





## IN BRIEF

## SC seeks report on pollution in Yamuna

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 19

Concerned over pollution in the Yamuna River in the national capital, the Supreme Court, on Tuesday, directed the National Green Tribunal (NGT)-appointed committee for river monitoring to submit its recommendations to improve the quality of the river water and the extent to which they have been implemented.

Posting the hearing after two weeks, Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading a three judge bench also made the NGT appointed committee a party in the suo motu case initiated by the court on its own on the "remediation of polluted rivers." Senior advocate Meenakshi Arora, who is an amicus curiae assisting the top court in the matter, said that the former chief secretary of Delhi and expert member of NGT was part of a committee formed by the NGT in 2018 to look at the pollution of Yamuna River. She urged the court to call for the committee's report. The top court also asked the Haryana government to file its response within two weeks on a petition filed by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), seeking directions to the Haryana government not to discharge the untreated waste-water in river Yamuna passing through the state, resulting in a rise in the ammonia levels in the river water. The court also sought response from Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh.

## Vaccine drive picks amid concerns

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Bharat Biotech in collaboration with ICMR, which has been given approval for restricted use in emergency situations, in clinical trial mode. Till Monday, 580 persons reported AEFI. Two deaths that followed vaccinations have been delinked with immunisation after post-mortem.

Bharat Biotech on Tuesday again issued a fact-sheet saying people with a history of allergies, having fever, bleeding disorder or those who are on a blood thinner, pregnant or lactating, and with any other serious health-related issues must not be take Covaxin. The company listed pain, swelling or itching at injection point, body ache, headache, fever, malaise, weakness, rashes, nausea and vomiting as possible side effects of the vaccine.

Senior officials of the government said both vaccines are safe and AEFI is just 0.18% out of which only 0.002% needed hospitalisation following immunisation which officials termed as "fairly low and the lowest so far in the world in the first three days."

"In a number of this vaccine, it is mentioned that if there is a causal relation between immunisation and adverse event, hospitalisation cost would be borne by the authorities. There is a robust mechanism in place to track and monitor AEFI," Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said.

However, after the resident doctors association of Delhi's LNJP Hospital raised concerns over Covaxin on Sunday, the latest to raise a red flag is the Karnataka Association of Resident Doctors.

"The Central government has approved Covid-19 vaccine Covishield and Covaxin. Covishield has at least got an interim analysis report. However, Covaxin is still in the phase-III trials, where the trial is being done on healthcare workers. We strongly condemn this. Health workers should be given a choice of the vaccine. We demand that the government should provide a vaccine which has interim analysis," said Dr Dayanand Sagar, president of Karnataka Association of Resident Doctors.

Making an attempt to allay concerns over Covaxin, NitiAayog member (health) Dr V.K. Paul said he too had taken the Covaxin and he has "zero" side effects. "Concerns about adverse effects of the vaccines are unfounded, negligible and insignificant, and the data shows we are in a situation of a lot of comfort," he said.

Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said India has vaccinated the highest number of persons in the world on the first day of vaccination with 2,07,229 people getting the shot. Giving data of all states, he said Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Punjab need to increase their vaccination coverage.

Fresh cases of Covid-19 on Tuesday dropped to 10,064 with 137 deaths being reported. Till date 141 persons have been detected with the new mutated UK variant of the Covid-19.

## France pitches for 'strategic triangle' in Indo-Pacific region

Plans to join hands with India, Japan to preserve 'rules-based order'

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 19

In a major move, France on Tuesday announced that there would be a "strategic triangle" along with India and Japan "committed to a rules-based Indo-Pacific" region.

The announcement made by French ambassador Emmanuel Lenain in New Delhi during an "India-France-Japan Workshop on the Indo-Pacific" organised by thinktank Observer Research Foundation is being seen by foreign policy watchers as significant, given the increasing Chinese military and economic assertiveness in the region.

France, though essentially a European nation, has territories in the Pacific Ocean and Southern Indian Ocean and so is also an Indo-Pacific nation. France is also a major strategic partner of India.

It may be recalled that India, along with the United States, Japan and Australia, is already a member of the four nation Quad, an arrangement that aims to preserve a "rules-based order" in the Indo-Pacific region.

"We are building a strategic triangle between Paris, Tokyo and New

## Rafale jets to thunder during India-France joint exercise

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 19

Indian Air Force will be putting its frontline fighter Rafale in practice with French Air and Space Force Rafales during the bilateral air exercise, "Ex Desert Knight-21" at Air Force Station Jodhpur from January 20 to 24, which will boost its operational preparedness amidst standoff with China.

French side will participate with Rafale, Airbus A-330 Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT), A-

400M Tactical Transport aircraft and around 175 personnel.

The Indian Air Force aircraft participating in the exercise will include Mirage 2000, Su-30 MKI, Rafale, IL-78 Flight Refuelling Aircraft, AWACS and AEW&C aircraft.

"The exercise is unique as it includes fielding of Rafale aircraft by both sides and is indicative of the growing interaction between the two premier Air Forces," said Indian Air Force on Tuesday. As the two detachments com-

mence their air exchange, they will put into practice operational experience gained across terrains and spectrums and endeavour to exchange ideas and best practices to enhance interoperability, it said.

The exercise marks an important milestone in the series of engagements between the two Air forces. As part of Indo-French defence cooperation, Indian Air Force and French Air and Space Force have held six editions of air exercises named "Garuda".

Delhi, committed to a rules-based Indo-Pacific and in keeping with our values. Our joint work focuses on maritime security and digital connectivity," Lenain tweeted on Tuesday.

Participating in the workshop, Japanese ambassador Satoshi Suzuki said: "This vision of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific cannot be achieved by a single country alone. It requires collective efforts of like-minded countries like India and France. At the

heart of this shared vision are universal values such as freedom, openness, and inclusiveness. ... It goes without saying that India is the indispensable partner in Japan's endeavor to achieve our vision. A free and open Indo-Pacific is a natural shared goal for the two Asian maritime powers: Japan in the Pacific and India in the Indian Ocean."

Speaking at the workshop, Indian foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said: "An Indo-

Pacific guided by norms and governed by rules, with freedom of navigation, open connectivity, and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states, is an article of faith for India. India, France and Japan are leading stakeholders in the region and with other like-minded countries, it is upon us to ensure that the Indo-Pacific remains peaceful and open, taking into account needs and concerns of all its inhabitants."

## ■ 'Set 5 targets for each police station' Shah praises role of police during Covid-19 pandemic

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 19

Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday chaired a high-level meeting with the Delhi Police top brass and discussed security preparedness for the Republic Day parade and the proposed tractor rally of the protesting farmers which they plan to hold on January 26.

During a visit to the Delhi Police headquarters on Tuesday, the home minister also addressed the police personnel and appreciated the role of the police in managing the ongoing farmers' agitation. Mr Shah also said that each police station in the capital should adopt five major targets whose progress should be regularly reviewed.

The home minister also appreciated the role of the Delhi Police during the coronavirus pandemic and said the force has been providing exemplary services to people of the national capital.

"Be it tackling the northeast Delhi violence, or the lockdown announced after the outbreak of coronavirus, or the unlocking process, or the movement of migrant workers, the Delhi Police has provided exemplary services to the people," he said.

Mr Shah's visit to the



Union home minister Amit Shah during an event at Delhi Police headquarters in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

city police headquarters is crucial as it comes close on the heels of the Supreme Court asking the Delhi Police to decide on the entry of farmers protesting against the Central farm laws, in the national capital on January 26.

The protesting farmers' unions have announced their tractor rally on the Outer Ring Road on the Republic Day.

On the occasion, the home minister also announced that 15,000 CCTV cameras will be

installed in Delhi for close monitoring of crime and criminals and also for the maintenance of law and order. These police CCTV networks will be connected with the CCTVs installed in railway stations, he said.

Mr Shah added that a memorandum of understanding has been signed by the Delhi Police with the National Forensic Science University to seek assistance of forensic experts in enhancing the investigation capabilities of the police force.

## Thriller for India at the Gabba

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to favour the brave.

Among the discomforts of an Australia that has clamped down on normal life in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic was the absence of house-keeping and room service in a Brisbane luxury hotel and so it was in the face of more than just the Australian attack that India stooped to conquer, its fightback inspired by newbies Washington Sundar and Shardul Thakur when India were still way behind Australia in the first innings and seemingly doomed to face defeat.

Displaying guts and gumption in the Test arena that are especially expected of him, Cheteshwar Pujara exemplified raw physical courage in the face of hot pace on a wearing pitch, taking nearly 10 blows on his body and helmet, some so painfully on his hands that it would be a miracle if he did not suffer any broken bones. Without Pujara keeping an end up while others sought runs more posi-

tively from the other, India would have been in no position to sustain the showing on a fifth day surface sporting cracks and playing up.

It was India's good fortune that the weather office was as wrong as it usually is in that the spectacular Brisbane thunderstorms they forecast stayed away, as if in tribute to the guts, grit and glory of Team India. In great weather, courageous batting methods promised resistance while Shubman and Pant took the battle to the bowlers. A fumbling skipper and wicket-keeper Tim Paine was to be at the receiving end as India recovered remarkably from the depths of 36 all out against the pink ball in Adelaide to victory in Melbourne, an astonishing draw in the face of adversity in Sydney and then the series-clinching win in Brisbane.

The valiant efforts of a Pat Cummins of a Glenn McGrath kind of pinpoint accuracy were not sufficient for Australia to keep the Indians at bay. It was appropriate that the baby-

faced Rishabh Pant, often the subject of ridicule for his lapses as a wicket-keeper, should carry the Indian tricolour with pride around the 'Gabba. For he is a splendid representative of a fearless and emerging young brigade of Indian cricketers who have grown up basically on white ball cricket and yet excelled with or against the red ball when the call of duty was at its most intense.

Doting dad Virat Kohli could only watch all this on television like the rest of us but he had contributed enough for this Team India to grow under his leadership in the last six to seven years with the dynamics of modern cricket drilled into them that victory must be chased at all cost, except when it proves impossible in a Test match and then a draw could become a badge of fortitude as it did at the SCG. And what a finale for a group of cricketers who have been away from home for months on end since the IPL ventured into the Covid world with a bio-secure bubble.

## India asks WhatsApp to withdraw proposed changes to privacy policy

New Delhi, Jan. 19: The Indian government has asked WhatsApp to withdraw the recent changes in the privacy policy of the messaging app, saying unilateral changes are unfair and unacceptable.

In a strongly worded letter to WhatsApp CEO Will Cathcart, the ministry of electronics and information technology said India is home to the largest user base of WhatsApp globally and is one the biggest markets for its services.

The proposed changes to the WhatsApp Terms of Service and Privacy

Policy, without giving users an option to opt-out, "raise grave concerns regarding the implications for the choice and autonomy of Indian citizens," it wrote.

The ministry asked WhatsApp to withdraw the proposed changes and reconsider its approach to information privacy, freedom of choice and data security.

WhatsApp had on January 16 delayed the introduction of the new privacy policy after user backlash over sharing of user data and information with the parent company, Facebook Inc.

■ WHATSAPP HAD on January 16 delayed the introduction of the new privacy policy after user backlash over sharing of user data and information with the parent company, Facebook Inc.

With the parent company, Facebook Inc. Stating that Indians should be properly respected, the ministry said, "any unilateral changes to the WhatsApp Terms of Service and Privacy would not be fair and acceptable."

With over 400 million users in India, the changes will have a disproportionate impact on the country's citizens, it said. It asked WhatsApp to provide details of the services provided by it in India, categories of data collected and permissions and consents sought. Also, WhatsApp has been asked to explain if it conducts profiling of Indian users on the basis of their usage, as well as explain difference between the privacy policy in India and other countries. — PTI

## SC to hear plea challenging physical hearing in courts

PARMOD KUMAR  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 19

The Supreme Court will hear on Wednesday petitions by lawyers against the Delhi high court order restoring physical court hearing by it and the subordinate courts in the national capital that was shelved in March last year in the wake of Covid pandemic. The petitioner advocates are seeking the continuation of virtual hearing of the court proceedings through video-conferencing.

"We see the gravity of the problem," observed Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading a three-judge bench after senior counsel Kapil Sibal, in a strong plea, said that there is a "clear and present danger" to the lawyers who would be exposing themselves to Covid.

Telling the court that the right to life and health has to be balanced with the delivery of justice, Mr Sibal said it was "unreasonable" in the present circumstances to take away the option of virtual hearing completely and to state that no adjournments will be granted in physical hearing.

The petitioner lawyers have approached the top court against the order of the chief justice of the Delhi high court taken on the administrative side to resume physical hearing from January 18 and also directing all subordinate courts in six districts of the national capital to hold physical hearing on alternate days without giving lawyers the option of addressing the court through virtual mode. The order issued on January 14 said the court shall hear matters through video conferencing on non-physical days.

## Apex court panel will meet farmers tomorrow

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farm laws, the Supreme Court had on January 11 appointed Mr Ghanwat, Bhartiya Kisan Union president Bhupinder Singh Mann and agricultural economists Ashok Gulati and Pramod Kumar Joshi as members of a committee to ascertain the views of the stakeholders on the contentious laws.

The committee members came under sharp criticism by the protesting farmers and the Opposition for publicly supporting the new laws. The farmers' unions even made it clear they would not talk to any committee members, after which Mr Mann recused himself from the panel.

The 81-year-old Mr Mann, a former Rajya Sabha member, said: "As a farmer myself and a union leader, in view of the prevailing sentiments and apprehensions amongst the farm unions and the public in general, I am ready to sacrifice any position offered or given to me so as to not compromise the interests of Punjab and farmers of the country."

