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## WEATHER



Max: 31.6°C  
Min: 21.0°C  
RH: 80%  
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Fog.  
Max/Min temp.  
31/21.9C

## COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+11,354)	(+112)
1,06,36,056	1,53,140

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+214)	(+2)
TS: 2,92,835	1,586
(+137)	(+4)
AP: 8,86,694	7,146

### CASES AROUND THE WORLD

9,83,53,744  
DEATHS  
21,06,818  
COUNTRIES  
AREAS WITH  
CASES  
219

worldometers.info/  
coronavirus

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Uttarayana  
**Tithi:** Pushya Shuddha Dasami till 8.53 pm  
**Star:** Kritika till 9.29 pm  
**Varjyam:** 8.04 am to 9.51 am  
**Durmuhurtam:** 6.53 am to 8.22 am  
**Rahukalam:** 9 am to 10.30 am  
**HJRI CALENDAR**  
**Jamadi- ul- Akhir** 9,1442 AH  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.50 am  
**Zohar:** 1.30 pm  
**Asar:** 4.45 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.15 pm  
**Isha:** 8.15 pm  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 6.31 AM  
**SUNSET TODAY** 5.46 PM  
**MOONRISE TODAY** 01.14 PM  
**MOONSET TOMORROW** 01.39 AM

## COUNTER POINT



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

## SHORT TAKES

### Petrol crosses ₹92 per litre

**New Delhi:** Petrol price on Friday crossed ₹92 a litre mark in Mumbai, while diesel touched an all-time high after rates were raised for the third time this week. Fuel prices were hiked by 25 paise per litre each, according to a price notification from oil marketing firms. This took the petrol price in Delhi to ₹85.45 per litre and ₹92.04 in Mumbai.

### Heroin worth ₹1,000 cr seized

**New Delhi:** Two Sri Lankan nationals have been arrested and about 100 kg of heroin worth an estimated ₹1,000 crore seized as part of a probe involving a trans-border drugs-trafficking racket, the NCB said on Friday. MMM Nawas and Mohamed Afnas were nabbed from Chennai, where they were living by hiding their real identities.

### Another Bengal minister quits

**Kolkata:** In yet another jolt for the TMC ahead of the assembly polls, West Bengal forest minister Rajib Banerjee quit the Mamata Banerjee cabinet. Banerjee, in a letter to the chief minister, said he was tendering his resignation as a cabinet minister, but did not cite any reason.

# Internet in all AP villages

## CM issues instructions to officials for unlimited access

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

The state government is making all efforts to provide unlimited and uninterrupted internet connectivity across all villages. Towards this, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy directed officials to prepare an action plan for establishing such a network in villages and an internet library at network point to facilitate work-from-home.

During a review meeting on internet connections in villages and providing laptops under the Amma Vodi scheme, held here on Friday, he

instructed officials to aim at providing uninterrupted internet services at desired connection plans for rural areas. He told them to focus on developing an internet system with non-destructive cables, which can neither be cut nor disturbed. He said that from the village network points, they must ensure house to house internet even in YSR Jagananna colonies.

Reddy said that the idea was to lay an underground cable from HT line to the substation and from the substation to village panchayats. He directed the authorities to provide any capacity connection for the cus-

tomers by establishing a proper system at the panchayat level.

The Chief Minister also reviewed the provision of laptops to the beneficiaries of Amma Vodi and Vasati Devena scheme that have been opted in lieu of financial assistance. He stated that those, who are studying in standard nine to 12, can opt for a laptop instead of financial assistance from next year. He directed the officials to think of giving laptops with more specifications to fully cater to the needs of students pursuing engineering and other technical courses. He said if the laptop is damaged,

it should be handed over to the ward and village secretariats. The pieces have to either be repaired within a week or replaced. For this, he directed the officials to keep the warranty for three years instead of one year.

Industries, commerce & IT minister Mekapati Gautham Reddy, special chief secretary R. Karikal Valaven, housing principal secretary Ajay Jain, AP Transco CMD Nagulapalli Srikanth, AP Fibernet chairman P. Gautam Reddy, AP Fibernet MD M. Madhusudhan Reddy and other senior officials were present.

# State appeals to SEC for rescheduling local polls

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

The state government on Friday made a fervent appeal to the State Election Commission (SEC) to reschedule panchayat polls at least till the first two phases of vaccination to health workers and police are over.

Conveying the government's commitment to cooperate with the SEC for the smooth conduct of the polls, a clear deviation from its earlier approach of confrontation, Chief Secretary Adityanath Das wrote a letter to State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar to revise the election schedule in compliance with the High Court order to enable both of them to make all efforts to ensure conduct of polls and the Covid-19 vaccination drive.

Indirectly, though, the Chief Secretary reminded the SEC that both the government and SEC are responsible for the polls as well as the vaccination drive as per the HC's judgment and it would be prudent to schedule both activities in such a way that they are held successfully.

He expressed difficulty to vaccinate the polling personnel and to put them on the polling duty at the same time and added that as the Centre mandated vaccination for all frontline employees in the first round, conduct of polls would mean vaccination would have to be deferred.

## SEC tells chief secy to remove 7 officials

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

The State Election Commission has invoked its plenary powers under Article 243 (K) read with Article 324 to remove nine 'tainted' officers who had 'failed' to prevent aberrations in the form of election-related incidents or poll-related violence. State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar issued instructions here on Friday for removal of these officers so as to conduct polls in a free and fair manner. SEC said he acted as the state government did not respond to his repeated requests to remove the tainted officers.

