DSSSB for initiation of the process, the high court said.

For this the corporation shall pay ₹25,000 to the petitioner within two weeks.

'Delhi likely heading towards herd immunity for Covid-19'

New Delhi, Jan. 25: The outcome of the fifth round of sero-prevalence survey in the national capital has indicated that Delhi population could be heading towards attaining herd immunity against coronavirus infection, sources said on Monday. The survey has found that in one district, 50-60 per cent of the sampled population has developed antibodies to Covid-19, they said.

For the survey, which ended a few days ago, samples of over 25,000 people from various districts across the city were col-

lected, the officials said. Delhi's population is over two crore, spread across 11 districts.

"In one district, the sero-prevalence rate is between 50-60 per cent, indicating a large number of people have developed antibodies, so we can say the city is moving towards attaining herd immunity," a source said without disclosing the name of the district.

Experts say herd immunity is said to have been developed in a population segment if 50-60 per cent of those are found to have the presence of antibodies in a

sero-prevalence survey.

Herd immunity implies that in any set of people in a community, after becoming affected by the virus, a lot many of them become immune to it, on account of antibodies developed in response to it. And, hence, such people become a protective layer between the infected person and unaffected people, thereby breaking the chain of viral transmission.

This is the fifth exercise that was conducted, but the Delhi government has not given any official version on it. — PTI

SC notice to govt over law commission appointment

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JAN. 25

The Supreme Court on Monday issued a notice to the Centre and the law ministry on a plea seeking appointment of the chairman of the law commission — a position which is vacant since Justice B.S. Chauhan (Retd) demitted office in August 2018.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasub-

ramanian issued notice on a PIL pointing out that not only the position of chairman, law commission is vacant since 2018, but other members of the Commission too have not been appointed.

The PIL by Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay sought the appointment of the chairman and the members of the commission within a month and to declare the Law Commission as a statutory body to save it from becoming non-functional.

148 fresh Covid cases in 24 hrs

New Delhi: Delhi recorded as many as 148 fresh coronavirus cases on Monday. With this, the tally of Covid-19 cases in Delhi has reached over 6.34 lakh, while the death toll mounted to 10,813. Five fatalities have been recorded in the last 24 hours, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department. According to a health bulletin issued by the Delhi government, 48,450 COVID-19 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours.

Modi lauds kids for spreading Covid awareness

New Delhi, Jan. 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday lauded the contribution of children in raising awareness about handwashing during the Covid-19 pandemic, and said that a programme tastes success if they become part of it.

In an interaction with the 'Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar' awardees via video conferencing, Modi praised the winners and said they should never stop working and stay humble all the time.

He also asked them to work for the country, urging them to think of what they can do as the nation approaches the 75th year of its Independence.

The Prime Minister also asked them to read biographies and said it will keep inspiring them. Speaking to a boy who made farming equipment, Mr Modi said modern agriculture is the need of the country.

Children also played a big role in spreading awareness about sanitation as part of the "Swachh Bharat" programme, he noted.

The prime minister said that this year's awards are special as the recipient earned them in the difficult times of Corona.

During the interaction, Mr Modi acknowledged the role of children in major behaviour-change campaigns like the swachata movement.

He said when children got involved in campaigns like the one on handwash during corona time, the campaigns caught the imagination of people and achieved success.

He also noted the diversity in the fields in which awards have been given this year.

Prime Minister Modi observed that when a small idea is supported by the right action, results are impressive.

He asked the children to believe in action as this interplay of ideas and action will trigger many actions inspiring people for greater things.

The Prime Minister advised the children not to rest on their laurels and said they should continue to strive for better results in their lives.

Mr Modi asked the children to take note of three pledges.

"First, pledge of consistency. There should not be any slackening of speed of the action. Second, pledge for the country. If we work for the country and treat every work in terms of the country then that work will become greater than the self. Third, the pledge of humility. Every success should spur us to be more polite as our humility will enable others to celebrate our success with us," Prime Minister Modi said. — PTI

Naveen urges mantris, judges to adopt schools

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 25



Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Monday urged two Union ministers from the state — Dharmendra Pradhan and Pratap Sarangi — and Odisha high court judges, all the MLAs and MPs of the province to adopt schools under the "Mo School initiative".

In a letter to the elected representatives and judges, the CM advised them to adopt the schools in which they had studied or any school of their choice under the Mo School (my school) programme.

A person can adopt a maximum of three schools under the initiative.

The CM had launched the Mo School campaign on November 14, 2017 in response to the philanthropic interest from alumni of Odisha schools residing in India and

abroad. Mo School is an initiative that aims to create a platform for people to connect, collaborate and contribute to revamping the government and government-aided schools in Odisha.

