





## SHORT TAKES

## 38 DELHI COPS AWARDED POLICE MEDALS

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

Thirty-eight Delhi Police personnel have been awarded police medal for their services, officials said. Seventeen have been awarded the Police Medal for Gallantry (PMG), three President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service and 18 Police Medal for Meritorious Service on the occasion of the Republic Day.

DCP Sanjeev Kumar Yadav and his special cell team, including inspectors Prabhakar Kumar Pankaj, Pankaj Kumar; sub-inspectors Krishan Kumar, Neeraj Kumar Sharma; head constable Girdhar Singh Gurjer; and constable Gurdeep Singh, were awarded the Police Medal for Gallantry for bringing under control criminal Kranti Gang in the Delhi NCR in 2018.

A team led by DCP Pramod Singh Kushwah with ACP Hridaya Bhushan, SI Sandesh K and ASI Bhupender Kumar arrested a suspected ISIS terrorist, Yusuf Khan, in September last year and recovered heavy ammunition. They have been awarded the Police Medal for Gallantry.

DCP Pramod Singh Kushwah and Inspector Vinod Kumar have been given the PMG for arresting three ISIS terrorists in Delhi in January last year.

DCP G. Ram Gopal Naik, ACP Rajesh Kumar, inspector Vinay Tyagi and constable Kuldeep Singh will receive the PMG for rescuing a five-year-old child of a Delhi businessman after an operation of 11 days in 2018.

Special CP Neeraj Thakur, ACP Ritambra Prakash and SI Suresh Kumar have been awarded the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service.

DCP Rajesh Deo, DCP Sanjeev Kumar Yadav, Additional DCP Rajendra Prasad Meena, ACP Anil Sharma, inspectors Manish Joshi, Vinod Narang and Pratibha Sharma, ASIs Rekha and Mahabir Singh are among the recipients of Police Medal for Meritorious Service.

## TRAFFIC MAYHEM IN MANY PARTS OF DELHI DUE TO STIR

**New Delhi, Jan. 26:** Traffic went haywire on national capital roads on Tuesday as the tractor parade taken out by farmers spilled into many parts of the city and reached Central Delhi's ITO and Red Fort areas despite police raising barricades and checkpoints at multiple places.

Wielding sticks and clubs and holding the tricolour and union flags, tens of thousands of farmers atop tractors broke barriers, clashed with police and entered Delhi from various points to lay siege to the Red Fort and climb the flagpole on Republic Day.

The traffic on the city roads, though thin due to the Republic Day holiday, was thrown completely out of gear with hordes of protesting farmers deviating from the pre-designed rally routes and driving their tractors towards Delhi from Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur and other border points. However, the traffic on most roads in the city was restored by around 9 pm, according to the traffic police.

As police and farmers involved in clashes at many places earlier in the day, some parts of the city were cut off, with the Traffic Police regulating movement of vehicles in view of presence of farmers at places such as ITO, Red Fort, Nangloi, Anand Vihar, Mukarba Chowk and Akshardham.

The traffic police took to Twitter to update commuters about situation developing on roads in different parts of the city. "Traffic is very heavy on GTK road, Outer Ring Road, Badli road, KN Katzu Marg, Madhuban Chowk, Kanjhawala Road, Palla Road, Narela & DSIDC Narela roads. Please avoid these roads. Traffic is very heavy on Wazirabad road, ISBT road, GT road, Pustha road, Vikas marg, NH-24, Road no. 57, Noida link road. Please avoid these roads," it tweeted in the afternoon hours. —PTI

## Sikh religious flag hoisted at Red Fort

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Red Fort, was not touched. The saffron flag hoisted by protesters from a staff outside the iconic Red Fort was the 'Nishan Sahib', a symbol of Sikh religion seen at all Gurdwara complexes.

The 'Nishan Sahib' is a triangular flag that is sacred to Sikhs. The emblem on the flag comprises a 'Khanda', a two-edged sword, Chakra, a disc, and

## PM Modi dons special turban from Jamnagar

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wore a special turban from Gujarat's Jamnagar at the 72nd Republic Day parade at Rajpath, continuing his tradition of donning unique head-gears.

The halari paghdi (royal turban) in shades of red with yellow dots was gifted to the PM by the royal family of Jamnagar.

Jamnagar MP Poonamben Maadam tweeted that the traditional "halari paghdi" represents the rich culture of the region.

"Jamnagar is known for its rich culture. Proud to see Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi Ji in a 'Halari Paghdi' from Jamnagar on the occasion of #RepublicDay," she said.

He paired the turban with a traditional kurta, pyjama, grey jacket along with a face mask.

Turbans have remained a highlight of the Prime Minister's sartorial choices at Independence Day and Republic Day events.

PM Modi was spotted wearing the colourful paghdi while he laid a wreath at the National War Memorial on the occasion of Republic Day, which has been a low key affair due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Last year, he sported a saffron bandhej head-gear with a tail for the 71st Republic Day.

For his maiden Independence Day speech in 2014, he had opted for a bright red Jodhpuri bandhej turban with green at the tail.

In 2015, he chose a yellow turban covered with multi-coloured criss-cross lines, and a tie and dye turban in hues of pink and yellow in 2016.

The Prime Minister's turban for 2017 was a mix of bright red and yellow with crisscrossed golden lines all over. He donned a saffron turban for his appearance at the Red Fort in 2018. Mr Modi's eye-catching turbans have been a highlight of his previous Republic Day appearances.

## ‘Col. Babu deserved highest honour’

*He, his men fought barehanded, proved India is stronger than China: Father*

**Hyderabad, Jan. 26:** The father of late Colonel Santosh Babu on Monday said he was "not 100 per cent satisfied" with the Mahavir Chakra posthumously awarded to him for his acts of gallantry against the Chinese attack in Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh in June 2020, and that he should have been honoured with the Param Vir Chakra.

"It is not that I am unhappy. But I am not 100 per cent satisfied with the award of Mahavir Chakra. There is scope for honouring him in a better way. But my opinion is that Santosh Babu should have been named

for the highest military award Param Vir Chakra for the gallantry he displayed while discharging his duties," Babu's father B. Upendra told PTI.

He said the valor shown by his son had inspired many people, including those working in the defence forces.

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



Colonel Santosh Babu

Mr Upendra said his son, overcoming the challenges posed by the climatic conditions of the area where he was posted, fought with Chinese troops.

"My son and his men fought barehanded. He

proved that India is superior and stronger than China by killing more enemy soldiers," he said.

My son and his men fought barehanded. He proved that India is superior and stronger than China by killing more enemy soldiers," he said.

According to him, Col. Babu's family did not get anything more than the departmental benefits that are usually given to the families of martyred soldiers, from the centre.

The Telangana government gave ₹5 crore compensation to Santosh Babu's family, besides Group-I post to his wife and a residential plot. —PTI

## 86 police personnel hurt in violence during parade

**New Delhi, Jan. 26:** The Delhi police on Tuesday said protesting farmers violated the conditions pre-agreed for their tractor parade and indulge in violence and vandalism, leaving 86 of its personnel injured.

The Delhi police registered seven FIRs in connection with the protesting farmers' tractor parade in the national capital, officials said here. "Three FIRs were regis-

tered in east district, three in Dwarka and one in Shahdara district," a police official said.

In a statement, the police also claimed it did all due diligence in following the conditions for the rally, but the protesters began their march much ahead of the scheduled time and extensive damage to public property was caused during the violence by them.

The police statement came as the national capi-

tal witnessed clashes between protesters and police during the tractor parade by farmers to press their demand of repealing the three new agri laws.

"The protesters violated conditions fixed for the rally. The farmers began tractor rally before the scheduled time, they also resorted to violence and vandalism," Delhi police PRO Eish Singhal said. —PTI

They were safely rescued by Delhi Police personnel after being stuck for almost two hours in the afternoon, provided refreshments and subsequently escorted away, a senior officer said. The entire area saw chaotic scenes for hours as the protesters pelted stones at police and damaged vehicles. Police personnel tried to control the mob by baton-charging them and lobbing tear gas shells.

## 200 artists, kids being stuck near Red Fort rescued after 2 hours

**New Delhi, Jan. 26:** Around 200 artists, including children, who were part of the Republic Day parade, were rescued after they got stranded near Red Fort on Tuesday as the farmer's tractor parade turned violent and protesters broke barriers and stormed the Mughal era monument.

They were safely rescued by Delhi Police personnel after being stuck for almost two hours in the afternoon, provided refreshments and subsequently escorted away, a senior officer said. The entire area saw chaotic scenes for hours as the protesters pelted stones at police and damaged vehicles. Police personnel tried to control the mob by baton-charging them and lobbing tear gas shells. —PTI



Indian Air Force's three C-130J aircraft (clockwise from above) flypast in Bhim formation, Ladakh tableau and members of Bangladesh Armed Forces contingent passes through Rajpath and President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi watch a flypast by Indian Air Force aircrafts during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations on Rajpath in New Delhi on Tuesday.



## UP tableau displays Ayodhya's Ram temple, cultural heritage

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

The cultural heritage of ancient holy town Ayodhya, replica of Ram temple, glimpse of 'Deepotsav,' and various stories from the Ramayana were depicted in the tableau of Uttar Pradesh in the Republic Day parade on Rajpath on Tuesday.

The bedecked tableau was fronted by a sitting model of Maharishi Valmiki and the temple model occupied a large portion on the rear side.

"Ayodhya is our holy place and the Ram temple issue has been an emotive one for the faithful. Our tableau showcased the ancient heritage of the temple town, revered by



A tableau of Uttar Pradesh tourism department depicting Ram Temple during the 72nd Republic Day Parade in Lucknow.

—PTI

countless people across the country," an official of the Uttar Pradesh government, accompanying the state team, said. A group of artistes, including many dressed as saints, accompanied the tableau.

Tableaux from a total of 17 states and Union Territories were showcased at the Republic Day celebrations, whose scale this year was severely curtailed on account of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Farmers shower flower petals on fellow farmers riding their tractors after breaking the police barricades at Singhu border during the Kisan Gantantra Parade on Republic Day in New Delhi on Tuesday.

—PTI

## Farmers clash with cops

■ Continued from Page 1

Morchha, an umbrella organisation of the protesting farmers' unions, distanced itself from "violent elements" who, it said, had infiltrated the otherwise peaceful movement.

The Morcha said that the long struggle against the Centre's three farm laws, that has been going on for more than six months now, and more than 60 days of protests at Delhi borders seemed to have led to this situation.

The violence and chaos in some areas overshadowed the peaceful tractor rally that passed through other parts of Delhi.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which has been supporting the farmers' agitation, condemned the violence and blamed the Central government for "allowing" Delhi's law and order situation to deteriorate from bad to worse. In a statement, the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP said the violence has weakened the farmers' protest.

Crowds began swelling at Delhi borders at around 8 am. Chants of "Kisan kanoon wapas lo" (Take back the farm laws) rent the air at borders where some tractors were laying patriotic songs such as, Aisa desh hai mera and Sare jahan se achha.

The protesters were expected to start their tractor rally at noon to avoid interfering with morning Republic Day celebrations in central Delhi. The tricolour and flags of different farmers unions fluttered as marches began from Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur border points, much ahead of the time decided for the tractor parade. Security personnel tried to convince the protesters to stick to the designated route and time and maintain peace.

Things suddenly changed at about 8.35 am when some groups of farmers broke barricades to force their way into the capital. At the Ghazipur border, tractors pushed aside a shipping container placed to block their route while police, outnumbered, stood by helplessly. Elsewhere, thick clouds of tear gas rose over approved march routes as farmers on tractors, on horses and foot forcefully began their rally hours ahead of schedule.

Another small group of tractors and protesters broke away from the approved protest routes — tipping over buses and violently clashing with overwhelmed police officers armed with batons — as they marched toward central Delhi. A handful of protesters were also

carrying swords, tridents, sharp daggers and battle axes.

Some of the most violent clashes took place at the ITO junction where protesters tried to break a final barrier and force their way towards central Delhi. Some angry farmers retreated and drove their tractors recklessly on a side road, forcing the police to resort to firing teargas.

There were chaotic scenes at ITO when protesters started chasing police personnel with sticks and ramming their tractors into the buses parked nearby. After almost a 40-minute long confrontation, this section of farmers moved towards Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg which houses the offices of AAP, Delhi Congress, BJP and this newspaper.