Mr Ghanwat said the panel was keen to know whether the farmers want these laws repealed or not. "A physical meeting will be held with those organisations who want to meet us in person. Video conferencing will be held with those who can't come to us."

He said: "If the government wants to come and speak with us, we welcome it. We will hear the government too. The biggest challenge is to convince the agitating farmers to come and speak with us. We will try our level best."

Mr Ghanwat also made it clear the panel "will not meet representatives of those farm unions that were formed recently".

The statement assumes significance in the wake of reports that the BJP was now registering new farmers' unions as a way to sway the dialogue in favour of the laws, and that these unions were meeting ministers and submitting memos.

Mr Joshi said: "We are also setting up a website where people can post their suggestions... We are unbiased, impartial."

## ■ 'Desertions from TMC good riddance'

## Mamata says BJP more dangerous than Maoists

urulia (WB), Jan. 19: Terming BJP as more dangerous than the Maoists, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, on Tuesday, accused the saffron party of making false promises to the people before elections and vanishing after winning.

Claiming that the Trinamool Congress is not perturbed over desertions by some leaders, she said politics is a solemn ideology and philosophy and one cannot change these everyday like clothes.

"BJP is more dangerous than the Maoists," Ms Banerjee said while addressing a rally here in Purulia district, which was once a hotbed of the banned ultra-Left organisation.

Ms Banerjee said the Maoists have come back to the mainstream in the state and that her government has given them jobs as special home guards.

TMC has inducted Chhatradhar Mahato, a former leader of Maoist-backed People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCAPA), who had hogged the limelight during the Lalgarh movement in the tribal-dominated Junglemahal area at the fag end of the erstwhile CPI(M)-led Left Front rule in the state.

Mr Mahato was set free



West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee during a public rally in Purulia on Tuesday. — PTI

in February last year by the state government following reduction in his life term to 10 years by the Calcutta high court for his good conduct.

Facing the flight of TMC MPs and MLAs to BJP ahead of the state polls, she said, "Those who want to join BJP can go, but we will not bow our heads to it."

Terming the desertions as "good riddance," she said these leaders would have disturbed the party if they had remained in the TMC.

She claimed the BJP leaders misled the tribals of the Jangalmahal area, within which Purulia is situated, with false prom-

ises and did not come again for their welfare after winning the Lok Sabha polls.

BJP candidates had won all the seats in the Jangalmahal area including Purulia in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Dismissing projections in pre-poll surveys, she claimed that "lies" are being dished out on the behest of BJP.

Accusing BJP, Congress, and CPI(M) of being brothers in arms, she alleged the Left party has handed over its votes to the saffron party.

Left Front and Congress have decided to fight the Bengal polls together. — PTI

— PTI

## Nadda, Rahul swap barbs over farm laws, China

Continued from Page 1 Arunachal Pradesh he is referring to was gifted by none other than Pandit Nehru to the Chinese? Time and again, why does Congress surrender to China?... Is the Congress ready to cancel the MoU signed between it and China's ruling party," Mr Nadda said.

Mr Gandhi retorted: "Who is he that I have to answer to him? Is he my professor? I will answer to the country." Mr Nadda accused the Congress and its leader of misleading farmers on three farm laws and questioned why the S w a m i n a t h a n Commission report was not implemented during the UPA's rule. The ruling party accused Mr Gandhi of "running away" from issues raised by Mr Nadda.

Hitting back at the Congress and its leader over the booklet - "Kheti ka Khoon" - in which the Opposition party has claimed the three farm laws will damage the agri-sector, the BJP said the Congress has a habit of using the word "khoon (blood)," which seems to be its identity post-Independence and sought to know what would it call the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, Bhagalpur riots and suicide committed by lakhs of farmers during the Congress' rule.

Ahead of the 10th round of meeting between the government and the farmers' unions, the BJP accused the Congress of not letting the farmers' issue be resolved while reminding the Congress of its 2019 Lok Sabha polls manifesto on reforms in the agri-sector.



## IN BRIEF

**Bird flu: Red Fort shut till R-Day**

**New Delhi:** A sample of a dead crow from Red Fort has tested positive for bird flu and orders have been issued to restrict the entry of public into the monument, officials said on Tuesday. Around 15 crows were found dead in the premises of Red Fort a few days ago. A sample from a dead bird was sent to a Jalandhar-based laboratory for testing, Rakesh Singh, the director of the Delhi government's animal husbandry department said. Entry of public into monument has been restricted till January 26 as a precautionary measure, he said. On Saturday, samples from a dead owl in the Delhi zoo had tested positive for avian influenza. — *PTI*

**CONG TO FIGHT POLL IN ALLIANCE WITH 5 PARTIES IN ASSAM**

**Guwahati, Jan. 19:** The Congress' initiative of forming a "grand alliance" to oust the BJP from power in Assam took shape on Tuesday with the party announcing it will contest the forthcoming assembly polls in alliance with five other political outfits. The Congress will join hands with the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), the CPI, CPI(M), CPI(ML) and the Anchalik Gana Morcha to ensure that the BJP with its "anti-people policies" does not return to power, APCC president Ripun Bora told reporters here. "Our doors are open for all anti-BJP parties and we invite the regional political parties to join hands with us against our fight with the BJP," the Rajya Sabha MP said. The Congress has taken the lead to oust all communal forces in the best interest of the state and the nation, he said. The party has taken the forthcoming Assam elections "very seriously and deputed senior leaders" to the state, Mr Bora said.

A high-level Congress team, led by Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel, and comprising AICC general secretary Mukul Wasnik, Bihar Congress MLA Shakeel Ahmed and the party's Assam-in-Charge Jitendra Singh are currently in the state, and held discussions with the representatives of the five parties to chalk out the alliance.

"Our central leaders held a series of discussions with the grassroots to state level functionaries and it was decided to challenge the communal BJP by uniting the anti-BJP forces," he said. Mr Singh said Congress welcomes all parties to come forward in the interest of saving the culture, language, identity and heritage of the state. — *PTI*

**Blow to J&K's Gupkar alliance**

■ Continued from page 1

On October 25 last year, the signatories met again here to formally structure their alliance and unanimously elected Dr Abdullah, a former CM, who heads the erstwhile state's oldest party National Conference (NC) as its president. The leader of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) became vice-president. The main agenda of the alliance was to seek the restoration of Articles 370 and 35A and other special rights of the people of J&K. The meeting also adopted the flag of the erstwhile J&K state as the PAGD's flag. The alliance did well in the DDC elections, winning 110 out of 278 seats last month.

However, Mr Lone, the PAGD's official spokesman, has complained that many of the alliance's official nominees had to face serious issues due to the presence of proxy candidates. "I am writing to you in reference to the recently held DDC elections and a spate of statements issued by leaders belonging to our party. The recurring theme of the statements was the fielding of proxy candidates by constituent parties against the officially mandated candidates of the PAGD," he said in the letter.

Mr Lone said: "We believe the votes polled against the PAGD are majority the votes cast by proxies of PAGD constituent parties against the official PAGD candidates. The net outcome of selectively voting for and against PAGD is a very poor voteshare. This is certainly not the voteshare that the people of J&K deserved post August 5... we look at the statistics but out there on the ground people look at our actions and our intentions," Mr Lone told the PAGD president it was difficult for PC to stay on and pretend as if nothing had happened.

**Netaji birth anniv be celebrated as Parakram Diwas**

*Bose family, TMC, Left react sharply*

**New Delhi, Jan 19:** The government has decided to observe January 23 as "Parakram Diwas" to commemorate the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Union minister Prahlaad Singh Patel said on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in the first "Parakram Diwas" programme in Kolkata on January 23 on Bose's 125th birth anniversary and inaugurate an exhibition on the grounds of National Library to mark the occasion, Mr Patel said.

Mr Patel said PM Modi will also felicitate prominent members of the Indian National Army formed by Bose and their family members in Kolkata on Saturday.

He said 200 Patua artists from West Bengal will make a painting on a 400-metre-long canvas depicting Bose's life.

Petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan will participate in a programme in Cuttack, Odisha, where Bose was born.

Another programme will be held in Haripura village in Gujarat's Surat district where Bose was elected as president of the Indian National Congress in 1938.

The culture ministry is also considering building a memorial in the honour of around 26,000 martyred members of the INA, Mr Patel said.

Members of Netaji's

family, the ruling Trinamul Congress and the Left parties in West Bengal on Tuesday reacted sharply to the Centre's decision to celebrate the icon's birth anniversary as Parakram Diwas (day of valour) and not by the names they had proposed.

TMC leader Saugata Roy said, the announcement to observe the day as "Parakram Diwas" was not enough.

"January 23 should be announced as a national holiday. It is our long-standing demand. As he was a national leader and head of Azad Hind Fauj, these two aspects are not reflected through 'Parakram Diwas'. We had also demanded observance of the day as 'Desh Prem Diwas' (patriotism day)."

"It appears to be a stunt keeping in mind the upcoming assembly polls in the state, and not as a mark of respect to Netaji," he said.

BJP leader and Netaji's grandnephew, Chandra Kumar Bose said the day should be observed as Desh Prem Diwas (day of patriotism). "Netaji's birthday on 23 January is celebrated as #DeshPremDivas across the country by people from all religions, caste & creed as he was the #LiberatorofIndia & their own leader. Govt sponsorship is not required. However its time the GOI officially announce! @narendramodi @PMOIndia," tweeted Bose. — *PTI*

**Girl flees to escape child marriage, found pursuing nursing 4 yrs later**

**New Delhi, Jan. 19:** A girl who went "missing" from her maternal uncle's house here nearly four years ago has been found by the Delhi police. She had left to escape being married off as a minor and is now pursuing a nursing course.

Officials said she had left the house in May 2017, when she would be around 16, and the matter was reported at the Shalimar Bagh police station in northwest Delhi

where a kidnapping case was registered.

The police had in 2019 also announced a reward of ₹50,000 for anybody providing information that helped to locate her, they said. DCP (crime) Bhisham Singh said, head constable Ramdas received an input Monday that the girl was coming to Delhi by a bus and would reach Anand Vihar ISBT in the morning. Based on this tip-off, the girl was found, he said. — *PTI*

**AASU threatens to resume anti-CAA stir**

**MANOJ ANAND**  
GUWAHATI, JAN. 19

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) here on Tuesday announced to resume anti-CAA movement by staging demonstrations across the state during the proposed visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah to express their resentment against the BJP-led government. The Prime Minister is scheduled to visit Jorhat Pathar in Upper Assam's Sivasagar district on January 23, where he is likely to distribute land pattas to over 1 lakh beneficiaries in a public function. He is also slated to address a public rally.

AASU president Dipanka Kumar Nath told reporters that the BJP-led government ignored the Assam Accord by imposing the Citizenship Amendment Act on the people of Assam. "Both the Centre and the state government have no interest in implementing the Clause 6 of the Assam Accord that pledges safeguards for the protection and promotion of Assamese identity and heritage. The BJP-led government at the Centre instead of taking steps to deport illegal foreigners are seeking to provide citizenship to the illegal Bangladeshis in the name of 'Hindu' religion," he said.

Accusing Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal of failing to take steps for implementing the Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, AASU president said, "They have also not fulfilled their promise to seal the porous border with Bangladesh as yet."

**14 guest workers, baby crushed to death in Guj**

**Surat, Jan. 19:** Thirteen guest workers and a year-old-girl from Rajasthan who were sleeping by the roadside in Surat district were among 15 dead after a dumper truck ran over them on Tuesday, police said.

Those killed include eight women and a guest worker from Madhya Pradesh, police said. While 12 of them died on the spot, three died during treatment at a hospital, police added.

Except for the 19-year-old worker from Madhya Pradesh, all the other deceased were from villages in Banswara district in south Rajasthan, police said.

The tragedy took place near Kosamba village, around 60 km from Surat, police said. The truck

driver, who apparently lost control over the vehicle after hitting a sugarcane laden tractor, has been booked under sections of the IPC and Motor Vehicles Act, police said.

The truck driver and the vehicle's "cleaner" were also injured in the accident and are being treated at a hospital.

The truck ran over the migrant construction workers on the Kim-Mandvi road shortly after midnight, Surat SP Usha Rada said.

The truck driver lost control over his vehicle after dashing against the tractor and veered off the road onto the pavement where the workers were sleeping, she said.

"The truck was on its way to Mandvi from Kim.

The driver lost control of the vehicle after it hit sugarcane hanging out of the tractor trolley coming from the opposite direction. "The truck's front window pane shattered on impact, which blocked the driver's vision. The truck then veered off the road and crashed into the sleeping labourers," she said.

Three workers injured in the tragedy are being treated in a nearby hospital, the police official said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund would be given to the next of kin of each person killed in the accident and ₹50,000 would be given to each injured. — *PTI*

**Muslim lady raising fund for Ram temple**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

Zahara Begum, organiser, Tahera Trust, in an unusual mission — she is exhorting fellow members of the Muslim community to contribute funds towards the construction of a grand temple for Hindu god Lord Ram at Ayodhya.

Speaking to this newspaper, she recalled that all communities, including Muslims, would pool efforts to support their Hindu brothers and sisters in organising Pooja for Vinayaka Chavithi, Dasara and Ram Navami by offering donations, in the true spirit and tradition of India, and its rich "Unity in Diversity".



Zahara Begum

She appealed to Muslim community to come forward generously to cooperate in all possible manners, including offering donations, towards the construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya in the same spirit.

Ms Zahara appealed to fellow Muslims to donate money through Nidhi

Samarpana, during the Nidhi Sekarana programme for building of Ram temple at Ayodhya, purely on a voluntary basis. She said that Muslims can start contributing doate from ₹10 to any larger amount of their choice towards the fund.

