





## SHORT TAKES

## Youth beaten to death with hammer

**New Delhi:** A 22-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly killing another person by hitting him multiple times on his head with a hammer in south Delhi's Tigri area. The accused, Govind, had a fallout with the deceased Rahul (32) following a quarrel over a petty issue. The accused killed the victim to take revenge from him. The incident took place on Sunday afternoon when Rahul was sitting in a park along with his friends. Govind came to the park and attacked Rahul with a hammer, hitting him on his head several times, a senior police officer said. The victim was then rushed to the Batra Hospital where he was declared brought, he said. During enquiry, it was revealed that Rahul was previously involved in five-six cases different cases, including murder, robbery and theft. His three brothers have also been declared "Bad Characters" of the area, the officer said.

## Civil def volunteer, aide held for thefts

**New Delhi:** The police has arrested a 36-year-old civil defence volunteer and his associate for allegedly stealing valuables from a car after breaking its windowpane in south Delhi's Saket. The accused identified as Rajesh Kumar and his associate Yogender Sharma (37) were held near PVR market in Saket on the night of January 8. At 9.25 pm, police noticed two men searching a parked car after breaking the windowpane of the vehicle, a senior police official said. Both of them were arrested and stolen items were recovered from their possession, he said. During interrogation, Kumar disclosed that he works as a Delhi civil defence volunteer.

## Man thrashes fast food vendor, held

**New Delhi:** The police has arrested a man for allegedly robbing and thrashing a fast food vendor who had asked him to pay ₹20 for a plate of snacks. The incident took place southeast Delhi's Jamia Nagar area. The accused has been identified as Firoz Khan (26), a resident of Hazi Colony here. According to Subhash Gupta, Firoz came to his food cart on January 9 and ordered a plate of for chilli potatoes. After eating, when he was asked to pay ₹20 for it, Firoz got angry and started abusing him. When the vendor opposed, Firoz punched him and beat him. He robbed ₹1,500 cash and Aadhar card from his cart. — PTI

## DELHI SEES 306 NEW CASES, 13 MORE DEATHS

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

Delhi recorded as many as 306 fresh coronavirus cases on Monday, the lowest in over seven months, and a positivity rate much below one per cent. This is also the eighth time the count of daily cases stood below the 500-mark in January. With this, the tally of Covid-19 cases in the national capital has reached over 6.3 lakh, while the death toll mounted to 10,691. Thirteen fatalities have been recorded in the last 24 hours, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department. According to a health bulletin issued by the Delhi government, 56,390 Covid-19 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours. The case tally stands at 6,30,506 in the national capital, including 6,16,461 patients who have either been discharged or have migrated or recovered. The number of active cases is 3,354, of which 1,491 are in home isolation. This month, 585 cases were reported on January 1, 494 on January 2, 424 on January 3, 384 on January 4, 442 on January 5, 654 on January 6, 486 on January 7, 444 on January 8, 519 on January 9 and 399 on January 10. Health minister Satyendar Jain had earlier said the positivity rate had been below one per cent for the past several days, indicating improvement in the Covid-19 situation here. On December 29 and 30, the city had recorded 703 and 677 cases respectively. On December 31, 574 cases were recorded.

Ban on sale of processed, packaged chicken from outside city  
Bird flu confirmed in Delhi

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

Testing of samples of crows and ducks confirmed bird flu cases in the national capital on Monday, prompting the city government to impose a ban on sale of processed and packaged chicken brought from outside the city.

"Only samples of ducks from Sanjay Lake have tested positive for bird flu. There is no cause for concern. Reports of other samples are awaited," deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said, asking people not to panic as there is no cause for concern.

However, officials said eight samples from three areas in Delhi, sent to a Bhopal-based laboratory, tested positive for avian influenza.

All eight samples — four from a park in Mayur Vihar Phase 3, three from Sanjay Lake and one from Dwarka — have been found positive for avian influenza, said Dr Rakesh Singh from the animal husbandry unit of the Delhi government's development department.



Ghazipur poultry market wears a deserted look after the authorities closed it for 10 days due to the bird flu outbreak in New Delhi.

A drive to cull ducks has begun at the famous Sanjay Lake, where several ducks were found dead in the last few days, Mr Singh added.

Seventeen more ducks were found dead at Sanjay Lake on Sunday, prompting authorities to declare it an "alert zone".

Besides, officials said, 91 crows have been found dead in 14 DDA parks in the last couple of days.

A few days ago, around 50 crows were found dead in Central Park, Mayur Vihar Phase 3.

In a press briefing, Mr Sisodia said results of 100 samples that have been sent to a Jalandhar lab are awaited.

He said Sanjay Lake area was sanitised after the samples of ducks from there tested positive for bird flu.

The Delhi government has also decided banning the sale of processed and packaged chicken brought from outside the city as a precautionary measure, he said.

"Also, there is a ban on selling packaged chicken

or processed chicken from outside to Delhi to prevent infection from one state to another. But there is no need to panic about bird flu. It is a common influenza," he said.

People who eat chicken and eggs should also not panic as there is no risk of infection from fully cooked chicken or boiled and cooked eggs, the deputy CM said.

The Delhi government is making all efforts to check the spread of bird flu and is monitoring the situation, he said.

## BJP team meets L-G over temple demolition

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

A BJP delegation, led by its president Adesh Gupta and Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, met lieutenant-governor Anil Bajjal regarding the demolition of a Hanuman temple in Chandni Chowk.

The Delhi BJP delegation requested Mr Bajjal to intervene in the matter and ensure that a new temple is constructed in Chandni Chowk and idols of Lord Hanuman and other deities removed from the demolished temple are placed there. The Delhi BJP said that the lieutenant-governor responded positively and assured appropriate action.

Mr Gupta said, "There is resentment amongst the people of Chandni Chowk over demolition of the Hanuman Mandir and felling of the ancient peepal tree. Local residents, temple committees, religious organisations, and the Hindu society are allowed to rebuild the temple and restore the idol of Lord Hanuman. It is very unfortunate that in the name of beautification the public works department of the Kejriwal government demolished the sacred ancient Hanuman temple in Chandni Chowk and now has also cut down the old peepal tree."

According to Mr Gupta, the PWD complained about non-cooperation of the municipal corporation and the police and said that the ancient temple was becoming a hindrance in beautification, requesting the court to allow the demolition of the temple.

## HC asks govt to consider appeal to postpone nursery admissions

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

The Delhi high court on Monday has asked the state government to consider a representation by a lawyer that admission of children to nursery class be postponed in the upcoming academic session of 2021-22 in view of the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic.

Justice Prateek Jain recorded the statement made by the counsel for Delhi government that the information or opinion provided by the petitioner in his representation will be taken into account while framing guidelines or taking any decision with regard to nursery admissions.

The Delhi high court, which said it has not

expressed any view on merits of the plea, disposed of the petition after petitioner cum lawyer Rajat Vats conveys satisfaction with this order. The plea sought direction to the Delhi Government to make some guidelines or pass resolution for postponement of nursery admission for 2021-22 academic session for the protection of children in the age group of 3-4 years in view of the pandemic.

Mr Vats said he has made a representation before the authorities on December 12, 2020, but no response has been received yet, after which he approached the court. During the hearing, Delhi government standing counsel Ramesh Singh submitted that no guidelines have yet been issued

by the government for nursery or entry level for the upcoming academic session. He also contended that the petition was premature as there can be no nursery admissions till the guidelines are issued.

The petitioner told the court that some private schools have already started the nursery admission process without guidelines. "Certain directions are required to be issued to protect the fundamental rights of children in the age group of 3 to 4 years regarding the nursery class admission which the government of NCT of Delhi is likely to grant permission for physical or online courses just to give financial benefits to school managements without considering interest of children," it said.

## Come with concrete steps to check stubble burning: SC tells Centre

**New Delhi, Jan. 11:** The Supreme Court Monday asked the Centre to file an affidavit detailing concrete steps to deal in future with the situation of stubble burning, which is a major cause of air pollution in the Delhi-national capital region (NCR) during the winters.

The order by a bench comprising Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian, came after it was submitted that the pollution caused due to stubble burning will again come to fore in future.

Mr Tushar Mehta (solicitor-general), you come

back with some concrete steps on stubble burning, the bench said.

The top court was hearing a petition which has raised the issue of pollution caused due to stubble burning in neighbouring states of Delhi.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for the petitioner, told the bench. The issue will arise again. For this year, the issue of stubble burning is over and it will start again next time. The Centre has said nothing on this.

The bench asked solicitor general to file an affidavit on the issue.

The apex court had last

month said it was not satisfied with the work done by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas, which has been constituted by the Centre to tackle air pollution.

We don't know what your commission is doing. People in Delhi are not satisfied with your work. We are also not satisfied, the bench had said.

Mr Mehta had earlier told the bench that the commission is working on war footing and several steps have been taken to deal with pollution.

On November 6, the apex court had asked the Centre to ensure there is no smog in Delhi as it was informed that the Commission has started functioning from that day.

It had said that pollution problem has to be dealt with by the executive as it has the power, money and resources for this.

The Centre, which has appointed former chief secretary of Delhi M.M. Kutty as the chairperson of the commission, had apprised the court that there were experts from the field besides members from NGOs in the newly created commission. — PTI

## Delhi's minimum temp dips to 7°C

Mercury likely to drop further to 5-6°C by Jan. 14, says met dept

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

Delhi's minimum temperature was recorded at 7 degrees Celsius on Monday and is likely to drop further as cold winds from the snow-clad western Himalayas continue to sweep the plains, the India meteorological department (IMD) said.

The mercury is likely to drop to 5-6 degrees Celsius by January 14, an IMD official said.

The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data

for the city, recorded a minimum temperature of 7 degrees. The maximum temperature on Sunday was 16.2 degrees Celsius, four notches below normal.

Delhi has registered above-normal minimum temperature since January 3 as a cloud cover persisted over the city under the influence of the successive western disturbances.

Delhi's minimum temperature had settled at 7.8 degrees Celsius on Sunday, 10.8 degrees Celsius on Saturday, 9.6 degrees Celsius on Friday, and 14.4 degrees Celsius

on Thursday, the highest in January in four years, according to the IMD.

The cloud cover over the national capital has prevented a steep decline in the minimum temperature so far, the official said. Clouds trap some of the outgoing infrared radiation and radiate it back downward, warming the ground. However, the minimum temperature has started declining with the commencement of north-westerly winds from the snow-capped mountains towards the plains starting Saturday, the official

said. Cold weather conditions persisted in most parts of Punjab and Haryana on Monday.

With a minimum temperature of four degrees Celsius, a notch below normal, Narnaul was the coldest place in Haryana. Chandigarh, the joint capital of both states, recorded its low at 9.5 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal.

Among other places in Punjab, Amritsar, Ludhiana and Patiala recorded minimum temperatures of 7.2, 7.9 and eight degrees respectively.

HC tells DJB to frame scheme in 9 mths  
Def Services Enclave to get water lines after 50 years

**New Delhi, Jan. 11:** In a relief to veterans, decorated officers, war-widows and armed forces personnel who were allotted land in 1970s for Defence Services Enclave at Khanpur and Khirki villages here but were never provided any basic facilities by local bodies, the Delhi High Court on Monday directed the water authority, DJB, to frame a scheme within nine months for providing drinking water to them.

The high court observed that the "right to access to drinking water is fundamental to life" and it cannot be deprived to the citizens merely on the ground that it is an unauthorised colony.

Presently, the colony is meeting its water requirements via four tube wells permitted to be installed there as an interim arrangement and according to the petition the electricity was provided later.

The high court asked the secretary, ministry of defence to constitute a committee, which may include representatives of

urban development ministry and Delhi chief secretary, to take a decision within four months with regard to regularising the Defence Services Enclave as was directed by the court earlier in another petition related to unauthorised constructions in Sainik Farms area of south Delhi.

The order was issued by Justice Jayant Nath on the plea by 54 persons who have been residing at the enclave for the last 50 years and were denied basic amenities like water and sewage connections as it was an unauthorised colony.

The high court observed that the petitioners were all "retired defence personnel who have devoted the most productive period of their lives defending the nation's borders and performing other dangerous and difficult tasks normally performed by defence service officers".

It said that "right to access to drinking water is fundamental to life and there is a duty of the State under Article 21 of the

Constitution to provide clean drinking water to its citizens" and noted that the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) was supplying drinking water to various other unauthorised colonies.

"It is a settled position of law that an individual has a right to access to drinking water in quantum and quality equal to his basic needs. .. Further, the petitioners in my opinion cannot be deprived of a right to access to drinking water merely on the ground that it is an unauthorised colony.

