

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SATURDAY 23 | JANUARY 2021

## WEATHER



**Max:** 31°C  
**Min:** 17°C  
**Rainfall:** 0.4 mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvati:** Thai 10  
**Tithi:** Dashami  
**Star:** Krithigai  
**Rahukalam:**  
9 am to 10.30 am  
**Yamagandam:**  
1.30 pm to 3 pm  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.22 am  
**Zohar:** 12.26 pm  
**Asar:** 3.39 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.06 pm  
**Isha:** 7.20 pm

**SUNSET TODAY 6.06 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.36 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 1.34 PM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 2.34 AM**

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+14,246)	(+151)
1,06,40,464	1,53,218

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+574)  
**TN:** 8,33,585

12,307

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

9,84,06,755

### DEATHS

21,07,465

219

worldometers.info

**India, China maintaining close communication on next round of military talks: MEA**

**New Delhi:** India and China have agreed to hold the next round of senior commander-level meeting soon and both sides are maintaining close communication over diplomatic and military channels on it, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Friday. Indian and Chinese troops have been locked in a bitter border standoff in eastern Ladakh for over eight months as multiple rounds of diplomatic and military talks have not yet produced any major breakthrough.

**Over 1 million Covid jobs administered**

**New Delhi/Varanasi:** The number of beneficiaries receiving COVID-19 vaccine shots crossed the one million mark on Friday even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought to dispel fears among a section of people over the injections asserting that all sorts of things are said in politics but the inoculation drive was launched only after nod from scientists.

## COUNTER POINT



**Don't worry, our vaccine is not just 98% or 110% but 200% effective!**

## Thieves decamp with jewels worth ₹12 crore in Hosur

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KRISHNAGIRI, JAN. 22

In a daring robbery, seven men wearing helmets entered a private finance firm and decamped with jewels worth several crore rupees. On Friday, at around 10.30 am, a seven-member gang entered Muthoot Finance office doing lending business and having its branch at the busy Bagalur road in Hosur town.

First the gang immobilised the unarmed security guard

and later the others including employees and customers in the premises. They took the gold jewelry and cash kept in the safety locker. Muthoot employees working in the branch claim that the thieves decamped with the jewels of their customers weighing over 25 kilos worth ₹12 crores. The robbers also took away ₹96,000 kept in the locker.

According to witnesses, the thieves entered the premises wearing helmets and a few of them were armed with guns

while others carried lethal weapons. A few said the thieves spoke in Hindi while others claim the robber gang used Tamil, Telugu and Kannada languages to order the employees and others to be calm till they escape from the place with the booty.

The incident came to light only after other customers came to the premises without knowing about the robbery that had taken place a few minutes ago before their arrival.

### STATE | 3

**HC issues notice to Udhayanidhi**



### WORLD | 5

**We believe in WHO, says Kamala Harris**

### SPORT | 8

**Siraj find of Australia tour: Ravi Shastri**



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### RAHUL GANDHI INSISTS POLL BE HELD

## New elected president will helm Congress party in June

**ASHHAR KHAN | DC**  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 22

The Congress party will have an elected president by June 2021, with the party's working committee on Friday approving holding the internal election after Assembly polls in five states. The Congress Working Committee (CWC), after a three-and-a-half hour meeting, authorised incumbent party chief Sonia Gandhi to schedule the internal election after the conclusion of Assembly polls.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal said, "Congress Working Committee has decided that there will be an elected Congress president by June 2021." The party elections will be held in May, after Assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry. Several Congress leaders were hoping to go to the Assembly elections



● **The party elections will be held in May, after Assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry**

under new leadership, however that failed to happen.

Senior leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Mukul Wasnik and P. Chidambaram reportedly asked for immediate organisational polls. While leaders like Ashok Gehlot, Amarinder Singh, A.K. Antony, Tariq Anwar and Oommen Chandy said the Congress president's election should be held after polls in five states, including Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

In the last working committee meeting, the party high command faced an unprecedented attack and was under pressure to announce internal elections to the post of party chief.

Last month the Congress president had met with some of the leaders who had written a letter to her in August last year demanding sweeping changes in the party. These leaders reiterated their demand to have elections to the party's top post. The CWC also passed resolutions on three issues of national importance, including farmers' protest, Covid-19 vaccine and WhatsApp chat leaks of Republic TV chief Arnab Goswami.

In her opening remarks, party president Sonia Gandhi hit out at the government over a host of issues. She said there were "many pressing issues of public concern" that needed

to be debated and discussed in the upcoming session of Parliament."

"It is abundantly clear that the three laws were prepared in haste and Parliament was consciously denied an opportunity for examining in any meaningful details their implications and impacts. Our position has been very clear from the very beginning: we reject them categorically because they will destroy the foundations of food security that are based on the three pillars of MSP, public procurement and PDS," she said.

Reacting to the WhatsApp chat controversy, she said, "Just a few days back, Mr Antony had said that leaking official secrets of military operations is treason. Yet the silence from the government's side on what has been revealed has been deafening. Those who give certificates of patriotism and nationalism to others now stand totally exposed."

## TN alliances confident of drawing in more parties

**G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC**  
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

After a round of resounding campaign by their respective chief ministerial candidates, both the DMK and AIADMK are now expecting changes in their coalitions, if one were to go by the latest statements of leaders from the two parties.

DMK President MK Stalin cautioned his cadre on Thursday that more parties were expected to be roped in as allies and hence the party may have to give up some constituencies and not all of them would get seats.

Similarly, Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar, addressing a meeting on Friday, said that they were expecting some new entrants to their alliance, which triggered speculations that the ruling party was anticipating the Congress breaking away from the DMK-led front.

With reports making the rounds that Puducherry Chief Minister V. Naranayasaamy had gone to New Delhi and briefed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi about the humiliations heaped on his party by the DMK, the rumour was that the Congress high command was sanguine to the idea of breaking the alliance.

For Rahul Gandhi's three-day tour of the western region of the State, no DMK leader has been invited by the Congress, which is organising the meetings and reach-out programmes on its own, giving the indication that the party was keen on building its independent vote bank.

On the other side of the fence, too, the PMK had put an end to the negotiations with the alliance leader AIADMK and actor R. Sarath Kumar's party, the All India Samathuva Makkal Katchi, is said to be piqued over a low offer of seats and threatening to quit alone in the polls. ■ **P3**



### FRIENDS AND FOES

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There is rumour that the PMK has been talking with the DMK on the side as the AIADMK has put its foot down on not accepting the pre-condition of giving an assurance on the demand for 20% exclusive reservation for Vanniyaars.

## No R-Day student cultural programmes

**Chennai, Jan. 22:** The Tamil Nadu government on Friday said cultural programmes of school and college students would not be part of the Republic Day celebrations here this year in view of the coronavirus pandemic.

Appealing to people, students and the elderly to avoid visiting the Marina beachfront to witness the event on January 26, the government said this was aimed at preventing the gathering of a large number of people.

For the Governor to lead the Republic Day celebrations on Kamarajar Salai, in front of the Marina beach, is the regular practice.

An impressive parade by the armed forces and police is part of the spectacle of the annual event while freedom fighters, students and the general public witness it.

This year, "the cultural programmes of school and college students are to be avoided and district collectors have been

● **Appealing to people, students and the elderly to avoid visiting the Marina beachfront to witness the event on January 26, the government said this was aimed at preventing the gathering of a large number of people**

advised to visit the freedom fighters and honour them with shawls," an official release said.

Arrangements have been made to broadcast the event on radio and television channels and Governor Banwarilal Purohit would unfurl the national flag at 8 am on January 26, the government said.

The Raj Bhavan had said on Thursday that the customary "At Home" reception would not be hosted by Purohit this year in view of the coronavirus pandemic. —PTI

## Bengal minister resigns from Mamata cabinet

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC**  
KOLKATA, JAN. 22

A day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brief Kolkata visit, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee received yet another blow as one more rebel Trinamul Congress minister: Rajib Banerjee quit her government, fuelling speculations of his defection to the BJP. The two-time legislator from Domjur in Howrah, with a clean image, is the third TMC heavyweight minister in a row to leave Ms Banerjee's cabinet in less than two months. He has neither quit as an MLA nor deserted his party however.

On Friday Mr Banerjee visited the Trinamul Congress supremo's residence in Kalighat and Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar at Raj Bhavan respectively and submitted his resignation letter which stated: "I regret to inform you that I hereby tender my resignation from my Office as Cabinet Minister being in charge of Forest Department on today, ie. On 22nd of January, 2021. It has been a great honour and privilege to serve the people of West Bengal. I heartily convey my gratitude for getting this opportunity."

## FREAK FOG



Chennaiites woke up to a foggy morning on Friday as several areas in Chennai witnessed a morning blanketed in poor visibility. Several vehicle users faced difficulties. A scene at Padi.

— N. Sampath

## ‘Offensive’ social media posts against Bihar govt to invite action

**NAYEAR AZAD | DC**  
PATNA, JAN. 22

The Bihar government has decided to keep a close watch on social media and penalise all those who post offensive and derogatory comments against ministers, MLAs, MPs and officials.

The state's Economic Offences Unit (EOU), which is also responsible for cyber-crime, has informed all state government departments about the decision and asked them to report any individuals or organisations who have been making such posts on social media.

"It has come to light that some individuals and organisations have been

● **The development has triggered sharp reactions from the opposition parties in Bihar**

making derogatory and offensive posts on social media against the government, ministers, MLAs, MPs and officials. This is against the law and comes under cybercrime laws," inspector general of police, EOU, Nayyar Husnain Khan, wrote in a letter to principal secretaries and secretaries of state government departments.

"You are requested to report to the Economic Offences Unit regarding any such post so that matter is

investigated and action could be taken against such individuals and organizations," Mr. Khan added in his letter.

The development has triggered sharp reactions from Opposition parties in Bihar. On Friday, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav criticised the move and asked the state government to arrest him under the same order.

"It seems that the chief minister has started following Hitler. Protesters cannot protest in Bihar. People will land up in jail for writing against the government. The common man cannot meet Opposition leaders. We know Mr Nitish Kumar that you are tired but at least have some shame," Mr Yadav tweeted.

## Jaya memorial inauguration to be a gala event

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

The AIADMK leadership cautioned its district secretaries on some party functionaries possibly shifting loyalty to V K Sasikala when she comes back from jail and urged them to identify such persons in advance and make arrangements for their replacements in the party.

At the meeting of district secretaries held on Friday, which was also attended by Ministers, the party honchos showed a keen interest in making the inauguration of the memorial for late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa inside the MGR



The model of Jayalalithaa's memorial in Chennai.

Samadhi on the Marina sands a well-attended show.

The district secretaries were instructed to be present on January 27 in Chennai with other large numbers of party cadre. Party coordinator O Pannerseelam and co-coordi-

nator Edappadi K Palaniswami briefed the participants on the arrangements made for the inauguration.

Meanwhile, the State government also plans to declare open the memorial being set up at the erstwhile residence of Jayalalithaa in Poes Garden for the public from January 28. The talk is that the AIADMK would like to open both the memorials before Sasikala lands on the political scene. Since the present leadership of the party would like to distance itself from Sasikala at least till the elections were over, they might not like her presence at the events.



## SHORT TAKES

## Salem city police station is best in Tamil Nadu

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC  
SALEM JAN. 22

The city police station here has been selected as the 'best police station' in the state. Selection for the best police station was earlier done at the national level, but now, the selection is made by individual states in accordance with guidelines. Accordingly, for the first time since last year, the Tamil Nadu police led by DGP Tripathi conducted inspections for the best police station in the state. The 'Salem City Police Station' has been selected as the best police station in Tamil Nadu for 2019.

The inspection was held from different parameters. The Salem metropolitan police secured the first position with 5,558 points. Tiruvannamalai metropolitan police station came second and the Chennai Kotturpuram East regional police station came third with 1,242.35 points.

## South Indian biz delegation to tour Africa

**Chennai, Jan. 22:** A large delegation of businessmen from South India is set to visit the Comesa region comprising Ethiopia, Djibouti, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia this year to sign MoUs in health, skill development and agriculture sectors.

The Ethiopian Ambassador Tizita Mulugeta Yimam, who was in Chennai, said that there has been huge interest for setting up businesses in the African region. The India Africa Trade Council, which was inaugurated formally in Chennai on Thursday, will be actively facilitating business ties and trade opportunities available in African countries. A SEZ is also planned in Kolar, Karnataka. The Trade Council is also in talks with companies in Chennai to explore the creation of more business ties.

## Lankan drug kingpin, associate arrested

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

A Sri Lankan drug kingpin and his associate residing in Karapakkam in Chennai were arrested by the NCB on Friday.

The accused, MMM Nawas and Mohamed Afnas, were arrested as a follow-up action linked to the seizure of 95.37 kilograms of heroin and 18.32 kilograms of methamphetamine, along with arms from a Sri Lankan fishing boat on the last number near Tuticorin.

Six Sri Lankan nationals on board were arrested and were remanded to judicial custody, last year. "In the follow-up action by NCB Chennai zonal unit sleuths intercepted the kingpin and his associates. Both Sri Lankan nationals were residing in Chennai along with their families by concealing their nationality. The two Sri Lankan nationals were operating from Chennai and they were the mastermind in organizing and transporting the contraband that was seized from the fishing boat Shenaya Duwa. They were staying without a valid passport in India. MMM Nawas for the last 10 years and Mohammed Afnas for the last 3 years.

MMM Nawas has a red corner notice issued against him by Sri Lankan authorities.

The duo was booked under the NDPS Act 1985.

## SENGANTHAL POONGA OPENED TO PUBLIC



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Friday opened the Senganthal poonga, the second horticulture park in the city, on Avvai Shanmugam Salai, through video conferencing. The department of horticulture constructed the 6.83-acre park to improve the green cover in Chennai. The ₹5 crore project includes the existing 250 trees and the department will plant 1,300 more native trees such as neem, mango, punnai, 30,000 shrubs and 1,600 palm trees. "The park will reduce the pollution level in this part of the city which is filled with carbon monoxide released from vehicles," said horticulture director Dr Subbayan. The park has pathway for walkers, rainwater harvesting ponds, tree court area, child play area and ponds surrounded by pergola. "We will also have an amphitheatre that can accommodate 150 to 200 people," added the official. A space to encourage people play traditional games is the highlight of the park. An art gallery and a rock garden with xerophyte plants are additional features.