Many former and present lawmakers, bureaucrats and people of other fields have adopted schools they studied in the past.

Claimed to be the first-of-its-kind initiative in the country, Mo School is a citizen-government partnership in which the former leads in designing the programme, defining its goals and directing its implementation.

आत्मनिर्भरता की ओर बढ़ते कदम
दुनिया में लहराया हमारा परचम

72^{वाँ}
गणतंत्र दिवस
26 जनवरी, 2021

हम विश्व के सर्वश्रेष्ठ गणतंत्र बनें, माननीय प्रधानमंत्री जी के इसी सपने को साकार करने के लिए उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार राष्ट्र गौरव के प्रति हर क्षण समर्पित है। अंत्योदय और समानता के आदर्शों को सर्वोपरि रखते हुये प्रदेश के हर वर्ग का विकास हो। हर नागरिक आत्मनिर्भर बने एवं प्रदेश के विकास में भागीदार हो। इसी कामना के साथ अपने गणतंत्र को सशक्त बनाने के लिए आइये, हम सब मिलकर तिरंगे की शान बढ़ाएं।

गणतंत्र दिवस की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं

-योगी आदित्यनाथ
मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश

- प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना के तहत 40 लाख से अधिक घरों की स्वीकृति/निर्माण
- पीएम किसान सम्मान निधि के अंतर्गत 27 हजार 101 करोड़ रु. किसानों को हस्तांतरित
- स्वच्छ भारत अभियान के अंतर्गत 2.61 करोड़ शौचालयों का निर्माण
- 1.28 करोड़ घरों को निःशुल्क विद्युत कनेक्शन
- उज्ज्वला योजना के तहत 1.47 करोड़ गैस कनेक्शन निःशुल्क वितरित
- 4 लाख सरकारी नौकरी
- एम.एस.एम.ई. में 2.5 करोड़ रोजगार
- किसानों को विभिन्न योजनाओं में 2.53 लाख करोड़ रु. का भुगतान
- गेहूँ, गन्ना, चीनी, आलू, दुग्ध, आम एवं आंवला उत्पादन में प्रथम स्थान
- 5 एक्सप्रेस-वे का निर्माण
- 52 मेडिकल कॉलेजों का निर्माण
- 1.35 लाख विद्यालयों में ऑपरेशन कायाकल्प के अंतर्गत बुनियादी सुविधाओं का विकास
- 29 एयरपोर्ट का विकास

सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश

SHORT TAKES

COVID-19 CASES
SHOW NO SIGNS OF
LET UP IN KERALAGILVESTER ASSARY
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'AGE 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 front-line 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.

Didi: Will give befitting
reply to 'insult' in pollsRAJIB CHOWDHURI
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



Trinamul Congress MP Nusrat Jahan addresses a rally to support chief minister Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata on Monday. — PTI

Ishwarchandra 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.

"Some minted so much money that they are running away to the BJP in a worry to stash them. The thieves are joining BJP to wash themselves to turn white from black. Let them get converted to the BJP. We will not take them

back later. Election is barely a month away. TMC would not have given tickets to them. That is why they are fleeing in fear," the TMC chief reasoned.

Sending a stern message to the fence-sitters, she added, "Those of you who are still in the queue to make a switch should not wait anymore. Hurry up, otherwise you will miss the train. Neither Bengal nor TMC want them. We also know whom to induct in our party. TMC will give tickets to only those who served the public. Those who have not worked for the public would not get ticket."

Ms Banerjee, whose party was an NDA partner once, however, blamed the CPI(M) for helping the BJP to make inroads to the state.

DRDO's Akash-NG missile hits target



DRDO conducted the successful maiden launch of Akash-NG (new generation) missile from integrated test range off the coast of Odisha on Monday. Akash-NG is a new generation surface-

to-air missile meant for use by Indian Air Force with an aim of intercepting high manoeuvring low detectable aerial threats. The missile intercepted the target with textbook precision. — PTI

3 more victims of rape
fall ill in MP, hospitalisedRABINDRA NATH
CHOUHDURY
BHOPLAL, JAN. 25

Days after an alleged rape victim died after consuming an overdose of sleeping pills in a government-run shelter home here, three girls, also victims of sexual exploitation, on Monday suddenly fell ill sounding an alarm to the police.

The three girls were among the five alleged rape victims who have been kept in the shelter home since July last year after the police busted a sex racket and arrested its alleged kingpin, Pyare Miyan, who is a newspaper owner.

Pyare Miyan was spotted by the police accompanying the five girls in his car. He was booked for running a sex racket and arrested.