"The petitioners have been residing in the said area for the last 50 years and cannot continuously be deprived of this right to access to drinking and potable water. In the light of the above, I direct the DJB to make an appropriate scheme as per their normal procedure for supply of portable drinking water to the 54 petitioners in accordance with law. The scheme shall be framed and implemented expeditiously preferably within nine months from today," the judge said. — PTI

## AAP MLA Bharti held in UP, youth hurls ink at him

Delhi CM targets UP CM Adityanath over incident

**Amethi/Rae Bareilly, Jan. 11:** Aam Aadmi Party MLA Somnath Bharti on Monday had ink hurled at him in Rae Bareilly and was arrested later for allegedly making objectionable remarks last week.

He was arrested for criminal intimidation and promoting enmity between groups, the police said, following remarks allegedly referring to Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath and the state's hospitals.

Minutes earlier, a youth hurled ink at the Delhi MLA when he was emerging out of a guest house.

Superintendent of police (of Rae Bareilly) Shlok Kumar said, "Ink was thrown on the AAP MLA, and the matter is being probed."

According to a purported video link, the AAP MLA recently said in Hindi, "Children are being born in hospitals, but they are of dogs."

Shortly after ink was flung at him, Mr Bharti also retweeted a video clip in which he is heard using a derogatory term for



Ink hurled at Aam Aadmi Party leader Somnath Bharti in Rae Bareilly where he had gone to inspect government schools on Monday.

— PTI

Adityanath, while talking about "atrocities on women" in the state.

Amethi police arrested Mr Bharti, a former Delhi minister, in Rae Bareilly on Monday morning, on the basis of a complaint filed by BJP worker Somnath Sahu over the alleged remarks made last week.

The arrest took place less than an hour after the ink-throwing incident.

Reacting to the ink-throwing incident, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal hit out at Adityanath.

"Yogi ji, our MLA

Somnath Bharti ji was going to see your government school. Ink was thrown at him? Are your schools so bad? If someone goes to see your school then why do you get so scared? Fix the school. If you do not know how to do, then ask Manish Sisodia," he tweeted.

"The schools which you are ashamed to show our children study there UP. Yogi ji. You are ruining the future of crores of children of Uttar Pradesh," Mr Kejriwal said in another tweet. — PTI



SHORT TAKES

PDP YOUTH LEADER SENT TO 7-DAY POLICE REMAND

YUSUF JAMEEL  
SRINAGAR, JAN. 11

People's Democratic Party (PDP) youth leader Waheed Ur Rehman Parra was on Monday sent to a 7-day police remand in connection with an alleged politician-militants nexus and terror funding case by a court in Jammu.

A report received from the winter capital said that two days after arresting Parra, a special wing of the J&K police produced him before a court which granted it his custody till January 18 to enable it to interrogate him in connection with a case related to an alleged nexus involving politicians, militants and their Over Ground Workers (OWGs) and sympathisers and illegal money transactions.

The police sources said that the case in which the J&K police's Criminal Investigation Kashmir (CIK) wing rearrested Parra was registered by it under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 sometime ago and has since filed over two dozen FIRs at various police stations across the Union Territory. The sources said that Parra will be brought to Srinagar for questioning.

The sleuths of the CIK had taken 33-year-old Parra in custody within the premises of a Jammu prison soon after he was released from over six week long detection at the weekend.

MP WOMAN SAVES GANGRAPE VICTIM FROM ABDUCTION

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY  
BHOPAL, JAN. 11

In a show of courage, a woman in a Madhya Pradesh village challenged four miscreants and rescued a 'gang rape' victim from them. Sribai Dhanak (54) of Abchand village under Sagar district fought single-handedly with the four men who were trying to abduct a woman after allegedly gang raping her, and saved her from their clutches.

"It was around 1 am on September 29, the woman carrying two children, ran towards me pleading to save her. She was completely naked. I was then alone in my farmland harvesting the standing crop", Sribai recounted the incident before Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday. She tried to calm down the woman by assuring to protect her from the four miscreants who later surfaced and threatened to burn her alive by pouring petrol on her if she resisted their move to kidnap the woman.

"I had picked a 'lathi' (stick) and dared them to come close to the woman. I held them back for nearly half-an-hour till my son, Debraj, landed there to take them on. Later, my son called the local police on his mobile phone, scaring the four, she recalled.

NHRC NOTICE TO MAHA OVER GOVT HOSPITAL FIRE

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, JAN. 11

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the Maharashtra government over the death of 10 newborns due to a fire in Bhandara District General Hospital.

Taking a suo motu cognizance of media reports on the fire incident, the NHRC has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police (DGP) calling for a detailed report in the matter within four weeks. The report must contain the fire audit reports of various hospitals in the state as well as what measures have been taken or contemplated to be taken by the state against the erring officials, said the notice.

Issuing the notices, the Commission has observed that the victim babies were in the custody of a state run hospital where they lost life. Hence, the state cannot escape its responsibility. This is a serious issue of violation of human rights for which the accountability of the negligent officials is required to be fixed, with retrospective effect, the notice added.

Meanwhile, the BJP has demanded registration of a culpable homicide case in connection with the Bhandara incident. Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis said that a case of culpable homicide should be registered.

Bird flu confirmed in 10 states: Govt

Over 200 migratory birds found dead in Himachal, culling begins in Haryana

New Delhi, Jan. 11: The Centre on Monday said bird flu has been confirmed in 10 states so far and stressed on increased surveillance around water bodies, live bird markets, zoos and poultry farms. "Till January 11, 2021, avian influenza has been confirmed in 10 states of the country," the department of animal husbandry and dairying said in a statement.

The outbreak was confirmed in seven states — Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh — as on January 10.

On Monday, bird flu has also been confirmed in Delhi, Uttarakhand and Maharashtra.

The Himachal Pradesh government on Monday banned the supply of all poultry products from other states for a week amid the bird flu scare, an official spokesman said on Monday.

Carcasses of 215 migratory birds were found in Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh's Kangra district on Sunday, taking the total number of such birds suspected to have died of avian influenza to 4,235, officials said.

Each day, hundreds of migratory birds were found dead in the lake area since December 29. Last Monday, the samples tested positive for H5N1, they said.

Also, for the fourth day in a row, a large number of dead poultry birds were found dumped by the side of the Chandigarh-Shimla highway in Solan district. The remains of the birds were buried according to safety protocol and their samples sent to a disease diagnostic laboratory in Jalandhar.

States have been asked to build awareness among the public and avoid the spread of misinformation. "States/ UTs have been requested to increase surveillance around water bodies, live bird markets, zoos, poultry farms, etc. along with proper disposal of carcass, and strengthening of biosecurity in poultry farms," it said. The Centre has also directed



Horticulture team members gather geese for medication following reports of bird flu cases at Sanjay Lake in New Delhi on Monday.

— PTI

states to maintain adequate stock of PPE kits and accessories required for culling operations.

Meanwhile, the department said that ICAR-NIHSAD has confirmed the death of crows and migratory/wild birds in Tonk, Karauli, Bhilwara districts of Rajasthan as well as Valsad, Vadodara and Surat districts of Gujarat.

Further, the death of crows was confirmed in Kotdwar and Dehradun districts of Uttarakhand. In Delhi, crows and ducks, respectively, were reported dead in New Delhi and Sanjay lake areas.

The outbreak of Avian Influenza has been among poultry in Parbhani district, while AI is confirmed from Mumbai, Thane, Dapoli, Beed in crows in Maharashtra.

In Haryana, culling of infected birds is underway to control and containment of the spread of the disease. A Central team has visited Himachal Pradesh and will reach Panchkula on Monday.

— PTI

Five districts in Maha hit by bird flu, health alert issued

BHAGWAN PARAB  
MUMBAI, JAN. 11

Maharashtra has become the ninth state in the country to be hit by bird flu as crows and birds from five districts were found positive for avian influenza by the Bhopal-based National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD).

State Health Minister Rajesh Tope has called for a health alert to be issued across the state to tackle the disease. The Bhopal-based lab confirmed that two crows from Mumbai died due to bird flu while three pond egrets and a parrot from neighbouring Thane were found positive for avian influenza virus. In addition to this, a chicken and two herons from

Parbhani, while crows from Beed and Dapoli (in Ratnagiri district) were infected by avian influenza virus.

Apart from Maharashtra, bird flu cases have so far been confirmed in Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi.

In Mumbai, 11 more dead crows were found near Tata Colony in Chembur's RCF area, whereas in Thane as many as 20 birds, including pond herons, parakeets have been found dead over the last four days. Some 800 chickens in a poultry farm were found dead due to bird flu at Muramba village in Parbhani.

"Culling of all birds will now be undertaken up to

a 1km radius of the infected zone in Parbhani where the poultry samples were found positive. The district administration has decided to cull nearly 8,000 birds in the Muramba village," Parbhani district collector Deepak Mugalikar said.

The Maharashtra animal husbandry department has so far recorded 1,205 deaths of various birds since January 8.

Tope said that there is a need to issue a health alert across the state to tackle the disease.

"It has now been confirmed that bird flu has entered Maharashtra. To prevent the spread of the disease, the health and animal husbandry departments should issue a health alert," he said.

BJP will take care of Assam's unique culture, says Nadda

MANOJ ANAND  
GUWAHATI, JAN. 11

Bharatiya Janata Party president J.P. Nadda on Monday said that his party will always take good care of the state's unique culture and language. Nadda, who is on a two-day visit to poll-bound Assam, addressed a public rally in Silchar. He highlighted the Modi government's achievements while referring that the Bodo crisis which was hanging for nearly 50 decades as well the Bru-Reang crisis were resolved by the BJP-led government at the Centre.

Targeting the Congress-led opposition in Assam, Nadda said that the state got only ₹50,000 crore for development during the Congress regime, however, the Modi government provided ₹3 lakh crore for the north-eastern state. Listing down BJP government's achievements,



BJP president J.P. Nadda addresses a public meeting in Silchar.

— PTI

Nadda said that Assam is 100 per cent open defecation free, and out of the 11 crore toilets built, 35 lakh were built here. He also lauded the achievement of the state in the health sector while referring to the low mortality rate from the previous regime.

The BJP chief said, "Lotus is blooming across India. The NDA always talked about giving importance to the state of Assam in India. If the identity of Assam has been strengthened at national level, it was done by the NDA government only".

ASSAM TO WAIVE MFI LOANS FOR WOMEN

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI, JAN. 11

In a series of freebies announced by the government in the run up to the Assembly polls in April this year, Assam finance minister and senior BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Monday announced that the state government will waive off the loans borrowed by women from micro-finance institutions (MFI).

Sarma while addressing a public meeting said, "We have decided to waive off the loans taken by our mothers and sisters from MFIs as soon as possible so that they can lead a dignified life. We cannot let them be harassed by the brokers of MFIs."

He used to buy their silence using cash and gifts of electronic gadgets such as mobile phones, officials said. "Apart from the physical abuse of these children, the accused also allegedly recorded their acts using their mobile phones, laptops and other electronic devices."

"It was further alleged that these photographs and video films containing child sexual abuse material were published and transmitted by the accused using the Internet," CBI had said after the arrest.

CDS, IAF Chief visit Ladakh

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen Bipin Rawat and Indian Air Force (IAF) chief Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria were in Ladakh on Monday to review the country's overall military preparedness as the stand-off between India and China entered its ninth month.

Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria undertook a visit to Air Force stations and advanced landing ground in Ladakh. Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria joined the CDS for a comprehensive discussion on operational matters with senior IAF and Indian Army Commanders at the Air Force Station in Leh.

CDS will review the overall security sce-

nario in the eastern Ladakh region and is likely to visit Kashmir on Tuesday.

During the visit, the Air Chief interacted with field commanders and was briefed on the operational preparedness and status of deployed forces at air bases as well as in the forward areas. He also interacted with IAF and Indian Army personnel deployed at these locations.

During his visit to Thoise, he reviewed the ongoing logistic operations for support and sustenance of troops in the winter season. He also visited DBO and Nyoma ALGs where he was given a security overview in the respective sub-sectors.

At the DBO, the Air Chief laid a wreath in homage to the fallen heroes.

SEARCH FOR MISSING



Malti

General Public is hereby informed that a lady namely **Malti, W/o Ramesh, R/o H.No. 468, T-Huts Kidwai Nagar, South Delhi** has been missing since 16.12.2020. In this regard a **DD No. 37A** dated **19.12.2020** has been recorded at PS, Kotla Mubarakpur, New Delhi. The description of missing lady is as under:

**Name:** Malti, **Husband's Name :** Ramesh, **Age :** 32 years, **Height:** 5'4", **Complexion :** Shallow, **Face :** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Red colour sari and blue colour hawai chapple in feet.

If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers.