— N. Sampath



## Chennai Central Square project yet to pick up pace

T. SUDHEESH | DC  
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

Though two years have elapsed since the work of the 14-m wide underground subway work, under the Poonamallee High Road that links to the Central railway station, began, the project continues to be in limbo, causing grave traffic concerns to the city commuters, who have appealed to the authorities to expedite the work.

The project was announced in 2018 with an 8-month deadline under the ₹400-crore 'Chennai Central Square' project to develop people-friendly pedestrian subways, two bus terminus, three-level underground parking and walkways in the city. But, the project has reached nowhere.

Ajay Francis Loyola, a social activist, who moved the high court recently against the delay, said the project was scheduled to be completed by October 2018. The contractors began to execute the work in the cut and cover method by dredging the Poonamallee High Road. As a temporary mechanism, the Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) laid iron beams across the dredged area and decking plates were placed to serve the vehicular movement. These decking plates, which are permanent in nature now, have become the reason for many accidents during the past two years. On October 26 last year a container truck from the Chennai port passed through these decking plates and the

entire portion caved in.

The delay of the project has now turned the entire traffic flow to become a bottle-neck. The traffic congestion near the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, especially during the pandemic, delays passing of the emergency vehicles. So the authorities should take immediate steps to complete this subway project to ensure safety of commuters. They should also publish a detailed status report with regard to Chennai Central Square' project, he said.

Meanwhile, the CMRL, which is implementing the project, said almost 80 per cent of work has been completed. "As part of the construction of subways, a box-pushing method was adopted to maintain traf-

fic flow in the roads. However, during the box-pushing, we encountered infringement and the same had to be demolished. Considering that the soil strata are being disturbed during box-pushing, restrictions have been made for the traffic over the decking. To minimise road closure periods and associated traffic description, decking was installed on road and traffic restored while the demolition and construction works were proceeding. The decking has been in place for the past nine months. However, the works have proceeded without any incident duly taking all the adequate precautions," said V.K. Singh, chief general manager (underground construction), CMRL.

## 20 arrested for gambling in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

Chennai police on Thursday night arrested 20 persons for indulging in gambling at a private mandapam in Mogappair West. The police have also seized ₹25,530 in cash and 12 card decks from them.

The operation was carried out by a police team headed by Nalambar police inspector based on a tip-off. The team raided a private mandapam located on Bajana Kovil street in Mogappair west at around 8:30 pm on Thursday and arrested, P. Selvam (30) of Saligramam, K. Kannappan (51) of Nesapakkam, C. Anbazhagan (50) of St. Thomas Mount, N. Ramesh (50) of Thiruverkadu and 16 others who were gambling with cash.

Special teams have been formed in the city to thwart illegal gambling, both online and offline, which has been on the rise recently.

## 23-year-old woman drowns in Mahabs sea

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

A joy trip with the family to Mahabalipuram turned fatal for a 23-year-old girl, as she drowned in the sea on Friday evening.

The deceased has been identified as Umamaheshwari, daughter of Eshwaran and a native of Pollachi in Coimbatore.

Eshwaran and his family had visited Melmaruvathur temple on

## Dense fog blankets Chennai, 70 flight services disrupted

P.A JEBARAJ & SINDHIYA  
SAMUEL | DC  
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

Chennaiites woke up to a thick blanket of fog enveloping the city on Friday morning, leading to low visibility in several parts of the city and its suburbs, particularly in Meenambakkam.

The dense fog also threw several flights schedule out of gear at the Chennai Airport on Friday morning. According to airport sources, seventy arrival and departure flights were disrupted due to the unusual fog formation in the city.

Officials of the Airports Authority of India said from 6 am the visibility became very poor at the runway at the Chennai airport and it improved only after 9:30 am.

As a result, 11 flights arriving at the Chennai airport from Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Delhi, Andaman, Coimbatore, Dubai could not make the landing at the airport and were diverted to Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Coimbatore airports.

Similarly, 12 arrival flights from Madurai, Delhi, Kolkata, Andaman, Mumbai, Coimbatore, Pune, Bengaluru, Kochi, Singapore were delayed for more than two hours. They landed at the airport after the visibility improved.

Also, at least 47 flights scheduled to depart from Chennai Airport to Delhi, Mumbai, Tuticorin, Madurai, Siliguri, Shiridi, Coimbatore, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kochi, Guwahati, Ahmedabad were delayed. After 9:30 a.m., the arrival and landing resumed at the airport gradually, sources said.



A man and his son walking near Chitlapakkam lake on a foggy Friday morning.

— E.K.Sanjay

## Clear sky, calm winds cause fog

According to the meteorological department, a combination of factors led to such dense fog. Clear skies and calm winds that prevailed on Thursday night led to the formation of dense fog. Chennai will experience partly cloudy sky and mist will occur in some areas during early morning hours till the weekend. Blogger Pradeep John wrote on his Twitter post that the air quality is good in Chennai. He wrote the winds in Chennai nearly came to standstill between 3 am and 10 am. The relative humidity was close to 100 per cent around 5:30 am over Meenambakkam and it was 97 per cent around 9 am on Friday. This also led to an increase in minimum temperature to 24 degree Celsius in both the weather stations at Nungambakkam and Meenambakkam.

## TRAIN SERVICES HIT

Since dense fog situation did not improve even after 8 am, train services were affected in the city. Train services from Tambaram to Chennai Central and Tambaram to Chengalpet

were disturbed. Other than this, the city also witnessed a slow movement of traffic due to the fog. Motorists used headlights till 9 am on Friday for proper visibility.

## SHRC directs govt to pay ₹5 lakh to man whose wife died during delivery

A. ARUL PALANI | DC  
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has directed the state government to pay ₹5 lakh as compensation to a man whose wife died during delivery two years ago in Tirunelveli. The SHRC also directed the government to initiate disciplinary action against two doctors who are responsible for the death of the woman and her baby.

S. Akila, of Kattalai Puthu street, Nambithoppu village, Thirukurungudi, Tirunelveli district was admitted in Thirukurungudi Primary Health Centre for delivery on June 7, 2019. She was examined by the staff nurse. There was no doctor at the centre. Akila delivered a male child at 6.45 pm, with malposition and had excess bleeding. On examination by

■ On examination by the doctor and nurses, there was no movement and around 8.15 pm the woman was declared dead by the medical officer. The body was sent for post-mortem and her relatives staged protest in front of

the doctor and nurses, there was no movement and around 8.15 pm the woman was declared dead by the medical officer. The body was sent for post-mortem and her relatives staged protest in front of the hospital alleging that Akila died due to the negligence of the

the hospital alleging that Akila died due to the negligence of the doctors and nurses of the hospital. Based on a newspaper report, the SHRC initiated suo motu proceedings and sought a report from the department.

SHRC member-judge D Jayachandran said the inquiry report by the Director of Public Health

and Preventive Medicine, Chennai, submitted to the commission, stated that there was a failure to recognise the obstructed labour in time by S. Udayasoorian, ANM, Primary Health Centre, Thirukurungudi.

The baby was delivered, born dead. After delivery, the patient had excessive bleeding. Only then the information was given to Dr. Kalaiarasi, who was not available during the time of delivery. It was also the duty of Dr. Jenifer, to be available on call between 4 pm and 9 am in the labour ward. But she failed to attend the same.

Therefore, the medical negligence of Dr. Kalaiarasi and Dr. Jenifer are the main cause for the death of Akila and the baby. The SHRC directed the government to pay a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to Suresh, husband of Akila.



## OTHER STORY

## Two nabbed for injuring tusker

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, JAN. 22

The Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) buffer zone administration nabbed the culprits who recently caused burn injuries on a 50-year-old wild tusker, which eventually died last Tuesday. It may be recalled that the tusker was seen roaming in Bokkapuram jungles with injuries on its back about a month ago. Though the MTR veterinary team treated it with the help of kumkiss and let it off into the jungles, the jumbo was again seen moving with burn injuries on its left ear last week. Efforts by MTR officials to save the tusker's life went in vain as the animal died on arrival at the elephant camp in MTR Theppakadu area, last Tuesday. Investigators came across a video of some persons throwing a fireball at the animal. Following this, they zeroed in on three persons who are in charge of a private tourist resort in Mavanallah hamlet in the MTR buffer zone limits. Deputy director, MTR (buffer zone), LCS Srikanth, said that based on the video proof, the MTR team arrested two persons identified as Prasath and Raymond Dean, hailing from Mavanallah. Ricky Rayan, another accused in the case, is absconding. The trio had lighted a cloth into a fireball to chase the wild tusker.

## HC issues notice to Udhayanidhi

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JAN. 22

The Madras high court has ordered notice to Udhayanidhi Stalin, the youth wing secretary of DMK political party, and Kalaingar TV Private Limited on a defamation suit filed by Assembly Deputy Speaker Pollachi V.Jayaraman, seeking Rs 1 crore as damages for having allegedly linking him in the Pollachi serial sexual assault incidents.

Justice R.Pongiappan, before whom the suit filed by Pollachi V.Jayaraman came up for hearing ordered notice and posted to January 29, further hearing of the case.

In his suit, Pollachi

Jayaraman also sought to restrain Udhayanidhi and Kalaingar TV from making and publishing derogatory and defamatory imputations against him either directly or by innuendos in any manner whatsoever.

Extracting the contents of the statements made and published, Pollachi Jayaraman in his suit submitted that the statements in the speech made at a public meeting at Manachenallur, Tiruchirappalli on January 7, 2021, by Udhayanidhi Stalin and disseminated by Kalaingar TV in their YouTube channel Kalaingar TV News were clearly aimed at gaining political mileage. The said statements cannot be true, the plaintiff

has no connection whatsoever with the alleged incidents at Pollachi.

He said the allegations made by Udhayanidhi Stalin by connecting the plaintiff to the unfortunate incidents of sexual harassment at Pollachi, was baseless and misleading. In fact, the plaintiff was one of the first persons to address the issue and took earnest efforts to bring this issue to the knowledge of the law enforcement authorities, for their action. However, Udhayanidhi Stalin was making imputations and allegations by connecting the plaintiff to the above, which was wholly baseless and purely out of malice, he added.

## DMK, TNCC flay Centre's stand on quota

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JAN. 22

The DMK and TNCC protested against the Union Government telling the Madras high court that reservation for school students in medical admission would affect the quality of education and demanded the withdrawal of the stand.

A set of Union Ministries like Home, Family Welfare and Labour have filed their memoranda in the court, which is hearing a petition by the mother of a student against the Puducherry government providing for 10 per cent reservation for students of government schools in medical admissions.

The Puducherry government's move was on the lines of the law implemented by the Tamil Nadu government providing for 7.5 per cent reservation for government schools. Under the law, brought in by the AIADMK government, 405 government school students got admission in medical colleges.

The Centre's present stand could be a threat to the law passed by the Tamil Nadu government, too, said DMK president M. K. Stalin, in a statement, alerting Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to watch out on that.

## Boy succumbs to dengue

DC CORRESPONDENT MADURAI, JAN. 22

A seven-year-old boy in Madurai died of dengue, while his elder brother diagnosed positive for dengue is under treatment.

Thirumalesh, son of Sathyapriya of S Alangulam, Madurai, complained of fever for the last one week was found to dengue positive and treated at

Rajaji government hospital in Madurai. However as the fever did not subside, Thirumalesh was shifted to a private hospital three days ago, where he succumbed to the fever.

Sathyapriya's elder son, Mrithin Jain (9) too diagnosed for dengue is under treatment.

Dengue cases in Madurai are feared to have increased since the onset

of the monsoon in last September, when three cases of dengue were said to be reported in the district. It however went up in the following month to 9 and according to district health department sources, Madurai district reported a total of 45 cases of dengue till January 20. Of the total number of reported cases 25 cases were found in the rural areas of Madurai district.

## Newly-wed doctor drowns in Cauvery

DC CORRESPONDENT SRIRANGAM, JAN. 22

A 34-year-old newly-wed government doctor drowned in the river Cauvery at Amma mandapam bathing ghat at Srirangam-Trichy on Friday. Police said the deceased, Dr. G. Priyadarshan, was working as a doctor at the government hospital in Pullambadi and got married only three months ago.

The doctor who came to Amma man-

● Police said the deceased, Dr. G. Priyadarshan, was working as a doctor at the government hospital in Pullambadi.

dapam for performing the rites of his wife's grandmother accidentally drowned in the river, while taking bath. The fire and rescue department personnel fished out the body and sent the same for post-mortem. The Srirangam police are probing.

## Floral tributes paid in Tiruchy to Dr Udhyaamoorthy

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, JAN. 22

Members of the Tiruchy district Makkal Sakthi Movement led by its state adviser K.C. Neelamegam paid floral tributes to the portrait of the movement's founder Dr. M.S. Udhyaamoorthy to commemorate his 8th death anniversary at Ponmalai in Tiruchy on Thursday.

Mr. Neelamegam recalled the yeoman service rendered by Dr. Udhyaamoorthy and called upon the present generation to follow his footprints. He also distributed the books authored by Dr. Udhyaamoorthy to the students who attended the ceremony.

## Nadda to finalise seat-sharing with allies

From P1

Even the DMDK, led by actor Vijaykandh, is said to be dissatisfied with the seats offered. But all those parties in the AIADMK alliance have been told to have talks with the BJP, whose national president JP Nadda is coming down to Madurai on January 30.

Nadda is expected to finalise the seat-

sharing with the allies as the AIADMK is said to have handed over a certain number of seats, say 70, to the BJP for distribution. So if any party would break away in anger from that coalition, it would be known only after that.

Meanwhile there is rumour that the PMK has been talking with the DMK on sides as the AIADMK has put

its foot down on not accepting the pre-condition of giving an assurance on the demand for the 20 per cent exclusive reservation for Vanniyaars.

Actor Kamal Haasan, discharged from hospital on Friday after a surgery, is also expected to resume his campaign soon and also look out for parties that might align with him to form an

alternative front.

But the indication is that both the DMK and AIADMK feel that their alliances are too cluttered and too many allies are hampering them from contesting in the desired number of seats that would give them a simple majority to form a government of their own.

From the past speeches of various

leaders of DMK and AIADMK, both the parties are confident of winning the Assembly elections in April or May even if they were to go it alone. Both parties are of the view that they have built adequate support base in the state.

The AIADMK, which is regularly advertising through newspapers their government's achiev-

ements in the past four years, believes that some of its schemes and innovative ideas like the 7.5 per cent reservation for government school students in medical college admissions would get them re-elected.

Even video films and other print advertisements are being released projecting Deputy Chief Minister O Pannee-

rselvam as the hero of the government and the champion of the common people. One advertisement even hails him as the protector of jallikattu.