At the Chintamani Chowk in Shahdara too police resorted to lathi-charge when protesters broke barricades and smashed window panes of cars. A group of "Nihangs" (traditional Sikh warriors) clashed with security personnel near Akshardham temple. At Nangloi Chowk in west Delhi and at Mukarba Chowk farmers broke cemented barricades and police used teargas to disperse them.



## SHORT TAKES

### JD-U AVOIDS QUERY ON PADMA AWARD TO PASWAN

**Patna, Jan. 26:** The JD(U) squirmed at suggestions that a posthumous Padma Bhushan award for former Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan indicated the BJP's fondness for the LJP founded by the late leader and headed by his son Chirag who has turned renegade.

Chief minister Nitish Kumar, de facto leader of the JD(U) who has known Paswan senior for many decades, had on Monday night come out with a statement expressing delight over a number of people from Bihar, including the late leader, receiving the Padma awards.

At a function organised at the JD(U) headquarters on the occasion of Republic Day, journalists sought reaction on Padma Bhushan for Paswan from R.C.P. Singh, a key aide of Kumar who replaced his mentor as the party president last month. A former career bureaucrat, Singh sought to wriggle out with a generic reply.

"We extend our congratulations to all distinguished persons who have received the civilian honours. We extend the same to family members of those on whom these have been conferred posthumously," he said. However, when journalists persisted with a pointed query as to whether the development indicated that the BJP still had a soft corner for the LJP, which has opened a front against Kumar and his party but swears by its loyalty towards the saffron outfit, Singh snapped back.

The JD(U) rank and file has squarely blamed its poor show in the recent Assembly polls on the rebellion of Chirag Paswan. —PTI

### COVID: INDIA SEES LOWEST NO. OF CASES IN 8 MNTHS

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

India recorded its lowest number of daily new cases after eight months with 9,102 persons found positive to Coronavirus in the last 24 hours. The active cases have now come down to 1.66% of the cumulative positive cases (1.77 lakh). The daily fatalities also dropped to 117 after more than eight months.

At the same time, the number of vaccinated healthcare workers was 20.29 lakhs on Tuesday. "India has crossed a crucial milestone in its fight against the global pandemic. The daily new cases have touched a new low today, 9,102 daily new cases were added to the national tally in the last 24 hours after 237 days. The daily new cases were 9,304 on 4th June, 2020," Union health ministry officials said.

Health ministry officials said with a sustained, pro-active and calibrated strategy of the Centre based on 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' approach, the daily new cases have seen a consistent decline. This has ensured a steady fall in daily fatalities too.

Kerala reported the maximum daily new cases 3,361 in the last 24 hours while Maharashtra recorded 1,842 new cases and Tamil Nadu reported 540 new cases.

### IN A FIRST, KOLKATA GETS BOAT LIBRARY

**Kolkata, Jan. 26:** A children's library on a boat was launched in Kolkata on Republic Day, a first of a kind initiative.

Children will be able to choose from a selection of 500 titles in English and Bengali on the Young Readers' Boat Library, an official said on Tuesday.

The idea behind the boat library is that one can read some good collection of books while appreciating the beauty of Kolkata, cruising on the Hooghly, he said.

"The boat library would take people on a three-hour long trip," the official said.

The trip will start at Millenium Park and the boat will travel all the way to Belur Math jetty and return, he said. There will be three trips on all weekdays, he added.

The boat has a free wifi facility as well.

The library has been set up by the West Bengal Transport Corporation (WBTC) in collaboration with a heritage book store of the city, the official said.

A ride on the boat would cost ₹100 for adults and ₹50 for children.

The library will eventually host activities such as storytelling, dramatised readings, poetry sessions, book launches, music and more, he said.

—PTI



Flight lieutenant Bhawana Kanth stands on the Indian Air Force tableau as it moves past Rajpath on Tuesday. She became the first woman fighter pilot to take part in the January 26 ceremonial event. — PTI



Army tanks and other weapon systems being showcased during the 72nd Republic Day parade at Rajpath, in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI



Union home minister Amit Shah, CJI S.A. Bobde, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar and others witness a flypast by Indian Air Force aircraft during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations on Rajpath on Monday. — PTI



A tableaux of the government biotechnology department showing Covid-19 vaccine passes through Rajpath during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations, in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

## Rafale makes debut on R-Day flypast

Carries out 'Brahmastra' formation alone and is part of the 'Eklavya' formation too

**New Delhi, Jan. 26:** The newly inducted Rafale fighter aircraft featured for the first time in Republic Day flypast as it carried out the 'Brahmastra' formation alone and was part of the 'Eklavya' formation with four other fighter jets.

The fighter jet conducted Eklavya formation by flying at a height of around 300 meter along with two Jagaur and two MIG-29 aircraft. The five jets resembled a V-shape with Rafale leading the pack.

The 25,000 strong audience was able to see Rafale fighter jet again when it culminated the flypast by conducting the Brahmastra formation wherein it traversed at a low altitude for some distance, then pulled up vertically at 90 degrees and conducted rolls before stabilising at a higher altitude.

In a major boost to India's air power capability, five French-made multi-role Rafale fighter jets were inducted into the IAF on September 10 last year. A total of 38 IAF aircraft and four planes of the Indian Army participated in the flypast on Tuesday.

Goel siblings who came all the way from Yamunanagar, Haryana to attend the ceremonial event, were ecstatic to see Rafale take to the sky at the celebrations for the first time.

"That 'Vertical Charlie' by Rafale at the end was a total show-stopper. It was my first time at a Republic Day, and less crowd actually helped me enjoy the event more. I must admit, Rafale's aerial manoeuvre was just scintillating," said 24-year-old Mayank Goel, an engineer.

His sister Kirti Goel, who attended it for the second time, when asked, what was the most amazing experience from the 2021 Republic Day event at Rajpath, she quipped, "Rafale's aerial stunt".

"I attended it in 2015 for the first time, when US President Barack Obama was the chief guest. That time, I had seen the 'Beast' and this time I saw the fighter jet Rafale, so two amazing experiences," she said.

For Kuldeep Sharma, who works in the IT sector, and his wife, Rafale's aerial manoeuvre at the end of



IAF's Rafale fighter jet flies over Rajpath, during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

the parade was the "most awe-inspiring experience".

As is traditionally the case on Republic Day, flypast was divided into two blocks; the first was along with the parade and the second was after the parade.

In the first block, there were three formations. The first was the 'Nishan' formation comprising of four Mi17V5 aircraft that carried the national flag and logos of all three serv-

ices.

It was followed by the 'Dhruv' formation by four helicopters of Army Aviation Corps. The last was the 'Rudra' formation - comprising a single Dakota aircraft flanked by two Mi17V5 helicopters — which celebrated the 50th anniversary of the country's victory in the 1971 war.

Dakotas played a major role during that war. On December 16 last year, India launched year-long

celebrations of its victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war that led to the creation of Bangladesh.

The second block of the flypast consisted of nine formations. These nine formations were 'Sudarshan', 'Rakshak', 'Bhim', 'Netra', 'Garuda', 'Eklavya', 'Trinetra', 'Vijay' and 'Brahmastra'.

Sudarshan formation had one Chinook and two Mi17V5 helicopters, Rakshak formation comprised one Mi-35 and four Apache helicopters, Bhim formation consisted of three C-130J aircraft and Netra formation comprised indigenously developed early warning and control aircraft Netra flanked by two Sukhoi-30 fighter jets.

Garuda formation had one C-17 Globemaster plane with two MIG-29 and two Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft. Trinetra formation comprised three Sukhoi-30 MKIs. Vijay formation showcased three advanced light helicopters.

The IAF showcased models of Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas and indigenously developed anti-tank guided missile

Dhruvastra on its tableaux during the Republic Day parade.

They also showcased scaled-down models of Light Combat Helicopter (LCH), Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter jet and Rohini radar on the tableaux.

Indigenously developed next-generation anti-radiation missile Rudram and anti-tank guided missile Dhruvastra were displayed on the LCA and the LCH respectively, on the tableaux.

Sukhoi-30Mki was displayed with indigenously developed Astra and Brahmos missiles at the tableau. Indigenously developed Akash missile was displayed along with the Rohini radar.

The IAF's marching contingent at the parade consisted of four officers and 96 soldiers marching in a box formation of 12 rows and eight columns.

The marching contingent was led by Flight Lieutenant Tanik Sharma and three supernumerary officers — Flight Lieutenant Manjeet Singh, Flight Lieutenant Apoorva Yadav and Flying Officer Kuttapa.

## Gov rues rampant extortion in Nagaland

MANOJ ANAND  
GUWAHATI, JAN. 26

Nagaland governor and Prime Minister's envoy for Naga peace talks R.N. Ravi on Tuesday said that the menace of rampant extortions under the guise of illegal taxation by anti-social elements in Nagaland has not yet been fully curbed which has been creating a sense of fear among businesses, small and large, and inhibit entrepreneurship that severely undermines the economy and growth of the state.

Pointing out that police and security forces have been taking action against such elements, Ravi in his Republic Day's address, however, said that the state government has also continued its efforts to curb the menace of extortion and illegal taxation.

Asserting that the state hasn't seen any major eruption of law and order problem for some time Ravi reiterated that illegal taxation by anti-social elements hampers development.

Pointing out that Nagaland is rich in natural resources and endowed with one of the finest human resources Ravi regretted that the people of Nagaland have not been able to reap optimum benefit of these as well as various progressive schemes of the Central and state governments because some extra constitutional entities in the guise of espousing the Naga national cause have queered the pitch for the people and the government and kept the peace and progress at bay. He said that the Centre has taken several political initiatives for its enduring resolutions from time to time.

## BENGAL | POLITICS

### Ghoshal compares Shubhendu Adhikari's popularity with that of Mamata

## Disgruntled TMC MLA quits party posts

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
with agency inputs  
KOLKATA, JAN. 26

Rebel Trinamul Congress MLA of Uttarpara, in Hooghly, Prabir Ghoshal on Tuesday publicly quit his two party posts, alleging that a section of party leaders was attempting to ensure his defeat in the coming West Bengal Assembly election.

He also compared newly-inducted BJP leader Shubhendu Adhikari's popularity with party supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Within a few hours of Ghoshal's

public resignation, the TMC issued him a show-cause notice.

In the morning the journalist-turned MLA told the media, "I have lot of grievances which were not addressed. After Lok Sabha polls, I repeatedly alerted the party of a disease like cancer infecting the rank and file. But there was no response. Rectification is needed in the party because good men cannot work here amid bad faces. Otherwise party will have to pay the price." He said, "I once thought I would resign as an MLA but I did not do it

because common people need MLA's signature for their "purposes." I now feel isolated in the party and hence resign as a district TMC core committee member and spokesperson. The day MLA Laxmi Ratan Shukla quit our party, I told the CM that it is better for me not to contest the election in view of the problems in Uttarpara constituency. She then asked me to fight the polls from any other seat, if needed."

Ghoshal claimed, "After Banerjee, if there was someone popular and important like her in the

TMC that was Shubhendu. He should have been retained. But there was gap in efforts. Otherwise Shubhendu would not have defected to the BJP."

He also complained that he was not invited to the CM's rally at Purshura on Monday. Stung by his explosive outburst, the TMC showcased and cautioned Ghoshal in the afternoon, suspecting his secret link with the BJP. He, however, rejected the possibility of his rapport with the saffron party.

Meanwhile, BJP leader Shubhendu Adhikari on Tuesday claimed that

more MLAs will desert the TMC in the coming days and wondered whether West Bengal Chief Minister will contest from their seats as well.

The Chief Minister has announced that she will contest from Nandigram seat, of which Adhikari was the sitting MLA, besides her Bhowanipore constituency after the former transport minister in Banerjee's cabinet quit the ruling party in the state, sparking an exodus of TMC leaders to the BJP.

Banerjee has announced that she will contest from Nandigram

seat where she will be trounced. Besides, her vote share in Bhowanipore constituency has also shrunk drastically since the 2019 elections. The TMC supremo may also declare in the coming days that she will contest from Domjur or Bally seats. But, wherever she goes, she will face the music," Adhikari said addressing a public meeting.

The TMC turnout claimed that "lotus will bloom" in the entire Adhikari family by Ram Navami and even in the Banerjee household by mid-February.



