

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | TUESDAY | 19 JANUARY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 30.0°C
Min: 20.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Clear.
Max/Min temp.
30/20 °C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES

DEATHS

(+10,800)

(+141)

1,05,71,658

1,52,588

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+206)

(+2)

TS: 2,91,872

1,579

(+81)

(+1)

AP: 8,86,066

7,141

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

9,56,83,835

DEATHS

20,43,728

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES

219

worldometers.info/

coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana

Tithi: Pushya Shuddha Shashti till 11 am

Star: Uttarabhadra till 9.55 am

Varjyam: 11.16 pm to 1.03 am (Wednesday)

Durmuhurtam: 9.06 am to 9.51 am; 11.09 pm to 12.01 am

Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

HILIRI CALENDAR

Jamadi- ul- Akhir 5,1442 AH

PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5.40 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 4.30 pm

Maghrib: 5.48 pm

Isha: 8.30 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.35 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5.51 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 10.57 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW

COUNTER POINT

Forget Bihar...
now our priority is
Assam and Bengal!

SHORT TAKES

Man held for fake GST invoices

New Delhi: GST officers have arrested one person for operating 46 fake firms and passing on fake input tax credit worth ₹82.23 crore, the Finance Ministry said on Monday. The officers of Central Goods and Services Tax Commissionerate, Delhi East, unearthed a network of fictitious firms being used to generate and pass on fake ITC.

3 killed in J&K encounter: IGP

Srinagar: The three youths killed in a gunfight with security forces in Lawaypora last month were involved in militancy, Inspector General of Police, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar said on Monday and added that police will soon convince their parents of it with concrete evidence.

India steps up Arunachal infra

New Delhi: India, responding to a TV report that China constructed a village in a border area occupied by it since 1959 but which is part of Arunachal Pradesh, said it had "seen recent reports on the construction work" and that it "too has stepped up border infrastructure, including the construction of roads, bridges, etc.

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Maharashtra eyes 'K'taka occupation

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Navalny decries arrest on arrival

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High five for Siraj in Brisbane Test

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Back to school

Students wait at a bus stop after a long time to attend classes in a school on Bandar Road in Vijayawada on Monday. Classes which stopped due to the pandemic have resumed. — C. NARAYANA RAO

Vaccination first, polls next: State AP promises HC better poll turnout after vaccination is over

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 18

Advocate general S. Sriram has informed the AP High Court that the state government is now fully committed to conducting the Covid-19 vaccination programme in a smooth manner.

While this is the first priority, the state would also ensure better turnout of voters in the gram panchayat polls if the elections are held after completion of the vaccination programme.

This is why the state gov-

ernment is raising objections against the state election commission (SEC) move to hold the polls in February, he said.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Arup Kumar Goswami and Justice Ch. Praveen Kumar held the hearing on Monday as the SEC challenged the interim order issued by the single judge suspending the election schedule for gram panchayat polls in four phases in February.

Advocate general S. Sriram informed the court that the AP government

was duty-bound to follow the guidelines issued by the Centre on the Covid-19 vaccination programme. Under the circumstances, the government was not expected to take any decision that would disrupt the vaccination programme.

He said the state government was not in a position to simultaneously take up the Covid-19 vaccination programme and the gram panchayat polls.

If polls are held alongside the vaccination programme, the voter turnout would not cross 50 per

cent. The people would be afraid of coming out for voting as it involved a risk to their health.

The advocate general said if the polls are held after completion of the ongoing vaccination programme, it would help enhance the voter turnout.

The AG explained to the court as to how the state had carried out a dry run based on the guidelines from the Centre before taking up the vaccination programme.

■ Page 3: 3.7 lakh health staff need to be vaccinated

PALANISWAMI TO MEET MODI AHEAD OF POLLS

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR and D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, JAN. 18

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami's scheduled visit to Delhi on Monday, ostensibly to invite Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inaugurate former Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalithaa memorial and to discuss plans for the state, led to tongues wagging in the political circles.

The grapevine had it that he has gone to explain to Modi the difficulties in allowing Dhi-nakaran-led AMMK me-рге with the AIADMK.

Mamata challenges rebel Adhikari in his home turf

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JAN. 18

In a move that is being seen as a masterstroke to avenge Shubhendu Adhikari's desertion of her party and joining the BJP, Trinamul Congress chief Mamata Banerjee on Monday announced that she would contest the forthcoming Assembly polls from Nandigram, adding that she will also try to contest from her home constituency, Bhowanipore, which elected her in 2011 and 2016.

Mr Adhikari is the MLA of Nandigram in East Midnapore.

In her first visit to Mr Adhikari's home turf after his induction into the BJP, Ms Banerjee said that Nandigram is "lucky" for her since her movement against forcible land acquisition there ousted the Communist regime a decade ago.

PROTOCOL | BREACH

Lodges complaint with privileges committee

Roja rues she is ignored

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, JAN. 18

R.K. Roja, the YSR Congress Nagari legislator and Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation chairperson, got emotional before the Andhra Pradesh legislative privileges committee meeting in Tirupati on Monday.

She said the district officials were insulting her by not following the protocol guidelines vis-à-vis their dealings with her as a legislator.

Roja complained to committee chairman Kakani Govardhan Reddy that officials in her constituency were not inviting her for meetings.

She wasn't invited to programmes and meetings of the Tirumala Tirupati

Devasthanams, even on development works in her constituency.

For instance, she was not invited to the TTD employees house-site allotment meetings.

The meeting was held at Padmavati guest house. Govardhan Reddy later told the media that the protocol violation matter was immediately taken up with Chittoor collector Dr Narayan Bharat Gupta

● ROJA COMPLAINED to committee chairman Kakani Govardhan Reddy that officials in her constituency were not inviting her for meetings. She wasn't invited to programmes and meetings of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams.

and he promised to do the needful. He said Roja raised issues related to area development plans.

"These issues do not come under the purview of the privileges committee and were referred to the concerned departments."

Govardhan Reddy said the onus is on the privileges committee to safeguard the freedom and dignity of the house as also its

committees and members. The chairman and members of the privilege committee along with the collector held a review with district officials on implementation of the protocol vis-à-vis MLAs in the district.

Speaking to the media, the committee chairman said they haven't received any major complaint from legislators in Chittoor district on the protocols being followed by the district administration.

"The district administration has to provide information to legislators when they take up welfare activities. The privilege committee will take up such complaints from MLAs," he said.

■ Page 2: Committee to meet TTD officials

Jagan, Shah meet in New Delhi today

To discuss irregularities in Amaravati land

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 18

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will visit New Delhi to meet Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday.

The CM will hold discussions with Shah on matters like the Amaravati land scam wherein top names from the judiciary are said to be involved. Sources in the CMO said the AP government had sent a request to Shah for an appointment to discuss on several issues. The CM would be accompanied by Advocate-General S. Sriram.

The visit gained significance also as AP is witnessing a series of attacks on temples and desecration of idols, and DGP Gautam Sawang had blamed those from the Opposition Telugu Desam and the BJP for their suspected roles to whip up religious sentiments. Notably, when BJP leaders led by AP party chief Somu Veeraraju went to visit the temple at Ramateertham in Vizianagaram district for a study of the scene where the idol of Lord Rama was

CM: School toilets must be cleaned

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 18

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy on Monday directed officials to accord top priority to clean toilets in schools and said students would otherwise be discouraged to come in for classes.

The CM reviewed this matter as also the Nadu-Nadu and other schemes with education minister Adimulapu Suresh and senior officials here. The

CM underlined the importance for hygiene in schools. Officials must oversee all requisite repair works including plumbing and sanitation. Companies with requisite experience and expertise in proper maintenance of toilets must be roped in. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for maintenance of school toilets must be in place.

■ Page 2: App to monitor toilet cleaning

vandalised, the AP police had blocked their way. The BJP leaders raised a hue and cry over the police action and pointed out that the state government had allowed YSRC MP V. Vijayasai Reddy, some ministers and even TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu to visit the spot.

BJP MP G.V.L. Narasimaha Rao had complained to the Union home

minister on the issue. The AP government requires the Centre's support on many matters of importance. It needs Central aid in getting the President's nod for the AP Disha Bill meant to toughly deal with those involved in violence against women and children.

■ Page 2: Capital relocation may be discussed

3 VACCINE VIALS BROKEN DURING TRANSPORT

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, JAN 18

Three vials of Covid vaccine, containing 30 doses, are stated to have broken while being carried to Virava village in Pithapuram mandal of East Godavari on Monday.

Sources said a Primary Health Centre supervisor took six vials of the vaccine from the PHC to the Community Health Centre in Pithapuram on Monday for immunising ASHA and sanitation workers in the area.

On reaching Pithapuram, the supervisor found three vials of the vaccine missing. Later, the vials were found broken. Following this, district immunisation officer Dr V. Aruna inquired into the matter. She told *Deccan Chronicle* that when the vials were being transported, they got broken as they had fallen down. Dr Aruna disclosed that each vial contains 10 doses.

MYSTERY ILLNESS REPORTED IN W. GODAVARI VILLAGE

DC CORRESPONDENT BHIMADOLU, JAN. 18

As many as 10 Pulla villagers suffered from the mysterious disease that was reported in Eluru last month.

According to sources, they collapsed suddenly and became unconscious on Monday. They were admitted to Primary Health Centre (PHC) at Pulla in West Godavari.

PHC medical officer Dr Leela Prasad told this correspondent that five to six persons fainted because of fits and four fell unconscious. However, they recovered within minutes and were sent home after treatment.

He said that water pollution may be one of the causes. Another version is that it could have happened because of food poisoning.

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SHORT TAKES

Srilakshmi promoted as principal secretary

Vijayawada: The state government on Monday promoted IAS official Y. Srilakshmi as principal secretary. Srilakshmi who was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation on charges of corruption was retained as Secretary in view of cases though all her batchmates were promoted. Chief Secretary Adityanath Das issued orders promoting Srilakshmi with a rider that the move is subject to the outcome of pending court cases. The Department of Personnel and Training rules permit the conditional promotion. She is retained in her current posting in municipal administration and urban development.

Thakur takes charge as RTC vice-chairman

Vijayawada: Senior IPS officer R.P. Thakur assumed charge as vice-chairman and managing director of the APSRTC here on Monday. He reviewed the status of its operations and financial position with the senior officials. Speaking on the occasion, he stated that the road transport corporation was one of the best organisations in the state as it is operating 45 lakh km daily with 12,000 buses transporting nearly 64 lakh passengers daily. He also reviewed the operations and financial status of the RTC in the post-Covid-19 lockdown scenario. He assured efforts to improve the organisation and also the welfare of the employees. Earlier, he thanked Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for giving him the opportunity to serve the government.

Gowtham sworn in as AP FiberNet chairman

Vijayawada: P. Gowtham Reddy was sworn-in as chairman of AP FiberNet Corporation Limited at a programme held at Thummalapalli auditorium here on Monday. Addressing the people, he announced that they were aiming to provide Internet, Cable TV and telephone connections to every household in the coming years and added that at present, they were having 10 lakh connections out of a total of 1.25 crore cable TV connections in the state. Referring to the planned expansion of the Internet, cable TV and telephone services to every village in the state, he said that in ₹450 plan, 30 MBPS speed and 300 GB Internet collection to be provided while in ₹599 plan, unlimited 50 MBPS speed Internet connection to be provided.

TTD CHAIRMAN BLAMES TD ON HOUSING ISSUES

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, JAN. 18

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Board chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy has accused main opposition party Telugu Desam of creating hurdles in Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's proposal to distribute house sites to homeless poor throughout the state. "The CM will overcome all impediments towards doing justice to the poor," he declared.

Subba Reddy was participating in a house sites distribution programme on Monday at Komadolu village in Eluru Assembly constituency. He pointed out that no Chief Minister in the past has taken up such a huge programme for homeless poor. However, former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is unable to digest the huge popularity the scheme is attracting for Jagan Mohan Reddy, he maintained.

Presiding over the function, Deputy Chief Minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas said under the housing distribution programme, which will go on for one month in the state, 2.56 lakh house sites are being distributed in West Godavari district. Of these, 31,000 sites have been earmarked only for the Eluru Assembly constituency (which is represented by Kalikrishna Srinivas).

Those present at the function included joint collectors G. Lakshminsha, Keerthi Chekuri and G. Rajakumari.

Meanwhile, East Godavari district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy has instructed officials to complete distribution of house site pattas by January 20. Reviewing the progress of distributing house sites and deploying mobile vehicles, he warned that stringent action will be taken against those government personnel who neglect these programmes.

New release



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, association president Venkataramireddy and others release AP Secretariat Association Dairy at the camp office on Monday.

— BY ARRANGEMENT.

Face-tracking cams to be set up near temples

VDCs set up in various villages to secure places of religious worship

DC CORRESPONDENT KADAPA, JAN. 18

Kadapa district superintendent of police Karur Karunapathi Nagendra Kumar Anburajan on Monday underlined that police are keeping a close watch on temples and places of worship in the district.

He pointed out that Village Defence Committees (VDCs) have been set up in various villages for securing places of religious worship, including temples, chapels and mosques. The SP stated that district superintendents of police and circle inspectors are reviewing security at all temples and places of worship at the field level. Visiting temples and prayer halls during the night time and guiding VDCs will be among their tasks. A vigil has been kept on thugs, suspects and conspirators in Kadapa district through face-tracking cameras.

He said Endowments Department officials have been asked to take immediate steps for setting up CCTV cameras, disclosing that of total 4,127 places of worship, 1,044 CCTVs have already been installed at temples, churches, mosques and other places of worship in the district. Work is underway to install cameras at the remaining places of worship.

He said patrolling is being carried out by officers from the sub-inspector to additional SP level.

