

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
VISAKHAPATNAM | WEDNESDAY | 13 JANUARY 2021

**WEATHER**  
Max: 32.4°C  
Min: 17.6°C  
RH: 70%  
Rainfall: Nil  
Forecast: Mist.  
Max/Min temp.  
32/17 °C

**COVID-19 COUNTRIES**

CASES

(+14,130)

1,04,93,758

DEATHS

(+162)

1,51,524

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+301)

(+2)

TS: 2,90,309

1,568

(+197)

(+2)

AP: 8,85,234

7,133

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

9,16,21,114

DEATHS

19,60,776

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

**ASTROGUIDE**

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Margasira Bahula Amavasya till 10.32 am  
**Star:** Uttarasada till 5.27 am  
**Variyam:** 2.03 pm to 3.35 pm  
**Durmuhurtam:** 12.02 pm to 12.42 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 12 noon to 1.30 pm  
**HJRI CALENDAR**  
**Jumadi ul-Awwal 28,1442 AH**  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.50 am  
**Zohar:** 1.30 pm  
**Asar:** 4.45 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.15 pm  
**Isha:** 8.15 pm  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.30 AM**  
**SUNSET TODAY 5.40 PM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 6.32 PM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 5.52 AM**

**COUNTER POINT**

**Season's rangoli!**

**SHORT TAKES**

**WhatsApp clears air on privacy**  
**New Delhi:** WhatsApp on Tuesday said its latest policy update does not affect the privacy of messages as the Facebook-owned company sought to address concerns around security of user data on the platform. In a blog-post, WhatsApp emphasised that it does not share users' contact lists or data of groups with Facebook for ads purposes, and that neither WhatsApp nor Facebook can read messages or hear calls between users on WhatsApp.

AIR | LINK

## Flights to link Kurnool to B'luru, Chennai, Vizag Kurnool to get air connectivity

**DC CORRESPONDENT KURNOOL, JAN. 12**

Kurnool airport near Orvakal is all set to launch commercial operations in a month from now in February. Indigo, which emerged as a successful bidder under UDAN-4 scheme, may have flights from here to Bangalore, Chennai, and Vizag.

Incidentally, finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy had during his recent trip to New Delhi met Indigo representatives seeking expediting of com-

mercial operations. Aviation sources said Kurnool airport may as well become a centre for running flight training operations. This is because air traffic at Bengaluru and Hyderabad airports has increased and running training operations from these centres is becoming increasingly difficult.

Given the proximity of Kurnool airport from both these locations, the possibility of setting up training facilities at Kurnool will be advantageous for all angles. Logistically Kurnool is at

the midpoint between Bengaluru and Hyderabad and on the flight path to Chennai from RGIA, Shamshabad, said an Airports Authority of India (AAI) official.

M.K.V. Srinivasulu, nodal officer who is overseeing finishing works at the Orvakal airport, said Indigo staff had visited the airport and assessed its readiness last month. They are visiting again on January 20 or the last week of this month. Once that is over, commercial flights will start taking off and landing

at Kurnool, the gateway of Rayalaseema. Originally, the airport was scheduled to start commercial operations by Deepavali but missed the deadline.

Orvakal Airport is spread over 970 acres at a distance of 20 km from Kurnool city. The airport has a runway length of 2,000 metres x 30 metres. It will have four parking bays, which can be utilised for and up to ATR-72 / Q-400 category of aircraft. The nearest major international airport is Hyderabad, about just 200 km from Kurnool.

**NATION | 4**  
**Indian Army is ever ready: Naravane**

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**WORLD | 5**  
**FBI warns of more protests in US**

**SPORTS | 6**  
**Shuttler Srikanth miffed with Covid test**

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State officials shift Covid-19 vaccines into a truck at Vijayawada Airport near Gannavaram on Tuesday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

## AP gets 4.75L doses of vaccine for launch

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12**

Nearly 4.77 lakh doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine called Covishield arrived at the city out of a total allotment of 4.99 lakh doses, on Tuesday. The vaccine is being manufactured at the Serum Institute of India (SII), Pune.

Krishna district collector Md. Imtiaz and Child Health and Immunisation joint director U. Sreehari received the consignment from SII, Pune. The doses were shifted to the State Vaccine Storage Facility located at Gannavaram amidst tight security provided by police.

The vaccine will remain stored there at a temperature between 2 degrees and 8 degrees Celsius before being transported to various places in the state. Collector Imtiaz

● The doses were shifted to the State Vaccine Storage Facility located at Gannavaram amidst tight security provided by police.

State health authorities disclosed that they are also expecting a consignment of about 20,000 doses of Covaxin developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, which has scheduled despatch of its first vaccine consignment to several places across the country on Tuesday itself.

Officials said the Centre has sanctioned 4.99 lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses including 4.77 lakh doses of Covishield and 20,000 of doses of Covaxin, manufactured by Bharat Biotech, to AP. With the first consignment arriving on Tuesday, officials expect the remaining vials on Wednesday. Bharat Biotech will be dispatching its first consignment to several places from Hyderabad.

■ Page 2: State awaits Centre's guidelines

## HC to hear SEC appeal on Jan. 18

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12**

The AP High Court asked the State Election Commission to explain the urgency for taking up hearing on its writ appeal. Based on its justification and assurances from the State government, court posted the next hearing to January 18.

A division bench comprising Justice U. Durga Prasad and Justice B. Krishna Mohan on Tuesday heard the appeal filed by the State Election Commission seeking to set aside the vacation bench judge's order suspending proceedings to conduct the gram panchayat polls in February. When the bench asked

SEC's counsel N. Ashwani Kumar to explain the urgency to adjudicate the writ appeal, the latter replied saying that suspension of election notification would cause widespread confusion among aspirants and voters and would halt the electoral process like preparation of electoral rolls. He maintained that implementation of model code of conduct could not be suspended once the election notification issued.

Responding to the justification, Advocate-General S. Sriram assured the court that preparation of electoral rolls would continue unhindered.

■ Page 2: SEC claims single judge has erred

## SEC RELIEVES POLL PANEL'S SECRETARY

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12**

State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar on Tuesday issued orders relieving G. Vani Mohan as secretary of the commission. In his relieving order, the SEC said her services are no longer required by the state electoral body.

The AP government had posted Vani Mohan, a 1996 batch IAS officer, as secretary to State Election Commission on May 31, 2020, while she was then serving as cooperative department commissioner and MD of AP Dairy Development Cooperative Federation.

■ Page 2: SEC informs CS about its decision

## 3 CAPITAL PROCESS TO BEGIN IN FIVE MONTHS: ADVISOR

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12**

The YSR Congress government is likely to achieve its plan of having three capitals — Executive, Legislative and Judiciary in the next four to five months, advisor to government (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy stated on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference here, he said all necessary steps for decentralisation of administration have been taken. He warned that the government will take firm action against those trying to create differences within the society in the name of religion and caste. In this regard, he went on to accuse TD leaders of trying to divert people's attention through such acts.

He said the government has constituted an SIT to investigate demolition of temples and has already achieved some success. He alleged that the election schedule issued for local body polls by SEC is part of a plan to divert attention of people from the Amma Vodi initiative.

He said, "Like never before in any state, 31 lakh house sites are being given to homeless poor. Unable to digest this good deed, the opposition has resorted to creating differences between people through vandalising of temples."

## SC stays farm laws, forms expert panel

**Farmers refuse to meet court-appointed panel**

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 12**

In a major breather to the Narendra Modi government that's caught in a cul-de-sac over the ongoing farmers' agitation, the Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the implementation of the three controversial farm laws for now, restored the Minimum Support Price System (MSP) that was prevalent before the enactment of farm laws and set up a committee of four agriculture experts to examine the laws and submit a report within two months.

The two months, the court said, will start from the date of its first sitting and the first sitting has to take place within 10 days from Tuesday's order.

The clarification of the three-member bench of the Supreme Court, that the suspension of the implementation of the three laws is not indefinite, and that the court will take a final call on the farm laws only after it examines the committee's report, seems to suit the government which is resisting the farmers' demand for repeal of the laws but is agreeable to making amendments.

There is no power which can prevent us from forming a committee. We want to solve the problem. We want to understand the ground situation. This is not politics.