Website : <http://cbl.nic.in>  
e-mail : [ciccbi@cbl.nic.in](mailto:ciccbi@cbl.nic.in)  
Fax : 011-230111334  
Ph. : 011-23014046, 30115229,  
23015218, Extn. 210  
DP/371/SO/2020

SHO

**P.S., Kotla Mubarakpur, New Delhi**  
**Ph.: 011-24620106, 8750870828**

**INDIAN RAILWAYS**  
**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (Bharat Sarkar)**  
**MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (Rail Mantralaya)**  
**RAILWAY BOARD**  
No. RS(S)/2020/747/3 New Delhi, Dated: 11.01.2021  
**CORRIGENDUM-1**  
**Sub: E-TENDER NO. 2020IS202 FOR PROCUREMENT OF 79,761 MTs MILD/CORTEN STEEL SHEETS/PLATES/COILS THROUGH e-RA METHOD**  
1. Corrigendum 1 of e-tender No. 2020IS202 has been uploaded in ireps website vide dated 08.01.2021.  
2. Due date of closing of subject tender is extended from 01.02.2021, 15.00 hrs. to 12.02.2021, 15.00 hrs.  
3. All other Terms and Conditions of e-Tender shall remain unchanged.  
**Dy. Director, Railway Stores (S)-I**  
77/21 **Railway Board**  
**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**E-TENDER NOTICE**  
Sr. DEE/EMU/GZB for and on behalf of President of India, Invites open e-tender under single packet system for the under noted work  
1. **N.I.T No.** RT3232Elet-EMU-WC-16-19-20  
2. **Name of the work** Complete dismantling of bogie, bolster overhauling of air spring fitted bogies etc. for EMU/EMU coaches & Tower wagon, hiring of Hydra/JCB machine and Removal, dismantling and cleaning of Brake cylinder at EMU Car Shed, Ghaziabad.  
3. **Tender cost** Rs. 5900.00 (online payment mode available on IREPS website)  
4. **Approximate cost** Rs. 1, 37, 92,790.98  
5. **Earnest Money** Rs. 2,19,000.00 (online payment mode available on IREPS website)  
6. **Completion period** 24 Months  
7. **Validity of offer** 45 days  
8. **Date & Time from tender advertised on IREPS website** 11.01.2021 (12:04 Hrs.)  
9. **Date & Time from tender submission start and end** 25.01.2021 (00:00 Hrs.) to 08.02.2021 (15:00 Hrs.)  
10. **Tender closing Date & Time** 08.02.2021 (15:00 Hrs.)  
11. **Date & Time of tender Opening (Immediately when tender submission ends)** 08.02.2021 (15:00 Hrs.)  
12. **Publication cost allocation** 96041132  
Note 1: All participant Tenderer/Tenderers will submit their requisite documents along with their tender offer. "No post tender correspondence for submission of additional document shall be entertained after opening of the Technical & Commercial offer. Even suo-moto post tender letters of the tenders shall be treated as null & void".  
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Tender Notice is available on website of [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). 79/2021  
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02431 Thiruvananthapuram Central - Hazrat Nizamuddin Rajdhani Special Express	Panvel	18:20/18:25	18:00/18:05	from 12.01.2021
02413 Madgaon - Hazrat Nizamuddin Rajdhani Special Express	Panvel	18:21/18:26	18:00/18:05	with immediate effect

**Note :-** The time-table of the other stations of the above special trains will hold good.

**All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc. may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.**

**For any kind information such as detailed Time-Table and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.**

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## IN BRIEF

## PM MODI NOT ON TOOTER, CLARIFIES BJP

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

The BJP on Monday clarified that neither Prime Minister Narendra Modi nor any of its leaders, including national president J.P. Nadda, Union home minister Amit Shah among others, are on the swadeshi microblogging site Tooter.

Ever since the United States based micro-blogging network Twitter suspended outgoing US president Donald Trump's official handle after the Capitol Hill violence, some handles on Twitter have been promoting the 'swadeshi' site which incidentally has a 'verified' handle of the Prime Minister has featured on the platform.

"Please note that neither the BJP or any of its state units, nor Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah, BJP national president J.P. Nadda have a presence on Tooter," BJP's IT cell head, Amit Malviya tweeted after the confusion created by Mr Modi's handle on Tooter.

Describing itself as a 'swadeshi social network,' Tooter has an account with a blue tick that has the same display picture and posts shared on Prime Minister Modi's official Twitter handle.

## 'GALWAN HEROES' MAY BE AWARDED AT REPUBLIC DAY

New Delhi, Jan. 11: Colonel B. Santosh Babu and some of the other Indian Army personnel, who were killed while valiantly fighting Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh in June last year, are expected to be honoured with gallantry awards on Republic Day, sources said on Monday.

Col. Babu, the commanding officer of the 16 Bihar regiment, was among 20 Indian soldiers who laid down their lives in the fierce hand-to-hand combat on June 15 in the Galwan Valley, an incident that marked one of the most serious military conflicts between the two sides in decades.

-PTI

## NO MORE SUCH EVENTS PLEASE: RAJINI TO FANS

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JAN. 11

A day after hundreds of Rajinikanth fans gathered for an event to put pressure on their matinee idol to enter politics, the actor requested them not to give him more pain by organising such events in future.

In a statement on Monday, issued through his Twitter account, Rajinikanth said the event on Sunday was organised by some people along with those expelled from various positions in Rajini Makkal Mandram and from the fans association.

Expressing gratitude to those fans who did not attend the event as per the instructions of the Mandram leaders, the actor said he was happy the event was held with discipline and dignity.

"I have already clearly stated as to why I cannot enter politics now," he said, adding "I have told you my decision."

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL POLLS IN U.P. ON JAN. 28

Lucknow, Jan. 11: The Election Commission of India on Monday issued a notification for the biennial election to 12 legislative council seats in Uttar Pradesh, which will fall vacant later this month.

The MLAs whose terms are ending include UP Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma, Chairman of UP Legislative Council Ramesh Yadav and UP BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh.

The 12 seats in the UP legislative council will get vacant on January 30 as the term of the members is coming to an end, UP's Chief Electoral Officer A.K. Shukla said.

Polling will be held on January 28 and counting of votes will be done one hour after the completion of polls as per established practice.

Nominations for the biennial polls can be filed till January 18 and scrutiny of the same will be held on January 19. The withdrawal of names can be done till January 21. —PTI

There will be famine if BJP continues to remain adamant on farm laws, says Bengal CM

## Country staring at food crisis: Mamata

Ranaghat (WB), Jan. 11: The country is staring at a food crisis and famine because of the "adamant" approach of the BJP to the continued agitation by farmers for withdrawal of the three new farm laws, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Monday.

She also called the BJP a "junk" party for inducting "rotten" leaders from other political outfits.

Reaffirming her opposition to the NRC, CAA and NPR, Banerjee, while reaching out to the Nadia district's Matua population, said all refugees will be granted land rights, and no one can banish them from the country.

"The country is staring at a food crisis. There will be famine and food shortage if the BJP continues to remain adamant on the farm laws. The Centre is trying to create famine through these farm bills."

"The farmers are assets of our country and we should not do anything that goes against their interest," she said, addressing a TMC rally here in Nadia district.

The TMC supremo also demanded immediate repeal of the three farm laws as sought by farmers agitating at Delhi's borders.

"We stand by the farmers and their demands. On one hand the BJP is lecturing us on farmers' issues and on the other it is torturing the farmers



who are protesting against the laws. So many farmers were beaten up in Haryana and Punjab," she said.

Slamming the saffron camp over the Citizenship Amendment Act, the TMC boss said, those born in this country are its legitimate citizens.

"All refugee colonies in the state have been recognised by the West Bengal government. All refugee families will have land holding rights. We have started the process and several families have already got it."

"No one can remove you from here. You are born here and are citizens of this country. You don't need the BJP's certificate to prove your citizenship," she asserted.

Reaching out to the Matua community that constitutes roughly 40 per cent population of Nadia district, Banerjee said, the BJP was trying to "fool" them with the promise of citizenship.

"I want to assure everyone that no one needs to be afraid of the NRC, NPR and CAA."

The Matuas, originally from East Pakistan, are a scheduled caste group, who entered India, particularly West Bengal, after Partition and creation of Bangladesh. While many of them have got Indian citizenship, a sizeable number has not.

The BJP had made significant gains in the district in the last Lok Sabha polls and bagged the Ranaghat seat. Nadia has two Lok Sabha seats.

She exuded confidence about returning to power for the third consecutive time with an even bigger mandate.

Calling BJP president J.P. Nadda's lunch at a tribal household in the state on January 9 a "show off", Banerjee claimed that the food items served to him were cooked at five-star hotels.

Accusing the BJP of being a "party of outsiders" trying to "destroy" the state's culture, Banerjee said West Bengal will never allow the saffron party's "hate politics" to triumph over secularism.

"BJP leaders from other states are coming here with money bags. If they offer you money, take it but don't cast a single vote for them," she said.

Reacting to Banerjee's comments, West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh said the TMC leader has sensed that the days of her government are numbered. —PTI



An artist with a physical disability gives finishing touches to a painting on the theme of farmers protest, during their ongoing agitation over the farm reform laws at Singhu border in New Delhi on Monday.

—PTI

## Farmers: We do not want to appear before any SC panel

New Delhi, Jan. 11: A joint front of 40 agitating farmer unions on Monday welcomed the suggestion of the Supreme Court for a stay on the agri laws implementation but said they are not willing to participate in any proceedings before a committee that may be appointed by it.

Pulling up the Centre for its handling of the farmers' protest, the apex court on Monday said it is extremely disappointed with the way negotiations between them were going and will constitute a committee headed by a former Chief Justice of India to resolve the impasse.

While all organisations welcome the suggestions of the Supreme Court to stay the implementation of the farm laws, they are collectively and individually not willing to participate in any proceedings before a committee that may be appointed by it, a statement issued by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha said.

"We met our lawyers this evening and after deliberation on the pros and cons of the suggestions, we informed them

that we are unanimously not agreeable to go before any committee that may be appointed by the Supreme Court today due to the stubborn attitude of the government," it read.

The umbrella body said the apex court was requested by their lawyers and by other counsel, including Harish Salve, to fix the next hearing on Tuesday to enable them to consult the farmer unions and seek their consent to the suggestion of the SC.

We have been told that no such hearing has been fixed for tomorrow as per the cause list already published for tomorrow till 9 PM and that only the matters are listed for pronouncements for order by the court. These events have deeply disappointed us, our lawyers and also farmers at large, the morcha said.

Earlier in the day, farmer leaders said they would continue their agitation even if the government or the Supreme Court stays the implementation of the new agri laws.

The farmer leaders, who said they were sharing their "personal opinion",

were also of the view that a stay is "not a solution" as it is only for a fixed period of time.

They were reacting after the Supreme Court indicated that it may stay the implementation of the contentious farm laws and refused to grant more time to the Centre to explore the possibility of an amicable solution saying it has already granted the government a long rope.

"We welcome the Supreme Court observation, but ending the protest is not an option. Any stay is only for a fixed period of time... till the issue is taken up by the court again," Haryana Bharatiya Kisan Union President Gurnam Singh Chaduni said.

The farmers want the laws to be repealed completely. The protest will continue even if the government or the Supreme Court stays their implementation, he said.

National spokesperson of Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) Rakesh Tikait said the Supreme Court's observations were "a slap on the face of the Central government". —PTI

## Congress MPs, ex-SAD neta walk out from par panel meet

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

Congress MPs Partap Singh Bajwa and Chhaya Verma as well as former Akali leader Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa on Monday staged a walkout from a meeting of the standing committee on agriculture, after the panel chairman refused to discuss Centre's three farm laws and the farmers agitation.

Citing the large-scale protests undertaken by various farmer unions that have seen thousands of farmers protest at the borders of Delhi for over 40 days, the three Rajya Sabha MPs raised the issue with the chairman of the standing committee, sources said.

Due to the refusal of the chairman to allow the situation to be discussed by the committee, the three MPs decided to walk out of the meeting in protest, they added.

The panel is chaired by BJP MP P.C. Gaddigoudar.

## Union minister Naik hurt in mishap; wife &amp; PA dies

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
with agency inputs  
KARWAR, JAN. 11

Union minister for Ayush and defence Shripad S. Naik was injured while his wife Vijaya and his personal assistant died in an accident at Hosakambi on Monday night.

Police officials said that they were travelling from Yellapur to Gokarna when the minister's car overturned injuring all the six in the vehicle.

The injured were immediately rushed to the Ankola Taluk Hospital for treatment. Sources said that Vijaya Naik and the

minister's personal assistant died in the road mishap.

Four others, including the minister, were seriously injured.

They were shifted to hospital in Goa.

Mr Naik is being brought to Goa Medical College for further treatment, the official said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken to Goa chief minister Pramod Sawant to ensure proper medical treatment for the minister, sources said.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh also spoke to Mr Sawant about

speedy medical treatment of Mr Naik (68). Karnataka chief minister B.S. Yediyurappa consoled the demise of Naik's wife and conveyed his wishes for Mr Naik's speedy recovery.