SHORT TAKES

TRACTOR MARCH HELD PEACEFULLY IN AURANGABAD

**Aurangabad, Jan. 26:** A tractor march organised here in Maharashtra on Tuesday to extend support to the protesting farmers in New Delhi passed off peacefully.

Around 150 to 200 people, five tractors, cars, and two-wheelers participated in the morcha, which started from Delhi Gate and culminated at Bhadkal gate, separated by a distance of about 2.2 kms.

The march was organised by the Maharashtra Rajya Kisan Sabha and the Maharashtra Rajya Lal Bawta Shetmajur Union.

Some workers of the Congress also joined the procession.

Ram Baheti, one of the organisers of the march, told reporters that around 4,000 volunteers from Aurangabad had recently visited Delhi and participated in the agitations being held at borders of the national capital.

He said the three agri laws were anti-constitutional since the government didn't send the draft bills to a joint parliamentary committee.

On eruption of violence during the tractor parade in New Delhi earlier in the day, Baheti said the lathicharge by police on farmers is condemnable. "The clashes occurred because of the stubborn stand of the Central government," he added.

R-Day: Cultural heritage, military might on display

■ Continued from Page 1

states depicted temples. While India displayed its key assets from the Army, including T-90 tanks and BrahMos missile system, it was the newly inducted Rafale fighter aircraft that was the show-stopper. It also flew as part of the "Eklavya" formation with two Jaguar jets and two MiG-29 aircraft. A total of 38 IAF aircraft participated in the flypast.

Another first at the ceremony was a 122-member marching-cum-band contingent of the Bangladesh armed forces taking part in the parade. The Bangladeshi tri-services contingent was the first marching contingent to walk down the ceremonial boulevard.

Lt. Col. Abu Md Shahnoor Shavon of the Bangladesh army, who spearheaded the parading contingent said, "It was an honour for us to be part of this august ceremony of India, and that too in the 50th year of our Independence. And, India gave us the honour to lead the parade."

The Bangladeshi military band right behind the marching contingent played six tunes in all, including some of the iconic ones like war song Chal Chal Chal by poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, and Shono Ekti Mujiborer.

Known otherwise to witness huge bustling crowds across many age groups, the annual ceremonial event at Rajpath was scaled down this time in view of the coronavirus pandemic, with spectators' size drastically cut to 25,000 from about 1.25 lakh last year.

From members of contingents to spectators, everyone wore masks, audience maintained the mandated distance while sitting, and standing spectators were not allowed. The marching contingents' route was also curtailed and they stopped at the National Stadium this year instead of following the regular route all the way to the Red Fort.

The size of the marching contingents was also reduced from regular 144 to 96 so that they could maintain social distancing, a senior official said.

Six tableaux from the defence arm, including one each from the Indian Air Force and the Navy, were also part of the parade. Flt Lt Bhawana Kanth, the first woman pilot of the IAF was part of its tableau, which depicted scaled down models of Light Combat Aircraft, Light Combat Helicopter, Su-30 MKI and Rohini radar. The Navy's tableau displayed models of Indian naval ship (INS) Vikrant and naval operations that were conducted during the 1971 India-Pakistan war.

Young Union Territory of Ladakh made its debut in the extravaganza on Rajpath with a beautiful tableau depicting the iconic Thikse Monastery and its rich cultural heritage. The Union Territory of Ladakh was created in 2019 after the central government bifurcated the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The CPWD float paid tribute to the sacrifices made by heroes of the armed forces, with a special floral tableau, while Delhi tableau depicted the pedestrianisation project of Chandni Chowk.

# Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan chants fill the air

Shouting slogans farmers, poured into Delhi on tractors, horses, cranes and motorbikes

**New Delhi, Jan. 26:** Chanting *rang de basanti* and *jai jawan jai kisan* numerous farmers rode tractors, motorbikes, horses and even cranes to cross the national capital's borders into the city for their proposed parade against the three contentious farm laws.

Locals stood on both sides of the roads at various locations showering flower petals on the farmers amid drum beats.

Standing atop vehicles decked up with flags, the protesters danced to the tune of patriotic songs such as *Aisa desh hai mera* and *Sare jahan se achcha*.

"People think farmers are only meant to plough their fields. But there is much more to a farmer's life. We also ride motorbikes and horses though we worship our tractors as it helps in earning our bread and butter."

"Today, everything is on display in this historical rally," said Gagan Singh, a protester riding a horse to the parade.

Parmajet Bibi, a woman in her late 40s, who was riding a tractor said, "Women are not just cooking at community kitchens. We help men in fields and we are riding tractors in this rally to send out a strong message".

Aditya Pajetta, a farmer from Haryana's Yamuna Nagar, carried a 15-kg plough on his shoulder while marching from Singhu border.

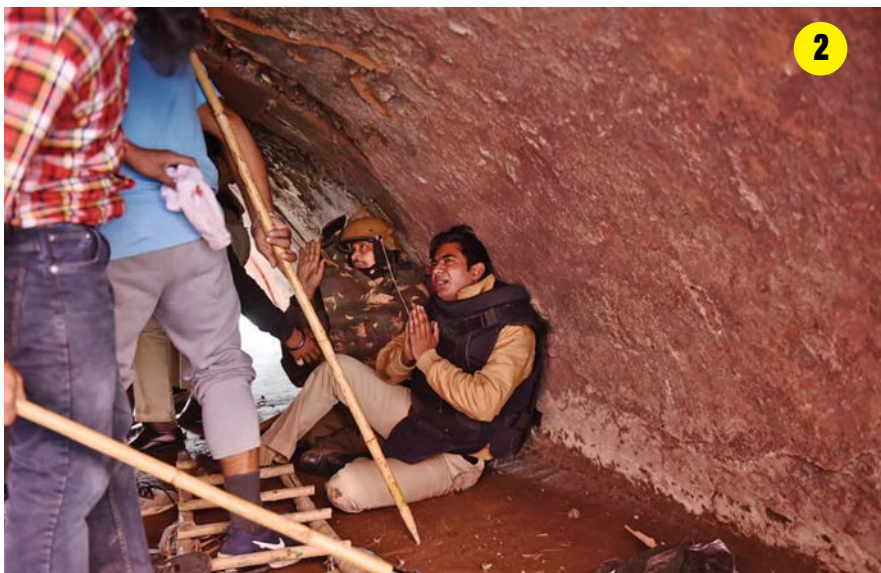
"Our fight is to save this plough. Generations have been involved in farming and it will be a pity if we cannot save their legacy. I have started marching from Singhu border and will carry it to the spot where the rally will conclude," he said.

The cranes which were part of the rally had a makeshift podium on the top with a mattress at the front for people to sit.

The Tricolour and flags of different farmer unions fluttered as marches began from Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur border points, much ahead of the time decided for the tractor parade. Security personnel tried to convince the protesters to stick to the designated route and time and maintain peace.

"We support the demands of farmers. We survive on what they produce and it is time we stand up for them. We salute their spirit," said Rani Devi, whose family was applying tilak to forehead of the participants.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at several Delhi border points since



1. Security personnel baton charge a protester during clashes after the farmers tractor rally turned violent on Republic Day in New Delhi on Tuesday.  
2. Protesting farmers corner two policemen during clashes at Red Fort.  
3. Combo picture shows a policeman falling from a rampart of the Red Fort during clashes with protesting farmers who had gathered there after their tractor parade.  
4. Farmers participate in a tractor rally after breaking police barricades at Singhu border near Bhalswa landfill site in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

November 28, demanding a complete repeal of three farm laws and a legal guarantee on minimum support price for their crops.

## High alert sounded in Punjab, Haryana

**Chandigarh, Jan. 26:** A state of "high alert" has been sounded in Punjab and Haryana as violent farmers' protest rocked neighbouring Delhi during the farmers' tractor rally. The ministry of home affairs (MHA) has also ordered the deployment of additional troops in parts of the national capital to contain the unrest.

Mobile Internet services were suspended in three districts of Sonapat, Jhajjar and Palwal until 5 pm Wednesday.

In the wake of the events

which unfolded in the national capital, Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar held a special meeting of his Cabinet and appealed to all farmers to return to their homes.

The need of the hour is to together defeat the designs of antisocial elements, said Mr Khattar.

He also chaired a high level meeting with senior officials including Chief Secretary Vijai Vardhan, home secretary Rajeev Arora and director-general of police Manoj Yadava here in the evening to take

stock of the situation. The DGP said a high alert has been sounded in the state in view of the violent incidents in several areas during the farmers' tractor parade in Delhi. He directed all district police chiefs to be extremely vigilant.

Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh said the violence during the farmers' tractor parade against the new agriculture laws in Delhi is unacceptable even as he ordered a high alert in his state.

The chief minister condemned the incidents that

took place at the historic Red Fort and urged the farmers to immediately vacate the national capital and return to the borders, where they had been protesting peacefully for the past two months.

Mr Singh ordered a high alert in Punjab amid the tension and violence in Delhi, and directed director-general of police Dinkar Gupta to ensure that law and order in the state is not deteriorated at any cost.

Expressing grave concern over the situation unfolding in the national

capital, the Punjab chief minister said the violence was apparently triggered by some people who violated the rules laid down for the tractor march through mutual agreement between the Delhi Police and the farmer unions.

It was unfortunate that these elements disturbed the peaceful agitation of the farmers, he said in a statement issued here.

The Punjab chief minister also condemned the incidents that took place at the Red Fort and other places in the national capital. — Agencies

## Violence is no solution: Rahul

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

As the unprecedented violent protests broke out in the national capital on the Republic Day, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said that violence is no solution to any problem. Taking to Twitter, Gandhi said, "Violence is not the solution to any problem. If anyone gets hurt, the damage will happen to our country. Take back the anti-farmer law for the benefit of the country."

While he was against the violence he once again reiterated his party's stand that the Center should take back the controversial farm laws.

The Congress has been supportive of the concerns of farmers. It was the first political outfit to take out a tractor rally in Punjab after the laws were passed in parliament. The party has also given its full support to the protesting farmers. In the recently held meeting of the Congress working committee CWC the party passed a resolution demanding the farm laws be taken back.

In her remarks the Congress president Sonia Gandhi had said, "It is abundantly clear that the three laws were prepared in haste and Parliament

## DIDI SLAMS CENTRE FOR FARMERS' STIR

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, JAN. 26

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamul Congress supreme Mamata Banerjee, who has been vehemently opposing the three farm laws, blamed the Centre for the farmers' siege at the Red Fort on Tuesday. In the afternoon she tweeted, "Deeply disturbed by worrying & painful developments that have unfolded on the streets of Delhi. Centre's insensitive attitude and indifference towards our farmer brothers & sisters has to be blamed for this situation."

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





# The Asian Age

27 JANUARY 2021

## History made on R-Day, but disorder regrettable

For the first time since the birth of the Republic of India on January 26, 1950, Republic Day this year wasn't just the traditional military parade on New Delhi's Rajpath but also the tractors' parade by tens of thousands of farmers in the nation's capital, venting their demands that have caught the country's attention for many months.

History was thus made. But it didn't turn out to be entirely peaceful as the chief coordinating body of the dozens of farmers' unions may have desired. Providing dramatic television footage, in some parts of the city, hundreds of farmers clashed with the police, which resorted to lathicharges and teargas shelling, but on the whole conducted itself with reasonable restraint.

Had a volatile section of the farmers not veered off the route marked out for the tractor parade by the Delhi police, rushed inside the Red Fort — Delhi's iconic landmark which has symbolised India's grandeur in unity since the mid-nineteenth century — and raised their sectional banners from one of its flagpoles, although taking care to keep these at a lower level than the tricolour which flutters there, the chaos and disorder that marked the day might not have drawn the kind of attention it now has.

**The disorder unleashed by a section of farmers, although the main body of the parade stuck to orderly conduct, is apt to turn the spotlight on the agitation leaders. Their tactical skills will be tested.**

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, the federating body of farmers' unions whose thousands of members have been camped at Delhi's borders for two months along with their families, braving intense cold weather, were quick to dissociate their wholly peaceful agitation from the sporadic violence, disorder and chaos of the day.

The farmers' organisations, from chiefly Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh in northern India, have been pressing for their demand for the repeal of three agricultural reform laws since about the middle of last year. Lately, there have been protests in sympathy by farmers in other parts of the country too. With the Narendra Modi government adopting an unbending stance in the negotiations, and right-wing social media groups seeking to malign the farmers as anti-national, the agriculturists decided to parade their determination by entering the capital city on Republic Day.