She recalled that while working for years with villages, sometimes remote, though several of them have over the last decade advanced a lot, she had noticed that in almost all villages, Hindus have donated land for construction of mosques, idgahs and also for burial grounds for the Muslim community.

"Non-Muslims have donated a great extent of

cultivable land of their volition to Muslims," she said, adding not only giving land, Hindus have also helped construct masjids, Idgahs and kabarastans (graveyards).

Ms Zahara further said, "we are blessed to be in a country where Lord Ram was born. We are fortunate that the temple is going to be built during our time. Lord Ram has taught 'Dharma' as a way of life' and stands as an exemplar for the entire world."

"Let us come together and participate in this divine activity and help in construction of a great Ram temple at Ayodhya with an open heart," she added.

**Shivraj's Cabinet meet signals phase out of Covid rules in MP**

**Restrictions on transfer of employees due to pandemic to be withdrawn**

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY**  
BHOPAL, JAN. 19

For the first time during the pandemic period, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday held a physical cabinet meeting here signaling that restrictions imposed in Madhya Pradesh in the wake of outbreak of Coronavirus last year would be phased out gradually.

Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who assumed office for the fourth time on March 20, ended the trend of holding virtual cabinet meetings by chairing the meeting of his council of ministers in the state secretariat in the morning.

The Chief Minister announced that the restrictions imposed on transfer of state government employees due to the pandemic would be withdrawn on April one and the routine transfer of employees would continue till April 30.

A dozen ministers in the Shivraj ministry including the Chief Minister had tested positive for Coronavirus. All of them have since recovered. Till date, the chief minister has been holding cabinet and other official meetings through video conferences in view of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, in a sign of slowing down of the pandemic, the number of fresh Coronavirus positive cases in Madhya Pradesh dipped to 304, the lowest since the outbreak of the pandemic, on Monday. The state recorded three deaths on Monday.

As on Monday, MP has reported a total 2,51,882 positive cases and 3,756 deaths. Total 2,42,996 coronavirus patients have so far recovered in the state.

Madhya Pradesh has also reported vaccination of 9,543 people on January 16, recording 63.2 per cent of vaccination of registered persons on the day.

Similarly, the state has reported vaccination of 8,995 people on January 18, recording 59.9 per cent of vaccination of registered persons on the day.



A medic vaccinates a healthworker with Covishield vaccine during a countrywide inoculation drive against Coronavirus, at Rajawadi Municipal Hospital in Mumbai on Tuesday. — *PTI*

**Maldives, Bhutan to be first recipients India to supply vaccines to 6 countries from today**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 19

India on Tuesday announced that it will begin supplies of Indian-manufactured Covid vaccines under grant assistance to Bhutan, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Seychelles from Wednesday.

New Delhi further said that regarding supply of these vaccines to Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Mauritius, it is awaiting the "confirmation of necessary regulatory clearances" from these three countries.

So far as vaccine supply to Bhutan is concerned, it is understood that a consignment containing 1.5 lakh doses of Covishield vaccines will reach Thimphu on Wednesday. It is also understood that a consignment containing one lakh doses of Covishield vaccines will reach the Maldivian capi-

● **THE VACCINE** consignments from India — under a grant assistance — is intended for frontline workers, the elderly and people people with comorbidities. Subsequent shipments will be on payment

tal Male on Wednesday. Bhutan and the Maldives will therefore be the first two foreign countries to receive the Covishield vaccines, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India. This is being seen as India's "gift" to these two neighbouring countries, highlighting their close strategic proximity to India.

The Indian government is also conducting training programmes for the administration of the vaccines on Jan 19-20 in all the recipient countries.

Meanwhile, in a statement, the MEA said, "The Government of India has received several requests

for the supply of Indian manufactured vaccines from neighbouring and key partner countries. In response to these requests, and in keeping with India's stated commitment to use India's vaccine production and delivery capacity to help all of humanity fight the Covid pandemic, supplies under grant assistance to Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Seychelles will begin from Wednesday. In respect of Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Mauritius, we are awaiting their confirmation of necessary regulatory clearances."

Meanwhile, India's vaccination drive against Covid-19 picked up pace on Tuesday with more than 6.31 lakh healthcare and frontline workers getting the jab.

Also, fresh cases of Covid-19 on Tuesday dropped to 10,064 with 137 deaths being reported.

**Subsidy on food served in Parliament canteens ends**

**New Delhi, Jan. 19:** Food served in Parliament canteens for MPs and others will become costlier as a subsidy given for it has been stopped, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Tuesday. While Mr Birla did not specify the financial implications of the decision, sources said the Lok Sabha Secretariat can annually save more than ₹8 crore with this move.

The annual food bill of the Parliament canteens hovers around ₹20 crore. The canteens are mainly run by three kitchens — one each in the main Parliament building, library and annexe.

Talking about the preparations for the Parliament session, starting January 29, Mr Birla said, "The subsidy given for the food served in Parliament canteens has been stopped, as

● **AS PER** the revised rates, the price of the tea will remain at ₹5, while that of coffee and lemon tea have been doubled to ₹10 and ₹14 respectively. The cost of a non-veg thali, which used to be ₹60, may cost ₹100 or more after the withdrawal of subsidy

a result several crores will be saved. While prices will definitely rise but still it will be less than the market rates. The decision to end the subsidy is taken after consulting leaders from all political parties."

The total food bill for Parliament canteens is divided into three parts, out of which the Lok Sabha Secretariat pays for two and one part is paid by the Rajya Sabha. Lok Sabha Speaker being the

**Odisha health staff refusing vaccination to lose free jobs**

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO**  
BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 19

The Odisha government on Tuesday sent a veiled caution to a section of health workers in the state who were not showing interest to take the Covid-19 vaccines. It said the health workers refusing to take Covid vaccination may lose the chance to get Covid-19 vaccine free of cost later.

"Many health workers have informed us in writing that they will not take vaccines as a mark of protest to non-fulfilment of their certain demands. We appeal to them to come forward and get themselves vaccinated so that they would be safe as well as family members. Those who remain absent during the vaccination, will be considered subsequently but those who refuse to take the vaccine may not get the same free of cost later," said state health director Bijay Panigrahy.

Panigrahi said that the second day of the first phase was successful. As many as 32,526 health workers were immunised in 375 sessions against the government target of 31,902. The government achieved a 102 per cent target by vaccinating more health workers on Monday, he added.

As many as 192 sessions were conducted on Tuesday vaccinating 16,261 health professionals, he pointed out.

Similarly, 92 sessions will be held on January 20, 436 sessions on January 21, 141 sessions on January 22, 178 sessions on January 23 and 279 sessions on January 25.

On Saturday, Covid vaccines were administered at 161 session sites across the state after the roll out of the vaccination initiative while the government stalled the inoculation drive on Sunday.

CHANDIGARH ADMINISTRATION ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT (ELECTRICITY WING) Press e-TENDER Notice	
Percentage rate tenders are hereby invited by three bid system from appropriate class Electrical Contractors/ Labour and construction societies registered with CHD Admn./ CPWD/ MES/ Railway/ State PWD/ Municipal Corporation/ other Govt. organizations/ State Electy. Boards and corporations. Tenderers should have valid HT Electrical License issued by Electrical Inspector of any State/ Central or UT Govt. & meeting with specified eligibility criteria. All the intending contractors/ firms are to be registered in the State portal and must possess compatible digital signal certificate of class II or III for E-tendering:	
1. Tender No.	: OP-411/2020-21
2. Description of work	: Providing individual electricity connections to the residents of outside Lal Dora of Adash Colony, Sector-54, Chandigarh.
3. Estimated cost	: Rs. 30.24,760/-
4. Earnest Money Amount	: Rs. 60,500/-
5. Period of Completion	: 90 Days.
6. Pre-Bid Meeting	: 22.01.2021 at 11 AM
7. Bid submission closing date and time	: 28.01.2021 till 2:00 PM
8. Opening date of tender	: 29.01.2021 after 11:00 AM
The bid form and other details can be seen / downloaded from the website <a href="https://etenders.chd.nic.in/nicgep/app">https://etenders.chd.nic.in/nicgep/app</a> .	
Executive Engineer, Electy. 'OP' Divn. No. 4, Sector 34-C, U.T., Chandigarh Email ID: elop4-chd@nic.in	



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49398.29	1.72
Nifty 50	14521.20	1.68
S&P 500*	3,788.36	0.53
Dollar (₹)	73.16	0.17
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.61	-0.48
Euro (₹)	88.70	0.34
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,480	1.98
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.90	2.10
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.936	-0.35
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.116	0.019

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

J&K Bank to transfer 8.23% stake to Ladakh

J&K Bank said its board has given in-principle approval to transfer 8.23 per cent stake to the Union Territory of Ladakh. The board decided "to give its 'in-principle approval' for implementation of General Administration Department, Govt. of J&K... in terms of which ownership of 8.23 per cent out of its (J&K Govt.) shareholding in Jammu and Kashmir Bank as on Oct. 31, 2019, shall be transferred to UT of Ladakh," it said.

SBI, ICICI & HDFC systemically important banks



The RBI said state-owned SBI, along with private sector lenders ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank continue to be Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) or institutions which are 'too big to fail'. SIBs are subjected to higher levels of supervision so as to prevent disruption in financial services in the event of any failure. The Reserve Bank had issued the framework for dealing with D-SIBs in July 2014.

Siddhartha Mohanty named as MD of LIC

Siddhartha Mohanty has been appointed as the managing director of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), according to a Personnel Ministry order issued on Tuesday. He is at present the chief executive officer of the LIC Housing Finance Limited. His appointment is effective Feb. 1.

Panel for uniform professional indemnity policy

An Irdai panel has suggested standardisation of the professional indemnity policy under which insurance cover can be provided to brokers, corporate agents, web aggregators and insurance marketing firms. A professional indemnity policy is a liability insurance product that protects individuals giving professional advice and professional entities against negligence claims by their clients for errors and omissions.

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Most sectors see employment recovery Jobs move to low productivity fields

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JAN. 19

Jobs have marked a recovery in most sectors but seen a visible shift in their composition. Jobs have moved from higher productivity sectors like manufacturing and services to lower productivity areas such as agriculture and construction.

In fact, agriculture saw higher job generation than pre-lockdown levels while real estate and construction jobs bounced back almost to the FY20 levels.

However, manufacturing, which accounted for 40 million jobs in 2019-20, saw employment dropping to 24.6 million in the June quarter of 2020, implying a loss of over 15 million jobs, finds a CMIE report. Manufacturing jobs recovered to 27.1 million in the September quarter and then to 28.8 million in the December quarter. "The shortfall is still quite high at 11.4 million. Every major manufacturing industry, except pharmaceuticals, employed less people in all three quarters of 2020-21 compared to the employment in 2019-20," CMIE said.

Similarly, jobs in the services sector fell to 128 million in the quarter of June 2020 from 154 million in March, recovered partially to 146 million in the September quarter and then 148 million in the December quarter. It is still short of the levels of March 2020. Retail trade, travel and tourism, educa-



- Employment in agriculture exceeds last year's levels
- Real estate and construction record near-complete recovery
- Manufacturing job shortfall is still high at 11.4 million
- Services jobs are still short of March 2020 levels

tion and personal non-professional services took the biggest hit on employment during the last three quarters.

On the other hand, agriculture saw the number of jobs going up during this period. Agriculture, which accounts for about 36 per cent of total employment in India, was the only sector that did not suffer any job loss during the lockdown. Employment in the agriculture sector hovered between 140 million and 150 million till the quarter ended June 2020. It shot up to a record 158 million during the September quarter, which was 5.5 per cent higher than the number of jobs in the year-ago quarter. It declined marginally to 154 million in the December quarter, but it was still 3.5 per cent higher than its level in the

year-ago quarter of December 2019. "The increase in employment in agriculture during the lockdown indicates both, shift in labour from shrinking employment opportunities in non-farm sectors and also, favourable agricultural conditions during the year. This excess labour flow into agriculture shows in the record area sown under the kharif crops of 2020," said Mahesh Vyas, managing director of CMIE.

Real estate and construction industry saw a near-complete recovery in terms of employment. The industry employed an estimated 61 million persons in 2019-20, which fell to 28 million in the June 2020 quarter but recovered almost all the 33 million job losses by the December 2020 quarter.

PVR predicts return of big-bang releases

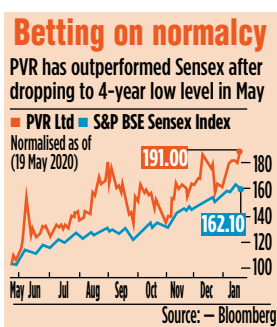
ASHUTOSH JOSHI JAN. 19

PVR Ltd is in talks with Bollywood producers to release their movies in cinema halls rather than on streaming sites of Netflix and Amazon.com, now that the pandemic is easing.

The country's biggest cinema operator, which runs about 835 screens across 71 cities, is operating most theatres at half capacity due to Covid-related restrictions. However, it sees benefits in the "age-old strategy" of movies first coming to the big screen before being monetised on other platforms.

"This applies more to big films, where the yield per eyeball in theatre is still the highest as compared to all the other distribution platforms," Kamal Gianchandani, PVR's chief of strategy, said in an earnings call last week.

A number of Indian films starring top actors such as Amitabh Bachchan, Akshay Kumar and Vidya Balan opted for streaming platform release in 2020 as theatres were shuttered by shelter-at-home rules. Post-reopening, Christopher Nolan-directed science fic-



tion *Tenet* and superhero movie *Wonder Woman* were the only prominent releases before Tamil action thriller *Master* opened in theatres last week.

"We are hopeful that *Master* will be a case study based on which you will see—over the next few weeks—the Bollywood film guys and more south Indian regional guys planning the release calendar of the films which are currently ready," PVR's CFO Nitin Sood said.