One of the five alleged

► THE GIRLS were among the five alleged rape victims who have been kept in a shelter home since July last year after the police busted a sex racket and arrested alleged kingpin Pyare Miyan, a newspaper owner

victims of sexual exploitation died after reportedly consuming an overdose of sleeping pills on January 21, sparking outrage among her kin.

Her body was not handed over to her family members and was cremated in the presence of the police, raising suspicion on the cover-up of her death by the police.

Later, chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan ordered a probe into the incident by a special investigation team of the

Madhya Pradesh police. Sources said the three girls complained of nausea when the SIT (special investigation team) members visited them in the shelter home to probe the incident.

"The three girls complained of nausea when the SIT members started interrogating them. They were immediately shifted to the hospital," an official of the shelter home told this newspaper requesting not to be quoted. On Saturday, another girl, an alleged victim of sexual abuse, fell sick and was admitted to the hospital.

Incidentally, the National Child Commission had earlier taken cognisance of the death of one of the five inmates of the shelter home and asked the state government to arrange for their counselling.

■ Col. Babu awarded Mahavir Chakra, 5 others Vir Chakra
Galwan heroes honoured
with gallantry awardsPAWAN BALI
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. Fourteen 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.

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-

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

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."

Mumbai HC's judgment on
sexual assault triggers outrageSHAHAB ANSARI
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 judgment 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 judgment has drawn the ire of child rights bodies and activists across the country. Kanoongo in her letter has also stated that consid-

ering 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.

She has also stated, "You are requested to provide details of the minor victim [maintaining strict confidentiality] so that the commission can provide help such as legal aid etc. in the best interest of the child."

Dhananjay Tingal, executive director of child rights NGO Bachpan Bachao Andolan, said their legal team was looking into the matter and all the data related to this is being collected.

"We shall be appealing the Supreme court on the basis of their inputs," Mr Tingal told a news agency.

Bengal Cong, Left
to fight 77 seats
they won in 2016

Kolkata: The Congress and the Left parties decided that in West Bengal elections, they will contest the seats they had won respectively in the 2016 polls while talks will continue for the remaining constituencies. The alliance in 2016 had won 77 seats, out of which Congress had emerged victorious in 44. — PTI

ADHOC HIRING OF CIVIL TRANSPORT

With Effect From 01 Apr 2021 To 30 Sep 2021
at Various Stations in The AOR of CIF Victor Force,
Awantipora For Local & Outstation Duties

TENDER NOTICE

HQ Victor Force intends to hire various types of vehicles i.e Light vehicles, Buses, Trucks upto 9 tons, Tipper, JCB and Water Bowser on Adhoc basis. **Sealed quotations are required to be deposited in Tender Box by 1200 hrs on 08 Feb 2021**, at HQ CIF (V) Main Gate Awantipora. The format of the quotation and terms & conditions can be obtained from CIF HQ (V) Signal Regiment before 05 Feb 2021. **For clarifications** please contact AQMG, HQ CIF (V). Mobile No.: 8055779685.

India's 1st snow igloo cafe comes up at Gulmarg

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JAN. 25

India's first snow igloo cafe 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 cafe 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



The igloo can accommodate 16 people at any given time for lunch or dinner.

'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 cafe crept into his mind after the family built a small (8x7 feet) igloo at its Srinagar home. "The idea of building an igloo cafe 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.

SHORT TAKES

Raj MLA booked for beating neta's son

Jaipur: Behror MLA Baljeet Yadav and six others have been booked in connection with an alleged attack on the son of a BJP leader in Alwar district of Rajasthan, police said. The independent MLA has rejected the allegation, and said he has no connection with the attack. Mohit Yadav, the son of former state minister Jaswant Yadav, was allegedly attacked on Sunday near Behror. He alleged that the assailants were in an SUV and beat him with sticks. A case under various Sections, including 307 (attempt to murder) and 120 (B) (criminal conspiracy to commit an offence) of IPC was registered against the MLA and six others on Sunday. The case against Yadav has been referred to the crime branch. Mr Yadav said, I have nothing to do with the matter and everything will be clear in the police investigation". — *PTI*

Deputy sarpanch killed by Naxals

Kondagaon: A deputy sarpanch was killed by Naxals in Chhattisgarh's Kondagaon district, over 200 kilometres from state capital Raipur, police said on Monday. The incident took place late Saturday evening in Permapal village under Bayanar police station limits when the victim, Bajjaram Korram, was in his house with his family, an official said. As per preliminary information, over a dozen ultras stormed into the house of Korram, deputy sarpanch of Permapal, dragged him out, thrashed him and strangled him, the official said. "They accused him of working against the interests of the local people. The village is located deep inside a forest along the Kondagaon-Narayanpur inter-district border," he said. "Prima facie it seems the Bayanar area committee of the Maoists was involved in the incident," he added. — *PTI*