This was also an unspoken assertion that the historic day belonged as much to the people as to the State which commemorates it by staging a military show each year. However, the disorder unleashed by a section of farmers, although the main body of the parade stuck to orderly conduct, is apt to turn the spotlight on the agitation leaders. Their tactical skills will be tested. They will need to remain united — if they are serious about their demands — while ensuring the isolation of violent elements. It is to be hoped that the government will be dispassionate in investigating who the troublemakers were, especially focusing on whether fifth columnists had infiltrated to give the months-long peaceful agitation a bad name.

Republic Day in India is high on ceremony and is associated with form. It is this aspect that was breached by the events of the day. As the Covid-19 pandemic is still around, the official celebration was kept at a reduced scale. If this offered a flavour of the times — the parade of the "kisans", practically in tandem with the "jawns", who put up the traditional military display — offered a glimpse of the people's history through the staging of a democratic protest even if it went somewhat awry.

## Bihar cops overstep limits

The Bihar police's warning of legal action against social media users who criticise the government, netas and babus stems from over-enthusiasm of the top cops. The threat appears to come from officers who appear to be so beholden to their political masters that they are prepared to step beyond boundaries in playing up to their hypersensitive bosses. The warning from the inspector general of Bihar Police has been served against "offensive" posts, but there are already ways to curb any overt misuse of social media by raising the issue with those who provide these platforms like Twitter, Facebook and others.

In threatening to make offensive use of social media a cyber-crime, the Bihar police are overstepping the bounds of law as there are no provisions in cyber-crime laws to deal with it since the Supreme Court struck down Section 66A of the IT Act. Police can find other provisions in "prescribed laws" to pressure activists who target netas and babus but they would be well advised not to as they would be setting a bad precedent in circumscribing freedom of expression and trampling upon the right to free speech. It is not for a branch of the executive like the police to creatively use existing laws to browbeat critics.

The Bihar chief minister, Nitish Kumar, has not helped matters either by talking up against criticism of the government on social media. Having chosen to be in public life, netas must face up to criticism. Dissent is legitimate in a democracy and it cannot be trampled upon nor can officials hide under ill-advised police action to muzzle those who criticise them or expose their corrupt ways. There are processes to deal with inflammatory social media posts stoking communal tensions or inciting violence and defamatory ones through civil and criminal action. The Bihar government would do well to junk police advice and respond to criticism with just good governance.

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V. Vijayasai Reddy



## No space for communal politics in AP under Jagan

Miscreants associated with Opposition parties in Andhra Pradesh are vandalising and desecrating temples to destabilise the democratically-elected YSRC government led by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy as they feel religious sentiments can be exploited to create a communal flareup.

Bizarrely, some of them, after instigating/condoning such attacks for political gain, accuse the YSRC of being responsible. Why would any government or ruling party attack temples or idols? How would it benefit to hurt the sentiments of a majority of people?

With the Jagan Mohan Reddy government's focus fixed on development and the state's welfare, there is no political space for the Opposition. The CM has likened such attacks on religious sites as "political guerrilla" warfare. The Opposition must understand that in the minds and hearts of Andhra's people, the CM doesn't belong to a particular religion but is a leader of all sections.

India is a religious society. Religion plays a key role in the lives of most Indians. It is an indispensable and foundational part of our society. Faith underlies our ceremonies, festivals, even harvest celebrations.

The Constitution explicitly recognises this, and provides for a country based on secularism, with tolerance and respect for all religions. Andhra Pradesh has seen a spate of temple desecrations of late. These cowardly attacks need to be tackled firmly by the State, creating a strong deterrent.

While the law will take its course and the CM has given assurances, it is important to gauge the action, attitude and role of the Opposition. While the state government has stuck to its constitutional obligation and is rolling out welfare schemes without discrimination, the Opposition led by former CM N. Chandrababu Naidu is politicising these unfortunate events to incite communal feelings.

Mr Naidu's desperate actions shows he realises the massive erosion of his political capital and support. He has resorted to such dirty communal politics as his development/welfare activities as CM don't compare with what young Jagan Mohan Reddy has achieved in less than two years.

The Opposition's role is to criticise and correct the government in areas that positively affect people. The Opposition's criticism should force a government to take more steps towards effective governance. But the TDP-led Opposition in Andhra aren't

playing this role and are instead damaging the state's social fabric by stoking religious sentiments. Mr Naidu's actions are a great disservice to the nation at large and setting a wrong precedent to other regional parties — to turn communal as their last option to remain politically relevant.

The Supreme Court, way back in 1994, warned of the perils of inciting religious feelings in the landmark nine-judge bench ruling in S.R. Bommai versus Union of India, where it said: "In a secular democracy like ours, mingling of religion with politics is unconstitutional". Its implication was clear — communal politics are a flagrant breach of our Constitution and of the secular democratic ethos. It is imperative that religion and caste aren't brought into politics by any party, association or individual.

Communal hatred is being used in Andhra to divert people's attention away from the unprecedented welfare schemes of the YSRC government. Recently, the CM flagged off the distribution of 30 lakh housing sites, an initiative to help every citizen fulfil their dream of owning a site and house. The Opposition couldn't digest such progress. This had led the Opposition parties to resort to communal politics to play spoilsport.

Note the factual irony of the Opposition protests on the issue. Data on attacks on temples in AP shows that in 2020, 228 cases of attacks on temples were registered, compared to 305 cases in 2019, 267 (2018), 318 (2017), 332 (2016) and 290 cases in 2015. The attacks on temples under the YSR Congress government has actually reduced. It also shows clearly that the issue had more potential to be communalised when Mr Naidu was in power. As the principal Opposition party then, we could have done the same thing, but didn't.

Ever since Jagan Mohan Reddy came to power in May 2019, communal politics have been used to target his government, despite his repeated assertion that "humanity is his faith". Mr Naidu is playing religious politics with an ulterior motive of undermining the YSRC government and polarising votes on religious lines. During the TDP government, Mr Naidu demolished many temples on Vijayawada's Krishna riverfront, razing them to the ground with bulldozers in the name of Pushkarams. He vandalised the famous thousand-pillar mandapam in Tirumala, even sold the lands of Sadhavarti, performed tantric rituals in the Kanaka Durga temple. A pink diamond went missing during his rule, which was later sold for ₹500 crores in

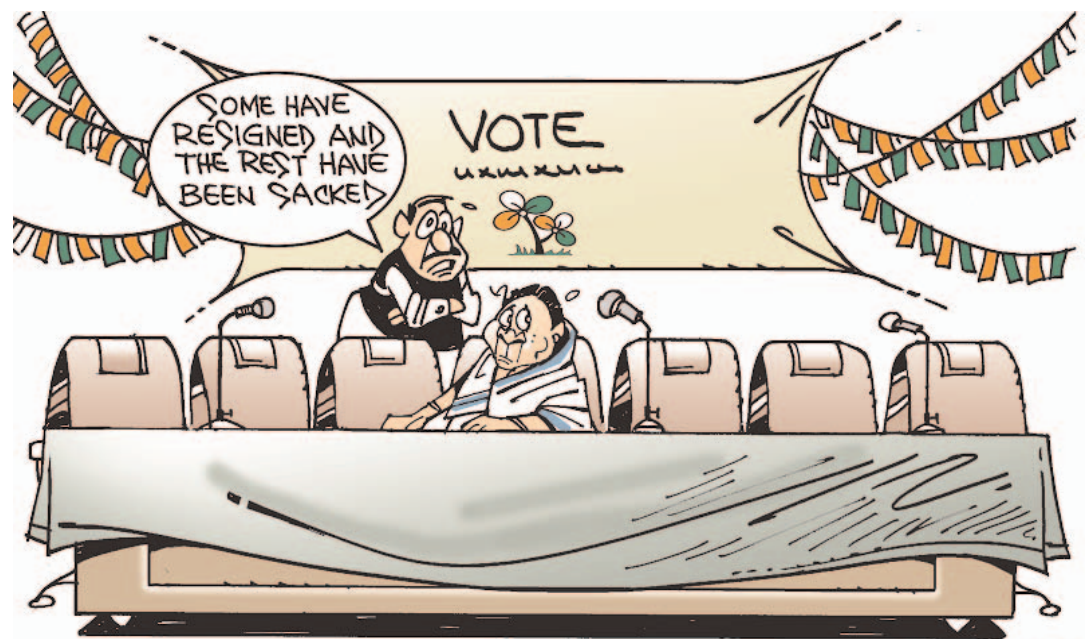
a Sothbey's auction in Geneva. Andhra Pradesh DGP D. Gautam Sawang has issued an alert across the state, asking all police officials to increase vigilance at temple sites. CCTV surveillance at all places of worship are being ramped up to monitor all movement at shrines. Over 2,600 temples across Andhra have been mapped for installation of CCTV cameras.

Finally, it's pertinent to note most attacks have taken place in temples run by TDP leaders. For instance, the temple with the Ramatheertham idol was headed by former TDP MP Ashok Gajapathi Raju, who has now been removed from his post by the state government.

Despite the Opposition's communal politics, the state government's conscience is clear. We will strive for development, irrespective of caste, creed, race, religion or gender, keeping in mind the principles enshrined in our secular Constitution and strive to make Andhra Pradesh India's number one state.

*The writer is a Rajya Sabha MP and YSRC Parliamentary Party leader and YSRC's national general secretary. He can be reached at: venumbaka.vr@sansad.nic.in.*

Subhani



## Biden's real challenge is to fix America's finances



Mohan Guruswamy

Thomas L. Friedman is a *New York Times* columnist and three-time Pulitzer Prize winner and is possibly the world's foremost globalisation evangelist. A kind of Billy Graham of globalisation.

His first book *The World Is Flat* came at a time when globalisation was still in its early days and was seen by many as the wave of the future and a panacea to the world's economic ills. Globalisation is described as the process in which people, ideas and goods spread throughout the world, spurring more interaction and integration between the world's cultures, governments and economies.

But what it turned out to be in practice is a system where the low-cost producers ended up as providers to America's gargantuan appetite for manufactured goods. They got paid in US dollars, which they promptly invested in US banks or treasury notes. American banking institutions in turn lent most of it to US consumers and companies who then bought more from us with that money. In 2020, the US posted a trade deficit of \$880 billion. But for the Covid-19 pandemic-induced economic contraction this was headed for a trillion dollars. This is the money the rest of the world salivates for. The US dollar is the world's most trusted and preferred currency. That is directly related to the rest of the world's confidence in the US system and its credibility. Is it any surprise then that 66 per cent of the world's reserves are held in US dollars? Even China holds almost \$3 trillion in US notes. India has \$548 billion. This cycle of production, consumption, conversion, credit and

demand is what globalisation has in fact become. Without the annual US deficits, the rest of the world will stagnate.

Every thinking American knows that the good times will not last forever. Former President Barack Obama tried to set it right by promising to narrow America's trade deficit or possibly ending it in 10 years by seeking to make US businesses competitive. He planned to make the US the centrepiece of a new Indo-Pacific trading bloc (Trans-Pacific Partnership) to blunt China's export surge and burgeoning trade surpluses. He failed. He left the US with an annual trade deficit of \$568 billion in 2016. Then Donald Trump picked up the gauntlet. He threw out the TPP and sought to beat down China's growing economic power with a sledgehammer as policy. He raised tariffs and banned many companies and their products. It only ended up with US consumers having to pay more and the US having to subsidise its farmers more as China dropped shutters on US farm products. By the time he was through he left the US with a trade deficit of \$880 billion in 2020. Now he has gone, and Joseph R. Biden has to pick it up from there.

The problem with the Americans is that they have the problem defined wrong in the first place. The problem is not about the US sliding into oblivion because its education system is faltering, or its R&D is flagging, or because Americans have ceased to be innovative and finally that China and India are beating it at all this. Far from being America's competitors, China and India are still its under-economies, serving it with cheap labour working on repeti-

tive jobs and repetitive number crunching. The problem with the US is that it lives far beyond its means and its profligacy has left it as debtor unable to pay its bills by endeavour, but by printing new banknotes. The problem with the unlimited printing of banknotes is that the more you print the less they can do.