The police said Mr Naik, along with his wife, personal assistant Deepak, his close confidante Sai Kiran, gunman and the driver were heading from Yallapur to Gokarna on Monday night.

On the way, the driver lost his control over the car near Hosakambi village in Ankola Taluk of Uttara Kannada and the vehicle overturned.



The all women crew of the inaugural flight of Air India from San Francisco to Bengaluru Capt. Papagari Thanmai (from left), Capt. Zoya Aggarwal, Capt. Akansha Sonware and Capt. Shivani Manhas pose for a photo after the landing of the maiden flight at Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru on Monday.

—PTI

## Ram temple foundation work to begin in January

Hyderabad, Jan. 11: Work on the foundation for the Ram temple at Ayodhya would begin this month and construction of the temple complex is expected to conclude in about three-and-a-half years, Swami Govinda Dev Giri ji Maharaj, Treasurer of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teertha Kshetra Trust, said on Monday.

"How the foundation shall be built, that has been decided just now. The excavation has begun but the actual foundation construction has not begun. It will start this January," he said at a press conference during a visit.

He was asked if the formal construction of the temple has begun, and if not, when it is going to

begin. Asked about the total cost of the project, he said he "guessed" that the cost of the main temple within the boundary should be between ₹300 crore to ₹400 crore.

The total cost could be over ₹1,100 crore, which includes the ₹300 crore to ₹400 crore for the main temple and the development of 67 acres (at the complex), he said.

He said the construction of the temple is likely to be completed in three to three-and-a-half years.

Giriji Maharaj said more than Rs 100 crore of donations has been collected as per accounts in Ayodhya.

Asked if donations for temple construction would be accepted from foreign countries as well,

he said they are not being allowed at present as FCRA (Foreign Contributions Regulation Act) facility is not available.

However, FCRA facility (permissions as per FCRA) is expected to be available in two months, he said.

"We don't want to build just a temple of stones and bricks. We want to build the nation. We want to build the national spirit. The spirit of love, the spirit of philanthropy, the spirit of universal brotherhood and at the same time, spirit of might," he said.

People would listen only if the country is strong, he said. The temple would belong to the whole nation with donations received from all, he said. —PTI

## SC warns govt on farm bills

■ Continued from Page 1 court's taking a dim view of the Centre's handling of the farmers' agitation, solicitor general Tushar Mehta protested and said that the court's observations were "harsh", insisting the government did its best to break the deadlock and resolve the issue.

"You did your best, but it did not seem to have any effect", CJI Bobde then quipped, appearing unimpressed.

The court is likely to pronounce orders on Tuesday on issues related to the farm laws and the farmers' protests at

Delhi's borders and may take a call on setting up a committee headed by a former Chief Justice of India to find ways to resolve the impasse.

In this regard, senior counsel Dushyant Dave, appearing for some of the farmers' organisations, suggested the name of former Chief Justice R.M. Lodha to head the committee, and offered to speak to him.

The court also voiced its concern over the protests taking a violent turn, taking note of what had happened on Sunday in Haryana. "Who is going to

be responsible for bloodshed? We need to uphold Article 21 as a constitutional court. What if some conflagration takes place?" Chief Justice of India Bobde said, in a poser.

CJI Bobde asked the various farmers' unions and outfits who were party to the matter to persuade the women, the old and children to go back to their native places. "Can you convey to them the Chief Justice has made this request," he told Mr Dave and H.S. Phoolka, who were appearing for the farmers.

## Covid-19: PM talks to CMs on vaccines

■ Continued from Page 1 include their elected representatives like MPs and MLAs in the first phase vaccination list.

The PM said that the country is in a decisive phase of this fight, with the start of the world's biggest vaccination campaign from January 16. "It is a matter of pride that the two vaccines which have been given approval for emergency use are made in India," PM said. He underlined that "the most important thing in this vaccination campaign is the identification and monitoring of those who have to be vaccinated. For this, a digital platform named CoWin has also been created using modern technology."

The government will use Aadhaar to register genuine beneficiaries and for the timely second dosage. After a person

receives the first dose of vaccination, CoWin will immediately generate a digital vaccination certificate. This certificate will also act as a reminder for the second dose, after which a final certificate will be given.

The PM noted that the booth-level strategy used for elections needs to be used here as well and added that during vaccination, people must maintain appropriate behavior to stave off any spread of infection.

It is learnt that the government has placed order with the Serum Institute of India for its Covishield vaccine at a price of ₹200 per vial for the first 100 million doses.

SII CEO had told the media that the vaccine is likely to be priced at about ₹1,000 per dose in the private market once the government allows for that.

## Didi taunts BJP as a 'junk party'

■ Continued from Page 1 finally mustered courage to lead a BJP rally with close friend Baishakhi Banerjee in south Kolkata nearly one and a half years after their induction into the saffron party, attacked the CM over the exodus of heavyweight leaders from her party.

The Behala East MLA, a Narada sting accused, alleged: "Those who are giving 'outsider' slogans were once the ally of a national party."

## Ashwin endures pain(e) in Test

■ Continued from Page 1 me, d\*\*khead. I've got a lot more Indian friends than you do. Even your teammates think you're a goose. Don't they? Every one of them," said Paine. While Ashwin remained unruffled, Paine made a blunder by dropping Vihari.



# The Asian Age

12 JANUARY 2021

## Will FM offer India the mega-stimulus it needs?

With the Union Budget just 20 days away, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman must be giving the final contours to her second full-fledged financial statement for the country — the third if one were to include the interim budget that she presented in 2019. Coming in the middle of a rare pandemic that wiped out several businesses in the service sector, plummeted consumer demand and left hundreds of thousands of people unemployed, all eyes in the country will be looking at Ms Sitharaman's Budget for relief.

Though the Reserve Bank and the government had announced steps, including a loan moratorium, emergency working credit, and cash transfers to women from the economically low-income families, the concerted action fell short of addressing the collapse of consumer demand. Despite its grandstanding announcements, the government had provided a stimulus that worked to be just around 1.2 per cent of GDP and the economy continued to wobble. The government, however, promised to unleash its economic firepower at a later stage, which raised hopes of a belated stimulus in the Union Budget that could put the economy back on its tracks.

**Without a credible revenue-raising plan, the Union Budget 2021-22 may end up being a statement of intent rather than action.**

Of late, there have been several hints of the finance minister presenting an expenditure-heavy Budget on February 1. However, there is no clarity on the avenues for revenue mop-up, especially in the wake of a not-so-healthy state of tax collections in a recession-hit economy. Some reports suggested the possibility of a cess — possibly named after Covid-19 — to raise revenue to boost government spending. However, the jury is out on how a new tax that takes away money from people's pockets would help to revive consumer demand. It was suggested that it could be levied on super-rich individuals. But will it be enough to finance a mega stimulus that the people of this country are expecting from the government? The answer is very unlikely.

Without a credible revenue-raising plan, the Union Budget 2021-22 may end up being a statement of intent rather than action. The government should, therefore, shed some of its worries about the fiscal deficit and unleash its spending power on productivity projects such as metro rail projects and dedicated freight corridors that have long-term utility of reducing India's dependence on imported fossil fuel. Alternatively, it could guarantee or refinance construction loans for subprime borrowers who already own land where they intend to build or rebuild houses. While this would be an expenditure neutral measure for the government, this step would create an upsurge in the construction activity that will have a positive ripple effect on many other sectors and create lakhs of jobs. The government could also ease up on fiscal deficit to invest on health infrastructure that the country woefully lacks by building primary healthcare centres on its land and let private healthcare professionals run it on a public-private partnership model.

Borrowing for creating value for the future generations is always seen as better than doling out handouts — a principle that the ruling BJP always claims it has believed in. The finance minister will hopefully be guided by this principle while preparing for the Union Budget on February 1.

## Indonesia: Air disaster again

It is tragic but it was probably predestined that the New Year's first air disaster should occur in Indonesia, the country with the worst aviation safety record with 104 civilian airliner accidents and over 1,300 related fatalities since 1945. Not much time flies by without the nation of 17,508 islands witnessing aviation incidents. The last major disaster was a Lion Air Boeing Max going down without giving the pilots a chance of re-establishing control of the aircraft thanks to the controversial anti-stall software programme. The event last week involved a much older Boeing 737-500 plane of Sriwijaya Airlines, which went down into the Java Sea, probably from mechanical failure or pilot error, which can be established only after studying data from the black boxes that divers have located.

Aviation is no more dangerous than it was before the Covid-19 pandemic struck, but pilots are complaining the downtime in 2020 due to severe travel curbs, when they have had to do with simulator training rather than frequent flying, may be affecting their performance somewhat. While aviation experts believe the plane climbing out of Jakarta may have been going too slowly for 10,000 feet altitude, the fall within a few seconds must have been horrendous. The budget flight had already faced a weather delay and Indonesian aircraft also face unique problems like flights through volcanic ash that may affect engine performance because of ingestion. And in any case, poor maintenance is a problem that has dogged Indonesian aviation.

The families of the 62 unlucky people on board may get some sense of closure only from the fact that it appears to be an accident, and not due to diabolical corporate carelessness as in the Boeing Max disasters or the Malaysian aircraft that may have been flown to extinction. However, it is no comfort that open skies in an era of lackadaisical attitude to air safety could be an invitation to such poor advertisements for aviation. Ironically, this comes as an all-woman crew steered Air India's longest flight over the North Pole on the way from San Francisco to Bengaluru, epitomising air safety.

### THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY  
Editor in Chief

Printer & Publisher: K. SUDHAKAR

THE ASIAN AGE office is located at:

New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.

Published and Printed on behalf of and for

Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.

London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.

RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Subhani



## The Three Ks: Some old ideas revisited

Asad Durrani

View from Pakistan

Khursheed Ali Khan was no run-of-the-mill general. Behind a laissez-faire demeanor, he was a serious practitioner of military art, with a sterling soldierly character. In a war game, he tasked me with making a plan, but then suggested I modify it to bring out a few lessons. Nothing unusual, except whenever a visitor would pick holes in my design, K always clarified why it was forced upon me.

As NWFP governor, he asked me — as I had recently left the service — to outline a few ideas on how to address some intractable issues. The paper I wrote was titled “Three Ks that defy resolution”. These were Kabul, Kashmir and Karachi. The K word was to acknowledge the proposal's sponsor. A quarter century may have elapsed, but in a discussion the other day when similar subjects came up, I had to revisit my old thesis. It was based on some ideas that we from the military used to pester the political governments with, and having headed the National Defence College, one believed our core issues needed a structured approach. The concept was heavy on strategy and avoided concrete steps unless they were required to illustrate an argument.

It was really self-evident. Issues with a long gestation period — all three Ks were brewing for decades — would need to be thought through for the long haul. Over time, there would be developments needing adaptation or modification of original assumptions, even of plans.

In Afghanistan, for instance; after the Soviet pullout, infatuated with the resistance we realised at great cost that the tribesmen may have pur-

sued a common agenda against the occupiers, but were now rivals for Kabul's throne. A historian in the decision-making echelons would have sounded the right alarm. Genuine Afghan hands were strongly opposed to using unconventional warriors in set-piece battles like Jalalabad, and later against the Northern Alliance. When the Taliban emerged as an anti-Mujahideen force, its momentum may have surprised us; but not the old Communist cadres growing beards to drive militia tanks and fly the helicopters.

Later we may have factored in the role of spoilers, but our counter-measures were mostly transactional. India's Afghan strategy was of course Kautilyan, but because of our neighbourhood advantage it could be contained. But our official sources exaggerated it to the extent that paranoid Afghans were convinced our involvement in Afghanistan was essentially to keep India out. After the Soviets left, America's interests were never aligned with ours. We still sucked up to them — and even believed post-9/11 that our bilateral ties were again “strategic”.

Besides improving ties with Iran and Russia, and keeping China and Turkey on board, we did well to retain leverage with Taliban against great external pressure for two decades and could thus bring them to the table whenever required. But we now need some experts in Afghan psyche and those with credibility among the key factions to steer the intra-Afghan dialogue, or to disengage from this messy affair.

The Kashmir imbroglio was no less complex. Surprised by the robustness of the popular surge for independence in early 1990s, we never really got a handle over the multi-

ple challenges such movements present — providing an effective political umbrella; influencing the militancy so that it didn't lead to any unintended consequences; and creating the necessary rapport with resistance groups. Finding the right mix of military and non-military prongs required a more subtle direction than swinging between arming the resistance to abandoning it. Engaging India in the Composite Dialogue framework was wise, and there may have been even some collateral benefit in Gen. Pervez Musharraf's four-point salvo; but if anyone believed Indians would voluntarily give up their position of advantage, he should have his head examined. After August 5, 2019, the handling of developments in the Valley clearly showed there were hardly any experienced hands in our Kashmir policy cells, and our responses were therefore limited to cartography and rewriting milestones.