**SHARAD A. BOBDE, Chief Justice of India**

It is clear that the court is being misguided by various forces even in its constitution of a committee. These are people who are known for their support to three laws

**ALL INDIA KISAN SANGHARSH PANEL**

The farmer unions, however, were not pleased and reiterated that they will not participate in the court-ordered committee process, charging that "all the members of this committee are pro-govt and had been justifying the laws of the government."

They added that they would not call off their protest until the newly enacted legislations are repealed.

"It is clear that the court is being misguided by various forces even in its constitution of a committee. These are people who are known for their support to the three Acts and have actively advocated for the same," a statement issued by All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) said. Having stayed the imple-

mentation of farm laws "until further orders", the court also directed that the farmers' land holdings shall be "protected" and no farmer shall be "dispossessed or deprived" of his/her title of land as a result of any action taken under the farm laws.

"While we may not stifle a peaceful protest, we think that this extraordinary order of stay of implementation of the farm laws will be perceived as an achievement of the purpose of such protest at least for the present and will encourage the farmers bodies to convince their members to get back to their livelihood, both in order to protect their own lives and health and in order to protect the lives and properties of others," the court said.

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**Sampath Vinayaga Temple Road: 9-20-1/1,  
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## SHORT TAKES

AP KIDNAP CASE:  
BROTHER OF  
EX-AP MIN NAMEDDC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, JAN. 12

Bhuma Jagath Vikhyat Reddy, brother of former AP minister Bhuma Akhila Priya, has been named as one of the accused in the kidnap case of Naveen Rao and his brothers.

Bowenpally police of Hyderabad, who took Akhila Priya into custody on Monday last week, have been questioning her on the alleged kidnap and the role of others who aided and abetted her.

The police has so far named 20 people. Vikhyat and his sister Naga Mounika have been vocal on the issue of Akhila Priya's arrest.

The police is in pursuit of Bhargav Ram Naidu, the husband of Akhila Priya, and Guntur Sreenu. They could be holed up in Pune or Bengaluru, police said.

CM TO TAKE PART  
IN KAMADHENU  
GOPUJA ON JAN. 15DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, JAN. 12

The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will take part in the prestigious Kamadhenu Gopuja mulled by TTD on the auspicious day of Kanuma on January 15 at 12 noon in Narasaraopeta of Guntur district.

After inspecting the venue, Sports Authority Stadium Grounds at Narasaraopeta, TTD JEO P. Basanth Kumar said, for decades TTD has been conducting Gopuja on Kanuma festival day. This year besides the 50 temples in TTD, Gopuja will be conducted in all 996 temples of State Endowments Department on January 15, he noted.

6 MONTHS JAIL  
FOR FATHER, SON  
OVER CASTE CRIMEDC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 12

The court dealing with cases under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act here on Tuesday sentenced a father-and-son duo to six months imprisonment.

The convicts, Tirumalakonda Venkata Ramana and his son Tirumala Konda Viswanath of Yerravonkallapalli in NP Kunta mandal had abused Avula Hari of the same village in the name of caste during a quarrel on July 14, 2016. The victim lodged a complaint against them with the NP Kunta police.

Then SC/ST (PoA) Cell DSP M. Venkata Ramana investigated the case and filed the chargesheet. SC/ST (PoA) Act Court judge Tirumala Devi pronounced verdict in the case on Tuesday. Apart from undergoing six months in jail, the duo has to pay a fine of ₹3,000.

Superintendent of police Satya Esubabu appreciated the efforts of DSP Venkata Ramana and additional public prosecutor Ram Naik for getting justice for the victim.

OFFICIALS FREE  
GRABBED LAND  
WORTH ₹80 CRDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 12

A team of revenue officials led by the tahsildar of Anandapuram mandal, accompanied by police personnel, seized back 16 acres of prime government land ₹80 crore during the last 24 hours.

Two parcels of land—four acres in survey no 42/1 and another four acres in survey no 74/1—are located in Gudilova, about 16 kilometres from National Highway. The revenue officials did not disclose the people who had occupied the government. The land cost increased manifold after a six-lane highway stretch was developed between Pendurthy and Anandapuram village.

A senior revenue official said each acre of land seized back now estimated to cost ₹5 crore. The two parcels of land are located about 30 km from Visakhapatnam city. The drive would continue till all the government land parcels grabbed by private people and agencies are taken back by the revenue department.

● **TWO PARCELS** of land—four acres in survey no 42/1 and another four acres in survey no 74/1—are located in Gudilova, about 16 kilometres from National Highway.

## Social breach



On the occasion of Sankranti holidays, people rush to board a bus to their native place, violating the Centre's Covid-19 regulations, in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Vundavilli asks parties to  
keep off temple attacks

He says Modi wants to implement the 'Hindutva' agenda

DC CORRESPONDENT  
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM,  
JAN. 12

Former MP Vundavilli Arunkumar has urged political parties to avoid politicising the temple attacks. Instead, he said, the police should be given a free hand in the investigation of these incidents.

The ex-MP told the media here on Tuesday that the police would be able to catch the culprits if they are given a free hand and if there is no political-level interference. No political party including the BJP would resort to attacks on temples or damaging idols. Anti-social elements must be behind these attacks.

He quoted Swamy Vivekananda to say that Lord Rama or any other



Vundavilli Arunkumar

god or goddess knows very well how to protect themselves, irrespective of whether or not their idols are destroyed or damaged.

Arun Kumar said the YSRC and the Telugu Desam should explain their attitude to the BJP. The BJP's ideology, in particular the 'Hindutva' agenda, posed a threat to

● **THE FORMER-MP** also made sensational comments on religious conversions. He said nothing was wrong with religious conversions. Some upper caste Hindus adopted a "touch me not" attitude and kept the downtrodden sections away from the social mainstream. Now these poor people are turning to Christianity.

the country and this will damage the image of the country at the global level too. Due to the Hindu culture and its philosophy and principles and the preachings of Swamy Vivekananda, India has a good image in the world, though Muslims and Christians ruled the country for many years.

He said the BJP led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to implement the "Hindutva" agenda.

The ex-MP also made sensational comments on

religious conversions. He said nothing was wrong with religious conversions. Some upper caste Hindus adopted a "touch me not" attitude and kept the downtrodden sections away from the social mainstream. Now these poor people are turning to Christianity," he said.

Arunkumar also said, "Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy is a true Christian and there is nothing wrong if he went to Rishikesh or Haridwar to worship Hindu gods."

State Election Commission  
claims single judge has erred

From Page 1

The AG also informed the court that developmental schemes of the government would be taken up only after taking prior permission from the SEC. The AG informed the court that as the local body polls would be held on a non-political and non-partisan basis, the model code of conduct would not apply and affect it in any manner.

The AG informed the court that the state government would not take advantage of the loss of time due to the issue of the interim order, by seeking advancement of conduct of polls and also would not move earth and heaven in case of the single judge's earlier order being vacated.

He assured to cooperate with the State Election Commission to stick to the schedule and hold elections as indicated by the court.

It may be mentioned that



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy greets Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya at a Star hotel in Vijayawada on Tuesday. — BY ARRANGEMENT

on Monday, soon after vacation bench of Justice M. Ganga Rao issued an interim order suspending the SEC's election proceedings to conduct gram panchayat polls, the SEC appealed against the order before the division bench.

It argued that the order of the vacation judge was

contrary to settled principles of law and facts of the case and maintained that the judge erred in suspending the election notification.

The SEC said that once the election process was set in motion, it could not be justified to interfere with the election process.

## Govt may turn a blind eye to cockfights

From Page 1

According to sources, a huge ground was being readied in Kesanakurru in Konaseema. Two prominent communities are participating in the cockfight on Wednesday and Thursday. A community from Konaseema area and another from Kakinada will reach the village to participate in the traditional sport.

They are reportedly planning 20 contests a day and the betting range may be between ₹10,000 and ₹3 lakh.

Many communities will

go for co-betting with big-wig punters. Cockfight grounds are being prepared at Kandrakota, Vetlapalem, G. Medapadu, Madhavapatnam, Achampet in limited numbers.

A general feeling is that the government may allow cockfights as freely this time as in the past. But, the government is still vigorously campaigning against the blood-letting sport. "The Telugu Desam and the YSRC are conducting cockfights separately. This is fine. The government is implementing welfare schemes without

political bias. Hence, why should we create any hindrance to the TD cadre vis-a-vis organising cockfights," a former MLA of the YSRC reasoned.