Anburajan appealed to

5 more held for spreading rumours on idols damage

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, JAN. 18

Prakasam district police arrested five persons from various places for engaging in false propaganda via social media over damage to the idols of Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Narasimha Swamy placed on an arch near the Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple at Singarayakonda a few days ago.

The Singarayakonda police had booked a case against 33 persons (24 persons for false postings on Facebook, five persons on twitter and four on YouTube), charging them with hurting the sentiments of devotees via the social media. Eight persons were arrested on January 5.

Police arrested five more persons from different parts of the state on Monday. They were Thotakura Anil Kumar (36) of Ongole, Mandapuru Srinivasa Rao (42) of Guntur, Chenchennagari Nareish Kumar Reddy (27) of Ananthapur, Budda Devendra Kumar (38) of

people that they inform concerned police officers or dial 100 or his own mobile number 9440796900 as soon as they realise any suspicious movements.

TD, BJP protest over removal of balipeetham at Kadiri temple

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, JAN. 18

There was tension in Kadiri town when a group of protestors owing allegiance to Telugu Desam, Bharatiya Janata Party, and other organisations mobbed the historic Lord Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple on Monday.

The protests were against removal of the balipeetham (sacrificial altar) at western Gopuram

of temple as part of road widening works.

The issue had been simmering since Sunday after supporters of BJP, TDP and allied organisations expressed opposition to removal of the centuries' old balipeetham.

Even though the Endowment Department and temple executive officer (EO) announced that balipeetham is not being removed but would remain at the temple,

protests continued unabated on Monday too.

Telugu Desam in-charge Kandikunta Venkata Prasad led a group of his party activists demanded action against temple EO Venkateswar Reddy, who had earlier announced the decision to remove balipeetham for road widening; but retracted his statement on Sunday.

"Lord Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple has a centuries-old histo-

separated from his wife for the past few years. He came to Kondaiahpalem for work and consumed liquor in the evening. In a drunken state, he reached up to the idol positioned outside the temple and removed the trident. In the process, a part of the hand of the goddess was also broken.

Eswarudu said the accused was identified from CCTV footage. Police registered a case.

to the idols was due to the blowing off of the cement scales on the arch built 20 years ago.

The arch was to be repaired two years ago. But, the work could not be done last year due to the Covid-19 spread. Police said some media persons and others spread rumours about the damage to idols even after additional SP B. Ravi Chandra explained the reasons for the damage.

APP TO MONITOR TOILET CLEANING IN SCHOOLS

From page 1

Officials informed the CM that a special mobile app has been designed to monitor maintenance of school toilets. Committees were also set up at state, district, school and college levels for the purpose.

The CM was informed by officials that a special mobile app has been developed to monitor the attendance of students in schools.

The record would be uploaded on the app every day to enable both teachers and parents have a regular check. The CM asked officials to ensure a system of messaging parents in case the wards failed to turn up at school. Volunteers may be assigned the task of finding out the health condition of students if they failed to reach school.

Jagan said officials must take a decision on reopening of schools from the first half of February and on conducting the classes. Officials were also told to finalise tenders for Vidya Kanuka to ensure prompt delivery of kits.

■ **THE RECORD** would be uploaded on the app every day to enable both teachers and parents have a regular check.

■ **VOLUNTEERS** MAY be assigned the task of finding out the health condition of students if they failed to reach school.

STATE CAPITAL RELOCATION MAY BE DISCUSSED

From page 1

Central help is also required for abolition of the AP Legislative Council as the Assembly had already passed a resolution to this effect. The state's plans to relocate the administrative capital to Visakhapatnam may also come up for discussion between the CM and Shah, according to sources.

HOUSE PRIVILEGE PANEL TO MEET TTD OFFICIALS

From page 1

The chairman said the committee conducted its first meeting in Amaravati and followed up on the complaints referred to it by the Speaker. The committee would conduct a meeting with TTD officials on Tuesday.

He said Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has released ₹1 crore each for 175 MLAs in the state from the CM's Disaster Relief Fund.

Govardhan Reddy directed district officials to follow protocol and extend privileges to legislative members and resolve the issues raised by the MLAs. Committee members M. Vishnu, S. Venkata Chinna Appala Naidu, V. Vara Prasad, Shilpa Chakrapani Reddy were among those present.

Ganta skips NTR death anniversary in party office

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 18

Visakhapatnam North MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao skipped the death anniversary meeting organised in TDP urban office on Monday. He, however, was seen at the garlanding function on beach road along with other MLAs Velagapudi Ramakrishnababu, P.V.G.R.

Naidu (Ganababu) and former MLA Palla Srinivasa Rao. After garlanding the statue, Ganta Srinivasa Rao straight away went to his constituency where blood donation camp was organised.

"We were not surprised at his absence. He has been keeping a distance from all party activities when rumours of his

■ **RAO'S CLOSE** aides defended his absence stating that he was busy in attending other programmes held in connection with NTR's death anniversary.

joining YSRCP were making rounds in political circles," said a senior leader of the party about Ganta Srinivasa Rao.

But the former minister's close aides defended his absence stating that Srinivasa Rao was busy in attending other programmes in connection with the death anniversary of their founder.

The state observed the death anniversary and attendance of party workers and sympathisers was good, said party vice-president Pasarla Prasad.



Vizag city MLAs Ganta Srinivasa Rao, Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu and P.V.G.R. Naidu (Ghana Babu) along with TDP activists pay tributes to TDP Chief N.T. Rama Rao on his death anniversary at the beach road in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

— DC

TD cadre pay rich tributes to NTR

DC CORRESPONDENT KADAPA, JAN. 18

A blood donation camp was organised under the auspices of Telugu youth. Party leaders anointed and paid homage to the NTR statue while under the auspices of Balakrishna Family Association's state president Peer-aiyah, TD leaders distributed clothes to sanitation workers.

Mallela Lingareddy, president of the Telugu Desam Kadapa Parliamentary Party, said that NTR gave a new definition to politics while state executive secretary Balishetti Hariprasad

said that NTR lit up millions of households. Kadapa constituency in-charge V.S. Ameer Babu, former director of fisheries corporation Yatagiri Ramprasad and others participated.

Tributes were paid on Pottipadu Road in Proddatur, Kadapa district. Proddatur constituency in-charge Dr. G.V. Praveen Kumar said that soldiers will work tirelessly for realisation of the aspirations of the great leader.

He was accompanied by state secretary V.S. Mukhtiar and party town president E.V. Sudhakar Reddy.

Bharat Ratna for NTR, urges cadre

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, JAN. 18

Telugu Desam Party leaders and cadre in East and West Godavari districts paid rich tributes to party founder and former chief minister N.T. Rama Rao (NTR) on his death anniversary on Monday.

MLC Chikkala Ramachandra Rao, and senior leaders Jyothula Naveen Kumar, Vanamadi Venkateswara Rao (Kondababu), Datla Buchiraju and others garlanded the statue of NTR near Zilla Parishad centre and paid homage.

Ramachandra Rao said

that NTR played an unforgettable role in Indian politics and he himself drafted principles and ideologies to uplift the poor and earned the self-respect of Telugu people. He urged the Union government to confer NTR with a posthumous Bharat Ratna. Kondababu said that NTR pioneered several welfare schemes for the poor.

Meanwhile, At Rajamahendravaram, former GUDA chairman Ganni Krishna garlanded the statue of NTR near Arts College gate. He said that NTR took the reputation of Telugus to New Delhi.

COVID | JABS

Lots of manpower, machinery required for taking up drive**3.7L health staff need to be vaccinated**

From page 1

The onerous task involved vaccination of 3.7 lakh healthcare workers, seven lakh frontline workers, 95 lakh ordinary individuals above age 50 and 45 lakh people aged below 50 with multiple health issues, in a phased manner.

Based on the availability of vaccine doses and the response from targeted persons, the government would go ahead with the vaccination programme. He also informed the court that as the two doses of vaccine are to be

administered with a space of 28 days, it would take time to complete the exercise.

The AG referred to SEC Ramesh Kumar's stand that as the election process was already started, there should be no interference with it. The Supreme Court had made it clear as to what the circumstances are under which courts could intervene in such matters, he said, and argued that the state government was according top priority to protecting the lives of the people.

■ **BASED ON** the availability of vaccine doses and the response from targeted persons, the government would go ahead with the vaccination programme.

■ **THE SUPREME** Court had made it clear as to what the circumstances are under which courts could intervene in such matters, he said, and argued that the state government was according top priority to protecting the lives of the people.

Assistant solicitor general N. Harinath informed the court that lots of manpower and machinery are required for taking up the vaccination programme.

Elections could be held any time but safeguarding

the lives of the people is more important.

SEC senior counsel B. Adinarayana Rao said the SEC was conducting gram panchayat polls as part of its Constitutional responsibility and asked as to what personal benefit the

SEC could derive by holding polls as per present schedule. After all, his kin were not contesting the polls.

SEC senior counsel D.V. Sitharama Murthy told the court that the state government made the SEC a respondent in its petition in his individual capacity and asked as to how motives could be attributed to him when he was only discharging his duty.

The court fixed the next hearing of the case for January 19 and asked SEC counsel to file his reply.

IN BRIEF

Two killed in separate mishaps

Visakhapatnam: Two persons were killed on the spot in two separate road accidents in Visakhapatnam on Monday. Reports said 21 year old Ramesh Kumar, pillion riding a motorcycle, suffered severe head injuries and died on the spot when RTC bus going towards Vizianagaram from RTC Complex knocked the motorcycle coming in the opposite direction. A retired ASI identified as K Rama Rao, who was riding the motorcycle, suffered injuries and rushed to hospital. The police said he was saved because of the helmet. In another incident, 65 year old Y. Demudu of Naiduthota died on the spot when a bus knocked him down while he was crossing the road.

Car skids off ghat road, 3 injured

Visakhapatnam: Three tourists suffered injuries when the car in which they were travelling skidded off the ghat road near Paderu in Visakhapatnam agency in the early hours of Monday. They hail from Vizianagaram and on the way to new tourist spot Vanjangi. The Paderu police registered a case and questioned them for over speeding on the ghat road which led to the accident. Earlier, they were given first aid at the local hospital.

10 arrested for betting in cockfights

Visakhapatnam: The Visakhapatnam rural police arrested 10 persons involved in cockfights and betting at Venkatapuram under Munagapaka Mandal and Kaligotla village under Devarapalle Mandal in the district on Monday. The police seized 10 fighting roosters and ₹4,000 cash from the punters. The organisers of the cockfights were charged under AP Gaming Act of 1974. The police also nabbed eight persons for playing the game of cards at Annavaram village under Kotavurata in the district and seized over ₹17,000 cash from them.

500 litres of hooch destroyed

Visakhapatnam: The officials of various enforcement wings destroyed over 500 litres of jaggery wash in parts of Ramabhadrapuram in Vizianagaram district. The officials also seized over 100 litres of hooch and nabbed two persons for transporting the hooch. They said that they will intensify the raids to destroy the hooch brewing centers in the district.

Top Army official visits ENC

Visakhapatnam: Lieutenant General C.P. Mohanty, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C), Southern Command arrived Visakhapatnam on a two-day visit to Eastern Naval Command (ENC) on Monday. The GOC-in-C interacted with Vice Admiral Atul Kumar Jain Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command and discussed the complete spectrum of security issues. The visit assumes significance as the Indian Armed Forces shift towards integrating all components into theatre specific commands.

For road safety



Tourism minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao flags off the bike rally by officials and staff from RTO office to mark the Road Safety Awareness programmer at district collectorate in Visakhapatnam on Monday. — DC

Intermediate classes begin for 1st year

All class 10 students were promoted due to pandemic

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, JAN. 18

Classes for first year Intermediate students started in the two Godavari districts on Monday. This included 324 colleges in East Godavari and 211 in West Godavari, inclusive of both government and private institutions.

It must be noted that students of Class X were all promoted due to Covid-19.

Intermediate regional inspecting officer of East Godavari I. Sarada said that the second phase of admissions would be held from January 18 to 25 while summer holidays and second Saturdays have been cancelled up to May 31. She said that private and unaided colleges should run from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm and collect fees as prescribed by the government.

Sarada said that college managements which accepted admissions

SOP for colleges with over 500 pupil

From Page 1

The junior colleges having more than 500 students will be permitted to conduct classes in two sessions from 8 am to 1 pm and from 1 pm to 6 pm and science and arts streams in alternate mode on Monday, Wednesday and Friday for one batch and on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday for another batch.

Health check up must

offline should upload details of the students through the Jnanabhoomi portal. She said that as many as 45,000 students were admitted in first year Intermediate in the first phase.

Meanwhile, the government fixed tuition fees in aided and cooperative junior colleges for the academic year 2019-20. Aided colleges should only collect Rs. 1, 560 for first year and Rs. 1,716 for second year. Private and cooperative junior colleges should collect only ₹3,119 for first year and ₹3,432 for second year.

However, no private junior college is following these instructions and thousands of rupees are being collected as tuition fees. In fact, private junior colleges started the first year Intermediate classes two months back and are collecting fees without considering the holidays.

According to a parent, although they were closed up to October, the institutions were collecting fees even for months when they were closed. He said that the government should directly collect the fees from parents and guardians and remit to college managements.

Meanwhile, West Godavari regional Intermediate officer B. Prabhakar said that the admission details are in the uploading process and all instructions have been issued to private junior colleges.

Women activists take out bike rally against farm laws

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 18

Activists representing several women organisations took out a bike rally from Gandhi statue at RTC Complex to the collectorate in Visakhapatnam on Monday demanding repeal of the farm laws.

The rally was flagged off by former AU Law College professor S Nirmala. Later, a meeting was held at the collectorate.