PVR's shares, which snapped eight years of gains to fall about 30 per cent in 2020, have risen almost 14 per cent this year. The Gurgaon-based company reported a loss of Rs 49.1 crore in the December quarter. —Bloomberg

HOME FIRST IPO OPENS TOMORROW

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 19

Home First Finance Company's initial public offering, aiming to raise Rs 1,153 crore, opens on January 21 in the price range of Rs 517 to Rs 518 per share of Rs 2 face value.

Home First Finance is an affordable housing finance company with 65 branches across 60 districts in 11 states and a Union territory, with major presence in markets such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat.

The company primarily caters to low- and middle-income group housing loans.

"The offer aggregating up to Rs 11,53.71 crore comprises a fresh issue of up to Rs 265 crore and an offer for sale aggregating up to Rs 8,887.1 million by the promoters and private equity investors True North Fund, Bessemer India Capital Holdings and certain individual shareholders," the company said.

E-VEHICLES GET FIRST BATTERY THAT CAN CHARGE IN 5 MINS



RACHEL MORISON JAN. 19

Israeli company StoreDot Ltd has manufactured the first battery for electric vehicles that can be charged in just five minutes, a step toward making refuelling as fast as cars at a gas station.

The lithium-ion samples were produced by StoreDot's strategic partner in China, Eye Energy Co, and have been used as a demonstration in a two-wheeled scooter. StoreDot said that rapid charging batteries could overcome range and charging anxiety, a critical barrier to mainstream EV adoption.

However, batteries that charge this quickly probably won't be achievable at scale for years with existing charging infrastructure. Degradation relating to use of fast-charging also is an underappreciated issue.

"This is a huge positive to the industry, making rapid charging on the go more convenient and reducing a huge barrier to adoption," David Watson, chief executive officer of EV-charging company Ohme Technologies UK Ltd. "But these benefits will take a while to come on stream." —Bloomberg

Foreign investment rules in e-com may be tightened

ADITYA KALRA & KRISHNA N. DAS NEW DELHI, JAN. 19

India is considering revising its foreign investment rules for e-commerce, three sources and a government spokesman told Reuters, a move that could compel players, including Amazon.com Inc, to restructure their ties with some major sellers.

The government discussions coincide with a growing number of complaints from India's bricks-and-mortar retailers, which have for years accused Amazon and Walmart Inc-controlled Flipkart of creating complex structures to bypass federal rules, allegations the US companies deny.

India only allows foreign e-commerce players to operate as a marketplace to connect buyers and sellers. It prohibits them from holding inventories of goods and directly selling them on their platforms.

Amazon and Walmart's Flipkart were last hit in December 2018 by investment rule changes that barred foreign e-commerce players from offer-

Stocks soar as institutional buyers stay on sidelines

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 19

Indian stocks rallied on the Asian markets' strength and hopes of the Chinese economy making a strong recovery in 2021 after a four-decade low growth last year. Equities made up most of the losses in the previous two sessions from across-the-board gains on Tuesday.

The Sensex gained 834 points, or 1.72 per cent, to close at 49,398 while the Nifty-50 gained 239.85 points, or 1.8 per cent, to close at 14,521.

However, provisional data showed both foreign portfolio investors and domestic institutions have turned cautious and remained on the sidelines, as FPIs were net buyers by just Rs 257.55 crore while the domestic



institutions were net sellers by Rs 199.30 crore.

The unusual surge in Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index helped other Asian markets to trade higher, leading to gains in the Indian market.

"Asian shares ascended on Tuesday as investors bet China's economic strength would help support growth in the region, even as pandemic lockdowns threatened to lengthen the road to recovery in the West. European stocks climbed

higher on Tuesday, sustained by hopes that an economic recovery following the coronavirus pandemic is not far off," said Deepak Jasani, head of retail research, HDFC Securities.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Realty (4.04 per cent), Metal (3.01 per cent), Auto (1.83 per cent), Capital Goods (2.70 per cent) and Bankex ((1.95 per cent) were the major gainers even as all sectoral indices closed with gains.

SALESFORCE INVESTS IN CLOUD STARTUP DARWINBOX

SARITHA RAI JAN. 19

Salesforce.com Inc is making its first investment in an Indian company, a developer of human resources software that serves several of Asia's largest tech startups.

The US giant's venture arm is leading a \$15 million financing round for Darwinbox, its first in India and its only investment in Asia outside of Japan.

Headquartered in Hyderabad, the startup has already raised \$35 million from backers, includ-

ing Lightspeed India, Sequoia Capital and 3one4 Capital.

Darwinbox counts some of the world's largest brands and Asian startups among its customers including Puma, Nivea, Indonesian online mall Tokopedia and Singapore's Zilingo. It develops touchless attendance systems and provides hiring and onboarding and employment engagement tools to more than a million employees of 500 customers across 60 countries. The startup last raised funds in 2019 and has grown 300 per cent

since then, co-founder Jayant Paleti said. "Adoption of cloud-based services by enterprises was double the global average before the pandemic," Paleti said in a phone interview. The former investment banker co-founded the startup in 2015 along with a colleague and a childhood friend, a former McKinsey consultant. "Since the pandemic, we are seeing a shift to the cloud within a few quarters that would have otherwise taken three or four years," he added. —Bloomberg

SBI MF LAUNCHES RETIREMENT BENEFIT FUND



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 19

SBI Mutual Fund has announced the launch of a new fund offer (NFO), SBI Retirement Benefit Fund. The NFO is an open-ended retirement solution-oriented scheme having a lock-in of five years or till retirement age (65 years), whichever is earlier.

The NFO opens on January 20 and closes on February 3.

The fund has four investment plans across a range of risk-profiles like Aggressive, Aggressive Hybrid, Conservative Hybrid and Conservative, which invest across equity and equity-related instruments and debt instruments.

These schemes may also invest in foreign equities, Gold ETFs and REITs/InvITs depending on the asset allocation and investment strategy. SBI Mutual Fund said in a virtual press conference.

"In addition to equity and debt instruments, every plan may take up to 20 per cent exposure to Gold ETFs, up to 10 per cent exposure to REITs/InvITs and foreign securities, including overseas ETF to the tune, up to 35 per cent in Aggressive Plan, up to 15 per cent in Aggressive Hybrid Plan and up to 10 per cent in Conservative Plan," SBI Mutual Fund said.

Systematic investment plan, or SIP, registered for this fund with a tenure of three years plus, has insurance benefits where in case of an unfortunate event the nominee stand to get the benefits. In the first year, the insurance cover will be 20 times the monthly SIP installment, in the second year it will be 50 times the monthly SIP installment, in the third year it will be 100 times.

NO EASY WAY OUT Sustained geopolitical tensions may affect chip supplies

China's car-chip shortage could persist for a decade

Jan. 19: China's automotive-chip shortage could persist for as long as a decade, but it has little to do with the current supply glitches snarling production, according to the official who oversees the nation's key new energy vehicle technology development platform.

Short-term factors like mistakes in ordering due to incorrect forecasts and factory disruptions because of Covid-19 will resolve naturally, Yuan Chengyin, general manager of the National New Energy Vehicle Technology Innovation Centre, said. Rather, China's rising demand for electric cars, its lack of domestic technical knowhow and sustained geopolitical ten-

sions will emerge as much more serious issues.

"China's chip industry is under tremendous pressure," Yuan said in an interview on Tuesday. "I don't think the issue can be solved overnight."

Carmakers around the world have been hit in recent weeks by a worsening global semiconductor shortage that's led to production cuts and staff layoffs. A deputy secretary general of the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers said last week the chip shortages could've had a relatively big impact on China's car industry from late December and may persist into the second quarter.

The problem as Yuan sees it is more systemic.



Chinese electric car

The nation's supply chain will continue to be vulnerable to global forces until Chinese companies build up their own manufacturing capabilities and make the semiconductors used in electric vehicles themselves.

"That's the huge challenge," said Yuan, who's also behind the country's first government-backed

car-chip industry body, the China Automotive Chip Industry Innovation Strategic Alliance. "If we don't address it, the auto industry could go back to where it was decades ago" in terms of competitiveness.

China imports the vast majority of the chips used in car production. Scaling up won't be easy. There are more than 100 different sorts of chips used in a car, helping to control everything from steering to communication, speed adjustments and power transmission. And the semiconductors for cars versus those in an iPhone or laptop need to be more robust, able to withstand a range of temperatures and much greater forces.

Cars also have longer

lifespans than consumer electronics goods, so the chips need to be highly durable, as well as affordable, considering all automakers are grappling with shrinking profit margins. Additionally, chips used in cars can take up to five years to develop.

Chinese firms need to enhance their competitiveness in the supply chain and speed up development of chips and operating systems, Xiao Yaqing, head of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said on January 16.

The chip industry innovation alliance has been identifying semiconductor products that Chinese chipmakers can focus on as a starting point, Yuan said. —Bloomberg



THE ASIAN AGE

20 JANUARY 2021

Amid turbulence, Biden's US will re-engage world

It is at a particularly tense moment in American history that Joseph Robinette Biden Jr will take the oath of office on Wednesday. He will be tasked with reuniting a nation fractured by the misrule of Donald Trump, who has disavowed even the normal decorum of transfer of power rituals that exemplify the elegance of democracy. Mr Biden and his deputy Kamala Harris inherit a fractured nation ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic, economic turbulence and cultural fissures caused by deep racial divisions. Between them, Mr Biden and Ms Harris represent vividly the true state of the United States of today of a mixed racial and cultural milieu but they will be up against a white supremacist cult living in a world of alternate reality that Mr Trump cultivated with his lies and converted into a bankable core of a dangerous vote bank.

The taut atmosphere in fortress Washington as it prepares to deal with violent threats to national security after the Capitol Hill invasion of January 6 is illustrative of what the new presidential team is up against. However distracting and divisive the prospect of convicting Mr Trump in the Senate trial and disbarring him from holding high office in the future may be, Team Biden will have to address the more immediate and impressive actions he has lined up like the \$1.9 trillion pandemic response that would need bipartisan legislative support and overhaul of health care, education and criminal justice systems with executive decisiveness. And all of that has to be done while attempting to "restore the soul of the nation" that he has promised. There will not be much place for the middle ground when it comes to dealing with facts like institutionalised racism and xenophobic anti-immigration.

Major reversal of policies are anticipated on the mix of sources for the energy grid with greater emphasis on alternative energy sources to keep in line with the Democrats' belief that climate change is real. A greater impact on the people will, however, depend on impetus to the US jobs scene but many nations will be pleased that the country will be rejoining the collective effort to try and bring down global warming. Putting a full stop to the beliefs of Trump Republicans that climate change does not pose a threat would in itself be a great contribution to protecting science and advancing solutions based on it. Leadership from the US in this fight for humanity would be even more welcome.

Sweeping American foreign policy changes can be expected and India, as a more trusted ally of the US in recent history, can hope to do much better than at a time when Mr Trump's empty promises came to nought and India is paying a price in not being able to pick up Iranian oil just as its techies faced hurdles in the H-1B visa program. As a driver of the India-US nuclear deal, Mr Biden is an old hand in dealing with India and his White House administration will have, besides vice-president Kamala Harris, as many as 20 persons of Indian origin with a majority of them in key positions. Pinpricks there may be in US views on J&K, CAA and other matters, but the chances of more meaningful country-to-country ties just got brighter.

Handle Nepal with sensitivity

The inability of Nepal foreign minister Pradeep Gyawali — who was on a three-day visit to New Delhi last week to attend the sixth meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Commission — to call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in spite of his request for a meeting is in an indicator that India does not regard bilateral relations as being normal until Kathmandu restores status quo ante on the sensitive border issue.

In May last year, Nepal — without warning — incorporated Indian territories of Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyudhara, into its maps. Prime minister K.P. Sharma Oli — raising a nationalist chorus to attract the support of other parties for the move — even had the Constitution changed to show these areas as part of Nepal. More, it placed its military police to demarcate these areas, although these had long been acknowledged as Indian lands by Kathmandu.

The Joint Commission has a development agenda. India stuck to that in talks with the Nepal foreign minister. New Delhi has also promised the Covid vaccine once domestic requirements are met. These steps suggest India's position of maintaining solidarity with the people of Nepal but not necessarily with its government until Kathmandu reverses its unilateral actions on the border issue. Only when that happens is India likely to discuss the boundary question with Kathmandu.

The domestic politics in Nepal is unsettled, and also evidently unstable. PM Oli has dissolved Parliament. National elections are scheduled for April. However, it is to be seen if these can indeed take place in the present atmosphere when the ruling Communist Party of Nepal has, in reality, split. China is taking an unusual interest in the situation and may well engender political impulses to prevent return to status quo ante on the border issue with India. In these circumstances the actions of the various domestic constituencies, including the armed forces and the royalists, besides the Madhesi — the terai people — bear watching. A wobbly Nepal invites undue foreign attention, and the Modi government has not been sensitive enough to this aspect.

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T. VENKATRAM REDDY  
Editor in Chief

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Subhani



Biden has tough task, to keep autocrats in check



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

The aftereffects of the attempted "insurrection" at the US Capitol in Washington on January 6, which have turned American society and politics upside down, may be expected to reverberate worldwide. The impact of signal events is not confined to particular geographies. The history of the last 100 years shows this amply.

Although the Indian national movement against colonial rule was not fully formed then, the defeat of Czarist Russia in the 1904-05 war at the hands of Imperial Japan boosted nationalist sentiments in this country and created the confidence that Europeans can be defeated by an Asian country. Later, the Russian revolution of 1917 became an inspiration, creating the sense that the poor can overthrow empires. India's own independence in 1947 had set the tone for the dynamics of decolonisation worldwide.