I don't think I ever understood the rise and fall of Karachi, but it was quite clear our once vibrant multi-ethnic megapolis was heading for an implosion — and all of us with our eyes wide shut.

Even a cursory look at this narrative suggests issues with roots in history, or simply too complex, were beyond the depth of our state structures. On core issues, one needed a core group to charter a course, steer its conduct, and adapt it to the evolving environment. A bureaucratic or politically partisan system could not be entrusted with this — not only because its key members were mostly on the move, but also as those at the helm often force the pace to add a feather in their otherwise colourless cap.

K took the paper to BB

**After August 5, 2019, the developments in the Valley showed there were hardly any experienced hands in our Kashmir policy cells**

— then in her second incarnation as PM — who didn't seem terribly pleased as with the Taliban now taking big strides in Afghanistan, she didn't want to share the spoils of the “victory” with a hybrid group that had the Opposition on board. Nevertheless, she appointed a pretty clued-up security adviser, who all by himself had no sway with the hands on the Afghan wheel, which only moved in the military track. Before that Nawaz Sharif had made it clear his Kabul policy would be conducted by his kitchen cabinet, not the Afghan cell. Soon thereafter he outsourced the Kashmir struggle to a private contractor. However, both mainstream parties had a common approach on Karachi: break up the MQM and let the devil take the hindmost.

It is of course unfair to put all the blame for fly-by-night policies on the political leadership. Members of the Deep State were reluctant to permit any rank outsiders, regardless of experience or expertise, in the decision-making corridors. Who knows when a group, even if dominated by the civil and military hierarchy, working under the chief executive and essentially in an advisory role, would get enough traction due to its sound judgment. That could blow the myth of the State's claim to total wisdom.

No surprise there. People in power are always protective of their turf. But the worst part is that they seldom pick up the courage to tell their political masters, civil or military, that most of our festering issues may not be fixed in an estimative timeframe — and therefore their management should take priority over a wishful outcome.

A council of wise men has always been a good idea since Plato's days.

*Lt. Gen. Asad Durrani (Retd) is a former director-general of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, has participated in several Track II initiatives, and an author and commentator*

### LETTERS

#### IMPEACH HIM!

US President Donald Trump's ineptness compounded by pride in his false political eminence cost needless lives in a pandemic, not least due to his disdain for science. And now his action has led to the mauling of the democratic ethos and traditions of a great country with an illustrious past. The US has lost face and its political elders need to reclaim its lost prestige. In proceeding with Trump's impeachment bid, the polity should help underscore the fact that the stature of a leader cannot eclipse democratic accountability of high office or destroy a nation's vibrant social ethos.

**R. Narayanan**  
Navi Mumbai

#### A TALL ORDER

**THE SHIV SENA** has once again rightly condemned the Narendra Modi-led Central government for its antipathy towards the farmers' agitation and called the existing situation Emergency-like. It's a sad day for democracy when an elected government in the middle of talks with key stakeholders takes resort in the Supreme Court, and says the farmers should fall back on its wisdom.

**Sankar Paul**  
Chakdaha, West Bengal

#### HEART-WRENCHING

**THE INFERNO** that swept through the Sick Newborn Care Unit (SNCU) at the Bhandara District General Hospital in Maharashtra, claiming the lives of at least 10 infants, is heart-wrenching. Seven babies from another ICU for children born in the hospital were lucky to get away with their lives after being rescued. Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray has done well to order a probe into the incident, besides calling for a fire audit of all government hospitals in the state.

**N.J. Ravi Chander**  
Bengaluru

**₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Kajal Chatterjee (Jan. 9). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.**

Aakar Patel



## On Republic Day, time to reclaim our basic rights

This month we will celebrate Republic Day, which is different from Independence Day. The difference may not be fully understood or appreciated. On August 15 we mark the anniversary of the day that India stopped being ruled by outsiders. We refer to this as freedom. On January 26, Republic Day, we mark the day when we put in force the laws that make the people of India sovereign. It must be noted that for some reason we mark Republic Day with a celebration of militarism. The marching in formation of armed men and their machines. We might want to ask those in parts of India which have experience of the military, such as the Northeast and Kashmir, what they make of this celebration or whether they consider this a proper way to mark the formation of the republic.

A republic is more than a democracy. A democracy is a system of majority rule government through elected representatives. Universal adult franchise — meaning the right to vote for these elected representatives — is only one aspect of being a republic. The other two aspects are guaran-

teed fundamental rights and civil liberties. These are equally important and without them you can have a democracy but not a republic. These include the right to freedom of expression, right to peaceful assembly, right to freedom of religion, right to form associations and to practise any occupation and the right to life and liberty. You could have a nation where adults can vote and elections are carried out, but none of these rights and liberties exist in a meaningful way. It would be a democracy, but it would not be a republic. The rights would not really be with the people but with the State, meaning the government and those who run it.

To give you an example, Indians have the right to peaceful assembly. It is actually a fundamental right, meaning one that enjoys a high degree of protection from encroachment. But do Indians have the right to peaceful assembly? They do not. They have the right to make an application to the police and the authorities seeking permission for a peaceful protest. The State has the right to approve, reject or not respond. Similarly, the right to occupation

does not exist (there is a Supreme Court judgment which says the rights of the cow surpass those of a butcher), nor does the right to freedom of religion as the new laws in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and several old laws and judgments show. The freedom of expression is legally criminalised in India through laws on sedition, defamation and contempt. Indeed, none of the rights and liberties that the Constitution saw initially as being “fundamental” are present in the original form today. It is safe to conclude that India is a democracy, but is it a republic? The reality is that today the rights are not with the citizen, they rest in the main with the State.

This has happened with the passage of time. The Constitution initially gave Indians all the rights referred to above in more or less unrestricted form, as they exist in other republics like the United States. It was the amendments that came later which began to cut away the freedoms to the extent that it can now be honestly said that they do not exist at all. The State appropriated sovereignty from the people. This happened, as many

will know, through footnotes to the Constitution, added as amendments to Part 3, which is the part on Fundamental Rights. The right to freedom of speech was now qualified. And the footnote reads that nothing shall prevent the State from making any law imposing reasonable restrictions on free speech which affect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

Who will determine whether these restrictions are reasonable? The State. The people, who through the Constituent Assembly had granted themselves the right to freedom of expression, were now made subordinate to their government.

The restrictions came not because of popular demand but because the government felt that it could not allow people too much freedom.

Similarly footnotes and their interpretations took away the real meaning of other rights, including the one to life and liberty.

The State in India can jail individuals without a crime having been committed.

This is called preventive detention, and it upends Articles 21 and 22 through a footnote. What is the difference between a government that wants this power over citizens and the British Raj?

The question is what can be done about this. The solution is obviously to get the State to undo the damage it has done over the years.

Article 13 says that the “State shall not make any law which takes away or abridges the rights conferred by this Part and any law made in contravention of this clause shall, to the extent of the contravention, be void”. Clearly, the State has committed overreach against its citizens.

Our pledge on this Republic Day must be to use those parts of the Constitution that are still on our side and take back our rights and liberties lawfully from the State, which has usurped them. That would be truly worth a celebration.

*The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist*



## SHORT TAKES

## CHINA: NO BIRTH CONTROL IN XINJIANG

Beijing, Jan. 11: A Chinese official on Monday denied Beijing has imposed coercive birth control measures among Muslim minority women, following an outcry over a tweet by the Chinese Embassy in Washington claiming that government police had freed women of the Uighur ethnic group from being “baby-making machines.”

Xu Guixiang, a deputy spokesperson for the Xinjiang regional government, said Monday that birth control decisions were made of the person's own free will and that “no organisational or individual can interfere.” “The growth rate of the Uighur population is not only higher than that of the whole Xinjiang population, but also higher than that of the minority population, and more significantly higher than that of the (Chinese majority) Han population,” Xu said.

## KIM ASSUMES LATE FATHER'S MANTLE

Seoul, Jan. 11: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has had his official party title changed, state media reported Monday, assuming a position previously held by his late father in what analysts said was a move to bolster his authority.

The North Korean economy is struggling in the face of self-imposed coronavirus isolation, and is subject to multiple sanctions over its banned nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

At the same time, nuclear talks with the United States have been deadlocked since the collapse of the Hanoi summit between Kim and President Donald Trump in February 2019. The ruling Workers' Party of Korea “unanimously adopted” a decision to elect Kim as general secretary at its congress on Sunday, the official KCNA news agency reported. “All the delegates expressed full support with stormy applause in great excitement,” it said.

## JIHADISTS KILL 13 SOLDIERS IN NIGERIA

Kano, Jan. 11: Thirteen soldiers have died in an ambush by jihadist fighters from the Islamic State West Africa Province group in volatile north-eastern Nigeria, two army sources said on Monday.

Heavy gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades hit a military convoy in Gazagana village, 30 kilometres from Yobe state capital Damaturu on Saturday. “We lost 13 soldiers in this ambush and several were injured,” an officer said.

The convoy was headed for a military base at Buni Yadi, another 20 kilometres from Damaturu, said the second army source, who gave the same death toll.

“It was a fierce battle and the terrorists also suffered casualties,” he said, without giving a figure. The ISWAP group carries out regular attacks in Buni Yadi region on soldiers and travellers, with the violence spilling over into Borno state.

Since 2009, the jihadist campaign in northeast Nigeria has focused on Borno where the Boko Haram group is also active.

## AZERBAIJAN, ARMENIA HOLD TALKS IN RUSSIA

Moscow, Jan. 11: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday hosted his counterparts from Armenia and Azerbaijan, their first meeting since a Russia-brokered truce ended six weeks of fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh.

As he sat down for talks in the Kremlin with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Putin said that the peace agreement has been successfully implemented, laying the foundation for a fair settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He noted that senior officials from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia will now discuss further moves to restore traffic links in the region after the decades-long conflict. The November 10 peace deal ended 44 days of hostilities in which the Azerbaijani army routed Armenian forces and reclaimed control over large parts of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas. Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but was under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia.

## Biden taps career diplomat William Burns as CIA chief

Taps a retired veteran diplomat who helped lead secret talks with Iran

Washington, Jan. 11: US President-elect Joe Biden on Monday announced William Burns as his pick to lead the Central Intelligence Agency, tapping a retired veteran diplomat who helped lead secret talks with Iran.

Burns, along with Biden's nominee for director of national intelligence, Avril Haines, will be tasked with rebuilding the US spy community's reputation after it was heavily politicized under outgoing President Donald Trump.

Currently president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a leading Washington foreign policy think-tank, Burns will be the first career diplomat to lead the CIA. Presidents have generally turned to intelligence or military veterans or politicians to lead the largest, best-funded component of the sprawling US intelligence community.

But Burns has deep experience in security and intelligence matters after spending over three decades in the US foreign service, including a stint as ambassador to Russia from 2005-2008.

“Bill Burns is an exemplary diplomat with decades of experience on the world stage keeping our people and our country safe and secure,” Biden said in a statement.

Burns will replace Gina Haspel, an agency veteran who became the first female CIA director after Tr-



In this file photograph taken on January 16, 2010, a reporter from Iranian television (L) asks a question of US diplomat Williams Burns (C) as he leaves a meeting of the Iran 6 in New York.

ump moved Mike Pompeo to be secretary of state.

One of Trump's most trusted aides, politically ambitious Pompeo was accused of catering to his boss's whims and allowing intelligence material to be twisted to serve Trump's policy desires while he led the agency.

Haspel, in the position since 2018, has been more low-key and disciplined, intelligence experts say, and even openly fell out of

favour with the president in his final months in office when Trump rejected intelligence that Russia was again meddling in the election to help him.

But Haspel's long tenure in the agency included taking part in the torture of Al-Qaeda suspects after the September 1, 2001 attacks, now clearly illegal activity that is one of the darker blemishes on the CIA's reputation — though Trump thought it was a

good thing. Broadly respected and having served in top positions under both Democratic and Republican administrations, Burns and Haines should have little trouble gaining approval by the Senate.

Burns, 64, served in the US diplomatic corps for 33 years, in jobs that took him around the world, including important roles in the Middle East in addition to his Russia posting. He was central in the

back-channel negotiations by the previous administration of Barack Obama that set the stage for the 2015 deal to limit Iran's nuclear capabilities — a deal that Trump summarily quit in 2018, with the support of Pompeo but not everyone in US intelligence circles.

At Carnegie since 2014, Burns defended the idea that Washington should remain a leader and support multilateralism as Trump radically reshaped the US world role, cancelling treaties, bullying allies, and taking a US-first, go-it-alone stance.

