

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | FRIDAY | 22 JANUARY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 32.2°C
Min: 17.2°C
RH: 33%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy sky. Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 30/17/9C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES (+14,229)
DEATHS (+285)
1,06,24,702 1,53,028

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+226) (+1)
TS: 2,92,621 1,584
(+139) (+0)
AP: 8,86,557 7,142

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

9,75,68,114
DEATHS 20,89,522
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 219
worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Pushya Shuddha Navami till 6.27 pm
Star: Bharani till 6.38 pm
Varjyam: Nil
Durmuhurtam: 9.07 am to 9.51 am; 12.49 pm to 1.34 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 pm to 12 noon
HJRI CALENDAR
Jamadi- ul- Akhir 8,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.46 am
Zohar: 12.37 pm
Asar: 4.29 pm
Maghrib: 6.11 pm
Isha: 7.22 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.05 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.49 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 12.19 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 12.21 AM

COUNTER POINT



Not farmers' protest, it is the Sensex!

SHORT TAKES

Army jawan killed in Pak fire

Jammu: An Army jawan was killed when Pakistan violated the ceasefire and resorted to firing on forward positions along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Thursday, officials said. The Pakistan Army resorted to unprovoked firing along the LoC in the Krishna Ghati sector of Poonch, the officials said.

Sensex crosses 50,000 mark

Mumbai: The Sensex breached 50,000 barrier for the first time ever in early morning trade and made a new all time high of 50,184 on positive global cues. However due to profit taking in the last hour of trade the benchmark index fell sharply from the historic highs and closed at 49,624 down by 167 points.

■ Full report on Page 7

Clashes at BJP's office in Bengal

Burdwan (WB): Two groups of people clashed at the BJP's Purba Bardhaman district party office in West Bengal on Thursday when a meeting of the saffron camp was in progress, police said. The two groups hurled stones at each other and torched vehicles.

NATION | 4

SC grants bail to Kannada actor Ragini



AP MOVES TOP COURT AFTER HC LETS POLL PANEL HOLD ELECTIONS

DC CORRESPONDENTS
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 21

The Andhra Pradesh government filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court on Thursday expressing its difficulty to conduct the gram panchayat polls as scheduled by the State Election Commission and hold the Covid-19 vaccination programme simultaneously.

The SLP followed the Andhra Pradesh High Court's verdict earlier in the day allowing conduct of the polls despite objections from the state government.

The court opined that the single judge did not assign any reason in which aspects the SEC failed to consider the state government's views on conduct of elections and how the conduct of elections would hamper vaccination process.

The government's main contention in the SLP is that employees were now preoccupied with the Covid-19 management and vaccination programmes. "It would be difficult to simultaneously handle the vaccination programme and the gram panchayat polls," the SLP stated.

The government expressed the fear that performing both the tasks at the same time could jeopardise the safety of the general public and the employees. It sought the intervention of the apex court to defer the polls.

Meanwhile, state government adviser (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said the government cannot put the lives of employees in peril by forcing them hold the panchayat polls.

5 killed in Serum Institute fire



Workers wearing protective gear walk away after a fire broke out at the Serum Institute in Pune on Thursday. Five men died in the fire in the five-storey under-construction building at the Serum Institute's Manjari premises. All the victims were construction workers whose bodies were recovered by fire brigade personnel from the fifth floor. Nine other workers were evacuated from the spot. The Manjari facility is where Covishield vaccine used in the nationwide inoculation drive against the pandemic is made. Serum Institute CEO Adar Poonawalla said Covishield production would not be affected due to the fire. — AFP

■ Report on Page 4

WORLD | 5

Harris credits mom for showing faith

SPORTS | 8

Pogba fires Manchester United to the top



'KTR for CM soon' chorus gets louder

More ministers back change of guard in state

IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, JAN. 21

Deputy Speaker Padma Rao on Friday joined the list of ministers Etala Rajendar, V. Srinivas Goud, Errabelli Dayakar Rao, Gangula Kamalakar and Legislative Council Chairman Gutta Sukhender, who have in the past said that party working president and minister K.T. Rama Rao has the capabilities to become the Chief Minister and should be indeed given the position "soon".

Addressing the inauguration of an office building of the South Central Railway Employees' Sangh, Padma Rao said, "I congratulate KTR, who is going to become the Chief Minister very soon... on behalf of the Assembly and railway employees. I wish KTR should safeguard the interests of railway employees after becoming Chief Minister."

Unlike in the past when both Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and his son Rama Rao dismissed such talk as "mere speculation", Rama Rao, who was present at the meeting when Padma Rao made these remarks, did not react.

In the past few days,

KCR APPROVES 10% QUOTA FOR THE POOR

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 21

The state government has finally decided to implement reservation for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) in Telangana.

On Thursday, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao announced that his government has decided to implement 10 per cent reservations for the EWS. The CM said that a high-level review meeting would be held in the next two to three days on the matter and appropriate orders would be issued.

■ Page 2: Overall quota in state is 60% now

MLAs Bajireddy Govardhan and Shakeel Ahmed have also joined the TRS chorus to amplify the voice to see Rama Rao as Chief Minister soon.

The desire of TRS MLAs to see Rama Rao as Chief Minister increased after health minister Etala Rajendar, in an interview

with a regional channel, said, "almost 99% of the government works are supervised by KTR currently."

With senior leader Rajendar, who reportedly maintains a cordial relation with other seniors of the party, confirming the speculation, other leaders too have joined the chorus and are now publicly stating their private intent to see Rama Rao as Chief Minister.

Opposition parties are observing the situation in TRS keenly. Congress leaders, including Telangana Congress Legislature Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, said that any change in the Chief Minister was an internal party issue of the TRS, but if Chandrashekar Rao made way for his son, it proved that he too agrees with the growing public perception that he was a failure in governing the state.

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay said KCR's decision to make Rama Rao the CM was an internal matter of the TRS, but added that the BJP would be happy and welcome it if a Daft was made the CM as per KCR's promise.

■ Page 2: Some TRS leaders say it's not good decision

Bengali cleric to float new party, Owaisi deal is likely

BSF exerts pressure on voters: Trinamul

Kolkata, Jan. 21: Ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal on Thursday met the full bench of the Election Commission of India (ECI) and alleged that the BSF is threatening people in the border areas of the state to cast their votes in favour of a particular political party.

The Border Security Force (BSF), however, denied the TMC's allegation as "baseless" and "far from the truth".

Muslim electorate during polls.

"Why are you talking about a split in Muslim votes? There are so many more political parties, but you never talk about any split in Hindu votes. If there are some who have problems with my outfit, they should think about what needs to be done. It is not my job to worry about the TMC's poll prospects," Siddiqui said.

He also said that the ISF would put up a concerted

"We have informed the CEC and other ECI officials that the BSF is threatening voters in the border areas. We have received inputs that officers of the paramilitary force are visiting various villages and asking people to cast their votes in favour of a particular political party. "This is a dangerous situation and the ECI must look into it," TMC secretary-general Partha Chatterjee said. — PTI

fight against the BJP, but declined to brand the saffron party as a "communal force".

Speaking about the possibility of forging an alliance with other secular parties, including the TMC, Siddiqui said it is Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's responsibility to bring everyone on the same table.

"It is not my duty; it is her job to bring everyone together to fight against the BJP," he said. — PTI



Indian cricketer Mohammed Siraj pays respects to his deceased father Mohammed Ghouse at a graveyard in Hyderabad on Thursday, after his return from the tour of Australia. — PTI

TURNING | POINT

India's fast bowler visits dad's grave after landing to pay homage

Racial abuse spurred Siraj to fight

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 21

An emotional Mohammed Siraj drove straight from the airport to the graveyard and paid his last respects to his father Mohammed Ghouse, on his return to Hyderabad on Thursday from a successful tour of Australia with the national cricket team.

Mohammed Ghouse, who had wanted to see his son play at the highest level for India, had died on

November 20 last year, about a week after the fast bowler landed in Australia with the Indian team. Siraj was advised by family members to stay back with the team and play on, as his father would have wanted.

He did, and played a key role in India's historic series win, taking 13 wickets — the most by an Indian bowler — in three Tests, including a five-wicket haul in the fourth and final game in

"I wanted to dedicate my performance to my Dad. I miss him a lot... at times I almost reached out to my phone to call him but realised he is no more," the 26-year-old Indian fast bowler said.

Brisbane.

Siraj laid flowers at his father's grave and offered prayers before heading for his home in Toli Chowki.

Later, speaking to reporters at his residence, the 26-year-old said he had pointed to the sky after taking 5 for 73 at the Gabba to honour his father.

"I wanted to dedicate my performance to my Dad. I miss him a lot... at times I almost reached out to my phone to call him but realised he is no more," the Indian fast bowler recalled.

Siraj also recalled the support he received from his family members. "They

have been of huge help. My friends too were there for me when I needed them," he said.

Help was also readily available on the field. Senior pace partner Jasprit "Bumrah bhai" supported me a lot and kept giving me constant tips with regard to bowling as well as mental framework during the series," Siraj recalled.

■ Page 2: I worked hard during lockdown, says Siraj

■ Full report on Page 4

SHORT TAKES

LAWCET PHASE II ADMISSIONS TO BEGIN TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 21

The Phase II schedule for Lawcet/PGLCET 2020 admissions will begin on Friday with online registration cum verification of certificates, online payment along with the process of uploading scanned copies of certificates. It will go on till January 26. Selected students will have to report at their colleges for verification of original certificates along with tuition fee payment challan from February 4 to February 9.

Second phase counselling for admission into LLB (three-year and five-year courses) and two-year LLM courses offered by various universities is scheduled from January 22 to 26. All candidates who have not submitted or have made incomplete submission have been directed to complete the online submission of scanned copies of relevant original certificates to enable exercising of web options and participate in the second phase of counselling.

BALALA ACCUSES TRS OF NOT RELEASING CDF

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 21

Malakpet MLA Ahmed Balala on Tuesday accused the TRS government of not releasing the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) of legislators for two years resulting in developmental works being stalled in their constituencies.

Balala was speaking to mediapersons after inspecting developmental works in Malakpet constituency along with GHMC, HMWS&SB and discom officials. He instructed officials to complete the pending works as soon as possible.

He said that though Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao had announced an increase in the CDF from ₹1.5 crore to ₹3 crore per annum, no fund had been released for two years.

He said works of laying water pipelines and drainage worth ₹5 crore had been sanctioned in Saidabad, Green Land Colony, Sairamnagar, Kalyannagar, Jayannagar and VK Dhage Nagar and near Dream Point Hotel. However, the process of tendering was not complete for many works.

“We asked contractors to start the works while officers were requested to complete the formalities,” Balala said. Apart from this, civic works like laying of BT roads, stormwater drains and streetlights worth ₹5 crore were also sanctioned.

FILL TOP POSTS OF SSC AND PCA, HC TELLS GOVT

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 21

The Telangana High Court on Thursday directed the state government to expedite the process of appointments of chairpersons to the State Security Commission (SSC) and the Police Complaint Authority (PCA) that deals with the grievances of the public on abuse of power by police personnel.

These bodies are to be constituted as per guidelines framed by the Supreme Court in 2007 vide the Prakash Singh’s case. However, even after one decade, the directions have not been implemented. The High Court took a serious note of this. Recently, the government had set up the authorities but the chairpersons had not been appointed on the ground that the court should recommend the names of retired judges as SSC chairperson who would look into the grievances of the public at the state level. Retired district judges are eligible to hold the post of chairperson of PCAs at every district headquarter.

Advocate-General B.S. Prasad told the court that the government had forwarded names of some retired judges to the HC registry on January 8 for its approval and recommendations. The court directed the government to appoint the chairpersons within four weeks after it got a communication from the HC.

The Telangana High Court pulled up the AP government for delaying the establishment of SSC and PCAs. As this matter now stood with the Telangana high court.

MLA: Don’t donate for temple at Ayodhya

Tension in Jagtial after BJP leaders stage protests

PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC JAGTIAL, JAN. 21

TRS legislator Kalvakuntal Vidyasagar Rao on Thursday appealed to the people not to donate any money for the construction of the Ram mandir at Ayodhya.

At a meeting held at a private function hall while launching the second phase of the sheep distribution scheme in the presence of animal husbandry minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav and welfare minister Koppula Eshwar in

Jagtial district, Rao came down heavily on the BJP.

Vidyasagar Rao alleged that the BJP leaders were playing a new political drama by raising funds for the construction of the temple.

“They have started begging from the people while going to every house. Why should people from the state give money for the temple, which is coming up in Uttar Pradesh? Are we not capable of constructing Ram mandirs in our villages? We too are true devotees of Lord

Sri Rama,” he said.

Vidyasagar Rao appealed to the people, “Not to fall for such cheap gimmicks and not believe them as they are trying to encourage communalism in the country.”

“Under the leadership of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, the state is witnessing all-round development across spheres. Equal importance is given to all religions and all castes. All festivals are celebrated on a grand note,” the MLA said.

Having learnt of the comments made by the

MLA, BJP leaders staged dharnas, burnt his effigies and took out protest rallies in the erstwhile Karimnagar district. A surcharged atmosphere prevailed in Jagtial district.

BJP leaders reached Vidyasagar Rao’s house in Metpally in large numbers and staged a dharna. They demanded that the MLA take back his words and apologise for his comments.