Enough has been said about the sense of entitlement that sections of white America are thought to harbor, and that it was this feeling that Donald Trump — although he was in the White House — was willing to mobilise in his failed effort to overturn the result of a presidential election that he had lost fair and square. It has also been noted that the great institutions of American democracy held, though their weaknesses have also been widely observed.

As he assumes office on Wednesday, President Joe Biden will no doubt be deeply conscious that he is comes in as the chief at a deeply corroding moment in American life. He may perhaps worry how this may impact his capacity to work at policies in relation to the rest of the world.

America's leadership in the world depended not only on its wealth, its technology, and its great military power, but on its adherence to the idea and rules of democracy in a fundamental way, no matter how flawed this was in the perception of the people of the world. This democracy quotient, which gave the US an edge over any other powerful nation, has been brought into question by recent events.

Governments may continue to kowtow — probably in a wobbly way — to even the reduced US hegemony of the present day since Washington still has enormous financial clout and military muscle, but America has lost the constituency of the people on the world stage.

It is this disenchantment, brought about by events that have played out on television screens across the world, that has now unexpectedly empowered tyrants, authoritarians, semi-despots, crypto-fascists, military dictators, and managers of police states. The overlords of terrorism will now have less to fear.

These recent developments have also denuded America of its legitimacy. The US can no longer call out grimy regimes. These will now be more emboldened than before to inflict pain on sections of their own people and act in conscious denial of humanist values. Their policies are now likely to be less directed toward assuaging the hunger of their own people, and directed more toward aggression, militarism and narrow nationalisms, making the world even more unsafe for the most vulnerable.

Callous authoritarians typically seek to draw acceptance from the atavistic sentiments of the

majority population in society, or on a linguistic majoritarian basis. The people who are not of the same language, religion, ethnic stock as the majority may now expect to suffer more than before from perpetrators that may be direct agencies of the government or civilian gangs which routinely inflict public violence on fellow-civilians as the one-sided, discriminatory State looks on, in some cases still dubiously proclaiming faith in the tenets of democracy.

In India, both variants of the game have found play in recent years. Indeed, there are now not too many examples remaining of properly functioning democracies where the rule of law is for real, or even of seriously aspiring democracies for that matter. The dice was always loaded against the practice of democracy in the last century and in the first two decades of the present. With the fall of America from its pedestal, and India, the most populous aspiring democracy, already having taken a tumble, autocracy will have a field day unless people rise to resist.

America's much-vaunted institutions have just about held in the face of the vicious January 6 onslaught. No section of the US military was (probably) a party to that shame. But sections of the police evidently were. Among the mobilisers and participants were some armed forces and security services veterans, and they went into the Capitol with loaded weapons to look for key elected officials to kill. We might as well be talk-

ing about benighted places like Afghanistan or Iraq.

The fate of the Republican Party, the ruling party of the past four years, is uncertain. Many of its most senior figures appear keen to appease the constituency that raided the Capitol, suggesting that such sections carry traction. And this is the party of Abraham Lincoln, mind, not a clone of the Ku Klux Klan or white supremacists. If the fundamentals are to be noted, influential sections of the Republicans look ready to pander to the base that has come to harbour a sense of entitlement because this base has a deep sense of grievance arising from economic fragility and existential vulnerabilities.

Documented studies and surveys suggest that the new generation of Americans, not excluding the white, harbours a disappointment. Their life prospects appear inferior to those that their parents knew. Evidently, there is a serious structural malady which, if left untended, can lead to monstrous political outcomes.

American capitalism, and its military-industrial complex, has permitted the US war machine to rain bombs on countries around the world, restricting the US government's capability to come to the aid of those in trouble in its own society. This is a readymade situation for an ambitious demagogue like Mr Trump to exploit in the future also, and other demagogues in the world to follow his vile example. So, we should all keep our fingers crossed.

It is this situation that the incoming US President has to address on an urgent basis. Mr Biden has a difficult, complex, sensitive job on his hands. If he succeeds, an impulse toward future insurgencies can be held in check. In any event, pressing domestic concerns are likely to demand his immediate attention, but if the new President's energies in engaging with the world are severely rationed, autocrats around the world will be left smiling.

LETTERS

YOUNG GUNS FIRE

Your talent is judged when the chips are down. India's incredible series win against a more solid Australia is nothing less than a miracle. We haven't won a test at Gabba, but when we did it was the young guns who performed. This series had witnessed our lowest Test score. None would have given us a chance, especially when seven of the top players were out of action due to injuries. Washington Sundar and Shardul Thakur made good. The bowling limelight was on Mohd. Siraj and Shardul. Shubham Gill and Rishabh Pant then sealed the win with spectacular performances. What a way to start 2021!

Syed Abdul Monim  
Navi Mumbai

RECOGNISE NPAS

THE LATEST FINANCIAL stability report of the RBI has struck a note of caution. The report has sounded a warning about a financial crisis emanating from banks. Bad loans could rise to 13.5 per cent by September 2021. The government seems to be considering a proposal to extend the period for declaration of Non Performing Assets (NPA), but rather than pushing the crisis into the future, it should recognise the NPAs in time.

Shovanlal Chakraborty  
Kolkata

HEED VAX WARNING

THE DEATH OF two persons — one in Ballari and another in Moradabad — following vaccination for Covid-19 is a matter of concern. Health officials claimed that the deaths were because of co-morbid conditions, but the incidents have raised eyebrows. Bharat Biotech has warned pregnant and lactating women, those using other Covid-19 vaccines and people with serious health issues from taking the Covaxin. Be cautious before taking the plunge!

Bidyut K. Chatterjee  
Faridabad

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

Skand Tayal



North Korea's Kim sends a clear signal to new US Prez

At the eighth congress of the ruling Workers' Party on January 5-12, North Korea's supreme leader Kim Jong Un (KJU) was bestowed with an additional title of "general secretary". In Communist parties, the general secretary of the central committee is the most powerful post as the party secretariat controls personnel, internal affairs and discipline. In the old Soviet Union, Josef Stalin eliminated all rivals as the CPSU's general secretary. After the abolition in 1982 of the post of chairman of the Communist Party of China, the country's paramount leader is the central committee general secretary, a position held by President Xi Jinping. In North Korea, KJU's father Kim Jong Il as well as the republic's founder Kim Il Sung had occupied this powerful position.

In recent times KJU has shown increasing sensitivity to the poor living conditions of the long oppressed North Korean masses and has given more attention to economic growth. The economy suffered badly from the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council, the most recent in Resolution 2371 of August 2017. The North Korean regime is faced with an existential dilemma. Any compromise on giving up its nuclear

weapons capacity could threaten the regime's survival as it could open a window for a US-led external attack or internal revolt.

In an autocratic system where the supreme leader is seen as infallible, it was surprising for KJU to accept failures on the economic front. In his address at the congress KJU noted with regret that "the goals we set were immensely underachieved in almost all areas". In a candid assessment reflecting the economy's dire condition, KJU said the last five years were "the worst of the worst" for North Korea.

The North Korean economy, crippled by sanctions, was further hit by the devastating floods of 2020. Western observers estimate North Korea's economy may have contracted by 8.5 per cent last year after a modest 0.4 per cent growth in 2019. Covid-19 has also badly impacted the North Korean economy as it closed its borders with China.

The unprecedented 2018-19 dialogue with outgoing US President Donald Trump was triggered by the North Korean leader in his New Year message of January 2018 in the hope that North Korea may obtain some easing of sanctions without giving up its nuclear deterrence capability. In the three summits

between Mr Trump and KJU in Singapore, Hanoi and the DMZ, the US establishment managed to restrain President Trump from signing a limited deal that would have eased the sanctions without a time-bound roadmap towards "complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization" of North Korea.

In a signed article in Foreign Affairs last April, then candidate Joe Biden had set out his approach towards North Korea: "I will empower our negotiators and jumpstart a sustained campaign with our allies and others, including China, to advance our shared objective of a denuclearised North Korea." Herein lie the seeds of fundamental differences between the two parties: North Korea's stated objective being "denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula".

At the party congress, KJU issued a stern warning to the incoming Biden administration, threatening to expand its nuclear arsenal. He exhorted his scientists to develop new capabilities of solid-fuel ICBMs, hypersonic missiles and tactical nuclear weapons. This would alarm both South Korea and Japan as any future threat of using tactical nuclear weapons may elicit an equivocal response from the United States'

guaranteed nuclear umbrella. The development of tactical nuclear weapons would also require fresh nuclear testing.

In his opening speech, KJU designated the United States as its "biggest enemy", but also kept the door for dialogue ajar by asserting that the US changing its "hostile policy" was necessary to establish better ties. In his closing remarks, KJU vowed to "strengthen the nuclear war deterrent".

North Korea has not slowed down its development of nuclear weapons and delivery systems. In October, at the military parade marking the 75th anniversary of the Workers' Party, a massive new ICBM was displayed. In another military parade on January 14, North Korea unveiled a new submarine-launched missile claiming it was "the world's most powerful weapon".

To draw Washington's attention, KJU is likely to resume the time-tested North Korean policy of brinkmanship and shrill rhetoric. He may refrain from personal attacks on President Joe Biden but apply pressure by threatening an ICBM or nuclear test. The Trump administration's one success was to pressure KJU to temporarily cease high-profile testing. The last North Korean

nuclear test was in September 2017 and the last ICBM test in November 2017.

After nine years at the helm, the young 37-year-old KJU has evolved as a confident and mature personality. He met President Donald Trump thrice in full media glare and often made extempore unprepared remarks. He has gradually given some visibility to his sister Kim Yo Jong after ruthlessly eliminating any possible challenger to his untrammelled power. However, at the congress, Kim Yo Jong seems to have been dropped from the politburo which she joined as an alternate member last year.

The world at large needs to appreciate KJU's efforts to lead North Koreans in the direction of a better life while ensuring regime survival along with peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. South Korea's President Moon Jae-in is a sympathetic partner of KJU in this endeavor. India would hope that the two Koreas and the US work in harmony to pursue the twin objectives of the denuclearisation of North Korea and peace and tranquility in Northeast Asia.

The writer is a former Indian ambassador to South Korea



## NEW TAKES



## BIDEN PLANS TO REVERSE TRUMP POLICIES

U.S. PRESIDENT-ELECT JOE BIDEN PLANS TO SIGN DOZENS OF EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND SEND SWEEPING BILLS TO CONGRESS IN HIS FIRST DAYS IN OFFICE.

## COVID-19 CRISIS

- Seek a \$1.9 trillion spending proposal aimed at accelerating the distribution of coronavirus vaccines while providing economic relief to millions of Americans hurt by the pandemic.
- Impose a mask-wearing requirement on all federal property, planes and buses.
- Extend relief on federal student loan payments and extend an eviction moratorium.
- Sign an executive order that helps schools and businesses reopen safely, expands Coronavirus testing and establishes clearer public health standards.
- Direct federal agencies to take immediate action to deliver economic relief to working families bearing the brunt of the crisis.
- Return the United States to the World Health Organisation. Trump withdrew from the agency, saying it failed to properly oversee the Covid-19 pandemic.

## CLIMATE

- Bring the United States back into the Paris Climate Agreement, the global pact forged five years ago among nearly 200 nations to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Trump vowed in 2016 to pull the US out of the agreement, making good on that promise in November 2020.
- Reimpose methane pollution limits for new and existing oil and gas operations repealed by Trump.
- Using the federal government procurement system — which spends \$500 billion every year — to make facilities more reliant on clean energy and purchase zero-emissions vehicles.
- Ban new oil and gas permitting on public lands and waters, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
- Cancel the permit for the Keystone XL Pipeline, which would carry oil from Canada to the United States.

## IMMIGRATION

- Repeal the ban on almost all travel from some Muslim-majority countries.
- Send to Congress a sweeping immigration bill that could legalise millions of immigrants living in the US without legal permission.
- Reinstate the program allowing “Dreamers,” people who were brought to the United States illegally as children, to remain in the country.
- Reverse Trump’s policy that separated immigrant parents from their children at the border, including ending the prosecution of parents for minor immigration violations, and prioritise the reunification of any children still separated from their families.
- Reverse Trump’s more restrictive asylum policies, such as imposing additional restrictions on anyone traveling through Mexico or Guatemala and attempting to prevent victims of gang and domestic violence from receiving asylum.
- End Trump’s National Emergency declaration that allowed him to shift federal funds from the Department of Defense to build a wall along the US border with Mexico.
- Order an immediate review of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for vulnerable populations who cannot find safety in their countries ripped apart by violence or disaster. — Reuters

## Biden to be sworn in President today

More than 25,000 National Guard troops being deployed to assist swearing-in

Washington, Jan. 19: Joe Biden will be sworn in as the 46th President of the United States, while Kamala Harris will take oath as the first woman Vice President on Wednesday, in the midst of growing concerns over the safety of the historic inauguration following the recent violent attack on the Capitol Hill by pro-Trump supporters.

Chief Justice John Roberts will administer the oath of office to Biden just after the clock strikes 12 (local time) at the West Front of the Capitol — the traditional location — under the unprecedented security umbrella of more than 25,000 National Guards, who have transformed the capital into a garrison city, mainly because of the threat of violent protest by Trump’s supporters.

Biden, 78, will take the oath on his 127-year-old family Bible, which will be held by his wife, Jill Biden. Biden, who will be the oldest president in American history, will deliver his first presidential address to the country after taking oath shortly after noon. The historic speech, with the theme of unity and healing, is being prepared by his Indian-American speech writer Vinay Reddy.

Harris, 56, will make history as the first female, first person of colour and first South Asian American vice president when she will be sworn in by Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina member of the Supreme Court. Sotomayor administered the oath to Biden as vice president in 2013.