On the other side, the DMK, enthused by the response for Stalin's village council meetings and the crowds that came to listen to Youth Wing secretary Udayanidhi Stalin and Women's Wing secretary Kan-

imozhi Karunanidhi, hoped that the people were with them.

It is this attitude of the Dravidian majors that has made the allies feel left out. So it is doubtful if small parties leaving an alliance due to some peeve or the other would just move to the rival camp. For, as of now both the DMK and AIADMK are only trying to short-change the allies.



Health minister C. Vijayabaskar, a medical doctor by training, is administered the Covaxin vaccine at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital on Friday.

## COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



**Aries:** You may be excited by new ideas, but take the time to carefully go over the essential details. Planning a romantic evening will work wonders for your relationship.



**Taurus:** You will be successful in your endeavours, provided you focus on intricate details. Minor obstacles could cause some tense moments, but it will sort out soon.



**Gemini:** You will find it easy to get things done today. You may be determined to give yourself top priority. You are likely to realise the healing value of a good massage.



**Cancer:** Some of you might find the going a little tough in a friends circle. A little disturbing professional life might disappoint you. Court matters might go in your favour.



**Leo:** Take care of your parents. Utilise the day in full. Go through important documents carefully before signing. Sudden financial gains are foreseen.



**Virgo:** With your sheer hard work and self-conviction, there is so much you can pull off. You can convert new plans into actions. Delays won't affect your schedule if you are flexible.

## You share your b'day with

Mariska Hargitay, American actress. She is best known for her roles in Lake Placid, The Perfect Weapon, Chicago P.D., Law and Order: Special Victims Unit and ER amongst others.



**Libra:** Some of you may be contemplating starting a new romantic relationship. Trust your instinct if you feel a situation is different than it appears. Tread cautiously.



**Scorpio:** Including your partner in decision making will ensure their support. You are likely to be in the limelight when socialising. It is likely to be a hectic day.



**Sagittarius:** You could feel a sense of stagnation and will be restless for a result. A self improvement project may be on the anvil for some of you.



**Capricorn:** Be patient if there are delays with some of your pet projects; things will soon be back on track. Be cautious about financial decisions, especially if you are contemplating making further investments.

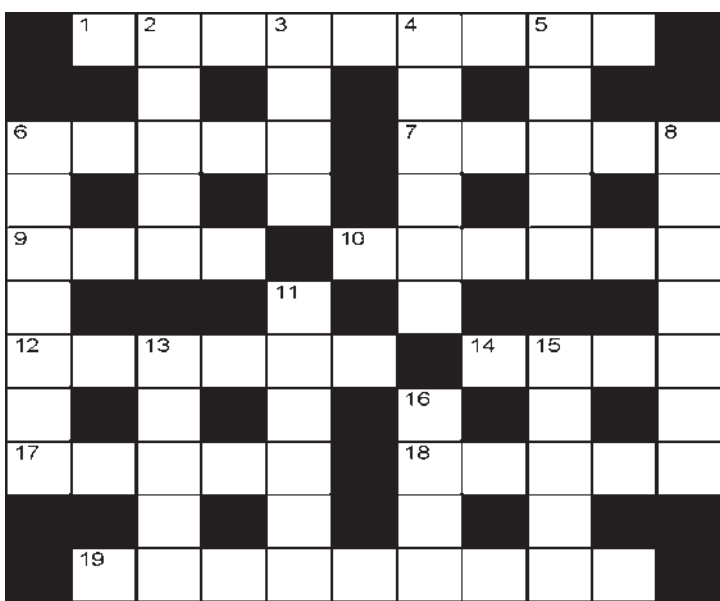


**Aquarius:** You may have a hectic day as career issues take up much of your time. Singles will have opportunities to meet members of the opposite gender but should be cautious in their approach.



**Pisces:** Your perspectives and worldview are undergoing subtle changes and this might make you contemplative as you think about your plans for the future. Work pressures could also make you more agitated.

## QUICK CROSSWORD



Across  
1. Manacles (9)  
6. Up in the air (5)  
7. Searches (5)  
9. Fashion, style (4)  
10. Picturesque (6)  
12. Small wave (6)  
14. Impulse (4)  
17. Wilt (5)  
18. Saltpetre (5)  
19. Senoritas (anag) (9)

down  
2. Shun (5)  
3. Import tax (4)  
4. Open with key (6)  
5. Scowl (5)  
6. Looked up to (7)  
8. Hide (7)  
11. Tick by (6)  
13. Stage accessories (5)  
15. Proportion (5)  
16. Tangle (4)

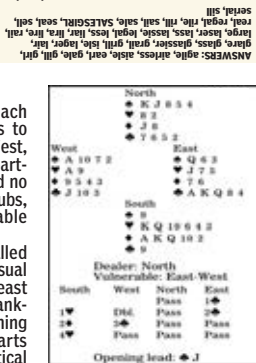
YESTERDAY'S ANSWER  
Across: 1. Relocate, 7. Pound, 8. Satin, 9. Lessen, 10. True, 12. Cuff, 14. Formal, 17. Nurse, 18. Stoic, 19. Goldmine.  
Down: 1. Routs, 2. Ledger, 3. Case, 4. Tutor, 5. Applicant, 6. Interlace, 11. Bonsai, 13. Forgo, 15. Moose, 16. Lead.

## Word Mine

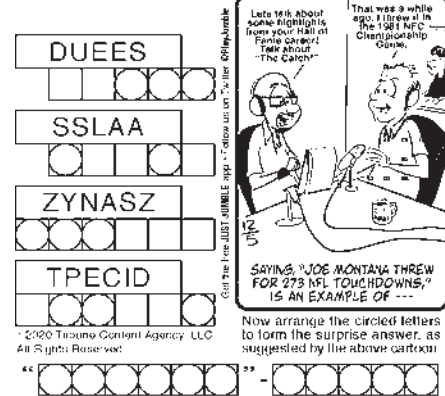
L  
S  
I  
G  
E  
R  
S  
A  
L

TODAY'S RATINGS: 27 AVERAGE; 29 GOOD; 32 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.



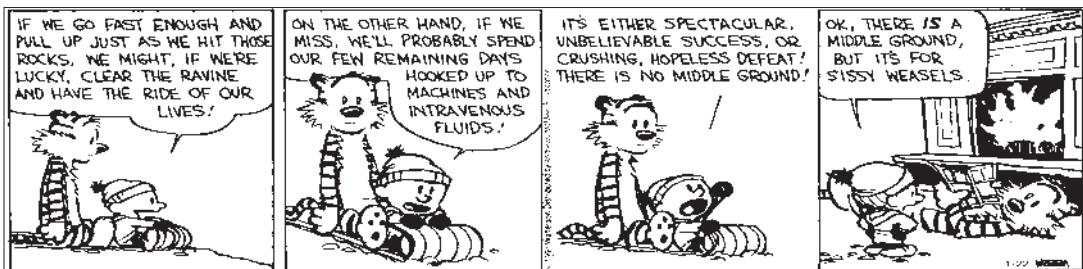
## jumble



three-diamond advance. West would probably have doubled two notrump, but then passed over my four-heart rebid, and East would have had nowhere to go. Against four hearts, West led the club jack. East overtook with his queen and continued with the club ace. South ruffed and played the heart king. Now West defended poorly, winning with the ace and returning his remaining trump. This pickled East's jack, and declarer claimed soon thereafter. West should not have been worried about diamond ruffs on the board. True, declarer would probably have made his contract anyway, but a third club from West was indicated. Even better would have been a smooth duck of the heart ace.

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CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli &amp; craig boldman



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



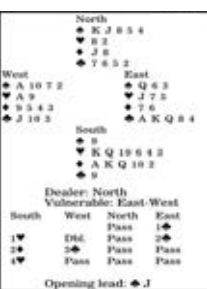
TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



WHEN VERY STRONG, GO SLOWLY OR QUICKLY?

“Pooh’s Little Instruction Book,” which was inspired by A.A. Milne, there is this observation: “When late morning rolls around and you’re feeling a bit out of sorts, don’t worry; you’re probably just a little 11 o’clockish.” I would have overcalled two no-trump, the Unusual No-Trump, showing at least 5-5 in the two lowest-ranking unbid suits, and planning on rebidding four hearts over partner’s hypothetical

you have done? South’s actual approach permitted his opponents to describe their hands. West, with two aces facing a partner who had opened, had no inclination to bid five clubs, especially at unfavorable vulnerability. I would have overcalled two no-trump, the Unusual No-Trump, showing at least 5-5 in the two lowest-ranking unbid suits, and planning on rebidding four hearts over partner’s hypothetical



three-diamond advance. West would probably have doubled two notrump, but then passed over my four-heart rebid, and East would have had nowhere to go. Against four hearts, West led the club jack. East overtook with his queen and continued with the club ace. South ruffed and played the heart king. Now West defended poorly, winning with the ace and returning his remaining trump. This pickled East's jack, and

declarer claimed soon thereafter. West should not have been worried about diamond ruffs on the board. True, declarer would probably have made his contract anyway, but a third club from West was indicated. Even better would have been a smooth duck of the heart ace.



## SHORT TAKES

6 GUEST WORKERS  
DIE AFTER FALLING  
INTO A PITMANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, JAN. 22

In what has raised serious questions over the unchecked illegal coal mining in Meghalaya, at least six guest workers from Assam died after they fell into a 150-foot pit in the forest of Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills on Friday.

The tragic incident took place in the same district where 15 men had disappeared inside an illegal rat-hole mine after it collapsed in December 2018. Locals alleged the guest workers whose bodies were found inside the pit this morning were digging an illegal coal mine.

However, state government sources claimed that they have found no evidence of an active coal mine. Deputy commissioner of East Jaintia Hills E. Kharmalki told reporters, "No coal stock has been found at the accident site, so we cannot ascertain that they were trying to open up an abandoned coal mine, but there was some earth-cutting work happening there."

Police, however, said that bodies of the six people have been recovered from the abandoned mine. "The Police have registered a case in this regard," Meghalaya DGP R. Chandranathan told reporters.

Among those killed four have been identified as Moqbul Hussain (45), Ali Hussain (40), Dilwar Hussain (35) and Jalal Uddin (28).

Such accidents in coal mines are not new to Meghalaya. One of the biggest tragedies in the state in recent times occurred on December 13, 2018 when 15 miners were trapped inside an illegal coal mine in East Jaintia Hills. The miners were trapped as rainwater from adjoining areas gushed into the open mines. Despite several days of rescue operations, they could not be saved.

The rescue team included personnel from the Indian Navy and the Army, besides NDRF and local police. The search and rescue operation was abandoned after 60 days of searching for the 15 miners trapped in a 370 feet-deep illegal coal mine.

NCB ARRESTS  
DAWOOD AIDE  
IN DRUGS CASESHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, JAN. 22

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Friday arrested another gang member of Chin-ku Pathan, a close aide of fugitive underworld don Dawood Ibrahim, in connection to a drug-related case in Mumbai. This is the fourth arrest in this case and he has been arrested from Dongri during a raid.

Pathan was the first arrest in Navi Mumbai on Wednesday and since then the NCB is on a crackdown of this gang.

The fourth arrested accused, who is also Pathan's cousin, is said to be one of the major suppliers of mephedrone also known as 'MCat' and 'Meow Meow' in Mumbai. According to police, NCB's Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede raided the accused drug suppliers' hide-out in Dongri locality of South Mumbai and took him in custody after the seizure of mephedrone from his residence.

COMPLAINT  
AGAINST MUNDE  
WITHDRAWNSONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC  
MUMBAI, JAN. 22

A day after a woman withdrew her complaint of sexual exploitation against Maharashtra social justice minister Dhananjay Munde, NCP chief Sharad Pawar said their decision stands vindicated as the party had said there needed to be an investigation before taking any action against the minister. BJP, which was demanding Munde's scalp, has now sought action against the complainant for making false allegations.

Ten days ago, the woman had alleged that Munde had sexually harassed her in 2006 on the pretext of marriage. Following the allegations, the BJP had demanded the resignation of Munde.

Dalmiya's daughter expelled  
from TMC for anti-party moves

Expulsion comes after Rajib Banerjee resigned from the Mamata Banerjee cabinet

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, JAN. 22

A day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brief Kolkata visit, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee received yet another blow as one more rebel Trinamul Congress minister Rajib Banerjee quit her government, fuelling speculations of his defection to the BJP.

Within hours of Rajib Banerjee's move, the TMC expelled his loyalist and the daughter of former ICC chief Jagmohan Dalmiya Baishali Dalmiya from the party, accusing her of "anti-party activities" after she supported him and slammed the leadership. Incidentally Rajib Banerjee and Dalmiya are MLAs from Howrah district.

Banerjee is a two-time legislator from Domjur with a clean image. He has become the third TMC heavyweight minister in a row to leave Mamata Banerjee's cabinet in less than two months after he visited the Trinamul Congress supremo's residence in Kalighat and Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar at Raj Bhawan respectively on Friday and submitted his resignation letter which stated "I



TMC MLA Rajib Banerjee talks to the media after resigning as West Bengal forest minister, outside Raj Bhawan in Kolkata on Friday. — PTI

regret to inform you that I hereby tender my resignation from my Office as Cabinet Minister being in charge of Forest Department on today, ie. On 22nd of January, 2021. It has been a great honour and privilege to serve the people of West Bengal. I heartily convey my gratitude for getting

this opportunity."

Rajib Banerjee has neither quit as an MLA nor deserted his party however. After meeting the Governor, he said in tears, "I never imagined I have to take such a tough decision. If I have hurt anyone, I apologise with folded hands. Please do not mis-

understand me. I was hurt within and staying like that for a long time. That is why I had to take this decision with a lot of pain and pent up anger."

Lashing out at the CM, Rajib Banerjee added, "I had almost taken this decision two and half years ago when I was removed as

the state irrigation minister. Though portfolio allocation is the CM's prerogative, I had expected minimum courtesy from her as a cabinet colleague. But I did not get that even. I got to know about my removal as the irrigation minister from the breaking news on TV when I was sitting with

party workers at an office in North Bengal. I had wished to resign then but was stopped by the CM."

Hit by his outburst, the CM, who was already furious at him for submitting his resignation letter to the Governor also, recommended Dhankhar to remove the state forest minister from the cabinet rather than accepting his resignation.

Rajib Banerjee was later excluded from the cabinet by Dhankhar while the CM took over his portfolio.