The American crisis began unfolding when Richard Nixon disengaged the US dollar from the gold standard. Remember how we in the ex-colony of the empire upon which the sun never set used to refer to the UK pound as sterling? That was because every British pound was linked to a gold equivalent in weight. That's how world currencies were valued then.

That was the basis of exchange rates. In one fell swoop, Richard Nixon, aka Tricky Dicky, unable to finance his twin wars in Vietnam and Cambodia, found a way out. Delink the US dollar from the gold standard and put the printing presses at its five Federal Reserves to full use. This had gone on over 40 long years and the birds have begun to come home to roost. Its two seaboards, the US' blue wings, keep it soaring. In the east the "masters of the universe" have invented an ideology — globalisation — that makes them the rest of the world's money managers. That money drives domestic consumption with easy credit. That money also drives the relentless innovation in America's west that drives global production and consumption. It's the geo-

**The American crisis began unfolding when Richard Nixon disengaged the US dollar from the gold standard. Remember how we in the ex-colony of the empire used to refer to the UK pound as sterling?**

graphical middle with its wheat, corn and soyabean fields, industrial scale production of poultry, pork, beef and dairy products and with its shuttered factories, that is blaming the rest of the world for its relative penury. They want to make America great again by making, if not all, but most of the world's manufactured goods. These need the giant steel mills and chemical plants gushing out industrial material to turn into industrial and consumer products. All those have also bolted. There is little President Biden can do to reverse it. The genie has left the American bottle and America's industries have mostly gone overseas.

The error in Friedman's analysis is that declining education standards, declining spending on R&D and productivity have led to the American crisis. President Obama never tired of stating this. Assuming the US sets right its high school education and the maths proficiency of its kids are on par with that of Indian or Chinese kids, would that stop US jobs from leaving for Bengaluru or Nanjing? As long as Indian and Chinese workers work for less than one dollar an hour when US workers will not work for less than \$15 an hour, jobs will flow across the deep oceans.

Despite what Friedman writes, the US will never cede the innovation crown to either China or India. If not the brilliant young techie entrepreneurs US universities churn out, young Indians and Chinese who flock to Silicon Valley and its clones in droves will see to that. The US will keep innovating. China and India will turn the innovation into goods and services. That is the future, till the house of cards falls down. Keeping it up is Mr Biden's biggest challenge.

*The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.*

### LETTERS

#### SCRIPTING HISTORY

Twenty-eight-year-old Flight Lieutenant Swati Rathore scripted history on Tuesday by becoming the first woman pilot to lead the Republic Day flypast. Rathore has nurtured her IAF dream since childhood and later joined the National Cadet Corps where she won a gold medal in shooting. She hails from Premapura in Nagaur, Rajasthan, and her father is a state government officer. Wish everyone a happy 72nd Republic Day.

**Priyanka Mathur**  
Noida

#### MEDIA MUST RISE

**ELEVATED TO A HIGH** pedestal, Narendra Modi has met with little constructive criticism from within his party. Acquiring an animated following and a dotting social media that has eclipsed the professional print and visual genres has rendered him too big to fail or appear vulnerable. But increasingly major agitations should underscore his need for upright men and institutions that alone would feed him corrective inputs. As it stands, the political Opposition will take quite a while to recoup and refocus. But institutions manned by professionals will rebound quickly once they find themselves free to express and act. So would informed critique by an unfettered media, the fourth estate. The nation needs much more than a breakthrough buday.

**R. Narayanan**  
Navi Mumbai

#### END OF AN ERA

**THE DEMISE OF** Larry King — the talk-show titan known for having interviewed eminent personalities from all walks of life — marks the end of an era. King hosted CNN's *Larry King Live* for 25 years and was a great listener and a fair interviewer. He was fair and ethical in his approach and allowed his guests to speak their minds. Larry King interviewed presidents from Richard Nixon to Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump and he interviewed movie stars, pundits and musicians. *Larry King Live* was CNN's biggest success story. However, the pandemic proved to be the great leveller felling celebrity and commoner alike, and, in the end, claimed him.

**Sankar Paul**  
Chakdaha, West Bengal

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.



## SHORT TAKES

MYANMAR ARMY  
RAISES COUP  
PROSPECT

Naypyidaw, Jan. 26: Myanmar's powerful military on Tuesday raised the spectre of staging a coup as it ramped up demands for an investigation into alleged voter fraud during last year's election, swept by Aung San Suu Kyi's ruling party. The National League for Democracy (NLD) won November's poll in a landslide, but has been much criticised by rights groups for its disenfranchisement of voters in conflict-ravaged regions.

The military-aligned opposition disputed the results, while the army has for weeks alleged widespread voter irregularities, claiming to have found 8.6 million cases of fraud.

Military spokesman Major General Zaw Min Tun on Tuesday renewed calls for the country's embattled election commission to provide final voter lists for cross-checking — a demand that so far has not been met. "Not resolving this in line with the law means this is a political crisis," he told reporters in Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw.

Zaw Min Tun added that military chief Min Aung Hlaing has already pointed out "dishonesty and unfairness" during the election. When pressed on the possibility of a coup, the spokesman refused to be drawn, but did not rule it out.

ITALY PM QUILTS  
TO FORM NEW  
GOVERNMENT

Rome, Jan. 26: Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigned Tuesday in the hope of forming a new government after weeks of turmoil in his ruling coalition, leaving Italy rudderless as it battles the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

He tendered his resignation to President Sergio Mattarella, the ultimate arbiter of Italian political crises, who invited him to stay on in a caretaker capacity pending discussions on what happens next.

The uneasy coalition that has led Italy since September 2019 was fatally weakened earlier this month by the withdrawal of former premier Matteo Renzi's small but crucial Italia Viva party.

Ahead of a key vote in parliament this week that he looked set to lose, Conte informed his cabinet on Tuesday that he would quit in what supporters said was a move to form a new government.

After the meeting with Mattarella, a spokesman for the president said he "reserves the right to decide (what to do next) and invited the government to stay in office in a caretaker capacity".

Mattarella will open discussions with party leaders on Wednesday afternoon which are likely to lead into Thursday — leaving a vacuum at the top of the eurozone's third largest economy at a crucial time.

DISMISS CASE,  
SAYS EPSTEIN  
EX-GIRLFRIEND

New York, Jan. 26: A British socialite charged with recruiting teenage girls for financier Jeffrey Epstein to sexually abuse in the 1990s asked a judge Monday to dismiss the case on multiple grounds, including that a deal years ago not to prosecute Epstein and others should shield her from prosecution. Lawyers for Ghislaine Maxwell said the indictment against their client was obtained unjustly and doesn't allege crimes specific enough to bring before a jury.

But they listed first among 12 separate arguments attacking the indictment that a non-prosecution deal Epstein reached with the federal government a dozen years ago should shield Maxwell from prosecution too. The deal sought to protect Epstein and those around him, but Maxwell was not identified by name in the document that was signed as Epstein agreed to plead guilty to state charges in Florida that forced him to register as a sex offender afterward. Lawyers for Epstein had planned to argue that the deal with prosecutors in Florida in 2008 protected him against sex trafficking charges lodged against him in July 2019 in New York City.

Manhattan federal prosecutors maintained they could proceed against Epstein or those who worked for him regardless. Epstein killed himself at a Manhattan federal lockup a month after his arrest. Maxwell, 59, was arrested last July and has remained jailed on grounds she might flee. She has pleaded not guilty to charges that she recruited teen girls for Epstein to sexually abuse.

## Tornado hits Alabama hotel



A Hampton Inn hotel is severely damaged after a tornado tore through Fultondale, Alabama. One person has died and at least five people have been hospitalised with critical injuries. The storm caused "significant damage," the National Weather Service tweeted.

— AP

'Threat': Guard to stay  
in Washington till Mar.

Violence a concern ahead of Trump's impeachment trial

Washington, Jan. 26: Thousands of US National Guard troops mobilised in Washington for the presidential inauguration will remain in place through mid-March due to ongoing threats, Pentagon officials said Monday.

The officials did not offer specific information on the threats, saying the information came from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

But Washington remained concerned about more possible violence after the January 6 attack on Congress by supporters of president Donald Trump, and ahead of the impeachment trial of Trump beginning the week of February 8.

Acting Army Secretary John Whitley said they had been briefed on possible risks with "several" upcoming events in Washington over the coming several weeks.

Security officials are concerned that protests "could either be used by malicious actors or other problems that could emerge," he said.

"We are posturing our forces to be able to respond to those threats if they emerge," he said.

The attack on the US Capitol on January 6, which left five people dead and has been labelled an insurrection, led the army to increase the number of National Guard troops deployed in Washington from a few hundred to 25,000 for the January 20 inauguration of President Joe Biden.

Much of the centre of the city was locked down and the normal hundreds of thousands of attendees told to stay home due to the high level of security.

On Monday about 13,000 of the reservists remained.

About 7,000 would stay through the end of January, and then fall slowly to about 5,000 in mid-March, according to Whitley.

Asked about the specific threats, Whitley referred reporters to the FBI, which did not respond to requests for comment.

— AFP

Ahead of Putin call, Biden  
walks high wire with Russia

Washington, Jan. 26: President Joe Biden has been quickly thrown into a high-wire balancing act with Russia as he seeks to toughen his administration's stance against Vladimir Putin while preserving room for diplomacy in a post-Donald Trump era.

The relationship is sure to be different than the one Putin enjoyed with Trump, who was enamored of the Russian leader and sought his approval, casting doubt on Russian interference in the 2016 elections and involvement in a massive hack last year.

Despite this conciliatory approach, his administration toed a tough line against Moscow, imposing sanctions on the country, Russian companies and business leaders for issues ranging from Ukraine to

all transactions with the group will be authorized through February 26 at 12:01 am (0401 GMT).

The order signed by Bradley Smith, acting director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control, said the United States was not unblocking any funds that have already been targeted.

— AFP

energy supplies and attacks on dissidents. Unlike his immediate predecessors, Biden has not held out hope for a "reset" in relations with Russia but

has instead indicated he wants to manage differences with the former Cold War foe without necessarily resolving them or improving ties.

— AP

YELLEN CONFIRMED  
AS 1ST FEMALE  
TREASURY SECY

Washington, Jan. 26: The US Senate on Monday voted by a wide margin to confirm Janet Yellen as the first woman to lead the Treasury Department, giving her a key role in Congress negotiations over a huge Covid-19 economic relief package.

Yellen was the first woman to lead the Federal Reserve, from 2014 to 2018, and previously the White House Council of Economic Advisors. Her immediate job will be to help win Congress approval for President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion rescue package to secure US economic recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. That will entail convincing skeptical lawmakers that the benefit of more spending outweighs concerns about the country's soaring debt level.

— AFP

PETS ARE BACK:  
BIDEN'S 2 DOGS  
SETTLE IN AT WH

Washington, Jan. 26: The patter of paws is being heard in the White House again following the arrival of President Joe Biden's dogs Champ and Major. The two German shepherds are the first pets to live at the executive mansion since the Obama administration.

Major burst onto the national scene late last year after Biden, then president-elect, broke his right foot while playing with the dog at their home in Wilmington, Delaware. The Bidens adopted Major in 2018 from the Delaware Humane Association. Champ joined the family after the 2008 presidential election that made Joe Biden vice president. The dogs moved into the White House on Sunday, following Biden's inauguration last week.

— AP

'MADE IN U.S':  
BIDEN PREFERS  
SWISS ROLEX

Washington, Jan. 26: Americans tend to notice everything about an incoming president at their inauguration, and thus Joe Biden's choice to wear a \$7,000 Rolex watch on the day he was sworn in.

Nor did the fact that the timepiece was made in Switzerland escape attention, as it marked one of the new president's first breaks with his predecessors, who chose watches a bit more quotidian and even manufactured domestically — the type of industry Biden says he wants to promote.

Biden's stainless steel Rolex Datejust "is a far cry from the Everyman timepieces that every president not named Trump has worn conspicuously in recent decades," *The New York Times* wrote.

— AFP

Moscow, Tehran call for  
'rescue' of Iran nuke deal

Moscow, Jan. 26: Moscow and Tehran called for the rescue of the Iran nuclear deal Tuesday, as their top diplomats held their first talks since Joe Biden's election raised hopes of Washington returning to the agreement.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said ahead of the talks in Moscow that "one of the most pressing topics is the task of rescuing the Joint Comprehensive Action Plan (JCPOA)".