She will be sworn in on two Bibles — one that belonged to a close family friend named Regina Shelton and another that belonged to Thurgood Marshall — the country’s first African American Supreme Court justice.

This year, however, the transition stands out for its acrimony. The process usually starts straight after the election, but it started weeks late after President Donald Trump refused to accept the result of the November 3 election



A military color guard practices during a dress rehearsal for the 59th inaugural ceremony for President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, at the US Capitol, in Washington, DC. The US Presidential inauguration is scheduled today. — AFP

## Top Indian Americans will address AAPI Inaugural Ball

Washington, Jan. 19: Several eminent Indian Americans including Congressmen and those set to occupy key positions in the incoming Biden Administration will participate and address the Presidential Inaugural Committee’s official Asian American inaugural ball here on Tuesday.

Asian American inaugural ball is one of the three additional events announced by the Presidential Inaugural Committee to celebrate

and honour America’s diversity in advance of the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris on January 20.

“We Are One” is the other event hosted to honour and celebrate all within the Black Community and African Diaspora, featuring powerful speakers, inspiring stories, and entertaining performances. “Latino Inaugural 2021: Inheritance, Resilience, and Promise” is the third

event being hosted by PIC in partnership with the Hispanic Federation and over 50 co-host organizations. To be hosted by IMPACT, a leading Indian American advocacy and political action committee, the Asian American inaugural ball will honour and recognise Biden and Harris.

The event will feature remarks from AAPI organisers, political leaders, celebrities and musical, comedy, and cultural performances. — PTI

won by Biden, a Democrat.

Trump has said he will not attend the inauguration. Trump, a Republican, will vacate the White Ho-

use hours before the inauguration and is expected to travel to his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida.

The scaled down inaugu-

ration is expected to begin around 11 am with an invocation by Leo Jeremiah O’Donovan, a Jesuit priest who is a close friend of the

## Biden team says will not lift travel ban

Washington, Jan. 19: US President-elect Joe Biden’s spokeswoman quickly dismissed Donald Trump’s announcement Monday that a Covid-19 ban on travelers arriving from much of Europe and Brazil would be lifted, underlining the fractious transition of power.

“On the advice of our medical team, the Administration does not intend to lift these restrictions on 1/26,” tweeted Jen Psaki, Biden’s press secretary.

“In fact, we plan to strengthen public health measures around international travel in order to

further mitigate the spread of Covid-19.” “With the pandemic worsening, and more contagious variants emerging around the world, this is not the time to be lifting restrictions on international travel,” she added.

Just minutes prior to Psaki’s tweet, President Trump said he would lift the travel ban on Europe and Brazil, although travel bans for China and Iran would remain in place.

“This action is the best way to continue protecting Americans from Covid-19 while enabling travel to resume safely,” he said in

a statement released by the White House.

Trump had announced an initial ban on January 31, 2020 on non-American travelers entering from China to stop the spread of the coronavirus. The ban was extended to European countries on March 14, the US shutting itself off from the world as the pandemic entered full force.

Both Biden and Trump’s statements come days after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that all air passengers bound for the US will be required to test negative

for Covid-19 within three days of their departure.

The test policy will take effect on January 26, and expands on a previous testing rule that targeted Britain and came into effect in December, following the emergence of a Coronavirus variant believed to be more transmissible.

Some epidemiologists have warned it is likely that new, more transmissible variants are already establishing themselves in the United States, the hardest-hit country in the world by the pandemic.

Biden will be inaugurated on Wednesday, after a

rocky handover of power and in the midst of an alarming surge of Covid-19 cases in the US.

Trump for months had refused to accept the outcome of the November 3 election, baselessly insisting the vote had been rigged and ignoring court rulings to the contrary, leaving the country seething with division and anger.

He denied Biden’s team access to funds and resources and still has not congratulated Biden or invited him for the traditional tea visit in the Oval Office.

— AFP

## It’s not going to be easy, says Kamala Harris

Washington, Jan. 19: Vice President-elect Kamala Harris has acknowledged the challenges that lie ahead for Joe Biden when he will be sworn in as the 46th President of the United States on Wednesday, saying “it is not going to be easy.”

Biden enters the White House on January 20 with the top challenge to lift the country from the devastation of a raging pandemic that has killed more than 3,98,000 Americans and thrown millions into economic distress. “We’re going into Wednesday knowing that we’re ready to do the work, and we’ve got a lot of work to do.”

“It’s not going to be easy,” Harris told reporters at Martha’s Table in Anacostia here on Monday, observing the National Day of Service. Every year on the third Monday in January, Americans honour the slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., who in the 1950s and 1960s organised non-violent protests for Black equality and voting rights.

The holiday traditionally features people commemorating King’s work by participating in community service projects. However, both the pandemic and warnings of violence in cities across the country following the January 6 insurrection by pro-Trump supporters in the US Capitol affected the events this year.

“As we have discussed, Joe has outlined our plan for vaccinations, our plan for recovery, and in particular relief for working people, for families. And there is a lot to do”. “Some of them say that ours are ambitious goals, but we do believe with hard work



US Vice President-elect Kamala Harris speaks to the press after participating in a service event to mark Martin Luther King Jr. Day at Martha’s Table in Washington, DC. — AFP

and with the cooperation and collaboration of the members of the United States Congress that we can get it done,” Harris said in response to a question.

Asked if she felt safe going to the inauguration, amidst intelligence reports of more violent protests by supporters of the outgoing President Donald Trump, she said, “I am very much looking forward to be sworn in as the next vice president of the United States and I will walk there to that moment proudly with my head up and my shoulders back”.

Harris, 56, will make history on Wednesday as the first female, first person of colour and first South Asian American vice president. Harris and the future Second Gentleman of the US Doug Emhoff participated in a service event on Monday, packing food into plastic bags which will be distributed. — PTI

## Mideast-mothers count days to Biden

Damascus, Jan. 19: Syrian mother Dahouk Idriss says she can’t wait for US President-elect Joe Biden to be inaugurated on Wednesday, so she can finally visit her son for the first time in four years.

Biden has pledged that, on his first day in office, he would reverse a ban ordered by Donald Trump on travel to the United States for citizens of many mostly-Muslim countries.

“I’m counting the days until I get my next visa,” Idriss said, sitting in her comfortable Damascus liv-

ing room, surrounded by pictures of her far-flung children and late husband.

The retired chemistry teacher in her sixties said she visited her 36-year-old son twice after he started studying in Washington DC the year Syria’s war broke out in 2011, once in 2015 and the last time in late 2016.

But after Trump took over the White House in 2017, he banned access to the United States to all travellers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, igniting international outrage. — AFP

## Trump mulls pardons on final day

Washington, Jan. 19: President Donald Trump began his final full day in the White House on Tuesday with a long list of possible pardons to dish out before snubbing his successor Joe Biden’s inauguration and leaving for Florida.

On Wednesday at noon, Biden will be sworn in and the Trump presidency will end, turning the page on some of the most disruptive, divisive years the United States has seen since the 1960s.

Biden, a veteran Democratic senator who also served as vice president to Barack Obama, was set to travel to Washington on Tuesday with his wife Dr Jill Biden from their hometown of Wilmington, Delaware.

Together with incoming vice president Kamala Harris — the first woman ever to hold the job — Biden was due to deliver an evening address on the Covid-19 crisis, from the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool.

By contrast, Trump has remained uncharacteristically silent as the clock ticks down to his departure to a new life in his Mar-a-Lago golf club resi-

## KEY DATES OF THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY

From the launch of his campaign in 2015 to his defeat to Joe Biden, Donald Trump’s time in the White House was a chaotic roller coaster ride as he shattered norms, shunned allies, bullied anyone who opposed him and governed with laser focus on how his policies would play with his conservative political base.

## HERE ARE SOME OF THE MAIN DATES PUNCTUATING TRUMP’S POLITICAL CAREER:

## FIRST MOVES

**January 25, 2017:** Trump signs an executive order ordering construction to begin on the wall he promised to build on the southern US border with Mexico, a key campaign promise he said Mexico would pay for.

**January 27, 2017:** Trump issues an executive order banning entries from seven Muslim-majority countries — Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Amid outrage, the Supreme Court validates the text in the summer of 2018.

**June 1, 2017:** Trump declares that the US is pulling out of the Paris climate agreement.

## ECONOMY

**December 20, 2017:** Republican-run Congress passes the biggest tax cuts in 31 years.

**May 31, 2018:** The US slaps tariffs on steel and aluminum from Mexico, Canada and the European Union.

**June 15, 2018:** Trump launches a trade war with China by slapping 25 percent tariffs on \$50 billion of imported goods.

**September 2019:** Unemployment hits its lowest level in 50 years, at 3.5 percent.

## DIPLOMACY

**December 6, 2017:** The Trump administration recognises Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, breaking with long standing US policy and drawing international condemnation.

**May 8, 2018:** The US withdraws from the international nuclear agreement with Iran and reestablishes US sanctions against the Islamic republic.

**October 27, 2019:** Announcement that the leader of the Islamic State group, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was killed in a US military raid in Syria.

**January 3, 2020:** The powerful Iranian general Qassem Soleimani is killed in a US air strike.

## DEFEATS

**July 28, 2017:** The Senate fails to overturn Obamacare, the Democratic health care plan that Trump had vowed to abolish.

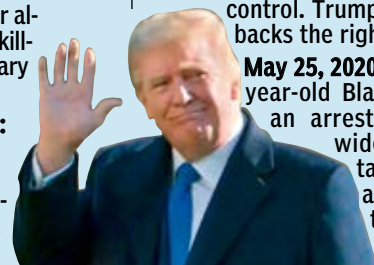
**November 6, 2018:** The opposition Democrats retake control of the House of Representatives. Republicans retain the Senate.

## DIVISION

**August 12, 2017:** During a rally of far-right activists in Charlottesville in Virginia, a neo-Nazi sympathizer drives his car into a group of anti-racist demonstrators, killing a woman.

**February 14, 2018:** A 19-year-old former student opens fire in his old high school in Parkland, Florida, killing 17 people. The massacre sparks an unprecedented mobilization of young people calling for gun control. Trump wholeheartedly backs the rights of gun owners.

**May 25, 2020:** George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, dies during an arrest, triggering nationwide protests. Trump takes a law and order approach and calls the demonstrators thugs.



dence in Palm Beach.

Banned by Twitter for his stream of inflammatory messages and misinfor-

mation, he has largely stopped communicating with the nation. He has also yet to congratulate

Biden or invite him for the traditional pre-inauguration cup of tea in the Oval Office.

Instead, Trump has spent his time meeting with a dwindling circle of loyalists who backed him

during a doomed, two-month effort to overturn the results of the November election. — AFP

to establish full diplomatic relations with the State of Israel,” the official Bahrain News Agency quoted Trump as saying. — AFP



## SHORT TAKES

ARGENTINA  
QUAKE HURTS 2  
KIDS, 1 ADULT

**Buenos Aires (Argentina), Jan. 19:** A 6.4-magnitude earthquake struck in northwestern Argentina near the border with central Chile, injuring at least three people, authorities said on Tuesday.

Two children and an adult were hospitalised in San Juan province in Argentina after the quake hit just before midnight on Monday, provincial Gov. Sergio Uñac said. The shaking caused the collapse of a house, damage to roads and some other buildings in several cities, as well power and water cuts, he said.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the epicenter was 27.6 kilometers (17 miles) southwest of the Argentine town of Porcito and struck at a depth of 14 kilometers (nearly nine miles). The quake was followed by a magnitude 5.0 aftershock about 15 minutes later and then at least five more strong aftershocks in the next hour ranging from magnitude 5.3 to 4.8, the USGS said. Strong shaking was felt in Chile's capital, Santiago. Chilean officials said there were no immediate reports of damage.

SUDAN TROOPS  
DEPLOYED IN  
DARFUR REGION

**Khartoum, Jan. 19:** A heavy Sudanese troop presence helped restore calm on Tuesday in the Darfur region, local sources said, after three days of inter-ethnic violence which claimed at least 155 lives and displaced tens of thousands.

The transitional government in the capital Khartoum has deployed military units to the remote region, where the recent end of a joint United Nation and African Union peacekeeping mission raised fears of more bloodshed.

Violence erupted on Saturday between Arab nomads and members of the non-Arab Massalit ethnic group in El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur, killing at least 100 people and wounding more than 130, said state governor Mohamed Abdalla al-Douma.

The clashes prompted some 50,000 people to flee areas in and around a camp for internally displaced people (IDPs) who were driven from their homes in previous conflicts, said aid group Save the Children.

INDIAN FISHING  
BOAT SINKS IN  
LANKAN WATERS

**Colombo, Jan. 19:** An Indian fishing boat allegedly trespassing the International Maritime Boundary Line sank in Sri Lankan waters after colliding with a Navy vessel of the island nation and a search and rescue operation was underway for the missing fishermen, the Navy said here on Tuesday.

The Indian boat sank in Sri Lankan waters about 8 nautical miles within the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) northwest of Delft Island on Monday.

Sri Lanka Navy said it had launched a search and rescue operation for the sunken Indian fishing boat and its fishermen. It said the navy units on patrol carried out an operation to seize Indian fishing trawlers poaching in Sri Lankan waters trespassing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), after observing more than 50 trawlers. As the operation was going on, one of the Indian fishing trawlers tried to evade the scene, making it collide with a Sri Lankan Navy vessel.

MIGRANTS SCALE  
BORDER OF  
SPANISH ENCLAVE

**Madrid, Jan. 19:** More than 80 migrants have managed to scale the double frontier fence to enter Spain's North African city enclave of Melilla from Morocco.

