

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VIJAYAWADA | THURSDAY | 7 JANUARY 2021



**NATION | 5**

**MP may bar non-veg food at hotels**



**WORLD | 5**

**Democrats win first Georgia runoff**

**SPORTS | 6**

**India vs Australia third Test from today**



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## WEATHER



Max: 34.0°C  
Min: 23.0°C  
RH: 81%  
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy.  
Max/Min temp.  
34/23 9C

## COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+18,341)	(+224)
1,03,92,443	1,50,338
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+417)	(+2)
TS: 2,88,410	1,556
(+289)	(+3)
AP: 8,83,876	7,125

### CASES AROUND THE WORLD

8,72,51,023
DEATHS
18,83,650
COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES
218
worldometers.info/coronavirus

## ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana  
Tithi: Margasira Bahula Navami  
till 11.56 pm  
Star: Chitta till 3.43 pm  
Varjyam: 8.58 pm to 10.27 pm  
Durmuhurtam: 10.32 am to 11.16 am; 2.56 pm to 3.40 pm  
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm  
**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
Jamadi-ul-Awwal 22, 1442 AH  
**PRAYERS**  
Fajar: 6.10 am  
Zohar: 1.30 pm  
Asar: 4.30 pm  
Maghrib: 5.54 pm  
Isha: 8.15 pm  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.37 AM**  
**SUNSET TODAY 5.49 PM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 12.34 PM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 1.27 AM**

## COUNTER POINT



Let's invite Trump... he never supported our farmers agitation!

## SHORT TAKES

### Cancel R-Day festivities: Tharoor

New Delhi: Congress leader Shashi Tharoor has suggested cancelling the Republic Day festivities after British Prime Minister Boris Johnson cancelled his India visit due to the coronavirus situation in the United Kingdom, saying getting crowds to cheer the parade as usual would be "irresponsible". Johnson, who was scheduled to attend the Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi as chief guest, has cancelled his visit to India later this month due to the growing health crisis created by the new coronavirus variant in the United Kingdom.

### 69K birds culled over bird flu scare

Thiruvananthapuram: Over 69,000 birds including ducks and chicken were culled in the districts of Alappuzha and Kottayam to contain the H5N8 strain of bird flu, Kerala animal husbandry minister K. Raju said on Wednesday. The minister said 19 Rapid Response Teams have been engaged in culling birds in both the districts and the regions suspected to have infected the birds will be sanitised on Thursday. Raju said there is no history of the H5N8 virus being transmitted to humans. As of now, he said there is no history of the virus being transmitted to humans.

## New AP chief justice sworn-in



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy offers a bouquet to Chief Justice Arup Kumar Goswami of the AP High Court after the latter was sworn-in at the Tummalapalli Kalakshetram in Vijayawada on Wednesday. ■ Report on Page 3 — By arrangement

## AKHILA PRIYA ARRESTED FOR KIDNAP IN HYD

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD JAN. 6

The city police on Wednesday placed former AP minister Bhuma Akhila Priya under arrest for her alleged involvement in the kidnapping of former hockey player Praveen Rao and two of his brothers, Naveen Rao and Sunil Rao, on Tuesday night. The kidnapping was done by a gang posing as income-tax officials and arriving in three SUVs and leaving the home with the three victims. Police finally helped in the release of the kidnapped men.

According to police, a complaint was received from law student Katakani Manish, stating that he was at home with his family at Krishna Residency in Manovikasnagar when about 15 persons, aged between 25-40 and speaking in English and Telugu arrived there. One wore a police uniform and carried a stick while the others were in plainclothes. They walked in, claiming they were I-T officials.

■ Page 2: Land dispute may have triggered kidnap

## MLC BYPOLL TO BE HELD ON JANUARY 28

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

The Election Commission of India has announced the bypoll for a casual vacancy in AP Legislative Council scheduled to be held on January 28.

The ECI in a statement on Wednesday announced the bypoll schedule and accordingly, notification for conduct of bypoll to be issued on January 11 and the last date for filing of nominations to be on January 18. Verification of nominations is to be held on January 19 and withdrawal of nominations on January 21. The counting of votes is to be held on January 28.

Telugu Desam MLC Potlula Sunitha resigned to her position on November 1 even as her tenure lasts up to March 3, 2023. She extended her support to the ruling YSRC.

● Notification for conduct of bypoll to be issued on January 11 and the last date for filing of nominations to be on January 18. Verification of nominations is to be held on January 19 and withdrawal of nominations on January 21.

## 2nd nationwide dry run for Covid vaccine on Jan. 8

New Delhi, Jan. 6: In a simulation of the actual execution of the Covid-19 vaccine roll-out that is expected to begin in a few days, another round of dry run will be conducted in all districts across states and UTs, except UP and Haryana, on January 8 to ensure efficient planning and management of immunisation process.

Each district will identify three types of session sites, similar to the previous dry run conducted on January 2, including a public health facility (district hospital/medical college), private health facility and rural or urban outreach sites, the Union health ministry said on Wednesday.

In this regard, a meeting of Union health minister Harsh Vardhan with the health ministers of states and Union territories is scheduled to take place on January 7 to guide them on conducting the dry run, the ministry said.

"The vaccine dry run will be conducted on January 8 in all districts across India, except for UP and Haryana. Covid-19 vaccine dry run has already been conducted in all districts in UP on January 5 and Haryana is conducting it in all its districts tomorrow (Thursday)," a source said.

"The Central government is gearing up for the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccine across the country. The Union ministry of health has been proactively carrying out the preparations for roll-out of Covid-19 vaccine, in collaboration with states and UTs and all stakeholders, over the past couple of months to ensure that the preparations for roll-out are on track," the ministry said in a statement.

## ANTIGEN TEST PRICE SLASHED TO ₹230 IN AP

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

The state government has reduced the price of the Rapid Antigen Test for Covid-19 to ₹230 from ₹750 per test, in private NABL and ICMR approved labs.

The department of health, medical and family welfare issued GO Rt No. 13 here on Wednesday stating that in the wake of increased availability of kits in the market and due to competition as more firms started manufacturing such kits, the cost of kits was decreased.

The country's drugs regulator on Sunday approved Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield and the indigenously developed Covaxin of Bharat Biotech for restricted emergency use in the country. "The roll out of Covid-19 vaccine is expected to begin in the near future. This milestone entails the need for testing of all planned mechanisms for conducting the vaccination drive in the country," it said.

The entire planning of the vaccination drive including beneficiary registration, microplanning and vaccination at the planned session site will be tested under the leadership of District Collector during the dry run.

The dry run will also familiarize the state, district, block and hospital level officers on all aspects of the Covid vaccine roll out.

## MYSTERY | CASE

**Tapan Misra says he was poisoned ahead of promotion interview**

## Space scientist alleges poisoning at Isro

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC  
BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 6

Odisha-born space scientist Tapan Misra has alleged that he was poisoned with the deadly arsenic trioxide on May 23, 2017 at the headquarters of Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) at Bengaluru, when he had gone there to attend a promotion interview.

Misra is a senior adviser at the Isro and is retiring at the end of this month. The scientist said he came out in public as he feared for

his life post retirement. In a much more serious allegation, Misra said: "I will also not rule it out as a new modus operandi of adjusting seniority and clearing me, who was perceived as an obstacle. Whatever may be the reason, it was a great shame for the country and our security apparatus."

"My contribution was in developing radar imaging satellites — RISAT, considered a very high-grade technology. We can watch the earth's surface in any situation, be it day or night, using this system.

## Jagan to rebuild temples razed by Naidu's regime

CM to lay foundation for works at Kanakadurga temple tomorrow

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

The YSR Congress government would reconstruct Hindu temples demolished by the Telugu Desam government in Vijayawada.

Endowment minister Vellampalli Srinivas Rao said Chief Minister Jag-an Mohan Reddy would launch the reconstruction work at the auspicious hour of 11.01 am on Friday.

The Chief Minister would also lay the foundation stone for development works at the Kanakadurga temple here with a government fund outlay of ₹70 crore. Besides these, the government would reconstruct 40 temples in 13 districts of AP.

Minister Srinivas alleged that TD president and then Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had no faith in God and did not respect Hindu religion. "Hence he committed the sin of demolishing temples in Vijaya-wada during

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 6

State BJP leaders will make a fresh attempt to visit Ramateertham and offer prayers at the Sri Kodandarama Swamy temple atop Bodikonda, Nellimerla, in Vizianagaram district.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, BJP state president Somu Veerajulu said the party would seek permis-

sion from the state government for the visit for prayers to Lord Rama. "When they allowed Rajya Sabha member V. Vijay Sai Reddy and Opposition leader Nara Chandrababu Naidu, what would be the harm if we are allowed," Veerajulu asked.

Stressing that the BJP is not against other religions, he said the party would honour the sentiments of Hindus who comprised 80 per cent of the

population in the state, and demand protection of Hinduism and Hindu temples.

He said the state BJP unit would, after January 20, launch a Jana Jagrana Yatra from Ramateertham to Tirumala via Pithapuram, Antarvedi, Rajahmundry, Vijayawada and Srisailem, where temples were attacked.

■ Page 2: Why no arrests for temple attack, asks BJP

Krishna Pushkaram, and never tried to rebuild those holy temples."

He said the Chief Minister, honouring the sentiments of Hindus, decided to reconstruct

those temples. Five temples, namely the Dakshinamukha Anjaneya Swamy temple, the Seethamma Vari Paadaalu, the Rahu-Kethu, the Boddu Bomma and

Gosala Krishna temple would be rebuilt.

The minister alleged that the Opposition Telugu Desam and BJP were trying to divide the people in the name of religion.

## CONSUMERS UNHAPPY OVER SUBSIDY ON LPG CYLINDERS

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 6

Several liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) consumers were unhappy for not getting the subsidy amount on refills while some complained that they get only a meagre amount being credited to their accounts. Frequent changes in domestic cylinder prices and subsequent change in the subsidy was creating a lot of confusion among the consumers.

As far as Chittoor district is concerned, there are around 10 lakh domestic LPG consumers and most of them are complaining that the drastic cut in subsidy amount is hurting their kitchen budget. They were seen visiting gas agencies to find out why the amount was so less, considering that the price of a domestic cylinder is currently ₹728.5.