“If Donald Trump had been reelected for a second four years as president, then American democracy would have gone straight into the intensive care unit,” Burns said in an online conference last month. After “erratic” and “unsteady” policies under Trump, Biden will have “the most difficult inheritance that any new president has faced since Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the height of the Great Depression 90 years ago,” he said. “Recovering the power of America's example of our competence after the experience of the last few years is going to be a critical driver of our foreign policy.” The biggest geopolitical test for the United States going ahead, he said, is “going to be managing an intense, long-term competition with China.” — *AFP*

## Democrats start impeachment of Trump in House

Washington, Jan. 11: Democrats began the process of impeaching President Donald Trump for a second time on Monday if Vice President Mike Pence and the Cabinet do not remove him from office.

Democrats introduced a resolution calling on Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment of the Constitution and remove Trump from the White House for being unfit to discharge his duties.

Republicans blocked an immediate vote on the resolution and Democrats followed up by introducing an article of impeachment of Trump for “incitement of insurrection” over his role in Wednesday's storming of the US Capitol by his supporters.

The dramatic moves came just nine days before Trump is to leave the White House and President-elect Joe Biden is to be sworn in as the 46th president of the United States. Democratic Representative Steny Hoyer of Maryland introduced the resolution calling on Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment and declare Trump “incapable of executing the duties of his office.” Republican Representative Alex Mooney of West Virginia objected to passing the resolution by what is known as “unanimous consent” and it will be put to vote on Tuesday.

After Republicans blocked the resolution, a single article of impeachment against Trump was

## SCHWARZENEGGER COMPARES CAPITOL MOB TO NAZIS

Washington, Jan. 11: Former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appealed for unity Sunday after the violent attack on the US Capitol, which he described as an attempted coup by President Donald Trump, drawing comparisons to Nazi Germany.

In a video posted on Twitter that quickly went viral, the Hollywood star compared the attack by Trump supporters to Kristallnacht, or the “Night of Broken Glass,” when Nazis carried out pogroms in Germany in 1938 that included breaking the windows of Jewish-owned stores. — *AFP*

introduced in the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives.

Trump was impeached by the House in December 2019 and now risks being the first president ever to be impeached twice.

It is unclear whether the body would hold a trial this time to consider the latest charges. Though time is running short, Democrats likely have the votes in the House to impeach Trump again and could draw increased Republican support for the move. — *AFP*

## PLANE'S BLACK BOXES: SEARCH INTENSIFIES

Jakarta, Jan. 11: The search for the black boxes of a crashed Sriwijaya Air jet intensified Monday to boost the investigation into what caused the plane carrying 62 people to nosedive at high velocity into the Java Sea. The Boeing jet disappeared minutes after taking off from Jakarta during heavy rain on Saturday, and the search has yielded plane parts and human remains but no survivors.

Authorities have said signals from the boxes were detected between Lancang and Laki islands in the Thousand Islands chain just north of Jakarta's coast. — *AP*



An Indonesian National Transportation Safety Committee investigator inspects the debris found in the waters around the location where Sriwijaya Air passenger jet crashed at Tanjung Priok Port in Jakarta on Monday. — *AP*

## Pope says women cannot be priests

Rome, Jan. 11: Pope Francis changed church law Monday to explicitly allow women to do more things during Mass, while continuing to affirm that they cannot be priests. Francis amended the law to formalise and institutionalise what is common practice in many parts of the world: That women can read the Gospel and serve on the altar as eucharistic ministers.

Previously, such roles were officially reserved to men even though exceptions were made. Francis said he was making the change to increase recognition of the “precious contribution” women make in the church, while emphasising that all baptised Catholics have a role to play in the church's mission.

But he also noted that doing so further makes a distinction between “ordained” ministries such as the priesthood and diaconate, and ministries open to qualified laity. The Vatican reserves the priesthood for men.

The change comes as Francis remains under pressure to allow women to be deacons — ministers who perform many of the same functions as priests, such as presiding at weddings, baptisms and funerals. Currently, the ministry is reserved for men even though historians say the ministry was performed by women in the early church. Francis has created a second commission of experts to study whether women could be deacons. — *AP*

## Mallya legal fees: Funds not given

London, Jan. 11: A UK court hearing an urgent application on Monday refused to sanction the release of substantial sums held with the Court Funds Office (CFO) as part of bankruptcy proceedings being pursued against liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya by a consortium of Indian banks, led by the State Bank of India (SBI).

Judge Sebastian Prentis, who presided over a remote hearing at the Insolvency and Companies Court (ICC) of the High Court in London, concluded that Mallya had failed to provide the “basic information” required for such a validation order

and agreed only to allow sufficient funds to cover an appeal hearing scheduled in the bankruptcy case for Wednesday.

“As to the urgency of this application, I remain puzzled,” the judge noted, as he raised questions about updated evidence on full disclosure of assets at Mallya's disposal, including jewellery and a “fine suite” of high-value luxury cars that were listed as being owned by him.

The 65-year-old former Kingfisher Airlines chief seeks approval to use 2.8 million pounds of the estimated 2.9 million pounds held by the court. — *PTI*

## Covid origins: WHO team in China on Jan. 14

Beijing, Jan. 11: China said on Monday that a group of experts from the WHO will arrive in the country on Thursday for a long-anticipated probe into the origins of the Coronavirus pandemic, ending the uncertainty and delay which drew sharp criticism from the world health body.

Experts from the WHO will conduct a field visit to China on January 14, the state-run CGTN quoted China's National Health Commission as saying in a report. Confirming the visit, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing on Monday that China supported scientists around the world to conduct a global study on the origins and transmission routes of the virus. Zhao declined to provide

details of the schedule of the experts and whether they would be permitted to visit the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV). US President Donald Trump, who has termed coronavirus “China virus”, has alleged that the virus may have emanated from WIV and called for a probe into it. WIV has denied the allegation, saying it is politically motivated.

The 10-member team of WHO experts is expected to visit Wuhan, but it is not clear yet whether they would visit WIV too. When asked about it, Zhao directed the questions relating to the schedule of the WHO experts to relevant authorities. “China stands ready to closely cooperate with WHO and international experts. With specific details of itinerary, I refer to you to competent

authority,” he said.

“The origin tracing may involve more countries. The WHO needs to conduct similar studies in other countries and regions,” Zhao said, highlighting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's recent comments that China “raced against time” and was the first country to report Coronavirus cases to the world.

“More and more research suggests that the pandemic was likely to have been caused by separate outbreaks in multiple places in the world” he said. The team's visit to China, especially to Wuhan where the virus first emerged in December last year, has become a bone of contention as Beijing, which questions the widely-held view about the virus' origins in Wuhan. — *PTI*

## Biden pushes for \$2,000 stimulus

Washington, Jan. 11: US President-elect Joe Biden has called for a \$2,000 “stimulus checks” to his fellow Americans, arguing that the current \$600 Coronavirus relief payment is not enough to choose between paying rent or putting food on the table.

Biden has called the current \$600 round of cash a “down payment,” and early last week he said \$2,000 checks would go out “immediately” if his party took control of both houses of Congress. With the Democrats now having a majority in the House of Repres-

entatives and in the Senate, and Biden set to be sworn in as the 46th President of the US on January 20, the former vice president is likely to push for a new stimulus package later this month. “\$600 is simply not enough when you have to choose between paying rent or putting food on the table. We need \$2,000 stimulus checks,” Biden said on Sunday.

Outgoing US President Donald Trump has also pitched for a \$2,000 check. In December, the House of Representatives also passed a bill. — *PTI*

## GOING | GREEN

Mayor Hidalgo has led efforts to reduce traffic in the city, with two main road arteries closed

## Champs-Elysees to be turned into new Paris garden

Paris, Jan. 11: Paris's famed Champs-Elysees avenue is to be given a green makeover to transform it into what the mayor says will be an “extraordinary garden”.

The French often call it “the most beautiful avenue in the world” but the decision follows years of campaigning by activists who complain that traffic and mass retail have turned it into a noisy and bland district shunned by Parisians.

The greening will take place in stages. First the car-clogged Place de la Concorde square at the bottom of the thoroughfare — scheduled to be completed before the Paris Olympic Games in 2024 — and then the whole of the avenue.

It's going to be another extraordinary garden,” Mayor Anne Hidalgo told the *Journal du Dimanche* newspaper.

The plan is in keeping with other efforts by the

Paris, Jan. 11: Ending the confusion over the fate of Paris Fashion Week, French fashion's regulatory body has said that this month's Paris men's and haute couture shows will be strictly audience-free

over Coronavirus fears. The Federation de la Haute Couture et de la Mode has told luxury houses they will not be allowed to invite guests this season, after instruction by police. The federation said that

“we confirm that there can be no public gatherings”, adding that “houses can still organise 'real' runway shows with models broadcast live, provided events take place behind closed doors.” — *AP*

Socialist city leader to create green spaces in the densely populated French capital, where elegant squares and tree-lined boulevards are often overwhelmed by vehicles.

A Champs-Elysees lobby group pushing for the project said it was “delighted with this announcement and welcomes the decision

by the mayor's office which appears to want to make the makeover of the Champs-Elysees one of its main urban projects of this decade.” Hidalgo has led efforts to reduce traffic in the city, which has seen the closure of two main road arteries that ran along the river Seine and the building of new infrastructure for bikes and electric scooters.

In 2019, American landscape architect Kathryn Gustafson was put in charge of a makeover for the Eiffel Tower area, where roads will also be turned into lawns and trees.

The Champs-Elysees was first laid out in 1670 but was given a revamp by Baron Haussmann, the architect behind the transformation of Paris under Napoleon III in the mid-19th century. It is also used as the route for the Bastille Day military parade, which celebrates the French republic and its armed forces on July 14. — *AFP*



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49269.32	1.00
Nifty 50	14484.80	0.96
S&P 500*	3,809.27	-0.40
Dollar (₹)	73.42	-0.23
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.01	0.60
Euro (₹)	89.26	0.43
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,866.389	0.79
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.60	-0.70
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.924	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.131	2.14

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Triton set to enter India with electric sedan

US-based Triton Electric Vehicle said it aims to introduce N4 sedan in India with price starting at Rs 35 lakh. The electric sedan, which would be manufactured in the US, is going to be available in four different variants and a high-performance limited edition in the country, the company said in a statement. Only 100 units of the limited edition version would be produced. The N4 model comes powered by 75Kwh and 100 Kwh battery options.

Vani Manja is Boehringer's country MD



Drug firm Boehringer Ingelheim said it has appointed Vani Manja as country MD for India, effective Jan. 1. Vani will look after the businesses in India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. She will also join the board. Vani succeeds Sharad Tyagi, who retired on Dec. 31. She was formerly the global head of Boehringer Ingelheim's go-to-market and business steering organisation, based in Germany. She joined the group in the US in 2011.

Agdhi's AI-based tech to check quality of seeds

Agri-startup Agdhi launched an Artificial Intelligence-based technology to check quality of seeds. Traditionally seeds are inspected manually. The Bengaluru-based firm said its AI vision technology—along with photometry, radiometry and computer vision—offers efficient methods for seed classification and seed quality analysis. The colour, texture, size, and shape, is extracted from images of seeds.

Gail to consider share buyback, dividend on 15th

GAIL (India) Ltd, the nation's largest gas distribution firm, will on Friday consider buyback of shares with a view to returning surplus cash to shareholders, the biggest being the Government of India. In a stock exchange filing, the company said its board will meet on January 15 to consider share buyback as also payment of interim dividend for the fiscal year ending March 2021. It did not give details.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

■ Closer to ₹200-L cr m-cap milestone Sensex moves past 49K-mark

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 11

India's most widely tracked equity index, the Sensex, seemed cruising to the 50000-mark, an unthinkable milestone a few years ago, as it closed above the 49000-mark for the first time, gaining 486.8 points to close the day at 49,269.32. The new record high came on positive global cues and third quarter earnings expectations, fall in daily Covid cases and high expectations from the upcoming union budget.

The Nifty 50 Index, too, closed at a new high of 14484.75, up 137 points, or 0.9 per cent.

With the ongoing massive rally, the BSE's market capitalisation is getting closer to the Rs 200-lakh crore mark, as it is now at Rs 196.56 lakh crore.

After the IT sector bellwether Tata Consultancy Services posted impressive third quarter performance last Friday, IT stocks made hefty gains on Monday, with the BSE IT Index moving up 3.63 per cent.

Another sector that helped market benchmarks gain close to 1 per cent was automobile. The BSE Auto Index was up 2.56 per cent.

The top gainers included Infosys (4.90 per cent), Wipro (3.87 per cent), Tech Mahindra (2.54 per cent), TCS (1.75 per cent) and HCL Technologies (6.09 per cent).