When the situation was reaching a flash-point, police reached the spot and brought the situation under control.

BJP: KTR is grabbing lands

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 21

BJP state vice-president N.V.S. Prabhakar accused IT minister K.T. Rama Rao and bureaucrat Jayesh Ranjan of trying to grab industrial lands. The former legislator demanded that

the Governor sack Rama Rao from the state cabinet.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, Prabhakar alleged that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao was giving subsidies to units and factories where his kin had

stakes. He alleged that Hyderabad Distillery and Modern Bakery were bought by Rama Rao’s friends. He stated that the TRS will disappear in the coming days and if Rama Rao becomes the Chief Minister, he will not last for more than one year.

KTR warns leaders against group politics

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 21

Party working president and minister K.T. Rama Rao took exception to Khammam TRS leaders indulging in group politics in the district.

He was at a meeting with Khammam MLAs, MLCs, MP and other senior leaders with regard to the upcoming Graduate MLC and Khammam Municipal Corporation elections.

Party sources said that Rao pulled up transport minister Puvvada Ajay for the group politics in the district.

He pointed out the behaviour of some MLAs was causing damage and urged the leaders to change their line of working style and mingle with both

the old and new leaders in order to knit a cohesive unit.

Rao said that MLAs coming in from other parties should strengthen the TRS and put up a united fight during elections. He urged Ajay to concentrate

across the erstwhile Khammam and not restrict himself only to the Khammam Assembly segment. He made it clear that TRS had to win the MLC and Municipal elections and the leaders should remember that they won only one Assembly seat in 2014 and 2018 elections.

After the meeting, Tummala Nageswar Rao met the working president alone in Pragathi Bhavan and discussed party issues pertaining to Khammam.

Start Tribal varsity classes: Min to Centre

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, JAN. 21

Minister for tribal welfare Satyavathi Rathod on Thursday inspected the land and the building allotted by the state for the Tribal University to be set up in Telangana state in accordance with the AP Reorganisation Act.

After Mulugu and Mahbubabad were suggested as the possible locations for the university, the Centre after examining the issue decided to set it up at Mulugu.

The state government has given 116 acres of assigned land, 50 acres of forest land and 169 acres of government land for the university. The building was also made ready for temporarily organising classes.

She said the state has fulfilled its obligations and it is now up to the Centre to start classes.

“In the state of Andhra Pradesh, where a tribal uni-

versity was sanctioned along with Telangana state as per the reorganisation act, the university has already begun its academic activities in one block of the Andhra University campus. The AP state government has neither given an acre of land, nor a proper building,” she pointed out.

Satyavathi Rathod alleged that the Centre was showing stepmotherly treatment towards Telangana state. She asked BJP leaders to stop criticising the TRS on the issue and said the government was trying to bring this issue to the attention of the Centre during the forthcoming Parliamentary sessions.

“Since it is already late in the academic year, we will ask the Centre to start classes immediately as all the facilities are already provided,” she said. MLA Seethakka, ZP chairman Kusuma Jagadish were present.

KTR: CENTRE IGNORING SOUTH INDIA

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 21

The Telangana state government is ready to start an agitation against the Centre if it did not set up Central government and public sector units in the state, said industries minister K.T. Rama Rao.

On Thursday, the minister was speaking to employees after inaugurating the divisional office of the South Central Railway Employees Sangh in Secunderabad.

“We cannot forget the railway employees’ contribution towards the separate Telangana state,” Rama Rao, the TRS Working president, said. “Employees are the main reason for being the railways at the top position in the world.”

He said that the Centre had promised to construct a railway wagon coach factory at Kazipet but had failed to do so, Rama Rao said. He also demanded that the Centre introduce bullet trains. Rama Rao alleged that the Centre was neglecting South India. “In the Budget Session the Centre must do justice to south India, and allocate new projects to southern states,” the minister said.

● Employees are the main reason for being the railways at the top position in the world.

From Page 1

Then there was “Virat Kohli bhai who backed me while I was playing white-ball cricket. As you know the chances for bowlers are rare in T20s and the 2018 IPL was a bad season for me, but he kept encouraging me. At the IPL last year, I got to learn quite a bit from Dale Steyn (Royal Challengers Bangalore’s South African pacer). All these players have contributed to my career,” he said.

“Then there are the fans who keep egging me on. I

thank them too for all their good wishes,” Siraj added.

There’s no substitute for hardwork, Siraj says. “I worked hard during the lockdown as well. This was an important season for me and it turned out well,” he said.

Speaking about competition at the highest level, Siraj said: “There was pressure but I just wanted to go out and give my best. It’s time to relax now, only a bit though. For I will continue to work hard as I want to keep playing for the country as long as I can.”

RTC babus say increase fares, don’t hike staff pay

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 21

TSRTC officials told Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao that the corporation’s losses were continuing due to the increase in price of diesel and the lockdown impact while it was still awaiting its dues being cleared.

They explained that if salaries of the corporation employees were increased, there would be a heavy financial burden on the TSRTC.

They made it clear that unless the government extends major financial assistance to the RTC and ticket prices are raised, then the financial burden cannot be reduced.

The matter came up during a review meeting here on Thursday with transport minister Puvvada Ajay, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, principal secretaries Sunil Sharma (transport) and Ramakrishna Rao (finance), financial advisor Ramesh,

JNTU-H announces student start-up policy

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 21

The Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad (JNTU-H) on Thursday announced the launch of a student start-up policy from the ensuing academic year in line with the National Innovation and Start-up Policy by the union education ministry.

Announcing the policy, IAS officer Jayesh Ranjan, in-charge vice-chancellor of JNTUH, said that it will play a crucial role to support student-led innovations and tech start-up incubation. As part of this policy, consideration of student innovation and entrepreneurial activities as a mini-major project will be given.

“It will allow students to

● ANNOUNCING the policy, IAS officer Jayesh Ranjan, in-charge vice-chancellor of JNTUH, said that it will play a crucial role to support student-led innovations and tech start-up incubation.

work on Innovative prototypes/problem validation, case study report, projects on open-ended problems, participate in social entrepreneurship right from first year to earn credits equivalent to mini-project,” an official communication from the university said.

Students will be allowed a maximum of 10 per cent exemption in all years to participate in events, bootcamps, conferences etc. Students will

be allowed gap year facility after the second year subject to the condition of completion of the degree within the stipulated time.

Application and prior approval by the review committee within the first one month of the semester is mandatory. Students will be able to specialise in minors such as entrepreneurship, innovation and products, design engineering by earning 18-20 credits over and above the credits for the award of the B.Tech degree. The courses are related to be taken through MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) over the fifth and sixth semesters. Engineering institutions will be ranked by the university on innovation and entrepreneurship index annually.

OVERALL QUOTA IN STATE CLIMBS TO 60% NOW

From Page 1

“There is a need to implement 10 per cent reservation in jobs and education for the economically weaker classes. We have decided to implement ten per cent reservations for EWS while continuing the reservations for those who are already enjoying the benefit as is. As on date, 50 per cent reservations are being implemented for weaker sections in Telangana. With 10 per cent reservations for EWS, overall reservation percentage would go up to 60 per cent,” the CM clarified.

SOME TRS LEADERS SAY IT’S NOT GOOD DECISION

From Page 1

However, some senior TRS leaders, who are not coming in front of the media with their opinion, privately confessed that it was not a good decision for the party.

“If KCR made KTR the CM, the Cabinet would be automatically dissolved and a new Cabinet would be formed. This is a risky move when some leaders are waiting to create trouble. They can divide the party and create a rebel group of MLAs,” a senior leader said.

Several MLAs, discussing the issue, said, “KCR should not make KTR the CM in the present critical political scenario, as the young leader cannot handle the challenges.”

One of them also wondered that if Rama Rao is made CM, who will become the party working president position? Supposing K. Kavitha gets the post, what about minister Harish Rao? What would be his position in a KTR-led government?

Some leaders, who maintain proximity with Chandrasekhar Rao, said Planning Commission vice-chairman B. Vinod Kumar may join the Cabinet if Rama Rao becomes CM, in which case Kavita will handle the party as its working president.

Subsequently, Harish Rao could be made Planning Commission vice-chairman and told to continue his political journey with Chandrashekar Rao.

“If this happens, the BJP will get an even stronger impact and response from people when they call us a nepotistic, family-owned business,” a TRS leader said. A few of such critics aside, the bulk of the TRS is euphoric about the possibility. “If KTR becomes CM and KCR shifts to national politics, it will make the party stronger and the state more developed,” said another leader.

● MINISTER HARISH Rao could be made Planning Commission vice-chairman and told to continue his political journey with KCR.



OTHER STORIES

WIFE KILLS
HUSBAND, HIDES
BODY IN FORESTDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JAN. 21

A woman killed her husband with the help of her father and buried him in the forest area in Neredupally village of Jayashankar Bhupalpally district. The incident came to light 50 days after the murder when the relatives filed a complaint against the accused.

The police officials are yet to officially declare the details of the case. Sources said that Kaleshwarapu Ramesh, a native of Narsakkapalli in Parkal of Warangal Rural district, who works as a mason is married to Tupakula Sharada of Neredupalli in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district.

Ramesh went to Neredupally to attend a family function on December 1. However, he remained untraceable since.

His family members assumed he must have gone on work somewhere. However, after he went without communication for several days, Sharada complained in the police station that her husband is missing.

Unconvinced, Ramesh's family members questioned Sharada about his whereabouts, and she revealed that she killed her husband.

Police arrested Sharada and said that the dead body would be exhumed on Friday and post-mortem would also be conducted on the same day.

MAN KILLS HIS
WIFE, DAUGHTER
IN HUZURABADDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JAN. 21

In a brutal act, a 50-year-old man allegedly killed his wife and daughter over family disputes in the early hours in Huzurabad town of Karimnagar district on Thursday.

According to the police, the accused was identified as Venkatesh, an auto driver, resident of Rajampet village of Dandepally mandal situated in Adilabad district. He was residing at Huzurabad with his wife and children.

Even though he was married and had two children, he loved one Rama (45) and married her 22 years ago. They had one daughter Amani (19).

Last year, Venkatesh performed his daughter Amani's wedding but due to a quarrel with her husband, Amani left her husband's house and was staying with her mother in Huzurabad.

From the past few months regular family disputes were taking place between Rama, Amani and Venkatesh. They even had settled their issues on a number of occasions in the presence of elders.

However, on Wednesday, Venkatesh who came to the house late in the night killed his wife Rama and daughter Amani brutally when they were in deep sleep, by beating them with the iron rod harshly on their heads.

Both Rama and Amani died on the spot. Later, by locking the door from outside, Venkatesh went to the police station and surrendered himself in front of the police.

The DCP Srinivas, ACP Srinivas Rao and CI Madhavi who reached the spot, sent the dead bodies for the post-mortem and started the investigation by registering the case.

Virus testing camp to be
set up at Medaram Jatara

Hire enough staff to carry out sanitation works: Minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JAN. 21:

"Provide all facilities to the devotees arriving for the Mini Medaram Jatara without any shortcomings and make necessary preparations appropriate action in this regard within this month," said minister for Tribal, Women and Child Welfare Satyavathi Rathod.

During a review meeting held in Medaram, on Thursday, she said with the arrival of the vaccine for Covid-19, there is a chance for a good number of devotees to visit the jatara this year.

"Medical personnel should be vigilant in the wake of the pandemic and ambulances and testing centers should be prepared," she said.

Devotees who visit Medaram take a holy



Minister Satyavathi Rathod offering prayers at Medaram shrine in Mulugu, Warangal on Thursday.

bath in the Jampanna vagu and take all precautions to avoid any accidents in vagu should be taken. Strict action would be taken against any negligence this time, she warned.

Irrigation officials have been directed to give a comprehensive report on the use of check dams in

the stream. She said if the check dams are posing a danger to the lives of the people, they may be removed.

She suggested the officials hire enough staff to carry out sanitation works.

"Plan and implement traffic management and parking of vehicles with-

out disturbing the devotees. All facilities should be made available in temporary and permanent rooms for the accommodation of devotees coming to Medaram. The RTC must put as many buses as required into service as devotees are coming to the fair not only from our state but also from other states. The roads too should be repaired as many devotees are coming in their own vehicles," the minister said.

JP Chairman Kusuma Jagdish, Collector Krishna Aditya, ITDA PO Hanmantu Zendage, Additional Collector Adarsha Surabhi, ASP Sai Chaitanya, RDO Ramadevi, ZP CEO Prasuna Rani, D.R.D.O Parijatam, Medaram EO Rajender, other officials and leaders were present among others.

Revanth to hold deeksha for
turmeric board on January 30DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JAN. 21

Congress MP A. Revanth Reddy will observe Rythu Deeksha in Armoor on January 30. Extending solidarity with turmeric farmers, Revanth Reddy and senior Congress leaders will participate in the deeksha, which will have the participation of turmeric farmers from the undivided Nizamabad and Karimnagar districts.

Senior party leaders P.

Sudarshan Reddy and Eravathri Anil brought the turmeric farmers issue to the notice of Revanth Reddy and he agreed to fight in support of the farmers.

Congress leaders will demand for a turmeric board as promised by Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Arvind. They also demand a minimum support price for turmeric.