The SEC said that continuance of such poll-tainted officers in the posts would send a wrong signal to the public. Their "partisan conduct" would be counterproductive for conduct of free and fair polls, he said, and the "affected public would be demoralised."

He stated that these officers should handover their charge and exit

He said that such a move would violate the guidelines of the Centre and asserted that the government would be ready to conduct polls after 60 days of completion of the first

forthwith. He asked collectors from Chittoor and Guntur districts to hand over their charges to joint collectors and asked Tirupati Urban SP to hand over his charge to SP, Chittoor.

The SEC said the Chief Secretary should send a panel of three names of suitable officers as replacements for the collectors of Chittoor and Guntur districts and the SP of Tirupati Urban. The names thus proposed should have vigilance clearance.

In case of subordinate police officers, the director general of police should send a panel of names and proposal to the SEC for replacement of those who are now transferred out.

The officers to be removed included, apart from the two district collectors and the SP, the Dy SP, Palamaneru who, since promoted as additional SP, shall be barred from poll related work; Deputy SP of Srikalahasti and circle inspectors of Macharla, Punganur, Rayadurgam and Tadipatri.

round of vaccination to frontline personnel who were to be involved in conduct of the local elections.

■ Page 2: Poll personnel must take vaccine: CS

# Cong to elect prez by June

**New Delhi, Jan. 22:** The Congress 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), authorised incumbent party chief Sonia Gandhi to schedule the internal election.

■ Report on Page 4

## QUICK ACTION CM sends CS to affected area

# Mystery illness strikes again, 22 unconscious

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

The mystery illness continued to raise its ugly head in the state with nearly 22 fresh cases being reported from Kumarapalli village in Dendulur mandal of West Godavari on Friday.

The affected persons became unconscious after turning giddy and had convulsions for a brief period. Among the affected, 13 were admitted to a government hospital for treatment while the remaining were discharged when they recovered.

The mystery illness seemed to be spreading with more than 600 persons being affected till

now and one death reported from Eluru. Recently, 29 persons were affected in Pulla village of Bhimadole mandal.

Following the development, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy directed chief secretary Aditya Nath Das, principal secretary for health Anil Kumar Singhal and commissioner for health and family welfare K. Bhaskar to rush to Kumarapalli village and take stock of the development.

Accordingly, the senior government officials arrived in the village and interacted with the affected persons and enquired with the local authorities about steps being taken up to treat the patients.

Meanwhile, the authorities collected samples of blood from patients. They also took food items and water and sent them for analysis to IICT and NIN in Hyderabad and also to a lab in Vijayawada.

Later, the chief secretary told media that the CM had directed them to provide all requisite medical intervention to help the affected persons recover.

He said that though the illness was reported earlier from Eluru and its surrounding areas, as the state government acted promptly, the illness was brought under control.

■ Page 3: Healthy secy for testing water

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■ Full report on Page 4

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## SHORT TAKES

IAS RANK  
CONFERRED ON  
JC RAJAKUMARIDC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, JAN 22

IAS rank was conferred on Joint Collector G.Rajakumari (Welfare) by the Central Government. She received conferring orders from the government on Friday. Ms.Rajakumari joined as DWMA project Director to East Godavari in the year 2017 and later, he was transferred to Revenue Divisional Officer in Kakinada. He was promoted as Joint Collector-2 (Welfare) in 2019. She succeeded in monitoring the officials to achieve the goals of their departments respectively. The East Godavari District Collector D.Muralidhar Reddy, Joint Collectors G.Lakshmisha and Keerthi Chakuri, the District Revenue Officer Ch.Sathibabu and other district officials greeted her.

OC JAC DEMANDS  
EWS RESERVATIONS  
IN AP TOODC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, JAN. 22

With the Telangana State implementing EWS reservation for forward communities, the Reddy Association has stepped up the demand for its implementation in Andhra Pradesh also. OC JAC held a dharna near the collectorate here on Friday and performed a Milk Abhishek for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekara Rao.

Joint action committee for OC (OCJAC) state president Birru Pratap Reddy sought immediate implementation of the 10 per cent Economic Weaker Section (EWS) reservation in AP. After the protest dharna, the activists organised Palabhisekham at the flex of prime Minister Modi, thanking him for having introduced this quota system in central government jobs.

TULASI REDDY  
ASKS CM TO  
IMPLEMENT EWSDC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, JAN. 22

The Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee Working President Dr. N. Tulasi Reddy requested the state government to implement EWS reservation. He wrote a letter to Chief Minister, stating that the unemployed youth belonging to castes whose reservation does not apply is said to be in trouble for jobs. He said that the central government had given 10 per cent reservation in central government schools and jobs to the upper caste poor with the 103rd amendment to the constitution.

He said several state governments were implementing it and the neighboring Telangana government was also prepared to implement it. He said the Andhra Pradesh state government was implementing EWS reservations in schools but not in job placements. Poor youth from the upper castes have recently lost 26,807 jobs in village or ward volunteers hired by the state government, 12,589 in secretariats, and 971 in the medical sector. He appealed to the state government to issue orders implementing the 10 per cent EWS reservation.

YADAVAS DEMAND  
GOVT WITHDRAWAL  
ON PHARMA UNITDC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, JAN. 22

The Yadava leaders demanded the state government should withdraw the permissions of the proposed pharma unit, set up by the Divis Labs in Thondangi mandal of East Godavari.

The All India Yadava Sangham President Mekala Ramulu Yadav, the State President Eesarapu Sekhar Yadav and others visited Pampadipeta and Tatipakalu area and expressed their resentment over the government stand on the proposed pharma unit.