Ex-TMC MP's ED custody extended

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Monday extended by two days the ED custody of former TMC MP K.D. Singh in a money laundering case. Mr Singh, arrested on January 14, was produced before special judge Geetaniji Goel by the ED on expiry of his 12-day custody granted earlier. The ED's special public prosecutor N.K. Matta, while seeking an extension of Mr Singh's custody by two days, told the court that the former MP's further custodial interrogation was required. Mr Matta told the court that the documents recovered as part of evidence were voluminous and that Singh was also required to be confronted with several individuals in the matter. Mr Singh was arrested under provisions of the PMLA. — *PTI*

38 BANGLADESHI NATIONALS DEPORTED

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JAN. 25

Thirty-eight Bangladeshi nationals, including women and children, have been deported from India, on the eve of its Republic Day, to their country. They were handed over to the Bangladesh government officials via the Petrapole-Benapole integrated check post (ICP) at the international border in the North 24 Parganas of West Bengal. The list has 25 females including girls and 13 males, mostly boys, originally hailing from Jessore, Cox Bazar, and many other districts, according to Union home ministry sources. Held as illegal immigrants by the security agencies, they had been kept under detention at various safe houses in the state for a long time, sources revealed. The Bangladesh deputy high commission, Kolkata, stated that it made necessary arrangements by issuing travel permits to the 38 Bangladeshis after the confirmation of their nationality to ensure their return across the border with the help of the state government on the advice of the foreign affairs ministry of Bangladesh. The development also came a day before the joint retreat ceremony is set to resume between the Border Security Force and Border Guard Bangladesh from Tuesday after a gap of 316 days at the Petrapole-Benapole ICP.

FARMERS' PROTEST Around 2L tractors expected to join ■ Heavy security in Delhi, its borders

Tractor parade on R-Day, Parl march on Budget day

New Delhi, Jan. 25: 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.

Heavy security has been deployed in view of the unprecedented "Kisan Gantantra Parade" that will move into Delhi from three border points — Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur (UP Gate).

The farmer unions protesting for nearly two months against the three new Central farm laws said on Monday their tractor parade will start only after the official Republic Day parade on Rajpath concludes.

They claimed around two lakh tractors are expected to participate in the parade in a show of strength and support.

Addressing a press conference at Sinhu border here on Monday, senior union leader Darshan Pal announced the farmers will also organise a foot march to Parliament from different locations on the Budget day, a move being seen as a pressure tactic.

Mr Pal, who is a member of the Krantikari Kisan Union, said the protesting farmers remain firm in



Farmers dance at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Monday.

— *PTI*

their stand of repealing the three new farm laws and their agitation will continue till their demands are met.

"We will march towards Parliament on foot from different locations on the budget day on February 1. As far as tomorrow's tractor rally is concerned, it will give the government an idea of our strength and they will know the agitation is not just limited to Haryana or Punjab but it is an agitation of the whole of the country," he said.

Every march or protest will be peaceful as the movement has been so far, he said.

"The farmers who have

come for the tractor parade will not go back now and will join the protest. The agitation will continue till our demands met. Our stand remains the same," Pal told reporters, sharing the farmers' plans to intensify the protest.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been campaigning at several Delhi border points since November 28, demanding a complete repeal of three farm laws and a legal guarantee on minimum support price for their crops.

The police, meanwhile, said thousands of security personnel have been

already deployed at several border points to maintain law and order during the farmers' tractor parade on Tuesday.

In a circular, Delhi police commissioner S.N. Srivastava directed all officers, jawans and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel, posted for the Republic Day Parade security arrangements to be prepared for an extended deployment to maintain law and order in the wake of the tractor parade.

The traffic Police asked commuters to avoid routes where protesting farmers will conduct their tractor parade on Republic Day.

— *PTI*

Centre's farm laws 'criminal', claims Rahul

Karur (TN), Jan. 25: Keeping up the attack on the NDA government at the Centre over the new farm laws, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said they were "criminal" and vowed to oppose them in the interest of the farmers.

The laws were aimed at benefitting "5-6 people closest" to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said at a farmers' convention at Vangal in this district, as part of his three-day election campaign in Tamil Nadu which began on Saturday.

He alleged that Modi wanted the farmers to negotiate with "huge corporates" rather than the ryots going to mandis or negotiating with small traders. "The result is going to be that millions of people who are employed by this agriculture system—farmers, labourers, loaders, small traders—all these people are going to be unemployed," he claimed.