Speaking to newsmen, TPCC office-bearers and party leaders Gadugu Gangadhar, Nagesh

Reddy, Manala Mohan Reddy, R. Bhupathi Reddy and Taher Bin Hamdan said that Arvind had cheated the turmeric farmers with false promises.

Earlier, former MP Kalvakuntla Kavitha failed to bring a turmeric board and tasted defeat while seeking re-election. The Congress government set up a turmeric research station in Kammarpally and ensured MSP for turmeric through Markfed, they recalled.

KTR is able leader, can
become CM: GangulaDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JAN. 21

Minister for Backward Class, food and civil supplies department, Gangula Kamalakara on Thursday said that the IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao is able leader to become Chief Minister and all leaders in TRS are ready to support his candidature if party supremo K. Chandrasekhar Rao announce him as CM in his place.

Right from the 2018, after winning the assembly polls, when the Chief Minister announced the formation of federal front and K.T. Rama Rao was made party working president the buzz over the possibility of KCR handing over the reins of the state to his son KTR in February is going on a wide range in the political circles with the ruling TRS ministers and MLAs openly making statements of KTR is going to be next CM of



Ministers Gangula and T. Srinivas Yadav along with Mayor Yadagiri Sunil Rao in a press meet held at LMD guest house in Karimnagar on Thursday. — DC

Telangana State. Few days back, TRS party senior leader and the health minister, Etela Rajendar also expressed his opinion in an interview. What is wrong in KTR becoming next CM of the state, he questioned on Wednesday, the Animal Husbandry, diary, and cinematography minister, Talasani Srinivas Yadav in a meeting held in Hyderabad said that KCR will take the decision of announcing KTR

as CM at an appropriate time. Speaking in a press meet ministers, T. Srinivas Yadav, Gangula Kamalakara said that people had given power to the TRS and the party supremo KCR will decide who will become CM. KTR has all capabilities to become a CM like his father. "All the party leaders are like suicide squad to CM KCR. Whatever the decision he takes we are ready to abide by it," they said.

Notification for 372
jobs released in SCCLDC CORRESPONDENT
KOTHAGUDEM, JAN. 21

Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) issued their first job notification on Thursday and invited applications for seven types of jobs for 372 posts.

Interestingly, about 305 posts out of 372 posts were reserved for local people. The erstwhile four districts such as Khammam, Warangal, Karimnagar and Adilabad (16 districts after the formation of new districts) are eligible for it. People of all Telangana districts can compete in 367 posts, which have been allotted as unreserved. The seven types of jobs are including fitter trainee, electrician trainee, welder trainee, turner machinist trainee, motor mechanic trainee, foundryman trainee and junior staff nurse.

● About 305 posts out of 372 posts in SCCL were reserved for local people. People of all Telangana districts can compete in 367 posts, which have been allotted as unreserved

Eligibility for the above jobs, education requirements, salary details, fees payment and other details are available on SCCL website (www.scclmines.com) in the home page careers link. The eligible candidates have to submit their applications only through online.

SATTUPALLI BAR
UNION CHIEF, DIES
IN ROAD MISHAP

Khammam: Mantripragada Satyanarayana, 58, president of Sattupalli Bar Association killed in a road mishap near Kothanarayanapuram village on Thursday. Satyanarayana, who was travelling in his car from Sattupalli to Khammam, hit a lorry coming opposite side. He died on the spot and his body was sent to Penuballi hospital for post-mortem.

LAND DISPUTES
SORTED OUT IN
DHARANI APPDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JAN. 21

Land disputes are being sorted out under the Dharani portal taking with utmost care in Nizamabad district. To avoid corruption charges and delay in land records, district collector C. Narayana Reddy is taking precautions. Considering four parameters, land records have been regularised in Dharani portal. Forest land issues will also be settled with the consent of higher ups.

The state government has accorded special powers to the district collectors to settle long pending land issues in transparent and fair manner. In view of the high value for lands, the disputes arise between purchasers and vendors. In most of the cases, land owners sold out their properties to others and registration process was completed. Consequent mutation of property is ignored in some cases.

However, a few others completed land transactions on sada binama (agreement on plain paper). In the context of the updating of land records by the state government, proper documents and mutations required for agriculture lands. Errors in land extent, names in records and delay in mutations led to controversies. Taking advantage of the loopholes in the rules, a few parties trying for land rights in illegal way.

District collector C. Narayana Reddy directed tahsildars to verify the land issues properly and dispose it without any delay. "If the details are satisfactory land records should be issues immediately, otherwise reject it", he said. Unnecessary delay in land transactions led to criticism and irregularities, he said. Collector also warned officials on irregularities in agriculture land issues.

BHUPALPALLY
VRO ARRESTED
TAKING BRIBEDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JAN. 21

Village Revenue Officer of Dwarakapet in Tekumatla mandal of Jayashankar Bhupalpally district, Jakku Ravinder, was nabbed by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) sleuths while accepting a bribe of Rs 2 lakh from one Ekkati Vijayapal Reddy, a resident of Hyderabad for rectification and issuance of pattadar passbook. ACB DSP K. Madhusudan said the officer was arrested and would be produced before the first additional special judge for SPE and ACB cases, Hyderabad.

CORRIGENDUM

Andhra Pradesh State Financial Corporation, Karimnagar branch Under section 29, a sale notice advertisement was published in page 3 of Deccan Chronicle English daily on Dt-21-01-2021. The property details of M/s Aditya Children Hospital was published as Stilt+Ground+2 Floors. Please read it as Stilt Floor 1775.94 Sq.ft., Ground Floor 1775.94 Sq.ft., First Floor 1775.94 Sq.ft., Second Floor 1775.94 Sq.ft., Third Floor 1775.94 Sq.ft. and Fourth Floor 1387 sq.ft. (Stilt+Ground+4Floors). Date: 21.01.2021 Sd/- Sr. Branch Manager, APSFC, Karimnagar.

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ECO FRIENDLY

Plastic bags should be prohibited in shops: Activist

100km walk for green Medaram Jatara

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JAN. 21

An environmental activist, Kolipaka Prakash 38, embarked on a 100 kilometre March from Hanamkonda to Medaram with a message to save Medaram from pollution cause due to the usage of plastic during the Jatara.

"My intention is to meet villagers along my way and explain them how plastic damages our environment. I wish to appeal people to celebrate the jatara in an eco-friendly way," Prakash said, beginning his march from Warangal on Thursday.

Medaram and its surroundings are polluted in several ways during the jatara. Tons of plastic waste gets accumulated during the Jatara every year. The situation is turning worse every year. The amount of plastic waste found today at Medaram is alarming, compared to the past ten years. The usage of plastic in the



Chief conservator of forests MJ. Akbar flags off the march in Warangal on Thursday. — By arrangement

jatara is very high as more than one crore people converge. Water bottles, plastic plates, glasses, carry bags etc., all contributes to the accumulation of plastic waste.

The huge number of vehicles arriving for the jatara is an add-on to the pollution. "This pollution is harming the ecosystem, birds and

animals in the forest area. We need to stop this before it is too late. The solution for this problem is to promote the usage of jute bags and the reusable material. Plastic should be strictly prohibited in shops at the jatara," he suggested.

Chief conservator of forests, Warangal circle, MJ. Akbar flagged off the march

● WATER BOTTLES, plastic plates, glasses, carry bags etc., all contributes to the accumulation of plastic waste. Huge number of vehicles arriving for the jatara is an add-on to the pollution.

from the forest circle office and thanked Prakash for taking up such an initiative. He termed the initiative exemplary for a cause which affects all human kind.

"The determination to save the forests must be shared by every one of us. One person cannot carry the baton to save the earth from the various man made pollutants.

We all must come together to take up this cause and work towards achieving our goals," he said. Members of Vana Seva Society G. Naresh Kumar and Warangal Medhini social service society members were present.

IN BRIEF

SC GRANTS BAIL TO KANNADA ACTRESS RAGINI

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 21

The Supreme Court on Thursday granted bail to Kannada film actress Ragini Dwivedi who is in custody since September 4 last along with others in a drugs racket case.

A bench of Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman, Justice Navin Sinha and Justice K.M Joseph set aside the November 3, 2020, order of the Karnataka High Court, refusing bail to Dwivedi and others in the case registered under various provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act.

The court had heard the matter at length on Wednesday, the order was pronounced on Thursday.

The court noted that Ragini is entitled to get the bail since the maximum punishment for the crime alleged against her is only one year imprisonment.

She was in the Bengaluru prison for the past four months in the arrest affected after a raid on her house in the city on September 4.

Her lawyer noted that the officials did not recover any drugs from her house in the raid on September 4 and yet she was arrested on the charge of conspiracy.

SONU SOOD'S PLEA REJECTED BY HIGH COURT

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, JAN. 21

The Bombay High Court on Thursday dismissed a petition filed by Bollywood actor Sonu Sood challenging the demolition notice issued by the Mumbai municipal corporation. The civic body has alleged that Mr Sood has conducted unauthorised construction and converted a residential structure into a hotel.

Mr Sood, who shot to fame for helping thousands of migrant workers reach their home from Mumbai during the lockdown, had approached the court seeking interim relief against the notice.

The actor had approached the high court after a City Civil court rejected his plea. Through the petition, he had sought to quash the notice and to grant interim relief by not taking any 'coercive' action against him.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) had issued notice to Sood in October 2020 under section 53 of the Maharashtra Regional Town Planning Act, with regard to alterations made to a six-storey residential building in Juhu.

While opposing his plea, the BMC claimed before the court that Mr Sood was a "habitual offender," who was repeatedly trying to convert a residential building into a hotel.

PM TO TAKE VACCINE IN SECOND ROUND

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 21

With hesitancy slowing down the progress of Covid-19 vaccination drive, the central government on Thursday launched a major drive to convince healthcare workers and others to come forward and take the shot. In the last six days, over 10.4 lakh persons have been vaccinated across India at 18,161 session sites. On Thursday itself over 2.33 lakh beneficiaries were vaccinated, with no deaths due to Adverse Effect from Immunisation reported.

In the last six days, close to 10 lakh persons have been vaccinated across India at 18,159 session sites.

On Thursday itself over 1.92 lakh beneficiaries were vaccinated, with no deaths due to Adverse Effect from Immunisation reported.

However, it is felt that the progress is slow and given this pace of vaccination, it will take much longer time than expected to reach the target of 3 crore beneficiaries in the first phase and may delay the second phase when people above 50 years are to be vaccinated.

The President, Prime Minister, union ministers, chief ministers, MPs, MLAs, and judges will be among those who will get the jab in the second phase.

India on Thursday registered 15,223 fresh cases of Covid-19 and 151 new deaths. So far, 145 persons have been found positive with the mutated UK strain of the virus.

CWC TO DISCUSS ROADMAP FOR NEW CONGRESS PREZ POLLS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 21

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) will be meeting on Friday to take stock of the political situation prevailing in the country.

The meeting is also expected to draw up a schedule for the long-pending organisational elections that could also pick a new party chief.

In the August meeting of the CWC, interim President Mrs. Sonia Gandhi had asked the CWC to relieve her of her duties and pick a new party chief.

The process of internal elections started in September with electoral roles of the party being revised.

Insiders say that an AICC session along with a 'Chintan Shivir' is expected to be called after the budget session of Parliament to look for a new President.

Several leaders have come out in the open and demanded that Mr. Rahul Gandhi once again take up the reins of the party.

Several leaders had written a letter to Mrs. Sonia Gandhi in August last year demanding sweeping changes in the functioning of the party. They also pressed for internal elections for electing the President and CWC members.

Last month Mrs. Gandhi had met some of these letter writers in a bid assuage their feelings and to initiate the free flow of ideas. Back room parleys have also been held with these leaders. The party does not want any embarrassment if a situation arises when elections are not being held.

The CWC is also expected to release a strongly worded resolution in favour of the farmers and against the farm laws. The issue of alleged Chinese incursions is also expected to be taken up. The issue of national security that came up post the purported chats of Arnab Goswami may find a mention.

5 dead in Serum Institute fire; Covishield facility unaffected

Fire breaks out due to an electric fault during the ongoing construction

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
with agency inputs
MUMBAI, JAN. 21

Five people including four men died on Friday in a massive fire which broke out in Pune's Serum Institute of India (SII). The fire broke out in an under construction building. Six people were rescued by the fire department personnel. However, the production of Covid vaccine would not be affected.

Maharashtra Public Health Minister Rajesh Tope said that the fire is under control. Five bodies were found after the fire was doused.

Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray said that as per the preliminary information, the fire broke out due to an electric fault during the ongoing construction works. He will visit the Institute on Friday.

Speaking with this newspaper, Pune police commissioner Amitabh Gupta, who visited the spot, said, "The bodies are yet to be identified."

A senior official of Disaster Management Unit, requesting anonymity said, "The fire erupted suddenly around 1.00 pm on the fifth floor of a building at the SII complex in Gopal Patti. Primafacie, it appears that the cause of the fire is short-circuit."

Speaking with the reporters, Mr. Tope said that the fire broke out at a newly constructed building, where work related to rotavirus plant installation was underway. The fire was noticed around 2.00 pm.

"Five fire tenders and three water tankers were sent to the spot. It took around two-three hours to extinguish the fire. Fire personal discovered five bodies when they entered the building after the fire was completely doused," Mr. Tope said.