Mr Ramulu Yadav said that though the people unanimously urged the government not to allow the proposed pharma unit by the Divis at Thondangi mandal, the government wants to go ahead for the project and it is totally wrong. He said that the All India Yadava Sangham will render its support to the agitators to cancel the permissions to the pharma unit permanently. He said that if the government withdraws the permissions to the Divis, the yadavas across the country would come to Thondangi to take up the agitation in favour of the village people.

## Contentious farm bills



Farmers along with Left activists and leaders take part in 'Chalo Guntur' tractor rally against the Centre's newly proposed agriculture bills in Guntur city on Friday.

SEC notification today on  
four-phase GP polls in AP

SEC maintains it will coordinate with state to hold GP elections

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

The State Election Commission (SEC) is all set to issue notification on Saturday at 10 a.m. for the first phase of gram panchayat (GP) elections.

The SEC's resolve on conduct of polls received a boost after a division bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court headed by Chief Justice Arup Kumar Goswami allowed holding of GP elections in its verdict delivered on Thursday. The notification is scheduled to be issued on Saturday morning even as the Supreme Court is slated to hear on Monday, January 25, the special leave petition (SLP) filed by the AP government seeking setting aside of the HC order. State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar has, however, decided to go ahead with the notification for organising the polls in four phases on February 5, 9, 13 and 17.

The SEC maintained that both the State Election Commission and state government will

GOVT EMPLOYEES SOUGHT POSTPONE  
OF LOCAL BODY ELECTIONSDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

The government employees sought postponing of local body election process till completion of Corona vaccination process for the safety of the employees' lives. The leaders of various employees associations led by AP JAC Amaravati chairman Bopparaju Venkateswarlu and secretary Y. V. Rao met Chief Secretary Das on Friday and submitted a memorandum seeking post-

ponement of local body elections.

Responding to the concerns of government employees, Chief Secretary Das assured that their demands would be considered sympathetically. AP State Panchayat Raj Engineers Association state president V.V. Muralikrishna Naidu, Teachers Association JAC G.V. Narayana Reddy, AP State Police Officers Association president Janukula Srinivas Rao and others were present in the meeting.

coordinate with each other in holding the panchayat elections even as the vaccination programme is on. The state government will implement all safety protocols related to Covid-19, he observed. Authorities will also provide the requisite equipment and training to staff on safety aspects of holding the polls. Ramesh Kumar lauded medical

personnel of both public and private sectors for their dedication in ensuring that Coronavirus is on the retreat. The election commissioner maintained that the State Election Commission has the same powers as Election Commission of India (ECI) when it comes to conduct of elections for local bodies. He asserted that all concerned offi-

cers, departments and district collectors are subordinate to the commission when it comes to poll-related issues. State Election Commission has the final and decisive say when it comes to holding of elections, he underlined.

Earlier, the commissioner called on Governor B i s w a b h u s a n Harichandan and apprised the latter about the measures being taken for conduct of gram panchayat polls in the Andhra Pradesh. The Governor, in turn, is learnt to have expressed support in holding the elections. Pointing out that the State Election Commission's decision on polls has been widely welcomed by various principal stakeholders, the election commissioner warned that any attempts to physically derail the election process by targeting contestants will be dealt with firmly. He directed the police department to keep a close watch on potential troublemakers and deal stringently with any attempts to disturb the polls.

## Poll personnel must take vaccine: CS

FROM PAGE 1

The CS also said that health and well-being of the polling personnel would be ensured only if they took the two doses of the vaccine and acquired immunity so that they could be deputised on poll duty. He made it clear that if any activity is taken up against the Covid-19 guidelines of the Centre, it would imperil the health of the polling personnel.

On the other hand, the state government filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court seeking to set aside the Andhra Pradesh High Court order allowing conduct of gram panchayat polls on Friday. It was admitted and the hearing is to be held on Monday before a three-judge division bench comprising Justice Lalit, Nageswara Rao, Justice S. Abdul Naseer and Justice Indu Malhotra.

The AP government employees also filed an SLP in the apex court with a prayer to provide relief from the High Court order and issue directions to defer conduct of polls by three months under Article 136 of the Constitution.

The SEC also fielded a caveat in the apex court not to give an ex-parte order and hear it before pronouncing any order on the conduct of gram panchayat polls in AP.

The state government's top legal source said that though initially the SLP was not admitted by the Supreme Court registry following some technical issues during filing of it online, subsequently, the issues were resolved and the SLP was admitted.

Meanwhile, the AP is witnessing an unprecedented development in the last few days, with the state government unwill-

ing to allow conduct of gram panchayat polls on the reason that it was pre-occupied with Covid-19 management and vaccination programme and any move to hold elections would keep the health of the people at stake. So is the case with SEC which is bent upon conduct of gram panchayat polls as per schedule claiming that it was its constitutional responsibility to do so.

The SEC is busy preparing for the issue of election notification and also to make arrangements for conduct of polls and even moved the Supreme Court to go ahead with the polls while the state government too was making efforts to stall the election by moving the apex court.

On the other hand, the SEC has decided to adopt electoral rolls already published with reference to 01-01-2019 as qualifying date and updated upto the

date of issue of notification for MPTCs/ZPTCs on 07-03-2020. It turned critical on the department of panchayat raj for failing to obtain the electoral rolls published by the Election Commission of India on 16-11-2020 or even the final rolls published on 15-01-2021 as it wanted to adopt the latest final electoral rolls for the polls.