He said no government can stop the cockfight as it is a matter of prestige to local leaders. "Local body elections would be held this year. If the government does not support this traditional sport, the ruling party may face reverses in the elections," he said.

Some ruling party workers in Undi constituency met their party leader and asked about the govern-

JAGAN, GOV.  
WISH FOR  
SANKRANTI

**Vijayawada:** Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan wishes the very best to the Telugu people living worldwide on the auspicious Makara Sankranti festival. Jagan said that the festival of Sankranti was a symbol of our culture and traditions, of the love we have towards our villages, the respect we give to the farmers and of the arts unique to us.

SEC INFORMS  
CS ABOUT ITS  
DECISION

From Page 1

After removing Vani Mohan as commission secretary, Ramesh Kumar also wrote a letter to Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das informing that he has relieved her from her post and mentioned: "circumstances that warranted for such an action".

Incidentally, just on Monday, the SEC had dismissed G.V. Sai Prasad, a senior functionary of State Election Commission of the joint director rank on charges of indiscipline and breach of the poll body's Code of Conduct.

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12

State Election Commissioner (SEC) N. Ramesh Kumar called on Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan on Tuesday. The SEC briefed the latter about the latest developments pertaining to conduct of the gram panchayat polls in February.

Ramesh Kumar reportedly sought that the Governor direct the AP government that it enable the State Election Commission in going

TD accuses YSRC  
over diverting  
Endowment fundsDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, JAN. 12

TD state spokesperson Anam Venkataramana Reddy came down heavily against the YSR Congress government for diverting the Endowment department funds meant for temples to various welfare schemes.

To justify his claim, he produced Government Orders 733, 108, 145, 441, and 593 related to the transfer of crores of rupees from endowment wing and minorities wing to different schemes including Amma Vodi.

Reminding that endowment revenue is from the lands and properties donated by devout to the temples, he said that the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has no right to divert funds of the department for any other purpose except temples and their development.

The TDP leader alleged that Jaganmohan Reddy has been targeting funds earmarked for Hindu temples to keep up promises he made during his Padayatra. He alleged that the CM is ignoring various strictures passed by the Supreme Court and the High Court against the use of funds of endowments department.

CHRISTIAN  
LEADERS RESIGN  
FROM TD OVER  
NAIDU'S REMARKSDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12

Representatives of Telugu Desam Christian cell on Tuesday submitted their resignations from membership of the party objecting to comments of former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu against their community.

"Chandrababu Naidu and TD leaders should prove their allegations about Christians organising religious conversions in AP," demanded community leaders belonging to TD after meeting at a private hotel in Vijayawada.

Speaking on their behalf to media, TD Christian cell president Y. Praveen Kumar underlined that the TD chief's comments have "shocked" the community's pastors and laity.

ment except for propagating Hindu dharma and the maintenance of Hindu shrines.

Burn anti-farm GOs  
in Bhogi fire: NaiduDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12

Telugu Desam Party chief N. Chandrababu Naidu has called upon people to burn in Bhogi fire all YSRC government's anti-farmer GOs, which have led to over 1,779 farmers committing suicides in Andhra Pradesh.

Addressing a video conference with party coordinators and in-charges of parliamentary and assembly segments, Naidu pointed out that the Jagan government had promised to pay ₹12,500 under Rythu Bharosa, but paid only half of it.

Further, the government is trying to wash its hands of free power by fixing meters for electric motors used by farmers. He alleged that the ruling party has cheated farmers to the tune of ₹21,000 crore.

As a mark of protest, the TD chief wanted people to make a Bhogi bonfire of all anti-farmer GOs including those

related to fixing motors on farm pump sets, Sunna Vaddi scheme, caste-based division of cultivators, and diversion of zero budget natural farming funds.

Naidu accused Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy of making tall promises before elections. "But after becoming the Chief Minister, he has turned into a betrayer of farmers," he stated.

The TD chief said the CM was being cruel towards Amaravati farmers and labourers who have been agitating on the streets since nearly 400 days.

He blamed Jagan Mohan Reddy of breaching the trust farmers who had parted with their valuable ancestral lands for establishing the capital city of AP at Amaravati. But now, over 30,000 Amaravati families have no choice but to continue their prolonged protests due to lack of crops, income and livelihood.

SEC Ramesh seeks Gov's  
help for holding GP pollsDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12

State Election Commissioner (SEC) N. Ramesh Kumar called on Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan on Tuesday. The SEC briefed the latter about the latest developments pertaining to conduct of the gram panchayat polls in February.

Ramesh Kumar reportedly sought that the Governor direct the AP government that it enable the State Election Commission in going

ahead with conduct of polls as per the schedule already announced.

The State Election Commissioner reportedly informed Biswabhusan Harichandan over the hurdles he has been facing in conducting the gram panchayat polls in four phases in February.

He informed the Governor that the State government has challenged SEC's election proceedings in the High Court and got suspension of the commission's order. Ramesh Kumar pointed

out to Biswabhusan Harichandan that though a single judge had ordered suspension of the election proceedings, the same has been challenged before a division bench. The bench has posted the case for hearing by a regular bench on January 18.

It has to be seen whether the Governor intervenes into the issue and resolves what appears to have become a prestige issue between the state government and SEC over whether or not the gram panchayat polls should be held.

State waits for  
Centre's advice

From Page 1

Meanwhile, health authorities are making arrangements to dispatch vaccine from the state storage facility at Gannavaram to regional centres at Kurnool, Kadapa, Guntur and Visakhapatnam. From there they will be sent to district vaccine centres and to 1,659 vaccine centres set up all over the state.

A senior health official

said, "We are awaiting guidelines from the Centre on dispatch of Covid-19 vaccine to various sites in Andhra Pradesh for administration to identified health-care workers.

These guidelines are expected by Tuesday night. Until their dispatch, the 4.77 lakh doses of Covishield will remain at the State Vaccine Storage Facility in Gannavaram," the official added.



## SHORT TAKES

## AP RECORDS 197 COVID CASES, TWO DEATHS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12

Andhra Pradesh registered 197 new Covid-19 cases and two deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin on Tuesday reporting that out of 40,986 samples tested, 197 persons were found infected with Covid-19.

Out of a total number of 1,23,96,593 samples tested so far, 8,85,234 persons were found infected with Covid-19 and of them, 8,75,690 were recovered while 2,411 are active with the virus.

Among the new Covid-19 infections, Krishna registered the highest number of 49 followed by 32 in Chittoor, 31 in Guntur, 19 in East Godavari, 15 in Visakhapatnam, 14 in Kadapa, seven each in Srikakulam and West Godavari, six each in Anantapur and Nellore, five in Prakasam and three each in Kurnool and Vizianagaram.

## YOUTH BEING EQUIPPED WITH SKILLS: AVANTI

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 12

Minister for tourism and youth services Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao (Avanti) said that the central and state governments are making serious efforts to equip the youth with skills to realise the Make in India dream.

The minister was the chief guest at a function to commemorate the 159 birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda organised by the department of youth services in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. The minister said skill development institutes and skill development university were being set up in the state shortly so that the youth would be equipped with skills to get better employment opportunities.

"Human sources are the greatest assets for the country," the minister said.

Earlier, he garlanded Swami Vivekananda's portrait and spoke about his ideals and message for the youth.

The presented cash awards to three school students who won the Swachh Bharat Summer Internship 2019-2020 selected by Nehru Yuva Kendra. He presented ₹30,000 cheque to Ch S.M. Ratna Kumari of Paykaraopeta, ₹20,000 to S. Sivakrishna of V. Madugula and ₹10,000 to T. Madhu of Bhimili.

## VACCINE FIRST PHASE THROUGH 18 CENTRES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
SRIKAKULAM, JAN. 12

The first phase of Covid-19 vaccination would be administered to frontline health workers through 18 centres in Srikakulam district. The process will begin from January 16, said district medical and health officer Dr K.C. Chandra Nayak.

Talking to the media after conducting a training programme for the health workers in his office on Tuesday, Dr Nayak said the vaccination team would comprise a woman constable, ASHA and Anganwadi workers as team members. Each vaccine centre would have a medical officer for supervision.

The centres were identified include Srikakulam town, temple town of Srikurmam, Amadalavalasa.