TCS hit a new all-time high of Rs 3,224 before closing at Rs 3,175. TCS market capitalisation soared to Rs



NSE LAUNCHES DERIVATIVES ON NIFTY FINANCIAL SERVICES INDEX

New Delhi, Jan. 11: The National Stock Exchange on Monday launched derivatives on the Nifty Financial Services Index, which will give more flexibility to institutional and retail investors to manage their hedge. This is the first time the exchange has made available weekly futures for the stock index derivatives.

The index consists of 20 stocks and is designed to reflect the behaviour and performance of the Indian financial market, which includes banks, financial institutions, housing finance, insurance companies and other financial services firms.

The first day witnessed volumes of 1.4 lakh contracts being traded.—PTI

11.91 lakh crore, close to top company by market-cap, Reliance Industries (Rs 12.02 lakh crore) as the latter's stock price fell 1.8 per cent to Rs 1,897 on the BSE.

Recounting the day's market movement Shrikant Chouhan, analyst-equity technical research, Kotak Securities, said, "Another day with tremendous gains for the market. Markets closed higher for the day, led by auto, IT, pharmaceuticals and select FMCG stocks...It seems that the market has gained momen-

tum due to the bright possibilities of bold announcements in the forthcoming union budget."

The top auto sector gainers included Tata Motors (11.11 per cent), Ashok Leyland (3.8 per cent), Maruti (2.75 per cent), Bajaj Auto (2.40 per cent) and Mahindra & Mahindra (2.37 per cent).

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers on Monday of equities worth Rs 3,138.90 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 2,610.13 crore.

NEXT TRANCHE OF MINING AUCTION SOON: MINISTER

New Delhi, Jan. 11: Coal minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday said the next tranche of commercial mines auction will be launched this month and stressed that further rounds will continue thereafter.

Speaking at the agreement signing ceremony for commercial coal mining and launch of single-window clearance system, he said commercial coal mining has been made a part of the system now.

"The next tranche of commercial mining auction would be launched in January 2021, and further tranches will continue thereafter," he said.

Speaking at the function, home minister Amit Shah said the country has reached a position where the coal sector can be the biggest contributor towards the target of India becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2025.

He said despite having the world's fourth-largest coal reserves, India is importing coal and this is not right for the country.

The coal minister said the single-window clearance portal is in the spirit of minimum government and maximum governance.

At present, about 19 major approval or clearances are required before starting a coal mine. In the absence of a unified platform for clearances, the companies were required to approach different departments, he said.—PTI

Housing launches grow YoY for first time since lockdown

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JAN. 11

The December quarter saw yearly growth in new launches of housing units, the first time after the pandemic. While new launches of housing units have gone up in the October-December quarter both on a quarterly basis and yearly basis, sales were actually down against year-ago quarter.

As many as 54,329 new units were launched in the eight prime residential markets during the three months. New launches grew by 173 per cent over 19,865 units launched in the July-September quarter. This also reflected a 12 per cent growth over the 48,530 new units that were launched in the December quarter in 2019. This was the first quarter that witnessed a yearly growth since the onset of the pandemic, signalling a turnaround in the market, finds PropTiger.

NCR, Chennai,



Hyderabad, Kolkata and Pune saw yearly growth in new launches. An increase in home-buying interest and muted new launches in the prior three quarters helped growth. Units in the sub-Rs 45 lakh category were the largest contributor to the overall supply, with a 46 per cent share.

However, for the entire 12-month period in 2020, only 122,426 units were launched and this was about half the new supply in 2019 at 244,256 units.

Similarly, home sales declined by 27 per cent compared to the

December quarter of 2019 despite showing 68 per cent improvement over the preceding quarter. As many as 58,914 units were sold during the December quarter. However, compared to the overall sales registered in 2019, 182,639 units sold in the pandemic-hit 2020 showed a 47 per cent decline.

Except Ahmedabad, home sales increased across all other cities when compared to the preceding quarter.

Stamp duty cuts by the Maharashtra government supported sales in Mumbai and Pune markets. Low interest rates, stagnant housing prices and attractive offers by developers were the other factors which supported sales.

According to Knight Frank India, driven by the Covid-induced need for larger homes, the share of Rs 50 lakh and above ticket sizes in total sales has gone up from 44 per cent in the second half of 2019 to 57 per cent in H2 2020.

Pandemic shrinks women workforce more than men

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JAN. 11

The coronavirus pandemic has affected women workforce disproportionately compared to men. The women labour force in India shrank by 10.5 per cent against 2 per cent for men between October 2019 and October 2020, finds the Asian Development Bank.

Despite being a universal crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women, says an ADB blog.

Between March and April 2020, 37 per cent of the female workforce, or 15.4 million women, lost their jobs versus 28 per cent of men. The labour force shrank by 10.5 per cent for women versus 2 per cent for men between October 2019 and October 2020.

Women-owned small businesses, which largely operate in consumer-facing sectors such as textiles, food processing and handicrafts, witnessed a sharp demand shock, with revival being slow. In the informal sectors, anecdotal evidence points toward men being preferred for re-employment as the economy opens.

Women also face additional mobility restrictions. Even before Covid-19, only 54 per cent of women were allowed to go to a nearby market alone. Only 48 per cent could visit places outside their village or community by themselves, according to the National Family and Health Survey conducted in 2015-



IN AN UNEQUAL WORLD

- Women-owned small businesses, which largely operate in consumer-facing sectors, witnessed a sharp demand shock
- In March-April, 37% of the female workforce lost their jobs versus 28% of men
- The labour force shrank by 10.5% for women versus 2% for men between October 2019 and October 2020

16. With the pandemic, women now require strong reasons to leave home, inhibiting their ability to work, run businesses, study or even avail of health care services and government aid.

The pandemic has led to an increase in domestic work. On an average, women spent five hours per day on unpaid household and care-giving work compared to 30 minutes for men, according to a survey conducted in 2019. As school closures continue and families remain at home during Covid-19, women's care work has increased by almost 30 per cent.

Further, the digital gender divide has worsened inequity in access to education, health and work opportunities. In India, 63 per cent of adult women own a mobile phone compared to 79 per cent adult

men. Only 21 per cent use mobile internet compared to 42 per cent adult men. Women are systematically denied access to technology, with phone use governed by male relatives. With online classes, telemedicine and work from home becoming the norm, women are at risk of getting left behind, unable to acquire the skills required to participate in a digital economy, say the ADB.

However, government has taken a few steps that have benefitted women. Direct cash transfers, free grains for ration cardholders, increase in collateral-free lending limits for women self-help groups and increase in the number of person days under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme are some of them.

Cars set best monthly growth in this fiscal

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, JAN. 11

December finally marked the best growth in retail sales of passenger vehicles (PV) as new launches, cheaper finance and pre-buying to escape the January price rise helped boost demand in Asia's third biggest car market.

The segment also recorded the second-best monthly total this financial year. PVs comprise cars, SUVs and vans.

PV sales grew 24 per cent in December to 271,249 units as against 218,775 units recorded in the same month last year, as per data sourced from 86 per cent of the regional transport offices (RTOs), shared by the Federation of Automobile Dealers Association, or Fada, on Monday.

Wholesales dispatches to dealers by 14 PV manufacturers during December stood at 276,544 units, a growth of 18 per cent compared to the same month last year. The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, or Siam, will issue sales later this week.

The inventory days for PVs currently ranges between 15-20 days while for two-wheelers it ranges between 30-35 days, according to Fada.

The two-wheeler segment scored better, posting the best monthly retail sales this year in December. A total of 1.42 million two-wheelers were sold last month, marking a growth of 12 per cent compared to 1.27 million units sold in the same month last year.

Commercial vehicle sales, however, slipped 13.52 per cent year-on-year to 51,454 units against 59,497 units. Similarly, three-wheeler sales fell 52.75 per cent to 27,715 units from 58,651 units a year ago.

Tractor sales, however, grew by 35.49 per cent to 69,105 units against 51,004 units 2a year ago.

Total sales across categories increased 11.01 per cent to 1.84 million.

However, supply-side issues in PVs continued for the second month, thus making waiting period as high as eight months in select vehicles.

STANCHART SEES INDIA CHARTING COURSE TO A TIGHTER BUDGET



Nirmala Sitharaman

ANIRBAN NAG JAN. 11

India will seek to narrow its budget deficit next financial year, amid expectations of improved revenue collections and economic rebound, according to Standard Chartered Bank Plc.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman will likely target fiscal deficit - the gap between income and expenditure - at 5.3 per cent of gross domestic product in the budget for the year starting April 1, the bank's chief South Asia economist Anubhuti Sahay wrote in a report to clients. That will be slimmer than the current year's number, which Standard Chartered expects to be 6.7 per cent of GDP, or even as high as 8.4 per cent if factoring in off-budget spending to help the economy shake off the pandemic fallout.

Although the government announced stimulus steps worth 15 per cent of GDP in the current year, the actual fiscal cost is seen at less than 2 per cent of GDP with most of the measures taking the form of loan guarantees. That compares with direct spending of about 3 per cent of GDP on average in other emerging markets, according to S&P Global Ratings.

The gains will be "driven by improved tax collection, higher divestment proceeds and reduced pandemic-related expenditure amid a better growth environment," Sahay said. "The fiscal consolidation path for FY22-26 will be keenly watched to assess medium-term market impact," she said.

Sitharaman, in an interview in December, said she would carefully balance her next budget to ensure the momentum in the economy isn't lost.

—Bloomberg

TROUBLE | BREWING Findings cast fresh shadow on operations, compliance practices

Carlsberg probes find potential bribes, lapses

ADITYA KALRA NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

An investigation of alleged unlawful practices at Carlsberg India found "potential improper payments" to government officials and other regulatory lapses, its former auditor said in a document seen by Reuters. Reports by a different global consultancy, also seen by Reuters, disclosed other lapses at Carlsberg India Pvt Ltd in 2018, including child labour.

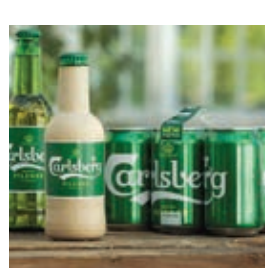
The findings cast a fresh shadow on operations and compliance practices at the Indian joint venture of Danish brewer Carlsberg A/S, which according to IWSR Drinks Market Analysis has a 17

per cent share of India's \$7 billion beer market.

Carlsberg's probes and a boardroom dispute come amid other challenges: an antitrust investigation last year concluded Carlsberg India colluded for years on prices with rivals, though a final ruling is pending.

An India affiliate of the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) network recently resigned as Carlsberg India's financial auditor after declining for two years in a row to give an opinion on the brewer's financials, amid boardroom tussles and internal probes into local practices.

Since at least 2019, Carlsberg had been probing allegations levelled by



some past and current employees around promotion of alcohol in prohibited areas, kickbacks and bribery, according to regulatory filings and the document prepared by local PwC affiliate Price Waterhouse Chartered Accountants LLP.

The investigation "concluded that there were internal control weak-

nesses... potential improper payments made to government officials/other persons and possibility of misappropriation of company's funds over past years by certain customers," says the PwC document, which details the basis of the firm's resignation.

"However, the amount of misappropriation and other amounts relating to inappropriate practices could not be ascertained."

Responding to questions from Reuters, Carlsberg said, "We cannot rule out breaches of our policies and code of conduct." The company said it does everything possible to prevent such incidents.

The investigations "specified that Carlsberg

Group's policies were breached in the period until 2018" and the probes identified the need for further strengthening of controls, the company said.

"Carlsberg India has taken several actions as a consequence of the findings, including... dismissal of and formal warnings to employees," it said.

Carlsberg told Reuters in November the auditor had quit because of "highly disruptive side-effects" of a commercial conflict with its joint venture partner, the Nepal-based Khetan Group. Three nominee directors from Khetan refused to approve the last two annual results. —Reuters



## SHORT TAKES

## Kohli becomes dad of baby girl

**New Delhi:** India captain Virat Kohli and his actor wife Anushka Sharma were on Monday blessed with a baby girl.

Kohli made the announcement on his official Twitter handle. "We are thrilled to share with you that we have been blessed with a baby girl this afternoon. We thank you all for your love, prayers and good wishes," Kohli tweeted.

"Anushka and the baby are both healthy and we are feeling beyond blessed to start this new chapter of our lives. We hope that you can respect our privacy at this time," added the star batsman who returned from Australia on paternity leave after leading India in the first Test. The news came on a day when India snatched a remarkable draw in the third Test against Australia in Sydney to keep the series alive at 1-1. — PTI

## India, Oz retain top-2 Test spots

**Sydney:** Australia and India on Monday held on to their top two positions in the World Test Championship (WTC) standings following the engrossing draw in the third Test here.

India's remarkable show saw them stay marginally ahead of third-placed New Zealand in the WTC points tally.

"An incredible battle in Sydney has helped both teams retain the top two spots in the ICC World Test Championship standings. A difference of 0.2 per cent between India and New Zealand," ICC wrote on its twitter handle.