On the other hand, the Chief Secretary in response to SEC's order to remove nine officers, stated that the SEC failed to follow any due procedure on the issue and added that the state government was considering a follow up action on the arbitrary action taken by the SEC. He further said that the so-called tainted officers were actively involved in the pandemic situation of Covid-19 and were engaged in implementation of vaccination programme at present.

Scared of BJP, Naidu adopted  
Hindutva agenda: MLA VamsiDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

Gannavaram MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsi alleged that Chandrababu Naidu fearing the BJP has adopted Hindu agenda to safeguard Telugu Desam from disappearance. The MLA who was elected on TDP ticket later was distancing from the party and supporting YSR Congress government. He alleged that despite having 40 years of experience, Naidu is engaging in immoral politics in the name of religions and creating divisions in society. He severely alleged that Chandrababu Naidu suspecting about the

● “Despite having 40 years of experience, Naidu is engaging in immoral politics in the name of religions and creating divisions in society”: Vamsi

strengthening of BJP in APz and hijacked Hindutva agenda of the saffron party. He severely alleged that Chandrababu Naidu who already an expert in creating differences in the name of castes now started a new conspiracy in the name of Hindutva to create communal disputes among various faiths in the society. He suggested Chandrababu Naidu to work honestly for the

developing of all communities in society and further for keeping communal harmony in the State. MLA Vamsi felt that there is no need of conducting local body elections in a hurried manner and said that there would no loss in conducting local body elections with one or two months delay. He claimed that Chandrababu Naidu fears to the election in Telangana and did not field party candidate in the recent the Dubbaka byelection and further he did not dare to conduct the campaign in Hyderabad corporation elections in favour of TDP candidates which show his cowardness.

LIQUOR POLICY  
U-TURN SIGN OF  
GRAFT: ASHOKDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

Telugu Desam MLC, P. Ashok Babu, has accused the YSRC government of making a U-turn on its liquor policy by seeking increased revenue and indulging in massive corruption at multiple levels in the name of running government-owned retail liquor shops. He said the ruling party boasted about spending ₹41,000 crore on welfare programmes alone for the poorer sections but, at the same time, it was not talking about the ₹17,500 revenue it got from liquor sales during 2020-21.

He lamented that it was clear the government was taking back “all their benefits and much more” from the people in the form of increased VAT, excise duty, licence fee etc. Petrol, current, sand, drainage and water charges as also property tax were already hiked, he noted. The MLC said that out of the ₹17,500 liquor revenue, the people were paying ₹11,000 crore towards VAT and excise duty. The remaining ₹6,500 crore came in from the cost of liquor. Of this, ₹5,000 crore worth of liquor was sold by just three companies. These included SPY Distilleries and some other brands, which were given patronage by the government.

All these companies were paying nearly ₹350 crore of J-tax to the chief minister every month, he said. Ashok Babu said that in order to cover up this corruption, the Chief Minister was allowing his party leaders to loot nearly ₹500 crore by way of collecting huge rents from the government retail liquor shops. He said the state-wide liquor transportation contract was given to a YSRC leader who gained from this by ₹25 crore. “He is collecting ₹30 per carton for transportation”.

CONTEMPT OF COURT  
NOTICES SERVED ON  
COURT OFFICIALSDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

In an unprecedented move, AP High Court served notices on its own officers for contempt of court as they failed to act on its directions and posted the next hearing to Feb. 5.

Single judge bench headed by justice B. Devanand held hearing on Friday and took up the case on suo moto basis and served notices of contempt of court to registrar (judicial) Alapati Giridhar, another registrar N. Muralidhar Rao, some section officers and their assistants, deputy section officer, examiner and assistants. A contempt of court petition was filed on commissioner of survey, settlements and land records as the official failed to implement the court order to promote an employee as the inspector of survey. The judge issued an order to serve notice to the respondent Siddharth Jain on Nov. 30, 2020.

HC STRIKES DOWN  
TWO GOs ON  
MEDICAL COLLEGE FEEDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

The AP High Court has struck down the GOs issued during the Telugu Desam government allowing Private Unaided Medical and Dental Colleges to steeply increase annual fees. It said they are against the judgments pronounced by Supreme Court. The Court found fault with the government for fixing fees based on agreements with private medical colleges. The High Court struck down two impugned GO Nos 72, and 77 issued by the TD government in 2017. It also directed AP Higher Education Regulatory and Management Commission (APHERMO) to fix the fee based on the expenditures incurred by respective colleges. It directed the government to notify the fee fixed by the Commission. The Bench comprising Justices Chagari Praveen Kumar and Rao Raghunandan passed the judgment.

## POLITICS | TEMPLES Political interference in temples and their trust boards has been causing disturbances

## Sena ‘shadows’ to keep tab on 12 temples: PK

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 22

Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan said that his party would soon form shadow committees to keep an eye on the functioning of temple committees and boards of 12 major temples in the state, including Tirumala, and also check if there were any violations in the implementation of ‘dharma’ in them.

“Despite the spate of attacks on places of worship in the state, the government's indifference in this matter would give impetus to those indulging in such unholy things”, Pawan Kalyan felt while addressing the media here on Friday along with the party's political affairs committee chairman Nadendla Manohar, before winding up his two-day

● “Would the YSRC government show the same attitude if the same kind of attacks happened in places of worship of other faiths?”, Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan questioned the state government.

tour to Tirupati and Tirumala.

The government has immediately arrested those who posted about temples on social media. But why was it so late in arresting a man who admitted to vandalizing idols in temples? It raises many doubts as to why the government took all those days to arrest the man, he said.