In May 2020, the cost of a 14.2 kg cylinder in the district was priced at ₹593.5 and the subsidy amount was almost dropped to zero. In September, the cost of a refill rose to ₹628 and the subsidy amount remained between ₹25 and ₹22. However, the cooking gas price has been increased to ₹728.50 in December last year.

In the past, when a refill price was hiked, the subsidy part was also increased. In some metro cities, when a cylinder was priced at ₹714, the subsidy amount transferred to a consumer's bank account was around ₹174. Last April, when a refill was priced at ₹725, the subsidy was between ₹220-238.

In Chittoor district, the subsidy given per refill was between ₹175-195 in early 2020. Further, the subsidy was cut down drastically and now most of the consumers are getting only ₹19.75 per refill from the last six months. Representatives of gas agencies say that the actual price of a cylinder has been reduced beyond the subsidised cylinder price by the Centre, which is why the consumers aren't getting subsidy.

■ Page 2: An NRI professor asked me to remain silent

■ Page 2: Distributors bear brunt of LPG consumers



## SHORT TAKES

## CM CONSOLES CHALLA FAMILY, PROMISES HELP

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, JAN. 6

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy consoled the bereaved family of MLC Challa Ramakrishna Reddy, who has passed away recently due to Covid-19. A senior most politician, Ramakrishna Reddy was an MLC belonging to the YSRC.

On Wednesday, the CM visited Orvakal Airport to console Challa's family members. It was learnt that the vacant MLC seat is being promised to Challa's son Bhageeratha Reddy.

Meanwhile, the CM was accorded a grand welcome at Orvakal Airport by district collector G. Veera Pandian and MLAs. From there he took a helicopter to reach Owk town where Challa's family resides. By special convoy he reached the house of Challa where he met his family members and consoled them.

The Chief Minister garlanded the photo of Challa Ramakrishna Reddy and paid floral tribute. Later he spoke to the family members and assured them that his party will stand by them and extend all support whenever they needed.

## MLC | POLLS

## NO NEED OF GPF, EPF MEMBERSHIP FOR TEACHERS: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

The Andhra Pradesh High Court ruled out any need for membership in general provident fund and employees' provident fund for teachers to enrol as voters in the MLC polls for teachers' constituency.

The All Private Polytechnic and Engineering College Staff Welfare Association president Kota Saikrishna filed a petition in High Court seeking direction for not insisting on membership in GPF and EPF for registration of voters for MLC polls.

Single judge bench led by justice A.V. Sesha Sai held the hearing on the petition recently and asked the Election Commission of India to clarify on the issue.

Accordingly, the ECI filed an affidavit in the court and its counsel Avinash Desai informed the court that the membership in EGP and GPF to enrol as voters for MLC polls for teachers' constituency was not compulsory and it can be only voluntary. However, the ECI said that the private teachers were supposed to obtain service certificates from the heads of their institutions along with a counter signature from a competent authority with regard to EPG and GPF issues.

The ECI's counsel further informed the court that under the provisions of the Representation of People Act, 1951, any addition or removal of names could be carried out until the last day for filing of nomination and said that the members of the petitioner's Association could also apply for addition in voters' list under Form-19. In case of any failure to submit such forms by December 31, 2020, such members could apply until the last date for filing of nomination papers, he said and added that the final publication would be on January 18, 2021.

The judge after recording all details issued orders resolving the petition.

## CASES BOOKED AGAINST REPORTERS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, JAN. 6

The Singayakonda police arrested several media personnel including reporters of three mainline TV channels and a truck driver on Wednesday over circulation of false news, messages, images in the media about damage to the idols of Lord Narasimha Swamy and Goddess Lakshmi in Singarayakonda in Prkasam district. Police said they registered cases against reporters of five popular electronic channels - NTV, HMTV, ABN, TV 5, and ETV - and of some Youtube channels, as they placed posts in a conspiratorial manner on facebook, whatsapp, twitter etc apart from broadcasting false news on television. Cases have been booked under various sections IPC and cable network act. Additional SP (Admin) of Praksam B. Ravichandra said said the cement scales on the statues had cracked and broken was not a recent development.

## TD chants mantras to win

Naidu harps on Hindutva agenda to restrain BJP from relegating TD

MD ILYAS | DC  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

Saffron and yellow parties are competing with one another by whipping up Hindutva sentiments in Andhra Pradesh.

Telugu Desam, which has always projected its secular credentials, is gradually shedding the secular veil and donning the role of 'Hindutva' protector, which gets evidenced from the scathing attacks against the YSR Congress and accusing it of promoting religious conversions.

The state's main Opposition party started an agitation against desecration and attacks on temples six months ago but the party never portrayed YSRC as a Christian party. However, now the TD has been openly terming Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, home minister Mekathoti Sucharitha, and DGP Gautam Sawang as Christians who are unable to protect temples. Going a step further, they are alleging that the ruling party is into promotion of religious conversions.

Similarly, the BJP Telangana state president and MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar, while claiming that BJP was Bhagavad Gita party, stated that YSRC was a Bible party.

Senior political analysts state that as both TD and BJP are eyeing the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat in the by-election, they started communal politics. They said that as BJP is aiming to emerge as the second biggest party after YSRC, TD is hijacking Hindutva agenda in order to win over the electorate.

They recalled that TD swiftly responded to the Ramateertham temple idol damage issue and its chief N Chandrababu Naidu not only visited the temple but also took out a rally and staged protest ahead of the BJP, which responded a day later.

Analysts opine that for the past 18 months, TD's attempts to make amends with BJP were all in vain. In order to salvage prestige and not to lose out to BJP, Naidu is harping on Hindutva agenda to restrain the saffron party from relegating TD.

Many point out that the traditional BC vote bank of TD has had a change and many are pitching for YSRC. Noticing that Christians are supporting the ruling party, TD has raked up the issue of Christian conversions. To attract the majority Hindu votes, TD is whipping Hindutva sentiments, which they hope to take advantage of in the Tirupati by-election.

In a first for the party, it had Hindutva issue in the agenda of the politburo meeting. It decided to continue its fight for the protection of temples and religion donning the role of 'Hindutva saviour'.

Meanwhile, YSRC ministers, Vellampalli Srinivas Rao, Kodali Srivenkateswara Rao, and Perni Venkataramaiah allege that Naidu, who had no faith in God and religion, is changing his colours for political gains. They said that for the first time, TD has brought religion into politics but the people would not tolerate such unhealthy politics and would teach a befitting lesson to both TD and BJP.



State BJP chief Somu Veerraju addresses the party activists near GVMC Gandhi Statue junction in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday, as they stage a protest against the vandalism of Lord Sri Rama idol at Vizianagaram Ramatheertham temple by unidentified miscreants.

-DC

## Naidu encouraging temple attacks to boost TD: Ambati

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

YSR Congress MLA and party official spokesperson Ambati Rambabu lambasted Telugu Desam and BJP leaders for trying to portray the state government as anti-Hindu.

Refuting the claim of BJP terming YSRC as "Bible Party," he countered that YSRC is Bhagavad Gita, Quran and Bible Party. But BJP has not adhered to Bhagavad Gita by shunning welfare of all sections of the society. He accused opposition party members of vandalising temples for political gains and appealed to people not to fall into such a trap.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, Rambabu said good governance is above

● Good governance is above any religion. State government is only trying to change the lives of poor through better welfare activities and not based on their religions, says Ambati Rambabu, YSRC spokesperson.

any religion. State government is only trying to change the lives of poor through better welfare activities and not based on their religions. He charged that some parties are trying to profit by bringing religion into politics, to revive their existence following their huge defeat in the last elections. He maintained that temples are being vandalised according to a plan with clear political intentions. The YSRC spokesperson

Ambati Rambabu criticised opposition leader N. Chandrababu Naidu for behaving like a saviour of Hindu religion when, in reality, he has no respect towards any religion other than his caste. He alleged that the same Chandrababu Naidu during his rule had demolished 40 temples and offered prayers wearing even shoes, thus showing scant respect or faith towards God.

Rambabu stated that there are many castes and religions in our country and in Andhra Pradesh, they are all living together in peace and harmony. He added that though Chief Minister and his father late CM Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy are Christian by birth, it did not come in the way of good governance.

## BJP DOORS STILL CLOSED FOR NAIDU: VEERRAJU

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 6

State BJP president Somu Veerraju said the doors are still closed for TD supremo and Opposition leader Nara Chandrababu Naidu.

Talking to reporters in Visakhapatnam, the BJP chief reacted to the statement of state minister who commented that Naidu was trying to get close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi by taking the name of Jai Sriram and protesting against the desecration of temples in the state.

Meanwhile AP BJP former president Kanna Lakshminarayana has demanded AP government to reconstruct 127 damaged temples thereby honouring the sentiments of Hindus.

## ANAM: GOVT WON'T SUPPORT ANYONE INVOLVED IN ATTACKS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, JAN. 6

Venkatagiri legislator and former minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy said the YSRC will not support anyone involved in attacks on religious places.

Stressing that all religions are equal in the country, he said no government dares to touch any religious place.

Speaking to the media at Venkatagiri on Wednesday, he said there was no need to react to the baseless allegations of the Opposition.

He maintained that the attacks on the temples are the actions of some anti-social elements who are keen on damaging the reputation of the state government.

The former finance minister expressed confidence in nabbing the offenders through a comprehensive probe.

## Why no arrests for temple attack, asks BJP

From Page 1

"It was unfortunate that not a single person was taken into custody in any of the attacks made so far on the temples."

Asked whether the BJP would demand a CBI inquiry, Somu Veerraju

said it was the responsibility of the state government to identify the culprits.

The BJP leader also strongly reacted to the presence of police personnel at the Visakhapatnam BJP office and at the GVMC dharna pro-

gramme. The YSRC leaders, on one hand, have been saying the BJP has no presence in Andhra Pradesh and would lose deposits in all polls. On the other hand, they are wary of the BJP and obstructing the party's programmes," he said.

## Distributors bear brunt of LPG consumers

From Page 1

"Consumers are arguing with us because they are used to get subsidy amounts of above ₹100-₹150 each time they book a refill. Distributors like us have nothing to do with pricing or subsidies. Only the centre will fix the price and the subsidy, and

whatever the decision our commission remains the same", a gas agency staff in the city said.

However, consumers who are paying over ₹700 for a cooking gas cylinder have been complaining that the centre cheated them for a very small amount being given as subsidy.

"Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our earnings took a nosedive, and we are yet to see any relief. The Central government should consider enhancing the subsidy amount because a small relief will save our budget", said Mr S. Sai Kiran, a resident of Subbareddy Nagar in Tirupati.

"She was put through a medical examination at Gandhi Hospital. We are

## NRI prof asked me to remain silent

From Page 1

According to Misra, one of the directors of Isro centres had told him on June 5, 2017, of the possibility of poison given to me. "I guess, he witnessed poison mixing in my food," Misra said.

Two days later, ministry of home affairs security agency personnel alerted him to arsenic poisoning, the scientist said. This helped the doctors focus on the exact remedy.

Misra said he had learnt that this poison is given in molecular level suspension (crystal level is harmless) just after a heavy meal. "It is a colourless, odourless, tasteless suspension and hence cannot even be suspected. It gets absorbed through the stomach during food ingestion, kills RBCs (red blood cells) immediately to such a large extent that the fine blood vessels are clogged, leading to heart attacks and strokes within two to three hours and the victim can easily be passed off as heart attack death," he said.

Misra also said he was "bombarded with hundreds of threatening emails to keep my mouth shut," while he had barely escaped from a "massive explosive incident, in which the ₹100 crore lab was destroyed" on May 3, 2018.

He alleged that on July 19, 2019, an Indian-American professor of a

topmost US university suddenly appeared in his office and requested him not to utter a word in future; as a quid pro quo, his IIT-Kharagpur grandson would be accommodated in a top notch college in USA.

"I declined and he left my office at 1430 hrs (2.30 pm). And my thirty plus years contributing career was consigned to a sinecure position at 1630 hrs (4.30 pm). On the same day. I was removed from all responsibilities, including SAC directorship," Misra said.

He alleged on July 12, 2019 — two days before the scheduled launch of Chandrayaan-2 (which was however postponed to July 22) — he was poisoned again, spent a long period in hospital, and is still under treatment.

Misra also alleged of a plan to defame him by doctoring the CCTV recording of his room on January 23 and 24 last year. He sought help for his safety.

Mishra wrote, "We, in Isro, occasionally heard about the highly suspicious death of Professor Vikram Sarabhai in 1971. Also heard occasional doubts about the sudden death of Dr S. Srinivasan, director of VSSC (Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre) in 1999. Case of Shri Nambinarayanan in 1994 is well known. But I never thought that I would be at the receiving end of such a mystery."

## Kidnapping triggered by land dispute

From Page 1

"They claimed it to be a raid and flashed their 'official' ID cards. The men searched the premises and separated people inside the house by bringing Praveen, Naveen and Sunil, the paternal uncles, in the hall and confining the remaining members in the bedroom," Manish said in his complaint.

It was only when their neighbour Sarita opened the door and after checking CC cameras that they noticed the men taking away the trio in three vehicles.

The family told the police they suspected the involvement of their relatives A.V. Subba Reddy, Akhila Priya, her husband Bhargava Ram and their henchmen and the deed was done in the context of a previous land dispute.

Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar said multiple teams from Telangana state and Andhra Pradesh police were keeping track of the kidnappers via their cell-phone movement.

"An alert was issued to the toll plazas in Telangana state and en route. Around 3.30 am, the kidnappers left the three victims at Narsingi toll plaza and they were rescued.

"It emerged during investigation that Bhuma Akhila Priya and husband Ram were involved in the kidnapping," said the official.

Akhila Priya was arrested at her residence in Kukatapally on Wednesday morning and taken to the Bowenpally police station.

"She was put through a medical examination at Gandhi Hospital. We are

verifying the involvement of Srinivas Chowdhary alias Guntur Srinu, Prakash, Sai and Chanti," the official said.

Officials said Praveen Rao had purchased 25 acres of land at Hafeezpet, Hyderabad, in 2016 with the help of mediator Subba Reddy who took the help of late Bhuma Nagi Reddy, the father of Akhila Priya.

Trouble erupted when Subba Reddy and Bhuma Nagi Reddy developed differences. After the TD leader's demise, his daughter Akhila Priya approached Praveen Rao for a share of the property. Praveen refused, saying the process of transaction had been completed lawfully. She began threatening him.

"Earlier, a case was registered against Subba Reddy at Miyapur police station for trespassing and threatening. In order to get the share in the land, Akhila Priya and her husband hatched a conspiracy and kidnapped the victims," the police said.

Hyderabad police booked Akhila Priya, Bhargava Ram and Subba Rao under Section 452 (trespass), 419 (cheating by impersonation), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), 506 (criminal intimidation), 149 (unlawful assembly), 120 (b) (criminal conspiracy), 147 (gathering with purpose of riot), and 342 (assault on the IPC).

The Telangana state police have sent teams to Andhra Pradesh to nab the absconding accused. "Akhila Priya and Subba Reddy are the prime accused in planning the kidnap," the Hyderabad commissioner police added.

## Women's security is not just a state or national issue, but a matter of concern across the world

IGNITE | 2021

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 6

Women's safety is possible only when the police department and people from all sections of the society join hands and play their part responsibly and effectively, observed Andhra Pradesh DGP Gautam Sawang on the third day of IGNITE-2021, here on Wednesday.

The DGP inaugurated the third day programme themed 'Women Safety' by signing an MoU on behalf of the police department with Sri Padmavathi Viswavidyalaya (SPMVV), represented by its Vice-Chancellor D.

Jamuna, to develop innovative Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) based solutions for women safety, conducting awareness seminars and workshops, online sessions and to create a secure environment for women.

Speaking on the occasion, the DGP Gautam Sawang felt that the partnership with SPMVV, the only women's university in the state, will be a milestone in preventing crimes against women and enhancing ways to protect them.

"Women's security is not just a state or national issue, but a matter of con-

cern across the world. It will be easier to solve problems and challenges faced by women only if we identify and understand them in advance. Establishment of a social law is not the only solution to the problem, hence the state government has set up a special system and laws in the name of 'Disha' to deal with this problem", he noted.

The DGP said that the Disha Act was brought in to enable speedy justice to women and all the Disha police stations have been provided with a DSP, an inspector, five SIs and equipped with relevant facilities to solve crimes

effectively. Forensic labs were set up in Vizag and Tirupati for DNA tests to bolster investigative capacity, Gautam Sawang added.

"In the past, it took more than 200 days to file a charge-sheet in a case related to crime against women. With Disha initiatives, it was reduced to 100 days. Now the time taken to file a charge-sheet on an average is 53 days", he informed.

Women and Child Welfare Principal Secretary AR Anuradha, Additional DG Sridhar Rao, Disha SP Radhika, women IPS officers and others were present.



Andhra Pradesh DGP Gautam Sawang interacts with women police on the third day of IGNITE-2021, in Tirupati on Wednesday.

- DC



## SHORT TAKES

### NCC STUDENTS EXHIBITION A BIG HIT

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

The Expo Defensa exhibition organised by four Andhra girls NCC battalion turned a big attraction in the Siddhartha College of Arts and Science here on Wednesday. The exhibition displayed different types of projects prepared by the girl NCC cadets and showed different rifles used in the army like the latest rifles and modern war tank models Arjuna and Bhishma.

College principal Dr. M. Ramesh inaugurating the exhibition said that this type of exhibitions would inculcate patriotism among the youth and also encourage them to join armed forces.

He appreciated exhibition which displayed how a common man enters into the army and becomes a soldier undergoing tough training pattern. He asked students to join NCC to serve the country.

College director Dr. V. Baburao, dean Dr. Rajesh C. Jampala were present.



Students of Siddhartha Arts College watch the NCC Girls Expo Defensa at college premises in Vijayawada on Wednesday.

— DC

# Fearing bird flu, zoos increase vigil in state

## Forest authorities are disinfecting all bird enclosures

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

Forest authorities are initiating several measures to contain bird flu, especially among birds in the zoological parks in Visakhapatnam and Tirupati.

As several states are already reporting the presence of avian influenza affecting their bird population, the AP government is also taking up measures, especially in Indira Gandhi Zoological Park in Visakhapatnam and Sri Venkateswara Zoological Park at Tirupati.

Forest authorities are disinfecting all bird enclosures in Indira Gandhi Zoo Park by spraying chemicals and blow-torching the iron grills of the enclosures to kill the virus. They are also removing surface soil in enclosures and

● Bird keepers have been instructed to keep a watch on enclosures assigned to them and they are not allowed to move from one set of enclosures to another as a precautionary measure.

● Visitors to the zoo are asked to take foot bath and their vehicles to undergo tyre bath using potassium permanganate at the entrance of the zoo itself

spaying lime powder and also frequently removing faecal matter.

Bird keepers have been instructed to keep a watch on enclosures assigned to them and they are not allowed to move from one set of enclosures to another as a precautionary measure.

Visitors to the zoo are asked to take foot bath and their vehicles to undergo tyre bath using potassium permanganate at the entrance of the zoo itself to avoid any spread of the virus from outside. The tyres of the vehicles take a dip in the

pit filled with the chemical before entering the zoo.

The zoo is following the Covid-19 protocol and as they have to face another virus H5N1, they have strengthened all safety measures to avoid the birds getting infected either inside or from outside sources.

Indira Gandhi Zoo curator Dr. Nandani Salaria said, "We are taking all requisite measures to protect the birds from infections with the avian influenza and constantly keeping a watch on them for any unusual behaviour or symptoms

of infection. So far no bird or animal in the zoo are affected with the bird flu. At present we are having 223 birds in the zoo."

Sri Venkateswara Zoo Park on an average attracts 2,000 persons every day and the authorities are taking all measures to avoid spread of infection from any source be it keepers or visitors.

Its curator Hima Sailaja said, "We are having 558 birds, including water birds like pelicans and painted storks. We are taking all measures to protect them from getting infected with bird flu. We will also keep close watch on them for any symptoms of the infection."

The zoo authorities are also keeping watch for the spread of infection from birds to humans and vice-versa.

## JUSTICE GOSWAMI SWORN-IN AS CJ OF AP HIGH COURT

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

Justice Arup Kumar Goswami was sworn-in as Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court in a solemn ceremony at the Thummalapalli Kalakshetram auditorium here on Wednesday. Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan administered the oath of office.

High Court Registrar-General B.S. Bhanumathi read out the notification on the appointment made by President Ram Nath Kovind.