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif thanked Moscow for its efforts to repair the JCPOA after the US exit in 2018 and for Russia's "constructive and principled" position on the deal.

Zarif urged unity between Moscow and Tehran "in order to save the JCPOA from the risks and fears that arose after the United States left this plan." The talks in Moscow come days after Zarif urged the United States to make the "fundamental choice" to lift sanctions and reverse the "failed policies" of the previous administration, which took a hard line on Tehran.

He cautioned that any efforts from Washington to extract additional concessions would ultimately end in failure.

"Iran wants the nuclear deal it made," Zarif wrote

● **THE AGREEMENT** was largely left in tatters after former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew and ordered officials to reimpose tough penalties against Tehran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" policy.

in an op-ed in the Foreign Affairs magazine.

The agreement was largely left in tatters after former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew and ordered officials to reimpose tough penalties against Tehran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" policy.

The deal was agreed in 2015 between Iran, the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany. It offered sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on Tehran's nuclear ambitions and guarantees it would not seek an atomic bomb. Iran maintains it has only pursued a civilian nuclear energy programme.

A new wave of US sanctions have hit hard Iran's vital oil sector and its international banking ties, plunging the economy into a recession.

But Tehran has signalled it could be willing to engage the new White House administration while rhetoric from officials in Moscow has suggested a change in tack in Washington from the Trump administration.

Joe Biden's pick for secretary of state, Anthony Blinken, said at a Senate confirmation hearing this month that Trump's policies had made Iran "more dangerous". While Blinken confirmed Biden's desire for Washington to return to the nuclear agreement, both sides have said the other must return to full compliance before the accord is implemented again.

Since the deal began unravelling with the US exit, Russia and European signatories have advocated efforts to salvage the accord and cautioned Iran against bolstering its nuclear enrichment.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov in December urged Iran to take "maximum responsibility" after Tehran announced plans to install advanced centrifuges in its main nuclear enrichment plant.

The ministry earlier this month blamed Iran's departure from norms of the nuclear deal on "systematic crude violations" by the United States.

— AFP

Covid may take 4-5 yrs  
to end: S'pore minister

Singapore, Jan. 26: It may take four to five years for the Covid-19 pandemic to end and the world to look to a post-Covid normal, a senior Singaporean minister has warned. Speaking at the Singapore Perspectives 2021 conference hosted by Singapore's Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) on Monday, Singapore's Education Minister Lawrence Wong, who co-chairs the Covid-19 ministry task force, said there are still many uncertainties to contend with in the next few years, while sharing his hopes about how the future can be "reset" once the pandemic is over, the *Channel News Asia* reported.

"At some point of time the pandemic will pass, but it may take four to five years before we finally see the end of the pandemic and the start of a post-Covid normal. What will this new post-Covid world look like? No one can tell," Wong said. He said there was still a great uncertainty about how the coronavirus will shape society in the coming years.

He said adhering to safe management measures like mask-wearing and avoiding crowds will continue for this year and "maybe a good part of next year". Beyond that, the availability of Covid-19 vaccinations will progressively restart global travel, but getting the world vaccinated won't be quick or easy, he said during the conference.

The Government has planned for everyone in Singapore to be vaccinated by the third quarter of this year, but Wong conceded that there could still be "bumps along the way". He noted that the current vaccines may not be so effective against new mutant strains of the virus, and will have to be modified to counter them.

— PTI

**Minneapolis, Jan. 26:** A new Brazilian variant of the Coronavirus has made its first known appearance in the United States in a person who recently returned to Minnesota after travelling to Brazil, state health officials announced Monday.

The Brazil P1 variant was found in a specimen from a patient who lives in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area who became ill in the first week of January, the Minnesota Department of Health said in a statement. Epidemiologists are interviewing the person to obtain more details about their illness, travel and contacts. There was no immediate indication that the variant was spreading in Minnesota.

Viruses are constantly mutating, and new versions — called variants — often emerge. Health officials are also worried about variants that were first reported in the United Kingdom and South Africa. Researchers believe they may spread more easily than the virus that has already sickened millions in the United States and caused nearly 420,000 deaths. The Brazilian variant was first identified in four travellers who were tested at an airport outside Tokyo. It contains a set of mutations that may affect its ability to be recognised by antibodies.

— AP

Denmark to pay for  
shut mink industry

Copenhagen, Jan. 26: Denmark has said it could pay out more than 19 billion Danish kroner (\$3.1 billion, 2.6 billion euros) to its mink farmers after it closed down the industry over Coronavirus fears. Denmark was the world's largest exporter of mink fur but culled all 15 million of its mink population last year after some were found to be carrying a mutated virus variant, and later banned mink breeding until 1 January 2022.

The support scheme announced late on Monday includes reimbursements to the country's roughly 1,000 mink farmers for the cull, as well as support for them to change their busi-

nesses. Mink breeders and related businesses now have "a good opportunity to move on", said agriculture minister Rasmus Prehn after a cross-party deal was sealed.

"Mink breeders have made a great sacrifice for public health and the common good." In November last year, Denmark said the "Cluster 5" mutation carried by mink had been wiped out, and they were the only animal confirmed to be able to contract it and pass it to humans.

The process, however, was mired in scandal from the start.

— AFP

## SIGNIFICANTLY | DELAYED

Project back after demonstrations denouncing racism, police violence against PoC

## US renews plans to put abolitionist Tubman on \$20 bill

Washington, Jan. 26: The White House said Monday it was expediting plans to put Harriet Tubman, a PoC woman who escaped slavery and became a leader of the pre-Civil War abolitionist movement, on the \$20 bill, a project that had been significantly delayed under Donald Trump.

The move means Tubman would become the first African American to feature on a US bill.

The project, launched by former president Barack Obama, has come back to

the forefront after historic demonstrations denouncing racism and police violence against people of colour. "The Treasury Department is taking steps to resume efforts to put Harriet Tubman on the front of the new \$20 notes," said presidential spokeswoman Jen Psaki.

"It's important that our notes, our money... reflect the history and diversity of our country and Harriet Tubman's image gracing the new \$20 note would certainly reflect that," she said. Tubman was born

into slavery in 1822 but escaped before going back to the slave-owning southern states to help dozens of others flee bondage, either to the northern US or in Canada, both before and

— JEN PSAKI

Presidential spokeswoman



Harriet Tubman

during the Civil War of 1861-65. After the war, she became a champion of wom-

en's rights before her death in 1913.

Her life, and in particular her work helping enslaved people escape as a conductor on the "Underground Railroad," were featured in a 2019 Hollywood biopic. Her image was set to replace the portrait of Andrew Jackson, the US president behind the "Trail of Tears" that drove dispossessed Native American tribes from the southeast of the expanding country, and who was much admired by Trump.

Trump's treasury secre-

tary Steve Mnuchin announced in 2019 that the revamp of the \$20 bill was being put off until 2028, citing "security issues" around counterfeiting one of the most popular bills in circulation.

During his 2016 presidential campaign, Trump criticized the plans to replace Jackson with Tubman, calling the move "pure political correctness."

He suggested putting Tubman's picture on the two-dollar bill, which is no longer printed.

Jackson, who occupied

the White House from 1829 to 1837, was seen by Trump as the first "populist" president of the country, and hung his portrait in the Oval Office during his tenure.

The fiery general rose to fame for his historic victory against British forces in New Orleans in 1815. But he is also remembered for the mass deportation of tens of thousands of Native Americans from their ancestral lands in the southeast that left thousands dead.

— AFP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48347.59	-1.09
Nifty 50	14238.90	-0.93
S&P 500*	3,854.61	-0.02
Dollar (₹)	72.94	0.05
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.70	0.03
Euro (₹)	88.62	0.24
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,509▼141	0.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.83	-0.09
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.954	0.25
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.046	0.007

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

India Inc puts 42% less money in foreign arms

Overseas investment by domestic firms fell by over 42 per cent to \$1.45 billion in December 2020, according to Reserve Bank data. In the year-ago month, companies in India had invested \$2.51 billion in their foreign firms (joint ventures / wholly owned units). In November 2020, the total outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) was of \$1.06 billion, down by 27 per cent from a month ago.

Gail plans to float pipeline InvIT before bifurcation



Gail (India) Ltd plans to launch an InvIT of its two gas pipelines between Dahej and Bengaluru ahead of a proposed splitting of the pipeline business from the gas marketing function, sources said. The nation's top gas marketing and transportation firm plans to monetise Dahej-Uran-Panvel-Dabhol pipeline and Dabhol-Bengaluru pipeline by setting up an Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT).

Grofers expects ₹10,000 cr in GMV by March

Grofers expects to achieve Rs 10,000 crore in gross merchandise value (GMV) by March supported by traction in its ongoing sale. The company claims to have witnessed around 3 to 4 times increase in sales during its ongoing Grand Orange Bag Days (GOBD) sale. "We are on road to double our GMV every year and are aiming to hit Rs 10,000 crore in GMV by financial year 2021," Grofers founder Saurabh Kumar said.

Mahanadi Coal Railway scouts for CEO

Mahanadi Coal Railway Ltd, a joint venture of MCL, Ircon and Idco, is scouting for a chief executive officer to implement coal evacuation infrastructure projects in Odisha, officials said. Initially, one corridor has been identified for implementation of the project, the estimated cost of which is Rs 1,700 crore. This project will help in creating railway evacuation infrastructure for Talcher mines.

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■ Health tax may go up; 4-yr plan to up spend to 4% of GDP

Budget may double spending on health

AFTAB AHMED NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

India is likely to double health spending in the next fiscal year with the aim of raising expenditure in the sector to 4 per cent of gross domestic output in the coming four years, two officials said, as the country looks to fix its health system after the coronavirus pandemic.

India will likely raise its health spending to Rs 1.2-1.3 lakh crore (\$16.46-\$17.83 billion) in the fiscal year starting April 1, from the current year's projected spending of Rs 62,600 crore, the officials told Reuters.

The new healthcare plan is likely to be unveiled on February 1 when finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman presents the country's budget for 2020-21. The officials did not



want to be named as the plan is not yet public.

Even after decades of high growth, the country's spending on healthcare has been a meagre 1.3 per cent of GDP, way below Brics peers and developed countries.

The strain on India's underfunded healthcare system was put in stark focus during the pandemic, with states forced to set up makeshift Covid care centres and many hospitals struggling to meet the demand for beds and oxy-

gen cylinders.

India has recorded over 10.6 million coronavirus cases, the second-highest in the world after the United States.

Sitharaman is likely to unveil a four year health budget plan with the aim to move India's healthcare spend to 4 per cent of GDP, with the help of a dedicated health fund, the officials said.

The government could also increase a health tax from the current 1 per cent of income and corporate tax to fund the new programme, one of the above officials said.

Currently it raises about Rs 15,000 crore-Rs 16,000 crore annually from the health tax.

The finance ministry did not reply to an e-mail seeking comment on the story.

—Reuters

Sitharaman could unveil easier FDI routes for construction, animation

SHRUTI SRIVASTAVA JAN. 26

The government is considering easing foreign investment rules for sectors ranging from construction to animation to lure overseas capital needed to create jobs in an economy cratered by the pandemic, people with knowledge of the matter said.

A proposal to allow limited liability partnerships (LLPs) to invest in the construction of townships, roads, hotels and hospitals is under discussion, the people said, asking not to be identified, citing rules. A plan to allow 100 per cent foreign direct investment in animation, visual effects, gaming and comics sector may also find men-

tion in the government's budget, one person said.

Allowing LLPs will open a new investment avenue when the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is struggling to revive the economy.

The government estimates India will require investment worth \$777 billion across infrastructure for development by 2022.

The construction sector received FDI inflows worth \$25.7 billion between April and September 2020, government data show. The relaxation in rules may help the government get closer to its target of creating affordable housing for all in urban areas by 2022 and building 100 smart cities.

—Bloomberg

Cairn Energy cautions Indian assets abroad could be seized

AMMAR ZAIDI NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

Just like US oil firm ConocoPhillips grabbed Venezuelan assets overseas to enforce an arbitration award, Indian bank accounts, airplanes and other foreign properties can be seized to collect \$1.4 billion awarded to UK's Cairn Energy against Indian retro tax, according to a letter seen by PTI.

The British firm has begun identifying overseas Indian assets in case the Indian government fails to honour the arbitration award.