The TMC mocked Rajib Banerjee for his step. But Dalmiya, who is an MLA of Bally, however, stood by him like she did when Laxmi Ratan Shukla, another MLA in Howrah, resigned as a minister and quit the party recently.

She said, "Rajib Banerjee's resignation will affect the party and public. Anyone who loves a party have self respect. They can not accept insult. We are insulted in Howrah always. There are some who are silent killers and backstab us and common people. If leaves, like Rajib Banerjee, start coming off a tree one after another, it is harmful for the tree." Stung by her allegations, the TMC disciplinary committee expelled her at a meeting.

CENTRE NOT IN  
FAVOUR OF EXTRA  
CHANCE TO UPSC  
ASPIRANTS

New Delhi, Jan. 22: The Centre on Friday told the Supreme Court that it was not in favour of granting one extra opportunity to those civil services aspirants who could not appear in their last attempt in the exams conducted by the UPSC last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar took note of the submissions of Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju, appearing on behalf of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

"We are not ready to give one more chance. Give me the time to file an affidavit... last night I received instruction that we are not agreeable," Raju told the bench, which also comprised justices B.R. Gawai and Krishna Murai.

The bench has now posted the plea of a civil services aspirant Rachna Singh for hearing on January 25 and asked the Centre to file an affidavit during the period and serve it to the parties.

Earlier, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta had told the bench that the government was considering the issue of granting one more opportunity to those civil services aspirants who could not appear in their last attempt to crack the UPSC exam.

The top court, on September 30 last year, had refused to postpone the UPSC civil services preliminary exam, which was held on October 4, because of pandemic and floods in several parts of the country.

However, it had directed the central government and the Union Public Service Commission to consider granting an extra chance to candidates who otherwise have their last attempt in 2020, with corresponding extension of the upper age-limit.

The bench was then told that a formal decision can be taken by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) only.

— PTI

● THE BENCH has now posted the plea of a civil services aspirant Rachna Singh for hearing on January 25 and asked the Centre to file an affidavit during the period and serve it to the parties.

## Govt-farmers talks hit roadblock

FROM PG 1

He adding that their agitation will continue peacefully. Tomar told kisan unions that the government is ready for another meeting if farmers want to discuss the proposal on suspending agriculture laws for a while. He told the unions that "the government was grateful for their cooperation."

The minister reiterated that there was nothing wrong in the three laws. "We gave the best proposal but you could not arrive at any decision. If you arrive at any conclusion please let us know, we will discuss again," he said.

After the meeting, Tomar said: "We should remain hopeful. Let's wait till tomorrow to hear farmer unions' final decision." Asked whether he expects the farmers to agree to the government offer, he said, "I don't want to speculate, but we are hopeful that farmer unions will consider positively our proposal."

The minister also said some external forces were definitely trying to ensure that the agitation continues and that was obviously against the interests of farmers. "No resolution is possible when the sanctity of an agitation is lost," he added.

Bhartiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait said that the farmers have decided to once again deliberate upon the government's proposal to postpone the implementation of the new farm laws. However, he said, the farmers are firm on their demand of complete repeal of the new laws. "If the stalemate continues, the protest will be scaled up, starting with the tractor rally on Republic Day," he added.

Farmer leader Shiv Kumar Kakka, who was



Farmers take out a rally as part of the preparations for their planned tractor parade in the national capital on the Republic day, during a protest against the new farm laws, in Amritsar on Friday. — PTI

PUNJAB GOVT TO GIVE JOB TO KIN OF FARMERS  
WHO DIED DURING STIR AGAINST FARM LAWS

Chandigarh, Jan. 22: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Friday announced job for a member of the family of each farmer from the state who died during the agitation against the Centre's new farm laws. Singh said he has received a report that 76 farmers from the state have died so far.

"All Punjabis are concerned about our farmers

sitting on the Delhi borders. They are there to persuade the Centre to repeal that laws that were implemented without taking us into confidence," he said.

"Lots of old people are sitting there at the (Delhi) borders not for themselves but for the future of their children and grandchildren," said Amarinder Singh, adding

the first to leave the talks, said there was no headway in the discussions and the government had asked the unions to once again deliberate upon its proposal.

After the meeting, Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ugrahan) leader Joginder Singh Ugrahan said the discussions have broken

down as the unions have outrightly rejected the government's proposal.

Farmers' leaders told the Centre that they are firm on their stated stance and have already decided that they would not settle for anything less than the repeal of the three laws.

Some leaders had appre-

hensions that their agitation would lose momentum once the farmers leave Delhi borders — where protests have been going on for about two months.

Harpal Singh, president, Bhartiya Kisan Union (Asli Arajnaatik), said "Even if we accept the

government's offer, our fellow brothers sitting at Delhi borders will not accept anything other than a repeal of the laws. They will not spare us. What achievement will we show to them?... We will die here but we will not return without getting the laws repealed."

Farmer leader Balbir Singh Rajewal said the unions will now concentrate on the Republic Day tractor march. "It will be a unique event. We have told the government and the Delhi police that we will march peacefully on the Outer Ring Road on January 26. If there is violence, the government will be responsible," he added.

During the meeting, the unions also alleged that Delhi Police was trying to harass their leaders.

One of the union leaders alleged that the rear windshield of his car was smashed by the police.

MALLYA APPLIED  
FOR 'ANOTHER  
ROUTE' TO STAY  
IN UK

London, Jan. 21: Vijay Mallya has applied to Home Secretary Priti Patel for "another route" to be able to stay in the UK, the liquor tycoon's barrister representing him in bankruptcy proceedings in the High Court of London confirmed during a remote hearing on Friday.

The 65-year-old businessman, whose legal challenge to the Indian government's extradition request was turned down at the Supreme Court level in the UK last year, remains in Britain on bail until Patel signs off on the order for him to be extradited to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering related to the now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines. The UK Home Office has so far only confirmed on background that a confidential legal process remains ongoing before the extradition order can be executed.

This had raised widespread speculation that Mallya had sought asylum in the UK, details of which are neither confirmed nor denied by the Home Office in Britain while an application is pending.

"The extradition was upheld but he [Mallya] is still here because as you know there is another route for him to apply to the Secretary of State [Patel] for status," said Mallya's barrister Philip Marshall, when specifically asked by Deputy Insolvency and Companies Court Judge Nigel Barnett about the status of the extradition proceedings. — PTI

PAWAN KALYAN  
DONATES ₹30  
LAKH FOR RAM  
TEMPLE

Hyderabad, Jan. 22: The Jana Sena Party president Pawan Kalyan on Friday donated a sum of Rs 30 lakh for the construction of the Ram Temple in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya.

The JSP president handed over the cheque for the amount to the RSS leader Bharat earlier today, in presence of BJP leader and former minister Kamineni Srinivas. Kalyan also handed over a cheque of Rs 11,000 as a donation from his personal staff.

President Ram Nath Kovind, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan earlier too had donated their contribution towards the construction of Ram Temple.

After the Supreme Court gave the verdict for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, Prime minister Narendra Modi performed Bhoomi Pujan for the temple on August 5, 2020 at the temple site.



## HEINOUS | CRIME

Kin allege that rape victim was treated as criminal; Shivraj orders SIT probe

## Hathras replay in MP: Kin denied victim's body

RABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, JAN. 22

In a 'replay' of Hathras incident, body of a minor 'rape victim' who died in a suspicious circumstance here, was not handed over to her kin and was cremated with presence of police on Thursday.

The incident triggered an outcry forcing Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to order a probe by a special investigation team (SIT) of Madhya Pradesh police on Friday. "We could not save the

girl. This is not a minor incident. It is most unfortunate", Chouhan said while taking stock of the situation at an official meeting here.

Earlier, the family members of the deceased cried injustice saying that the alleged rape victim was treated like a criminal by the system till her death, even though she was a victim.

"She had been put in a government shelter home since last 6 months (after the incident relating to sexual exploitation of five girls including the

deceased was among five girls who were allegedly sexually exploited by Pyare Miyan (68).

deceased by the accused Pyare Miyan came to light in July, 2020). No member of the family had been allowed to visit her in the shelter home. She died in a suspicious circumstances. We wanted her body to be brought home for the last time before her last rites. But, police refused to hand over the body to us and took the body to the cremation ground for last

rites straight from the hospital", the deceased's mother said.

She demanded a CBI probe into her death. The deceased was among five girls who were allegedly sexually exploited by Pyare Miyan (68), who runs a local Hindi daily here. Pyare was arrested by police when he was accompanying a group of girls in a car in July 2020. He was booked for running sex racket. Police said the five alleged victims of sexual exploitation were kept in a shelter home for security reasons.

On Wednesday, the deceased had allegedly consumed overdose of sleeping pills. She was rushed to government-run Hamidia hospital where she died during treatment. Police took her body to the cremation ground from the hospital on Thursday for her last rites after postmortem. The deceased's brother performed the last rites.

"My father and uncle were in the hospital to accept the body. But, police refused to hand over the body to them. A bus was sent to my home to carry

women members of the family to the cremation ground to be present during her last rites", the deceased's mother said.

Bhopal deputy inspector general of police Irshad Wali said everything was done with the consent of the family members of the deceased. Police did not allow the body to be taken to her home fearing a law and order situation.

Senior Congress leader and former chief minister Kamal Nath on Thursday decried the incident, describing it "inhuman and shameful".



# We believe in WHO: Kamala

VP Harris says WHO vital to control virus, building back better global health

Washington, Jan. 22: The Biden administration believes that the WHO is vital to controlling the spread of Covid-19 and building back better global health and pandemic preparedness, Vice President Kamala Harris has told WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, a day after the US rejoined the UN health agency. The US rejoined the World Health Organisation (WHO) on Wednesday in one of the first official orders of the Joe Biden presidency, reversing a key foreign policy decision his predecessor Donald Trump took last year after accusing the UN health agency of incompetence and bowing to Chinese pressure over the Coronavirus pandemic.

In April last year, as the Coronavirus pandemic was spreading across the globe, Trump cut off US funding to the WHO, saying it was "virtually controlled by China." He then went further, triggering the process to pull the US

● **IN APRIL** last year, as the Coronavirus pandemic was spreading across the globe, Trump cut off US funding to the WHO, saying it was "virtually controlled by China."

completely out of the organisation.

The withdrawal was due to go into effect in July this year, but Biden's order will cancel it. During her phone call on Thursday, Harris discussed the decision by the Biden administration to rejoin the WHO with the health agency's Director-General Dr. Ghebreyesus.

Harris emphasised that she and Biden believe that the WHO is vital to controlling the spread of Covid-19 and building back better global health and pandemic preparedness, according to a readout of the call issued by the White House. "The vice president and the director-general also discussed the resumption of the United States' role in the global public health

and humanitarian response to the Covid-19 pandemic," it said.

Harris also stressed on the Biden-Harris administration's strong support for efforts to strengthen the global Covid-19 response, mitigate its secondary impacts, including on women and girls, and advance global health security to prevent the next outbreak from becoming an epidemic or pandemic.

She emphasised the importance of making the US safer through global cooperation, the White House said. Ghebreyesus thanked Harris for the call and congratulated her and Biden on their inauguration. Both the director-general and the vice president reiterated that they look forward to meeting in person. Earlier in the day, Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious-disease expert, while addressing the WHO executive board meeting said the US will cease the drawdown of its staff seconded to the agency. —PTI

## CLUBBERS HIT DANCE FLOOR IN WUHAN

Wuhan, Jan. 22: Glow-in-the-dark rabbit ears, pulsating beats, and a flexible attitude to masks: nightlife in China's Wuhan is back with a vengeance almost a year after a lockdown brought life to a standstill in the city of 11 million.

As the rest of the world continues to grapple with lockdowns and soaring infections, young people in the city, once the epicentre of the novel Coronavirus, are enjoying their hard-earned freedom. In Super Monkey — a huge nightclub in the city centre — there is no dress code or VIP list.

What is obligatory, at least to get through the door, is a mask and a temperature check — any higher than 37.3 degrees Celsius and bouncers can turn prospective partygoers away. Inside, where clubbers let loose on the dancefloor amid the deafening sound of techno and a blinding laser show, the rules are not always so strictly followed.

While masks are obligatory at the door, DJs and partygoers take them off to chat with friends, dance, or smoke. Many are just happy to find themselves out on the town after last year's grueling quarantine, imposed to battle what was then a mysterious new virus. —AFP

## Beijing launches drive for testing 2mn in 48 hours

Beijing, Jan. 22: Beijing on Friday kicked off a drive to test two million people in 48 hours as the city rushed to snuff out a new local cluster of cases believed to be linked to a more contagious virus variant.

Long queues snaked through the Chinese capital — which reported 19 Coronavirus cases in the past week — as the mass testing campaign got under way in Dongcheng and Xicheng districts.

The two downtown districts include Tiananmen Square and several government ministry offices, and are home to around two million residents.

AFP saw one testing line stretch over 400 metres (1,300 feet), with around a thousand people waiting to be tested.

"I received the notification this morning and thought I'd come during lunch hour; but there are so many people here in line," one Dongcheng resident said.

Officials plan to complete the testing by Saturday, and with the Lunar New Year holiday looming — typically a time when hundreds of millions travel across the country to visit families — they are keen to avoid a fully fledged outbreak in Beijing.

Locals have complained about long wait

times in freezing temperatures, with social media users on Friday saying queues for tests were "unending" as residents braved the winter chill to get swabbed.

"I queued for three hours and finally got tested," one user said on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform.

The Xicheng district government said in a social media notice Friday that some of the confirmed cases had been into the area and there was an "increased risk" of infections.

Dongcheng district also put out a notice to say tests would be organised in batches over Friday and Saturday for both residents and workers.

A partial lockdown is already in place in the city's southern Daxing district, where five neighbourhoods have been ordered to remain indoors and all 1.6 million residents have been told not to leave the city.

Beijing's rush to test comes as China faces its highest number of cases in nearly a year, after Coronavirus was first detected in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019. Officials have said that some of the cases detected in Beijing are linked to a variant of the deadly pathogen that was first found in the UK and is believed to be more transmissible. —AFP

## Swiss favour 'burqa ban'

Geneva, Jan. 22: A clear majority of Swiss voters favour introducing a nationwide prohibition against wearing face-covering garments in public spaces, known as a "burqa ban", a poll showed on Friday.

According to the Tamedia poll of 15,000 eligible voters, a full 63 percent of those questioned said they would vote yes or were consid-

ering voting yes in an upcoming popular vote on the ban, the Tages Anzeiger daily reported.