## Selfie belief



Students take a selfie with the Swami Vivekananda Statue at Ramakrishna Mission during the National Youth Day celebrations on the beach road in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. — K. MURALIKRISHNA

## NRIs' Ayyappa Deeksha in US

## Temples consecrated idols of Ayyappa

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, JAN. 12

Hundreds of Ayyappa devotees with roots in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana state, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka and living in the USA are observing the 41 days of arduous Deeksha withstanding the sub-zero freezing temperatures.

Clad in their black attire, the devotees performed Ayyappa bhajans at temples in the US, to the amazement of onlookers. Several Hindu temples have consecrated the idols of Ayyappa to facilitate the devotees of the Naishtika Brahmachari to worship him and offer Irumudi on completion of the Vratam.

Some of these temples at Maryland, Missouri, Tampa, and Houston have built replicas of the holy 18 steps as in Sabarimala, enabling devotees to carry the Irumudi and scale the

steps with great fervour.

Founder of Sri Satyanarayana Swamy temple at Atlanta, Naga Ravikumar Medicherla, said that they had installed the Ayyappa idol in 2015 on devotees' request. "Ayyappa devotees in the US had an unhindered and satisfying Deeksha this year owing to the work from home and Covid restrictions.

As many as 200 devotees, most of whom are IT professionals, and 20 of their kids observed Deeksha this year as they were working from home and attending online classes, respectively," said Ravi-kumar hailing from Hyderabad.

During Deeksha, the devotees performed Padi Puja (Puja to 18 steps) and, on the second Saturday of each month, at the Ayyappa shrine in Atlanta.

Speaking to this newspaper, Balaji Lokanathan said that he and 20 devotees had

formed a core group of volunteers to help the temple administration perform special rituals at the temple. Their team was instrumental in designing the sanctum sanctorum of Ayyappa shrine in Atlanta.

They also pay special attention to celebrate festivals such as Vishu, Sankranti (Makara), Vilakku puja and Irumudi ritual in December apart from Pushpabhishekam.

He said that nearly 15 devotees go to Sabarimala from Atlanta every year after observing 41 days Deeksha to see the lord in all his glory, but Covid foiled their plans this year.

Interestingly a core team member, Rama Iyer, trekked to Sabarimala from Coimbatore, a distance of 200 km, inspiring Balaji, Saravanan Vadivelu, Raghu-pati and Subramanyam to join him.

## RTA FILES CASES AGAINST PRIVATE BUS OWNERS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 12

The RTA officials filed cases against the owners of 27 private buses in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

The officials said that a special drive has been launched on Monday which would continue until January 18.

An official release said that cases were filed against five owners for overcharging the passengers, seven for using buses for stage carriage, two for carrying goods, seven for not maintaining the passengers list.

## More eating, no exercise in lockdown days

## School kids face problem of obesity, parents give them new outfits and uniforms

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 12

Obesity among students during the year-long lockdown has emerged as a serious worry for parents, also as they need to buy new outfits for their children, including uniforms.

A Class X private school student in Anantapur had a waist size of 39 inches prior to the lockdown, but within a few months the size swelled to 43 inches. The parents say they purchased more than 10 pairs of outfits including two pairs of uniforms for the student. Similar situations arose for students and parents across the country.

Uniform-making and supplying agent Rajesh of Anantapur said a corporate school recently started classes for Class-IX and X. It ordered new sets of uniforms in bulk for all students. "I was shocked to collect measurements of children who have all become fatter or grown in size," he said and added at least four students were found having a waist size of 43.

Parents of a Class IX girl student from a private school in Anantapur purchased more than 15 new dresses for her, saying the old dresses did not fit anymore. "This is an inevitable situation and I had to spend more than ₹17,000 to get new clothes for my daughter excluding what I spent by way of ordering new school uniforms," a mother stated on condition of anonymity.

● The online classes also added to the problem of obesity.

She confided that the old clothes were donated to the granddaughter of her housemaid.

Private schools make uniforms for their students via dress supply agents. The agents are now getting new clothes stitched for these schools.

"Children and teens are seriously struggling with obesity due to lack of minimum physical exercise during the lockdown home-stay period, when they also ate more," Dr Ravi Srinivas, general physician and obesity specialist, observed.

Children also took a fancy to search for new types of food and cooking tips on Google during this period, and engaged in cooking experiments as time was hanging heavy on them. This resulted in obesity among many of them.

Among many, noted writer Yendamuri Veerendranath had cautioned children against eating food while watching TV as the intake would be more and lead to obesity and other physical disorders.

The online classes also added to the problem of obesity. A study revealed the children ate extra food with rich fats and were sleeping an extra two hours per day. They spent nearly five hours a day with phone, computer and TV screens.

## HIGH DEMAND FOR VIGIL ON LOCKED HOMES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 12

There has been an unprecedented demand for the virtual house guarding facility. Locked House Monito-ring System (LHMS), facilitated by the Vizag city police free of cost for the Sankranti festival. The city police, given the demand, may run out of the CCTV cameras required for the LHMS set up.

Under the LHMS scheme, when property offenders enter into the locked house, the police get a buzz and pictures from the CCTV centre installed at the house. The control centre immediately informs the police station close to the house to prevent the burglary and nab the offenders.

The city police had urged the people in the city to utilise the police app to prevent the possible burglaries in locked houses during the upcoming Sankranti vacation.

The city police have been receiving at least four requests every day for the e-surveillance of the houses. With 75 CCTV cameras in its possession, the city police would need to procure more surveillance cameras if the demand keeps surging.

DCP crimes V. Suresh Babu said during Sankranti most of the people visit their home towns by locking their houses giving scope for the burglaries.

He said people could register in the app a day or two before going out of the station and put a request giving the journey and return date. The police will install CCTV cameras at the house free of cost.

● The city police have been receiving at least four requests every day.

## VIZAG POLICE ARREST 5 PEOPLE IN 4 INCIDENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 12

The Visakhapatnam police on Tuesday arrested five persons in four separate incidents in the city.

In the first case, the police arrested one inter-state ganja smuggler and seized 154 kg of dry ganja worth ₹15.4 lakh when a three-member gang was transporting the ganja in a seafood export van.

The arrested were identified as Praveen Prabhakaran, 35, Abhishek, 33, and Prasanth, 32, hailing from Kerala. The other two, however, managed to escape.

In another case, two people were arrested in connection with the theft of branded taps at Modern Fish Market, Fishing Harbour area in the city. The arrested were identified as K. Naresh and I. Ranga Rao. The police recovered the stolen property worth ₹75,000.

A 22-year-old youngster was arrested for stealing two mobile phones from a retired naval person's house at Malkapuram in the city. The arrested was identified as V. Mahesh. The police have recovered the two mobile phones from him. In another incident, a 36-year-old, G. Pentababu was arrested for stealing a motorbike at Kancharapalem area in the city.

## With govt sitting on bills, panchayats run up huge debts

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, JAN. 12

It is a case of so near yet so far for people in the interiors as although Central funds have been released by the 14th Finance Commission, the blanket ban by the State government has left many gram panchayats in debts.

Panchayats have no funds as the State government has suspended payment of bills related to these funds, which are essentially meant for creation of infrastructure in villages. As a result, they have not been paying salaries to sanitation workers.

Incidentally, while panchayats with general funds are placed better, the problems are increasing for panchayats that are solely dependent on government grants.

Lack of funds has resulted in health hazards as sewers are not being cleaned and there has been no chlorination of drinking water, not even to buy bleaching powder. Meanwhile, even if panchayat bills are passed through the treasury, funds are not credited from the CFMS. Many panchayat secretaries lament

that they have already incurred debts in lakhs and are unable to continue it any longer.

There are a total of 807 gram panchayats in Kadapa district, of which eight are major panchayats. An amount of ₹64.27 crore was sanctioned by the 14th Finance Commission in two tranches recently. Of this, ₹4.27 crore has been earmarked for the management of Integrated Protected Fresh Water Schemes (CPWSs). ₹40 lakh has been allotted for maintenance of drinking water hand pumps while ₹59.60 crore has been allotted to all panchayats proportionate to the population.

Of this, 50 per cent is to be spent on construction of cement concrete roads and drainages, while the remaining is for electricity, repairs and chlorination and sanitation. Non-release of bills has been going on for seven to eight months now. An estimated ₹15 to ₹20 crore is pending for the district because of the ban on settlement of bills.

District treasury officials said that all the bills received by the treasury have been passed. They said that funds have to be deposited directly to the panchayat accounts.