New Zealand had earlier achieved the number one position in the ICC Test Team Rankings for the first time in history following their clean-sweep of Pakistan and West Indies. Both Australia and India bagged 10 points each after the draw. — PTI

## Spurs overcome Marine challenge

**Crosby, England:** Marine's part-time players had been holding off Tottenham for 20 minutes when apprentice plumber Neil Kengni spotted his chance. Some 30 yards (meters) from the goal of Joe Hart, who has played at a World Cup for England, Kengni unleashed a shot.

Surely the semiprofessional eighth-tier club could not take the lead against the Premier League's fourth-place team? Only the crossbar spared the blushes and Tottenham of Hart, who tipped the ball over to be sure.

Tottenham went on to win 5-0 with Vinicius scoring a hat trick but that is only the same goal margin the London club beat Manchester United by earlier in the Premier League season. — AP

## Sindhu, Saina eye good show

**Bangkok:** Nearly 10 months after Covid-19 disrupted the international calendar, star shuttlers P.V. Sindhu and Saina Nehwal will return to competitive action in Yonex Thailand Open Super 1000 tournament starting on Tuesday, an event shorn of some sheen due to Japan and China's pullout from the Asia leg. While Olympic silver-medallist Sindhu has been training in London for the last two months and would be keen to quickly find her rhythm, Saina was down with Covid-19 and has recently recovered from the dreaded disease. — PTI

## Live on TV

## BADMINTON

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

## CRICKET

**Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament:** Jharkhand vs Bengal from 11.55 am; Assam vs Tamil Nadu from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

## FOOTBALL

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

**English Premier League:** Sheffield vs Newcastle from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1; Wolverhampton Wanderers vs Everton from 1.45 am (Wednesday) on Star Sports Select 2; Burnley vs Manchester United from 1.45 am (Wednesday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. And Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C-9, Sector-III, Noida-201301  
Editor - T. Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep. Rs. 20.00 per copy.



Ravichandran Ashwin (left) is congratulated by captain Ajinkya Rahane as Hanuma Vihari (second from right) is congratulated by teammate Mohammed Siraj after play on the final day of the third Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Monday. — AFP

## DRAWSOME!

## Vihari, Ashwin pull off memorable draw to keep Test series alive

**Sydney, Jan. 11:** Ravichandran Ashwin and Hanuma Vihari battled pain and a hostile Australian bowling attack while resolutely displaying the largely extinct art of Test-saving batsmanship to snatch a remarkable draw for India after Rishabh Pant raised visions of an improbable win here on Monday.

Chasing a herculean target of 407, Pant (97 off 118 balls) and the ever-steady Cheteshwar Pujara (77 off 205 balls) produced an amazing 148-run stand before India were forced to down the shutters finishing on 334 for 5 in 131 overs when players shook hands.

SCORECARD	
<b>Australia 1st Innings 338</b>	
<b>India 1st Innings: 244</b>	
<b>Australia 2nd Innings 312/6 decl.</b>	
<b>India 2nd Innings (Overnight 98/2):</b> Rohit Sharma c Starc b Cummins 52, Shubman Gill c Paine b Hazlewood 31, Cheteshwar Pujara b Hazlewood 77, Ajinkya Rahane c Wade b Lyon 4, Rishabh Pant (wk) c Cummins b Lyon 97, Hanuma Vihari not out 23, Ravichandran Ashwin not out 39. Extras (lb-3, w-2, nb-6) 11. <b>Total (for 5 wickets in 131 overs) 334.</b>	
<b>For India:</b> 1-71, 2-92, 3-102, 4-250, 5-272.	
<b>Bowling:</b> Mitchell Starc 22-6-66-0, Josh Hazlewood 26-12-39-2, Pat Cummins 26-6-72-1, Nathan Lyon 46-17-114-2, Cameron Green 7-0-31-0, Marnus Labuschagne 4-2-9-0.	

The series stands at 1-1 going into the fourth Test in Brisbane but an Indian team which has turned into a 'mini-hospital' would be walking away with a lot of pride. They put up a proper fight in adverse circumstances already soured by racist chants and abuses from the crowd here during the course of the game.

Pant's innings will be remembered for a long time but none can forget

that Ashwin (39 no, 128 balls) and Vihari (23 off 161 balls), battling a hamstring injury, put their bodies on line to save a game which could have been lost in a jiffy after their two best batsmen were gone on the day.

Pat Cummins (26-6-72-1), Josh Hazlewood (26-12-39-2), Mitchell Starc (22-6-66-0) and Nathan Lyon (46-17-114-2) threw everything they had, peppering them with short balls, hitting the patches with a few jumping from the spot.

"...this one's a tough one to swallow. Our bowlers were superb, Lyon bowled well. Just that we (especially me) didn't hold onto our catches," said

Australian skipper Tim Paine after the match.

The duo, in 42.4 overs, scraped their way for a 62-run stand, which certainly would have made Rahul Dravid proud on his 48th birthday.

Vihari hobbled with a torn hamstring but defended dourly, Ashwin got hit on the ribs but carried on manfully while also engaging in some chatter with Tim Paine and close-in fielders.

Catches landed in no man's land and that was the slice of luck they needed. When Marnus Labuschagne was brought in the 112th over, one knew that they had done their job. — PTI

## HANUMA OUT OF FINAL TEST, MAY MISS ENG SERIES

**New Delhi, Jan. 11:** India's injury woes in the Test series against Australia compounded on Monday after the hero of their drawn game in Sydney, Hanuma Vihari, was ruled out of the fourth Test with a hamstring tear that could keep him out of action for a considerable time.

It has been learnt that Vihari was taken for scans after the match.

However, a BCCI source confirmed that Vihari is unlikely to be fit in time for the next Test starting in another three days' time. "The extent of Vihari's tear can only be ascertained after the scan reports come through. But even if it's a grade 1 tear, he is out for at least four weeks and then will need some rehabilitation time. So it's not only Brisbane Test but also, he won't be a part of England Tests at home," a source said. — PTI



Rival captains Australia's Tim Paine (left) and India's Ajinkya Rahane gesture to each other after the final day of the third Test at the SCG on Monday. — AP

## Brisbane Test on, crowd capacity capped at 50%

**Sydney, Jan. 11:** The Indian cricket team is all set to leave for Brisbane on Tuesday after BCCI secretary Jay Shah's assurance to Cricket Australia ended the uncertainty over the fourth and final Test at the venue, which has reduced its crowd capacity to 50 per cent for the game.

The BCCI had written to CA about relaxation of hard quarantine rules in Brisbane as complying with them would have confined the Indian players to their hotel rooms after the day's play, something they had

strong reservations about. The match starts January 15.

"I want to thank the Queensland Government for their cooperation and willingness to working closely with CA and the BCCI so we can deliver the fourth Test as planned," CA interim CEO Nick Hockley said in a statement.

"...but more importantly delivering on a plan that places the safety and wellbeing of the players, match officials and the wider community as a top priority," he added.

The players are now expected to be in an

Indian Premier League like bio-bubble where they can mingle among themselves in the hotel.

With the clarity over the game emerging finally, CA also announced the crowd seating plan.

"Acting on advice of the Queensland Health and the Queensland Government, Cricket Australia and Stadiums Queensland are working together to ensure the safety of patrons attending the Brisbane Test on January 15, with a crowd capacity of 50 per cent at The Gabba," the CA release stated. — PTI

TWEET

TALK

Really proud of #TeamIndia! Special mention to @RishabhPant17, @cheteshwar1, @ashwinravi99 and @Hanumavihari for the roles they've played brilliantly. Any guesses in which dressing room the morale will be high? #OneTeamOneCause #AUSvIND.

— SACHIN TENDULKAR  
cricket legend

Hope all of us realise the importance of pujaara,pant and Ashwin in cricket teams..batting at 3 in test cricket against quality bowling is not always hitting through the line ..almost 400 test wickets don't come just like that..well fought india..time to win the series.

— SOURAV GANGULY  
BCCI president and former India captain

Loved the fight and determination of India all day today. Starting with Pant and Pujara, and then for Vihari and Ashwin to withstand Australia and look largely in control for most of the day was very impressive. Can't wait for Brisbane now. #AUSvIND

— RICKY PONTING  
Former Australia skipper

A fitting birthday gift for Rahul Dravid. An extraordinary display of resistance, fight and patience by India today.

— INTERNATIONAL CRICKET COUNCIL

Unbelievable Grit, determination and character shown by #TeamIndia. What an unbelievably spirited effort and some serious grind. Well done men. test cricket at its best

— K.L. RAHUL  
India batsman

Even a half-strength, battled, bruised, injured, ridiculed, abused, bio-bubble fatigued India is difficult for a full strength Australia to beat at home. No praise high enough for this herculean effort. Told you this is a damn good team. Cherish it. #AUSvsIND

— WASIM JAFFER  
Former India batsman

Feel so so proud of the Team, Pant showed why he needs to be treated differently & d grit showed by Vihari, Pujara & Ashwin was unbelievable

— VIRENDER SEHWAG  
Former India opener

Some incredible fight shown today by @BCCI @cheteshwar1 @ashwinravi99 @Hanumavihari @RishabhPant17 and all involved in that performance throughout. Well done to my good mate @RaviShastriOfc. Long live test cricket.. #INDvAUS #TestCricket #TeamIndia #fight

— SIMON DOULL  
Former New Zealand pacer

## Delhi hammer giants Mumbai

**Mumbai, Jan. 11:** Delhi started their campaign at Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy with a thumping 76-run win over domestic heavyweights Mumbai in an Elite Group 'E' game at the Wankhede Stadium here on Monday.

Put in to bat, Delhi rode on a blazing 74 off 37 balls by two-down Nitish Rana to post a mammoth 206 for 4 and then bundled out Mumbai for a meagre 130, with left-arm pacer Pradeep Sangwan (3/20) leading from the front.

Delhi openers Shikhar Dhawan (23) and Hiten Dalal (24) started in an aggressive manner putting 38 in 4 overs. However, Dhawan could not convert his start, and Delhi were 56/2 at one stage.

However, one-down Himmat Singh (53 off 32 balls) and Rana took the Mumbai attack to cleaners and added 122 for the third wicket.

The left-handed Rana hammered seven fours and five sixes, while Singh struck three boundaries and four maximums as Mumbai bowlers were made to toil hard.

Mumbai never got going in the chase as they lost half their side for 52. Mumbai batters Yashasvi

Jaiswal (0), Aditya Tare (3), Suryakumar Yadav (7), Siddhesh Lad (4) and Sarfaraz Khan (15) fell cheaply.

All-rounder and India player Shivam Dube hit a whirlwind 42-ball 63, with three fours and five sixes, but that was too little and too late. India speedster Ishant Sharma, who returned to competitive cricket after sustaining a side strain during IPL, ended with figures of 2/16.

In Chennai, Bihar beat Arunachal Pradesh by 18 runs in their opening Plate group match.

Opting to bat, Bihar were bowled out for 122 in 20 overs with MD Rahmatullah (24) making the highest score. For Arunachal Pradesh, medium-pacer Manvan Patel took 4 for 20. In reply, Arunachal faltered after a bright start and were restricted to 104/9. — PTI

## BRIEF SCORES

■ Delhi 206/4 in 20 overs (Nitish Rana 74, Himmat Singh 53; Shams Mulani 2/43) bt Mumbai 130 in 18.1 overs (Shivam Dube 63; Pradeep Sangwan 3/20, Ishant Sharma 2/16).

■ Andhra Pradesh 107/6 in 20 overs (Ricky Bhui 39; Jayant Yadav 2/13, Yuzvendra Chahal 2/21) lost to Haryana 108/4 in 15.5 overs (C.K. Bishnoi 42 n.o, S. R. Chauhan 35; Naren Reddy 1/4).

## UNACCEPTABLE, UPSETTING: RAHANE ON RACIST ABUSE

**Sydney, Jan. 11:** India skipper Ajinkya Rahane on Monday said the racial abuse that his teammates endured from the crowd during the third Test against Australia here was unacceptable and found support from his Australian counterpart Tim Paine, who said he stands with the tourists on this issue.

Play was halted on Sunday for about 10 minutes after India pacer Mohammed Siraj complained of racial abuse from a section of the crowd, leading to expulsion of six spectators and an unreserved apology from Cricket Australia.

CA has also promised strongest possible action

against the offenders, which includes the possibility of them being banned for life from the SCG.

"We have lodged a complaint and I spoke to the match referee and umpires whatever I had to speak. Whatever happened is not acceptable at all and shouldn't happen anywhere in the world and we were upset about it," Rahane stated at the post-match press conference on Monday.

Paine, who had won hearts by joining the Indian team's huddle on Sunday, said he did so to "make sure that the visitors knew that he and his team were against any sort of abuse". — PTI