State president of POW M Lakshmi said the new laws would lead to corporatization of the agriculture sector, depriving the livelihood of the farm labourers. In the process, this would hit the food security system of the country.

She said women in the agriculture sector comprised 60 per cent of the workforce but only 12



Women from various organisations take part in a bike rally in support of farmers who are protesting against the central government, during the Women Farmers' Day near GVMC Gandhi Statue Junction in Visakhapatnam on Monday. — DC

per cent was recognised as farmers and the rest have no rights on the lands. She said farmers fear the new laws would destroy agriculture in the country and many would be left with no

work and no food. State president of AIDWA B Prabhavathi, Mahila Chaitanya secretary D. Lalitha and Mahila Samakhya executive president A. Vimala also spoke.

Kurnool-based devotee group alleges robbery in Tirupati

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, JAN. 18

A Kurnool-based devotee group, who were on a pilgrimage to Lord Venkateswara's abode in Tirumala, alleged that thieves tried to rob them when they had reached a pitch-dark point on the pedestrian route. They said, one among the thieves has tried to snatch away a gold chain from a 13-year-old boy in their group, but they managed to run to safety and dialled 100 for help".

Tirumala II-town CI Mr Chandra Sekhar told this newspaper. On receiving information, the II-town police led by the CI reached Sunil's family

persons tried to surround them at the 2,830th step.

"The devotees alleged that some four to five thieves had followed them in the dark for a while and flashed torch lights on their faces when they had reached a pitch-dark point on the pedestrian route. They said, one among the thieves has tried to snatch away a gold chain from a 13-year-old boy in their group, but they managed to run to safety and dialled 100 for help".

Tirumala II-town CI Mr Chandra Sekhar told this newspaper. On receiving information, the II-town police led by the CI reached Sunil's family

within five minutes. "After collecting details from the devotees, we combed the vicinity but found nothing. As the place was located near the link road, we suspect that thieves might have escaped on that route. However, we have intensified the patrolling on the pedestrian route", the CI said.

Meanwhile, the devotee family requested the TTD and Tirumala police to enhance the pedestrian routes' security. It may be mentioned here that the temple body has recently taken up works to rejuvenate the shelter along the trekking route from Alipiri

14,606 HEALTH STAFF GET COVID VACCINE

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 18

Covid-19 vaccine was administered to 14,606 healthcare workers at 316 session sites out of 316 in AP on Monday.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 vaccination coverage report stating that no case of adverse effect following immunisation was reported.

2 ASHA WORKERS ADMITTED TO GGH AFTER JAB

DC CORRESPONDENT ELURU, JAN. 18

Two ASHA workers, Sharone Rani and Suseela, of Agadala Lanka village in Bhimadole mandal of West Godavari District, were admitted in Government Hospital, after getting the Covid-19 vaccine. According to sources, these two ASHA workers were administered Covid-19 vaccine on January 16 at Bhimadolu PHC.

In the evening, Sharone Rani came to the PHC with severe headache and Suseela with vomiting. The PHC Medical Officer Dr Ravi Paul said that Suseela was administered the vaccine with an empty stomach without even taking breakfast.

414 TURTLES RESCUED, LET OUT INTO GODAVARI

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, JAN. 18

The forest department officials rescued 414 Indian Soft Shelled turtles, packed in 16 gunny bags and arrested two persons — Chayan Dhali and Bhiswajit mandal — belonging to Odisha state on Monday.

According to Forest Range Officer V.Durga Kumar Babu, the turtles were being carried to Odisha from Samalkot by a van.

He said by taking permission from the Fourth First Class Judicial Magistrate Court, the turtles were released into River Godavari.

AP records 81 new Covid cases, 1 death

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 18

Andhra Pradesh registered 81 fresh cases of Covid-19 and a death in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin here on Monday reporting that out of 27,861 samples tested, 81 persons were found infected with Coronavirus. Out of a total number of 1,26,04,214 samples tested so far in the state, 8,86,066 persons were found infected with confirmed Coronavirus and of them, 8,77,212 were recovered during treatment while 1,713 are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Coronavirus, Kadapa regis-

tered the highest number of 19 followed by 15 in Chittoor, 13 in Guntur, seven in Visakhapatnam, six each in Krishna and Prakasam, four each in Kurnool and Srikakulam, three in East Godavari, two in West Godavari and one each in Nellore and Vizianagaram.

Guntur found to be having the highest number of cumulative Coronavirus active cases with 284 followed by 271 in Krishna, 193 in East Godavari, 175 in Kadapa, 151 in Nellore, 146 in Visakhapatnam, 128 in Chittoor, 94 in West Godavari, 69 in Kurnool, 68 in Prakasam, 54 in Anantapur, 45 in Srikakulam and 35 in Vizianagaram.

Centre seeks proposals from AP for Central Reserve Park

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, JAN. 18

Union ministry of environment, forests and climate change has sought proposals from special secretary (Forests), Government of Andhra Pradesh, for construction of a central reserve park between Penukonda and Somandepalli adjacent to National Highway 44 passing through the district.

There is feasibility for the park to come up over 1,000 acres of existing reserved forest land abutting the national highway in Anantapur district. The park proposal was taken up by the union ministry after local organisations sent a representation to it in October last.

The ministry has since

asked the special secretary to submit a detailed report on the issue.

Penukonda Prayatata Porata Samithi president J. Prathap Reddy has pointed out that more than 2,000 acres of forest lands, including hillocks, are available between Penukonda and Somandepalli mandals located along the National Highway 44, closer to Bengaluru city.

Prathap Reddy maintained that there are various types of wild animals in the forest area including at least 120 leopards, 10,000 bears and 30,000 black bucks. Adequate water is also available close to the proposed forest lands for the central reserve, he stated, asking the state government to speed up the process for establishing the reserve.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSE PATTAS SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY JAN. 20: EG COLLECTOR

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, JAN. 18

East Godavari district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy instructed the officials to complete the distribution of house pattas by January 20.

He also told the Village Revenue Officers, Volunteers and Welfare Secretaries to expedite the distribution of the house sites and encouraged them to start the housing construction process.

He reviewed the progress of distribution house sites and mobile vehicles for ration depots and other

issues with the divisional and mandal level officers along with joint-collector G. Lakshminsha, Keerthi Chakuri and G.Rajakumari here on Monday.

He said that negligence should not be entertained and stringent action would be taken against those personnel who don't take the issues seriously to complete their targets.

He said that the officials would make surprise inspections in several villages and towns on the distribution of house sites to the homeless poor.

Congressmen demand Port at Dugarajapatnam

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, JAN. 18

Demanding the central government to establish a major Port at Dugarajapatnam as per the agreement during the state's bifurcation, Congress leaders staged a protest in front of the sub-collector's office in Gudur on Monday.

Reminding that the former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu wrote to the Centre against the port, they expressed surprise over the silence being maintained by BJP and YSRC leaders on the subject.

Referring to the government attention towards constructing a temple in Ayodhya, the Congress lead-

■ REMINDING THAT the former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu wrote to the Centre against the port, they expressed surprise over the silence being maintained by BJP and YSRC leaders on the subject.

ers maintained that the need of the hour is ports and important projects but not temples.

Stressing that the project would generate employment to thousands of unemployed in the region who are pinning their hopes on the Port, the Congressmen submitted a representation to the Sub Collector urging the government to take up the Centre's issue.



A six-foot-long cobra spotted in Tirumala on Monday, causing a scare among the devotees trekking up to the hill town along the Alipiri pedestrian route. The captured cobra was later released in the dense Seshachalam forests away from Tirumala.

IN BRIEF

Digvijay donates for Ram temple

Bhopal: Senior Congress leader and Rajya Sabha member Digvijay Singh on Monday donated ₹1,11,111 for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya through Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Singh sent a letter to the Prime Minister, with the cheque to Ram Janmabhoomi Teertha Khetra Trust, appealing him to ensure that inflammatory speeches were not made by the volunteers during collection of funds for construction of Ram temple from the people. The former chief minister said he was sending the cheque through the Prime Minister for deposition at the proper place since he was not aware of the right address to send the cheque. He also demanded for public audit of the funds raised earlier by Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) for construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

ODISHA CONG CHIEF ATTACKED, BJP BLAMED

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 18

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Niranjana Patnaik on Monday said he was attacked by some miscreants with BJP affiliations attacked his vehicle on Sunday night at Keonjhar. “The attack on me, my security personnel late on Sunday night was a handiwork of the BJP. Members of the saffron party’s youth wing carried out the attack. This is a clear case of political vendetta and desperation of Odisha BJP,” Patnaik alleged. He said that the miscreants thrashed his driver and personal security officer (PSO) and damaged his car. “I have lodged a police complaint. I was shocked to know that the miscreants were members of BJP’s state youth wing. This is a clear case of political vendetta and desperation of Odisha state BJP. Congress is raising relevant issues in the state and speaking out against the policies of BJP, which is desperately trying to get a foothold in Odisha. Congress is the biggest hurdle for them,” he tweeted.

MEDIA TRIAL HINDERS JUSTICE: HC ON SSR PROBE

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 18

The Bombay High Court on Monday held that a media trial during the investigation of any case violates programme code under the Cable TV Network Regulation Act and does have an impact on the probe. While passing order on a bunch of petitions filed by former police officers, activists, lawyers and NGOs, seeking restrain order for electronic media in actor Sushant Singh Rajput’s death case, also observed that Press Council of India (PCI) guidelines will apply to electronic media along with print media till the time electronic media frame their own guidelines. The court had asked the Centre on October 29 last year as to why it should not frame guidelines on media coverage of sensitive criminal matters and ongoing investigations, and whether “excessive” reporting by the press amounted to interference in the administration of justice under the Contempt of Courts Act.

BORDER | ROW India says it takes necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty

Report: China has built village in Arunachal

New Delhi, Jan. 18: In a cautious reaction to a report that China has built a village in Arunachal Pradesh, India on Monday said it keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on the country’s security, and takes necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The ministry of external affairs said India has stepped up the construction of border infrastructure, including roads and bridges for the improvement of livelihood of its citizens. The response from the ministry came when asked about a report by NDTV channel, saying China has

constructed a new village in the disputed region of Arunachal Pradesh and it consisted of about 101 homes. The news channel said the report is based on satellite images accessed exclusively by it. “We have seen recent reports on China undertaking construction work along the border areas with India. China has undertaken such infrastructure construction activity in the past several years,” the MEA said. “In response, our government too has stepped up border infrastructure including the construction of roads, bridges etc, which has provided much needed

connectivity to the local population along the border,” it added. The ministry also asserted that the government remains committed to the objective of creating infrastructure along the border areas for the improvement of livelihood of its citizens, including in Arunachal Pradesh. “Government keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India’s security and takes all the necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity,” it said. In its report, NDTV showed two images of the area where it said the village has been set up.

According to the channel, the first image dated August 26, 2019 did not show any human habitation but the second one of November 2020 shows a row of structures. The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet, while India contests it. India and China are locked in a bitter border row in eastern Ladakh for over eight months. The army as well as the Indian Air Force have been maintaining a high state of operational readiness along the entire stretch of the LAC with China including

in the Arunachal sector in view of the eastern Ladakh standoff. India and China have held several rounds of military and diplomatic talks in order to resolve the eastern Ladakh row, but no significant headway has been made for its resolution. Earlier this month, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat visited various forward posts near the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh and reviewed India’s operational preparedness. He also visited several key installations including “forward most air maintained” posts in Dibang Valley, Lohit sector and Subansiri valley, according to the Army. — PTI

580 persons report adverse effects after vaccination

Two people were reported dead; Govts deny deaths connected to jabs

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, JAN. 18

As India intensified its vaccination drive against Covid-19, 580 persons were found to have Adverse Effect Following Immunisation (AEFI) with seven needing hospitalisation in the last three days. Two people were reported to be dead following the Covid-19 shots — a 52-year-old ward boy working in a Moradabad (UP) hospital, and a 43-year-old man in Bellary (Karnataka). However, both central and state governments denied that the death in Moradabad had any connection to the vaccination while the post-mortem of the second person is yet to be conducted.

Since Saturday, a little over 3.81 lakh health, sanitation and frontline workers have been vaccinated out of which over 1.48 lakh were immunised on Monday. “Post-mortem by a board of three doctors revealed death due to cardiopulmonary disease (pockets of pus in lungs, enlarged heart) and is not related to vaccination,” Union health ministry official said about the death of the 52-year-old ward boy Mahipal Singh. However, the family of Mahipal Singh man alleged that his condition deteriorated after the jab. Mahipal Singh was given a vaccine shot on Saturday. His family said he had minor pneumonia, cold, cough and fever before the vaccine, but his condition deteriorated after the jab and he was breathless. He died the next day.

However, the Uttar Pradesh government said the man died due to septicemic shock and cardiac arrest and the death was not related to the Covid-19 vaccination. “An adverse event following immunisation (AEFI) committee probed the death of the man in Moradabad. The cause of death was septicemic



Relatives mourn the death of a family member, Mahipal Singh, at their residence in Moradabad district on Monday. — PTI

Assam Cong questions efficiency of Covaxin, tells govt to instil confidence

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JAN. 18

Amidst the report of a few temporary side effects after the vaccination and poor turn out of recipients, the Assam unit of the Congress party has questioned the efficacy of Covaxin and asked the government to instil confidence among people before inoculating them. The reaction of the

Opposition came after two medical colleges in the state witnessed a poor 40 per cent turnout on the first day and the officials feel that the use of the “contentious” Covaxin is one of the reasons for many health workers not turning up. In Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College and Hospital in lower Assam’s Barpeta, only 27 of the 100 listed beneficiaries came for vaccination,

while at Tezpur Medical College and Hospital, only 52 of the 100 listed beneficiaries turned up. Leader of Opposition in the Assam Assembly, Debabrata Saikia told reporters that the doctors in Delhi and Tamil Nadu are reluctant to take the vaccines as Covaxin has been given the nod for political gains as elections for the five states are due in

spring. “The vaccine rollout has been done hurriedly without complete trial. The Centre has done it to reap benefit in polls. It is said that the vaccination has become a political game as the inoculation drive kicked off without efficacy data and other considerations. Human life can’t be compromised in pursuit of private profit and political gains,” said Saikia.

istry, was anterior wall infarction with cardiopulmonary failure. Of the seven people needing hospitalisation, three are from Delhi, two in Karnataka, and one each in Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh.