The Swiss are set to vote on whether they want to ban face coverings in public on March 7, when they will also vote on a range of other issues as part of the country's famous direct democratic system.

The text does not me-

tion Muslim veils explicitly, stating only that "no one shall cover their face in public, nor in areas accessible to the public or in areas where services are ordinarily accessible to all." But the proposed ban, which has been opposed by the Swiss government, is widely seen as targeting burqas and other face-covering Muslim veils. —AFP

# Fauci says he feels liberated with Biden

Washington, Jan. 22: In his first White House briefing as President Joe Biden's top advisor on Covid-19, Anthony Fauci said it was "liberating" that he could focus on science without fear of repercussion now that Donald Trump had left office.

The top infectious disease scientist was briefing

reporters on Thursday on the state of the US outbreak that has claimed more than 4,08,000 lives.

Asked to compare his experience under the previous administration to the new one, the 80-year-old responded a little coyly at first, saying he wasn't sure he could "extrapolate" based on first impres-

sions. "But one of the things that was very clear as recently as about 15 minutes ago, when I was with the president, is that one of the things that we're going to do is to be completely transparent, open and honest."

"If things go wrong, not point fingers but to correct them and to make everything

we do be based on science and evidence."

Toward the end of Thursday's briefing, Fauci was asked by another reporter to expand on his "jokes" about the differences in the management styles between the two leaders.

"I was very serious about it, I wasn't joking," he

said, laughing.

"Obviously I don't want to be going back over history, but it was very clear that there were things that were said, be it regarding things like hydroxychloroquine and other things like that — that really was uncomfortable because they were not based on scientific fact." —AFP



Lebanese police stand on their checkpoint, as they ban people to reach the shut-down slopes of the Faraya-Mzaar ski resort, during a lockdown aimed at curbing the spread of the coronavirus, in Faraya, northeast of Beirut, Lebanon, Friday. — AP

## Russia agrees to extend nuke deal

Prez Biden had proposed a five-year extension of the New START treaty

Moscow, Jan. 22: Russia and the United States drew closer on Friday to extending a nuclear pact ahead of the fast approaching expiry date of the last arms control accord between the former Cold War rivals.

The New START treaty, which is due to expire on February 5, is seen as a rare opportunity for compromise between Moscow and Washington, whose ties have further deteriorated over recent cyber hacking and election meddling allegations.

The accord restricts Washington and Moscow to a maximum of 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads each, a cut of about 30 percent from a limit set in 2002, and 800 launchers and bombers — enough to blow up the world many times over.

The Kremlin on Friday welcomed a US proposal to prolong the pact by five years, but cautioned that any extension would

depend on the specifics of the offer.

"We can only welcome the political will to extend this document," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, but warned that "everything depends on the details of this proposal".

The comments from President Vladimir Putin's spokesman came a day after the White House said Washington would work towards a five-year extension.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said efforts to find an agreement were all the more pertinent when "the relationship with Russia is adversarial as it is".

The cautiously optimistic rhetoric emerging from Moscow and Washington comes against the backdrop of deeply strained ties and Biden's campaign promise to take a tougher stance on Russia than the previous White House

administration.

Lawmakers in the US demanded punishment for Russia last year after concluding that Kremlin-backed hackers were behind a sweeping cyber intrusion into government institutions.

The most recent claims added to US intelligence conclusions that Russia meddled in the 2016 election to back Biden's predecessor Donald Trump, including through social media manipulation.

Despite his promise to take a harder line on Putin compared to Trump, Biden's aides voiced support for reaching an accord with Moscow before his inauguration.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Friday welcomed Biden's proposal, saying: "We should not end up in a situation where we have no limitation whatsoever on nuclear warheads". —AFP

## IS claims hand in deadly, rare twin Iraq blasts

Baghdad, Jan. 22: The Islamic State has claimed responsibility for a rare and deadly twin suicide bombing that rocked central Baghdad killing over 30 and wounding dozens.

The group said the bombing "targeted apostate Shiites," on a statement circulating in an IS-affiliated website late Thursday. The statement said the first bombing was carried out by Abu Youssef al-Ansari and the second by Mohammed Arif al-Muhajir.

At least 32 people were killed and over 100 people wounded in the blasts on Thursday. Some were in severe condition. According to officials, the first suicide bomber cried out loudly that he was ill in the middle of the bustling market, prompting a crowd to gather around him — and that's when he detonated his explosive belt. The second detonated shortly after.

The US-led coalition recently ceased com-

● **AT LEAST 32** people were killed and over 100 people wounded in the blasts on Thursday. Some were in severe condition.

bat activities and is gradually drawing down its troop presence in Iraq, sparking fears of an IS resurgence. The group has rarely been able to penetrate the capital since being dislodged by Iraqi forces and the US-led coalition in 2017.

The attack was the first in nearly three years to hit the capital. Elsewhere, in northern Iraq and the western desert, attacks continue and almost exclusively target Iraqi security forces.

An increase in attacks was seen last summer as militants took advantage of the government's focus on tackling the coronavirus pandemic and exploited security gaps across disputed territory in northern Iraq. —PTI

## RUSSIA VOWS CRACKDOWN ON NAVALNY PROTESTS

Moscow, Jan. 22: Aides of jailed Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny faced possible fines and prison time on Friday as police vowed to crack down on opposition protests this weekend.

His allies are planning to hold demonstrations on Saturday in dozens of cities in support of the Kremlin critic, who was arrested and jailed on his return to Russia following a near-fatal poisoning with a nerve agent. —AFP

## EU agrees to keep borders open but restrict travels

Brussels, Jan. 22: European Union leaders agreed that borders should remain open and assessed more measures to counter the spread of Coronavirus variants during a video summit as the bloc's top disease control official said urgent action was needed to stave off a new wave of hospitalisations and deaths.

Expressing great concern about the virus' mutations, the 27 leaders looked at further border restrictions like limits on all non-essential travel, better tracking of mutations and improving coordination of lockdowns. Though worried that another surge of deaths across the EU was imminent, they could not immediately agree on whether or not to halt non-essen-

tial travel.

"It is of great importance not to travel, but you cannot immediately enforce this legally," Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said after the conference call. European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen insisted on the importance of keeping borders open to ensure that goods continue to move smoothly while introducing measures "that keep us all safe."

She said leaders discussed a proposal to introduce new trans-border "dark red zones" where infections rates are particularly high and where all non-essential travel should be discouraged. Travellers from these areas could be required to undergo tests before their departure and be placed in iso-

lation upon arrival at another location.

Von der Leyen said the commission will make precise recommendations to member states in the coming days. Some 4,00,000 EU citizens have died from Covid-19-related causes since the start of the pandemic, and the head of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Andrea Ammon, said that "an increasing number of infections will lead to higher hospitalisation and death rates across all age groups, particularly for those in older age groups."

In a study published just before the summit, the ECDC warned of the high dangers of the new variants, like those initiating in Britain, Brazil and South Africa. —AP



People wearing face masks walk past closed shops on the main shopping street "Zeil" in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany on Friday. — AFP

# Indian mathematician wins prestigious award

Washington, Jan. 22: Nikhil Srivastava, a young Indian mathematician, has been named winner of the prestigious 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize along with two others for solving long-standing questions on the Kadison-Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs.

Srivastava from the University of California,

Berkeley, Adam Marcus, the Ecole polytechnique federale de Lausanne (EPFL) and Daniel Alan Spielman from Yale University will receive the 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize, the National Academy of Sciences said in the state-

The prize consists of a medal and \$1,00,000.



Nikhil Srivastava

Srivastava, Marcus and Spielman solved long-stand-

ing questions on the Kadison-Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs, and in the process uncovered a deep new connection between linear algebra, geometry of polynomials, and graph theory that has inspired the next generation of theoretical computer scientists, it said.

They published new con-

structions of Ramanujan graphs, that describe sparse, but highly-connected networks, and a solution to what is known as the Kadison-Singer problem, a decades-old problem that asks whether unique information can be gleaned from a system in which only some of the features can be observed or measured,

according to the Yale news.

Srivastava is currently Associate Professor of Mathematics at the University of California. Their groundbreaking papers on the questions, both published in 2015, solved problems that mathematicians had been working on for several decades, the National Academy of Sciences said.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYAT RAJ DEPARTMENT SALEM DISTRICT	
SCHEME COMPONENT OF POOLED ASSIGNED REVENUE (SCPAR) 2020-2021 STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE ROAD ELECTRONIC TENDER NOTICE Dt. 22.01.2021	
1. For details, visit <a href="http://www.tntenders.gov.in">www.tntenders.gov.in</a>	
2. e-Bids are invited by Additional Director / Project Director, DRDA, Salem District for Improvement, Strengthening and Upgradation to the Panchayat & Panchayat union roads. Package wise with two Cover System.	
3. The Package wise bid documents can be downloaded free of cost from <a href="http://www.tntenders.gov.in">www.tntenders.gov.in</a> from 23.01.2021 to 09.02.2021	
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i) Last Date and Time of downloading & Submission of E-Bid Documents	09.02.2021 03.00 P.M.
ii) Date and Time of online opening of Bid Documents	09.02.2021 04.00 P.M.
Addl. Director / Project Director, District Rural Development Agency, Salem.	
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## DECCAN Chronicle

23 JANUARY 2021

# Put politics, profit aside; level with all on vaccine

India is at present in the midst of one of the largest public health campaigns the world has ever seen: Vaccination against Covid-19 pandemic. Its first phase, which started on January 16, seeks to inoculate three crore Covid warriors including medical professionals and frontline workers. Initial reports suggest that the response to the programme has not been all that encouraging and there exists some reluctance, if not resistance, in taking the jab.

Addressing a public health issue is as much the job of the public as that of the government, and the programme should have received a wholehearted welcome since the target group is very much part of the system that fights the pandemic. That has not happened, and the government needs to assess its reasons. While doing so, it must bear in mind two things: one, lack of transparency in the whole exercise, and two, technical glitches in the CoWIN app that monitors it.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi misses no opportunity to stress that the two vaccines that are being used for the programme are made in India. However, there have been doubts even among health professionals about the suitability of introducing Covaxin, the indigenously developed and manufactured vaccine, in the programme since it has been cleared only for phase III of the clinical trial. Now, days after the programme has started, and after lakhs of people have taken their vaccines, the two companies that manufacture the vaccines have come out with advisories to the people. They contain certain precautions those who go for them must take, including an advice that people with certain medical conditions should avoid taking them.

This late realisation, if one may call it so, is grossly unacceptable. The government and the companies should have been upfront about the products from the beginning, instead of resorting to chest-thumping about their being made-in-India. Nobody has a doubt about the capabilities of Indian scientists or Indian manufacturers: the latest *Lancet* reports underscores the efficacy of the vaccine, and says all adverse events were mild and moderate and were more frequent after the first dose. But the fact remains that the scientific process should be allowed to be completed in its entirety; political and commercial considerations should wait for their turn. The government must at least now do a rethink on the campaign and be true and honest with the people on its components. It must win people's confidence by placing all the facts before them, to start with; piecemeal and ad hoc release of critical information is not the right way to do it. Technical glitches hampering the vaccination programme equally defy logic. The government had ample time to develop a proper, fool-proof mechanism for it but its performance on this front has been dismal. Similar was the case with Aarogya Setu, the app that helps people follow Covid-appropriate protocol. The government must ensure that such mass programmes are designed with little technical interface, realising the fact that a great share of the Indian population has little access to technology products. And when used, they should come without glitches and in an easy-to-use form. The government must realise that this is a fight India can ill-afford to lose.

**The government must win people's confidence by placing all the facts before them, to start with; piecemeal and ad hoc release of critical information is not the right way to do it**

## Don't censor OTT content

An assault on creativity in cinema is being carried out by the political class. The grounds that the stereotypical Indian neta is being lampooned or projected in negative shades are not sufficient to allow censorship to stifle the medium of free cinema. Indian content on OTT platforms has also been seen to flourish during the pandemic when people have been forced to mostly stay indoors and their wide search for sources of entertainment has seen them embrace Internet-based media.

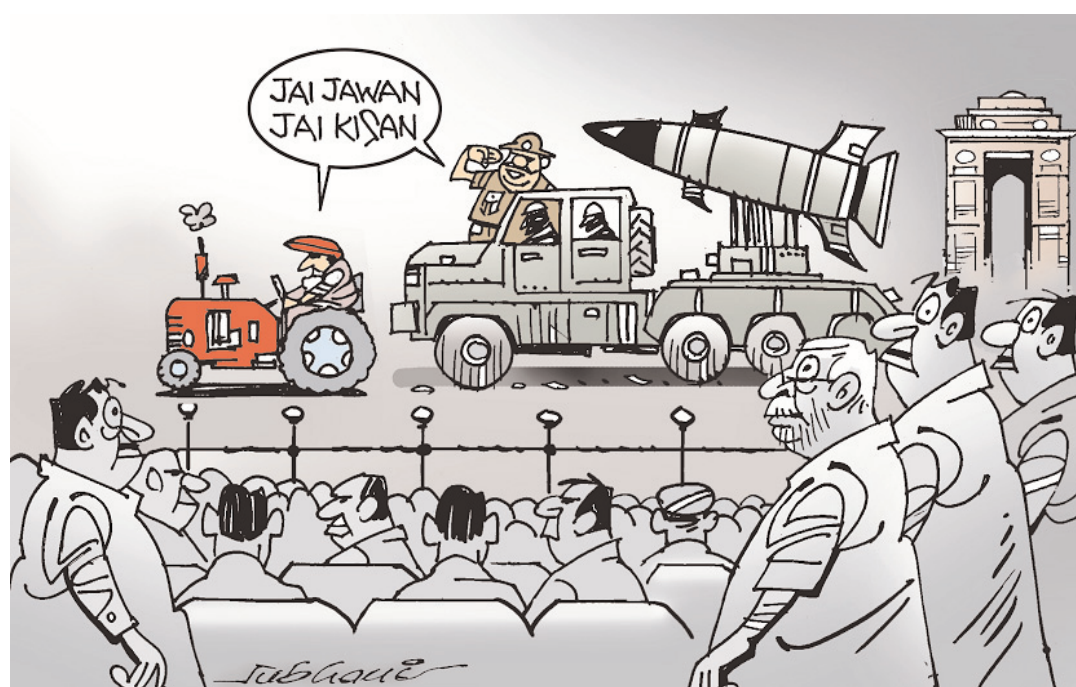
The serial *Tandav*, of a distinctly political thriller genre with startling resemblance to recent events in the country, has been under attack from many States and its makers have been forced to issue apologies and pull scenes just to please those who have been beating the drum of protest on their taking offence at content. The denigration of gods is a smoke screen under which many of these objectors operate. This is deeply disappointing because India is not a country that prosecutes people under blasphemy laws.