The health minister said that the Covishield vaccine's building is far away from the fire. He also said that the police investiga-



Workers of Serum Institute of India come out of the building after fire broke out in it in Pune on Thursday.

- PTI

tion is underway and a fire audit would also be conducted.

In a series of tweets, SII CEO Adar Poonawalla said, "We have just received some distressing updates; upon further investigation we have learnt that there has unfortunately been some loss of life at the incident. We are deeply saddened and offer our deepest condolences to the family members of the departed (sic)." In another tweet, Mr. Poonawalla said, "I would like to reassure all governments & the public that there would be no loss of #COVISHIELD production due to multiple production buildings that I had kept in reserve to deal with such contingencies at @SerumInstIndia. Thank you very much @PuneCityPolice & Fire Department (sic)."

A team of the National

Disaster Response Force was also sent to the spot from Talegaon on the outskirts of Pune.

Cyrus S Poonawalla, chairman and MD of Serum Institute of India, on Thursday said the vaccine major will offer a compensation of ₹25 lakh in addition to the mandated amount to families of persons who died in a fire at the company's premises in Pune.

"Today is an extremely sorrowful day for all of us at Serum Institute of India. Regrettably, there were losses of lives in the fire that broke out in our under installation facility situated at the Special Economic Zone at Manjari," Poonawalla said in a statement.

"We are deeply saddened and offer our condolences to the families of the departed. In this regard, we will be offering a com-

pensation of ₹25 lakh to each of the families, in addition to the mandated amount as per the norms," he added.

"We would like to extend our gratitude to everyone for their concerns and prayers in these distressing times," Poonawalla said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief at the loss of lives in a fire at the Serum Institute of India building. Modi tweeted, "Anguished by the loss of lives due to an unfortunate fire at the @SerumInstIndia. In this sad hour, my thoughts are with the families of those who lost their lives. I pray that those injured recover at the earliest."

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said it was distressing to learn of the tragic loss of lives in a fire incident at a Serum

Institute of India facility and urged the state government to provide necessary help to the victims and their families.

"While it's distressing to learn of the tragic loss of lives in the fire incident at Serum Institute, the news of another fire is extremely worrying," Gandhi said in a tweet.

"My condolences to the family of the deceased. I request the state govt to provide necessary help to the victims & their families," he said.

The Manjari facility is where the Covishield vaccine used in the nationwide inoculation drive against the pandemic is made.

The building where the fire broke out is part of the under-construction site of the Serum facility and is one km from the Covishield manufacturing unit, sources said.

Naravane: Defence modernization held hostage; flays 'rigid' process

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 21

Indian Army chief Gen M.M. Naravane on Thursday hit out at the bureaucratic procurement process holding defence modernization a "hostage" and called for "revolution in bureaucratic affairs" to realize the vision of "self-reliance".

The Army chief pointed out that the new weapon acquisition policy Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 which came into force around four months back has 681 pages against the earlier policy Defence Procurement Procedure 2016 which had just 450 pages. He said that the former defence minister

Manohar Parrikar had once remarked that our entire procurement process is based on distrust. "We are not being able to fast-track the process of acquisition. It is because we have tried to cater for every contingency and every loophole. This results in acquisition process getting tied up in knots. To that end what has happened is that the process and procedures, rather than the product, have become paramount and these are holding hostage the defence modernization," he said.

"The laborious and time consuming and often rigid stages of this acquisition process also in them-

selves, create delays in the acquisition cycle. During this cycle better version of these equipment become available than is in the original contract. "But there is still no scope for negotiations to incorporate these new features and to make any mid-course corrections," said Gen Naravane.

He said that any contemplated change takes this already delayed cycle back to the start point. "And then you have to start once again so this becomes a vicious cycle. We need to be able to fast track all these things. Since we have made the rules, we should also have the latitude to override them. Rules should be user

friendly for the customer that is armed forces as well as the manufacturer. This waiver clause must be there to cater to operational condition and to accommodate different specifications then were originally promulgated," he said.

Army chief said that once skis to be used in snowbound terrain were rejected because vendor offered ultra-light skis weighing 1.6 kilos against formulated qualitative requirements of 2 and 5 kilos. Similarly, punji which are sharp pointed spikes used as obstacles, were rejected because it was of 6 kilos against notified requirement between 3 and 5 kilos.

Farmers say no to 18-month pause on 3 new farm laws

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 21

The protesting farmers' unions on Thursday rejected the central government's proposal to suspend the three contentious agriculture laws for 18 months and set up a joint committee to address grievances.

The unions also rejected a suggestion by the police officers to hold their proposed Republic Day tractor rally on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway instead of Delhi's busy Outer Ring Road.

In a general body meeting of Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the umbrella body of the protesting

farmer unions, the members reiterated a full repeal of the three laws and enacting legislation for remunerative MSP as the pending demands of the peasants' movement.

Generally, representatives of 41 farmers' unions had been participating in such meetings. But Thursday's meeting was attended by about 80 farmers' unions.

After the meeting, a statement issued by the Morcha said, "the proposal put forth by the government on Wednesday was rejected. A full repeal of three central farm acts and enacting a legislation for remunerative MSP for all farmers were reiterated as the pending

demands of the movement."

The union leaders also paid homage to the 143 farmers who have been martyred in this agitation which has been going on at Delhi borders for the last 57 days.

The Morcha said, "These companions are separated from us while fighting this mass movement. Their sacrifice will not go in vain and we will not go back without the repealing of these farm laws."

On Wednesday, when the Centre put forward the offer during their tenth round of talks with the farmers, the union leaders said they would decide upon it only after holding internal consultations.

BATTLE | BENGAL

Banerjee to contest from Nandigram against the backdrop of Suwendu quitting Trinamul

Forgotten Nandigram divided between Didi, Dada

Nandigram (WB), Jan. 21: Two large cut-outs of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her protégé-turned-rival Suwendu Adhikari adorning opposite sides of the street in Tengua bazar of Nandigram sum up the prevailing political mood of the area which is hogging national limelight following the former's announcement of her candidature from here.

The obscure Nandigram village that shook the base of mighty Left regime and became a bastion of the Trinamul Congress 14 years ago, now stands divided between its favourite "Didi and Dada" amid speculations of Banerjee taking on her trusted lieutenant in the anti-land acquisition

movement, Suwendu Adhikari. Though, the BJP is yet to take a call on fielding Suwendu from Nandigram which he represented in the assembly before quitting after joining BJP, the dashing leader has expressed willingness to take on the challenge and defeat Banerjee in the polls.

Many locals in the cradle of change, Nandigram, were feeling 'disenchanted and forgotten' and yearning for another change till a few months back.

But, with the announcement of Banerjee's candidature and Adhikari, a political heavyweight of the region, who had switched over to the BJP vowing to defeat her, has put the entire East Midnapore district, especially Nandigram, on edge.

"The people of Nandigram are not very happy with the TMC and also have grievances against Mamata di as she hardly visits Nandigram. Had there been any other candidate of the TMC, the defeat would have been imminent."

But, there is a section of the people who have a soft corner for the TMC chief.

"We can't forget the tough days of the movement when she and Suwendu da were our only saviours," Anisur Mondal, a sharecropper who was part of the Bhumi Ucched Pratirodh Committee (BUPC), said.

Mondal's views were echoed by local BJP leader Sabuj Pradhan, who agreed that Banerjee's poll announcement is likely to change the social-political

equations on the ground level. "Till last month the situation in Nandigram was not in favour of the TMC. It will be a divided house if both Mamata Banerjee and Suwendu Adhikari contest from Nandigram assembly."

"If one of them pull out from the contest, the elections will swing easily the other way," Pradhan, a former Congress leader and part of BUPC, who had recently joined the BJP, said.

Banerjee and Adhikari were heroes of the Nandigram movement.

The feisty Trinamul Congress boss was its guiding spirit, while Adhikari was her general on the ground, holding protests against the SEZ where Indonesia's Salim group wanted to set up a

chemical hub.

But, after Adhikari jumped the ship, several villages overnight switched sides, and the rival camps took over party offices.

Even as Gokulpur, Gokulnagar, Gopi-mohanpur, Adhikaripari, Heria have turned into strongholds of Adhikari, Sonachura, Haripur, Khejuri, Brindaban Chak, Daudpur, Tekhali remains bastion of the Trinamul Congress.

Sixty-year old Kanchan Mal of Gokulpur village, who was injured during the agitation and her house was set on fire, said despite the anger against the TMC, "both Mamata di and Suwendu babu are like son and daughter of Nandigram. It will be a tough choice for us." - PTI



A larger than life cut out of West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee put up at Nandigram in East Midnapore district on Thursday.

- PTI

SHORT TAKES

POPE CALLS ON BIDEN TO FOSTER 'RECONCILIATION'

Vatican City, Jan. 21: Pope Francis on Wednesday urged the United States' new president Joe Biden to promote "reconciliation and peace" around the world following his inauguration.

He offered Biden, the second Roman Catholic to become US president after John F. Kennedy, his "cordial good wishes and the assurance of my prayers" in the task ahead.

"Under your leadership, may the American people continue to draw strength from the lofty political, ethical and religious values that have inspired the nation since its founding," he said. "At a time when the grave crises facing our human family call for far-sighted and united responses, I pray that your decisions will be guided by a concern for building a society marked by authentic justice and freedom," the Pope said.

MEXICO LAUDS BIDEN HALT TO BORDER WALL

Mexico City, Jan. 21: Mexico on Wednesday hailed US President Joe Biden's order to halt construction of former President Donald Trump's wall along the US-Mexican border, as well as his other immigration-linked reforms. "Mexico welcomes the end of the construction of the wall, the immigration initiative in favour of DACA and a path to dual citizenship," Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard wrote on Twitter.

He was referring to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals programme to regularize the immigration status of young people who arrived illegally as children, which Trump tried to shut down.

The Republican sparked anger during his 2016 election campaign when he branded Mexican migrants "rapists" and drug dealers, and vowed to build a wall across the southern US border.

'STRENGTHEN' U.S.-ISRAEL TIES, BIBI TELLS BIDEN

Jerusalem, Jan. 21: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday urged new US President Joe Biden to "strengthen" a long-standing alliance between the two countries, partly to confront the "threat" posed by Iran. "I look forward to working with you to further strengthen the US-Israel alliance, to continue expanding peace between Israel and the Arab world and to confront common challenges, chief among them the threat posed by Iran," Netanyahu said.

The Israeli leader was speaking in a video congratulating Biden moments after he was sworn in as US president.

Netanyahu, who has referred to Trump as the "best friend" Israel has had in the White House, noted that he had "a warm personal friendship going back many decades" with Biden. Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, said it was "not sorry" to see Trump depart, calling him "the world's main source and sponsor of oppression, violence and extremism" and partner in "Israeli aggression" against the Palestinians.

INTEL CHIEF 1ST NOMINEE TO GET SENATE NOD

Washington, Jan. 21: The US Senate voted Wednesday to confirm former CIA official Avril Haines as director of national intelligence, making her the first member of newly-inaugurated President Joe Biden's Cabinet to gain approval.

Senate Democrats and Republicans gave strong support to Haines, voting 84-10 to make her the first woman ever to lead the 18 entities of the US intelligence community.

Biden and the Senate are moving quickly to get key members of his government in place, with votes expected in the coming days on the secretaries of defence, state and the Treasury.

Biden, sworn in Wednesday as successor to Donald Trump, has pledged to hit the ground running to deal with several major challenges.

But until the Senate approves his nominees, government departments will be led by acting secretaries and directors, keeping a brake on some of his administration's momentum.

Haines, 51, is a veteran of the intelligence world, having served as deputy CIA director and deputy national security advisor in the previous Obama-Biden administration.

US rejoins climate accord, Muslim travel ban lifted, masks mandatory

President Biden reverses Trump's decisions, sets a clear policy path for new administration

Washington, Jan. 21: US President Joe Biden signed a series of executive orders to launch his administration Wednesday, including a decision to rejoin the Paris climate accord and a mask mandate for all federal buildings.

The orders included keeping the United States in the World Health Organization, ending the ban on entries from mostly Muslim-majority countries, bolstering environmental protections and strengthening the fight against Covid-19.

Also among the directives was a halt to construction of the wall on the US-Mexico border, and efforts to expand diversity and equality for minority groups in the federal government.

The orders were aimed at reversing decisions by his predecessor Donald Trump and setting a clear policy path for Biden's new administration, just hours after he was sworn in as president.

"Some of things we are going to be doing are going to be bold," he said in the Oval Office.

"We are going to combat climate change in a way we have not done so far," Biden said of returning to the Paris agreement, a treaty signed by most nations in 2016 to limit global warming.

He said his actions on the Covid-19 pandemic, which has claimed 400,000 American lives, would help change the course of the crisis.

His return to the Paris Agreement, which the United States joined Barack Obama was president and Biden vice president, was lauded by other leaders.

"Welcome back," said French President Emmanuel Macron.

"We are together. We will be stronger to face the challenges of our time. Stronger to build our future. Stronger to protect our planet," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also welcomed the move, saying it was a large step for the leading producers of global carbon pollution.

"But there is a very long way to go," he said in a statement.

"We look forward to the leadership of United States in accelerating global efforts towards net zero" emissions, he said, calling for "ambitious" new targets for 2030 and expanded climate finance.

Biden's climate czar John Kerry hailed the move as a boon for "America's credibility and commitment — setting a floor, not a ceiling, for our climate leadership."