RESOLUTION DEMANDS STATEHOOD FOR PUDUCHERRY

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, JAN. 18

The open assertion of the DMK’s Puducherry unit on Monday to field candidates in all the 30 constituencies for the Territorial Assembly elections is seen as harbinger to the splintering of the Congress-DMK alliance not just in the Union Territory but also in Tamil Nadu. Though all is seemingly well with the DMK-Congress alliance in Tamil Nadu with even Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and DMK’s Youth Wing secretary Udhayanidhi Stalin sharing the stage at a jallikattu event at Avaniyapuram in Madurai on Pongal Day, that relationship between the two allies has been going south for quite some time in Puducherry. On Monday, DMK members boycotted the crucial Assembly session called to pass a resolution against the Centre’s farm laws and also to demand Statehood for the Union Territory on the pretext of attending a meeting called by S Jagathrakshan, DMK’s newly appointed in-charge for Puducherry. Jagathrakshan, DMK MP representing Arakkonam, vowed to lay down his life in the event of the DMK failing to win all the 30 constituencies in the elections. Though it is not clear whether he aspires to become the next CM, as it is rumoured in some circles, or not, he had made it clear that the alliance with Congress was over. In fact, the DMK has not been participating in any of the programmes of the Congress.

Will incorporate ‘K’taka-occupied areas’: Uddhav

Mumbai, Jan. 18: Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said his government is committed towards incorporating into the state the areas of Karnataka where Marathi-speaking people are in majority.

This will be the “true tribute” to martyrs of the cause, the Chief Minister’s Office (CMO) said in a tweet.

Maharashtra claims Belgaum and some other areas, part of the erstwhile Bombay Presidency but currently in Karnataka, on linguistic grounds.

Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti, a regional organisation fighting for the merger of Belgaum and some other border areas with Maharashtra, observes January 17 as the ‘martyrs’ day’ for those who laid down their lives for the cause in 1956.

“Bringing Karnataka-occupied Marathi-speaking and cultural areas in Maharashtra will be the true tribute to those who accepted martyrdom in the boundary battle. We are united and committed towards it. Respects to the martyrs with this promise,” the CMO tweeted.

Maharashtra claims certain areas, including Belgaum, Karwar and Nippani which are part of Karnataka, contending that the majority of population in these areas is Marathi-speaking.

The dispute between the two states over Belgaum and other border areas is pending before the Supreme Court for many years.

Thackeray last year appointed Maharashtra ministers Eknath Shinde and Chhagan Bhuwal as co-ordinators to oversee the state government’s efforts to expedite the case related to the boundary dispute.

Protests erupted in parts of Karnataka on Monday including in the district headquarters city of Belagavi on Monday in a strong condemnation of Maharashtra Chief Minister’s statement on the sensitive border issue.

Political leaders cutting across party lines came down heavily on Thackeray. “There is no question of giving even an inch of land from Karnataka to Maharashtra. He should give up issuing statements just for political reasons,” Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa told reporters on Monday. “I am pained at

GOVT NAMEBOARDS IN TAMIL ON K’TAKA BORDER VANDALISED

Erode (TN), Jan. 18: Sign and name boards of the Tamil Nadu government in Tamil and English on the state’s border with Karnataka were allegedly damaged by a fringe group from the neighbouring state for the second time in ten days, police said here on Monday. The group claimed that Thalavadi in Tamil Nadu’s Erode district ‘belonged’ to Karnataka.

The incidents come against the backdrop of a row between Maharashtra and Karnataka over some border areas where Marathi speaking people live predominantly.

Following the back to back incidents and a call for protest against it by Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi, armed police personnel have been deployed at (Thalavadi taluk, Erode district) Tamil Nadu’s border with Karnataka (Chamarajanagar district), they said. Such incidents have been brought to the notice of police in Karnataka, they added.

On Sunday, sign and name boards, including one by Erode District Panchayat, were damaged by unknown miscreants. Thalavadi police said, adding they inspected the spot and posted adequate number of armed policemen to avert such incidents in future.

Such boards inform people about the beginning of the limits of Tamil Nadu state. — PTI

Maharashtra Chief Ministers remarks that can disturb the prevailing harmonious atmosphere. I expect Uddhav Thackeray, as a true Indian, to show his commitment and respect to the principles of federalism in letter and spirit,” Yediyurappa said in a tweet. On Monday, pro-Kannada organisations held demonstrations and burnt Thackeray’s effigy in parts of the state.

A few pro-Marathi activists led by local units of Shiv Sena and Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti had organised the ‘Martyrs Day’ in Belagavi on Sunday.

They demanded merger of Belagavi, Karwar, Nippani, Bidar and Bhalki with Maharashtra. — PTI

‘Tandav’ makers issue apology

AMID STIR, SHIVRAJ DEMANDS BAN ON WEB SERIES

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JAN. 18

Amid protests by Hindu bodies against Saif Ali Khan-starrer ‘Tandav’ released by OTT giant Amazon Prime, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday demanded a ban on the web series for hurting religious sentiments of Hindus.

Chouhan met Union information and broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar in New Delhi to place his demand, saying that the web series sought to denigrate Hindu deities.

Meanwhile, state medical education minister Viswas Sarang wrote a letter to Javadekar demanding to frame laws for censorship of films released on OTT platform to deny misuse of the platform by ‘vested interests’.

Khan and Zeeshan Ayyub. At the end of a tense day that saw debate escalate around the show, which balances intrigue in Delhi’s corridors of power and touches on current issues such as student unrest and farmer protests, the cast and crew of Tandav, which literally translates to ‘dance of destruction’, issued a statement in a bid to defuse the situation. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

SAMSUNG CHIEF
JAILED OVER
FRAUD CHARGES

Seoul, Jan. 18: Billionaire Samsung scion Lee Jae-yong was sent back to prison on Monday after a South Korean court handed him a two and a half-year sentence for his involvement in a 2016 corruption scandal that spurred massive protests and ousted South Korea's then-president.

In a much-anticipated retrial, the Seoul High Court found Lee guilty of bribing then-President Park Geun-hye and her close confidante to win government support for a 2015 merger between two Samsung affiliates. The deal helped strengthen his control over the country's largest business group. Lee's lawyers had portrayed him as a victim of presidential power abuse and described the 2015 deal as part of "normal business activity."

Wearing a mask and black suit and tie, Lee was taken into custody following the ruling. He didn't answer questions by reporters upon his arrival at the court.

FRENCH MUSLIM
COUNCIL ACCEPTS
RULES BY MACRON

Paris, Jan. 18: France's Muslim federations agreed on Sunday on a "charter of principles" requested by President Emmanuel Macron in his bid to eradicate sectarianism and extremism.

Macron urged the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) to devise the charter in November, after the jihadist killing of a schoolteacher who showed cartoons of the Prophet Mohamed to students.

The charter rejects "instrumentalising" Islam for political ends and affirms equality between men and women, while denouncing practices such as female circumcisions, forced marriages or "virginity certificates" for brides.

It also explicitly rejects racism and anti-Semitism, and warns that mosques "are not created for the spreading of nationalist speech defending foreign regimes".

"This charter reaffirms the compatibility of the Muslim faith with the principles of the Republic, including secularism, and the commitment of French Muslims to their complete citizenship," CFCM president Mohammed Moussaoui said.

ITALY PM TO
LAUNCH BID TO
SAVE GOVT

Rome, Jan. 18: Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte was due to address parliament's lower house on Monday at the start of a make-or-break week in a crisis that could bring down his government.

Against the backdrop of coronavirus pandemic that sparked fresh restrictions at the weekend, Conte will seek a show of support with lawmakers ahead of a crucial vote in the upper Senate the following day.

His coalition government, in power since September 2019, was plunged into turmoil by the withdrawal last week of former premier Matteo Renzi's Italia Viva party.

Conte was to speak at midday to the Chamber of Deputies, where his coalition partners including the Democratic Party (PD) and Five Star Movement (M5S) have a majority of support.

The real test will come on Tuesday, however, when he addresses the Senate and faces what will effectively be a vote of confidence.

JAPAN SLAMS
KOREA ON
BROTHEL RULING

Tokyo, Jan. 18: Toshimitsu Motegi, in a diplomatic policy speech in Parliament, said a recent South Korean court ruling ordering Japan to compensate 12 South Korean women who were sexually abused in Japanese military brothels during the war was "an abnormal development absolutely unthinkable under international law and bilateral relations."

"We strongly urge South Korea to correct the violation of international law as soon as possible" and restore healthy relations, Motegi said.

The Seoul Central District Court ruled on Jan. 8 that the Japanese government must give 100 million won (\$91,360) to each of 12 elderly women who filed lawsuits in 2013 over their wartime suffering as "comfort women."

Chilly slide



Young men slide on a snow covered street in the Balat District of Istanbul on Monday. Extreme cold and snow have hit large parts of Europe, with freezing temperatures causing causing railroad tracks in Poland to crack and snow blanketing most of the Turkish city of Istanbul.

— AFP

Navalny decries 'mockery of justice' in airport detention

Moscow, Jan. 18: Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny said on Monday his treatment was beyond a "mockery of justice" as he was brought before a hastily organised court a day after his dramatic airport arrest.

With calls growing in the West for Navalny's release, he was brought into a courtroom set up at a police station in Khimki on the outskirts of Moscow where he was taken following his detention on Sunday night.

Police seized Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most prominent opponent, at a border control post at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport less than an hour after he returned to Russia from Germany for the first time since he was poisoned with a nerve agent in August.

In a video posted by his

team from inside the hearing, an incredulous Navalny said he did not understand how a court session could take place at a police station and why no one had been notified until the last minute. "I've seen a lot of mockery of justice, but the old man in the bunker (Putin) is so afraid that they have blatantly torn up and thrown away" Russia's criminal code, Navalny said.

"This is ultimate lawlessness."

In another video, Navalny called for the hearing to be open to all journalists, after only pro-Kremlin media were allowed to attend.

"I demand that this procedure be as open as possible, so that all media have the opportunity to observe the amazing absurdity of what is happening here," he said.

— AFP

EU chief demands
Navalny's release

Brussels, Jan. 18: EU chief Ursula von der Leyen on Monday joined the international chorus of condemnation against Russia's arrest of opposition figure Alexei Navalny and demanded his release. "I condemn the detention of Alexei Navalny," she said in a statement.

"The Russian authorities must immediately release him and ensure his safety," Von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, also repeated Brussels' call for an independent investigation into an attempt on Navalny's life.

The 44-year-old returned to Russia on Sunday from

Germany, where he received treatment after being poisoned with what experts say was the Novichok nerve agent.

There have been calls for more Western sanctions against Russian President Vladimir Putin's government following the latest arrest.

But von der Leyen did not address what would be a decision for the EU member states, saying simply: "We will monitor the situation closely."

"We also continue to expect a thorough and independent investigation on the attack on Alexei Navalny's life," she said.

— AFP

Biden all set for
busy 1st week

Washington buzzes with increased security

Washington, Jan. 18: President-elect Joe Biden's top advisors on Sunday outlined his plans to tackle the nation's multiple crises while balancing the impeachment trial of Donald Trump, as an historic inauguration week opens in the United States.

Washington was under the watch of thousands of National Guard troops and ringed with security barriers ahead of Biden's swearing in on Wednesday, in a nation still rattled by the January 6 attack on the Capitol.

Pro-Trump protests planned at state capitols nationwide got off to a quiet start with only small groups of armed demonstrators gathering in states including Ohio, Texas, Oregon and Michigan.

"The events of the past few weeks have proven just how damaged the soul of America has been and how important it is to restore it. That work starts on Wednesday," Biden's incoming chief of staff Ron Klain said.

"We're inheriting a huge mess here, but we have a plan to fix it." As the president-elect prepares to take power in a city where only two weeks earlier Trump supporters launched a violent attempt to overturn the election, Biden faces overlapping crises: not only the pandemic but a struggling economy, climate change and racial tensions.

Biden wants the Congress to act quickly on a massive, \$1.9-trillion stimulus package to revive the economy, and he plans a blitz to accelerate America's stumbling Covid vaccine rollout.

His target of seeing 100 million doses of coronavirus vaccine injected within his first 100 days in office is "absolutely" achievable, top US scientist Anthony Fauci said on Sunday.

"The feasibility of his goal is absolutely clear, there's no doubt about it," said Fauci, who will be Biden's chief advisor on the virus, as he was

FBI screens troops
ahead of function

Washington, Jan. 18: US law enforcement agencies are screening National Guard members to make sure they do not pose a security risk during President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration, a four-star general said in comments broadcast on Sunday.

Following the January 6 riots at the Capitol building in support of outgoing President Donald Trump, it emerged that some of those involved had current or former ties to the military.

General Daniel Hokanson, who heads the National Guard Bureau, was asked by CBS News on Sunday if troops were being checked as they

arrived in Washington.

"In coordination with the Secret Service and the FBI, they're screening all the personnel that are coming in," Hokanson said.