Cairn CEO Simon Thomson in the January 22 letter to the Indian High Commissioner in London—with copies marked to the Prime Minister's Office, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and external affairs minister S. Jaishankar—said the arbitration award is "final and binding" and "the Government of India has an obligation to comply with its terms." "As India is a signatory



to the New York Convention, the award can be enforced against Indian assets in numerous jurisdictions around the world for which the necessary preparations have been put in place," he wrote.

In 2019, ConocoPhillips had moved US courts to seize Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA's assets to collect \$2 billion compensation it had won in an arbitration against Venezuela's 2007 takeover of its assets. PDVSA thereafter paid ConocoPhillips.

The three-member tribunal, which comprised a judge appointed by India, last month unanimously overturned a Rs 10,247 crore retrospective tax demand on Cairn and

asked the Indian government to return value of the shares it sold, dividend it seized and tax refunds it stopped to enforce the tax.

If India does not comply with the order of the tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, it would be a violation of international rules on arbitral awards, commonly called the New York Convention.

Sources with knowledge of the matter said the options before the Indian government were limited. An appeal against the award in a court in The Hague may not yield positive results as the tribunal had given a very detailed 582-page order to make it "as bullet-proof" as possible.

In contrast, the September 2020 arbitration award in UK's Vodafone Group challenge to retro tax demand of Rs 22,100 crore was only 100 pages. That order has been challenged by India in a court in Singapore—the seat of that arbitration.

—PTI

Insurers told to offer uniform Saral Pension plan from April

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JAN. 26

In a bid to help customers make an informed choice, the insurance regulator has mandated all life insurers to offer a standard individual immediate annuity product from April 1 this year. The product called, "Saral Pension", prefixed by the insurer's name, will be a traditional, single premium, non-participating immediate annuity plan with two annuity options. The minimum entry age to buy this plan will be 40 years and the maximum will be 80 years.

It may be noted that annuities are plans bought by an individual from insurance companies for retirement or other purposes while a pension is provided by an employer to the employee solely for the purpose of retirement.

In the first of the two annuity options, 'Life Annuity with Return of 100 per cent of Purchase price', the annuity is paid for the entire life of the annuitant, or subscriber. In addition, 100 per cent of the Purchase Price will be

returned to the nominee / legal heirs on death of the annuitant.

The second variant called 'Joint Life Last Survivor Annuity with Return of 100 per cent of Purchase Price on death of the last survivor' the annuity is first paid to the annuitant for life. After death of the annuitant, if the spouse is surviving, the spouse continues to receive the same amount of annuity for life till his/her death. Subsequently, on death of the spouse, the Purchase Price shall be payable to nominee/legal heirs. However, if the spouse has pre-deceased the annuitant, then on the death of the annuitant, the Purchase Price shall be payable to the nominee / legal heirs.

However, there will be no maturity benefit under the product.

As per the guidelines, the minimum annuity will be Rs 1,000 per month, Rs 3,000 per quarter, Rs 6,000 per half year and Rs 12,000 per annum.

There will be a limit for maximum annuity. The minimum and maximum purchase price depends on the annuity amount, ,

the guidelines said.

The guidelines further said pricing is left to the insurers. However, annuity rates should be derived based on actuarial principles and ensure that annuity rates are fair and reasonable to customers.

"Indian life insurance market currently has several individual immediate annuity products marketed by life insurers, with each product having its own features, terms and conditions and annuity options. With a view to having uniformity across insurers, and to make available a product by all life insurers that will broadly meet the needs of an average customer, it is felt necessary to introduce a standard, individual immediate annuity product, with simple features and standard terms and conditions," said the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) on Monday in a statement.

The policy can be surrendered any time after six months from the date of commencement, if the annuitant or the spouse is diagnosed with any specified critical illnesses.

MSEs seek council help to get over ₹18,700-cr dues

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JAN. 26

Micro and small enterprises (MSEs) have filed over 66,500 applications seeking payment of Rs 18,700 crore pending dues from central PSUs, ministries and other entities. The Micro and Small Enterprise Facilitation Council (MSEFC) has disposed of cases involving 4.6 per cent of the payment dues. Only a minuscule of the MSME payment dues is reaching the council for settlement.

MSEFC, which facilitates settlement of pending dues of MSEs, has received a total of 66,503 applications seeking payment of Rs 18,728 crore, or over \$2.5 billion, from buyers, as per data from MSME Samadhaan. The buyers are central PSUs, ministries, departments, state PSUs and government departments, railways, proprietor owned entities, individuals and other MSMEs.

The council has disposed of 5,889 applications, accounting for Rs 871 crore, or 4.6 per cent, of the Rs 18,728-crore dues. Further, the council has rejected 11,616 applications, which amounted to payment of Rs 2,541 crore. As many as 5,930 cases involving Rs 895 crore were mutually settled with the buyers.

The council is currently considering 16,088 cases, involving total payments of Rs 6,804 crore. The MSEFC is yet to review 26,980 applications, seeking Rs 6,978 crore of payment dues.



According to Rajive Chawla, chairman of IamSMEofIndia, less than one per cent of the payment dues are reaching the council for settlement. "Many of the MSMEs do not want to drag their buyer to the council as it risks losing the buyer, especially if private companies are involved. In the case of government departments and PSUs that risk is not there. Further, they wait for the situation to improve and the buyer to settle the payments. Moreover, the awareness about the council is also limited among the MSMEs," he said.

However, of late, MSMEs are increasingly approaching the council after the government increased the threshold of payment dues to approach NCLT to Rs 1 crore. Further, government also has suspended fresh cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. "The MSMEs earlier had the option of approaching NCLT. But since the government has put fresh cases on hold and increased the threshold of dues, they are approaching the council more," said Chawla.

TECH SECTOR TOP PAYOUT CONTRIBUTOR OVER FY10-20



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 26

Technology was the largest payout contributor to the overall payout pool at 20 per cent during the decade FY10-20, while the oil and gas sector was the largest contributor to the overall profit pool at 22 per cent.

Technology was the second highest contributor to the profit pool at 14 per cent, according to the 'Payouts' - The Eabler for Value Creation report from Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

The top six sectors that contributed high payout ratios are mining (75 per cent), consumer (70 per cent), technology (58 per cent), utilities (50 per cent), media (41 per cent) and capital goods (40 per cent).

"Divergence in the profit pool and payout pool of companies is primarily due to varying levels of capital intensity across different sectors. Consumer and technology sectors have the lowest capital intensity," the report said.

The top six sectors with high profit contribution during FY10-20 were oil & gas- 22 per cent, technology- 14 per cent, banks (private sector) - 9 per cent, mining-8 per cent and consumer - 6 per cent.

Top six sectors with high payout contributions were technology - 20 per cent, oil & gas - 17 per cent, mining - 16 per cent, consumer - 10 per cent, utilities - 7 per cent and automobiles - 6 per cent.

FAST | FORWARD

Only major economy to clock double-digit growth

India to grow 11.5% in 2021: IMF

LALIT K JHA WASHINGTON, JAN. 26

The IMF on Tuesday projected an impressive 11.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021, making the country the only major economy of the world to register a double-digit growth this year amidst the coronavirus pandemic.

The International Monetary Fund's growth projections for India in its latest World Economic Outlook Update released on Tuesday reflected a strong rebound in the economy, which is estimated to have contracted by eight per cent in 2020 due to the pandemic.

In its latest update, the IMF projected a 11.5 per

cent growth rate for India in 2021. This makes India the only major economy of the world to register a double-digit growth in 2021, it said. China is next with 8.1 per cent growth in 2021 followed by Spain (5.9 per cent) and France (5.5 per cent).

Revising its figures, the IMF said that in 2020, the Indian economy is estimated to have contracted by eight per cent. China is the only major country that registered a positive growth rate of 2.3 per cent in 2020.

India's economy is projected to grow by 6.8 per cent in 2022 and that of China by 5.6 per cent.

With the latest projections, India regains the tag

of the fastest developing economies of the world.

IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath, during a virtual press conference to release the WEO update, said that India has somewhat a faster pace of recovery, but cumulatively by the end of 2022, it is 9 per cent below its pre-pandemic projected level.

Cumulatively by the end of 2022, India is still nine per cent below its pre-pandemic projected level, Gopinath said.

We are seeing India come back to its 2019 levels and 2021, but it's still below. Why do we have these upgrades (in IMF's growth projections for India)...because the activity and mobility particular-

ly came back much faster than expected in India. We have not seen another wave, Gopinath said.

In fact, we are seeing a very strong decline in cases, which is again a bit different from other parts of the world. So, these factors, including what we're seeing in terms of high frequency indicators, point to have somewhat faster pace of recovery. But again, there is still some distance to go, Gopinath said.

Early this month, IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva had said that India actually has taken very decisive action, very decisive steps to deal with the pandemic and to deal with the economic consequences of it. —PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Paes eyes French Open comeback

**Kolkata:** Indian tennis icon Leander Paes on Monday said he is eyeing a French Open comeback this year in his quest to make a record eighth appearance at the Olympics in Tokyo.

Paes, 47, said he skipped the Australian Open as he is apprehensive of playing in a bio-bubble but is looking ahead to the French Open.

"Playing sport in a bio-bubble is very tough and may not be the best thing to do. I got a grand farewell at the Australian Open last year so I felt this year I would be sitting out and watching," Paes said. "I hope that by the time of French Open, by the end of May, Europe will get to a better position than now."

— PTI

## Nadal takes veiled swipe at Djokovic

**Melbourne:** Rafael Nadal has taken an apparent swipe at Novak Djokovic over his requests for quarantined players preparing for the Australian Open, saying not everyone felt the need to "advertise" how they were trying to help. The Serbian world number one issued a list of suggestions to Tennis Australia last week on behalf of 72 players unable to leave their Melbourne hotel rooms after Covid-19 cases were detected on their planes to Australia. "We all try to help each other," Spanish great Nadal told *ESPN* from Adelaide, where he and Djokovic are quarantining ahead of the Grand Slam.

"Some need to make public everything they do to help others," he added, in remarks widely seen as referring to Djokovic. — *AFP*

## Ex-India goalie Prasanta dies

**Kolkata:** Former India goalkeeper Prasanta Dora, who made a name for himself while playing for big three clubs of Kolkata Maidan, died on Tuesday. He was 44 and is survived by 12-year old son Adi and wife Soumi.

According to his elder brother Hemanta, who also played as a goalkeeper for India and Mohun Bagan, Prasanta was diagnosed with Hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis in December after he developed unrelenting fever. "His platelet count reduced drastically and doctors took a long time to diagnose the disease. We were giving him blood regularly but he could not survive and died at 1.40pm today," the elder brother said. — *PTI*

## Govt decree saves Italy from Oly ban

**Rome:** The Italian government pushed through a last-minute decree Tuesday providing more autonomy for the country's Olympic committee in an effort to prevent the team from being suspended for the Tokyo Games. It was one of the final acts of Giuseppe Conte's government before the premier headed to the presidential palace to offer his resignation. The IOC's executive board had on its agenda Wednesday whether to impose a humiliating probation on Italy because of a two-year domestic dispute that it said amounted to government interference. — *AP*

## Live on TV

## BADMINTON

**BWF World Tour Finals:** Group matches from 9.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD, Star Sports 3

## CRICKET

**Pakistan vs South Africa:** First Test, Day 2 from 10.30 am on Sony Ten 2

**Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament:** Quarterfinals — Haryana vs Baroda from 11.55 am; Rajasthan vs Bihar from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

## FOOTBALL

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

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

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## STATUS KOHLI

Nothing changes between me and Virat, he is my captain and I am his deputy: Rahane

**New Delhi, Jan. 26:** Ajinkya Rahane has won many a fans with his astute captaincy during the Indian team's epic triumph in Australia but he would like to make it very clear that the undisputed leader of this side is Virat Kohli and he is happy filling in when required.

Come February 5, Rahane will again be the vice-captain of the Test team against England with Kohli back in the saddle. So will things be different now when he once again dons the vice captain's hat?

"Nothing changes. Virat was and will always be the captain of the Test team and I am his deputy. When he was absent it was my duty to lead the side and my responsibility to give my best for Team India's success," Rahane, who was on his way to Chennai, said. For the vice-captain, it was not about being on the hot seat but having the ability to perform the role to perfection that mattered the most.

"Its not the matter of merely being a captain. How you perform the captain's role is what's more important. So far I have been successful. Hopefully, in future also, I will try to give these kind of results for my team," said the man, who has led his country to four wins in five Tests.