Later, Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy felicitated the new chief justice and presented him with a shawl and bouquets.

## VBRI RULES OUT AVIAN INFLUENZA AMONG 6 CROWS

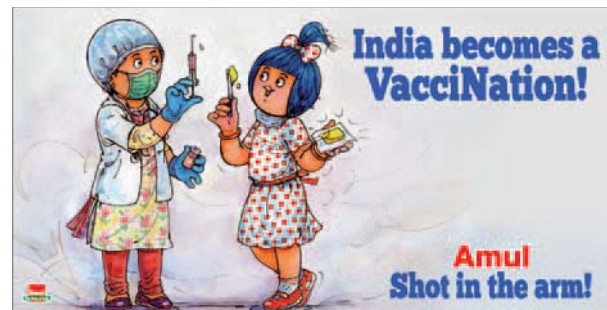
DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

Veterinary and Biological Research Institute authorities ruled out any presence of avian influenza in six crows which perished in Tenali in Guntur district.

Following the death of six crows on Tuesday night at Tenali, the animal husbandry authorities collected samples of the deceased birds and sent them for analysis for bird flu at VBRI on Wednesday. The VBRI scientists had come up with the test report by evening declaring that no presence of H5N1 virus in the deceased birds.

However, it was suspected that the crows might have been killed after eating grains having residues of pesticides or due to poisoning after eating some food.

The authorities also inspected the nearby poultry birds in several farms and noticed no unusual mortality.



## Man stabs son two days before wedding

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL JAN. 6

● Marriage was fixed with approval of parents only

Disapproving love marriage proposal of his son, Harsha Vardhan, who is a bank employee at Gulbarga of Karnataka, the father, Srinivasa Achari stabbed him indiscriminately while both of them were going for a morning walk on Wednesday.

According to police, Harsha Vardhan had fallen in love with his girlfriend belonging to Kadiri town of Anantapur district for the past two years.

He explained his love affair to his parents who agreed for marriage with the same girl and fixed January 8 for the wedding.

All arrangements were made for the marriage in a function hall.

Srinivasa Achari attacked his son with a knife and tried to pass on the blame on some unidentified person.

However, locals shifted severely injured Harsha Vardhan to a nearby government hospital. His condition is stable now. Police took the accused father into custody and booked a case against him. Knowing about the incident, the bride fell unconscious and was shifted to a hospital in Kadiri.

## Pre-arrest bail plea of ex-intel chief AB

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

Andhra Pradesh High Court to take up hearing on a petition filed by the former intelligence chief and senior IPS officer A.B. Venkateswara Rao is seeking sanction of anticipatory bail fearing his arrest in a scam in purchase of security equipment on Thursday.

The single judge bench headed by justice K. Lalitha held a hearing on the petition on Wednesday. Petitioner's counsel B. Adinarayana Rao asked the judge for an urgent hearing of the petition.

However, the public prosecutor K. Srinivasa Reddy raised objection stating that the petitioner was seeking anticipatory bail on an issue even no case was booked. He said that law and order police had not registered any case so far and expressed ignorance on the issue raised by the petitioner. He further said that he was unable to argue on the petition with no details and asked the court to adjourn

the hearing on the petition after a week to give him time to get details.

But the petitioner's counsel B. Adinarayana Rao interfering in the argument informed the court that ACB and others were made respondents in the case and further said that the public prosecutor was representing one of them while other agencies were having their own standing counsels to represent in the court.

In response to it, public prosecutor told the court that the name of public prosecutor was mentioned in the list while ACB was having its own counsels. He further informed the court that it was impossible to argue in the case without knowing what case and under what sections to be booked.

However, the petitioner's counsel asked the court to hear the case and its background at the first instance so that the court could adjourn the hearing.

The judge directed the registry to list the case for hearing on Thursday.

## BIE ANNOUNCES FIRST PHASE ADMISSIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

Based on a direction from the Andhra Pradesh High Court, the Board of Intermediate Education announced the first phase schedule of offline admission for the academic year 2020-21.

BIE secretary V. Ramakrishna issued a statement here on Wednesday said sale of application forms will start on January 7 and the last date for receipt of filled-in application forms in the colleges is January 17.

Principals of government, private aided, private unaided, cooperative, AP residential, social welfare residential, tribal welfare residential, incentive and AP model junior colleges and composite degree colleges offering two year intermediate course in general and vocational streams are requested to take care in enrolment of students.

## SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

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Open e-Tender Notice No.B/E.E.GS/10/2020-21 Dt. 04.01.2021

For and on behalf of the President of India, the undersigned invites e-Tender for the following works up to 15:00 hours and the date mentioned below.

1. B/E.29/VEGS/28/2020-21, Name of work: 1)Nuzvid-Provision of new FOB at Nuzvid Station of SSE/BR/UR/ under ADEN/BR/North/BZA Jurisdiction. 2) Anaparthi-Replacement of existing FOB at Anaparthi station with new FOB with 3.0m wide gang way of SSE/BR/UR/ under ADEN/BR/North/BZA Jurisdiction. 3) Pithapuram-Replacement of existing FOB at Pithapuram station with new FOB with 3.0m wide gangway of SSE/BR/UR/ under ADEN/BR/North/BZA Jurisdiction. 4) Annavaram-Provision of new FOB of 6.0m wide gangway at Annavaram Station of SSE/BR/UR/ under ADEN/BR/North/BZA Jurisdiction. 5) Narsipatnam Road-Replacement of existing FOB at Narsipatnam Road with new FOB of 3.0m wide gang way of SSE/BR/UR/ under ADEN/BR/North/BZA Jurisdiction. 6) Tenali Jn.-Provision of additional gang way to existing FOB at Tenali station of SSE/BR/UR/ under ADEN/BR/South/BZA Jurisdiction. 7) Bapatla-Replacement of existing FOB at Bapatla station with new FOB with 6.0m wide gangway in Bapatla Station of SSE/BR/UR/ under ADEN/BR/South/BZA Jurisdiction. 8) Tanuku-Replacement of old existing FOB with new FOB of 3.0m wide gangway at Tanuku Station of SSE/BR/UR/ under ADEN/BR/North/BZA Jurisdiction-Electrical arrangements, Period of completion: 90 days, Tender value: ₹ 2765127/-, E.M.D.: ₹ 55300/-, Cost of Tender document: Nil, Date of closing: 18.01.2021

The prospective tenderers are advised to visit website "www.ireps.gov.in" before the date of tender closing to note any changes/corrigenda for any tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (Electrical), Vijayawada.

Tender Notice inviting e-Tender No.B/SG/CN/S&T/4/BZA/2020-21 Dt.04.01.2021 (Through ireps.gov.in)

Signal and Telecomm (Construction), South Central Railway, Vijayawada invites e-Tender on behalf of the president of India for the below work under Open tender/Single packet system tendering:

Sl.No.:1, Tender Notice No.: B/SG/CN/S&T/4/2020-21, Dt. 04.01.2021, Name of the work: Hiring of 02 Nos of 4 wheeler Road vehicles (Non-AC Base-Model-LMV-Car) for ASTE/CN/BZA & ASTE/CN/IBZA for inspection of work sites under Dy. CSTE/CN/BZA unit of South Central Railways, Tender value: ₹ 12,60,000/-, EMD value: ₹25,200/-, Completion period: 21 Months, Cost of tender form: Nil, Date of closing & time: 28.01.2021 @ 15:00 hrs.

1. For bid document and other details, please login to website <https://ireps.gov.in>

2. Payment of earnest money deposit should be only through Net Banking/Payment Gateway facilities available online in IREPS.

3. Tenderers can submit their offers online during tender submission/ bidding period which is fifteen days period prior to closing of tender.

4. Tenderers should watch for any corrigenda (issued online only) up to the date of commencement of the tender submission/bidding period.

Dy. Chief Signal and Telecommunication A0010 Engineer (Construction), Vijayawada.

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at <http://www.ireps.gov.in> or [www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in)

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**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)**

Chief Medical Superintendent, Railway Hospital, Vijayawada, Vijayawada Division, South Central Railway invites EOI (Expression of Interest) upto 13.00 hrs. of dt. 10.02.2021 in the office of Addl. Chief Medical Superintendent (Stores), Railway Hospital, Vijayawada for the following subject.

**RAILWAY HOSPITAL, S.C. RAILWAY, VIJAYAWADA INVITES EOI (EXPRESSION OF INTEREST) FOR EMPANELMENT OF MEDICAL STORES/FIRMS AS VENDORS FOR SUPPLY OF MEDICINES ON DAY TO DAY BASIS FOR LOCAL PURCHASE FOR A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS FROM APRIL 2021 TO MARCH 2023**

The last date and time for receipt of EOI applications will be dt. 10.02.2021 upto 13.00 hrs.

For more details visit our website [www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in)

**A0014 Chief Medical Superintendent, Railway Hospital, Vijayawada.**

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at <http://www.ireps.gov.in> or [www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in)

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## Consumption of liquor down

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

The liquor policy of Andhra Pradesh, imposing prohibition in a phased manner, is showing good results. The consumption has come down last year as compared to the previous year.

The sale of IM liquor from April to December 2019 was 239.56 lakh cases as compared to 126.55 lakh cases in 2020. This meant a drop of 47.17 per cent. Sale of beer for the same period in 2019 was 186.36 lakh cases and it was 126.55 lakh cases in 2020, showing an 80.91 per cent dip.

The sale of IM liquor in December 2019 was of 25.88 lakh cases compared to 21.41 lakh in 2020, with a 17.27 per cent fall in sales. Sale of beer in December 2019 was 7.93 lakh cases compared to 6.14 lakh cases in 2020, showing a 22.57 per cent fall.

The sale of IM liquor on December 30 and December 31 in 2019

was of 96,330 and 1,37,669 cases respectively. It reduced to 81,087 cases on December 30, 2020 and 1,04,904 cases on December 31.

Similarly, sale of beer on December 30 and December 31 in 2019 was of 34,307 and 65,317 cases respectively and this has reduced to 22,263 cases on December 30, 2020 and 46,459 cases on December 31.

YSRC leaders said that, in Telangana, the sale of IM liquor and beer on December 31 was of 2.17 lakh cases and 1.56 lakh cases respectively. The state government has taken effective steps to bring down alcohol consumption by closing down the belt shops and permit rooms, hiking the prices and reducing the working hours.