Censorship of OTT content is a grave offence against cinematic art. International platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hotstar have explored uncharted territory in front of Indian audiences too because they are free of governmental controls like rigid censorship of content as in films for theatrical release. They serve a very mature audience who have been able to absorb art without boundaries from international sources. Playing spoilsport are the usual suspects from the illiberal spectrum of politics, spurred on by political leaders who think nothing of Orwellian state controls of thought processes and social engineering.

It is risible that the objection to the serial *Mirzapur* comes on the ground that it besmirches the image of UP in projecting it as a lawless state ruled by mafias. The top court had only recently emphasised that viewers had a choice and they could switch off channels if they felt offended by particular content. The less official India intercedes in all this the better because State control of lives in India has proved inhibiting enough in various facets of life, including art.

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Subhani



# Vaccine hai to hum hai: Get ready for the vaxxie!



Shobhaa's Take

I am all set for “the jab”. Hoping I will get it soonest. Admission: I am severely needle phobic, to the extent that I cannot watch someone else getting a prick even if it is on the screen. Despite that and several other reservations, I am consoling myself on many levels. I am all set to shoot my “vaxxie” — for those asking, “*wat dat*”? — a “vaxxie” is a selfie shot with the arm that is not going under the vaccinator’s needle. Right now, despite a slight tremor in my voice as I write these words, I am thanking my stars that I am not Norwegian. And that I am not yet 80. Chances are pretty high that I’ll survive the jab and live to tell the tale.

Besides... and here’s my biggest trump card — I am 100 per cent Indian! Fully-fully *desi*, inside out! This is my biggest shield. Not being a scientist, my wonky reasoning does not have to make sense to anybody but myself, and a few crazies like me. Never before has being born an Indian and having lived my entire life in India been such a boon!

*Poochho kyon?* Go on, ask, *na*? Look at our comparatively low numbers with Covid-19 deaths (approximately 165K). There has to be some explanation for this phenomenon. I seriously believe it is India’s dirt. I grew up in Mumbai, surrounded by germs and bacteria of every known description. I have happily eaten street food since my childhood. I played in and with mud, consuming some of it too. I did not wash my hands twenty times a day. But I did bathe regularly, okay? My home was scrupulously clean (my

mother ensured that), but even she could not stop me from devouring roadside *bhulpuri*, *paani puri*, college canteen cutlets and exposed greasy snacks peddled by favourite vendors outside local train stations. This was true about all my friends back then — we ate the most unhygienic food ever, and none of us fell seriously sick. Our stomachs, we joked, were “zinc lined” and our systems bug-proof.

Let’s loosely call this a vital “immunity building” exercise, for want of a better medical term. We ate and drank rubbish 00 who knows? These bad habits may have spared us from picking up the deadly coronavirus today. Nothing unique about our youthful experiences — most of India conforms to this pattern. We are called filthy by the Western world. Our “unsanitary” existence is widely mocked — but hey please explain how come we have not dropped like flies, like people in other, more “developed” countries? Is it our unique DNA structure that’s helping Indians combat the global scourge better than most nations still reeling under fresh cases and strange variants of the virus?

January 16, 2021 will

**India is well and truly on its way to recovery from the deadly Covid-19 virus. As for me, I will time my blowdry with the jab. I can't afford to ruin my historic 'vaxxie'! Come on Bollywood... pull out a few cool 'vaxxie' looks.**

**January 16, 2021 will always remain a red letter in India's calendar. It was the one Saturday citizens had been impatiently waiting for ever since the world went into lockdown mode and life came to a standstill.**

always remain a red letter in India’s calendar. It was the one Saturday citizens had been impatiently waiting for ever since the world went into lockdown mode and everyday life came to a standstill. It’s the day we kicked off the most challenging immunisation exercise in the history of the world. According to available data, over two lakh citizens were vaccinated on Day 1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was justifiably proud when he addressed the nation at 10.30 am and said: “We are launching the world’s biggest vaccination drive and it shows the world our capability.” All our chests suddenly grew to 56 inches! It is an ambitious plan, involving thousands, as 300 million people hope to receive their jab in this phase, by the end of summer. These include 30 million doctors, nurses, police personnel and firefighters. The next lot, of 270 million, will reach all those over the age of 50 (me!), and those with other vulnerabilities. This impressive rollout is nothing short of a feat — and must be acknowledged as such.

For now, I am studiously ignoring the cynics and doomsday prophets who are pointing out all kinds of loopholes and deficiencies. Sanjiv Agarwal of Good Governance India Foundation is asking tough questions like: “Does all of India need a vaccine?” He believes that India has already achieved a high level of immunity and perhaps only the truly vulnerable need the jab. We are

waiting for the ultimate photo-op that shows Prime Minister Narendra Modi pushing up his *kurta* sleeve and baring his upper arm for the shot. Yes, there are going to be hiccups and setbacks. Yes, we need more data, more time... but can we afford to wait? In Mumbai, the drive was suspended for two days. Frankly, I’m fine with the chief minister’s decision to do so. There was talk of a server being down, and messages not going out on time. Apparently, the turnout was lower than expected, with genuine concerns about the vaccine getting “wasted”. But given the rumour factories at work, this is hardly surprising. Each vial can vaccinate 10 people. Once a vial is opened, it cannot be preserved for more than eight hours. Despite these early roadblocks, citizens are filled with confidence and hope that the timely delivery of the shots is definitely going to halt the coronavirus — and hopefully, any mutant/variant as well.

Being sentimental, superstitious and God-fearing, I loved the *aartis*, pujas and prayers that were conducted when the vaccines left the Serum Institute of India in Pune. Or later, when hospital employees greeted the health workers carrying the precious boxes to the designated venues with *mithai* and flowers. This is so endearing and such an Indian thing to do! Why not? I am prepared to pray to an icebox filled with life-saving vaccine vials without any self-consciousness! *Vaccine hai, to hum hai!* India is well and truly on its way to recovery from the deadly Covid-19 virus. As for me, I will time my blowdry with the jab. I can’t afford to ruin my historic “vaxxie”! Come on Bollywood... pull out a few cool “vaxxie” looks. Airport looks are so 2020!

Readers can send feedback to [www.shobhaade.blogspot.com](http://www.shobhaade.blogspot.com)

## LETTERS

### ONE POINT AGENDA

The agitation by farmers is becoming curiously by the day. Centre and farmer unions are playing hide and seek game since two months, in a relaxed way as if in a Test match, not playing for a result. Unions’ insistence to hold tractor rally on outer ring road on January 26 is a form of oneupmanship over Modi government. The Supreme Court gave a free hand to the Delhi police on the tractor rally and clarified that the panel is not the decider on issues and that it will do its job as experts in their field. Claiming it as a mass movement is travesty of truth and having more meetings between ministers and union leaders will not solve any issue. None can believe that it is a simple farmers’ agitation for a genuine cause with a display of muscle power and affluence and holiday atmosphere at Delhi borders.

**Parthasarathy Mandadi, Tirupati**

### KAMALA AN INSPIRATION

**APROPOS THE** report *Harris’ success inspires students* (Jan. 22). The Vice-President of the United States Kamala Harris has not just inspired students in her vicinity but also all around the globe. Her perseverance along with sound education, hard work and people’s support has made possible her great achievement. From a district attorney, to a senator and now the vice president of US is a stupendous accomplishment. Students need to take a leaf out of her book and try to adapt some of her qualities. Her profound knowledge and outspokenness add to her calibre. This is definitely a proud moment for everyone.

**Jacqueline Netto,, Chennai**

### TRAGIC KILLING

**THE TRAGIC** killing of four of our fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy ramming their boat is an appalling attack on innocent civilians. After a relatively calm period for our fishermen in the seas, we are sadly witnessing increased incidents of rogue behaviour by the Sri Lankan Navy, especially after the new regime took over. India has rightly protested strongly with Lanka who must be asked to offer an immediate explanation for the ghastly killing, along with an unconditional apology assuring that such brutal acts will never be repeated. We certainly cannot continue tolerating Pakistan-like rogue neighbour by Sri Lanka resorting to ‘Naval terrorism’ against our innocent fishermen.

**A. Mohan, Chennai**

Farrukh Dhondy  
Cabbages & Kings



*“If any young person with attitude Refuses to express their gratitude For the love they are shown — Just leave them alone With no single degree of latitude”*

— From **Ghazals of Gulligoochi** by Bachchoo

Friends from India informed me that the talented and A-list presenter of the nation’s most honest TV channel NDTV, Ms Nidhi Razdan, was approached through email to take up a post as a visiting professor of journalism at Harvard University.

Ms Razdan, who in all fairness deserves invitations from universities with greater reputations and more rigorous standards than Harvard (Cambridge UK, for instance, comes to mind) fell for the hoax. Perhaps she, in an act of altruism, wanted to do some charitable service to herds of benighted American students.

She may have thought, in accepting the offer of a professorship, that she could bring the great Indian standards of fearlessness before government, religious authority or bigotry

followed by Indian newspapers, TV, radio and even film and web series, to the Americans who have fallen for Donald Trump’s tweets and the fake news of his media sycophants over these last few years.

Having made her plans to depart for New England, Ms Razdan, as a good journalist would, checked on the authenticity of the invitation and found that there was no such invitation and the correspondence she had got on the Internet was some purposeless, elaborate joke. The humour escapes me, though!

What it does confirm, gentle reader, is that the greatest instrument of public discourse, of the dissemination of information, of the connectivity of the human race, can be as malevolent as it is benevolent. Not only has it put tremendous power (we are not talking about wealth) in the hands of those who control these devices of the ether, it has also facilitated evil.

Twitter, Facebook, Amazon and the rest decided last week, after Donald Trump’s urging his supporters through these platforms to overturn American democracy, to ban his “free speech”. A decent gesture, but one

that came years after they allowed any and all manner of hate speech, terrorist and even openly fascist propaganda to go uncensored on their platforms. Crooks and perverts seemed welcome.

Because, gentle reader, Ms Razdan is not the only one to have fallen for fake offers which arrive through the Internet. Must I now admit that I have been, on several occasions contacted through email to inform me that I am the lucky winner of millions of pounds on the Nigerian Lottery?

It seemed the first time like very welcome news. I wonder how many others in our world, this vale of tears, didn’t stop to consider that they couldn’t have won the Nigerian Lottery as they hadn’t bought a ticket to enter it. Of course, the emails persuaded me that a fan and admirer, who insisted on remaining anonymous, had bought a hundred tickets in my name and one of them had proved the lucky one. All the paymaster of the lottery now wanted was my bank details, passwords, etc, and the money would be deposited, making me an instant millionaire, in the following twenty-four hours.

How could I resist? I sent my details post haste to the designated email address, expecting a phone call any minute from my bank’s branch asking me to attend and shift my millions into safer and more profitable investments.

And then, two hours later, when the banks opened, a call did come. The lady banker at the other end asked me to identify myself. Yes, the necessary checks and usual questions — my birth date, the name of my first dog, my best friend’s favourite food, the bra size of my first girlfriend — I rattled all the details off. Then came the news. The lady banker at the other end said that since my account had been overdrawn for three months by several hundred pounds, they were suspending all activity on it.

I was of course aware that my account was in the red, but surely all that would change when my lottery win came in. Holding the phone some distance from my mouth, I let out a contemptuous laugh, saying words to the effect of “you just wait, young lady, your branch is going to be flooded with a bigger deposit than what elephants leave in the jungle”. She politely

ly asked what I meant. I told her about my triumph at the Nigerian Lottery. There was a long pause and she said I was the hundredth customer to fall for what was a confidence trick and if I had had any money in my account it would have disappeared. Disappointed and downcast, I bumbled the call off.

*Hanh, merey yaaron*, I knew that the Internet and the social media are the vehicles of fraud as never before. In imitation of a famous Indian scam, some crooks have taken to sending posts to the unwary to say that they are guilty of tax fraud and they ought to deposit X amount immediately or be arrested that very day. Those with a guilty conscience will be inclined to fall for it.

Myself? Having been made a fool of once, I’ve resolved to train myself to be a cyber detective with the help of my distant cousin, Hutoxic Feromonerelacementwalla (abbreviated mostly to Effipeewalla), the first Parsi woman to be appointed to the post of detective sergeant at the Bottomlea police station. Okay, not quite Kamala Harris, but still something?

# Hoax on TV anchor is a wake-up call on fake offers



quick  
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,878.54	-1.50
Nifty 50	14,371.90	-1.50
S&P 500*	3,841.19	-0.31
Dollar (₹)	72.97	0.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.67	0.57
Euro (₹)	88.79	-0.16
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,861*263	0.53
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.64	-0.82
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.939	-0.29
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.094	-0.013

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Indian Bank Q3  
profit more than  
doubles to ₹514 cr

Indian Bank more than doubled its profit at Rs 514.28 crore in the third quarter against Rs 247.16 crore in the year-ago period. Total income was Rs 11,421.34 crore, up from Rs 6,505.62 crore. The bank's gross NPAs as a percentage of assets rose to 9.04 per cent from 7.20 per cent. The percentage of net NPA was lower at 2.35 per cent as against 3.50 per cent. The bank had made provision of Rs 2,314.35 crore.

Tata Motors  
raises prices by  
up to ₹20,000



Tata Motors said it has raised prices of its passenger vehicle (PV) range by up to Rs 20,000 to offset rising input costs and semiconductor. The company joins others like Maruti Suzuki and Mahindra & Mahindra, which have also hiked their vehicles' prices. "Rising input costs and material costs of steel, precious metals and semiconductors have compelled the company to pass on the part of the cost to customers," it said.

GMR Philippines  
JV executes  
terminal contract

A joint venture of GMR Airports handed over new terminal building at Clark international airport to the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA), Philippines. The 40,000-square metre terminal building at the airport, which is situated between Angeles and Mabalacat cities, was constructed within 24 months by the joint venture of GMR Airports and Megawide Construction Corporation, GMR said.

Ducati launches  
Scrambler bike  
range at ₹7.99 L

Italian luxury motorcycle brand Ducati launched the all-new Scrambler bikes in India with the range starting at Rs 7.99 lakh for the Scrambler Icon Dark and going all the way up to Rs 10.99 lakh for the new 1100 Dark Pro at pan-India showroom. With this update all three models, namely, Ducati Scrambler Icon, Ducati Scrambler Icon Dark, and the Ducati Scrambler 1100 Dark Pro are now BS6 norms compliant.