He alleged that political interference in temples and their trust boards has been causing disturbances for the past several years. He said political interferences and appointing politicians as members on

temple trust boards, including Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, should be stopped.

Pawan Kalyan slammed the decision of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam trust board to keep open the ‘Vaikunta Dwaram’ at the sacred abode of Lord Venkateswara in Tirumala for 10 days from Vaikunta Ekadasi. It was not fair to break centuries-old practices, he said, while recalling that the holy passage used to be kept open for devotees only on Vaikunta Ekadasi and Dwadasi days for several centuries.

Condemning the series

of incidents of vandalism at temples in the state, he accused the state government of inaction in identifying and nabbing the perpetrators.

“Would the YSRC government show the same attitude if the same kind of attacks happened in places of worship of other faiths?” he questioned.

He also alleged that the law and order situation in the state has been deteriorating with the ruling party targeting and harassing common people and opposition parties when they post their views on various issues on social media platforms.

Replying to a question, the Jana Sena chief said that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was a responsible and committed organisation.

JANA SENA CHIEF DONATES ₹30 L  
TO AYODHYA’S RAM MANDIR TRUSTDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 22

Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan donated ₹30 lakh for the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. The Jana Sena Chief handed over the cheque to the RSS state chief Bharatiji. He also gave a cheque for ₹11,000 arranged by his personal staff.

He said “Lord Sri Ramachandra embodies dharma and tolerance,

sacrifice and bravery. They are an inspiration to all. It is everyone's responsibility to support construction of the temple in Ayodhya”.

“After knowing that I am donating, my personal staff members, including Muslims and Christians, have also raised ₹11,000 for the purpose,” he added. Former minister and BJP leader Dr. Kamini Srinivas and RSS representatives participated in the programme.

“Is there still an organization anywhere in the world that is so committed to leave everything for the country even after all

these decades?, Pawan Kalyan asked, while saying that he had never seen such a strong organisation in the world.



## SHORT TAKES

## Special train to Rayagada

**Visakhapatnam:** Railways has decided to run daily special express trains between Guntur-Rayagada from January 27. The train will leave Guntur daily at 11.20 pm, reach Visakhapatnam on the next day at 8.45 am and depart at 9.05 am to arrive Rayagada at 1.40 pm. In return direction, the train will leave Rayagada daily at 2.50 pm with effect from January 28, reach Visakhapatnam at 7.15 pm.

## TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED IN AGENCY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 22

The agency police launched a special skill development programme Sankalpam for the benefit of unemployed men and women in Visakhapatnam agency.

In this connection, ASP of Chintapalli division Vidhya Sagar Naidu launched the poster for agarbatti manufacturing and adda-leaf plate making courses to be conducted in Sileru and Dharakonda areas of Vishakhapatnam agency as part of the programme to be conducted jointly by ITDA Paderu, APSSDC and Dandakaranya Educational Society.

Through Sankalpam, the Vishakhapatnam District police were making efforts to connect job and skill seekers with providers and were targeting interior areas.

These are 30-60 days duration courses conducted with focus on youth between 18-35 years irrespective of educational background, but coming from interior areas.

Speaking to reporters, ASP Vidhya Sagar Naidu said that women will be given priority and free food and accommodation will be provided to participating members along with a certificate from NSDC.

The police department is also having talks with buyers to facilitate marketing of the manufactured products.

## AP RECORDS 137 COVID CASES, FOUR DEATHS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

Andhra Pradesh registered 137 fresh cases of Covid-19 and four deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin on Friday reporting that out of 48,313 samples tested for Covid-19, 137 persons were found infected with the virus. Out of a total number of 1,27,87,961 samples tested, 8,86,694 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 8,78,060 were recovered while 1,488 are still active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of confirmed Covid-19, East Godavari, Krishna and Visakhapatnam registered 17 each followed by 16 in Guntur, 15 in Anantapur, 12 in Chittoor, each each in Kurnool and West Godavari.

## TRAINING MUST FOR SURGERIES: AYUSH OFFICIAL

DC CORRESPONDENT  
SRIKAKULAM, JAN. 22

State commissioner for Ayush medicine P. Usha Kumari said that training was mandatory for the Ayush doctors to perform surgeries. She was in Srikakulam on Friday to attend a meeting of Ayush doctors from Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam for their reorientation programme.

Talking to the media personnel after the programme Usha Kumari said Benarus Hindu University had a separate department to train the Ayush doctors for conducting various surgeries.

## Seeking justice



Mahila Chetana members stage a protest in front of the in-law's house of a married woman, Aparna, near MVP Colony in Visakhapatnam on Friday. Aparna's husband abandoned her with her two girl children for over nine years.

## SPL TEAM VISITS ABANDONED VESSEL AT VIZAG

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 22

A special team, comprising of architects, bankers and marine engineers visited the merchant ship that was abandoned by Bangladesh recently to study its stability in the waters, financial viability and other related issues. The APTDC officials said they are exploring all possibility to take over the ship to convert into an entertainment centre which might include a floating restaurant. The vessel, which ran aground due to a cyclonic storm, was a major attraction during the last Sankranti vacation.

Thousands of people went close to the vessel during a low tide and took pictures.

Representatives of Gill Marine, the company which drained out the fuel and furnace oil and subsequently took over the management of the vessel, told DC that the APTDC officials were evincing interest in buying off the ship and suggested them not to make any deal until they have heard from the government. "The government sounds serious about taking over the vessel but did not make any agreement so far. A team of experts visited the vessel and based on their report, the government might take a decision," said Surrender Singh Gill.