Reflecting on his relationship with Kohli, Rahane said it has always been smooth.

"Me and Virat have always shared a good bonding with each other. He has time and again praised my batting. Both of us played memorable knocks for our team in India and overseas conditions. It only helped that Virat comes at No.4 and myself at No.5. We have had a lot of partnerships," the 32-year-old said.

Theirs is a relationship that has been based on transparency and mutual respect. "We have always backed each other's game. When we are at the crease, we discuss threadbare about opposition's bowling. We caution each other whenever one of us plays a rash shot."

Ajinkya Rahane



And how does he find Kohli as a captain?

"Virat is a sharp captain. He takes good on-field decisions. Whenever the spinners are in operation, he is banking on me and he believes that taking those catches at slips off (Ravichandran) Ashwin and (Ravindra) Jadeja is one of my core competence areas.

"Virat expects a lot from me and I try and ensure not to let him down," said Rahane.

Rahane's classy hundred in the Melbourne Test, according to head coach Ravi Shastri, was a catalyst for change.

— PTI

## JAYA WARNS ENG SPINNER OF 'BIGGER CHALLENGE'

**London, Jan. 26:** England spinners Dom Bess and Jack Leach must have gained a lot by bowling in Sri Lanka in a just-concluded series but a bigger challenge awaits them against India in the four-Test rubber starting February 5, feels former Lankan skipper Mahela Jayawardene.

Left-arm spinner Leach claimed 10 wickets in the two-match series while off-spinner Bess took 12 in England's 2-0 victory.

"I think that's going to be a very exciting series

and a very good challenge for this group of players. That's what cricket is all about. You need to go away and win the Test series," Jayawardene told *Sky Sports*.

"The two spinners (Bess and Leach) will have learned a lot here but it will be a bigger challenge in India."

Jayawardene though believes that England are "well prepared" for the India series, especially when they will have services of star all-rounder Ben Stokes and impres-

## HUSSAIN FEELS INDIA CAN'T BE BULLIED NOW

**London, Jan. 26:** Former England captain Nasser Hussain feels Virat Kohli has instilled a fighting attitude in the current Indian team, which does not get bullied by adversities, whether on or off the field. Despite missing some key players to injuries and Kohli, who was on paternity leave, an inexperienced Indian team, led by Ajinkya Rahane, displayed grit and determination to register a historic come-from-behind 2-1 series win over Australia.

Hussain warned England to be ready for a tough one in the four-Test series against India, starting February 5.

"Any side that can go to Australia, go 1-0 down after being bowled out for 36, lose Kohli because he's going home on paternity leave, lose your bowling attack and still come back and win after some of the stuff that went on off the field in Australia, they won't be bullied," he told *Sky Sports*.

"They (India) are a tough side. I think Kohli has instilled that. Make no mistake, at home, they are a formidable outfit."

Insisting that England will head into the assignment with plenty of confidence after the series sweep in Sri Lanka.

— PTI

## MUSHTAQ ALI | QUARTERS

## Punjab knock out Karnataka

**Ahmedabad, Jan. 26:** Punjab knocked defending champions Karnataka out from the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 cricket tournament as their bowlers set up a comfortable nine-wicket win in the first quarterfinal on Tuesday.

In the other quarterfinal, Tamil Nadu defeated Himachal Pradesh comfortably by five wickets.

After restricting Himachal to a lowly 135 for 9, thanks to Sonu Yadav's 3 for 14, Tamil Nadu rode on fine knocks from Baba Aparajith (52 not out) and Shahrukh Khan (40 not out) to romp home with 2.1 overs to spare.

Punjab first dismissed Karnataka for meagre 87 and then overhauled the target in 12.4 overs in what turned out to be a lopsided contest at the Sardar Patel stadium.

Pacers Siddharth Kaul (3/15) and Sandeep Sharma (2/17) ran through the Karnataka top-order after they were sent in to bat. Karnataka were reeling at 26 for three, after openers Karun Nair (12) and Devdutt Padikkal (11) fell cheaply.

Pavan Deshpande (0) was dismissed off his second ball, as Mayank Markande took a diving catch.

Kaul dismissed both Padikkal and Deshpande in the fourth over.

It soon became 26 for 4 as young left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh (2/16) dismissed B. R. Sharath (2),

who was caught in the slip cordon.

Allrounder Shreyas Gopal (13), who has often come to Karnataka's rescue too could not convert his start as he edged to wicket-keeper Prabhsimran Singh off pacer Ramandeep Singh (2/22) as Karnataka lost half their side for 51. Ramandeep got his second wicket when he sent back J. Suchith (8) to leave Karnataka at 72 for 6.

Leggie Mayank Markande (1/12) then got into the act as he cleaned up a well-set Anirudh Joshi (27). Punjab continued their dominance over their opposition and ran through their lower order.

Punjab lost opener Abhishek Sharma (4) early but Prabhsimran Singh (49 not out off 37 balls) and Mandeep Singh (35 not out) ensured that the chase was walk in the park with their 85-run unbeaten stand for the second wicket.

## BRIEF SCORES

■ **Karnataka 87 in 17.2 overs** (Aniruddha Joshi 27, Siddharth Kaul 3/15, Arshdeep Singh 2/16) lost to Punjab 89/1 in 12.4 overs (Prabhsimran Singh 49 n.o., Mandeep Singh 35 n.o.)

■ **Himachal Pradesh 135 for 9 in 20 overs** (Abhimanyu Rana 28, Nitin Sharma 26, Rishi Dhawan 35 n.o., Sandeep Warrier 2/32, Sonu Yadav 3/14) lost to Tamil Nadu 141/5 in 17.5 overs (Baba Aparajith 52 n.o., Shahrukh Khan 40 n.o., Vaibhav Arora 3/30).

## TWO UAE PLAYERS GUILTY OF FIXING GAMES, ARE BANNED

**Dubai, Jan. 26:** United Arab Emirates players Mohammad Naveed and Shaiman Anwar Butt were on Tuesday suspended by the ICC after they were found guilty of trying to fix matches during the T20 World Cup qualifier in 2019.

Former UAE captain Naveed and top-order batsman Shaiman were found guilty of two offences each under the ICC Anti-Corruption Code after they exercised their right to a hearing before a tribunal.

"The pair remain suspended and sanctions will follow in due course," the ICC said in a statement following a hearing by an independent Anti-Corruption Tribunal.

The two players were "party to an agreement or effort to fix or contrive or otherwise influence improperly the result, progress, conduct or other aspect(s) of a match or matches at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Qualifier 2019."

Naveed was also found guilty of similar breaches during the T10 League in 2019.

— PTI



P. V. Sindhu

## Sindhu, Srikanth eye turnarounds

**Bangkok, Jan. 26:** Premier Indian shuttlers P.V. Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth need to shrug off the disappointments of the last two weeks as they gear up for the highly-competitive HSBC BWF World Tour Finals, beginning here on Wednesday.

World champion and Olympic silver medalist Sindhu, who had won the prestigious title in 2018, has been clubbed in Group 'B' alongside top-ranked Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei and home favourites Ratchanok Intanon and Pornpawee Chochuwong.

Sindhu's comeback to international badminton after the coronavirus-induced break was not as good as she would have expected.

The Indian, who has been training in London for the last few months, couldn't go the distance after losing a close opening match in Thailand Open, the first of the Asia leg.

In the second event last week, Sindhu suffered a demoralising straight game defeat against former world champion

Ratchanok in the quarter-finals and she will have to gather herself as she opens her campaign against magician Tzu Ying, who reached the finals in both the Thailand Opens.

Former world No. 1 Srikanth, on the other hand, has been clubbed in Group 'B' with Denmark's Anders Antonsen, Chinese Taipei's Wang Tzu Wei and Hong Kong's NG Ka Long Angus.

Srikanth, who had reached the semifinals of BWF Super Series Masters Finals in 2014, couldn't spend enough time on the court. He had pulled out of the first Thailand Open ahead of the second round due to a calf muscle pull, while he was forced to withdraw after the opening round last week after his roommate B. Sai Praneeth tested positive for Covid-19.

Placed 17th in the Road to Bangkok Final ranking after the first event, Sindhu jumped to number 10 after a quarterfinal finish last week and qualified for the season finale due to two rules laid down by the BWF.

— PTI

## Spurs spring into round 5

**Wycombe (England), Jan. 26:** Gareth Bale scored only his fourth goal since returning to Tottenham in leading a comeback to beat Wycombe 4-1 in the FA Cup.

Playing his first full match of the season on Monday, Bale netted before halftime to cancel out Fred Onyedinnma's shock opener for the second-tier side.

With extra time looming, Harry Winks put Tottenham in front with a curling strike in the 86th minute then Tanguy Ndombele netted twice.

Jose Mourinho's side plays Everton in the fifth round to maintain their challenge in four competitions.

Mourinho named a strong team and this was a chance for Bale to show why he should be in the team more often while back on loan from Real



Tottenham's Gareth Bale celebrates after scoring against Wycombe in their FA Cup fourth round match in High Wycombe, England, on Monday.

— AP

Madrid. He wasted a chance after five minutes by heading wide and dragged an effort wide from another good position on the edge of the

area. Those misses proved costly as Wycombe took the lead in the 25th minute.

Uche Ikepeazu got the better of Tottenham

defender Toby Alderweireld down the right and his cross was not cleared by Davinson Sanchez, who could only divert it into the path of Onyedinnma to fire home.

## BILBAO ROUT GETAFE

Raul Garcia scored twice as Athletic Bilbao maintained their recent impressive run by routing Getafe 5-1 in the Spanish league.

Yeray Alvarez, Alex Berenguer and Oscar de Marcos also scored for Athletic, which a week ago celebrated the Spanish Super Cup title after beating Barcelona in the final and Real Madrid in the semifinals.

The home win against Getafe on Monday left Athletic in ninth place in the Spanish league, closer to the qualification spots for European competitions.

— AP

## Nambiar cherishes 'late' Padma award

**New Delhi, Jan. 26:** It was a long time coming, over three decades to be precise.

For 88-year-old O. M. Nambiar, the man who nurtured one of India's greatest athletes in P T Usha, the announcement of his name in the list of this year's Padma Shri awardees is a case of "better late than never".

"I feel very happy for this award though it could have been many years back. Still I am happy. Better late than never," Nambiar, who is battling the Parkinson's disease, said in an interaction from his home in Kozhikode.

Usha was conferred the Padma Shri in 1985 while

Nambiar, presented the Dronacharya that year, had to wait for another 36 years before the nation's fourth highest civilian honour came his way.

His affliction will, however, not allow him to receive the honour in person when the President gives it away at the Rashtrapati Bhawan later. But that's not lessened his joy.

"Every medal won by my trainees gives me immense satisfaction. I consider my Dronacharya Award, Best Asian Coach award and now Padma Shri as recognition of my hard work and dedication," said the legendary hailing from Kerala.

Looking back in time, an

**I feel very happy for this award though it could have been many years back. Still I am happy. Better late than never.**

— **O.M. NAMBIAR**  
P. T. Usha's coach

Olympic medal for his most famous ward — Usha — was Nambiar's "lifetime dream" and he recalled being devastated when she missed the bronze in the 1984 Los Angeles Games by a whisker.

The man, who moulded Usha into one of India's finest athletes during his mentorship from 1977 to 1990, said he couldn't stop weeping once Usha was

done with that race.

"It is absolutely true that I wept when we knew that Usha missed the bronze by one-hundredth of a second in 400m hurdles in 1984 Olympics. I was inconsolable," Nambiar said.

"I cannot forget that moment. An Olympic medal for Usha was my biggest lifetime dream," he added.

Usha was beaten by Romanian Cristiana Cojocaru for the bronze medal in a photo-finish, denying India what could have been its first Olympic medal in athletics. The Romanian clocked 55.41 seconds while Usha recorded 55.42 seconds.

Nambiar's son Suresh said that someone from the family will collect the award for him when the ceremony is officially held.

"My father will not be able to collect the Padma Shri. His movement is restricted. Somebody from the family will receive the award," he said.

Nambiar was with Indian Air Force for 15 years and retired as a Sergeant in 1970.

He got a coaching diploma from the NIS-Patiala in 1968 and joined the Kerala Sports Council in 1971.

He was tasked with finding talented athletes in the state.

— PTI