Some 150 people from sub-Saharan countries attempted the crossing at 7.30 am Tuesday but police stopped many from entering the territory, the Spanish news agency Efe and other media outlets said. Of the 87 who made it, nine were taken to a hospital for treatment of injuries suffered in the crossing while the rest were taken to the city's temporary migrant accommodation center while authorities study whether they can be deported.

Most are normally released and ordered to leave Spain. Comment from government offices in Melilla was not immediately possible.

## China rushes to build isolation centre

Small, localised outbreaks prompt Chinese officials to order mass testing, lockdowns

**Beijing, Jan. 19:** Thousands of prefabricated rooms fill a vast field on the outskirts of China's Shijiazhuang city as construction crews work around the clock to erect a large quarantine facility to curb the city's growing Covid-19 outbreak.

China has largely brought the virus under control even as the rest of the world struggles with mounting deaths and overburdened hospitals.

But a spate of small, localised outbreaks has prompted Chinese officials to order mass testing, strict lockdowns and to prepare to move full villages into the quarantine facility to stamp out a resurgence.

The scenes outside Shijiazhuang, northern China, are reminiscent of Beijing's efforts early last year to build makeshift field hospitals in Wuhan — the central city where Covid-19 cases first emerged — within days.

The quarantine buildings in Shijiazhuang are equipped with bathrooms, Wi-fi and air conditioning and will house close contacts of confirmed virus patients once completed in the next few days.

State broadcaster CCTV



Erezinha da Conceicao (L) and Dulcinea da Silva Lopes(R) become the first women to receive the Covid-19 vaccine produced by China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd, during the start of the vaccination program in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on Monday.

showed workers in high-visibility vests and hard hats assembling the cabin-like structures in the dark, while flags bearing the names of construction teams and Communist Party units fluttered from the completed buildings.

The facility is expected

to have enough rooms to hold more than 4,000 people once it is completed, CCTV said Tuesday.

Work began on January 13 as northern Chinese cities placed millions under lockdown over hundreds of new infections in recent weeks. Over 20,000

residents of villages in the surrounding Hebei province have been sent into quarantine in centralised facilities, state media reported last week.

Meanwhile, millions of local residents have been tested for the virus multiple times.

— AFP

California urges  
stop to 300K jabs

**Los Angeles, Jan. 19:** California's state epidemiologist is urging a halt to more than 300,000 Coronavirus vaccinations using a Moderna vaccine version because some people received medical treatment for possible severe allergic reactions.

Dr Erica S. Pan on Sunday recommended providers stop using lot 41L20A of the Moderna vaccine pending completion of an investigation by state officials, Moderna, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the federal Food and Drug Administration.

"Out of an extreme abundance of caution and also recognising the extremely limited supply of vaccine, we are recommending that providers use other available vaccine inventory," Pan said in a statement.

She said more than 330,000 doses from the lot arrived in California between Jan. 5 and Jan. 12 and were distributed to 287 providers. Fewer than 10 people, who

all received the vaccine at the same community site, needed medical attention over a 24-hour period, Pan said. No other similar clusters were found.

Pan did not specify the number of cases involved or where they occurred. However, six San Diego health care workers had allergic reactions to vaccines they received at a mass vaccination centre on Jan. 14. The site was temporarily closed and is now using other vaccines, KTVB-TV reported. The CDC has said the vaccine can cause side effects for a few days that include fever, chills, headache, swelling or tiredness, "which are normal signs that your body is building protection".

However, severe reactions are extremely rare. Pan said in a vaccine similar to Moderna, the rate of anaphylaxis — in which an immune system reaction can block breathing and cause blood pressure to drop — was about 1 in 100,000.

— AP

U.S. SANCTIONS  
RUSSIA SHIP OVER  
NORD STREAM 2  
GAS PIPELINE

**Berlin, Jan. 19:** A Russian ship tasked with laying pipes to complete construction of the controversial Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline will be placed under sanctions by the US, German officials said Monday.

"This is the announcement of a sanction of a Russian ship. We take note of the announcement with regret," a ministry spokesman said, confirming a report in the Handelsblatt newspaper that Washington would make the decision official on Tuesday.

Work on the 10-billion-euro (\$11 billion) pipeline resumed in German waters in December after being suspended for nearly a year because of the threat of US sanctions.

Signed off by US President Donald Trump in late 2019, the measures threatened asset freezes and visa restrictions for companies involved in the construction.

According to the Handelsblatt, the US informed Germany and several European countries that it would censure the pipeline laying vessel "Fortuna", owned by the Russian company KVT-RUS.

The ship helped work to restart on the site in December by laying a short section of pipeline in German waters. The decision comes just ahead of Joe Biden's inauguration as US president on Wednesday.

Trump's administration repeatedly criticised Germany and other European nations for relying on energy from Russia.

Besides Russian giant Gazprom, which has a majority stake in the project, the international consortium involved in the pipeline includes European players such as Germany's Wintershall and Uniper groups, the Dutch-British giant Shell, France's Engie and Austria's OMV.

— AFP

Russian Kremlin refuses to free  
Navalny, warns against protest

Navalny accuses Putin of ordering poisoning, Kremlin denies report

**Moscow, Jan. 19:** The Kremlin on Tuesday dismissed Western demands to release Russia's most prominent opposition leader Alexei Navalny, saying his calls for mass protests over his arrest were "troubling".

Legal pressure is ramping up against President Vladimir Putin's best-known domestic critic, who is due in court on defamation charges on Wednesday, as his allies in Russia call for protests in Moscow this weekend.

Navalny, 44, was arrested on Sunday as he returned to Russia from Germany for the first time since he recovered from a near-fatal poisoning with the Soviet-designed Novichok nerve agent in August.

Russia's prison service said it had detained the opposition politician for violating the terms of a suspended sentence he was given in 2014 on fraud charges he says were politically motivated.

A hastily organised court on Monday ordered Navalny jailed for 30 days, prompting his associates to call on Russians to take to the streets in central Moscow and march towards the Kremlin on Saturday.

Demonstrations in Moscow have been banned due to coronavirus restrictions, but Navalny's right-hand man Leonid Volkov said on Tuesday the organisers would not seek formal permission from authorities to stage the rally.

Volkov said that, the prospect that the unauthorised rally could result in detentions for Navalny's supporters would not deter them, pointing to what he said were multiplying attacks on the opposition.

"Putin poisoned Navalny and Navalny is now behind bars," he said.

Navalny accuses Putin of ordering his poisoning, a claim the Kremlin has repeatedly denied.

— AFP



Police officers patrol in front of Moscows penal detention centre Number 1 (known as Matrosskaya Tishina) where opposition leader Alexei Navalny is held after being jailed for 30 days following his arrest at a Moscow airport upon the arrival from Berlin, on Tuesday.

— AFP

Navalny urges Russians to  
take to streets over jailing

**Moscow, Jan. 19:** Russia's most prominent opposition leader Alexei Navalny called on Monday for his supporters to take to the streets after a hastily organised court ordered him jailed for 30 days.

The makeshift court — set up in a police station on the outskirts of Moscow where Navalny was being held — agreed to a request from prosecutors for Navalny to be kept in custody until February 15.

Police then moved the Kremlin critic to Moscow's Matrosskaya Tishina prison, infamous as the jail where lawyer Sergei Magnitsky died in 2009 while being held under pre-trial arrest.

Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's best-known domestic critic, was taken to the station after a dramatic airport arrest on Sunday that prompted condemnation from the West and calls for his immediate release.

In a video released by his

team shortly after the ruling, the 44-year-old anti-corruption campaigner urged his supporters to protest.

"Do not be silent. Resist. Take to the streets — not for me, but for you," Navalny said. The head of Navalny's regional network Leonid Volkov said preparations were underway for protests to be organised across the country on Saturday.

Navalny was arrested as he returned to Russia from Germany for the first time since he was poisoned with a nerve agent in August and flown to Berlin in an induced coma.

Russia's FSIN prison service said that it had detained him for violating the terms of a suspended sentence he was given in 2014, on fraud charges he says were politically motivated.

Navalny's lawyer Olga Mikhailova told reporters outside of the police sta-

tion Monday that a court hearing on turning that sentence into a prison term will take place on February 2. In another video posted by his team from the courtroom before the Monday ruling, Navalny said he did not understand how the session could be taking place.

"I've seen a lot of mockery of justice, but the old man in the bunker (Putin) is so afraid that they have blatantly torn up and thrown away" Russia's criminal code, Navalny said. With temperatures hovering around -20 degrees Celsius (-4 Fahrenheit), several dozen Navalny supporters gathered outside the police station shouting "Freedom!" and "Let him go!" as police looked on. One waved a pair of underwear attached to a pole, a reference to claims that the Novichok nerve agent used against Navalny had been placed in a pair of his underpants.

— AFP

UN 'DEEPLY  
TROUBLED' BY  
ARREST OF  
OPPN ACTIVIST

**United Nations, Jan. 19:** The UN human rights office has raised alarm over the arrest of Russian opposition activist Alexei Navalny and called for his immediate release. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on Monday tweeted that it was "deeply troubled" by Navalny's arrest and called on the Russian government to respect his right to legal due process.

Navalny, 44, was arrested on Sunday upon return to Moscow from Germany, where he had been recovering after allegedly being poisoned with a Novichok nerve agent. In a statement issued later in the day, two independent UN human rights experts saluted the bravery of the anti-corruption activist and called on Russia to release him, while also ensuring that his life and well-being are protected.

Agnes Callamard, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and Special Rapporteur Irene Khan, who covers the right to freedom of opinion and expression, said it was "appalling that Navalny was arrested for breaching parole terms, for a sentence he should not have received in the first place and despite the authorities being fully aware that he had been several months in Germany recovering from an attempt on his life".

OHCHR said in the press release that it was believed Navalny's arrest was related to alleged violations of a suspended sentence for a fraud conviction following proceedings that the European Court of Human Rights said in 2018.

— PTI

COURT TO HEAR  
MEGHAN'S CASE  
OVER PRIVACY

**London, Jan. 19:** Meghan Markle's high-profile lawsuit against a British newspaper group for privacy and copyright breaches returns to court in London on Tuesday, with the duchess potentially days away from winning the case.

Meghan, who with her husband Prince Harry is waging an increasingly public war with some media outlets, is suing the publishers of the Mail on Sunday, *Daily Mail* and *MailOnline*.

The American former television actress claims Associated Newspapers breached her privacy, her data protection rights and copyright by publishing extracts of correspondence with her estranged father, Thomas, before she married Harry.

Judge Mark Warby approved an earlier application by the duchess for the trial to be postponed. Her legal team instead asked for a judgment to be made without the need for a full trial.

If Warby rules in the duchess's favour, then the case is over, bar an appeal. If she loses, then it will go to a full trial later this year, potentially forcing Meghan and her estranged father to face each other in court to give testimony.

Warby ruled against the royal in a preliminary hearing last year, striking out elements of the claim.

Meghan alleges that reporters acted "dishonestly and in bad faith", and "deliberately dug up or stirred conflict" between her and her father.

— AFP

DOZENS KILLED  
IN TALIBAN  
ATTACKS

**Kabul, Jan. 19:** A wave of Taliban attacks and violence has killed dozens across Afghanistan, even as talks are underway between the government and the insurgents in Qatar, officials said on Tuesday.

A statement from the defence ministry said four army soldiers were killed late on Monday night in Taliban attacks on checkpoints in Kunduz province.

According to the ministry, 15 Taliban fighters were also killed and 12 were wounded. The details were impossible to independently verify as Kunduz is off limits to journalists and the Taliban hold sway across most of the province's rural areas. However, Ghulam Rabani Rabani, a provincial council member in Kunduz, gave a significantly higher casualty toll. At least 25 members of the security forces were killed by the Taliban in separate attacks in the Dasht-e-Archi district, including 13 soldiers and four policemen, he said.

At least eight other soldiers were killed near Kunduz city, the provincial capital, he said. Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said the insurgents were behind all the attacks. The Taliban were able to seize weapons and ammunition from the checkpoints, he said.

— AP

● A STATEMENT from the defence ministry said four army soldiers were killed late on Monday night in Taliban attacks.

## SECURITY | THREAT

Several videos show the woman actively directing fellow rioters urging them 'upstairs'

## Pelosi's laptop was to be sold to Russia: FBI

**Washington, Jan. 19:** A young woman identified as having taken part in the storming of the U.S. Capitol reportedly stole a laptop from top Democrat Nancy Pelosi's office and hoped to sell it to a Russian spy agency, according to an FBI criminal complaint.

The complaint, filed late Sunday in a U.S. District Court in Washington, seeks the arrest of Riley

June Williams of Pennsylvania on grounds including "violent entry and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds."

The *Washington Post* reported on Monday night that federal authorities said they had arrested Williams, but the report included few details.

Relying on several photos and videos of the chaotic January 6 intrusion, an FBI agent said

● RELYING ON several photos and videos of the chaotic January 6 intrusion, an FBI agent said Williams was seen near the office of House speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Williams was seen near the office of House speaker Nancy Pelosi.

A witness, identified in the court document only as W1 but who claimed to

be "the former romantic partner of Riley June Williams," alleged that Williams planned to send the laptop to a friend in Russia to sell it to the SVR foreign intelligence agency.

That sale "fell through for unknown reasons, and Williams still has the computer device or destroyed it," the affidavit says.

It was unclear whether a laptop from Pelosi's office

was actually stolen. The FBI said it was continuing to investigate.

Several videos show the woman believed to be Williams actively directing fellow rioters, urging them "upstairs, upstairs, upstairs." The complaint says Williams' mother in the city of Harrisburg was shown pictures taken in the Capitol and confirmed a thin, bespectacled brown-haired woman in

several pictures was her. She said her daughter had "taken a sudden interest in President Trump's politics."

Williams had traveled to Washington with her father, though the two were separated during the chaos that day.