## RS smuggling rampant in AP

Smugglers open new routes into forests

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 22

Though the Andhra Pradesh Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF) tightened the vigil and claimed to have curbed the smuggling of red sanders to some extent, smuggling activities had once again become rampant with smugglers having opened new routes to venture into the Seshachalam forests, this time through areas under Yerpedu in Chittoor district.

In Chittoor (west) and some parts in Anantapur divisions, more than 165 entry/exit points and over 198 loading points were identified by the RSASTF in the past. These points are being monitored on a daily basis by the forest staffers and the task-force personnel, who also take up combing operations inside the forest almost every day.

With forces blocking almost all the entry/exit points and loading points along the western side (Tirupati-Piler areas), the smugglers have changed their entry/exit points and passage of smuggled material through areas under Yerpedu mandal. They are reportedly getting

away from the hawkish eye of the forces for some time now. It is learnt that the smugglers until now are effectively assembling in abandoned places close to the forest areas under Yerpedu, where they set themselves up before entering the forests. The risk is minimal at these territories as they are closer to the forest area and stay away even with minimum crowd, making it simple for the red sanders smugglers to trick the task force teams.

However, it has now become difficult for the smugglers and woodcutters to use these routes under the Yerpedu mandal because the forces have blocked the porous

passages now. During a combing operation, kickstarted on Thursday, the taskforce team have traced out the routes and sent out a strong message to the smugglers that the forces can find them the minute they achieve the forest periphery.

According to RSASTF DSP Venkataiah, acting on a specific information that smugglers are now using routes under the Yerpedu corridor more freely than before, the taskforce has put focus on these porous routes. On Friday early morning, a team sent out on a combing operation under the leadership of RSI Lingadhar have found the new passages in Yerpedu area and thwarted six smugglers attempting to venture into the woods.

A senior officer said that the taskforce has advanced its surveillance system and also improved the informer network at the roots of villages in Tamil Nadu, from where the smugglers and woodcutters are coming. Though smugglers found new strategies and applied tactics to smuggle red sanders logs, the taskforce is confident that their plans will be foiled, he added.

## Health secy for testing water

From Page 1

He said that as the samples were sent for analysis, they would come to know about the reason for the illness once the reports were out and promised to take all necessary steps to avoid recurrence of such a health issue in future.

Health principal secretary Anil Kumar Singhal said that the cases related to mystery illness were reported from Pulla and Kumarapalli villages and added that they were making efforts to find out the

reason. He underlined the need to test water samples in and around the affected villages and Central agencies if needed to find out the cause for such an illness.

On Thursday, a farmer identified as B. Bullabai, 40, died while working in the field when he accidentally slipped into an irrigation canal at Kummurikunta village in West Godavari.

It caused tension among the villagers as they feared that he died due to the mystery illness.

## 30 PER CENT FEE SOP SOUGHT IN PVT COLLEGES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 22

AP Parents Association members appealed to the Regional Inspection Officer (RIO) for Intermediate Education to implement the 30 per cent fee concession policy for the academic year 2020-21 in the private aided and unaided educational institutions.

The association members, on Friday, handed over a representation to the RIO, Nellore. President of the association, S. Narahari said that the APHERMC and the Board of Intermediate Education (BIE) has directed the private, aided and unaided institutions in the state to follow the GO, No. 57, providing 30 per cent concession to the students this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

He demanded the state government initiate a stern action against those colleges collecting fees by violating the GO and the directions of the BIE.

"As per the directions of the Secretary of the BIE, colleges must display the details of students, groups and the fee they are collecting from the parents on the notice boards. But they are not implementing the rule," he said.

He also demanded the RIO to convene a meeting with all colleges and explain to them about the GO. No. 57 and make sure that they implement it.

He warned that they would initiate a protest against the BIE, if they fail to resolve this issue.

● Demanded the RIO to convene a meeting with all colleges and explain to them about the GO

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## Docs give new lease of life to patient

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

The doctors gave a new lease of life to a critically near-fatal woman through cystoscopy and DJ stent placement at Vijayawada.

A 28-year-old female, Divya (name changed) came to Manipal hospitals Vijayawada with complaints of fever with chills, backache, nausea and vomiting for 3 days.

Additionally, she was experiencing decreased urine output, worsening breathlessness since the first day. She visited the hospital at the midnight with the above-mentioned complaints.

Speaking about the surgery Dr Sridhar A.V.S.N.S., consultant nephrology and kidney transplant physician said, "On arrival, she was in a state of shock. She was experiencing difficulty in breathing and anuric. On evaluation, we realised she had severe renal failure, acute respiratory distress syndrome (Ards), leucocytosis, right acute pyelonephritis with pelvic ureteric junction calculus, and negative RT PCR for SARS COV-2. All these above complications made this case very serious as the patient was in a very fatal situation. She was

intubated and put on mechanical ventilation with vasopressors and SLED-F (sustained low-efficiency hemodiafiltration), for eight hours. After that, she underwent a cystoscopy and DJ stent placement in the right ureter."

Speaking about the surgery, Dr Sudhakar Kantipudi, Hospital Director said that when the patient visited us, she was on the verge of a life-and-death situation. It was very vital for us to stabilize the situation before taking any further steps. The overall condition of the patient has been improved with her blood pressure coming back to normal, improvement in her urinary output (UOP) and subsequently taken out from ventilation support.

She recovered completely from her renal failure and after one month she successfully underwent percutaneous nephrolithotomy (PCNL) for right renal calculus.