## MYADAM KISHAN RAO

**DOB: 10-02-1936      DOD: 12-01-2021**

**With deep sorrow, we inform the sudden demise of our beloved**

---

**Founder**





**The light which used to show the right path of living, taught us the aim of life is sacrifice. After enlightening us, the light has suddenly disappeared. We pay homage to this noble soul.**

**Inserted by:  
Family & Staff**

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**Final rites on 13-01-2021 Wednesday, 11:00am  
at Mahaprasthanam Swarg Vatika, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad.**

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## SHORT TAKES

## EC DISCUSSES SECURITY FOR STATE POLLS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 12

The Election Commission of India on Tuesday held a meeting with the Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla to discuss requirement and availability of the Central Armed Paramilitary Forces (CAPF) during the upcoming Assembly polls in several states.

Other related issues, including law and order situation, transfer posting of officials were also discussed.

Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and the Union Territory of Puducherry will be held this year.

The term for Tamil Nadu Assembly ends on May 24; Kerala June 1; West Bengal May 30; Puducherry June 8; and Assam May 31.

The ECI had in December issued an advisory to states saying in order to ensure free and fair election, states should ensure that the officers directly connected with conduct of elections in an election going state/UT are not posted in their home districts or places where they have served for a considerably long period.

## INDIAN ARMY IS EVER READY, SAYS NARAVANE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 12

Army chief General M.M. Naravane asserted on Tuesday that Indian army is "alert and ever-ready to meet any challenge" from China and there has been no reduction in Chinese deployment in friction areas in Eastern Ladakh.

"We are prepared to hold our ground as long it takes to achieve our national goals and objectives," said Army chief.

"It is not only the Eastern Ladakh but we have maintained a high state of alertness all along the Northern borders as of now, keeping the threat perception in mind. We have gone in for a winter posture and deployment," he said.

Gen Naravane said that not much should be read in Chinese withdrawing troops from depth areas in the Tibetan plateau that were there for training. "There has been no decrease in strength either on the Chinese side or our side as far as the friction points are concerned," he said.

He said that all logistics aspects have been taken care of, whether it is clothing, ration or habitat and "as a result of all this, our operational preparedness is of a very high order and the morale of the troops is high." "We keep saying that we are prepared to meet all challenges. But last year we had to walk the talk and actually rise up to the occasion and show that we are indeed prepared to meet all these challenges," he said.

## SC panel on laws pro-govt: Farmers

## Unions say they never demanded the SC form a committee to resolve impasse

**New Delhi, Jan. 12:** Agitating farmer unions on Tuesday disapproved of the committee appointed by the Supreme Court to break the deadlock over the acts and said they will continue their protest against the three legislations.

Addressing a press conference at Singhu Border here, Union leaders claimed the members of the committee are "pro-government", and asserted they will not appear before it.

The Supreme Court earlier in the day stayed the implementation of the controversial farm laws till further orders and set up a four-member committee to resolve the impasse between the Centre and the farmer unions protesting at Delhi's borders over the legislations.

"The members of the SC-appointed committee are not dependable as they have been writing on how agri laws are pro-farmer. We will continue our agitation," farmer leader Balbeer Singh Rajewal told the

presser. The farmer leader said that unions never demanded the apex court form a committee to resolve the impasse over the laws, alleging the Central government is behind these developments.

"We are against the committee on principle. It is the government's way to distract attention from the protest," he said. The farmer leaders said the Supreme Court can repeal the farm laws suo motu.

Another farmer leader Darshan Singh said they will not appear before any committee, adding Parliament should discuss and resolve this issue. "We don't want any external committee," he said. However, the farmer leaders said they would attend the January 15 meeting with the government.

The four members of the committee are BKU president Bhopinder Singh Mann, Shetkeri Sangathana (Maharashtra) president Anil Ghanwat, South Asia Director for International

Food Policy Research Institute Pramod Kumar Joshi, and agriculture economist Ashok Gulati.

During the hearing, the top court sought the cooperation of the protesting farmers and made it clear that no power can prevent it from setting up a committee to resolve the impasse.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Haryana and Punjab, have been protesting at several border points of Delhi since November 28 last year, demanding a repeal of the three laws and a legal guarantee to the minimum support price (MSP) system for their crops. Farmer leaders welcomed the SC's order to stay the implementation of three farm laws on Tuesday, but said they would not call off their protest until the legislations are repealed.

The Sankhyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of around 40 protesting farmer unions, has called a meeting later in the day to decide the next course of action.

—PTI

## All states to receive vaccine by Jan. 14

VINEETA PANDEY | DC  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 12

The central government has started procurement and transportation of the Covid-19 vaccines for the nationwide inoculation drive that begins from January 16. Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said on Tuesday that the entire doses of 1.10 crore of Oxford vaccine Covishield by the Serum Institute of India (SII) and 55 lakh of Covaxin from Bharat Biotech — will by January 14 reach all states and Union Territories.

Bhushan said already 54.72 lakh doses of the vaccines have reached designated national and state-level stores till Tuesday afternoon. He clarified that apart from the ordered vaccines, Bharat Biotech is also giving 16.5 lakh doses

of its Covaxin for free to the government as a goodwill gesture.

"55 lakh doses of Covaxin are being procured from Bharat Biotech. For 38.5 lakh doses the price is ₹295 each, excluding taxes. Bharat Biotech is providing 16.5 lakh doses for free as a goodwill gesture which ultimately brings the cost of Covaxin down to ₹206 per dose," Bhushan said.

The 1.1 crore doses of Covishield vaccine are being procured from SII at the cost of ₹200 per dose, excluding taxes. More vaccines will be ordered in the coming days. Covaxin will also be supplied to Brazil and other countries.

NITI Aayog member (health) Dr. V.K. Paul said both Covishield and Covaxin have been tested on a large number of people and "are the safest with

no risk of any significant side effect."

The health secretary said that four other vaccine candidates by Zydus Cadila, Russia's Sputnik V, Biological E and Gennova are also in advanced stage of clinical trials and once they are cleared by the Drugs Controller General of India, they will be available to people.

As the first shipment of the vaccines rolled out, SII CEO Adar Poonawala said it was a historic and emotional moment for his team and he hoped that the vaccine reached everyone this year. Covishield vaccines were initially brought to the four Central Government Medical

Stores Depots — at Chennai, Karnal, Kolkata and Mumbai — and then dispatched to different regional medical stories in

states. Bhushan said some big states have multiple stores. For instance, Uttar Pradesh has nine, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat have four each, Kerala has three, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka and Rajasthan two each.

Meanwhile, the Health Secretary said the Covid-19 situation is still worrisome across the world and even though daily cases are declining in India. The official said the effectiveness of the vaccines can be observed only after 14 days, till then people must maintain Covid-appropriate behavior and follow protocols like masks, distancing etc.

The country on Tuesday reported 12,584 fresh cases and 167 new deaths in the last 24 hours. This was the lowest in the last seven months.





SHORT TAKES

MINE BLAST:  
EFFORTS ON TO  
FREE 22 CHINESE

Beijing, Jan. 12: Rescuers are seeking to free 22 Chinese workers trapped underground for more than two days following an explosion at a partially built gold mine in the country's east, state media reported on Tuesday.

Some 300 rescuers were seeking to clear obstructions to reach the workers, whose condition remains unknown, the reports said. The mine in the eastern province of Shandong was under construction at the time of the explosion. The cause of the blast has not been announced.

Mine managers did not report the explosion to authorities in the city of Yantai until Monday evening.

China's mining industry focused on coal used to be the world's deadliest, suffering more than 5,000 fatalities a year from explosions, floods and gas leaks.

2 CAPITOL COPS  
SUSPENDED  
AFTER ATTACK

Washington, Jan. 12: Democratic Representative Tim Ryan of Ohio says two US Capitol Police officers have been suspended as a result of their actions during last week's attack on the Capitol. Ryan told reporters on Monday that one of the officers took a selfie with someone and the second officer put on a "Make America Great Again" hat. He says of the latter that the "interim chief determined that to be qualifying for immediate suspension". Thou sands of pro-Donald Trump insurrectionists stormed the Cap itol, forcing lawmakers to flee and hide. Five people died, inc luding a Capitol Police officer.

The congressman says Capitol Police are looking at everybody involved that could have poten tially facilitated the incursion "at a big level or small level in any way". Capitol Police did not immediately reply to a request for more details.