— AFP

SOME ORDERS THAT BIDEN SIGNED

● **KEEPING THE United States in the World Health Organisation.**

● **A DECISION to rejoin the Paris climate accord, a treaty signed by most nations in 2016 to limit global warming. His return to the Paris Agreement, which the United States joined Barack Obama was president and Biden vice president, was lauded by other leaders.**

● **A MASK mandate for all federal buildings.**

● **END TO the ban on entries from mostly Muslim-majority countries.**

● **BOLSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL protections.**

● **STRENGTHENING THE fight against the deadly Coronavirus pandemic.**

● **EFFORTS TO expand diversity and equality for minority groups in the federal government.**



A TV screen broadcasts the news of the inauguration of US President Joe Biden at a shopping mall in Hong Kong, on Thursday. — AP



There is a much broader scope of political accord with President Biden. There would be debates about how we can do things well for both countries. Biden represents the interests of the US, I represent those of the Federal Republic of Germany

— ANGELA MERKEL
German Chancellor



Best wishes on this most significant day for the American people! We are together. We will be stronger to face the challenges of our time. Stronger to build our future. Stronger to protect our planet. Welcome back to the Paris Agreement!

— EMMANUEL MACRON
French President

Even in dark times, we not only dream, we do: Harris

Washington, Jan. 21: In her first remarks to the nation as US Vice President, Kamala Harris has highlighted "American aspiration" and underlined that President Joe Biden has summoned the people to look beyond crisis and aspire to unite. Harris, 56, made history on Wednesday when she was sworn in as the first female, first PoC and first Asian-American US vice-president. The former senator was sworn in just before

Biden took the oath of office to become the 46th US President.

"In many ways this moment embodies our character as a nation. It demonstrates who we are, even in dark times. We, not only dream, we do. We not only see what has been, we see what can be."

"We shoot for the moon, and then we plant our flag on it. We are bold, fearless and ambitious. We are undaunted, in our belief that we shall overcome,

that we will rise up. This is American aspiration," Harris said outside the Lincoln Memorial.

She cited the accomplishments of President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, who "saw a better future and built it with land grant colleges, and the transcontinental railroad."

She also highlighted how Martin Luther King Jr fought for racial and economic justice.

— PTI

Harris credits mom for showing faith

New York, Jan. 21: Kamala Harris, who scripted history by becoming the first-ever woman Vice President of the US, has credited her Indian mother for showing faith in her and always reminding her two daughters that "though we may be the first, we should not be the last."

Harris remembered her late mother Shyamala Gopalan, a cancer researcher and civil rights activist from India, saying she has always carried that lesson from her mother with her throughout her career from serving as the first woman District Attorney of San Francisco, to the first woman Attorney General of California, and the first woman of colour to represent California in the United States Senate.

Harris, 56, created history on Wednesday by becoming the first-ever woman Vice President of the United States.

She is also the first female, first PoC and first

South Asian American vice president.

"My story is the story of millions of Americans. My mother Shyamala Gopalan arrived in the United States from India. She raised my sister Maya and me to know that though we may be the first, we should not be the last, Harris said at the Presidential Inaugural Committee's official Asian American inaugural ball, hosted virtually by IMPACT, the leading Indian American advocacy and political action committee on Wednesday.

"Your continued faith in me has brought me to this moment, she said.

She thanked IMPACT and RUN AAPI, an Asian American voter outreach organisation, for their leadership, asserting that the contributions of the Asian Pacific American community are woven throughout the fabric of the US.

— PTI

Harris success inspire students

Montreal, Jan. 21: Students at a high school in Canada were glued Wednesday to coverage of former student Kamala Harris's inauguration as US vice president, saying her achievements would drive them to reach new goals. Harris, then aged 12, moved to Montreal

with her sister Maya in 1976 when their divorced mother relocated the family to pursue her career as a cancer researcher.

From 1978 to 1981 Harris attended Westmount High, which also counts singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen among its alumni. "I find it so crazy that a

woman from this school, my own high school, went and became such a great woman, and now she is the vice president of the USA," a student named Brenda said. Harris was an extroverted American teenager who identified as African-American, former classmates said. — AFP

Bring ties back on the right track, urges China

Beijing, Jan. 21: A visibly relieved China on Thursday warmly congratulated new US President Joe Biden and urged him to heal and rebuild the severely damaged bilateral ties by his predecessor Donald Trump. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying, known for fiery retorts against the US, welcomed Biden's first moves to join the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organisation (WHO) which was trashed by

Trump as a puppet of China over its conduct to deal with the Covid-19.

"We express congratulations on the inauguration of President Biden. I noted many US media say this is a new day in America...After travelling an extraordinary period, we believe our two peoples deserve to embrace a better future. We hope Biden will be successful in governance," she said.

"I noticed the word unity has been mentioned several times in his inaugural

speech. This is what is urgently needed in our bilateral relations," she said, adding that over the past four years "a handful of US politicians made so many lies and incited so much hatred and division".

"Chinese and Americans have fallen victims to this," she said and asked the new US administration to bring the damaged China-US ties on the right track.

"We have different social systems, development stages and historical cul-

ture. It is only natural for us to have differences. Just as Biden said democracy should allow the right to dissent and disagreement must not lead to disunion, this should also be true to international relations," she said.

"Countries with different ideologies, social systems and culture can live in harmony and achieve the goal of common development and peace and development for the world," she said. — PTI

TRUMP'S LETTER 'GENEROUS': BIDEN

Washington, Jan. 21: US President Joe Biden has said his predecessor Donald Trump has left him a "very generous" letter in the Oval Office before departing the White House. It is customary for outgoing presidents to write their successors a letter and leave it for them on the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office.

However, given that the

former president broke several of the past traditions, including by opting to skip Biden's inauguration ceremony and never formally congratulated him on his election win, it was unclear until Wednesday whether Trump would maintain the tradition of outgoing presidents leaving notes for their successors. — PTI

WOMEN'S | SUFFRAGE

Michelle Obama drew praise from fans on social media for her belted pantsuit in plum

Inauguration fashion: Purple, pearls, US designers

Washington, Jan. 21: Joe Biden and Kamala Harris showcased American designers at their inauguration Wednesday, and Harris gave a nod to women's suffrage, Shirley Chisholm and her beloved sorority in pearls and purple.

Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush also donned hues of purple. Harris has cited Chisholm, a Democrat from New York, as an inspiration for her career. Chisholm was the first PoC woman elected to

Congress and the first PoC major-party candidate to run for US president.

Pearls had a strong fashion showing, in line with a social media campaign that had inauguration watchers donning strands in support and celebration of Harris. Nobody in attendance did them quite like Jennifer Lopez — from earrings to bracelets — as she sang "This Land is Your Land" in head-to-toe white Chanel.

Rep. Barbara Lee, a California Democrat, wore a pearl necklace owned by

Chisholm herself. It was a gift from Chisholm's goddaughter.

"Because of Shirley Chisholm, I am," Lee, who is PoC, posted on Twitter. "Because of Shirley Chisholm, Vice President Harris is."

The pearls Harris wore, by Wilfredo Rosado, were also a symbol of unity with her sisters in Alpha Kappa Alpha, the first African American Greek-letter sorority, said Rachel Torgerson, fashion features director for *Cosmopolitan*.

The sorority's founders are referred to as the "Twenty Pearls." Every new member receives a badge adorned with 20 pearls.

Harris attended Howard University, one of the nation's historically PoC colleges and universities. "There's no doubt that every part of her look today celebrates who she is, where she came from and where she hopes to lead the country. Every piece was carefully considered and packed with meaning," Torgerson said.

Like Harris, Rosado is the child of immigrants.

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders drew fashion praise on social media for his cozy, comfortable inauguration wear: His signature beige parka and a pair of knit patterned mittens. The look earned him his own inauguration Bobblehead to mark his viral fashion moment. It's now on pre-sale for \$25 at the National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum's online store.

Jill Biden wore an ocean blue wool tweed coat over

a dress by American designer Alexandra O'Neill of the Markarian label. Aides said Harris was dressed in Christopher John Rogers and Sergio Hudson. Both are Black designers, Rogers from Louisiana and Hudson from South Carolina. Harris' husband, Doug Emhoff, wore a Ralph Lauren suit.

Michelle Obama, a fashion icon, drew praise from fans on social media for her belted pantsuit in plum, also by Hudson.

— AP



Michelle Obama

DECCAN Chronicle

22 JANUARY 2021

A return to decency in US will be good for the world

Young American poet Amanda Gorman may have stolen the show at the inauguration of the new US President with her words in verse: “And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us, but what stands before us.” In a sense, the poetic line summarises Joseph Robinette Biden Jr’s fundamentally reassuring message that the United States can heal while it recovers and rebuilds even as he attempts to reconcile and rectify the stark differences brought to the fore in four years of the Donald Trump era. The sense of calm resolve that Mr Biden, America’s 46th President, conveyed amid rhetoric and realism in bringing up “white supremacy” and “domestic terrorism” might have been just what was required after the tumultuous events of just two weeks ago when the same US Capitol, a pillar of democracy, was under siege.

Mr Biden’s ability to find the right words as he plays the healer who can stitch together the seemingly unbridgeable divide was the highlight. His talk of “American aspiration”, as opposed to the “America First” that his predecessor had emphasised at his 2017 inaugural, was tempered by post-pandemic humility after the US has been scarred more than any other nation with 400,000 deaths and millions more sick. The advent of the new presidency is not so much a transition as a sea change from the rule of his predecessor who showed scant regard for basic science and who upended news cycles with untruths distributed on social media platforms. In the face of crass challenges to democratic traditions, Mr Biden’s call for public comity was comforting: “Let’s begin to listen to one another again, hear one another, see one another.”

“Without unity there is no peace, only bitterness and fury, no progress, only exhausting outrage,” helped echo the ringing truth of old maxims on unity amid diversity that the world seems to have forgotten, thanks to the cascade of crises carried by the virus including the disruption of large parts of the global economy. In a welter of executive action, Mr Biden is bringing the United States back into the Paris agreement on climate change and into the World Health Organisation, besides stopping the construction of the “Mexican Wall” and addressing immigration issues thrown up by a racist and insular predecessor. The liberal revival promises more towards repairing hurt allies and equitable trade deals, obviating the need for tariff or sanctions-ridden confrontations that Mr Trump’s Washington had so preferred.

The dazzling optics of fireworks lighting up Capitol Hill was in keeping with the celebration of the inauguration while celebrity entertainers ushered in sobriety in view of the Covid-riddled times we are living in. There were messages to be read too in the ascension of vice-president Kamala Devi Harris, the first Black American and first person of Indian descent who was sworn in with her hand on two Bibles. The absence of the outgoing President Trump seemed inconspicuous, though he had the decency to leave a “generous letter” for his successor. In the end, the oldest democracy did survive the threat even as the “Proud Boys”, who were eulogised by Mr Trump, began mocking him as “a total failure”. One can only hope the return to decency and truth in America might ease the path to a global revival too.

Is Lone playing BJP games?

The recent decision of Sajjad Lone, the founder-leader of the small Kashmir valley party, the People’s Conference, to leave the People’s Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) not long after the PAGD parties performed well in the recent District Development Council (DDC) election cannot but cause surprise.

The impression it is likely to leave in Kashmir is that Mr Lone didn’t have the stomach for the fight ahead. The PAGD was created to struggle peacefully — using all democratic means — for the restoration of Article 370 of the Constitution, which gave constitutional autonomy to J&K and was squelched by the Centre in August 2019.

Since the PC has pulled out of what is an anti-BJP alliance, the surmise apt to be drawn in the valley is that the PC leader has been brought to his knees by the Centre, possibly through a deft mix of incentives and intimidation — the sorry fate of many in the country.

Mr Lone’s PC is limited to a corner of north Kashmir. Since the arrival of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the scene six years ago, the PC leader became the first valley politician to cozy up to the PM and the BJP. But in the environment created when the BJP scuttled its own alliance government with the People’s Democratic Party in J&K (in which Mr Lone was a minister), the latter joined the Gupkar Alliance founded by National Conference and PDP a day before Article 370 was read down and hundreds of valley politicians pushed into jail.

By breaking from the Gupkar group, Mr Lone would appear to have gone back to his position of affinity with BJP. Splitting away from PAGD carries the optics of the weakening of the anti-BJP forces in J&K. But in Kashmir valley such optics are likely to be derided in the present atmosphere. Mr Lone chose a lame explanation for his departure, saying PAGD parties had put up proxy candidates against official PAGD candidates in the DDC polls. This is true enough, but the remedy would seem to lie in taking steps to politically invigorate PAGD, not flit away from it. This is why the sense in the Valley is that Mr Lone’s tail has been twisted by the Centre.

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Subhani



Transparency needed to remove all vaccine fears



Karan Thapar

As I See It

I’m used to school-boys squabbling, hacks quarrelling and, even, fishwives shouting like alley cats but doctors and scientists lunging at each other’s throats came as a complete surprise. Unfortunately, that’s what we have witnessed as differences of opinion, particularly over Bharat Biotech’s Covaxin vaccine, transformed into vicious disputes and nasty divisions. The fact that this is not edifying is the least of my concerns. More important, I fear it is fuelling vaccine hesitancy, not just among the uninformed general population but also among those who are well aware of the need for vaccination.