"...they are trying to help 5-6 people closest to the Prime Minister and they are hurting the interest of millions and millions of farmers," he said about the Centre. — *PTI*

Tomar: Govt's offer best for farmers

New Delhi, Jan. 25: Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Monday termed the government's proposal to suspend new farm laws for 1-1.5 years as the "best offer" and hoped that the protesting farmers' unions will soon reconsider it and convey their decision.

The talks between the government and 41 protesting farm unions have remained inconclusive even after 11 rounds of discussions. During the 10th round of talks, the government had climbed down and offered a proposal to keep the new laws in abeyance for 1-1.5 years, but it was rejected by the unions.

In the 11th round of discussion, the government asked unions to reconsider the proposal and convey their final decision. "The government has given the best offer to farmers' unions. I am hopeful that they will convey their decision to us after discussing it among themselves. Once they communicate, we will take it forward," Mr Tomar said.

After the 11th round of talks, the minister had indicated that there won't



Narendra Singh Tomar

be further talks but he would be ready to meet for farmers' final decision on the offer made by the government.

It remains to be seen whether the farmers' unions will convey their decision after their planned tractor rally or 'Kisan Gantantra Parade' in the city on January 26.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court-appointed committee on farm laws is scheduled to hold its second round of consultations with farmers and agricultural organisations on January 27.

Notwithstanding severe cold, thousands of farmers have camped at Delhi borders seeking repeal of the new laws and a legal guarantee of government-fixed minimum support price for agri-crops.

The farmers' protest at Delhi borders has entered its 61st day and even peasants in other states like Maharashtra have started extending support to them. — *PTI*

■ Purchase, pvt possession of alcohol limited to 6 litres in UP Not in favour of liquor ban, hints Yogi

New Delhi, Jan. 25: A day after the Uttar Pradesh government made obtaining license mandatory for buying, transporting or possessing over six litres of alcohol, chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday indicated he was not in favour of forcefully imposing ban on liquor in the state.

He however, made it clear that his government will take all steps which are in interest of Uttar Pradesh.

According to a new excise policy, purchase, transport or private possession of alcohol in the state is limited to six litres. To keep liquor above the prescribed limit, one has to obtain license from the excise department.

The chief minister told reporters that this step will "check liquor smuggling and is in overall interest of the state".

When asked whether



Singer Sonu Nigam meets Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow on Monday.

— *PTI*

state government has plans to make Uttar Pradesh liquor-free, he said, "We cannot forcefully impose something but whatever will be in the interest of the state we

will take those steps."

The Uttar Pradesh government has allowed sale of select types of alcohol in shopping malls. Earlier, sale of liquor was allowed only at certified model

shops in the state.

Liquor is banned in Bihar, the neighbouring state of Uttar Pradesh. There is restriction on sale of liquor in Gujarat as well. — *PTI*

Govt officer killed, buried in Bihar; Opp. slams Nitish

Patna, Jan. 25: A government official was killed and buried at a secluded spot along a river in Patna district following a tiff with a fertiliser vendor, drawing fresh Opposition criticism of the Nitish Kumar government on Monday over law and order situation in Bihar.

Ajay Kumar (55), a resident of Kankarbagh locality of the city, was posted as the block agriculture officer at Masaurhi in the district, and had gone missing since January 18.

His body was recovered from a pit dug close to the Punpun river in Gaurichak police station area, nearly 20 km from his residence, on Sunday.

According to superintendent of police, city, (East), the body was recovered following a "confession" by alleged accused Abhinav alias Golu who was arrested on Saturday. Family members of the

deceased had lodged a complaint after Ajay Kumar went missing, and also suspected that Golu, a 21-year-old, who traded in fertilisers and seeds, could have plotted his disappearance.

During interrogation, Golu allegedly confessed to having killed the official, with whom he was locked in a dispute over settlement of bills.

The SP said cellphone records of the deceased showed that the last call received by him on January 18 was from Golu, who said he had lured the official into visiting the secluded spot with the promise of helping him clinch a lucrative land deal. Golu has been sent to jail and investigation is on to ascertain if others were involved in the crime, the SP added.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, who had last week met the governor with a memorandum alleging a

marked deterioration in law and order, came out with an angry tweet.

"Ajay Kumar, an agricultural department official employed with Bihar government, got kidnapped and the police went to sleep. Now his body has been recovered. Criminals patronized by the ruling dispensation are running amok and the chief minister and his two deputies are looking on helplessly, Yadav tweeted.

BJP leader and MP Ram Kripal Yadav, whose party is an alliance partner in the Nitish Kumar government, also expressed concern over the incident.