US Acting Homeland Security chief quits

Wolf resigns over the storming of the US Capitol by outgoing President Donald Trump's supporters

'Armed protests' planned at  
all capitols, Washington: FBI

Biden names two PIOs  
to Office of WH Counsel

Washington, Jan. 12: Chad Wolf, the acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, has resigned over the storming of the US Capitol by outgoing President Donald Trump's supporters. His resignation comes amidst Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) warning of a nationwide "armed protests" being planned in the run-up to President-elect Joe Biden's January 20 inauguration.

Wolf — whose department oversees numerous federal law enforcement bodies and also is in charge of security for Biden's inauguration ceremony — said last week that he was staying in his position until the end of Trump's administration on January 20.

"I am saddened to take this step, as it was my intention to serve the department until the end of this administration," Wolf wrote in an email to the staff of the Department of Homeland Security on Monday. "Unfortunately, this action is warranted by recent events, including the ongoing and merit-less court rulings regarding the validity of my authority as Acting Secretary.

These events and concerns increasingly serve to divert attention and resources away from the important work of the department in this critical time of a transition of power," he said. His resignation comes into effect from Monday midnight.

Peter Gaynor, Administrator of Federal Emergency Management Agency, replaces Wolf as DHS acting secretary for the remaining duration of the Trump administration.

He is the third Cabinet member of the Trump administration to resign after the January 6 incident that resulted in the death of five people, including a

Washington, Jan. 12: The FBI is warning of plans for armed protests at all 50 state capitols and in Washington in the days leading up to President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration, stoking fears of more bloodshed after last week's deadly siege at the US Capitol.

An internal FBI bulletin warned that, as of Sunday, the nationwide protests may start later this week and extend through Biden's January 20 inauguration, according to two law enforcement officials who read details of the memo to *The Associated Press*.

Investigators believe some of the people are members of some extremist groups, the officials said. The bulletin was first reported by ABC. "Armed protests are being planned at all 50 state capitols from 16 January through at least 20 January, and at the US Capitol from 17 January through 20 January," the bulletin said, according to one official.

The officials were not authorised to speak publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity. The FBI issued at least one other bulletin — they go out to law enforcement nationwide on the topic — before the riots last week.

On December 29, it warned of the potential for armed demonstrators targeting legislatures, the second official said. Army General Daniel Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau, told reporters Monday that the Guard is also looking at any issues across the country. The riots followed weeks of online calls for violence in Washington in the waning days of Donald Trump's presidency. — *AP*

Washington, Jan. 12: US President-elect Joe Biden on Monday named two Indian Americans — Reema Shah and Neha Gupta — to the Office of the White House Counsel.

Shah, who had served on the debate preparation team for Biden on the Biden-Harris Campaign, has been named as Deputy Associate Counsel while Gupta, currently an attorney in the Office of the General Counsel for the Biden-Harris Transition, has been named as Associate Counsel in the Office of the White House Counsel. Shah was an associate at Latham & Watkins and a Bristow Fellow in the Office of the Solicitor General at the Department of Justice. She served as a law clerk to Justice Elena Kagan on the US Supreme Court and Judge Sri Srinivasan on the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit.

Originally from New Jersey, Shah is a graduate of Harvard College, Cambridge University and Yale Law School.

On the other hand, Gupta served as a Deputy City Attorney in the San Francisco City Attorney's Office, where she was general counsel to several city agencies, litigated constitutional and statutory challenges to city laws and administrative decisions, and participated in the office's affirmative public protection advocacy.

Previously, Gupta clerked for Judge Michael Daly Hawkins of the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and Judge Richard Seeborg of the US District Court for the Northern

Domestic Policy Advisor to the Vice President

9. Shanthi Kalathil, Coordinator for Democracy and Human Rights

10. Mala Adiga, Policy Director to Dr Jill Biden

11. Tarun Chhabra, Senior Director for Technology and National Security

12. Sumona Guha, Senior Director for South Asia

13. Aisha Shah, Partnerships Manager, Office of Digital Strategy

14. Sabrina Singh, Deputy Press Secretary, Office of the Vice President

15. Vedant Patel, Assistant Press Secretary

POMPEO HEADS  
TO EUROPE ON  
HIS FINAL TRIP

Washington, Jan. 12: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will make his final trip abroad as America's top diplomat this week, the State Department said Monday. With just a week before president-elect Joe Biden is inaugurated, the department said Pompeo will visit Brussels on Wednesday and Thursday. While there, Pompeo plans to meet with NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg and Belgium's foreign minister. He will then return to Washington, capping foreign travel for his two-and-a-half years as President Donald Trump's secretary of state.

District of California.

A New York native born to Indian immigrants, Gupta is a graduate of Harvard College and Stanford Law School.

Biden also named Samiyyah Ali as Deputy Associate Counsel, Funmi Olorunnipa Badejo as Associate Counsel, Tona Boyd as Special Counsel, Megan Ceronsky as Associate Counsel, Martine Cicconi as Associate Counsel, Sean Crotty as Associate Counsel and Ashley Deeks as Associate Counsel and Deputy Legal Advisor to the National Security Council.

These individuals will, under the direction of White House Counsel Dana Remus, help restore faith in the rule of law and the accountability of government institutions, the transition said.

— *PTI*

AFTER FROSTY FEW DAYS, PENCE,  
TRUMP APPEAR TO REACH DÉTENTE

Washington, Jan. 12: President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence appear to have come to a détente after nearly a week of silence, anger and finger-pointing. The two met Monday evening in the Oval Office and had a "good conversation," according to a senior administration official. It was their first time speaking since last Wednesday, when Trump incited his supporters to storm the Capitol building as Pence was presiding over certification of November's election results.

During their conversation, Trump and Pence pledged to continue to work for "the remainder of their term" — a seeming acknowledgment that the vice president will not pursue efforts to try to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove Trump. — *AP*

dus of officials in the final days of the Trump administration. US Deputy National Security Advisor Matt Pottinger, first lady Melania Trump's chief of staff Stephanie Grisham, White House Deputy Press Secretary Sarah Matthews, White House social secretary Rickie Niceta, US special envoy for North

hern Ireland Mick Mulvane, acting chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisors Tyler Goodspeed and deputy assistant secretary for intelligence and security at the Commerce Department John Costello are among the officials who have resigned over the Capitol violence. — *PTI*

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INDICATORS	%
Sensex	49517.11 0.50
Nifty 50	14563.50 0.54
S&P 500*	3,803.94 0.11
Dollar (₹)	73.25 0.27
Pound Sterling (₹)	86.01 -0.05
Euro (₹)	81.51 -0.05
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,946▲297 0.60
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	56.43 1.38
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.931 0.12
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.168 0.034

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Karnataka Bank  
Q3 profit rises  
10% to ₹135 cr

Private sector lender Karnataka Bank reported a 10 per cent increase in net profit at Rs 135.38 crore for the December quarter on account of a decline in bad loans. The Mangalore-headquartered bank had reported a net profit of Rs 123.14 crore in the year-ago period. Total income declined to Rs 1,868.62 crore from Rs 1,993.68 crore. The gross NPAs eased to 3.16 per cent of assets from 4.99 per cent.



■ Only 40-57% of claim amounts reimbursed

Insurers go stingy  
with Covid claims

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, JAN. 12

Though the number of Covid-19 claims settled by non-life insurance companies has risen sequentially during the December quarter, the claim amount settled by them against the amounts claimed, has not increased in the same proportion. This indicates that policyholders are now paying a significant portion of the claim amount from their pockets owing to disagreements between hospitals and insurers on charges.

Sample this, during October to December 27, the total number of claims reported were 4.23 lakh, of these 83 per cent, or 3.51 lakh, claims were settled. However, in value terms, claims worth Rs 6,235.8 crore were reported, of which only 57 per cent, or Rs 3,578.50 crore were settled.

Similarly, during July to September 2020, there were 2.94 lakh Covid-19 related claims reported to insurers. Of these, 62 per cent, or 1.82 lakh, claims were settled. However, in terms of value, the reported claim amount was Rs Rs 4,629.30 crore, of which insurers settled claims worth Rs 1,842.3 crore, or a mere 40 per cent of the reported claim amount.