Much of Washington resembles a fortified compound in a war zone, with most of the downtown area blocked off, security fences topped by razor wire and about 25,000 National Guard troops deployed to the capital.

In a recent letter to all US troops, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told service members the January 6 riots were "inconsistent with the rule of law" and said troops "must embody the values and ideals of the nation."

— AFP

VP-ELECT HARRIS
TO RESIGN FROM
HER SENATE SEAT

Wilmington (Delaware), Jan. 18: Vice president-elect Kamala Harris will resign her Senate seat on Monday, two days before she and president-elect Joe Biden are inaugurated. Aides to the California Democrat confirmed the timing and said Gov. Gavin Newsom was aware of her decision, clearing the way for him to appoint fellow Democrat Alex Padilla, now California's secretary of state, to serve the final two years of Harris' term.

Padilla will be the first Latino senator from California, where about 40 per cent of residents are Hispanic. Newsom announced his choice in December, following intense lobbying for the rare Senate vacancy from the nation's most populous state.

— AP

Another 3 million in lockdown as
Covid-19 cases increase in China

Beijing, Jan. 18: Nearly three million people were put under lockdown in China Monday after a surge in coronavirus cases linked to a travelling salesman in the country's northeast.

While China has largely brought the virus under control, a sharp rise in cases in the past few weeks has prompted fresh lockdowns, travel restrictions and multiple rounds of mass testing. Monday saw three million residents of two cities in northeastern Jilin province placed under new measures, as China reported 109 new infections.

More than 19 million people across China's northeast are now barred from leaving their homes.

— AFP

France, UK boost
vaccine campaign

Paris, Jan. 18: France and Britain on Monday joined a growing list of nations starting mass vaccinations for all elderly citizens as the UK began demanding all arrivals quarantine to try and halt the spread of a new Covid-19 variant.

The French drive aims to cover all people over 75 and comes after Brazil and India, which figure among the worst-affected countries, administered their first jabs over the weekend.

Health Minister Olivier Veran said more than one million vaccinations are being targeted by January and between 2.4 and 4 million by February.

France had earlier offered vaccinations to residents of retirement homes and health workers on the frontline.

Britain on Monday extended its own vaccination campaign to people over the age of 70, after first attending to over-80s, and frontline health workers and care givers.

— AFP

W.H.O DEMANDS
FAIR ACCESS TO
COVID VACCINE

Geneva, Jan. 18: The world is on the brink of a "catastrophic moral failure" if rich countries hog Covid-19 vaccine doses while the poorest suffer, the head of the WHO said on Monday. World Health Organisation director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus denounced the "me-first" attitude of wealthy nations and also blasted vaccine manufacturers for chasing regulatory approval in rich countries rather than submitting their data to the WHO to green-light vaccine use globally.

— AFP

Fearing Biden, Erdogan
tries to mend ties with EU

Ankara, Jan. 18: Facing a potentially hostile US administration, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is trying to break his isolation by mending EU relations, torn by what the bloc views as his belligerent foreign policy.

Ties between Ankara and Brussels have plunged to a nadir not seen since Turkey formally opened talks to join the bloc in 2005, a process which is now frozen.

And while Erdogan speaks of turning "a new page", the list of European grievances is long.

Most recently, Brussels began drawing up a list of sanctions over Turkey's hunt for natural gas in the eastern Mediterranean, which triggered a naval

standoff with Greece last year. But older suspicions simmer. Erdogan's direct military interventions in the Syrian and Libyan conflicts raised hackles in Europe, while his vocal backing of Azerbaijan in the six-week Nagorno-Karabakh war upset

Armenia's allies across the West.

Erdogan's threats to send millions of Syrian and other refugees Turkey is hosting to Europe if the bloc fails to provide more funding are a constant menace. And he has made the animosity personal by attacking French President Emmanuel Macron's treatment of Muslims, which Europe counters by pointing to Turkey's grim record on human rights.

Some believe this standoff is unsustainable for Erdogan.

"Ankara cannot afford an escalation with both the US and Europe, especially with an economy this fragile," a European diplomat said.

— AFP

DISASTER | RUINS

At least 84 got killed and thousands left homeless after 6.2-magnitude of earthquake

Indonesian medics exhausted by quake casualties

Mamuju (Indonesia), Jan. 18: Medics battled exhaustion and the risk of Covid-19 as they raced on Monday to treat scores of people injured by a devastating earthquake on Indonesia's Sulawesi island.

At least 84 were killed and thousands left homeless by the 6.2-magnitude quake that struck early on Friday, reducing buildings to a tangled mass of twisted metal and chunks of concrete in the seaside city of Mamuju.

Doctors in hazard suits treated patients with broken limbs and other injuries at a makeshift medical centre set up outside the only one of the city's hospitals that survived relatively intact — one was flattened by the violent tremor.



Rescuers lead a sniffer dog during a search operation at the ruins of a building collapsed in earthquake in Mamuju, in Indonesia on Friday.

— AP

A handful of doctors and nurses worked "non-stop" in the first couple of days after the quake until reinforcements arrived, but it was still barely enough

amid shortages of medicine and other supplies.

"We were completely overwhelmed at one point," said Indahwati Nursyamsi, director of

West Sulawesi General Hospital.

"My nurses were also quake victims and had to help their families." Medics scrambled to quarantine Covid-19 positive patients in a bid to prevent an outbreak at the crowded open-air triage centre.

Some with coronavirus have been put in a prayer room — common in the Muslim majority nation — at the back of the hospital.

The hospital was trying to open up more rooms for surgery and erect additional tents outside to treat the injured.

But fears that another quake could bring down the building added to the challenges as patients, and some staff, refused to stay inside.

— AFP

Trapped Chinese miners
send SOS after a week

Beijing, Jan. 18: At least 12 gold miners trapped hundreds of metres underground in China for more than a week have sent up a note warning that they are injured, surrounded by water and urgently need medicine.

Twenty-two workers were trapped more than 600 metres from the mine's entrance after a blast eight days ago near Qixia city in eastern Shandong province.

After days without any signs of life, rescuers heard knocking sounds on Sunday afternoon as they drilled through the mine's shaft.

A note was sent up on a line from the depths below saying that at least a dozen of the miners are still alive, but that they urgently needed help as their health deteriorates.

"We are in urgent need of medicine, painkillers, medical tape, external anti-inflammatory drugs, and three people have high blood pressure," the note read.

The condition of the other ten workers is

unknown. Four people were injured, according to the note, which was crumpled, water-stained and scrawled in pencil on pages ripped out of a notebook.

"We wish the rescuers won't stop so that we can still have hope. Thank you," the note read.

The writer of the note asked rescuers to send down some medication from his car, and warned that there was a large amount of underground water where the miners are trapped.

— AFP

DECCAN
Chronicle

19 JANUARY 2021

Tejas decision a good one, but much more left to do

In a historic decision, the Cabinet Committee on Security on January 13 approved the country's largest-ever indigenous defence deal when it cleared the procurement of 83 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk 1-A — ten of which are to be trainers — for the Indian armed forces from Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd at an approximate cost of ₹47,000 crore, closing the circle that began with the commissioning of the LCA project in the 1980s.

The first rollout is expected in 2023-24, and then on 16 aircraft are to be manufactured every year on present reckoning. To start with, the indigenous content is to be 50 per cent, to be stepped up to 60 per cent within a short time-frame. HAL would be outsourcing the job to more than 550 domestic vendors.

This gives us an idea of the technological and economic spinoffs of the LCA programme for the Indian economy as a whole, going beyond the military aspect of acquiring a fighter jet at home which is billed as the workhorse of the future for the Indian Air Force, filling the gap left by the hoary MiG-21s of Soviet manufacture, which have been phased out.

The good news is that the LCA Mk-2 version with a bigger engine is in its design stage and is expected to be ready for trials next year.

If high-level efficiency is ensured in the production of the Tejas Mk 1-A by HAL, the country will make valuable savings of foreign exchange spent on importing costly fighter jets from Western sources. What's more, in time, the Tejas will be ready for export too. Some countries are said to have evinced an interest. The realisation of sale will, of course, depend on a host of political, strategic and economic considerations, and the prospect of readying the fighter for export will potentially add to India's strategic muscle and offer a certain latitude in dealing with the world.

The domestic manufacture of the Tejas Mk 1-A is a signpost of enormous value, although it has been more than three decades in the making, starting from the conception stage when the Aircraft Development Agency (ADA) was set up in 1984. The ADA designed Tejas in collaboration with Aircraft Research and Design Centre (ARDC) of HAL.

To find true liberation from imports in the strategic sphere of fighter aircraft manufacture, it is now crucial to look at the propulsion aspect for upgrade. India's LCA is fitted with the GEP-404 engine. In the wake of the 1998 nuclear test, the United States had held up the supply of these engines. It is therefore important to return special focus to the development of the indigenous Kaveri engine, which has been in the works for decades. To achieve cent per cent indigenous content, radars and avionics will also need to be manufactured domestically. Only a country that can grow its own food and has the ability to defend itself can ultimately avoid being at anyone's beck and call.

WhatsApp: A lot to explain

The Mark Zuckerberg-acquired WhatsApp is throwing up as many headaches as its parent Facebook these days because netizens are getting smarter about their data privacy. In an imperipete push to monetise data out of WhatsApp, the popular messaging platform, Facebook got into a tangle that saw millions of individual users and groups sign off and download apps like Signal and Telegram that are less intrusive of personal territory like online data. It may have come as a shock to most Internet users that an app promising end-to-end encryption, and which routinely declines law enforcement enquiries with the excuse that it has no access to user chats, should talk of sharing user data with Facebook.

It is largely true that netizens sign off much of their rights over prized personal information when they sign on to social media platforms and the like. Big Tech has never been averse to building up their businesses and making money out of a large number of users running into millions. The leaks of personal data from breaches by hackers or emanating from sheer carelessness of the machinery that is supposed to ensure security of data have not stopped people from their modern-day existence in an inter-connected world. The advantage is very much with those who keep data as citizens seem to have no rights in the absence of a regulatory framework to govern the Internet.

A parliamentary committee has summoned Facebook and Twitter officials to question them on the misuse of social media and online news platforms, but it is a long-drawn process that might not lead to foolproof measures to safeguard citizens' rights. Big Tech may have done signal service to the world in cutting off the communication of hate propaganda by maverick users like Donald Trump, but it must do a lot more to earn people's trust that it will not recklessly monetise their online presence by compromising their privacy. No algorithm has been invented yet that exposes the cavalier ways of the giants of the new economy. It is up to Internet users to be most discerning in signing on.

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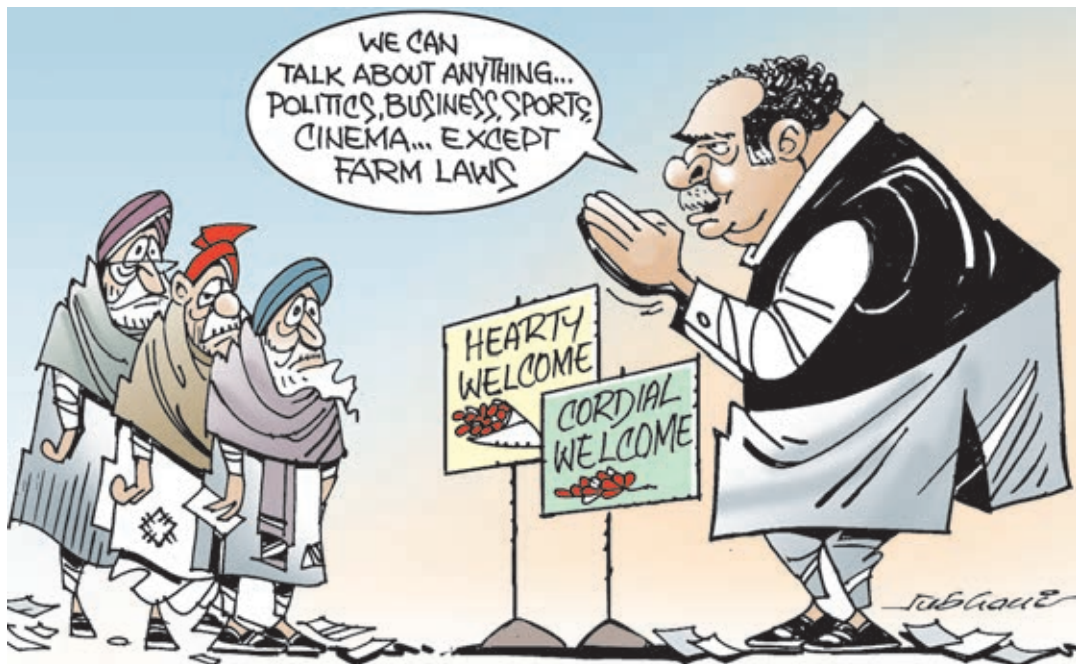
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Subhani



Thoughts on democracy as Trump exits, finally..



Sunanda K.
Datta-Ray
Reflections

Not long before Donald Trump became the first-ever American President to be impeached for a second time — this time with a real possibility of conviction — his daughter Ivanka chose to remind the world of the close ties between her father and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The opening and closure in record time of a study centre in Gwalior that exalted Nathuram Godse, the killer of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, also occurred almost simultaneously.

It is the legal action against Mr Trump by America's senators and congressmen that grips the world's attention. The impeachment proceedings threaten to overwhelm President-elect Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion plan to end "a crisis of deep human suffering" by speeding up the supply of coronavirus vaccines and financially helping Americans who are still struggling with the economic disaster caused by the grim pandemic. It even distracts notice from the contradictions, if not crisis, of democracy that Mr Trump's rantings and ravings have unwittingly highlighted. For it should never be forgotten that 74 million Americans voted for the man who now seems bent on destroying the edifice on which he stood.