■ Telecom & retail bring 51% earnings

Reliance's Q3  
net rises 12%



New Delhi, Jan. 22: Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd on Friday reported a better-than-expected 12 per cent rise in December quarter net profit on improving oil-to-chemical business, strong continued momentum in retail and a steady telecom unit Jio. Consolidated net profit in October-December stood at Rs 13,101 crore, compared to Rs 11,640 crore net earning in the same period a year back, the company said in a statement.

While oil-to-chemical, or O2C, business improved quarter-on-quarter, it was lower than year-ago earnings but this was more than made good by a spurt in consumer-facing businesses of telecom and retail, which now contribute to 51 per cent of earnings as compared to 37 per cent a year back. About 56 per cent of the pre-tax profit (Ebitda) of Rs 8,483 comes from Jio and Reliance Retail. Net income was further aided by a 20 per cent year-on-year decline in finance expenses due to cash coming in the digital unit, Jio Platforms and Reliance Retail from Google/financial investors, respectively. Revenue was down 18.6 per cent at Rs 137,829 crore. Jio, the telecom arm, posted a 15.5 per cent quarter-on-quarter rise in net profit to Rs 3,489 crore as it added over 25 million subscribers and per user income rose to Rs 151 per month. It had 410.8 million

subscribers at the end of December.

The average revenue per user (ARPU) compared with Rs 145 per month in the previous quarter.

A sharp recovery in fashion and lifestyle businesses helping retail get back to pre-Covid level saw the segment's cash profit rise 76.3 per cent to Rs 2,482 crore.

Overall retail revenue was dragged down by transfer of fuel retailing business to a separate unit where UK's BP Plc has a 49 per cent stake, and one-off factors impacting grocery. The firm added 327 new stores to take the total number to 12,201.

The traditional O2C business Ebitda was down 28.1 per cent at Rs 8,756 crore on lower prices and pandemic impacting fuel demand. It, however, was up quarter-on-quarter.

Finance cost at Rs 4,326 crore was 29 per cent lower on a quarterly basis.

Reliance said it has completed fundraising from selling minority stakes in

Jio Platforms Ltd—the unit that holds telecom and digital businesses, and Reliance Retail to global investors.

It raised Rs 152,056 crore in Jio and Rs 47,265 cr in retail. A cumulative cash inflow of Rs 220,231 crore helped it turn into a net cash surplus company.

Gross debt fell to Rs 257,413 crore as of December-end when compared to Rs 336,294 crore as of March 2020, while cash at hand rose to Rs 220,524 crore from Rs 175,259 crore. Net debt stood at a negative (-) Rs 2,954 crore.

Commenting on the results, Mukesh Ambani, chairman and managing director, said: "We have delivered strong operational results during the quarter with a robust revival in O2C and retail segments, and a steady growth in our digital services business."

Reliance said it along with its partner BP has started production from the R Cluster, an ultra-deep-water gas field in block KG D6. —PTI

HDFC Bank  
shares slip  
after Sebi  
slaps ₹1 cr fine

New Delhi, Jan. 22: Shares of HDFC Bank on Friday fell over 2 per cent after Sebi imposed a penalty of Rs 1 crore for invoking securities pledged by stock broker BRH Wealth Kreamtors in violation of the regulator's interim directions.

On the BSE, shares of the private lender ended at Rs 1,443.65 apiece, falling 2.05 per cent over the previous close. Intraday, it had hit a low of Rs 1,440.7.

On Thursday, Sebi imposed a penalty of Rs 1 crore on HDFC Bank for invoking securities pledged by BRH Wealth Kreamtors in violation of the regulator's interim directions.

The bank has also been directed to transfer Rs 158.68 crore along with 7 per cent interest per annum into an escrow account till the issue of settlement of clients' securities is reconciled. The Sebi had found that HDFC Bank on October 14, 2019 invoked the pledge of securities to the extent of Rs 158.68 crore and thereafter, sold most of the securities and appropriated the sale proceeds towards the outstanding under the various credit facilities advanced by the bank to BRH.

The private sector lender had granted credit facilities to BRH and BRH Commodities aggregating to Rs 191.16 crore and Rs 26.61 crore, respectively. —PTI

No let up seen in  
iron ore exports

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JAN. 22



JSW STEEL NET JUMPS MANIFOLD

New Delhi, Jan. 22: JSW Steel on Friday reported a manifold jump in its consolidated net profit to Rs 2,669 crore for the December 2020 quarter. The steel-maker had clocked a net profit of Rs 187 crore in the year-ago quarter. Its total consolidated income during October-December 2020 rose to Rs 22,006 crore, compared with Rs 18,182 crore in

the year-ago period. The company's total consolidated expenses stood at Rs 18,120 crore, higher as against Rs 17,719 crore a year ago. On a standalone basis, the firm registered a net profit of Rs 2,829 crore, against Rs 691 crore in the year-ago quarter. Its standalone income was at Rs 19,408 crore, compared with Rs 15,902 crore a year ago. —PTI

44.8 million tonnes in calendar year 2020.

At the same time India has been facing a production shortage. Icrs estimates domestic iron ore deficit to be 55 million tonnes in FY21. Of the 18 auctioned blocks, which had contributed 53 per cent to Odisha's overall iron ore production in FY20, only seven have started production, leading to the shortage. Ore supply shortage is likely to persist in the near term until new miners ramp-up production.

The shortage of ore has seen prices rallying by 140 per cent in Odisha since June-end and the prices have rallied 100 per cent in Chhattisgarh as well. The rising iron ore prices combined with shortage saw steel prices going up by 55 per cent to Rs 58,000 a tonne in January against the year-ago month. This has affected the downstream industries. The rising steel prices coupled with the pandemic impact on global trade saw engineering exports fall 13.24 per cent for the April-June period.

Sensex drops below  
49K on profit taking

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, JAN. 22

The market continued to be volatile ahead of the Union Budget with investors taking profit home after the benchmark indices surged earlier this week to new all-time high. The Sensex closed 746 points, or 1.5 per cent down, at 48,878, a day after it hit the 50,000 mark.

The Nifty-50 closed at 14,371.90, down by 218.45 points, or 1.5 per cent. The BSE Mid-cap Index fell 1.19 per cent and the BSE Small-cap, 1.04 per cent.

Foreign portfolio investors turned net sellers by Rs 635.59 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 1,290.35 crore.

"We are seeing some kind of profit booking at higher levels as the Sensex touched the psychological mark of 50,000 this week. The persisting rise in (Covid-19) cases has intensified restrictions in parts of Europe, UK and Hong Kong which is impacting global markets," said Rusmik Oza, head of Fundamental Research, Kotak Securities.

IL&FS ADDRESSES  
₹32,000-CRORE  
GROUP DEBT

Mumbai, Jan. 22: Debt-laden Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services group's (IL&FS) board on Friday said it has addressed Rs 32,000 crore of the group's overall debt so far.

The board, led by veteran banker Uday Kotak, retained its target of addressing a debt of over Rs 56,000 crore by 2021-22, of an overall debt of over Rs 99,000 crore (as of October 2018).

"The aggregate debt of Rs 32,000 addressed comprises about Rs 21,600 crore of debt addressed basis cash balances," the group said in a release.

It said nearly Rs 10,300 crore more of net recovery is expected from other resolution and restructuring applications. —PTI

INDIGO PAINTS  
IPO SUBSCRIBED  
OVER 117 TIMES



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, JAN. 22

Indigo Paints IPO subscription stood at more than 117 times on the final day of the public bidding process.

As per the last update, the public offer was subscribed 189.57 times by the qualified institutional buyers, 263.05 times by non-institutional or high net worth investors and 15.93 times by retail individual investors.

Indigo Paints' Rs 1,170 crore public issue was priced at Rs 1,488 to Rs 1,490 per equity share of Rs 10 face value.

Sequoia Capital backed Indigo Paints raised Rs 348 crore from 25 anchor investors on January 19.

The Pune-based firm manufactures a range of decorative paints and has an extensive distribution network across India.

CSR rules now allow firms to  
take up multi-year projects

New Delhi, Jan. 22: The government on Friday amended various rules pertaining to the CSR regime, including allowing corporates to undertake multi-year projects and making registration compulsory for agencies implementing CSR activities on companies' behalf. Besides, companies have been permitted to set off the excess amount spent under CSR up to three succeeding financial years. They have also been allowed to create or acquire capital assets through CSR in the name of beneficiaries or a public authority or registered trust, among others.

Non-compliance with CSR provisions has been decriminalised by shifting such offences to penal regime, while companies having CSR obligation below Rs 50 lakhs have been exempted from constituting a CSR Committee, according to the corporate affairs ministry.

Under the Companies Act, 2013—being implemented by the corporate

MAKING IT EASY

- Registration compulsory for agencies implementing CSR activities
- Firms can set off excess amount spent under CSR up to three years
- They can also create or acquire capital assets in beneficiaries/trusts name
- CSR offences decriminalised

affairs ministry—certain class of profitable companies are required to shell out at least two per cent of their three-year annual net profit towards corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities in a financial year.

The amendments are aimed at further improving the ease of doing business, decriminalising non-compliance with CSR provisions as well as to make the CSR framework

more transparent, an official told PTI.

Further, the idea is to move from just looking at expenditure to focusing on impact of CSR projects implemented under the companies law, the official added.

In a significant move to boost transparency, agencies implementing CSR projects for companies should get registered with the ministry's MCA 21 portal and the system will automatically generate a unique CSR registration number.

The registration requirement will be effective from April 1, 2021.

Also, international organisations have been permitted to carry out designing, monitoring and evaluation of the CSR projects or programmes. However, they cannot act as implementing agencies.

According to the official, such a move will help in bringing in the best international practices in the field of CSR and capacity building. —PTI

CRYPTOS WON'T  
WORK AS  
ACTUAL  
CURRENCIES: UBS



MARK CRANFIELD  
JAN. 22

Cryptocurrencies may never be able to work as actual currencies, according to UBS Global Wealth Management.

The "fundamental flaw" inherent in cryptocurrencies is that supply can't be reduced when demand is slumping in most cases, Paul Donovan, chief economist at UBS GWM, said in a video this week. That means they can't be considered currencies, he said.

A "proper currency," as Donovan termed it, can be a stable store of value, providing certainty that it will be able to buy the same basket of goods tomorrow as it buys today. That confidence is derived from central banks' ability to reduce supply when demand is falling. There is no such mechanism for switching off supply on most cryptocurrencies, and therefore their value can slide - leading to a collapse in spending power.

"People are unlikely to want to use something as a currency if they've got absolutely no certainty about what they can buy with that tomorrow," Donovan said in the video.

Bitcoin futures are listed on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange alongside contracts for most major currencies, but the difference in daily trading volumes suggest that some investors haven't yet embraced the crypto as a fully fledged currency. Amid the 11 per cent price plunge for Bitcoin on Thursday transactions for the January futures were just above 13,000, while there were around six times as many for Japanese yen futures. —Bloomberg

HEALING | TOUCH Climate change, social inequality seen as biggest global threat

Unilever for living wage across value chain

New Delhi, Jan. 22: Anglo-Dutch FMCG major Unilever on said everyone who directly provides goods and services to the company will earn at least a living wage by 2030.

The company will spend 2 billion euros annually by 2025 with suppliers owned and managed by people from under-represented groups.

This is part of commitments announced by Unilever to help build a more equitable and inclusive society by raising living standards across its value chain, creating opportunities through inclusivity and preparing people for the future of work, Unilever said in a statement on Thursday. Unilever CEO Alan Jope



A living wage is defined as the minimum income necessary for a worker to meet his or her basic needs and is higher than the normal wage.

The past year has widened the social divide, and decisive and collective action is needed to build a society that helps to improve livelihoods, embraces diversity, nurtures talent, and offers opportunities for everyone, he added.

"We believe the actions we are committing to will make Unilever a better, stronger business; ready for the huge societal changes we are experiencing today—changes that will only accelerate. Without a healthy society, there cannot be a healthy business," Jope said.

A living wage is defined as the minimum income necessary for a worker to meet his or her basic needs and is higher than the normal wage. It allows workers to participate fully in their communities and help them break the cycle of poverty. Under living wage, people can afford a decent standard of living, covering a family's basic needs—food, water, housing, education, healthcare, transportation, clothing; and includes a provision for unexpected events. "Our ambition is to improve living standards for low-paid workers worldwide. We will therefore ensure everyone who directly provides goods and services to Unilever earns at least a living wage or income, by 2030.

"We already pay our employees at least a living wage, and we want to secure the same for more people beyond our workforce, specifically focusing on the most vulnerable workers in manufacturing and agriculture," the company said. Unilever will work with its suppliers, other businesses, governments and NGOs—through purchasing practices, collaboration and advocacy—to create systemic change and global adoption of living wage practices.

In parallel, Unilever will also help 5 million SMEs in its retail value chain grow their business through access to skills, finance and technology by 2025. —PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Vaccination may jeopardise Oly

**Tokyo:** Japan is publicly adamant that it will stage its postponed Olympics this summer. But to pull it off, many believe the vaccination of its 127 million citizens for the coronavirus is key. It's an immense undertaking in the best of circumstances and complicated now by an overly cautious decision-making process, bureaucratic roadblocks and a public that has long been deeply wary of vaccines. Japan hopes to start Covid-19 vaccinations in late February, but uncertainty is growing that a nation ranked among the world's lowest in vaccine confidence can pull off the massive, \$14 billion project in time for the games in July, casting doubt on whether the Tokyo Olympics can happen. Japan has secured vaccines for all its citizens, and then some, after striking deals with three foreign pharmaceutical makers Pfizer Inc., AstraZeneca and Moderna Inc. — *AP*

## Spanish player tests +ve in Oz

**Melbourne:** A Spanish tennis player ranked in the top 70 who was forced to quarantine in her hotel room after potentially being exposed to the coronavirus on an Australian Open charter flight says she tested positive for Covid-19. Paula Badosa, a 23-year-old who reached the fourth round at last year's French Open, wrote on Thursday on Twitter that she received her test result for the illness caused by the coronavirus on the seventh day of her hard quarantine. "I have some bad news," Badosa said in a post written in Spanish and English. "Today I received a positive Covid-19 test result. I'm feeling unwell and have some symptoms, but I'll try to recover as soon as possible listening to the doctors. I've been taken to a health hotel to self isolate and be monitored." — *AP*

## Hockey girls hold Chile senior side

**Santiago:** A resilient Indian junior women's hockey team came from behind twice to hold Chile senior side to a 2-2 draw in their fourth match of the tour here. Deepika (40th minute) and Gagandeep Kaur (55th) led India's fight back after Chile had taken the lead twice through goals from Mariana del Jesus Lagos (21st) and Fernanda Villagran (51st). With three wins from as many games in the tour, the Indian team started the match brightly as they tried to penetrate Chile's defence, but could not find a clear opportunity inside the first 15 minutes. Chile, on the other hand, relied on counter attacks with their tactic paying off in the second quarter. The Indian juniors will again play Chile senior side in back-to-back matches on Saturday and Sunday. — *PTI*

## Lakers win eighth game on the road

**Los Angeles:** LeBron James scored a season-high 34 points as the Los Angeles Lakers won their eighth straight road game with a 113-106 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks on Thursday. The victory opened a seven-game road trip for the NBA champion Lakers.