The number of liquor shops was reduced by 33 per cent from 4,380 to 2,934 shops and 43,000 belt shops were closed. This action yielded good results, they said.

## DRDO to assist processing units

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 6

Defence Research and Development Organisation has come forward to assist in the manufacture of agriculture equipment for processing of horticulture produces through its Defence Food Research Laboratory to benefit farmers in drought-hit

areas. DRDO chairman Sathish Reddy responded positively to be part of measures aimed at uplift of the farming community through cost-effective innovations. Anantapur MP Talari Rangaiah met the DRDO chairman on Wednesday and explained the situation.

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# DECCAN Chronicle

7 JANUARY 2021

## Scrap laws, ask farmers, don't skip due process

The seventh round of talks between the government and farmers protesting against the three new laws regulating agriculture in India on Monday produced no immediate result other than fixing the date for a new round. However, two things have emerged after the talks ended in stalemate: the government has offered to sit with the farmers' unions and discuss the laws "clause by clause"; two, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is understood to have directed officials in the agriculture ministry to look for an amicable solution to the issue.

Given Mr Modi's initiative and the offer to discuss the laws threadbare, it looks like an open approach to the issue could solve it so that the lakhs of farmers could call off their agitation they are holding now braving the gripping cold and pouring rains on the outskirts of the capital city. It could allow them to drop the plan to take out a tractor rally on the Republic Day and spare the nation from having to watch the spectre of more of its *annadatas* dying on the streets and adding to the present toll of 50.

The catch, however, lies in the openness of the government. In our country, laws, especially those that have an implication for large sections of people, are passed after an elaborate process, which includes discussions in Parliament, parliamentary committees and even outside. This process, though painstakingly slow, ensures that the safeguards necessary to protect the interests of the stakeholders are not overlooked or omitted.

But the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, especially its second edition, does not seem to believe in such democratic niceties. Laws that sought to alter the basic idea of India such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 and the virtual annulment of Article 370 of the Constitution were pushed through Houses of Parliament after a single day's discussion each.

As for the farm laws, the government has done too little to take the stakeholders into confidence. The government which is now willing to discuss the laws "clause by clause" had not bothered to persuade its own partners, resulting in the exit of the Shiromani Akali Dal, one of the oldest allies of the BJP, from the Cabinet and the NDA. The bill was not sent to the House committee either. Worse, there was no proper voting on the bill in the Upper House of the Parliament. The protesters have little reason to trust the government.

The NDA government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have spared no occasion to champion the farmers' cause. Mr Modi has long promised to double the income of farmers by 2022; Niti Aayog brought out an action plan in 2017 proposing to achieve it; and the first budget of the new government finance minister Nirmala Sitaraman presented in 2019 talked of promoting zero-based farming as a means to achieve the target. But the farmers saw little action on the ground. If the government is serious, and if farmers' welfare is its priority, then it should keep the laws in abeyance, sit with them and draft new ones that address their concerns.

## Scale down the parade

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who had accepted India's invitation to be the chief guest for the Republic Day celebration this year, has had to back out unexpectedly on account of domestic compulsions caused by a renewed surge of Covid-19 infections in the UK. We sympathise with his situation. Since this is a last-minute problem, let us just be practical about it and not bother tearing our hair to find a suitable replacement at such a late stage.

There is no harm in saying pass this year. Since this is an unusual period for all of the world, the pandemic provides us a perfectly good reason to not go scouting for a dignitary after the British leader has been obliged to drop out.

Late in 2018, when US President Donald Trump informed us that he was unable to accept the invitation to be chief guest on account of scheduling difficulties, we were fortunate that President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa did not stand on ceremony and agreed to step in at a late hour. South Africa is a good friend and its President was most gracious. Nevertheless, the pandemic poses a problem for all and it is not fair to put friendly nations in a quandary by asking them when barely three weeks remain.

Although institutional memory may have faded in this regard, it may be recalled that in the years 1952, 1953, and 1966 no invitation was extended to an international dignitary to be chief guest. Of course, since then invitations have gone out each year. There have also been somewhat unusual situations. In 2018, for example, the ten leaders of Asean nations were collectively invited to be chief guest. In 1956, there were two chief guests — Britain's chancellor of the exchequer as well as the chief justice of Japan.

Hospitality being a part of diplomacy, Republic Day chief guests are chosen from countries that India may want to be especially solicitous toward for reasons of geopolitics or geo-economics in a given year. Not having one in a particular year just speaks of extraordinary circumstances.

### DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER  
Editor

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Subhani



# Why trust needs to be the key word in 2021



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

India has a good story to tell when it comes to vaccines — it produces more than 60 per cent of all vaccines sold across the globe.

Why then has India's final approval of two Covid-19 vaccines kicked up such a storm, with many respected health experts and scientists calling it a hasty decision?

Unless you have been living under the rock the past few days, you probably know the answer.

In brief, last weekend, India's drugs regulator gave the green signal for the emergency use of two coronavirus vaccines. One, called Covishield, is developed by AstraZeneca-Oxford University and is being made in India by Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine producer by the number of doses produced.

The controversy, however, is more about the drug regulator's emergency approval to the second coronavirus vaccine, the indigenously produced Covaxin, before critical efficacy data of the third phase of clinical trials are out. Covaxin is being made by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Institute of Virology. Bharat Biotech is a well-known vaccine maker and has a track record of clinical trials in 20 countries.

But Covaxin has completed only two of the three required phases of clinical trials. The vaccine is safe. The critical Phase 3 trial, meant to test efficacy, started last November. The company expects to release the efficacy data by March.

What further complicates the situation is the drug regulator saying that Covaxin would be administered in "clinical trial mode". This has led to questions about whether those being vaccinated with Covaxin in the immediate future will, in effect, be taking

part in a clinical trial.

Why could India's regulatory authorities not wait for a few more weeks for all the three phases of the clinical trial to be over and approved an indigenous vaccine of proven efficacy?

Till date, there is no convincing answer.

Perplexingly, over the past few days, we have also been witnessing bizarre incidents such as the Drugs Controller-General of India not taking any questions from journalists at a press conference, and the two companies which have got the green signal engaging in a temporary slanging match about the merits of their respective vaccines.

All this plays havoc with public trust in oversight mechanisms when there are signs of vaccine hesitancy in the country.

How do we restore trust?

"Transparency breeds trust, and trust is very important during a health crisis like a pandemic," says virologist Shahid Jameel, director of the Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University. "Science does not work on beliefs. Science works on data, and we still don't have data on the efficacy of one of the approved vaccines. Science does not say it has answers to everything but there should be clear communication about what is not known, and this has to be communicated openly and transparently."

"A common man who does not understand the difference between the different vaccines needs to be told what exactly is known and what is not known," Dr Jameel adds. "Otherwise, there is a risk of vaccine hesitancy spreading."

Leena Menghaney, South Asia head of the access campaign at humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières, also points out that transparency is a key component to building trust. And it is important to adopt it as a public health strategy.

Ms Menghaney cites the example of the European Medicines Agency (EMA), that has set a minimum level of transparency for itself. In many areas, the agency has decided to go beyond what the law requires. During the pandemic, EMA is implementing exceptional measures to maximise the transparency of its regulatory activities on treatments and vaccines for Covid-19 that are approved or are under evaluation. This includes making public the detailed minutes of various committee meetings. In 2019, the World Health Assembly adopted a resolution on improving the transparency of markets for medicines, vaccines and other health products in an effort to expand access. The resolution urges member states to enhance public sharing of information on actual prices paid by governments and other buyers for health products, and greater transparency on pharmaceutical patents, clinical trial results and other determinants of pricing along the value chain from laboratory to patient.

A trust deficit can arise due to multiple reasons, acting independently and together.

There is a lesson from India's victory in the battle against polio. Then too, there was a trust deficit in some quarters, though due to different reasons.

While researching a report on a sudden spurt of polio cases in parts of Uttar Pradesh in 2006, I saw firsthand how lack of trust could derail a public health intervention. Official explanations attributed the spike to rumours and fear among the Muslim minority. But a visit to Moradabad, one of the worst affected dis-

tricts in UP, offered nuanced insights into the reality of traditionally disadvantaged communities that have little contact with the healthcare system. Rumour mongers were exploiting grievances accumulated over years. This was among the most daunting challenges in the global battle against polio.

In a narrow bylane flanked by open sewers in Karula, in the outskirts of Moradabad, I met Muslim families who were convinced that a "geopolitical conspiracy" lurked behind the persistent attempts to give polio drops to their children. Many people told me they wanted to know why the government was so eager to protect their children against polio when it paid no heed to other ailments that struck them. There were rumours about the polio drop making male children impotent.

Frustration and rage at a dysfunctional healthcare system had morphed into irrational fear and distrust of "outsiders", including health workers and field operatives of international agencies. Muslim clerics in some local mosques in Uttar Pradesh had reportedly opposed the polio vaccine.

Distrust was dispelled through concerted trust-building efforts by civil society, universities like Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Milia Islamia, health officials and international agencies like Unicef, as Dr Jameel points out. Many respected Imams worked hard to build trust among communities resisting the vaccine.

Trust and transparency during a crisis mean that not only should the political and administrative leadership be decisive, it must also convincingly explain to all groups that whatever is being done is being done in their interest.

Opacity in decision-making, attempts to gloss over mistakes or polarise the populace on any count will punch holes in the trust narrative.

We must not let that happen in 2021.

*The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.*

## LETTERS

### NETAS FIRST

If the Supreme Court judgement on Central Vista was 2:1, the entire issue cannot be wished away by the government. It is a fact that the 93-year-old Parliament building outlived its service and it is time to make it a heritage monument for ceremonial use. The NDA government rightly chose to construct a new Parliament building keeping future needs of the growing nation. But then, leaving aside the pleas for and against Central Vista project, the point to be considered is the financial aspect at a time when the pandemic is causing havoc with the country's economy.

Govardhana Myneedu  
Vijayawada

### IDOLS OF GODS

The new Coronavirus strain, the mutant variety, is slowly and steadily increasing day by day which is a cause for concern. It cannot not be brushed aside and may be recalled that the government was complacent and self-congratulatory in the initial stages of Covid-19 and paid the price for the same (*AP Records 377 Covid-19 Cases, DC, Jan. 6*). We need to be vigilant and cannot lower the guard as prevention is better than cure.