## JNTU-ANANTAPUR V-C APPOINTED

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 22

Prof. Ginka Ranga Janardhana, professor and APPSC member has been appointed as vice chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Anantapur (JNTUA). Mr Ranga Janardhana will assume charge as vice-chancellor at his office on Saturday. The newly appointed

vice chancellor from Tadipatri town and his high school and Intermediate Education was at the Government Junior College, New Town, Anantapur and did B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering branch from JNTU College of Engineering, Anantapur. He pursued his Master of Engineering at PSG College of Technology, Coimbatore.

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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.

## 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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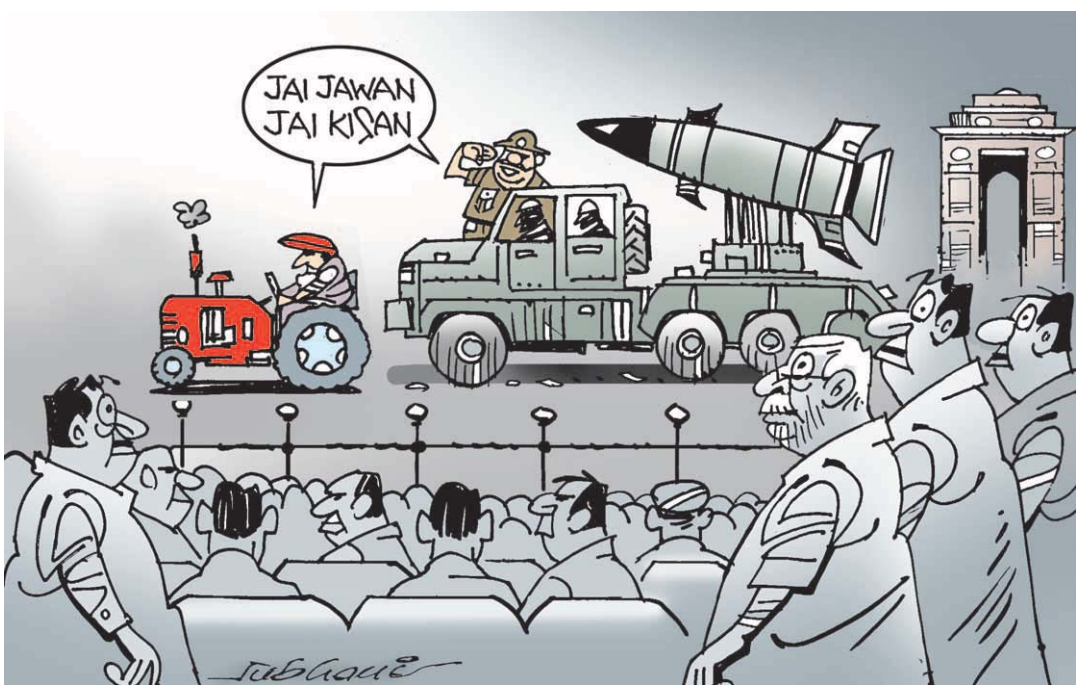
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Subhani



## 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!

*Poocho 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](mailto:www.shobhaade.blogspot.com)

### LETTERS

#### LOCAL POLLS

The SEC of AP had the local polls postponed mid-way in March 2020 when Covid was not severe. At that time the SEC opposed the election even though the State wanted to go ahead. And now under very serious pandemic, it is not an issue for the SEC. It is unfortunate that a single judge of AP HC found reason to postpone local polls but a two judge bench of the same HC allowed the local polls to be held. Hats off to our judiciary.

Govardhana Myneedu  
Vijayawada

#### VACCINE FEARS

Transparency and communication are vital and crucial when crores of people are to be inoculated (*Transparency needed to remove all vaccine fears, DC, Jan. 22*). The author is unequivocal and unreserved in his analysis about the vaccine fears. Further, the fear of being treated like guinea pigs is perhaps making people shy away from the vaccine.

Dr C. Ghanshyam  
Visakhapatnam

#### FARM LAWS

Now that the farmers have rejected the Centre's proposal to suspend Farm Laws for 1.5 years, the only recourse left is to make the implementation optional for States as agriculture is after all a state subject. The Catch-22 situation can only be solved by satisfying both the factions of farmers. Unless of course the PM, as is his wont, comes out with some sort of out of the box solution.

K. Nehru Patnaik  
Visakhapatnam

## 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

### Cong-R to contest 32 Lok Sabha seats

HYDERABAD, JANUARY. 22 The Ruling Congress had set up its candidates in 32 constituencies out of 41 to contest the mid-term elections for Lok Sabha scheduled to be held in the first week of March.

Making the announcement the Chief Minister, Mr. K. Brahmananda Reddi told newsmen that the party would support Independents in Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Visakhapatnam constituencies.

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 buttoned 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 Feromonereplacementwalla (abbreviated mostly to Effpeewalla), 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!



SHORT TAKES

BIHAR TO KEEP WATCH ON SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

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 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.

Third rebel TMC minister resigns; party expels MLA for backing him

He has become third TMC heavyweight minister in a row to leave 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.

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 dis-

trict.

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 supreme's residence in Kalighat and Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar at Raj Bhavan respectively on Friday 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 oppor-



TMC MLA Rajib Banerjee talks to the media outside Raj Bhawan in Kolkata on Friday.

tunity."

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

misunderstand 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

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 ASG S.V. Raju, appearing on behalf of the DoPT.

Govt, unions talks hit roadblock

SANJAY KAW | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 22

The government's negotiations with the protesting farmers' unions hit a roadblock on Friday as the farmer leaders once again stuck to their demands for repeal of the three agriculture laws and a legal guarantee for MSP, even as the Centre asked them to reconsider its proposal for putting the laws on hold for 12 to 18 months.