A senior official of an insurance company said, "The pendency appears big (claims pending) because the Covid treatment is long drawn. Patients after discharge continue to remain in



Cadila aims to supply 150 mn doses

CHRIS KAY  
JAN. 12

Cadila Healthcare Ltd, a drugmaker working to develop an indigenous coronavirus vaccine, said it expects to supply between 100 million to 150 million doses of its candidate this year.

The Ahmedabad-based firm's ZyCoV-D vaccine was approved to com-

mence with final stage human trials in December, and it is recruiting 30,000 volunteers for its phase 3 tests, according to a presentation filed with the stock exchanges on Tuesday. Cadila's plasmid DNA candidate doesn't use an infectious agent, like other vaccines, and instead introduces the DNA sequence encoding the antigen. — *Bloomberg*

quarantine and use medicines for nearly two months after discharge and they submit the final bills only after that."

On policyholders bearing a part of the cost of treatment, the official said, "We have come across a few hospitals where the cost of the PPE kits worn by the medical staff is not equally distrib-

uted between all the patients in a ward but only to the insured patients in the ward. There are several items which are not payable by us and have been communicated to the hospitals."

Take the case of N. Akhter, a 76-year old female who suffered from breathlessness due to Covid-19 infection. Her

Philippines may  
tap meat, fish  
freezers for vaccine

ANDREO CALONZO  
JAN. 12

The Philippines is preparing cold storage for Covid-19 vaccines, with government telling industry groups with facilities for storing meat and fish to be ready to help in keeping and distributing the shots.

The Philippine cold chain industry expects revenues to hit 20 billion pesos (\$416 million) by end-2023.

Local cold-chain logistics operators can help distribute the vaccines throughout the archipelago, as low-temperature storage facilities are mostly in cities, said Anthony Dizon, president of the Cold Chain Association of the Philippines. The group is waiting for the government's final decision on which shots to buy, he added. — *Bloomberg*

one-day bill in the intensive care unit of a top South Mumbai hospital was around Rs 33,000. Out of which, the insurer, however, did not pay Rs 5,318 charged for disposable gown, PPE kits, shoe cover and face mask and Rs 600 charged for resident doctor visits. So, the patient has to pay nearly Rs 6,000 per day from her pocket.

TATA CHEMICALS  
IN TALKS FOR  
ARCHEAN'S  
IND. SALT UNIT

BAIJU KALESH &  
P R SANJAI  
JAN. 12

Tata Chemicals Ltd is in advanced talks to acquire the industrial salt unit of Chennai-based Archeon Group that could value the business at Rs 450 crore (\$61 million) at a minimum, according to people familiar with the matter.

The board of Tata Chemicals is set to discuss the potential offer as soon as this month, said the people, who asked not to be identified as the information is private.

A representative for Archeon declined to comment, while a representative for Tata Chemicals didn't provide any immediate comment.

The Archeon unit, with a production capacity of 3 million tonnes, makes industrial salt used as an intermediary in the manufacturing of products from detergents, textile dyes to plastics and glass.

A potential deal could offer a reprieve to Archeon, which has been struggling to service its debt obligations for the past two years. The company, founded in 1982, has businesses spanning from industrial salt, fertilisers to mining. In 2018, India Resurgence Fund, a JV between Bain Capital and Piramal Enterprises invested \$156 million in Archeon's marine chemical business. — *Bloomberg*

Amazon tells  
Sebi to suspend  
Future-RIL deal



SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JAN. 12

After receiving a validation for Singapore tribunal's interim award from Delhi High Court, Amazon has once again asked markets regulator Sebi to suspend the Future-Reliance deal. It has also asked the Sebi to instruct stock exchanges not to issue any approval letter to Future Retail.

In the letter dated January 5, Amazon informed the regulator about the constitution of the arbitral tribunal by Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) in the arbitration proceedings initiated by Amazon against inter alia FRL, Kishore Biyani and Rakesh Biyani. A three-member tribunal consisting of Singaporean barrister Michael Hwang Albert van den Berg and Jan Paulsson have been formed at the SIAC.

"We wish to highlight that in view of the constitution of the Arbitral Tribunal, the interim award passed by the Emergency Arbitrator stands automatically

extended for the duration of the Arbitration Proceedings unless it is reconsidered/ modified/ vacated by the Arbitral Tribunal," Amazon said in the letter seen by *Financial Chronicle*.

Hence, Future Retail continues to be expressly enjoined and restrained by the interim award from taking in any steps in furtherance...In October, Amazon had received an interim order from SIAC barring Future Retail from taking any step to dispose of or encumber its assets or issuing any securities to secure any funding from a restricted party.

Amazon wants the Sebi to take action by suspending review of the impugned transaction (Future's transaction with Reliance), and not granting any no-objection in relation to the same. It also wants the regulator to direct Indian stock exchanges not to issue any no-objection/ approval letter to FRL.

Amazon has been writing letters to regulators and stock exchanges from October 3 on this matter.



## SHORT TAKES

## Warner says sorry to Siraj and India

**Sydney:** Australian batting star David Warner on Tuesday condemned the racist slurs hurled at Indian players, particularly pacer Mohammed Siraj, during the third Test here and said such behaviour by the spectators was not acceptable. Siraj and senior pacer Jasprit Bumrah were abused for two consecutive days by the crowd. Play was, in fact, halted on the fourth day for a few minutes after the Indian team complained to the umpires, which led to the expulsion of six spectators from the stands and an unreserved apology from Cricket Australia. "I'd also like to say sorry to @mohammedsirajofficial and the Indian team as racism, and abuse is not in any way acceptable or tolerated anywhere at any time, and I would expect better from our home crowd," Warner said in an Instagram post. — PTI

## Hyderabad win second match

**Hyderabad:** Hyderabad defeated Odisha by 11 runs in the second round of their Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament being played in Kolkata. Put in to bat, Hyderabad made a modest 153 for 8 with the help of knocks by Tilak Varma (44), Tanmay Agarwal (34) and Himalay Agarwal (22). Odisha were restricted to 147 for 4. **Brief scores:** Hyderabad 153/8 in 20 overs (Tanmay Agarwal 34, Tilak Varma 44, Himalay Agarwal 22, Suryakant Pradhan 3/34, Ankit Yadav 2/23) bt Odisha 147/4 in 20 overs (Govind Poddar 50, Subranshu Senapathi 43 n.o., Rajesh Dhuper 30 n.o., C. V. Milind 2/24, T. Ravi Teja 2/40). **Points:** Hyderabad 4, Odisha 0.

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## BAD START!

## Sindhu, Praneeth lose on return to action in Thailand

**Bangkok, Jan. 12:** World champion P. V. Sindhu suffered a shock defeat on her return to international badminton, losing in three games to Denmark's Mia Blichfeldt in the opening round of Thailand Open Super 1000 event here on Tuesday.

Months after the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the international calendar, Sindhu, seeded sixth, returned to action with a 21-16, 24-26, 13-21 defeat to world No.18 Blichfeldt in a 74-minute battle.

In the men's singles, world No.13 B. Sai Praneeth too suffered a straight game loss to Thailand's Kantaphon Wangcharoen on his return to competition. Frontrunner to represent India at the Olympics, Praneeth went down 16-21, 10-21 to the world No.15.

Earlier in the day, the Indian mixed doubles pair of Ashwini Ponnappa and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy claimed a 21-11, 27-29, 21-16 win over the Indonesian pair of Hafiz Faizal and Gloria Widjaja.

However, the women's doubles pair of Ashwini and N. Sikki Reddy couldn't cross the opening hurdle, going down 16-21, 7-21 to fourth seeded Korean pair of Kim So Yeong and Kong Hee Yong.

Sindhu made a good start, opening up a 6-3 lead and never allowing her opponent an advantage, to take the opening game.

In the second game, the Indian once again moved 11-8 ahead but the Danish girl turned the tables at 15-14. After a neck-and-neck battle, it was Blichfeldt who showed better nerves to make a roaring come-back. — PTI



P. V. Sindhu

## SAINA &amp; PRANNOY CLEARED TO PLAY AFTER COVID TEST DRAMA

**Bangkok, Jan. 12:** Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and H.S. Prannoy were cleared to compete in the Thailand Open after they tested negative for Covid-19, invalidating their previous positive results that forced them out of the tournament hours earlier on a chaotic Tuesday.

Both the Badminton World Federation and Badminton Association of India confirmed the development. "Both Saina Nehwal and H.S. Prannoy have been cleared to participate in the ongoing Thailand Open after the

fourth-round tests reports confirmed that both shuttlers have been tested negative for Covid-19," BAI said in a statement.