While he is believed to have broken many constitutional norms during his four years in the White House — including trying desperately hard to thwart the peaceful transition of power to his legitimately elected successor — millions of Americans had endorsed his excesses. The January 6 rioters who stormed the US Capitol

building in Washington chanting "Hang Mike Pence" and "Where's Nancy?" clearly saw both the Republican vice-president and the Speaker of the House — the first and second in the line of presidential succession — as national enemies.

There is footage available of the rioters beating a police officer with a flagpole as the crowd chanted "USA" and crushing another officer repeatedly in a door. The violence resulted in five deaths; more might have perished if the police hadn't distracted the mob from breaching the debating chambers long enough to whisk every legislator away to safety. The outrage to civilised governance was infinitely worse. Some Republicans, after encouraging or standing by mute as the President attacked the democratic process for months, have shaken consciences. Ten of them joined all 222 Democrats in the House vote accusing Mr Trump of "incitement of insurrection" that was passed on January 13, a week after the attack.

Even those who concede that Mr Biden obtained more votes can ask if that invalidates the views of 74 million Americans.

A similar question arose in 2000 when George W. Bush defeated Al Gore by winning 271 electoral votes, one more than a majority, despite Mr Gore receiving 543,895 more votes nationally. Many Americans did not regard it as a satisfactory outcome, but they accepted it without protest.

The flaw goes back to 507 BC when the Athenian Cleisthenes introduced demokratia, or "rule by the people", from demos, "the people," and kratos, or "power". Setting aside

the claims of Vaishali, Athens was the first democracy for the Western world. But it was a far cry from the universal adult suffrage which we identify with democracy today, and which can be indistinguishable from mob rule. In the middle of the 4th century, for instance, Athens boasted about 100,000 citizens (sons and daughters of citizens), some 10,000 metoikoi, or "resident foreigners", and 150,000 slaves. Only male citizens above 18 were a part of the demos, meaning only about 40,000 people could participate in the democratic process.

Around 460 BC, under the rule of the general Pericles (generals were among the only public officials who were elected, not appointed), Athenian democracy began to evolve into an autocracy (Herodotus' "the one man, the best") which eventually led to Mao Zedong's concept of "people's democratic dictatorship". The premise was that the party and the State represented the people and acted on their behalf to preserve the "dictatorship of the proletariat", and save the government from collapsing into a "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie", or liberal democracy. Mao famously used the term on June 30, 1949, commemorating the 28th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China.

However, not all democracies are killed by Army coups or declarations of emergency. Many are destroyed from within. The urge to perpetuate a particular group's stranglehold on power or the plea that a mere head count does not adequately reflect the mood and temper of the people explains opportunistic

However, not all democracies are killed by Army coups or declarations of emergency. Many are destroyed from within.

devices like Gen. Ayub Khan's "basic democracy" (Pakistan), King Mahendra's "panchayati democracy" (Nepal) or "guided democracy" (Indonesia). Mr Trump's "America First" slogan is strongly echoed in the implicit argument that India's majority feels disenfranchised unless it enjoys special privileges. Hence the Hindu Mahasabha's attempt to propagate the "true nationalism which Godse stood for" through an eponymous library.

Three years ago, the Mahasabha installed a statue of Godse and was about to organise prayer meetings there, but the statue was removed. This second try has to be seen in the context of the constitutional dismemberment and demotion of Jammu and Kashmir, motivated tinkering with academic curriculums, triumphalism over the new Ram temple in Ayodhya, Hindutva trolls, opposition to inter-faith marriages and attacks on Muslims in the name of cow protection. WhatsApp and Twitter are said to be the main instruments for hounding the community.

In view of such similar populist moves, it was not surprising that 39-year-old Ivanka Trump, a senior adviser to her father, should choose this moment to recall her 2017 visited when she led a high-powered delegation to the Global Entrepreneur Summit in Hyderabad. "As the world continues to battle Covid-19, our countries' strong friendship in promoting global security, stability, and economic prosperity is more important than ever," she tweeted, paying particular tribute to Mr Modi by name.

Given the association with a man who is widely accused of desperate attempts to subvert democracy, it's a compliment the Prime Minister of an India that is still proud of being the world's largest democracy could have done without.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

HYDERABAD'S PRIDE

Hyderabad not only has the distinction of making vaccines to fight Covid like Covaxin by Bharat Biotech, the cure for another deadly scourge on humanity was found by the Anglo-Indian Ronald Ross in Hyderabad. Arguably the first Indian to be awarded the Nobel for medicine, the Sir Ronald Ross Institute is still functioning in Hyderabad.

P.A.S. Prasad
Visakhapatnam

TEMPLE ATTACKS

The data since 2015 till date is replete with incidents of idol destruction, theft of ornaments, digging temple premises without let up. Only difference is the 'reaction' of Opposition parties like the BJP, TDP and JS ever since YSRC was voted to power. This clearly exposes the sinister designs of the Opposition to discredit the ruling party. More importantly, the main Opposition TD needs a plank to refurbish its own image and therefore is investing all its energies in making a hue and cry over the attacks.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

TRANSPARENCY

Isn't it a transparency concern when an undertaking is taken from participants over the Covaxin inoculation prior to the jab? The government clarified that Covaxin, being in phase 3 trials, the clearance was accorded based on data submitted so far by Bharat Biotech and it is for emergency use only. The distribution of the two vaccines was also done by following set norms. The controversy should be set at rest.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

PM to begin election campaign in State

HYDERABAD, January. 18

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, will inaugurate tomorrow the election campaign of the Ruling Congress in Andhra Pradesh at Rajahmundry in the rice-rich district of East Godavari.

Chief Minister K. Brahmananda Reddy left by air this morning for Vijawada en route to Rajahmundry to receive her.

Aakar Patel



Nehru a model of modernity... Why his vision & legacy endures

I was being interviewed for my book and was asked a question unrelated to it — Why does Hindutva hate Jawaharlal Nehru so much? It is an interesting question and has two parts to the answer. To know it, we must first understand what Nehru was and what he wanted.

Before Independence, Nehru wrote a series of works through which he aligned himself to India as a civilisational entity of the sort that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh also approves of. He traces the modern nation to its origins in the Indus Valley Civilisation (discovered only a few years before he wrote *Glimpses of World History* and only 15 or so years before he wrote *The Discovery of India*) to the periods of the first and second millennia after Jesus Christ.

But having acknowledged that India was ancient, Nehru sought also to align it to the modern world and the era he was a part of and the future that he saw for all mankind. To that end he used the State as an instrument to modernise the country. Nehru based his strategy on two things — heavy industry and heavy

education. India had limited resources but these two would get priority.

You could argue about whether the strategy was good, bad or indifferent, but it would be difficult to say that he did not execute what he sought out to do. Having determined that he was going to modernise this civilisational entity he set about doing it because Nehru was not only a man of vision (you could argue with him about whether your vision was better) but also a man of action.

He began building institutions, including some which are today called "navratnas", but were then nothing and needed to be built. Some such examples are Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (1964), Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (1956), Steel Authority of India (1954), Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (1964), Indian Oil Corporation (1959), Isro (formerly INCOSPAR) 1962, Department of Atomic Energy (1954), Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (1954). And then Nehru set up the Indian Institutes of Technology (1951), the Indian Institutes of Management (1961), the National Institute of Design (1961), and the

Sahitya Akademi (1954).

The list goes on and on. Why were all these set up? They were set up because they were the means through which Nehru determined India would be modernised. He inherited a pre-modern economy, where the vast majority of production lay in agriculture and that agriculture was being largely managed by farmers whose means of farming had changed very little for over a thousand years.

Nehru did not inherit a trillion-dollar economy. He had to figure out how to get India there.

The problem is that nobody in the world of Hindutva has any vision — good, bad or indifferent — when compared to Nehru, and that includes our Prime Minister. He can offer us statements like "\$5 trillion economy" but he does not say, because he does not himself know, what needs to be done to get us there. More important, he does not know what the State needs to do differently to get there. You can only build institutions if you can think of what to do with them. The reason that Narendra Modi has not built institutions while Jawaharlal Nehru was

so prolific is because Mr Modi does not have even Nehru's starting point.

Nehru had said: Heavy industry and higher education! What does Narendra Modi say? If the answer to that is difficult for you to come up with, it is because there is no answer. This is the first reason that the BJP and Hindutva adherents hates Nehru: Jealousy.

The second reason is that Nehru was not a fraud nationalist. He was a real one. He did not only name China, he fought against it. Nehru lost because Nehru fought. And he fought because he could not bear the thought of surrendering any land of his precious India.

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar said at the Ramnath Goenka Lecture on November 14, 2019 that Nehru should have accepted Zhou Enlai's offer on the border dispute during Zhou's 1960 visit to India. What was that offer? That India should accept the Karakoram range as the Sino-Indian boundary. This is where the Line of Actual Control exists today. But this was not acceptable to Nehru. He wanted the border much further into Tibet.

And he was willing to fight for it. He may have lost, yes, but he did not give up India's claim.

This is unlike Mr Modi, who has not only given up the claim, but is also unwilling even to name the opponent for fear of what China might do. This is the second reason that the BJP and Hindutva hate Nehru. He was a nationalist who exposed thoroughly their own fraudulent nationalist credentials.

The name Nehru is used far too loosely in today's times without much understanding of what he really stood for because we have not explained his thinking in simplified terms.

He is not only much superior to whatever came after him, particularly as we see now in a period of economic collapse and national security failures, but he is a model for modernity. He died more than 55 years ago but is still spoken about and his legacy is all around us today. Of how many Prime Ministers, and that includes this current one, will we be able to say that?

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

quick
BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|------------|-------|
| Sensex | 48,564.27 | -0.96 |
| Nifty 50 | 14,281.30 | -1.06 |
| S&P 500* | 3,768.25 | -0.72 |
| Dollar (₹) | 73.28 | -0.31 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 99.18 | 0.49 |
| Euro (₹) | 88.47 | 0.27 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 48,332▲117 | 0.24 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 54.87 | -0.42 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 5.957 | -0.52 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 1.087 | -0.92 |

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Maruti Suzuki
increases prices
of most vehicles

Maruti Suzuki India said it has increased the price for select models by up to Rs 34,000 to offset adverse impact of rising input costs. The new prices are effective from January 18. While the company did not specify the models, according to dealer sources the price hike impacts most of its models, but select variants of certain models have been left untouched in price hike. Last month, Maruti said it would hike prices from January.

Cure.fit acquires
US-based digital
fitness firm Onyx



Health-tech startup Cure.fit said it has acquired California-based fitness company Onyx. The company, however, did not disclose the value of the deal. Cure.fit's acquisition of Onyx is a step towards improving its computer vision technology for its at-home fitness product and expanding its international business, a statement said. Onyx specialises in body tracking technology and personalisation of workout feedback.

Skootr leases
over 3.25-L sq ft
space in H'bad

Managed office space operator Skootr has inked the largest office space leasing in this segment in Hyderabad for catering to large multinational clients wanting customised office space. Rajat Johar, country head, Skootr said, "With the Covid-19 outbreak, employees' priorities have changed to health, safety and hygiene. This has led to occupiers shifting their base from Grade B assets to Grade A office space." He added that Skootr provides 'space as a service.'

IRFC IPO: Retail
portion
oversubscribed

The initial public offering of the Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) was subscribed 65 per cent on the first day of subscription on Monday. The offer received bids for 80,89,30,700 shares against 1,24,75,05,993 shares on offer, as per data available with the NSE. The category reserved for non-institutional investors was subscribed 9 per cent and retail individual investors, 1.25 times.



■ Import of appliances, furniture, EV parts to get costlier
Budget may raise duties
by 5-10% to aid local mfg

**AFTAB AHMED &
MANOJ KUMAR**
NEW DELHI, JAN. 18

The government is considering hiking import duties by 5-10 per cent on more than 50 items, including smartphones, electronic components and appliances in the upcoming budget, three government sources privy to the discussions told Reuters on Monday. The move to increase import duties is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's self-reliant India campaign that aims to promote and support domestic manufacturing, said the sources, who asked not to be named as the discussions are not public. One of the sources said

FOCUS ON SELF-RELIANCE

- ▶ Customs duty hikes part of revenue raising and Atmanirbhar Bharat plan
- ▶ Govt seeking additional revenue of about ₹120,000 crore-₹21,000 crore from duties
- ▶ Duty hikes could hurt Swedish furniture maker Ikea and electric vehicle maker Tesla

the government was seeking to target additional revenue of about Rs 20,000 crore- 21,000 crore from the moves, as it looks to shore up revenue amidst the pandemic-driven slowdown. Two of the government sources also said the duty hikes could impact furniture and electric vehicles, potentially hurting the likes of Swedish furniture maker Ikea and Tesla,

which is planning to launch its cars in India this year. Both Ikea and Tesla executives have previously expressed concerns about the steep duty structure their products already face in India. The list of items likely to attract steeper duties is set to include appliances such as refrigerators and air-conditioners too, three of the sources said.

The sources said the proposals may still be tweaked further before they are finalised. India has in recent years taken a series of measures that industry executives say discriminate against foreign companies. Government officials say such taxes are essential to promote India as a destination for local manufacturing and to support domestic businesses. "This is part of revenue raising and Atmanirbhar Bharat plan," said one of the government sources. Last year, India raised import taxes on a wide range of products such as footwear, furniture, toys, electrical and electronics items by up to 20 per cent. —Reuters

Beware of tricky January, budget moves of mkt

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 18



Sensex and Nifty-50 fell close to 1 per cent for the second session in a row on profit taking amid negative global cues, though foreign portfolio investors were still buying shares. The Sensex closed 470 points down at 48,564 while the Nifty-50 closed 152.40 points lower at 14,281.30. The broader market fall was even sharper with the BSE Mid-cap Index down 2.01

per cent and BSE Small-cap Index, 1.89 per cent. "The news of fresh Covid cases in China has spooked the markets across the globe, including India, as participants are worried about global economic recovery," said

Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking. It's time to remain cautious as the January-February period has seen big market falls in the past—the biggest fall after a sharp rise took place on January 21, 2008—and later between 2015 and 2018 the market saw sharp falls post-Union Budget. With little headroom for the government to present a popular budget, profit taking before budget day cannot be ruled out.