In its main front-page story, Tuesday’s *Hindustan Times* reported that the average turnout was “less than 50 per cent” for the first three days of vaccination. Out of 7,704 sessions, where 100 people per session should have been vaccinated, only 381,305 people have taken the jab. What makes this low turnout worse is that at this stage it is health workers who are getting vaccinated. These are the people who understand the importance of vaccination. Normally, they don’t need to be convinced. So, if they’re backing off, that would suggest a possibly bigger problem.

It’s this problem that I want to focus on today. At its heart, I would say, is the controversy over the efficacy of Covaxin which, in turn, has been made considerably worse by an inexplicable attack by 49 doctors and scientists on the experts who were the first to raise legitimate questions about the vaccine. Far from allaying the concerns, which are

legitimate and need answering, these 49 gentlemen seem to suggest it is anti-national to raise valid doubts and it is our patriotic duty to grit our teeth and take the vaccine. Well, that is an attitude almost calculated to rile people. And it certainly had that effect on doctors, nurses, ward boys and other health workers.

To understand my point, let’s come to the perceived problem with Covaxin and then turn to the inflammatory critique it has unnecessarily provoked.

The problem arises from the fact Covaxin has been cleared “for restricted use in emergency situations ... in clinical trial mode” although its efficacy data from Phase 3 trials is not available. Two of India’s top virologists, Gagandeep Kang and Shahid Jameel, have questioned this. Their reasons for doing so are simple. Though safe, we still don’t know how efficacious it is. As they have explained, without credibly established efficacy data we don’t know if Covaxin works or how well it works. It’s being given in the belief that it will but if that turns out not to be the case not only will that seriously damage trust in vaccination, but it could also mean many recipients, who think they are protected and inevitably drop their guard, could end up getting needlessly infected. If this happens, it can only add to our problems.

However, the case against using Covaxin goes further. Experts also say the argument it is an acceptable shortcut in a pandemic doesn’t hold. First of all, both cases and deaths are a fraction of what they were when they peaked in September. So, there’s no emergency now.

Second, we have other vaccines with credibly established efficacy that we could use. And they’re available in sufficient quantity. So, as Dr Kang told me in a recent interview: “I would ask why would you want to give a vaccine without efficacy emergency-use authorisation in these circumstances?”

Now the government’s doctors have advanced a third reason for prematurely pushing Covaxin. They claim it could be better at tackling new strains of the virus. The problem is that there’s absolutely no data to support this. Both Dr Kang and Dr Jameel say it is simply “an hypothesis”. This time Krishna Ella, chairman of Bharat Biotech, which has made Covaxin, agrees. On January 4, he publicly admitted that “it’s only an hypothesis right now”. Isn’t it odd that the government should think otherwise?

In fact, on January 4, Dr Krishna Ella went one step further. Most people have forgotten about this additional point which is why it’s worth recalling. “Just give me one week’s time (and) I’ll give confirmatory data”, he said. Two weeks and more have passed but he hasn’t done so. Instead, he’s gone silent on the subject.

It was in the face of such well-established concerns that 49 doctors and scientists decided to vindictively pounce on those who initially raised them. In a statement released on January 14 and within hours tweeted by the health ministry, they attacked what they

It’s both bizarre and deplorable to frame differences over the efficacy of Covaxin as issues of national pride or as an attempt to run down Indian achievements. Yet that is what the 49 did.

called “irresponsible statements by vested interests ... defaming (the) Indian scientific community and casting aspersions upon its integrity by making politicised statements about the recent research in the field of Covid-19 vaccines”. Referring to doubts about Covaxin as “reprehensible utterances”, the 49 sought to wrap themselves in the flag by asserting they have “a vision to make India a global leader in scientific research” and “a name to reckon with”. And, presumably for Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s benefit, they added they are “atma nirbhar”.

Frankly, it’s not just bizarre but deplorable to frame differences over the efficacy of Covaxin as issues of national pride or as an attempt to run down Indian achievements. Yet that is what the 49 did. No doubt the sound of the patriotic drum they tried to beat was music to their ears, but it turned out to be a discordant and disturbing note for the doctors, nurses and assorted health workers who they imagined would be reassured. It seems to have put them off in very sizeable numbers. As I said earlier, they’ve probably made matters much worse.

So, if we are going to ensure that Indians in their hundreds of millions get willingly vaccinated, we must be fully transparent about the vaccines we are using and their efficacy and not attack as “anti-national” all those who raise legitimate concerns. But if that doesn’t suffice to resolve the spreading doubts, we might have to consider temporarily withdrawing Covaxin till its efficacy is sufficiently and credibly established. Remember, the important goal is to get the largest number of people vaccinated. Which vaccine is used should be a mere detail.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

TEAM INDIA

India’s surreal victory against Australia at the Gabba, Brisbane has been truly phenomenal. The absence of experienced players, multiple injuries, nothing could deter this young side led by the calm Ajinkya Rahane who did wonders on the field. Beating Australia on their soil is always special and this side punched above their weight in all the sessions when everyone had written them off.

Jitesh Mathur
Hyderabad

Kudos to Team India for defeating Australia in the Gabba Test despite all odds. I wish the former captain M.S. Dhoni had also appreciated the team.

Sukrutha M.
Hyderabad

Rishabh Pant played superbly on the final day to help India win the series. He proved to be a good wicket keeper and batsmen. This is great achievement for India in recent times.

V.R.K. Valmeeky
Hyderabad

RAM MANDIR FUND

Collection of donation for Ram Mandir in Ayodhya must be streamlined to ensure that it does not turn into a scam. All donations must be collected in chequ or other modes of transfer directly to Ram Mandir Trust bank account.

G.D. Bajaj
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Cong-O front to contest all 41 seats in State

VIJAYAWADA, JANUARY. 21 The Congress (O)-led Democratic National Front has decided to contest all the 31 Parliamentary constituencies in Andhra Pradesh in the forthcoming elections.

Representatives of the four State political parties forming the front — Congress (O), Swatantra, Jana Sangh, SSP — met here today and finalised 25 out of 27 constituencies falling within the Andhra area. Out of the 14 constituencies in the Telangana region, the meeting finalised seven, leaving the remaining seven to be decided at a meeting of the four-party front in Hyderabad on January 23, according to a spokesperson for the front.

Rafia Zakaria



How Big Tech giants finally dealt crushing blow to Trump

Donald J. Trump spent the last days of his presidency sulking in the White House residence, isolating himself from nearly everyone and busying himself in making an enemies list, which included his own vice-president. One of the few people seen visiting him was a man who made a small fortune selling pillows on television and is a consumer of the most bizarre conspiracy theories possible.

Washington D.C. was a ghost town peopled only by National Guardsmen called up to defend the Capitol against the angry mobs unleashed by the President’s caustic vitriol. Even these men weren’t quite trustworthy; they were being vetted again to ensure they weren’t secret Trump supporters who would compromise the new President’s security.

Of all the humiliations Donald Trump has been subjected to, however, the worst hadn’t come from his political opponents. It came not on the day of the Capitol insurrection or even the impeachment that followed, but on the day that Twitter suspended his account. In an instant, the President who had goaded his supporters to fight

hard, feeding them a steady diet of lies, conspiracy theories and deceit for years, had no means to get in touch with them.

Mr Trump himself was likely stunned when this finally happened. For years, his detractors were hounding social media giants Twitter and Facebook to boot him out from their platforms. None of their entreaties worked; Mr Trump kept lying, riling up supporters, destroying careers, firing high-level Cabinet members, threatening politicians, instigating his supporters to deliver death threats, and his accounts were untouched. Even as he was actively spreading lies before and after the election, lies about mail-in voting, lies about who had won, and lies about rigging, Twitter and Facebook did nothing.

That changed after the Capitol Hill insurrection. Facebook and Twitter finally jettisoned Mr Trump. When an irate President tried to access the official POTUS account and started to tweet from there, that account was also suspended. In a belated purge, the two platforms began to delete pages and other accounts that were pushing for further attacks on the Capitol.

Extreme right-wing Trump supporters, members of militia groups like the Boogaloo Boys or neo-Nazi groups like The Proud Boys and many others immediately cried foul. Twitter and Facebook were engaging in censorship, they claimed, trying to quash speech on the right even as they let left-oriented groups operate without restrictions. The argument reflected just how far Trump supporters are from the one-time conservatives who used to make up the Republican Party. The latter group, with many who have long turned away from Donald Trump, would know, for instance, that freedom of speech and censorship rights do not apply to private companies but to governments. Free enterprise, a cherished conservative principle, stands for the freedom of Twitter and Facebook, both private companies, to kick out whomever they wish.

Annoyed at being booted out, Mr Trump’s MAGA supporters turned to a different quasi-Twitter service called Parler that was geared towards just those conservatives who were against Twitter’s rules of content and moderation. Parler doesn’t moderate any of its

content, allowing anything and everything to be said and shared on the site. In the minds of Mr Trump’s staunchest supporters, this was the ideal free-speech zone, where the harm words can cause was simply no consideration at all. Mr Trump’s faithful, many of whom already had Parler accounts, trooped off. If the liberals in charge of Twitter and Facebook would kick them out, Parler was there to welcome them.

The tentacles of Big Tech, however, could reach longer and deeper than they imagined. Parler may have been a separate service that didn’t moderate its content, but it used Amazon Web Servers to host content, and the app was distributed via the Apple App Store and Google Play. These made it subject to the rules of service of Apple, Amazon, Google, etc. These other tech giants stepped in. If Parler wouldn’t moderate its content, they would refuse to host the site or allow the app to be sold. Ultimatums were handed down; they couldn’t be met, and so the week after the Capitol insurrection Parler went dark. The conservatives who funded it vowed the site would be back, but without web server hosting it appeared this would be a tall order.

Big Tech’s role in first pushing and then ultimately (belatedly) removing Mr Trump will be debated for decades to come. It’s hard not to wonder about how many people would still be alive if Twitter and Facebook had done what they did this January a year ago; they would have denied Mr Trump a platform to spread lies about Covid-19 and the election. A study completed by the *Washington Post* found that in the two weeks since Mr Trump was suspended from Twitter, misinformation on the election and the events that followed had been reduced by a whopping 72 per cent.

Donald Trump, who tweeted hundreds of times a day on some days and whose tweets are now a part of history, will never have access to a Twitter account again. His is a lifetime ban applied not to a particular account but to him as a person regardless of which account he uses. The story of Mr Trump’s end is in this sense as much a tale of how giant tech companies now have the power to make or break governments, even in the most powerful country in the world.

By arrangement with Dawn

quick BITES

INDICATORS

		%
Sensex	49624.76	-0.34
Nifty 50	14590.40	-0.37
S&P 500*	3,854.89	0.08
Dollar (₹)	72.98	0.06
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.02	-0.04
Euro (₹)	88.44	0.12
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,125.575	1.17
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.95	-0.23
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.956	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.114	0.024

* As of 8:30 PM IST

SBI Cards net profit plunges 52% to ₹210 cr

SBI Cards and Payment Services Ltd reported nearly 52 per cent dip in its net profit to Rs 210 crore in the December quarter on higher provisioning. The pure-play credit card firm had posted a net profit of Rs 435 crore in the year-ago quarter. Its total income grew marginally to Rs 2,540 crore from Rs 2,563 crore. SBI Cards said its total management overlay provision stood at Rs 1,113 crore in Q3 against Rs 758 crore in Q2.

Asian Paints Q3 profit jumps 62% to ₹1,265 crore



Asian Paints reported a 62.28 per cent jump in its consolidated profit to Rs 1,265.35 crore for the third quarter against Rs 779.71 crore a year ago, Revenue from operations stood at Rs 6,886.39 crore, up 25.43 per cent, against Rs 5,490.11 crore. Amit Syngle, MD & CEO, said demand conditions continued to exhibit a strong recovery across business segments, spread over most regions in the third quarter.

Bajaj Auto PAT jumps 23% to ₹1,556 crore

Bajaj Auto reported a 23 per cent jump in profit after tax at Rs 1,556 crore for the December quarter on the back of higher volumes and exports against a PAT of Rs 1,262 crore in the year-ago quarter, the firm said. Its sales from operations rose 17 per cent to Rs 8,910 crore, compared with Rs 7,640 crore in the year-ago period. The firm sold 13,06,810 vehicles during the third quarter, a rise of 9 per cent.

Cyient Q3 net profit falls 12% to ₹95 crore

IT firm Cyient reported a 11.9 per cent decline in net profit at Rs 95.4 crore for the December quarter. The Hyderabad-based firm had posted a net profit of Rs 108.3 crore in the year-ago period. Its revenue fell 5.6 per cent to Rs 1,044.3 crore from Rs 1,106 crore YoY. On sequential basis, net profit was higher by 13.8 per cent from Rs 83.9 crore, while revenue was higher by 4.1 per cent from Rs 1,003.3 crore in the September quarter.



■ It has taken 30 years for index to go from 1K to 50K Sensex retreats after breaking 50000 barrier

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 21

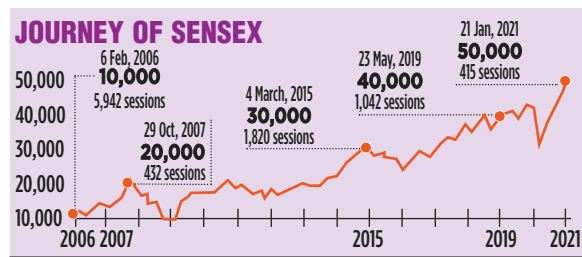
The Sensex breached the 50000 barrier for the first time ever in early morning trade and made a new all time high of 50,184 on positive global cues.