Dr C. Ghanshyam  
Visakhapatnam

## 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

### Concern over Sheikh's talks with Pak. envoy

The Ruling Congress here has "taken serious view" of Sheikh Abdullah's meeting with the Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi yesterday, according to the senior Vice-President of the Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee, Mr. Mohd. Ayub Khan.

Mr. Ayub Khan said in a statement, the Government of India should prevent "unfriendly countries like Pakistan" from interfering in the affairs of the State through the Plebiscite Front at this juncture.

He appealed to the people of the State to remain vigilant and protect the Constitution and secular traditions.

Mr. Khan said during the past few days, the Plebiscite Front leaders in Kashmir had steeped up their "sinister campaign" to create a situation of instability in the State by "misleading" the people in the name of religion.

Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu



## India's toppers no longer find civil services a dream career?

Is the civil service no longer a dream career for aspiring youngsters in India? The recent survey of national school board toppers over 20 years suggests that it may be so.

Of the 86 men and women who topped in their school board exams between 1995 and 2015, more than half live abroad, and most are working or pursuing advanced degrees in science and technology. Of those working most are in the tech sector, followed by medicine and finance. More than half grew up outside India's metros in Tier-II and Tier-III cities. No surprises there!

What is surprising is that only one of these toppers joined the civil service. Subhankar Mohapatra, who topped the Class X CBSE exam in 2006, chose to

become a civil servant (after studying at medical college). He cleared the IRS exam in 2016, the IPS in 2017 and finally the UPSC in 2018. The Odisha cadre officer is presently posted as sub-collector and SDM in Kandhamal, Odisha. Two others from the Toppers Club are preparing for the civil service exam. That's it.

Could it be that there are many more attractive alternative career paths available now that are more rewarding financially and career-wise than what the civil service can offer to our brightest? For decades, the civil services have enjoyed an unparalleled social standing. While there have always been officers who have quit the civil service for better opportunities outside the government in the private sector and even politics,

largely, the IAS and allied services have been a top draw, as seen in the lakhs of hopefuls who appear for the UPSC. But that seems to be changing now.

### NEW TRANSFER POLICY FOR POLL-BOUND TAMIL NADU

The Election Commission has already started gearing up for the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections due in May 2021, starting with the babus who will be on election duty. In a recent letter to the state Chief Electoral Officer, Sathyabrata Sahoo, and chief secretary K. Shanmugam, the Election Commission has stressed the need for effective transfer of officers who have completed three years and to ensure that no officer is posted in their native district.

Officers who are retiring within

six months and those who are facing disciplinary actions recommended by the Election Commission for earlier poll duty lapses should not be designated for poll duty. Further, officials who will complete three years in an election-related post before May 31 should be transferred.

Sources say that the Tamil Nadu government has transferred more than 50 IAS and IPS officers, including district collectors and district superintendents of police of more than 20 districts in the last two months.

### A THORNY ISSUE

The Punjab government has appointed 1995-cadre IPS officer G. Nageswara Rao as secretary in the department of home affairs and justice, a post that has traditionally

been held by the IAS cadre. The appointment is part of a larger reshuffle of officers effected by the Congress government of Captain Amarinder Singh.

The move is unlikely to help in the long ongoing tussle between IAS and IPS officers. The IAS officers are likely to see this as another encroachment on their turf, a trend that has become more pronounced at the Centre after the Modi *sarkar* came to power. The rivalry between the two elite services — be it at the Central or state level — is also over issues like pay parity, promotions, central empanment and avenues for deputation and training courses.

*Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.*



SHORT TAKES

EX-CONG MLA SAYS  
11 OF 19 MLAS  
MAY JOIN JD(U)

NAYEAR AZAD | DC  
PATNA, JAN. 6

Former Congress MLA Bharat Singh has created a flutter in the political circle by predicting a major split in the party.

According to him around 11 MLAs of the party are in touch with the JD(U) leadership and may quit the Congress soon. He also alleged that Congress state president Madan Mohan Jha and senior party leader Ajit Singh are among those who may also defect to the JD(U).

Talking to reporters Singh said that, “Most of the candidates who contested Assembly elections on Congress ticket were outsiders. They got tickets by paying huge money and now after winning elections they are planning to quit and join hands with the ruling

INDIA COMMITTED  
TO TERRITORIAL  
INTEGRITY: EAM

SRIDHAR  
KUMARASWAMI | DC  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 6

Pitching for an “inclusive political outlook that encourages ethnic harmony” in a clear message to Colombo, visiting External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Wednesday said it “is in Sri Lanka’s own interest that the expectations of the Tamil people for equality, justice, peace and dignity within a united Sri Lanka are fulfilled”, adding that “India has been strongly committed to the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka”.

EAM who is currently on a 3-day visit to Sri Lanka that began on Tuesday referred to the “commitments made by the Sri Lankan government on meaningful devolution, including the 13th Amendment to the Constitution”, pointing out that the “progress and prosperity of Sri Lanka will surely be advanced as a consequence”.

Teams deployed to check  
bird flu in Kerala, Haryana

At present, there are 12 epicentres of Avian Influenza spread in four states

VINEETA PANDEY | DC  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 6

Union health ministry has deployed multi-disciplinary teams to the Avian Influenza affected Alappuzha and Kottayam districts of Kerala, and Panchkula in Haryana.

The move comes shortly after the department of animal husbandry notified detection of Avian Influenza (H5N8), also known as bird flu, in the samples of dead poultry ducks from Alappuzha and Kottayam districts in Kerala, and from poultry samples from Panchkula in Haryana.

Besides, advisory has been issued to Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh where too cases of Avian Influenza have been detected, to avoid further spread of the infection.

According to the Union government, at present there are 12 epicentres of bird flu spread in four states.

In Rajasthan dead crows were found in Baran, Kota and Jhalawar; in Madhya Pradesh samples of dead crows were positive to avian influenza in Mandsaur, Indore, and Malwa; while in Himachal Pradesh samples of dead migratory birds tested positive in Kangra. Officials said in Kerala there are four epicenters in Kottayam, and Allappuzha.

“As per the report received, Kerala has already initiated control and containment operations from January 5, at epicentres and culling process is in operation,” officials in Union min-



A worker sprays disinfectant inside a poultry farm in view of Avian influenza, in the outskirts of Bhopal on Wednesday.

● **BESIDES, ADVISORY** has been issued to Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh where too cases of Avian Influenza have been detected, to avoid further spread of the infection.

istry of animal husbandry said.

They added the measures suggested to the affected states to contain the disease and prevent further spread as per the Action Plan on avian influenza include strengthening the biosecurity of poultry farms, disinfection of affected areas, proper disposal of dead birds/carcasses, timely collection and submission of samples for con-

firmation and further surveillance, intensification of surveillance plan as well as the general guidelines for prevention of disease spread from affected birds to poultry and human.

Besides, coordination with forest department for reporting any unusual mortality of birds has also been suggested to the states. The other states were also requested to keep a vigil on any unusual mortality amongst birds and to report immediately to take necessary measures.

In India, the disease spreads mainly in winters through migratory birds.

India notified its first outbreak of avian influenza in 2006.

So far infection in humans is yet reported in the country though the disease is zoonotic.

“There is no direct evidence that avian influenza viruses can be transmitted to humans via the consumption of contaminated poultry products. Implementing management practices that incorporate bio security principles, personal hygiene, and cleaning and disinfection protocols, as well as cooking and processing standards, are effective means of controlling the spread of the AI viruses,” officials asserted.

They, however, said secondary spread by human handling (through fomites) cannot be ruled out.

MP MAY BAR  
HOTELS FROM  
SERVING  
NON-VEG FOOD

RABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, JAN. 6

Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday imposed a ban on chicken imports from southern states for 10 days in view of avian flu scare in the state.

Official sources here said the state government was seriously contemplating to bar hotels and restaurants in the state from serving non-vegetarian food if the bird flu took the form of an epidemic form in the state.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan convened an emergency official meeting here to take stock of the situation in the wake of the reports of death of at least 400 crows and some other avian species in various parts of the state in the last couple of weeks.

“Avian flu has been detected in chicken in Kerala and some other southern states. We have taken a decision not to allow transportation of chickens from these southern states to Madhya Pradesh for 10 days”, Chouhan told reporters here.

Official sources said a decision to resume chicken imports from southern states would be taken after reviewing the bird flu situation in these states after 10 days.

UP: 50-year-old  
gangraped, killed  
by priest, aides

**Budaun (UP), Jan. 6:** A 50-year-old anganwadi worker was gangraped and brutally murdered allegedly by a priest and his two accomplices in Budaun district of Uttar Pradesh, police said on Wednesday.

Two of the accused were arrested on Tuesday night after the post-mortem report confirmed rape while the priest is on the run, they said, adding that the woman’s leg and a rib bone were fractured and there were injuries in her private parts. The incident, which triggered an instant hue and cry in the political circles, took place on Sunday and the matter came to light when her body was brought home at night. The FIR was registered two days later following which the duo was nabbed.

Opposition parties attacked the BJP government in the state and termed the incident “horrific” and “shameful”, with the Congress comparing it to the Nirbhaya incident of 2012.

“The post-mortem report confirms rape and there are injuries in her private parts and a fracture in the leg,” Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Sankalp Sharma said. She suffered from a rib fracture too, he said, citing the autopsy report.

He said the station house officer (SHO) of Ughaiti police station has been suspended for “delay in informing higher authorities, laxity in taking action, dereliction of duty and failure in taking speedy action”.

“On Sunday, the 50-year-old woman, who had gone to a temple, was found dead under mysterious circumstances. Family members of the woman have accused the temple mahant (priest) and his accomplices of raping and murdering her. Based on this, a case was registered

against the accused. Two of the accused persons were arrested on Tuesday night, while the mahant is still absconding,” he said.

Four teams have been formed to nab the priest, the SSP said.

The case was registered on Tuesday after the post-mortem report came.

“Based on complaints of the family members and the post-mortem report, a case has been registered under section 376D (gang-rape) and 302 (punishment for murder) of IPC,” the SSP said.

He said that opinion on the post-mortem report is being sought from medical experts and after that only any conclusion can be reached.