"The fresh incident comes within a fortnight of the murder of Rupesh Kumar Singh, a senior official here with a private airlines. There should be a check on crime so that the people's confidence in the government does not sag," he said. — *PTI*

Early disengagement

■ **Continued from Page 1** tranquillity. The Indian delegation was led by 14 Corps commander Lt-General P.G.K. Menon and included a joint secretary from the external affairs ministry.

India and China have been involved in a military stand-off in eastern Ladakh for the last nine months. Each side has deployed around 50,000 troops along with tanks and artillery. Despite temperatures dipping to minus 30° Celsius in the region, both the countries 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 troops on both sides 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 disengagement by China. Besides, in Depsang Plains, Chinese troops have been preventing Indian Army from patrolling.

China had been pushing India to vacate strategic heights which the Indian Army had occupied on the south bank of Pangong Tso in a surprise action in August. This has given the Indian Army a strategic advantage and choked Chinese movement in the sector.

China has been mainly interested in getting India vacated from these strategic heights. However, India's stand was that it will discuss disengagement of the whole Eastern Ladakh and not just a few points.

Delhi under heavy security

■ **Continued from Page 1** as opposed to over one lakh spectators who usually attend the event every year.

The parade will also be shorter this year. Instead of marching up to Red Fort, the parade will end at National Stadium and only the tableaux will be allowed to perform at Red Fort.

A five-layer security cover comprising border pickets, inner, middle and outer security has been deployed in and around the city to maintain law and order during the

Republic Day ceremony and the proposed tractor parade.

"We have 140 CCTV cameras across the Republic Day parade route and along the enclosures. We have identified and set up facial recognition systems at 30 identified spots at the Rajpath from where the public will enter.

"This system is fed with a database of nearly over 50,000 people, including that of suspected terrorists, criminals and anti-social elements," said another senior police officer.

Maha gov has time to meet Ranaut..

■ **Continued from Page 1** demanded a debate, even though all top leaders were present in Parliament at the time.

"We said 'send it (the laws) to a select committee where people of all parties are there'. But the Central government said, 'No discussion. We came with this and we will pass it without discussion. You all have come here to support'," Mr Pawar recalled, pointing at how the farmers have turned the tables

on the government. "Today every farmer is saying first repeal these laws and then we can discuss."

Farmers from various districts of Maharashtra had gathered at Azad Maidan in Mumbai to protest against the Centre's new farm laws and to express solidarity with the farmers in Delhi demanding a complete repeal of the three farm laws, terming them as 'anti-farmer'.

PM unhappy with PMJAY working in BJP-ruled states

■ **Continued from Page 1** many of them are not empanelled under it, sources further added.

Keeping this in mind, the Prime Minister is said to have directed state officials to make a serious effort to expedite e-card generation simultaneously while empanelling more hospitals under PMJAY.

Mr Modi also underlined the need to strengthen the care mechanism between health and wellness centres as well as PMJAY.

While the Centre has aggressively promoted the scheme as offering cashless treatment of up to ₹5 lakh per family among the rural poor, covering more than 1,000 procedures at empanelled public and private hospi-

tals, it follows a prospective payment mechanism, where the higher ceiling of the treatment cost is fixed.

So if the treatment cost exceeds the fixed package amount allowed under Ayushman Bharat, the patient has to pay the remaining sum from his or her pocket.

As the package prices are on the lower side, many private hospitals were reluctant to come under the ambit of the scheme during its initial days.

Though later some hospitals did join it after the Centre upwardly revised the costs of some procedures, several of them are out of its purview, thus affecting the scheme's performance in many key states.

Our national interest will be protected at all costs: Prez

Seeks to allay fears on agri laws, says Indians salute farmers

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

Mr Kovind's remarks came amid the nearly nine-month-long military standoff with China in eastern Ladakh and the deadlock between the Centre and the farmer unions over the farm laws enacted in September.

"The path of reform at the initial stages may cause misapprehensions but the government is singularly devoted to the farmers' welfare," he said, as the protests by the farmer unions demanding repeal of the three laws continues at border points in Delhi.

On the country's efforts to fight Covid-19, the President said an effective response to the pandemic would not have been possible without the



President Ram Nath Kovind addresses the nation on the eve of Republic Day 2021 in New Delhi.

— *PTI*

Constitutional value of 'Fraternity' among the people of the country. He also took pride in the fact that India was called as "pharmacy of the world" for supplying medicines to several countries to alleviate the sufferings across the globe. He felt that after about a year of this "unforeseen ordeal", India today stands "not respondent but confident."

Also, he said the slowdown has turned out to be transitory as the economy has regained its dynamism.