However, due to profit taking in the last hour of trading, the benchmark index fell sharply from the historic highs and closed at 49624, down by 167 points or 0.34 per cent.

The broader Nifty-50 Index also made a new all-time high of 14753 but closed lower at 14590.35, down by 54.35 points.

Provisional data showed profit taking by the domestic institutions of Rs 1,039.48 crore while the foreign portfolio investors were net buyers by Rs 1,614.66 crore.

The market's rally has been driven by ample liquidity, as foreign portfolio



investors have pumped the highest ever money into Indian market of Rs 2,41,021 crore so far in this financial year, far more than the previous high of Rs 1,40,033 crore in 2012-13. This month, too, they have bought equities worth over Rs 22,730 crore.

From 1990 when the index crossed the 1000-mark the first time ever, it took 30 years for the Sensex to reach 50000, analysts said.

Apart from the sharp rebound from the Covid-19 inflicted dislocation of eco-

nomics activity, liquidity and low interest rate have been major drivers of the current bull market rally, analysts said.

"The combination of strong capital inflows, low interest rates and leaner balance sheet of Indian corporates along with government measures for growth is expected to lift the economic growth ahead. The same is likely to resonate in capital markets, thereby keeping the markets buoyant in the long term," said Vijay Chandok-MD & CEO, ICICI

Securities.

Nilesh Shah, group president & MD, Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company, said, "The Sensex touching 50000 in 2021 is like Indian cricket team winning test series in Australia against all odds of Covid-19. While economic data is about the past which is improving month-on-month, the Sensex is reflecting the positivity about the future."

"As the Sensex crosses the 50K, the valuations do look stretched. The valuations are a function of earnings and earnings not coming through remains the key risk at the current juncture. The continuous up-move not backed by fundamentals may make the rally fragile, going ahead," said Joseph Thomas, head of research-Emkay Wealth Management.

Govt okays closure of Scooters India

New Delhi, Jan. 21: The company that manufactured famous scooters like Lambretta and Vijay Super will be shut down after the Cabinet gave its nod to a proposal to close the loss-making state-owned firm, sources said.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) is believed to have given consent to shutting down Lucknow-based Scooters India Ltd at its



meeting on Wednesday, they said.

The Scooters India brand name shall be sold separately as the company holds famous brands such as Lambretta, Vijay Super, Vikram and Lambro,

shared an official. The company produces several types of three-wheelers under the Vikram brand.

The government's go-ahead to the closure proposal paves the way for the heavy industry ministry to begin the process of winding up of the firm.

As per the proposed plan presented to the Cabinet, Rs 65.12 crore required for closure of Scooters India is being sought as loan

with interest from the Government of India, sources said.

The proposal also entails offering voluntary retirement scheme/voluntary separation scheme (VRS/VSS) to the regular employees. The firm has around 100 employees.

Moreover, 147.49 acres of the company's land shall be returned to the UP State Industrial Development Authority. —PTI

France to shut 40% of cash-handling centres

WILLIAM HOROBIN
JAN. 21

The Bank of France will shut down more than a third of its cash handling centres by the end of 2022 as the Covid-19 pandemic accelerates a decline in the use of notes and coins.

Operations will cease at 14 of the 37 centres that stock currency and replace damaged notes and coins. The central bank estimates the network would be 40 per cent underused if it remained as expansive as it is now.

Lockdowns to curb virus infections have pushed more shoppers onto online platforms, while the raising of the ceiling for contactless payments has encouraged card use. There are also concerns over contagion via bank notes, although the central bank has denied there are risks.

That's given extra impetus to the decline in cash usage, which already fell 20 per cent between 2012 and 2019. The central bank expects a further 25 per cent drop by 2022 from last year's levels.

France, along with the Netherlands and Finland, is one of the euro-area



countries where consumers have traditionally favoured cards over cash, said Erick Lacourge, managing director of cash, branches and services at the Bank of France. In contrast, Germany, Spain and Italy have been much slower to move away from notes and coins.

"There's a generalised decline in the use of cash throughout the world," Lacourge said, but "the speed of decline isn't the same in every country, and France is one place where it is falling the fastest in the euro area."

The closures will impact 134 people at the Bank of France, he said. They'll be offered early retirement packages, retraining for other jobs, or posts in cash centres that remain open. —Bloomberg

NSE arm takes over Cogencis

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 21

NSE Data & Analytics Ltd, a 100 per cent subsidiary of the National Stock Exchange of India, has acquired Cogencis Information Services Ltd, which provides real-time market data terminals to institutional customers.

"NSE Data has acquired 100 per cent equity in Cogencis from Samara Capital and minority shareholders, including the company's founder, co-founder, and an employee welfare trust," the NSE said.

The Cogencis Work-Station provides data on all asset classes, including foreign exchange, fixed income, equities, commodities, as well as macro-economic data, either generated on its own or aggregated through various sources.

As a part of the transaction, the news department of Cogencis has been sold to Informist Media Private Ltd. Cogencis has entered into a five-year exclusive commercial arrangement with Informist Media to source news.

IndiGo is now world's 7th biggest by capacity

ADITI SHAH & JAMIE FREED
NEW DELHI/SYDNEY, JAN. 21

IndiGo has emerged as one of the world's biggest airlines by capacity, aided by a swift recovery in the domestic aviation market to nearly 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels and the financial strength to boost market share as rivals struggle.

The airline is now the world's seventh biggest by capacity and the largest outside the United States and China, according to data firm OAG. It is a rare bright spot in a battered global aviation industry, providing a lifeline to squeezed lessors and aircraft manufacturers by paying bills on time and in full.

IndiGo took 44 planes from Airbus SE last year—the most of any customer and topping Delta Air Lines Inc and China Southern Airlines Co Ltd—as it replaced older planes with more fuel-efficient newer models. It is also gearing up to expand its fleet further from 2023.

With a 52 per cent domestic market share in 2020



versus 47 per cent in 2019, and profitability in sight after a loss last fiscal year, IndiGo is expanding its reach to smaller cities such as Ranchi, Patna and Gorakhpur to replace a fall in business travel on larger routes like New Delhi-Mumbai, CEO Ronojoy Dutta told Reuters.

It is also betting that faster growth and higher margins will come from non-stop flights to international destinations like Moscow, Cairo and Manila, which it can reach with its narrowbody planes, eliminating the need to complicate its fleet with widebody aircraft.

"As things stabilise, I'm very optimistic that by the end of 2021, I think we'll be totally back to normal,"

Dutta said, referring to the calendar year rather than the financial year ending March 31.

"And I think 2022 will be a great year for us in terms of growth and profitability," he added.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought global air travel to a halt, plunging airlines into the red. India imposed one of the toughest lockdowns and even now airlines can only fly 80 per cent of their capacity on domestic routes.

IndiGo already had free cash of Rs 8,930 crore (\$1.22 billion) as of March 31, 2020, a week after India went into lockdown, which it bolstered by raising more than Rs 3,000 crore over the next six months through the sale and leaseback of some assets and other cost-cutting measures.

Once IndiGo can operate at full capacity, it wants to ramp up its utilisation rate to a breakeven level of around 12 hours per day, compared with 10 hours currently, said Dutta, adding it would also be able to fill more seats and reduce unit costs. —Reuters

Rs 53.90 lakh at pan-India showroom.

BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine is the second car launch this year and the first out of the 20 new cars for this year was the BMW 2 Series 220i M Sport petrol variant introduced in the first week of this month.

BMW's new product offensive is higher compared to the market leader and its compatriot archrival Mercedes-Benz, which plans to bring out only 15 new cars this year.

Audi, Jaguar Land Rover, Swedish Volvo Cars and Lexus are other luxury brands in the country, which experienced a steep

decline in sales last year due to Covid-induced dull market.

Pawah said sales at BMW had dropped only by about 35 per cent to 6,604 units in calendar year 2020 while the luxury car market had slumped much higher between 40 and 50 per cent. Mercedes sold 7,893 cars last year, which is a 42.7 per cent drop compared to 2019.

But Pawah is confident the economy would bounce back and sales volumes would be stronger than before due to pent-up demand. "And we are confident to outperform the luxury segment in India," he said.



Vikram Pawah

On Thursday the German car-maker launched its second product, the new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine priced between Rs 51.50 lakh and

Sebi gives conditional nod to Future-Reliance deal

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 21

Ignoring the requests made by Amazon.com, the Securities and Exchange Board of India has given a conditional approval to the contested Future Group and Reliance Retail deal.

As per Sebi riders, indebted Future Group will have to seek the approval of shareholders and the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for the deal.

Based on the Sebi comments, BSE and NSE, in their separate observation reports, have stated that the comments on the draft scheme of arrangement are "subject to the outcome of any of the ongoing litigations/arbitration/ legal proceedings involving the draft scheme and/ or the decision by any competent authority/ competent court in this regard".

As per the Rs 24,713 crore deal, Future Group would be selling its retail, wholesale, logistics and warehouse businesses to Reliance Retail Ventures. But Amazon has opposed the deal.

Amazon, which had entered into another deal with Future Group earlier, had asked Sebi not to grant no-objection certificate to the deal. Both Delhi High Court and Singapore International Arbitration Centre are looking into the dispute between Future Group and Amazon.

K. Narasimhan, senior advocate, Madras High Court, said the Singapore Tribunal's proceedings would not be affected by



the Sebi approval. "The approval with conditions is just one part of the process," he said.

The Sebi said, the "company shall ensure that any future disputes, complaints, regulatory actions or proceedings, or orders issued therein involving the draft scheme if any, shall be brought to the notice of shareholders prior to the approval by NCLT."

Airing the concern of Amazon it said: "Company shall ensure that the details of the complaints made by Amazon.com NV Investment Holdings, the submissions of Future Retail and the counter submissions of Amazon and all the proceedings pending and completed related to the same in the Delhi High Court, the award of Emergency Arbitrator in the Singapore International Arbitration Centre or any other ongoing court/arbitration proceedings or any other orders issued therein are brought into the notice of the shareholders of the listed entities involved in the scheme before taking shareholder approval.

Further the same shall also be brought to the notice of NCLT while filing the draft scheme for their approval."

Commenting on the approval, Amazon spokesperson said: "The letters issued by BSE & NSE clearly state that comments of Sebi on the "draft scheme of arrangement" (proposed transaction) are subject to the outcome of the ongoing Arbitration and any other legal proceedings. We will continue to pursue our legal remedies to enforce our rights."

Future Group founder and CEO Kishore Biyani had earlier indicated that it would take around 45 to 60 days to complete the deal after getting approval from the Sebi.

The stock exchanges have asked Future to ensure shareholders are informed that 74.2 per cent of the business value of the Future Enterprises Ltd is getting transferred to Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd and Reliance Retail and Fashion Lifestyle Ltd and that these two companies would not be seeking listing post the scheme of arrangement.

Nasscom keen to help US on STEM skills gap

New Delhi, Jan. 21: IT industry body Nasscom said it is looking forward to working with the new US administration to find solutions to the STEM skills gap and enable America to be more competitive and create more jobs.

The statement by Nasscom, which represents the over \$190-billion Indian IT sector, comes after Joe Biden was sworn in as the 46th US President and Kamala Harris took oath as America's first woman vice president on Wednesday.

Nasscom said a key challenge the technology sector faces is the lack of required STEM talent in the US and noted that despite a high degree of overall unemployment in the US, demand for high-tech skills continues to remain robust, endorsing the argument that there are just not enough workers with relevant skills to fill them. —PTI

STOVE KRAFT IPO FROM JAN.25

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 21

Kitchen appliances maker Stove Kraft's initial public offering in the price band of Rs 384 to Rs 385 per equity share of Rs 10 face value opens on January 25.

The IPO comprises a fresh issue of shares aggregating to Rs 95 crore and an offer for sale by promoters and private equity investors of up to 82.50 lakh equity shares to raise Rs 412 crore in total.

The net proceeds from the fresh issue would be utilised in repayment of certain borrowings (Rs 76 crore) and for general corporate purposes.

Only 10 per cent share in the public issue will be offered to retail individual investors.