The national body said it was possible after it took up the matter with BWF. "BAI have taken up the matter with topmost BWF officials to ensure if tests were negative, matches for respective players should be rescheduled and no walkover is given," BAI added.

Earlier in the day, chaos gripped India's campaign when Saina was forced out following a positive Covid-19 test. — PTI

## Srikanth miffed at poor treatment

**Bangkok, Jan. 12:** Former world number one shuttler Kidambi Srikanth got a bloodied nose after undergoing multiple Covid-19 tests and miffed at the poor treatment of health officials at Thailand Open, the Indian on Tuesday called it "unacceptable".

"We take care of ourselves for the match not to come and shed blood for THIS. However, I gave 4 tests after I have arrived and I can't say any of them have been pleasant. Unacceptable," an upset Srikanth wrote on his Twitter handle.

The 27-year-old, who is scheduled to open his campaign on Wednesday against fellow Indian



Kidambi Srikanth shared images after his Covid Test in Thailand which left him bleeding from the nose.

Verma, shared photographs of his nose bleeding after he was tested for the fourth time.

The Badminton World Federation said Srikanth is being attended to by a doctor and it is awaiting a

medical explanation.

"A doctor from the Covid-19 testing team is attending to Srikanth Kidambi. BWF is still awaiting a medical explanation from Badminton Association of Thailand and the Department of Disease Control as to the reasoning for the occurrence," a BWF official said.

The BWF allowed the rest of India players to come to the venue and play but made it clear that "no coaches, managers or other personnel from Team India" will be allowed. The BWF said "the entire Indian team has been categorised high risk by Thai health authorities." — PTI

## Arjun &amp; Akshath best performers

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 12

Leg-spinner G. Arjun and top order batsman P. Akshath Reddy emerged the top performers in Tuesday's action in the Hyderabad Cricket Association's A-1 Division three-day league matches.

Arjun took seven wickets while conceding just 48 runs for Balaaji CC against Charminar while Akshath hit 176 to help Income Tax take a first innings lead.

P. Saaketh Sai Ram (101) of Central Excise; Venkata Chaitanya (6/61) of Concorde; Amrith Yadav (6/13) and Aryan Cariappa (5/53) of Sportive; Apex's S. Vikranth (150 n.o.) and Ranjith Kumar (126); N. Surya Teja (100 n.o.) Jai Hanuman; Evergreen's G. Aniketh Reddy (5/30); Rahul Singh (5/35) of AOC; Zinda Tilismath's N. Anirudh Reddy (5/58); Ensonse's Md Junaid Ali (111) and P. Shiva (100); Osama Bin Wasim (5/44) of Khalsa; and Nitin Sai Yadav (5/54) of Rohit XI were the other performers.

**Brief scores (Day-2):**

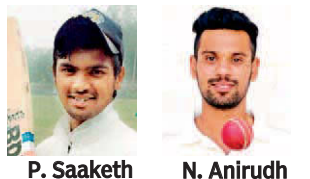
**A-1 DIVISION (THREE-DAY)**

**Group-A**

■ R. Dayanand 251 in 75.4 overs & 3 for no loss in 2 overs vs Income Tax 395 in 80.1 overs (P. Akshath Reddy 176 — 152b, 15x4, 7x6, D. Swaroop Kumar 59, A. Vamshivardhan Reddy 49, Shiva Singh 42, M. A. Shanmukha 3/96)  
■ Deccan Chronicle 421/7 in 90 overs vs Central Excise 242 in 63.2 overs (P. Saaketh Sai Ram 101 n.o. — 142b, 8x4, 3x6, T. P. Anirudh 78, Md Abdul Adnan 4/61, E. Vidyand Reddy 3/41) & 116/3 in 17 overs (Y. Chaitanya Krishna 55 batting, P. S. Chaitanya Reddy 38, E. Vidyand Reddy 3/26)  
■ Jai Hanuman 457/9 in 90 overs & 239/2 decl in 39.5 overs (Shashidhar Reddy 62, N. Surya Teja 100 n.o. — 122b, 9x4, 1x6, Sal Purnanand Rao 51) vs BDL 120 in 34.1 overs (Harish 34, Thejodar 49, Irfan Khan 3/25, Rohit Rayudu 4/21) & 14/1 in 2.5 overs.  
■ Budding Star 482/8 in 90 overs vs Union Bank of India 363/7 in 79 overs (Harsh Shankpal 95, Neeraj Bist 77, Arjun Yadav 56 n.o.)

**Group-B**

■ Concorde CC 123 in 47.5 overs & 149 in 34.3 overs (M. Radhakrishna 4/9) lost to Hyderabad Bottling 255



P. Saaketh

N. Anirudh

in 59.5 overs (M. Radhakrishna 49, B. Harshith 35, P. Praneeth Reddy 55, B. Akhlesh Reddy 30, Venkata Chaitanya 6/61 — 16-3-61-6) & 18/2 in 0.4 overs. **Points:** Hyderabad Bottling 6, Concorde 0.  
■ Evergreen 53 in 18.5 overs & 288 in 39.3 overs (Ishan Sharma 72, Chandan Sahani 95, N. Anirudh Reddy 5/58 — 73-0-58-5) lost to Zinda Tilismath 160 in 60.2 overs (G. Aniketh Reddy 5/30 — 13.2-3-30-5) & 184/5 in 37.5 overs (Shashank Lokesh 90 n.o., Sai Suprith Yadav 35). **Points:** Zinda Tilismath 6, Evergreen 0.  
■ AOC 113 in 36.1 overs & 297/4 in 40 overs (Amit Pachera 86, Shivam Tiwari 48, Sachin Shinde 58 n.o., G. Rahul Singh 48 n.o.) vs Combined Districts 177 in 52.2 overs (Md Afreedi 46, Rahul Singh 5/35 — 15.2-6-35-5) & 83/6 in 17 overs.  
■ Continental 419/7 in 90 overs vs Ensonse 365/6 in 90 overs (Md Junaid Ali 111 — 202b, 17x4, P. Shiva 100 — 177b, 16x4, 1x6, Mehdi Hasan 57, Owais Abdul Wahed 34 n.o., S. Nikhil 3/73)  
■ Cambridge XI 432/8 in 90 overs vs MP Colts 286 in 83 overs (Ashesh Singh 61, Valsnav Reddy 47, Rahul 92, Sampath 58, Ashish Srivastav 3/67) **Group-C**

■ Balaaji CC 145 in 43.2 overs & 236/6 in 40 overs (R. Vamsi 55, S. Ganesh 36, Paaba Nilesh 36, G. Trishank Gupta 4/37) vs Charminar CC 178 in 43.2 overs (Ali Diamond K 40, G. Arjun 7/48 — 17.5-6-48-7) & 119/4 in 29 overs (Ali Diamond K 40 batting)  
■ Sportive CC 493/7 in 90 overs bt Jai Bhagwathi 155 in 31.2 overs (P. Akshath 54, Abhinav Kumar 44, Aryan Cariappa 5/53 — 9-1-53-5) & 168 in 34.3 overs (A. Yuvaraju 68, Arnav K 36, Amrith Yadav 6/13 — 5-0-13-6). **Points:** Sportive 8, Jai Bhagwathi 0.  
■ Mahmood CC 264 in 85.3 overs & 38/2 in 5 overs vs Apex CC 431/8 decl in 82.1 overs (Ranjith Kumar 126 — 104b, 23x4, 2x6, S. Vikranth 150 n.o. — 163b, 18x4, 2x6, Lokesh Reddy 3/100)  
■ Khalsa 342 in 80.5 overs & 74/3 in 17.3 overs (Harshit 37 batting) vs Secunderabad Nawabs 236 in 67 overs (Taksht Rao 40, T. Harish Singh 56, Jaidev Goud 88, Osama Bin Wasim 5/44 — 14-2-44-5)  
■ Rohit XI 555 in 88 overs bt Gouds XI 192/9 in 50.2 overs (K. Kirthik Reddy 89 n.o., Nitin Sai Yadav 5/54 — 17.2-2-54-5) & 145/9 in 23.4 overs (V. Srujan 44, V. K. Siddharth 3/51, Nitin Sai Yadav 3/5). **Points:** Rohit XI 8, Goud's XI 0.

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