Unlike the last 10 rounds of talks, at Friday's meeting the two sides could not even reach a decision on the next date as the government also hardened its position saying it is ready

to meet once the unions agree to discuss the suspension proposal.

On Thursday, the government offered to put on hold the three laws and set up a joint committee to find solutions. After internal consultations, the farmers' unions decided to reject the offer and stick to their two major demands.

Even though the 11th round of talks lasted for nearly five hours, the two sides sat face to face for less than 25 minutes. The talks were held in two sessions — the morning session lasted for about 15 minutes, after which the Central ministers left the meeting room. After about

four hours, the ministers again came and held discussions for less than 10 minutes.

"This is an insult to farmers. When agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar came, he asked us to consider the government's proposal and said that he is ending the process of meetings," said S.S. Pandher of Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, 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 farm laws. However, he said, they are firm on their demand of complete repeal.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES

RUSSIA VOWS CRACKDOWN ON NAVALNY RALLY

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.

"Attempts to hold unsanctioned public events, as well as any provocative actions on the part of their participants, will be regarded as a threat to public order and immediately suppressed," Moscow police said on Friday.

Navalny's associates urged Russians to take to the streets despite official pressure and promised financial help to protesters given fines on Saturday.

LANKA TO PROBE INTO WAR CRIME ALLEGATIONS

Colombo, Jan. 22: Sri Lanka will conduct an investigation into allegations its troops committed war crimes during a conflict with Tamil separatists, it said on Friday, a month before the UN Human Rights Council is due to discuss the island's rights record.

At least 1,00,000 people were killed in the decades-long civil war, and there were allegations that 40,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the final onslaught.

The government denies the toll. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was defence chief when the rebels were crushed in 2009, named a commission of enquiry Friday to look into investigations held by previous governments.

The panel was given six months to look into allegations of "human rights violations, serious violations of international humanitarian law," his office said.

It would also be tasked with investigating previous "inconclusive investigations" instigated by Colombo following international pressure.

Biden admin believes in WHO: says Kamala

VP Harris says WHO vital to control Covid-19 pandemic

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 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 read-out 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 admin-



Snow-covered the ski lifts of 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, on Friday. Lebanese authorities have extended a nationwide lockdown to Feb. 8 amid a steep rise in Covid-19 death and infection rates.

Beijing launches drive for testing 2 million in 48 hrs

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.

istration'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.

Math honour for Indian

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 statement.

The prize consists of a medal and \$1,00,000. Srivastava, Marcus and Spielman solved long-standing 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,



Nikhil Srivastava

and graph theory that has inspired the next generation of theoretical computer scientists, it said.

They published new constructions 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.

"Their proofs provided new tools to address numerous other problems, which have been embraced by other computer scientists seeking to apply the geometry of polynomials to solve discrete optimisation problems," the academy said.

The Michael and Sheila Held Prize is presented annually and honours outstanding, innovative, creative, and influential research in the areas of combinatorial and discrete optimisation, or related parts of computer science, such as the design and analysis of algorithms and complexity theory. The prize was established in 2017 by the bequest of Michael And Sheila Held.

IS claims hand in Baghdad 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 combat

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

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.

NEW CONGRESS CHIEF TO BE ELECTED BY JUNE

ASHHAR KHAN | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 22

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) further pushed the organisational elections to June. Speaking to reporters, General Secretary K.C. Venugopal said, "Congress Working Committee has decided that there will be an elected Congress president by June 2021."

The Congress elections will be held now in May after the Assembly elections of five states — West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry are over. Several party leaders were hoping to go to the Assembly elections 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. The dates for the election of a Congress president and the CWC will be announced soon after being ratified by the Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

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.

MUSK OFFERS TO BUILD TUNNELS IN FLOOD-PRONE MIAMI

Miami, Jan. 22: As the world waited with baited breath for the US presidential inauguration, Tesla CEO Elon Musk had more pressing issues at hand — exchanging tweets with Miami's mayor about building a tunnel system under the Florida city.

Other Florida-seem enthusiastic about the potential project by Musk's Boring Company, but many Floridians were quick to point out how shallow the water table is in the state's swampy south.

"Cars & trucks stuck in traffic generate megatons of toxic gases & particulate, but @boring-company road tunnels under Miami would solve traffic & be an example to the world," the tech tycoon tweeted, adding he had discussed the project with Florida Governor Ron DeSantis last week.

— AFP



## 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 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, who are hoping this is the beginning of another run of victories. They had a five-game winning streak snapped in their most recent outing, a 115-113 loss to Golden State. "Our motivation was not losing two in a row tonight. We were able to get that accomplished," said forward Anthony Davis. James made a key three pointer and capped his night with an emphatic double clutch slam dunk as the Lakers improved to a NBA best 12-4 on the season after Thursday's gritty performance at the Fiserv Forum in Milwaukee. — AFP

## 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

## 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

## Deepak storms out, suspended

**Vadodra, 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



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

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 Vadodra."

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

## 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.

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 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 Wriddhiman 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.

"I don't see who is No.1 or 2... Team will give a chance to those who do better. I will continue to do my job. Selection is not in my hands, it's up

## 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 allrounder, 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. — PTI

to the management."

"No one learns algebra in class I. You always go step by step. He is giving his best and will definitely improve. He has matured and proved himself. In the long run, it augurs well for the

Indian team."

"The way he has shown his intent after being sidelined from his favourite T20 and ODI formats was really exceptional," Wriddhiman further added. — PTI

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