The complaint says that after Williams returned home, she packed a bag and told her mother she was leaving "for a couple of weeks." "It appears that

Williams has fled," the complaint says.

Scores of those who forced their way into the Capitol have been identified and arrested, usually with the help of photos and videos posted on social media. The Capitol remains on heavy lockdown ahead of the inauguration on Wednesday of Joe Biden as president — an event the rioters had hoped to prevent.

— AFP



## SHORT TAKES

## Shastri in tears after 'unreal' win

**Brisbane:** Ravi Shastri claims to be anything but an emotional person.

As a 22-year-old captain of the India U-25 team back in 1984, he had stopped the team manager from telling rookie Mohammed Azharuddin about his grandfather's ill health to ensure that the player, who was on the verge of breaking into the Indian team did not leave a match and hamper his chances. He is a 'khaadoos' (resilient in Marathi) Mumbaikar who will hardly get mushy. But that was before Tuesday when he watched Rishabh Pant take a lap of honour with the national flag, hand it over to a proud Mohammed Siraj and then to Shardul Thakur.

"I got emotional. I am not someone who generally has tears in his eyes and even I got emotional," the India head coach, still trying to soak in what his wards had achieved, confessed to a quote-hungry media after his team of mostly greenhorns outfoxed Australia 2-1 in a Test series.

"I had tears because this is unreal. What these guys have pulled off will go down in history as one of the greatest series ever played. When you look at the Covid situation and state of injuries and then to show the stomach for a fight, after being bowled out for 36 is unimaginable," said the veteran of 80 Tests.

Known for his one-liners, Shastri was still gathering his thoughts after what unfolded here. "This is the toughest tour ever. Nothing comes closer to this. This surpasses all," he said.

— PTI

## Team to get ₹5cr bonus from BCCI

**New Delhi:** The BCCI on Tuesday announced a ₹5 crore bonus for the Indian cricket team after the Ajinkya Rahane-led side won the fourth and final Test against Australia to clinch the series 2-1 and retain the Border-Gavaskar trophy. BCCI President Sourav Ganguly and Secretary Jay Shah tweeted within minutes of each other to make the announcement. The Board later issued a formal statement, applauding the team. "It was a series that showcased grit, determination and resilience of the highest quality," the BCCI said.

"The Board applauds the efforts displayed by the team on and off the field... The BCCI is proud of this magnificent feat and has announced a cash reward of 5 crore INR to the team," it added.

Ganguly said the "value of this win is beyond any number." "We are extremely proud of the series win. Beating Australia in Australia by a young team will remain etched in the history of Indian cricket forever.

"It cannot get better than this. I am so proud of everyone. Congratulations to Ajinkya Rahane and Ravi Shastri and the rest of the touring party for this remarkable feat," he said. BCCI secretary Jay Shah echoed the sentiment. "Heartiest congratulations to every member of the Indian cricket team. The team overcame the odds, injuries and a tough opposition and showed great character, resolve and courage to win the historic Test series in Australia for the second time in a row." — PTI

## Kohli returns for Eng Test series

**New Delhi:** Virat Kohli returned to lead India against England in the upcoming home Test series while the selectors also recalled all-rounder Hardik Pandya and pacer Ishant Sharma to bolster the squad, announced by the BCCI on Tuesday. Kohli, who headed back to India on a paternity leave after the Adelaide Test, was named in the 18-man squad along with pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who missed the final Test in Brisbane against Australia due to an abdominal strain. The squad was named only for the first two Tests of the four-match series, starting on February 5 in Chennai. Ishant had missed the Australia tour due to the side strain he suffered during the IPL while Pandya only played the ODIs and T20Is Down Under. The second Test will also be played in Chennai (February 13-17) while Ahmedabad will host the third (February 24-28) and fourth Test (March 4-8). — PTI

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Indian players celebrate with the trophy after defeating Australia by three wickets on the final day of the fourth Test at the Gabba in Brisbane on Tuesday. India won the four-Test series 2-1. — AP

## RISHABH!

## Rishabh leads India to series win after rookies demonstrate daredevilry

**Brisbane, Jan. 19:** An Indian cricket team saddled with broken bones and battered bodies showed a never-seen-before zeal to retain the coveted Border-Gavaskar trophy with a historic three-wicket win over Australia in the fourth and final Test here, successfully chasing a 328-run target to seal the four-match series 2-1.

A minefield of talent called Rishabh Pant (89 not out off 138 balls) channelled his inner 'Mad Max' to scare the daylight out of the Australians with his breathtaking stroke-play, ending the home team's 32-year-old unbeaten run at the 'Fortress Gabba'.

The result has the potential to end Tim Paine's reign as Australia captain having lost back-to-back home series against India. "Whether it was with bat, ball or field, every time we had a chance to go ahead in the game, we let it slip," Paine said after the rather poor performance by his team.

The highlights package of Pant's battle with Nathan Lyon can be enjoyed repeatedly in times to come as he demolished the 100-Test man in company of debutant Washington Sundar (22), who

hooked the world's best fast bowler, Pat Cummins, for a six.

No one moved from their seats as Pant cut, drove, and paddle-swept to make a statement to his detractors while gifting India one of their finest overseas wins during the dying moments of the final session with an off-driven boundary.

While Shubman Gill (91 off 146 balls) announced his arrival on the global stage, Cheteshwar Pujara (56 off 211 balls) surpassed all the pain barriers en route his slowest Test fifty that held the game in balance for Pant to launch a final assault.

The Australian team wouldn't feel too good about not being able to win a Test match with an opposition that was finding it difficult to field a fit first XI a day prior to the Test match.

Add to it, the visitors were also left quite hurt by the racial slurs directed at the likes of Mohammed Siraj and Jasprit Bumrah by the crowd during the Sydney Test. The series will be remembered for ages and the impact that Ajinkya Rahane's team had on the cricketers' fraternity and the fans in general will be written in golden words when a fresh history of Test cricket after 2000 is written. — PTI



Mohammed Siraj (right) celebrates India's series win with Rishabh Pant at the Gabba in Brisbane on Tuesday. — AFP

## AUSTRALIA'S FIRST LOSS AT GABBA AFTER 1988

■ Australia's defeat was their first at Brisbane in 32 years. Last time they lost was against the West Indies in 1988. In between these two defeats, Australia went unbeaten for 31 Tests. The only other venue to witness a longer streak is Karachi, where Pakistan remained unbeaten for 34 successive Tests between 1955 and 2000.

■ India won the four-Test series 2-1 despite losing the first Test match. This is only the fourth instance in which a team has come back from a Test down or worse to beat Australia in Australia. On all the three previous occasions, it was England — in 1882-83, 1911-12 and 1954-55 — who managed that.

## PANT SURPASSES DHONI

■ Rishabh Pant became the 68th Indian batsman to complete 1,000 runs in Test cricket. By completing the same in the 27th innings of 16th Test match, he is the fastest among the seven Indian wicket-keeper to score 1,000 runs in Tests. Mahendra Singh Dhoni who completed 1,000 runs in 32 innings of 20 Test matches, held the previous Indian record.

## INDIA'S JOINT 4TH SMALLEST WIN IN TESTS

■ India recorded their joint fourth smallest win in Tests by beating Australia by three wickets in fourth Test at Brisbane. India's one-wicket win over Australia at Mohali in 2010-11 is the smallest win followed by two two-wicket victories against Australia at Mumbai in 1964-65 and at Chennai in 2000-01. India also achieved a three-wicket win over the West Indies at Chennai in 1978-79.

■ India's 329/7 is their third highest fourth innings total to win the match. The highest is 406/4 against the West Indies at Port of Spain in 1975-76. India beat England by six wickets at Chennai in 2008-09 after making 387 which is India's second highest fourth inning total to win in Tests.

■ This is also the fifth-highest successful chase in Australia. In the last 20 years, only South Africa have chased down a higher total in Australia, when they scored 414 at Perth in 2008.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

## Biggest moment of life for Pant

**Brisbane, Jan. 19:** After playing a key role in India's breathtaking and successful run chase in the series-deciding fourth Test against Australia, Rishabh Pant on Tuesday called the historic win as the "biggest moment" of his life.

"This is one of the biggest moments of my life now, and I'm happy that all the support staff and all my teammates supported me even when I wasn't playing," Pant said at the post-match presentation ceremony.

India did not play Pant in

● Rishabh Pant took the intimidating Australian attack on a challenging fifth day track by the scruff of its neck to conjure up an unbeaten 89-run knock that powered India to a 2-1 Test series victory.

either the preceding ODI or the T20 series. But the young wicketkeeper-batsman made an impression in the Test series, playing a combative 97-run knock in the second innings in Sydney and again here on Tuesday.

"It's been a dream series. The team management

always backs me and tells me, you are a match-winner and you have to go win the match for the team. I keep thinking every day that I want to win matches for India, and I did it today," Pant said.

Asked about the pitch that had cracks all over, Pant said, "It was a fifth-day

pitch and the ball was turning a bit. I thought I have to be disciplined with my shot selection."

India skipper Ajinkya Rahane initially struggled to find words but gathered himself to praise his courageous teammates.

"It means a lot to us. I don't know how to describe this, but our boys showed a lot of character and determination after the Adelaide Test," Rahane, who led India in the absence of Virat Kohli, said.

"I'm really proud of each individual." — PTI

## Rahane credits team effort for win

**Brisbane, Jan. 19:** For someone who led India to one of their greatest ever series wins, Ajinkya Rahane was at his modest best at the end of it all, saying he looked good as a leader because everyone else contributed.

Rahane and Virat Kohli are contrasting personalities but the former did remarkably well in galvanising the squad after the regular skipper headed back home on paternity leave following the debacle in the first Test at Adelaide.

"It's an honour to lead the country. It was not about me but about the team. I looked good because everyone contributed. For us it was about having that character on the field, having the fighting spirit, the attitude," said Rahane in the post-match presser when

**It was really tough after the Adelaide Test but it was all about showing character and fighting spirit. It was not thinking too much about the result. We just wanted to play good cricket. Credit to everyone in the squad including the support staff.**

— AJINKYA RAHANE  
India stand-in Test captain

asked about his captaincy stint. Rahane's calm demeanour helped the team move on from the Adelaide disaster and he made sure the game was not discussed going forward.

He led from the front in Melbourne with a match-winning hundred to level the series.

The going got tougher with each passing game as the injury list grew but Rahane said it was all about fighting on with the resources they were left with.

"It was really tough

after the Adelaide Test but it was all about showing character and fighting spirit. We were not thinking too much about the result. We just wanted to play good cricket. Credit to everyone in the squad including the support staff."

Rahane will be back to being Kohli's deputy in the upcoming home series against England next month but for now he just wants to savour this victory.

"We all should enjoy this win, not just us but every Indian should enjoy

this. What we did here is historic and we want to enjoy this win tonight and once we land in India we will think about the England series," said Rahane, who too got emotional after Rishabh Pant hit the winning runs. Chasing 328 at Australia's fortress was a herculean task but Rahane said they were only focussed on playing their normal game.

"This morning we spoke about playing simple cricket. What we did in this tour was fight very hard. Yes, we were looking to play session by session. During tea time, we sent messages to Rishabh but he was always looking to chase the total.

"Credit to him, he took that risk and took on the Aussies. His and Pujara's innings gave the platform to win the game." — PTI



Indian captain Ajinkya Rahane (left) applauds supporters as the team takes a victory lap carrying the national flag around The Gabba in Brisbane on Tuesday. — AP



We are all overjoyed at the success of the Indian Cricket Team in Australia. Their remarkable energy and passion was visible throughout. So was their stellar intent, remarkable grit and determination. Congratulations to the team! Best wishes for your future endeavours.

— NARENDRA MODI  
Prime Minister

EVERY SESSION WE DISCOVERED A NEW HERO. Every time we got hit, we stayed put & stood taller. We pushed boundaries of belief to play fearless but not careless cricket. Injuries & uncertainties were countered with poise & confidence. One of the greatest series wins! Congrats India.

— SACHIN TENDULKAR  
India legend

WHAT A WIN!!! Yesssssss. To everyone who doubted us after Adelaide, stand up and take notice. Exemplary performance but the grit and determination was the standout for us the whole way. Well done to all the boys and the management. Enjoy this historic feat lads.

Cheers @BCCI.  
— VIRAT KOHLI  
India captain

This win is going in history books! Young team beating a experienced Australian side I don't think I was so proud while I was playing for india Flag of India #Unbelievable stuff #test cricket at it's best congratulations boys Man dancingFisted handFisted handFisted hand #IndiavsAustralia

— YUVRAJ SINGH  
Ex-India all-rounder

Khushi ke maare pagal. This is the new India. Ghar mein ghuskar maarta hai. From what happened in Adelaide to this, these young guys have given us a joy of a lifetime. There have been World Cup wins but this is special. And yes, there is a reason Pant is extra special.

— VIRENDER SEHWAG  
Ex-India opener

No matter what happens, we shall always play like the team called INDIA! You don't get to see such performances everyday. Take a bow champs!

— DINESH KARTHIK  
India wicket-keeper

Congrats to the Indian cricket team @BCCI... That's one of the best series wins I can ever remember on Aust soil & to do it after being bowled out for 36, plus a depleted squad-shows tremendous character, resilience, courage & belief.

— SHANE WARNE  
Former Aussie spin wizard

Test cricket's heart is beating strongly! That was an extraordinary win @BCCI & a fantastic series to watch. Aussies not lost at The Gabba since 1988. Wow

— STUART BROAD  
England player

India thoroughly deserved to win this series, against all odds they stood tall. Australia has some serious thinking to do, had the advantage of home series, fitness and the toss across the series!

#AUSvIND  
— TOM MOODY  
Former Australia player