Mr Kovind urged people to utilise the 'lifeline' provided by the Covid-19 vaccine and get inoculated as per guidelines. "Your health opens the way for your advancement."

Paying tributes to the 20 Indian soldiers who laid down their lives at Galwan valley in eastern Ladakh last June during

clashes with the Chinese troops, the President said the past year "was a time of adversity, and it came from many fronts."

"We faced an expansionist move on our borders, but our valiant soldiers foiled it. To achieve this objective, 20 of them had to lay down their lives."

Mr Kovind said the nation shall remain grateful to those brave soldiers.

Paying tributes to the farmers, the President said every Indian salutes our farmers who have made our vast and populous country self-reliant in food-grains and dairy products. He said that despite adversities of nature, numerous other challenges and the Covid-19 pandemic the farmers sustained the agricultural production. "A grateful nation is fully committed to the welfare of our farmers." — *PTI*

THE ASIAN AGE

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.

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.

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.

THE ASIAN AGE

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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

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.

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

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist based in Kolkata

LETTERS

BUDGET HALWA

This refers to the report that officials of the finance ministry have started preparing and eating halwa in the process of getting ready for the Union Budget. As per Indian tradition, eating sweets before starting any major work is considered auspicious. It is also customary to distribute it. One can only hope the Budget will also do exactly the same thing. The economy needs a dose of halwa in the form of a stimulus.

D.B. Madan
New Delhi

A PLOT AT SINGHU?

AT THE Singhu border, the protesting farmers recently caught a man who made a disturbing confession to the media. Covering his face with a handkerchief, the young man claimed that he was planning to shoot at a group of farmers January 26 with his group, including two girls. The plan was for a team of trained thugs to fire on farmers' tractors, which would provoke the Delhi police to fire back in response. One can only imagine the kind of riots that might have erupted across the country after that. One can only conclude that certain elements were planning a bloodbath in order to stop the farmers' agitation.

Abdussalam
Mumbai

DOING A VITAL JOB PROGRESSIVE SOCIETIES evolve through introspection. This earlier used to come about through the discourses of sages and writings of scholars and spirited reformers. Today the media is an instant and extended arm for such catharsis. Movies, for generations, carried the onus. If *Ganga Jal* highlighted the rough and ready dispensation of justice, the one on Jessica Lal's murder or the Nirbhaya horror served specific purposes. As does a *Tandav* or *Mir-zapur* in appealing to our consciences. If all these offerings on OTT platforms magnify the wars in society no one should complain as they are only performing their duty.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Deepak Singhal (Jan. 24). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

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 bumble 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

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

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi set to send a single article of impeachment to Senate

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



● **Former US President Donald Trump's second impeachment trial is set to commence in the first week of February 2021.** The Republican leader has been facing impeachment following his inflammatory speech on January 6, where he urged thousands of his supporters to flock to the US Capitol and protest the congressional certification of Joe Biden's victory in the US polls.

his tenure, which came to a close as a mob of loyal supporters heeded his rally cry by storming the Capitol and trying to 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.**

Paris, Jan. 25: Clashes broke out in the Netherlands on Sunday as anti-curfew demonstrators protested against coronavirus restrictions, while France imposed new border controls with numerous countries under pressure to slow the spread of new variants.

France introduced a requirement for incoming travellers from EU neighbours to show a recent negative coronavirus test and Israel announced it would "close" its skies to almost all aircraft.

In the US, Johns Hopkins University said the coun-

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

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.

"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

MEXICO'S PREZ SAYS HE'S TESTED +VE FOR COVID-19

Mexico City, Jan. 25: Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has said that he has tested positive for Covid-19 and that the symptoms are mild. Mexico's president, who has been criticised for his handling of his country's pandemic and for not setting an example of prevention in public, said on his official Twitter account that he is under medical treatment.

"I regret to inform you that I am infected with Covid-19," he tweeted. "The symptoms are mild but I am already under medical treatment. As always, I am optimistic. We will all move forward."

José Luis Alomia Zagarra, Mexico's director of epidemiology, said López Obrador had a "light" case of Covid-19 and was "isolating at home."

Mexico's president wrote that while he recovered Interior Secretary Olga Sánchez Cordero would be taking over for him in his daily news conferences, at which he usually speaks for two hours without breaks each weekday.

López Obrador, 67, has rarely been seen wearing a mask and continued to keep up a busy travel schedule taking commercial flights. — AP

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 rules 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 countrywide 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 under 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 Sindh 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 Sindh 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 one 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

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

* As of 8:30 PM IST

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.