To a specific question as to whether the case bore any resemblance to the horrific Nirbhaya rape case, the SSP said, “It will be wrong to link this incident to any previous incident. Let’s wait for the medical examination report.” CMO Budaun Dr Yashpal Singh said the woman died of trauma and excessive bleeding. The victim’s son said his mother had gone to offer prayers at the temple on Sunday but she did not return home within expected time. It was only around 11 pm that the temple priest and two of his aides came to their house and handed over her body, he said.

Before the family members could ask how she died, the accused left the house saying that she had fallen in a dry well and her body was pulled out and brought to her home. He said police was informed on Monday.

Budaun District Magistrate Kumar Prashant said, “Whatever help can be given from the department, it will be given. She was an anganwadi sahayika. We are also paying attention towards the security of the family.” He too shared the CMO’s opinion. — PTI

WORLD

Indian hacker jailed  
for 11 years in UK

**London:** An Indian-origin man who hacked into the computer accounts of over 574 girls and young women to exploit them has been sentenced to 11 years in prison for blackmail, voyeurism and cybercrimes by a UK court. Akash Sondhi gained unauthorised access to hundreds of social media accounts, in particular Snapchat, and went on to commit blackmailing crimes between December 26, 2016 and March 17, 2020, the UK’s Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) said. The 27-year-old from Chafford Hundred in Essex, south-east England, threatened his victims that if they didn’t send him nude images, he would post intimate images of them online.

GRAMMY AWARDS  
POSTPONED TO  
MARCH OVER VIRUS

**New York, Jan. 6:** The Grammy music awards slated for January 31 in Los Angeles have been postponed until March over Covid-19, which has been rapidly spreading in California.

The Recording Academy released a statement saying it rescheduled the show to March 14, a week earlier than the date briefly listed on its website. “The deteriorating Covid-19 situation in Los Angeles, with hospital services being overwhelmed, ICUs having reached capacity, and new guidance from state and local governments have all led us to conclude that postponing our show was the right thing to do,” organisers said.

“Nothing is more important than the health and safety of those in our music community and the hundreds of people who work tirelessly on producing the show.”

The ceremony’s delay comes less than a month before it was set to take place in the shadow of the pandemic, which has dealt devastating blows to the music industry.

The organisation had said the show set for late January would be mostly virtual, but had not released specific plans. Beyonce, Dua Lipa, Taylor Swift and rapper Roddy Ricch are the top nominees at the normally star-studded gala. Comedian Trevor Noah was set to host the 2021 show, and it wasn’t immediately clear if that was still the plan.

Democrats win first seat in  
battle for US Senate run-offs

Democrat Warnock becomes Georgia’s first African-American Senator

**Atlanta, Jan. 6:** Joe Biden’s Democratic Party took a giant step Wednesday towards seizing control of the U.S. Senate as they won the first of two Georgia run-offs, hours before Congress was set to certify the president-elect’s victory over Donald Trump.

President-elect Joe Biden on Wednesday hailed his Democratic Party’s likely takeover of the Senate as a sign that Americans want action and made an appeal for bipartisanship.

“It’s time to turn the page. The American people demand action and they want unity. I am more optimistic than I ever have been that we can deliver both,” Biden said in a statement that congratulated Democratic candidates on their likely wins in Georgia.

Democrat Rev Raphael Warnock on Wednesday secured a crucial win in the senatorial race, becoming the first person of colour enator from Georgia and bringing his party within the reach of a majority in the US Senate ahead of President-elect Joe Biden’s inauguration.

Multiple news outlets on Wednesday morning projected 51-year-old Warnock, a senior pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, winner against Republican Senator Kelly Loeffler in the Georgia Senate runoff. He is the first African-American to represent



People wait for a rally of supporters of US President Donald Trump challenging the results of the 2020 US Presidential election on the Ellipse outside of the White House on Wednesday.

Georgia in the US Senate. He is also the first Democrat to win the Senate race from Georgia in 20 years.

Democrat Jon Ossoff on Wednesday claimed victory in the second of two Georgia run-off votes, claiming a win that would give President-elect Joe Biden control of the US Senate.

“Georgia, thank so much for the confidence you have placed in me. I am honored by your support, by your confidence, by your trust and I will look forward to serving you,”

Ossoff said in a televised statement.

The US media have not yet called the race, and Ossoff’s Republican opponent has not conceded.

Both President Donald Trump and President-elect Joe Biden had campaigned for their respective candidates. Biden congratulated Warnock on his historic win in Georgia.

“I congratulate Reverend Warnock on his ground breaking win last night and I am hopeful that when the count is complete, Jon Ossoff will also be victorious. I con-

gratulate the people of Georgia, who turned out in record numbers once again, just as they did in November, to elect two new Senators, demand action, and call on our elected leaders to end the gridlock and move us forward as a nation,” the President-elect said.

Donald Trump faced one of the darkest days of his presidency Wednesday with Congress poised to certify Joe Biden’s White House victory and Democrats on track to take control of the Senate with a pair of stunning upset

victories in Georgia.

Thousands of Trump supporters, fueled by his spurious claims of voter fraud, were flooding the nation’s capital, meanwhile, to protest the certification.

With political tensions running at fever pitch, there was a heavy police presence in downtown Washington and many business owners, fearing clashes, have boarded up doors and windows.

“They stole our election,” said Katherine Caldwell, a 61-year-old woman from Oregon wearing a white cowboy hat that read “Trump Is My President.” Certification of the Electoral College vote at a ceremony presided over by the vice president is usually just a formality.

Trump, 74, has refused to concede defeat in the November 3 election and has been ramping up the pressure on fellow Republicans and Vice President Mike Pence to back his baseless claims of election fraud.

“The Vice President has the power to reject fraudulently chosen electors,” Trump tweeted on Tuesday.

“If Vice President @Mike.Pence comes through for us, we will win the Presidency.” The vice president has no legal authority to reject the results, however, and Pence has given no public indication of what he will do at the joint session.

— AFP/PTI

Trump orders  
ban on 8 more  
Chinese apps

BEIJING SLAMS  
DON OVER ORDER  
AGAINST APPS

**Washington, Jan. 6:** President Donald Trump has signed an executive order barring transactions with eight Chinese apps including Alipay and WeChat Pay to protect America’s national security, citing the steps taken by India to ban more than 200 Chinese connected software applications.

Trump’s order said action is needed to “deal with the national emergency” caused by the “pervasiveness of the spread” of apps created and controlled in China. The ban against the eight Chinese apps — Alipay, CamScanner, QQ Wallet, SHAREit, Tencent QQ, Vmate, WeChat Pay, and WPS Office — will come into effect in 45 days from on Tuesday.

“The pace and pervasiveness of the spread in the United States of certain connected mobile and desktop applications and other software developed or controlled by persons China, to include Hong Kong and Macau (China), continue to threaten the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States,” Trump said on Tuesday. “At this time, action must be taken to address the threat posed by these Chinese connected software applications,” Trump said in his executive order. The orders follow two others Trump signed in

Beijing, Jan. 6: Beijing accused the US on Wednesday of “bullying” after President Donald Trump ordered a ban on a series of Chinese apps in his last weeks in office, branding them a threat to national security.

Under the Trump administration Beijing and Washington have clashed repeatedly over trade, technology, human rights and the origins of the Coronavirus pandemic.

In the latest move to raise tensions, Trump ordered a ban on transactions involving Alipay, WeChat Pay and other apps linked to Chinese companies, saying they could route user information to the government in Beijing.

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said on Wednesday the move was an example of “bullying” by the US, and accused Washington of “stretching the concept of national security.” “This harms both itself and others.” — AFP

August banning dealings with the popular video app TikTok as well as the main WeChat app. — PTI

Career Chronicle

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## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,174.06	-0.54
Nifty 50	14,146.25	-0.38
S&P 500*	3,773.05	1.24
Dollar (₹)	73.11	0.10
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.75	-0.43
Euro (₹)	90.21	-0.45
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,125*71	0.13
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	54.43	0.83
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.894	0.044
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.030	0.075

## DoT: Spectrum auction bidding to start in March



Bidding for the sixth round of spectrum auction for radio-waves worth Rs 3.92 lakh crore will start from March 1, according to a DoT notice. The long-awaited spectrum auction is being held after a gap of four years and over two years after the Trai recommended the base price for the radiowaves. The DoT has fixed January 12 for the pre-bid conference. Telecoms will need to submit their application by February 5.

# IIFCL could be merged with new company Govt mulls infra bank with ₹1 lakh-cr corpus

SIDDHARTHA SINGH  
JAN. 6

India is considering a proposal to create a bank to help fund port, road and power projects as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government aims to lift Asia's third-largest economy out of the recession. The new entity, likely to be part of the budget announcement in February, may have an equity capital of Rs 1 lakh crore (\$13.7 billion), people with knowledge of the matter said, asking not to be identified as the matter isn't public. The existing India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd, which has a Rs 2,000-crore corpus, will be merged with the bank, they said. Initially, the institution will be funded by the government, which will later invite investors, the people said. It could be on the



lines of state-run National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Ltd, which counts the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, Asian Development Bank and Abu Dhabi Investment Authority among its investors. The finance ministry has prepared a note for the cabinet to discuss the proposal. The spokesperson at the ministry declined to comment. India faces the challenge of boosting spending on productive assets that aid economic growth after being forced to direct the bulk of stimulus last year on the poor and the farm-

ers to protect them from a pandemic-induced slowdown. Citigroup Inc economists wrote last year that spending should be directed on infrastructure, rather than populist measures, to cushion the economy headed for the deepest slump among emerging nations. Attracting foreign investment is also crucial to meet Modi's goal of spending \$1.5 trillion on new roads, rail links and other infrastructure over the next five years as public finances deteriorate. The government pumped nearly Rs 1.7 lakh crore into public sector banks in the two years to March 2020. But a widening budget deficit and weak revenue growth put a brake on any further recapitalisation plans for the current financial year.