SHORT TAKES

Women hockey side stun Chile

Santiago, Chile: The Indian women's junior hockey team rallied from a goal down to script a stunning 3-2 win over the Chilean senior side at the Prince of Wales Country Club here. Deepika (39th), Sangita Kumari (45th) and Lalrindiki (47th) scored for India after Fernanda Villagran (21st) had given the hosts the advantage. Chile's Simone Avelli (56th) pulled one back late in the match, but it was not enough to force a comeback as the Indian junior team secured a creditable win. It was India's third consecutive victory on the tour. They had defeated Chile's junior side twice earlier this week. India started the match on the front-foot, twice penetrating inside Chile's striking circle, but without causing much damage. The home side's first real attack came in the 10th minute when they earned a penalty corner, but to no avail as the visitors defended it well. — PTI

Lewa shines to stifle Augsburg

Berlin: Robert Lewandowski scored his 22nd Bundesliga goal of the season as Bayern Munich stayed four points clear, helped by a late penalty miss from Alfred Finnbogason in a 1-0 victory at Augsburg on Wednesday. Lewandowski's 13th-minute penalty was enough for a win which kept the reigning champions clear of second-placed RB Leipzig, who edged out Union Berlin 1-0 thanks to an Emil Forsberg goal. But Bayern survived a late scare in the Bavaria derby as Finnbogason could only hit the post from the spot with 14 minutes to play. Poland striker Lewandowski has scored 10 goals more than his nearest rival, Dortmund's Erling Braut Haaland, in the Bundesliga this term. Bayern battered the hosts' goal with 15 first-half shots while Augsburg did not trouble the European champions with a single attempt in the first 45 minutes. — AFP

Collin's 42 puts Nets in shambles

Los Angeles: Collin Sexton scored a game-high 42 points as the Cleveland Cavaliers overcame a James Harden triple double and spoiled the debut of the Brooklyn Nets' Big Three with a 147-135 double overtime victory. Wednesday's marathon contest was supposed to showcase the Nets' star trio of Harden, Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving playing together for the first time together. Irving finished with 37 points, Harden had a triple double of 21 points, 10 rebounds and 12 assists and Durant tallied a team-high 38 points and 12 rebounds, but it wasn't enough as the Cavaliers had seven players in double-figure scoring at the Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse arena in Cleveland. Elsewhere, Dallas Mavericks got the better of host Indiana Pacers 124-112. — AFP

No threat to CWG in 2022

New Delhi: The Commonwealth Games Federation is confident the 2022 Birmingham CWG will go ahead as scheduled next year despite the host city's council leader's recent expression of doubts in view of a surge in Covid-19 cases in the UK. The Commonwealth Games are still 18 months away and Birmingham City Council leader Ian Ward last week said "we can't be certain" that the Games will go ahead amid concerns over pandemic. The council leader of town Walsall, Mike Bird, has also expressed concerns over the staging of the Games and has called for contingency plans. — PTI

Live on TV

BADMINTON

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

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Hobart Hurricanes vs Perth Scorchers from 10.35 am; Sydney Sixers vs Sydney Thunder from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: East Bengal vs Mumbai City from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Italian League: Benevento vs Torino from 1.15 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

WWE

SmackDown: Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

Warm welcome for warriors

Nation's pride Rahane and victorious Indian team back home

Mumbai/ New Delhi, Jan. 21: Chants of 'aala re aala Ajinkya aala' headlined a red carpet welcome for Ajinkya Rahane as the stand-in captain, along with coach Ravi Shastri and some other members of the team, returned to the country on Thursday after India's epic triumph in Australia. The chants (meaning here comes our Ajinkya) were heard amid the beating of the traditional dhol tasha and showering of flower petals at Rahane's residential complex.

Besides Rahane and Shastri, also arriving in Mumbai were star bats-

man Rohit Sharma, pacer Shardul Thakur and opener Prithvi Shaw, while Brisbane Test hero Rishabh Pant landed in the national capital early this morning.

T. Natarajan, who was originally picked as a net bowler but became the first Indian cricketer to make his international debut across all three formats during the same tour, landed in Bengaluru and then took off for his village in Tamil Nadu's Salem.

The players from Chennai, including veteran off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, rookie

Washington Sundar and bowling coach Bharat Arun are currently in Dubai and are expected to reach the country early morning on Friday.

On arrival in Mumbai, Rahane, Shastri, Rohit, Shardul and Shaw were felicitated by Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) officials, including President Vijay Patil and Apex Council members Ajinkya Naik, Amit Dani and Umesh Khanvilka.

Rahane also cut a cake to celebrate the team's win.

However, more surprises awaited the reticent batsman after he drove straight to his housing

society in suburban Matunga, where residents had made elaborate preparations to accord their hero a royal welcome.

Rahane was welcomed with the beats of dhol, while others showered the cricketer with flower petals. Rahane was also joined by his wife and two-year-old daughter in the celebration.

Soaking in the carnival-like atmosphere, Rahane acknowledged the love and adulation showered on him by the people of the city, many of whom waited for his team at the airport wearing masks amid the Covid-19 pan-

demic. In his society, residents and videographers jostled to capture the moments and the unassuming batsman posed happily for them.

Rahane was then greeted in a traditional manner as he walked towards the entrance of the building.

Dhol tasha is usually played to celebrate special achievements and during joyous occasions.

An injury-ravaged India beat Australia by three wickets in the series-deciding fourth Test in Brisbane on Tuesday to clinch the Border Gavaskar Trophy 2-1.

— PTI

Paul punches big as Man U on top

London, Jan. 21: Paul Pogba produced a moment of magic as Manchester United came from behind to beat Fulham 2-1 and reclaim the Premier League lead on Wednesday, ending Manchester City's short stay at the top.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's in-form team started the match third in the table after 24 hours of chopping and changing at the summit.

The win sent the Red Devils two points clear and equalled the club record of 17 Premier League away games without defeat set by the treble-winning side of 1999.

United were forced to dig deep after Ademola Lookman punished them for an untidy start before Edinson Cavani pulled them level with a poacher's goal later in the first half.

Pogba — back in the starting line-up in recent weeks after a spell on the periphery of Solskjaer's team — put United in front with a stunning left-foot curling effort from outside the area in the second half.

United have now won seven Premier League games after going behind this season.

The Premier League race is shaping up to be a thriller, with just eight points separating United from seventh-placed West Ham. United knew they had to respond after City beat Aston Villa 2-0 earlier on Wednesday to leapfrog Leicester. — AFP

JUVENTUS NICK PAST NAPOLI TO BAG SUPER CUP

Reggio Emilia (Italy), Jan. 21: Andrea Pirlo won his first trophy as a coach on Wednesday as Juventus beat Napoli 2-0 in the Italian Super Cup.

Cristiano Ronaldo blasted in his 20th goal of the season following a corner on 64 minutes in Reggio Emilia, before Napoli captain Lorenzo Insigne missed a penalty and Alvaro Morata added a second deep into injury time.

Pirlo, 41, clinched his first silverware five months after taking over at his former club where he won four league titles.

Juventus won the annual trophy played between the league champions and Italian Cup holders, for the ninth time, having finished runners-up last year to Lazio.

Juventus sit fifth in the league, 10 points behind leaders AC Milan, after losing 2-0 to second-placed Inter Milan last weekend.

It was the first meeting between Pirlo and Napoli coach Gennaro Gattuso, who won the 2006 World Cup together and spent a decade as AC Milan teammates, winning two Serie 'A' titles and two Champions League crowns together. — AFP



India's stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane (centre) carries his daughter while his wife walks behind as they are welcomed by family and supporters on his arrival at his residence in Mumbai on Thursday. — PTI

5 Team India members advised home isolation

Mumbai, Jan. 21: Five members of the Indian cricket team arrived here from their Australia tour on Thursday morning and they have been advised to remain in seven-day home quarantine, officials said.

The cricket team members will have to undergo RT-PCR test on arrival at the international airport here, Brihanmumbai Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal said.

"The players are also advised to remain in home quarantine for

● **Ajinkya Rahane, Rohit Sharma, Shardul Thakur, Prithvi Shaw and coach Ravi Shastri have been advised to remain in seven-day home quarantine after arriving in India.**

next seven days," Chahal said.

The Indian cricket team's stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane, players Rohit Sharma, Shardul Thakur and Prithvi

Shaw, and head coach Ravi Shastri landed in Mumbai in the morning, after their momentous Test series victory over Australia, an official from the BCCI said.

An injury-ravaged India beat Australia by three wickets in the series-deciding fourth Test in Brisbane on Tuesday to clinch the rubber 2-1 and retain the Border Gavaskar Trophy.

On their arrival in Mumbai, the players were felicitated by Mumbai Cricket Association officials. — PTI

ROOT WANTS BEST OUT OF ENGLAND

Galle, Jan. 21: India's come-from-behind series win over Australia was a "great advert" for Test cricket and his side will have to be at their "absolute best" to challenge them at home, said England captain Joe Root.

"It was a fantastic series to watch from start to finish with some brilliant cricket played," Root told reporters on the eve of England's second Test against Sri Lanka. — PTI

MALINGA RETIRES FROM FRANCHISE GAME POST SNUB

Mumbai, Jan. 21: Sri Lankan pacer Lasith Malinga on Wednesday announced retirement from franchise cricket after Mumbai Indians released him ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League season.

Malinga, the highest-wicket taker in the IPL history, informed his decision to the Mumbai Indians management earlier this month, making himself unavailable for the champion side, MI said in a statement.

Malinga has already retired from Test and ODI cricket but he is yet to call it quits from T20 internationals. Last year, he had expressed his desire to lead Sri Lanka in the T20 World Cup earlier scheduled to be held in Australia in October-November 2020.

"After discussing with family, I think now is the right time to retire from all franchise cricket," the Sri Lankan bowling legend said in the release. — PTI

New Delhi, Jan. 21: The comparisons with the iconic Mahendra Singh Dhoni are flattering but young Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant on Thursday said he wants to carve his own identity in the game after playing a key role in the side's historic Test series win in Australia.

Pant is often compared with the two-time World Cup winning former captain and wicketkeeper batsman, who retired last year after a glorious international career.

"You feel amazing when you are compared to someone like MS Dhoni and you compare me with him," Pant told reporters after landing here from Australia where his match and series-winning effort of 89 in the second innings of the fourth Test won him all-round praise.

"It's amazing but I don't want to be compared with anyone, I want to make myself as a name in Indian cricket, because

You feel amazing when you are compared to someone like MS Dhoni and you compare me with him. It's amazing but I don't want to be compared with anyone, I want to make myself as a name in Indian cricket, because it's not good to compare some legend with some youngster.

— **RISHABH PANT**
India star cricketer



it's not good to compare some legend with some youngster," he added.

The 23-year-old also scored a 97 in the drawn third Test in Sydney. And he wants to savour the triumph for now.

"I think the whole team is very happy with the way we played the series in Australia," he said.

India made a stupendous fight-back after being bowled out for a record lowest score of 36 in

Adelaide and went on to win the series despite their captain not being available for the remainder of the contest and many key players lost to injuries.

They won the second Test in Melbourne and drew the next at the SCG before pulling off a remarkable victory at the Gabba — where Australia had not lost since 1988 — to clinch the series. — PTI

Sindhu, Sameer, Satwik in quarters

Bangkok, Jan. 21: Indian shuttlers P. V. Sindhu and Sameer Verma stormed into the quarterfinals of the Toyota Thailand Open after registering straight-game wins but HS Prannoy bowed out of Super 1000 tournament here on Tuesday.

Olympic silver medalist Sindhu expectedly outclassed Malaysia's world No. 92 Kisona Selvadurai 21-10, 21-12 in a lop-sided second-round contest that lasted just 35 minutes. She will face either Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon or Korea's Sung Ji Hyun next.

World No. 31 Sameer also continued his impressive run, stunning world no. 17 Rasmus Gemke 21-12, 21-9 in just 39 minutes for his third victory over the Danish player. Prannoy, however, failed to cross the second round hurdle, going down 17-21, 18-21 to Malaysia's Daren Liew. Meanwhile, Indonesian fifth seed Anthony Ginting suffered an unexpected defeat to Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk-yiu, who moved into the quarter-finals with a 21-19, 13-21, 21-12 win. — PTI

● **Olympic silver medalist P. V. Sindhu outclassed Malaysia's World No. 92 Kisona Selvadurai 21-10, 21-12 in the second-round of Thailand Open.**

also made it to the quarterfinals with a stunning 22-20, 14-21, 21-16 win over world No. 17 German duo of Mark Lamsfuss and Isabel Hertrich in a match that lasted close to an hour.

Satwiksairaj also paired up with Chirag Shetty in the men's doubles to notch up an upset 21-18, 23-21 win over seven seeds Korean combination of Choi Solgyu and Seo Seung Jae.

Prannoy, however, failed to cross the second round hurdle, going down 17-21, 18-21 to Malaysia's Daren Liew. Meanwhile, Indonesian fifth seed Anthony Ginting suffered an unexpected defeat to Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk-yiu, who moved into the quarter-finals with a 21-19, 13-21, 21-12 win. — PTI

3rd-tier Alcoyano humiliate Madrid

Madrid, Jan. 21: Real Madrid suffered an extraordinary defeat in the Copa del Rey on Wednesday as La Liga's reigning champions lost 1-2 to Alcoyano, who play in Spain's third tier and had a man sent off in extra-time.

Zinedine Zidane threw on the likes of Eden Hazard, Karim Benzema and Toni Kroos as substitutes, while Alcoyano's Ramon Lopez was sent off in the 109th minute for a late challenge on Casemiro.

But against all the odds, Alcoyano still scored the winner, Juanan diverting in at the near post to pull off an incredible upset that continues a worrying dip in form for Madrid. After a surprise loss to

Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish Super Cup semifinal last week, Madrid have now responded with an embarrassing exit in the cup.

Alcoyano were comfortable in the first period but Madrid scored with their first chance on the stroke of half-time as Marcelo's delivery to the back post found a diving Eder Militao, who headed in.

But Madrid still laboured in the second half, even after Benzema replaced Mariano Diaz, and Alcoyano equalised in the 82nd minute, a corner flicked on by Lopez to the back post, where the sleeping Vinicius allowed Solbes a simple finish. — AFP

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