"Unusual strength in the dollar index and sustained run up in the commodities have battered the sentiment of the equity market. It has triggered selling in commodities and the Nifty Metal Index closed 4.57 per cent lower," said Shrikant Chouhan, analyst-equity technical rese-arch, Kotak Securities. Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 650.60 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 42.51 crore.

RBI forex intervention
to touch \$93 bn by Mar.

Mumbai, Jan. 18: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to spend at least \$20 billion more to support the rupee and increase the forex kitty through the remainder of the financial year, taking its overall forex intervention to \$93 billion, according to a report. The report by the Wall Street brokerage Bank of America Securities also expects the central bank to raise banks' HTM (held-to-maturity) limits of excess government securities by 2 per cent of their books to fund the fiscal deficit if high forex intervention limits its open market operations (OMOs). So far this fiscal, the RBI's forex intervention has touched \$73.7 billion, according to the assessment by brokerage's India economists Indranil Sen Gupta and Aastha Gudwani. They also feel the RBI to intervene with \$45 billion in 2021-22 if the current account deficit (CAD) stays 0.5 per cent of the GDP. After eight years, the RBI under the current governor Shaktikanta Das has been building up the forex reserves, which as of

January 15 stood at \$58.1 billion, a lifetime high. While delivering the Nani Palkhivala lecture last Saturday, Das repeated his resolve to not let the 2008 or 2013 run on the rupee to be repeated again. "Our BoP (balance of payment) forecasts place RBI forex intervention at \$93 billion (\$73.7 billion so far) in 2020-21 and \$45 billion in 2021-22 if the the CAD remains at 0.5 per cent of GDP, which is dependent on the crude oil averaging at \$50 a barrel," the report said. It said since high forex intervention is limiting OMOs, the RBI is expected to raise banks' HTM limits by 2 per cent of their books to fund the fiscal deficit. The report further said it is sure the RBI will continue to buy forex when the dollar is weakening and let the rupee depreciate when it strengthens. On Saturday, Das had said, "To mitigate global spillovers, EMs (emerging markets) like India have no recourse but to build their own forex reserve buffers, even though at the cost of being included in the currency manipulators list." —PTI

Total to buy 20% in Adani Green for \$2.5 bn

**BAIJU KALESH, MANUEL
BAIGORRI, FRANCOIS
DE BEAUPUY & P. R.
SANJAI**
JAN. 18



Total SE has agreed to a \$2.5-billion deal that includes a minority stake in India's renewables major Adani Green Energy Ltd, as it expands its efforts to diversify beyond oil. Paris-based Total will acquire 20 per cent of Adani Green, take a board seat and add a 50 per cent stake in a portfolio of operating solar assets with capacity to transmit 2.35 gigawatts of power to consumers, the company said on Monday in a statement. "India is the right place to put into action our energy transition strategy based on two pillars: renewables and natural gas," Total CEO Patrick Pouyanne said in the statement. Its demise coincides with a growing global backlash among technology experts, privacy advocates, billionaire entrepreneurs and government organisations against WhatsApp's new

Chinese WeChat-operator Tencent Holdings Ltd, has in recent years ventured into adjacent areas such as no-frills phones and expanded even into spheres such as mobile entertainment. On January 6, Mittal—son of Sunil Bharti Mittal, chairman of Bharti Airtel Ltd—announced the closure of Hike StickerChat. Its demise coincides with a growing global backlash among technology experts, privacy advocates, billionaire entrepreneurs and government organisations against WhatsApp's new

The deal is the third in a week for Total in the renewable area, following the acquisition of a French biogas producer and of a stake in a large US solar portfolio. The French oil and gas giant and its European peers are increasingly investing in clean power and renewable fuels amid mounting pressure from investors, governments and consumers to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. —Bloomberg

WhatsApp rival Hike goes off the air in India

SARITHA RAI
JAN. 18



Hike, the messaging app backed by SoftBank Group Corp. that aimed to compete against WhatsApp in the world's second-most populous country, shut down and vanished from app stores on Monday. The startup valued at \$1.4 billion in a 2016 funding round announced its app was going off the air earlier this month without explanation. The app started by billionaire-family scion Kavin Bharti Mittal has failed over several

years to displace Facebook Inc's rival app as India's go-to venue for social media and mobile communications. The country remains WhatsApp's largest market globally. Hike, backed also by

Chip shortage forces Ford
to advance plant shut down

New Delhi, Jan. 18: The global shortage of semiconductors will impact production of US auto major Ford's plants in India in the coming months, even as the company advances a scheduled week-long shutdown to this week at its Chennai factory, according to a company official. Ford India, which has two factories at Chennai in Tamil Nadu and Sanand in Gujarat, expects the issue, which is affecting the entire automotive sector, to continue for at least through the first half of 2021. "The global semiconductor shortage will impact vehicle production at Ford's Chennai and Sanand plant in the coming months," a Ford India spokesperson said in a statement. The spokesperson further said, "In Chennai, we have pulled ahead a down week to this week due to a supplier part shortage connected to the global semiconductor shortage." The company is working closely with suppliers to address production constraints tied to the global semiconductor shortage and working to prioritise key vehicle lines for production, making the most of its semiconductor allocation. "This issue is affecting the entire automotive sector and expected to continue for at least the first half of 2021," the spokesperson added. Ford India exports a significant portion of vehicles produced from its two plants. In December 2020 its production was down 42.96



AUDI DELAYS OUTPUT,
IDLES 10,000 STAFF

YUEQI YANG
JAN. 18

A global semiconductor shortage is forcing Audi to delay the production of some high-end cars and furlough workers, its chief executive officer told the *Financial Times*. The Volkswagen AG brand has put more than 10,000 workers on furlough as production slowed, but overall output for 2021 shouldn't be affected because the company expects to make up for lost time in the second half, Markus Duesmann said in the interview. VW, the world's biggest carmaker, had said last month that it's bracing for a major production

disruption in first-quarter manufacturing around the globe because of the bottleneck. Other carmakers, including Daimler AG, Nissan Motor Co, Honda Motor Co, Ford Motor Co and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV, have also said they face impact from the chip shortage. In the *FT* interview, Duesmann said Audi will "do everything we can to keep it below 10,000 [fewer models produced] for the first quarter." The supply challenge came as Audi saw unexpected rise in demand for cars, largely due to a rebound in China, he said. —Bloomberg

per cent at 6,943 units. The company's domestic sales were at 1,662 units, down 45.06 per cent from the year-ago month, whereas its exports were at 6,992 units, a decline of 53.83 per cent from December 2019.

Last month, due to the shortage of semiconductor supplied by Bosch Ltd, Mahindra & Mahindra had also stated it was expecting reduction in production and sales volumes. —PTI

LEXUS DRIVES
IN SEDAN LS
500H NISHIJIN
AT ₹2.22 CR



MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, JAN. 18

Japanese luxury car maker Lexus, the arm of Toyota, on Monday introduced a new variant of its flagship sedan LS, called the Lexus LS 500H Nishijin priced at Rs 2.22 crore at New Delhi showroom while the entry level variant the LS 500h costs Rs 31 lakh less at Rs 1.91 crore. The brand has given the LS 500h a few crucial updates across the range. Although priced higher, it rivals the Mercedes-Benz S-Class, Audi A8L, and the BMW 7 Series. The new LS 500h Nishijin variant has interiors crafted with an expression of style and comfort, featuring a unique collaboration involving traditional Japanese crafts. It is inspired by the path of the moonlight on the sea, a rare phenomenon witnessed for a few days before and after a full moon. Lexus India president P. B. Venugopal said the new Nishijin variant and improvements to the flagship model have been introduced following positive response of the LS 500h in India. "These upgrades keep in line with the sophistication and craftsmanship of the Lexus LS 500h flagship luxury model," he pointed out. These will deliver optimum performance with cutting-edge technologies, while keeping in mind the environmental benefits and the comfort, Venugopal said. There is no change to the engine. It continues to pair a 3.5-litre petrol engine with an electric motor, generating an output of 358PS.

BULL | CASE 'Looking at a single metric of value or P/E is not a fair way to judge the market'

Unfazed by high prices, MF stays bullish on stocks

NUPUR ACHARYA
JAN. 18

A record price-to-earnings valuation for Indian shares shouldn't act as a deterrent for stock investors, according to Radhika Gupta, the head of Edelweiss Asset Management Ltd. Gupta, the only female chief executive officer of a major asset manager in India, says it's "risky to be underweight equities" at a time when local stocks remain "heavily" driven by liquidity. Her firm, which oversees Rs 46,500 (\$6.3 billion) in assets, is putting its money to work: an Edelweiss balanced fund that invests in both

stocks and bonds has boosted its equity allocation to about 75 per cent, from just 30 per cent in March. "Looking at a single metric of value or P/E is not a fair way to judge the market at a point when domestic economic activity is bottoming out, and you have such high liquidity," she said. "We are buyers of businesses. We are looking at corporate earnings, the domestic economy, flows and risk appetite." The benchmark S&P BSE Sensex has rallied around 90 per cent from its low during the March swoon in 2020, hitting fresh records on the way

The rally fuelled by central bank liquidity and incessant foreign inflows has the gauge trading at 23 times its 12-month forward earnings. That's versus a five-year average multiple of 19 times. Gupta's optimism is at odds with rising concern among many market watchers that stock prices in India have run ahead of themselves as the economy braces for its biggest annual contraction in records going back to 1952. Last week, the Reserve Bank of India also warned about the rally, citing a widening "disconnect" between certain sections of the financial mar-



Radhika Gupta

kets and the real economy. The RBI will also start draining cash from the banking system as it seeks to revert to normal liquidity operations from pandemic-imposed emergency measures. Gupta, on the other hand, points to improving

corporate earnings and the strength shown in recent months by high-frequency economic indicators such as exports, automobile sales and manufacturing output amid an uptick in consumption. Analysts surveyed by Bloomberg have revised up 12-month estimated earnings for Sensex members by about 20 per cent since a trough in July. "A lot of the uncertainty surrounding markets has ebbed," she said. "The second quarter was good for company earnings led by margin expansion, the tail risk for banks has been contained and a couple of government

reforms in the pipeline tell you that the downside risk isn't very high." Foreigners continue to pile into Indian stocks, having bought a net \$2.2 billion in two weeks in the new year, after pumping in \$23.4 billion in 2020. That was the most since 2012. "Vaccines and the low interest environment that we are in could be a very good thing for emerging markets" like India, said Gupta. "We are hoping to see a scenario of better-than-expected performance for the corporate sector. With lockdowns opening up, we expect revenues to come back." —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Chandrasekhar suffers stroke

Bengaluru: Former India cricketer B.S. Chandrasekhar has been hospitalised after suffering a stroke but is recovering well and is set to be discharged in the next couple of days, his family said on Monday. The 75-year old legendary former leg-spinner complained of “tiredness and fatigue” on Friday evening and his speech became a “little bit cluttered”, his wife Sandhya Chandrasekhar Bhagwath said, describing the health scare as a “very, very minutest stroke”. “Chandra is recovering very well, and he will be back home on Wednesday or Thursday,” she said. On advice of doctors, the Mysuru-born Chandrasekhar was admitted to the Aster RV Hospital, where he was kept in the emergency care unit for observation. — PTI

Eng win opening Test in Lanka

Galle, Sri Lanka: Jonny Bairstow and Dan Lawrence held their nerve in a 62-run unbroken stand to guide England to a seven-wicket win over Sri Lanka on Monday on the fifth and final morning of the series-opening Test.

England ensured they didn't have any more hiccups in erasing the remaining 36 required on the last day after Sri Lanka had set up a tricky 74-run target on a turning wicket. England had slumped to 14/3 late on the fourth evening, included a crucial run-out of their captain Joe Root for just 1, before Bairstow and Lawrence combined to usher the tourists to 76/3. Bairstow remained unbeaten on 35 and Lawrence finished 21 not out. — AP
Brief scores: Sri Lanka 135 & 359 vs England 421 & 76/3 (Bairstow 35 not out)

Dungdung stars in hockey girls win

Santiago, Chile: Striker Beauty Dungdung scored a hat-trick as the Indian junior women's hockey team thrashed their Chilean counterparts 5-3 in a high-scoring match to make a successful return to competition following a year-long break due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The striker from Jharkhand scored in the 29th, 38th and 52nd minutes, while Lalrindiki (14th) and Sangita Kumari (30th) also registered their names on the scoresheet for India. Chile's goals were scored by Simone Avelli (10th), Paula Sanz (25th) and Fernanda Arrieta (49th). The match started with the Chile junior team retaining most of the possession, and scoring in the 10th minute as Avelli was on the end of a perfect pass to score the hosts' opening goal. — PTI

72 players in Oz Open quarantine

Melbourne: The number of players in hard quarantine swelled to 72 ahead of the Australian Open after a fifth positive coronavirus test was returned from the charter flights bringing players, coaches, officials and media to Melbourne for the season-opening tennis major. That means they won't be allowed to leave their hotel rooms or practice for 14 days, creating a two-speed preparation period for the tournament. Other players in less rigorous quarantine will be allowed to practice for five hours daily. Australian Open organizers confirmed late Sunday that the latest case involved a passenger on the flight from Doha, Qatar to Melbourne who was not a member of the playing contingent. But all 58 passengers, including the 25 players, now cannot leave their hotel rooms for 14 days. — AP

Live on TV

BADMINTON

Thailand Open: Round of 32 matches from 7.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

CRICKET

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament: Haryana vs Kerala from 11.55 am; Mumbai vs Andhra Pradesh from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

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NEWBIES STING

Siraj's five-for and Shardul's 4/61 keep India in contention

Brisbane, Jan. 18: Indian pacers Mohammed Siraj and Shardul Thakur produced another inspirational effort in adverse circumstances but India were set a a challenging target of 328 by Australia as the Border-Gavaskar Trophy headed towards an exhilarating finale in the fourth Test here.