Kotak Mahindra Bank Q3 net profit rises 16%



Kotak Mahindra Bank reported a 16 per cent increase in stand-alone net profit at Rs 1,854 crore for the third quarter against Rs 1,596 crore in the year-ago quarter. Total income rose to Rs 8,124.92 crore from Rs 8,077.03 crore. "Net interest income for Q3FY21 increased to Rs 4,007 crore, from Rs 3,430 crore in Q3FY20, up 17 per cent. NIM for Q3FY21 was at 4.51 per cent," it said. Gross NPAs declined to 2.25 per cent.

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.

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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 50,000-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

AADHAR 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 K.Y. 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

Hockey girls end tour undefeated

Santiago, Chile: The visiting Indian women's junior hockey team pipped the Chile senior side 2-1 in sixth and final match to end the tour unbeaten. Forward Beauty Dungdung's brace scored in the 6th and 26th minutes gave India a much deserved win while the lone goal for the hosts was scored by Francisca Tala (40th) on Sunday.

With their narrow victory in the sixth and final match, the young Indian team returns to the country with an undefeated streak, winning five and drawing one game.

In Buenos Aires, the Indian women's senior hockey team suffered their second consecutive loss on the tour of Argentina, going down 2-3 to the hosts' B side in a thrilling clash here. — PTI

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BRUNO BLASTS REDS

Fernandes gem knocks Liverpool out of FA Cup

Manchester, Jan. 25: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer hailed Bruno Fernandes's dedication to perfecting his free-kick technique as the Portuguese's stunning strike earned Manchester United a thrilling 3-2 win over Liverpool to reach the FA Cup fifth round on Sunday.

Solskjaer handed Fernandes a rare rest from the start with United leading the way in a tight Premier League title race.

But the Red Devils' talisman came off the bench to win a compelling cup tie at Old Trafford, devoid of the caution both sides showed in a 0-0 draw when they met a week ago on league duty.

"When you leave him out like I did today, he stayed

about 45 minutes after training yesterday shooting free kicks so I was pretty confident he could score one if he got the chance," said Solskjaer.

"He's never happy with me when I tell him to go inside after training when he's playing the next day, so he got some practice yesterday."

Liverpool's wait for a first domestic cup win of Jurgen Klopp's reign goes on to compound their faltering league form.

The English champions have fallen six points behind United after failing to score in their last four league games.

However, there was hope for Klopp of a revival as Mohamed Salah scored twice.

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, Tielemans 51-pen, Maddison 71)

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

"If you want to win here you have to be absolutely top and we were not," said Klopp, who is yet to win in six visits to Old Trafford as Liverpool manager.

Elsewhere, Leicester and Everton were also successful over Championship opposition to maintain their fine form.

The Foxes came from behind to beat Brentford 3-1 to set up a home tie against Brighton.

Dominic Calvert-Lewin struck on his return from injury as Everton saw off Sheffield Wednesday 3-0. Carlo Ancelotti's men will face the winners of Tottenham's trip to Wycombe on Monday.

Burnley beat Fulham 3-0 at Craven Cottage. — 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 undeterred 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 and since their loss in the Spanish Super Cup final last weekend to Athletic Bilbao, after an extra-time Copa del Rey win over Cornella in midweek. — 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 takeoff 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, Ranule 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. — AP

MUSHTAQ ALI | KNOCKOUTS

Domestic boys out to impress

Ahmedabad, Jan. 25: It will be the last chance for the domestic players to impress before the all-important IPL auction when the knock-outs of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy begin here from Tuesday.

While Karnataka will go all out looking to retain the title, the seven other teams, which have made it to the quarterfinals, will be itching to make an impact and get their names inscribed on the trophy. A mighty Punjab stand between Karnataka and their title defence as the two teams will square-off in the first quarterfinal, which is expected

to be an even battle.

Punjab made it to the knock-outs from Elite Group 'A' after winning all their five games in the league stage, while Karnataka also scraped to the final eight, despite being second on the points table in Group 'A', having lost one game.

In the second quarterfinal, for Tamil Nadu, attacking opener N. Jagadeesan, who is the leading run-getter in the tournament so far with 315 runs and skipper Dinesh Karthik, will again be the key players in their clash against Himachal Pradesh, who came through from Elite Group 'C'. — PTI

Lampard axed, Tuchel may be in

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 expecta-

tions, 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 excellent 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. — AFP

26th January, 2021

Heartiest Greetings

To People of Haryana On

REPUBLIC DAY

“The Constitution of India has a special identity across the world. The fundamental rights enshrined in our constitution give us the rights as citizens of a free democratic Nation. India has touched glorious heights in various fields due to the strenuous efforts of its people. On the solemn occasion of Republic Day, let us come together and take a pledge to march on the path of progress and make the Nation and State 'Aatmanirbhar'.”

- Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana

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