— Bloomberg

## PFC plans ₹10,000-crore retail bond issue

DIVYA PATIL & RAJESH KUMAR SINGH  
JAN. 6

India's biggest lender to the power sector plans to sell bonds to individual investors as it tries to attract savers dissatisfied with deposit rates at a 16-year low. Power Finance Corp has filed a draft prospectus for a Rs 10,000-crore offering (\$1.4 billion), and plans to raise the entire sum this

quarter, according to Parminder Chopra, director (finance). "We want to explore an alternative source of funds," Chopra said in a telephone interview. "Fixed deposit rates are quite low, so there could be interest from the public to get a bit better rate." Unprecedented monetary stimulus to help cushion the economy from damage wrought by the Covid-19 crisis has

dragged down rates that households get on bank savings. The rate on term deposits maturing in three years at the country's largest lender, State Bank of India, is 5.3 per cent, the lowest since September 2004. Power Finance has previously sold notes to retail investors, but those were tax-free infrastructure bonds, Chopra said. This planned offering would be the company's maiden tax-

able issuance to individual buyers, she said. The New Delhi-based company has hired Trust Investment Advisors Pvt Ltd, A.K. Capital Services Ltd, Edelweiss Financial Services Ltd and JM Financial Services Ltd as lead managers for the offering. It plans to issue the AAA rated notes in one or more tranches, according to the draft prospectus.

— Bloomberg

## TCS BUYBACK: TATA SONS TENDERS SHARES WORTH ₹9,997 CRORE

New Delhi, Jan. 6: Tata Sons tendered shares worth Rs 9,997 crore of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) during the IT major's Rs 16,000-crore buyback offer that concluded recently.

Tata Sons, the single largest shareholder of TCS, tendered more than 3.33 crore shares during the offer, a regulatory filing said. TCS said over 5.33 crore equity shares were bought back under the offer at a price of Rs 3,000 apiece and out of the total, Tata Sons' 3,33,25,118 shares were accepted under the buyback offer.

The total amount utilised for the buyback offer—which opened on December 18 and closed on January 1—was around Rs 16,000 crore, as per the filing. The shares tendered by Tata Sons were worth Rs 9,997.5 crore.

Among others, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and RBC Emerging Markets Equity Fund tendered around 16.69 lakh shares and 7.69 lakh shares of TCS, respectively.

Late last year, TCS CEO and MD Rajesh Gopinathan said the company is focused on its policy to return capital to shareholders.

The Mumbai-based company's cash reserves stood at Rs 58,500 crore as of September 2020.

In October 2019, TCS' board declared a special dividend of Rs 40 per equity share.

— PTI

## NBFCs require ₹2.2 L-cr extra funding next yr

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JAN. 6

NBFCs need additional funding of Rs 1.9-2.2 lakh crore in FY22, apart from refinancing of existing credit lines. This additional funding will help non-banks achieve assets under management (AUM) growth of 7-9 per cent in FY22 after a flat-tish performance in FY21, says Icra.

Growth would be contingent upon access to adequate funding lines. However, it has to be seen if banks will provide additional funding. Mutual fund exposures to non-banks have improved in the recent past, but their sustainability is critical. Other sources for funding could be securitisation and retail or overseas lenders/investors.

According to Motilal Oswal Research, while the cost of market borrowings has declined sharply, NBFCs have a lower share of market borrowings now as compared to two years ago. Post the IL&FS crisis, companies reduced their non-convertible debenture and commercial paper exposures. They focused on bank borrowings and alternative sources like sell-downs and external commercial borrowings to raise incremental money.

While most issuers expect to maintain or augment their on-balance sheet liquidity profile, most of the investors want to reduce it. This



divergence could pose challenges for incremental funding to the sector and has the potential to affect growth revival in FY22 and a sustained improvement in the subsequent years, says Icra. NBFC AUMs had registered a growth at a CAGR of 16 per cent between March 2016 and March 2020. The key segments which would bolster growth include gold loans, home loans, personal credit, rural finance and microfinance. Growth in vehicle finance, business loans including loan against property and other commercial lending segments, which are closely linked to the economic activities, are expected to take longer to see a reasonable revival. "Non-bank exposures to the commercial real estate and other large corporate/wholesales exposures are expected to register a decline even in FY2022 after the decline of about 15 per cent in FY2020 and about 10 per cent expected contraction in FY2021," said A. M. Karthik, vice president of Icra.

## GAMES

### SHORT TAKES

## Claire 1st female official in Tests

**Sydney:** Australia's Claire Polosak is set to become the first female match official in a men's Test match when she takes up the fourth umpire's role in the third Test between India and Australia starting here from Thursday. The 32-year-old from New South Wales has already earned the distinction of being the first woman on-field umpire in a men's ODI match in ICC's Division 2 league between Namibia and Oman played at the Windhoek in 2019. As per ICC rules for Test matches, the fourth umpire is appointed by the home cricket board from their nominees to the International Panel of ICC Umpires and from the host country. Polosak, who is a resident of New South Wales's Goulburn city, has also had the distinction of being the first female match official in a men's List A game in Australia. — PTI

## Indian shuttlers to start training

**New Delhi:** The entire Indian badminton contingent cleared the Covid-19 test on Wednesday and is set to begin training ahead of the Yonex Thailand Open, starting next week. The Indian team, part of the Green Zone, consisting of players and all stakeholders such as umpires, line judges, personnel from BWF, Badminton Association of Thailand, medical staff, and TV production crew, were tested after arrival in Bangkok. The Asia leg in Bangkok consists of two Super 1000 events — Yonex Thailand Open (January 12-17) and Toyota Thailand Open (January 19-24) followed by the \$1,500,000 HSBC BWF World Tour Finals (January 27-31). "The Asian Leg in Bangkok received a boost with all 824 participants in the Green Zone quarantine bubble testing negative for Covid-19," BWF said.— PTI

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# OPENING GAMBIT

## Rohit and India ready to change Sydney script

**Sydney, Jan. 6:** Having touched nadir and zenith in a span of 10 days, Ajinkya Rahane's India will look to start afresh against Australia with the big-hitting Rohit Sharma's presence adding a new dimension to what promises to be an enthralling third Test starting here on Thursday. The Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), despite being witness to some extraordinary batting performances from the touring Indian sides over the years, has not exactly been a happy hunting ground with six defeats. The lone win came a good 42 years back.

If Rahane's side can go 2-1 up and ensure the retention of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, it will be one of the finest hours in the history of Indian cricket. Making it even more special is the fact that the side has been without two world class performers and a senior pacer against a nearly full-strength Australian team. Seldom has an Australian batting unit, that boasts of a player of Steve Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect and literally intimidated by an Indian bowling unit, which isn't operating at full-strength.

Pacer Navdeep Saini will make his debut here, replacing Umesh Yadav who went home following an injury. The pressure is understandable as Australia are literally pushing a 70 per cent fit David Warner out there in the middle to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea. And in this backdrop, enters Rohit Sharma, whose last couple of months have been loads of off-field drama. But, his mere presence has added spring in the strides of the team and the youngsters in this current set-up swear by him. — PTI



India's Rohit Sharma prepares to bat in the nets during a training session at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday, ahead of the third Test against Australia.

— AFP



Australia's David Warner bats during a training session at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday.

— AFP

### NUMBERS GAME

#### INDIA HAVE WON JUST ONE TEST AT SYDNEY CRICKET GROUND

- The third Test match of the series between India and Australia will be played at Sydney Cricket Ground from Thursday (January 7).
- Australia have a good record at this ground. They have won 60, lost 28 and drew 20 in 108 previous Test matches played here. India, on the other hand, have won just one, lost five and drew six in 12 previous Test matches.
- Australia have won six, lost one and drew three of their past 10 Test at this ground, the only loss having come against England in the disastrous 2010-11 Ashes series. The only team to have beaten Australia in Sydney Tests in the past 18 years was England, who did it in 2003 by winning the match by 225 runs and in 2011 by an innings and 83 runs.
- India's only victory at this ground came in 1977-78 when they beat Australia by an innings and two runs. The last Test match at this ground between the two teams in 2018-19 ended in a draw.

#### FOR THE RECORD

- Nathan Lyon who took 394 wickets at an average of 31.63 in 187 innings of 98 Tests, needs six wickets to become third Australian and 16th bowler overall to reach the 400 mark in Test cricket.
- Cheteshwar Pujara, who scored 5,903 runs at an average of 45.80 in 132 innings of 79 Tests, is 97 runs short of the 6,000 mark in Tests. He will become the 11th Indian and 69th batsman overall to reach this landmark.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

## NZ sweep series, are No.1 in Tests

**Christchurch, Jan. 6:** Towering paceman Kyle Jamieson completed an 11-wicket match haul Wednesday as New Zealand thrashed Pakistan in the second Test to become the world's top-ranked team.

Jamieson was near unplayable in Pakistan's second innings, finishing with six for 48 after his five for 69 in the first innings, to give New Zealand victory by an innings and 176 runs.

The win inside four days in Christchurch, which completed a 2-0 series sweep, also confirmed New Zealand had overtaken Australia to be the world's number one Test side for the first time.

New Zealand batted Pakistan out of contention with a first innings 659 for six, with Williamson's masterful 238 supported by Henry Nicholls (157) and Daryl Mitchell (102 not out).

But there was still a chance Pakistan could force a draw until Jamieson took the ball.

In his sixth Test after making his debut against India 10 months ago, Jamieson has taken 36 wickets at a stunning 13.27 average and with four five-wicket hauls to his credit. But he said he's far from being the finished product. "I'm a long way off the cricketer that I want to be," Jamieson said after his Man of the Match performance.

**I'm a long way off the cricketer that I want to be. I'm 12 months into my international career and it's a long process and hopefully I've got another 9-10 years in this group and if that happens I've got more to come.**

— KYLE JAMIESON  
New Zealand pacer on his career

"I'm 12 months into my international career and it's a long process and hopefully I've got another 9-10 years in this group and if that happens I've got more to come," he further added.

The teetering Pakistan resumed the day after for one, needing to bat for the better part of two days to salvage a draw, but they were never in the hunt.

Kiwis' pace battery Trent Boult had nightwatchman Mohammad Abbas out for three in the fifth over and after that the day was mainly about Kyle Jamieson, who recorded his best match performance. After Abbas departed, Abid Ali and Azhar Ali looked to be laying the groundwork for a solid third-wicket stand and moved the score to 46 when Jamieson removed Abid for 26.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
Pakistan 297 & 186 in 81.4 overs (Zafar Gohar 37; Kyle Jamieson 3/48) lost to New Zealand 659/6 decl.



New Zealand players pose for a team photo with their trophy after defeating Pakistan to claim series 2-0 at Hagley Oval in Christchurch, New Zealand, on Wednesday.

— AFP