The target is a tricky one and the Indian batsmen would get a fair idea whether to go for it by lunch on the final day, which is Tuesday. This was after Siraj and Thakur combined to share nine wickets while dismissing Australia for 294 in their second innings.

Siraj (19.5-5-73-5) punched way above his weight with his maiden five-wicket haul but couldn't prevent hosts from posting an imposing target for his team in only 75.5 overs of the second innings batting.

At stumps, India were 4 for no loss with Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill at the crease.

The highest target chased at Brisbane is 236 and that was seven decades ago which is an indicator why this Australian ground can be equated with Fort Knox. The home team hasn't lost a game here since 1988.

Thakur's dream Test match also got better with figures of 4/61 and a match haul of seven wickets. The most poignant moment was his apparent joy when he took the catch to help Siraj pip him to the coveted five-for landmark.

As Siraj showed that scuffed red kookaburra acknowledging the 957 people in the stands on the first working day of the week, the most generous applause came from his partner in crime, who walked a foot behind him clapping with gusto.

The possibility of rain adds to the excitement and the changing weather did affect the contours of Australia skipper Tim Paine's facial expressions which exhibited relief and despair in equal measures. Among the two captains, Paine is supposed to be the enforcer but this Indian team hasn't stopped surprising their detractors with a spirit, which has made this series one of the finest played in recent times. — PTI



Paceman Mohammed Siraj (right) points to the sky to pay tribute to his father who passed away in India while the bowler was on national duty in Australia, as he celebrates his fifth wicket with teammate Mayank Agarwal on the fourth day of the fourth Test against Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane on Monday.

— AFP

Mum's call did wonders for Siraj

Brisbane, Jan. 18: Mohammed Siraj revealed how a phone call with his mother and the memory of his late father spurred him on to a five-wicket haul in the final Test against Australia on Monday.

Siraj, playing only his third Test, ably deputised for the injured Jasprit Bumrah in Brisbane, where India need a draw to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with the series locked at 1-1.

It has been an emotional series for the 26-year-old, who lost his father in November and welled up with tears during the national anthems in Sydney.

"I am very thankful that I got five wickets. It was a very tough situation for me because I lost my dad recently," said Siraj.

"I called up home and I felt strong after talking to them and to my mother. She motivated me to feel strong. So I was mentally strong and my focus was to make sure my dad's dream comes true."

SIRAJ'S MAIDEN 5-WICKET HAUL IN TESTS

- Mohammed Siraj recorded the best bowling in Tests by taking 5/73 against Australian in the fourth Test.
- The right-arm medium pacer from Hyderabad also became the 18th Indian to take five wickets in an innings in Australia.
- Kapil Dev holds the Indian record of taking the highest number of five-wicket hauls in Australia. He claimed five five-wicket hauls in 21 innings of 11 Test Down under.
- Siraj's previous best bowling was 3/37 on debut in the second Test of the series at Melbourne.
- Shardul Thakur also recorded his best bowling after taking 4/61 on Monday. His previous best was 3/94 in the first innings of the fourth Test.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

Siraj's father, an auto rickshaw driver from Hyderabad, died on November 20 as India prepared for the start of their tour.

'CRACKS ON GABBA CAN BE CONFUSING'

An emotional Siraj struggled to describe his maiden five-wicket haul in words but sounded a word of caution about the cracks on the Gabba surface creating confusion in the Indian batsmen's minds on the final day.

He believed that there are a few spots on the surface, from where the ball might rear up awkwardly when his team sets out to chase a record target of 328 on Tuesday to win the series against Australia.

"When they bowl, obviously there will be some confusion, it will play in the mind of the batsmen that there are cracks on the pitch but our batsmen are prepared for this. We will come to know only tomorrow," Siraj said.

— Agencies

DRAWN TEST SERIES WILL BE WORSE FOR HOSTS: PONTING

Brisbane, Jan. 18: Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting feels a drawn Test series against a severely depleted India will be a worse result for the hosts than the loss they suffered at home in the Border Gavaskar Trophy two years ago.

The injury-ravaged Indian team has shown great resilience and grit throughout the current tour of Australia. In the ongoing fourth and final Test, the tourists are without their premier fast bowlers, skipper Virat Kohli and a few specialist batsmen.

"I think a drawn series will be worse than the loss a couple of years ago," Ponting told *cricket.com.au*. "That's the way I look at it, considering how hard India have found it going through 20 players in a series, (Australia) having (David) Warner back for the last couple of games, (Steve) Smith back for all them that they didn't have last time around."

"A draw would not only feel like a loss to them but be a worse result than last series," he added. The 46-year-old batting great backed Australia to eke out a win, saying the Indian resilience is bound to crack.

— PTI

Smith says patience will be key for Aussies on fifth day

Brisbane, Jan. 18: Australian batsman Steve Smith reckons that with the Gabba track starting to play a few tricks, staying patient would be imperative for his team's bowlers when they defend an imposing 328 against a determined India on the last day of the and final Test here.

"I think the game is in a nice place for us. I think the wicket has started to play a few tricks today, couple of balls shot up," Smith said.

"So, tomorrow it is just

going to be about bowling (in) good areas and letting the natural variation of the day five wicket sort of do its work and hopefully we can hold on to all the chances."

The rain factor is also going to be a crucial one on the final day but Smith would rather focus on controllables.

"Who knows? That is a tough question."

He said the Australian bowlers should remain patient and not go searching for too much.

"The Indian players have obviously batted

well. Obviously in Sydney, it was 130 (overs) or something, obviously it is a different wicket to that. But for us it is just being patient, not searching too much, bowling good areas and just letting it happen," the prolific player said.

"I think the more you sort of go searching for on these kind of tracks, then you probably don't get the reward. So, it is just about hitting good areas consistently and letting the natural variation of the wicket take its course." — PTI

Messi sees red as Bilbao lift Super Cup

Madrid, Jan. 18: Lionel Messi lost his cool after another Barcelona collapse, hitting an opponent away from the ball and being sent off for the first time while playing with the Catalan club in the team's 2-3 loss to Athletic Bilbao in the final of the Spanish Super Cup.

Inaki Williams' goal in extra time gave Athletic the lead and a come-from-behind win. Barcelona had little chance of recovering when Messi swung his right arm toward the head of an Athletic player while trying to free himself. Messi was shown the red card following a video review.

After Athletic scored in the 90th minute to seal a 2-2 draw and force extra time, Williams netted the

title-clinching goal with a neat curling shot from just inside the area, with the ball hitting the far post before going into the top corner.

The goal three minutes into extra time secured Athletic their third Super Cup title, and first since they beat Barcelona in the 2015 final. The Basque Country club also won the title in 1984.

Barcelona were seeking their 15th Super Cup title, and third in the last five seasons. It was also looking to end their title drought after going without a trophy last season, something that hadn't happened since 2007-08.

It was an even match at the La Cartuja Stadium in Seville, with neither team creating many significant



Athletic Bilbao players celebrate after winning the Spanish Supercopa final against FC Barcelona. — AP

scoring opportunities.

Barcelona opened the scoring with a shot from the middle of the area by Antoine Griezmann in the 40th minute but Athletic

equalized two minutes later.

MAN UTD STAY TOP

Manchester United maintained their three-point

advantage over Liverpool at the top of the Premier League but were denied a famous win at Anfield by Alisson Becker's heroics in a 0-0 draw on Sunday.

Liverpool remain third after failing to score for a third straight league game, but were grateful to their goalkeeper to extend a 68-game unbeaten home run in the League as he denied Bruno Fernandes and Paul Pogba late on. United are now unbeaten in 12 league games as they bolstered their claim to be title contenders for the first time since former manager Alex Ferguson retired eight years ago.

But Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men may rue the chance to open up a six-point gap against the champions. — AFP

SYED MUSHTAQ | ALI TROPHY

Jharkhand defeat Hyd in super over

Kolkata, Jan. 18: Jharkhand saw off the challenge of Hyderabad via a super over in an Elite Group B match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament here on Monday.

Jharkhand restricted Hyderabad to 139/8 in 20 overs, with Vikash Singh and Vivekanand Tiwary picking up three wickets each.

B. Sandeep (37) was the top-scorer while Himalay Agarwal and Buddhi Rahul contributed 26 each as Hyderabad posted a modest score.

In reply, Jharkhand started in earnest with skipper Ishan Kishan (27) and Utkarsh Singh (29) going on the attack. The dismissal of Kishan by T Ravi Teja did not seem to deter Utkarsh and Virat Singh, who went for their shots.

In the super over, Kishan smacked two sixes off C. Rakshann Reddy while Roy hoisted one over the boundary as Jharkhand ended up with 23 runs. Hyderabad could only muster 14 for one.

Jharkhand are in third place with 12 points after completing their engagements in the group while Hyderabad are fifth with 4 points. Odisha beat Assam by four wickets to finish at the bottom with one win.

Tamil Nadu, who have so far won all their four games, meet hosts Bengal (three wins from four games) in the final Group B match.

BARODA GO INTO KNOCKOUTS UNBEATEN

Unbeaten Baroda qualified for the knockout stage as they finished on top in Group C following a 12-run win over Gujarat in Vadodra on Monday.

Baroda had come into the final Elite Group C match, after winning their first four games.

Baroda rode on an unbeaten 50 by Vishnu Solanki and a whirlwind 17-ball 34 by Abhimanyusingh Rajput to post a competitive 176/4 and then restricted Gujarat to 164/9 to eke out a win.

In Alur, Mandeep Singh led from the front with an unbeaten 99 to help Punjab trounce Tripura by five wickets and storm into the quarterfinals as table-toppers from Group A.

Defending champions Karnataka also remained in the hunt for the last-eight berth, securing a five-wicket win over Uttar Pradesh that took their net run-rate to 0.292.

BRIEF SCORES

■ Hyderabad 139/9 in 20 overs (B. Sandeep 37, Himalay Agarwal 26, Rahul Buddhi 26, Vivekanand Tiwari 3/25, Vikash Singh 3/36) tied Jharkhand 139/9 in 20 overs (Utkarsh Singh 29, Anukul Roy 28, Ishan Kishan 27, Ajay Dev Goud 4/22). **Super over:** Jharkhand 23/0 beat Hyderabad 14/1.

■ Uttar Pradesh 132/8 in 20 overs (Abhishek Goswami 47, Karan Sharma 41, J. Suchith 3/21, Praveen Dubey 3/15) lost to Karnataka 156/5 in 19.3 overs (Shreyas Gopal 47 n.o., Sharma 2/23) by five wickets.



P.V. Sindhu

Sindhu & Co. eye improved results

Bangkok, Jan. 18: Indian shuttlers, including Olympic hopefuls P.V. Sindhu and Saina Nehwal, will hope to give a better account of themselves at Toyota Thailand Open Super 1000 tournament, starting here on Tuesday, after a lacklustre show last week.

The Indian players seemed to struggle with their fitness as none of them could cross the second round at the Yonex Thailand Open, the first event of the Asia leg here.

Barring Kidambi Srikanth, it was the first tournament for the whole Indian contingent in nearly 10 months.

If Olympic silver medalist Sindhu struggled to keep pace with her first-round opponent

Denmark's Mia Blichfeldt, London Games bronze winner Saina simply ran out of steam in the second round.

Among others, world No. 13 B. Sai Praneeth looked a mismatch against Thailand's Kantaphon

Wangcharoen, while former world No. 1 Srikanth and 2014 Commonwealth Games champion Parupalli Kashyap were either forced to withdraw or retire after suffering calf muscle pulls.

Sindhu, a medal contender at Tokyo Games, has been training at London for last two months and she will be itching to go deep in the draw when she opens against world no 12 Busanan O., who had outlasted Saina last week.

Saina, who recently recovered from Covid-19 and had to go through the ordeal of a false positive test last week, will however have an imposing task as she faces fourth seed and home favourite Ratchanok Intanon in the first round.

In the men's singles, Praneeth will need to find his rhythm when he takes on Daren Liew of Malaysia, while Srikanth, faces Thailand's Sittikorn Thammasin, an opponent he has beaten twice in the past. — PTI

JAPAN'S PM VOWS OLYMPICS WILL BE PROOF OF VICTORY OVER VIRUS

Tokyo, Jan. 18: Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga vowed on Monday to get the pandemic under control and hold the already postponed Olympics this summer with ample coronavirus protection.

In a speech opening a new Parliament session, Suga said his government would revise laws to make anti-virus measures enforceable with penalties and compensation.

Early in the pandemic, Japan was able to keep its virus caseload manageable with non-binding requests for businesses to close or operate with social distancing and for people to stay home. But recent weeks have seen several highs in new cases per day, in part blamed on eased attitudes toward the anti-virus measures, and doubts are growing as more contagious variants spread while people wait for vaccines and the Olympics draw closer.

Suga pledged to achieve the Olympics as a proof of human victory against the coronavirus.

"We will have full anti-infection measures in place and proceed with preparation with a determination to achieve the Games that can deliver hope and courage throughout the world," he said. — AP