## Live on TV

## BADMINTON

**Thailand Open:** Semifinal matches from 9.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

## CRICKET

**Big Bash League:** Melbourne Renegades vs Brisbane Heat from 10.35 am; Melbourne Stars vs Perth Scorchers from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

## FOOTBALL

**Indian Super League:** Kerala Blasters vs Goa from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

**Italian League:** Roma vs Spezia from 7.30 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

**English Premier League:** Aston Villa vs Newcastle from 1.30 am (Sunday) on Star Sports Select 1

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## MIXED FEELING

Big gun Sindhu exits but mixed pair Satwik-Ashwin enters semis

**Bangkok, Jan. 22:** Error-prone P. V. Sindhu suffered a demoralising defeat in the quarterfinals while Sameer Verma's gallant fight too ended in agony at the Thailand Open here on Friday.

However, Satwicksairaj Rankireddy claimed twin wins in mixed and men's doubles quarterfinals along with Ashwini Ponnappa and Chirag Shetty to keep India's flag fluttering at the badminton World Tour Super 1000 tournament here.

Sindhu looked a pale shadow of the player who had won the world championship gold in 2019 as she committed too many unforced errors to go down 13-21, 9-21 against home favourite Ratchanok Intanon.

"I made a lot of unforced errors and I think that I gave away easy points. I didn't play my best today. It wasn't my day," a crestfallen Sindhu said.

In men's singles, Sameer's giant-killing run also came to an end after he squandered a match point to go down 13-21, 21-19, 20-22 to world no. 3 Anders Antonsen of Denmark in a quarterfinal contest.

With the defeat of Sindhu and Sameer, Indian challenge in singles competition ended in the tournament.

The doubles players, however, gave fans something to cheer as Satwik and Ashwini upstaged world no. 6 pair of Peng Soon Chan and Liu Ying Goh of Malaysia 18-21, 24-22, 22-20 after toiling hard for one hour and 15 minutes.

"We have played them three times. We have won twice and lost once. We were confident. We knew our main strength would be our attack. They were under pressure. We kept



India's Satwicksairaj Rankireddy (right) goes for a shot next to teammate Ashwini Ponnappa during their mixed doubles quarterfinal match against Indonesia's Chan Peng Soon and Goh Liu Ying at the Thailand Open badminton tournament in Bangkok on Friday.

● **Olympic silver medallist P. V. Sindhu was a pale shadow of herself and was outclassed by Malaysia's World No. 92 Kisona Selva-duray 21-10, 21-12 in the women's singles second round of the Thailand Open.**

● **The Indian men's doubles and mixed doubles pairs are in the semifinal of a Super Series. The mixed doubles pair has gone into the last 4 for the first time. The men's pair are on course to defend their win from last year.**

fighting. We had our chances and never messed up," Satwik said.

Later in the day, Satwik and Chirag saw off another Malaysian pair of Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi 21-18, 24-22 in 37 minutes.

The Indian men's doubles and mixed doubles pairs are in the semifinal of a Super Series. The mixed doubles pair has gone into the last 4 for the very first time and the men's doubles are on

course to defend their sensational win from last year.

Earlier, Sindhu looked awfully out of form as she was all at sea against Ratchanok, a former world champion.

"Some of my lifts were going out and going out of control. I was hitting with so much power sometimes. I should have controlled things a lot more. If I had won the first game, I think things would have

been comparatively different," she said.

## MARIN BREEZES INTO SEMIFINALS

Spanish fifth seed and former world number one Carolina Marin sailed through to the semi-finals, beating Turkey's Neslihan Yigit 21-6, 21-15.

Marin is aiming for back-to-back titles in this week's tournament — the second of three consecutive events in Bangkok

that culminate in next week's World Tour Finals. She came out on top last week against top-seeded Tai Tzu-ying, and continued her winning streak on Friday — despite Yigit holding a brief lead in the second set.

"I wanted to keep going, keep fighting and keep the focus on what I needed to do, even when Yigit was leading," said Marin.

World no. 6 Marin will be facing off in the semi-finals against South Korean An Se-young, a formidable teenager who was awarded "Most Promising Player" in 2019.

They already duelled in last week's tournament, with the more experienced Marin winning 21-18, 21-16. — *Agencies*



From last some days, my team captain Mr Krunal Pandya is using abusing language to me (sic) in front of my teammates and also other State teams.

— **DEEPAK HOODA** justifies leaving Baroda camp at the T20 tourney

## Deepak storms out, suspended

**Vadodara, Jan. 22:** The Baroda Cricket Association (BCA) has suspended senior player Deepak Hooda, who had stormed out of the camp before the start of Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, for this domestic season for "indiscipline" and "bringing disrespect to the game."

Hooda had walked out of the team on the eve of domestic T20 tournament after a spat with captain Krunal Pandya. He had alleged "misbehaviour" on the part of Pandya.

"He (Hooda) has been suspended for this season for indiscipline and bringing disrespect to the BCA and the game. Without informing the team and the BCA, he left the team and the (bio) bubble," BCA secretary Ajit Lele told PTI on Friday.

The decision to suspend Hooda was taken during the Apex Council meeting of the BCA which was held on Thursday evening.

Hooda, who was initially appointed as Baroda's vice-captain for Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, had stormed out of the bio-bubble on January 9. He had alleged "misbehaviour" on the part of Pandya in an e-mail sent to BCA.

"At this moment, I am demoralised, depressed and under pressure," Hooda, who has played 46 first-class matches, wrote

in the e-mail.

"As from last some days, my team captain Mr Krunal Pandya is using abusing language to me in front of my teammates and also other state teams who have come for participation at Reliance Stadium Vadodara."

Following Hooda's letter, the BCA had sought the manager's report. — *PTI*

## ROYALS TRADE BATSMAN UTHAPPA TO SUPER KINGS

**New Delhi, Jan. 22:** Veteran India batsman Robin Uthappa has been traded to Chennai Super Kings in an all-cash deal, IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals said on Thursday. The 35-year-old right-hander from Karnataka had scored just 196 runs in 12 matches in the last IPL in UAE after being picked up by Rajasthan Royals at the last IPL auctions.

"I really enjoyed my year at the Royals and had a great time being part of this franchise. I am now excited for the next part of my cricketing journey joining CSK for IPL 2021," Uthappa said in a release.

## CAREY, COULTER-NILE NOT SURPRISED AT IPL FRANCHISES RELEASING THEM

Australian players Alex Carey and Nathan Coulter-Nile said they were not surprised at their IPL franchises releasing them and they are hoping to find a team in next month's Players Auction for the upcoming edition of the cash-rich league. While wicket-keeper batsman Carey was released by last edition's runners-up side Delhi Capitals on Thursday, Coulter-Nile was de-listed by champions Mumbai Indians.

"It wasn't a surprise. I didn't play a lot of cricket, just sat on the sidelines, so it probably makes sense to open that spot up for someone else," Carey was quoted as saying by *cricket.com.au*. — *PTI*

## INDIA-ENGLAND TESTS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

**Chennai, Jan. 22:** The first two Tests of the upcoming India-England series will be played at the MA Chidambaram Stadium behind closed doors, a top official from host association TNCA said on Friday.

According to Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) secretary R.S. Ramasaamy, the two Tests would be played without spectators as per a BCCI directive, considering the prevailing Covid-19 situation.

"Yes...crowd will not be allowed for the two Test matches as a preventive measure in view of the virus situation," Ramasaamy said.

Also, a circular dated January 20 has been sent out to TNCA members saying that the decision to play the matches behind closed doors was taken along with the BCCI.

— *PTI*

## Burnley curtail Reds' home run

**Liverpool, Jan. 22:** Jurgen Klopp took responsibility for the sudden collapse of Liverpool's Premier League title defence after their 68-game unbeaten run in the Premier League at Anfield came to a stunning end in a 1-0 defeat by Burnley on Thursday.

The Claretts began the game just one place above the relegation zone, but gave their chances of beating the drop a huge boost when Ashley Barnes was tripped by Alisson Becker seven minutes from time and then beat the Brazilian from the penalty spot.

Klopp's men have now failed to win in five consecutive league games to slip to fourth in the table, six points behind leaders Manchester United.

Liverpool had not tasted a league defeat at Anfield since April 2017.

Since then the Reds have ended a 30-year wait to win a league title, but their chances of repeating that feat are fading rapidly after a disastrous run over the past month.

## BARCA LABOUR PAST THIRD-TIER SIDE CORNELLA

**Madrid, Jan. 22:** Barcelona needed extra-time goals from Ousmane Dembele and Martin Braithwaite to end the cup run of third-division side Cornella and reach the Copa del Rey last 16 with a 2-0 win on Thursday.

Barca missed two penalties, Miralem Pjanic and then Dembele both guilty from the spot, but Dembele made amends by scoring early in extra time, before Braithwaite made it two after 120 minutes.

Barca were looking for a reaction on the back of their shock loss to Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish Super Cup final on Sunday, when Lionel Messi was sent off for the club for the first time. With Messi suspended, a rotated line-up laboured to victory after a third consecutive extra-time in eight days. — *AFP*

## PARMA OWN GOAL GIFTS LAZIO ITALIAN CUP QUARTERS BERTH

**Milan, Jan. 22:** Parma goalkeeper Simone Colombi's late own goal sent Lazio through to the Italian Cup quarter-finals on Thursday after a 2-1 win in Rome.

Lazio midfielder Marco Parolo had nodded in the first goal from a curling Andreas Pereira cross on 23 minutes in the last-16 tie. But Parma fought back, with Valentin Mihaila lev-

elling for the visitors.

As the game looked to be heading for extra time, Vedat Muriqi headed towards goal on 90 minutes, with the ball bouncing off the post, against the unfortunate Colombi and into the net.

Seven-time winners Lazio play Atalanta next Wednesday for a place in the semi-finals. — *AFP*

## Siraj is find of Oz series: Shastri

**New Delhi, Jan. 22:** India head coach Ravi Shastri on Friday described rookie pacer Mohammed Siraj as the find of the Australia tour, hailing him for playing a key role in the historic Test series win despite personal loss and racial abuse from spectators Down Under.

Siraj could not return to India after his father died barely a week after he landed in Australia with the Indian team in November last year. He also faced racial abuse from a section of the crowd in Sydney during the third Test.

Despite all this, Siraj finished the series with 13 wickets — the most by any Indian bowler — as the team came from behind to script a memorable 2-1 win.

"Find of the tour for shoring up the bowling attack the way he did — Mohd Siraj. He fought through personal loss, racial remarks and channelised them to find home in the team huddle," Shastri tweeted in appreciation of the 26-year-old pacer.

Siraj turned out to be one of the architects of India's success and successfully stepped into the shoes of his senior pace colleagues after making his debut in the series-turning second Test.

In the fourth Test in Brisbane, Siraj led a young Indian bowling attack, picking up his maiden five-wicket haul in the longest format of the game. He returned with match figures of 7/150 as India beat Australia by three wickets at the Gabba.

On Thursday, Siraj revealed that on-field umpires had offered his team the option of leaving the third Test against Australia midway after he was subjected to racial abuse by the crowd in Sydney, a proposal that was turned down by skipper Ajinkya Rahane.

After his arrival in the country, the youngster had driven straight to his father's grave in Hyderabad to pay his respects. He had dedicated each of his wickets in Australia to the departed soul. — *PTI*



Pacer Mohammed Siraj gestures during a press conference at his residence in Hyderabad on Thursday.

## Saha bats for 'keeper Pant

**Kolkata, Jan. 22:** Rishabh Pant the batsman redeemed himself spectacularly in Australia and his much-criticised wicket-keeping skills are also on the mend, feels senior India stumper Wriddhman Saha who wants the youngster to be given some breathing space as "no one learns algebra in class I".

Saha, who is considered India's number one Test wicketkeeper, said in an interview that he does not believe that Pant's heroic show in Australia would close the door for him in the Indian team.

"You can ask him (Pant), we have a friendly relationship and help each other whoever gets into the XI. Personally, there's no conflict with him," Saha said after returning home following the historic Test series win in Australia.

"I don't see who is No.1 or 2... Team will give a chance to those who do better. I will continue to

## THAKUR HAPPY TO BE CALLED BOWLING ALLROUNDER NOW

**Mumbai, Jan. 22:** It was a debut over two years after his actual debut and Shardul Thakur says he took a quantum leap from being just a fast bowler to a bowling all-rounder with his impactful show in India's epoch-making Brisbane Test win over Australia. Thakur snared seven wickets and was India's top scorer in the first innings, striking 67 while batting at No.8. He, along with Washington Sundar, pulled the team out of trouble by conjuring a crucial 123-run stand. The partnership eventually played a key role in the team's three-wicket win.

His Test debut was back in 2018 which last just 10 balls thanks to injury.

"Yes, I can be called a bowling all-rounder, I have that ability to bat and even in future, whenever I get my opportunity to bat, I am going to contribute useful runs to the team's total," Thakur said.

He could have made it even more momentous at Brisbane with a five-wicket haul but has no regrets on missing out on that as he can't feel happy enough for fellow pacer Mohammed Siraj, who actually got one. — *PTI*

do my job. Selection is not in my hands, it's up to the management."

Saha was all praise for the 23-year-old Pant, whose 89 not out on the

fifth day sealed the match for India at the Gabba for a 2-1 series win.

"No one learns algebra in class I. You always go step by step. He is giving

"Anyone can go through a bad phase. A professional player always accepts the highs and lows, be it with form or criticism," the 36-year-old said.

— *PTI*