

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 8 | JANUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 27°C
Min: 21°C
Rainfall: 3 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Margazhi 24
Tithi: Dashami
Star: Swathi/ Visagam
Rahukalam:
10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.18 am
Jumma: 12.20 pm
Asar: 3.31 pm
Maghrib: 5.57 pm
Isha: 7.12 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5.58 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.34 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 1.31 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 1.33 PM

TN-born Raj Iyer becomes first Chief Information Officer of US army

New Delhi: Washington: Indian-American Dr Raj Iyer has taken over as the first Chief Information Officer of the US Army. One of the highest ranking Indian-American civilians in the US Department of Defense, Iyer, who holds a Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering, serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary of the Army and directs representation of the secretary in matters relating to information management/information technology (IT), the Pentagon said in a statement. Iyer, originally a native of Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu, grew up in Bengaluru and completed his undergraduate studies at NIT-Tiruchy before moving to the US to pursue higher studies. — PTI

JEE-Advanced test for IITs to be held on July 3

New Delhi: The JEE-Advanced test for admission to Indian Institutes of Technology will be conducted on July 3, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' announced on Thursday. The relaxation in the eligibility criterion pertaining to class 12 marks will be offered this year too, he said. — PTI

Designer Satya Paul passes away

Coimbatore: Ace fashion designer Satya Paul, known for giving the Indian saree a contemporary touch, has passed away at the age of 79, his son Puneet Nanda said. Paul, who had suffered a stroke in December, breathed his last at Sadhguru's Isha Yoga Center on Wednesday. "He had a stroke on December 2 and as he was slowly recovering in the hospital, his only wish was to get all the things he was being monitored and poked with-removed so he could fly away."



COUNTER POINT



We should not allow anyone from virus-affected states!

Army troops help pregnant woman reach hospital

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 7

As continuous heavy snow fall cut all road connectivity in Kashmir, Indian Army troops carried a pregnant lady undergoing labour pain for about 2 kilometres to hospital, in knee deep snow in a village in Kupwara.

As Kashmir Valley was under a spell of heavy snow fall, the Army on Tuesday midnight received a distress call for help from a resident in Pharkian village in



Kupwara about his wife who was undergoing labour pain and needed to be evacuated to hospital

immediately. Due to heavy snowfall and inclement weather neither the community health ser-

vice vehicle nor civil transport was available and same was only possible after the snow was cleared from the road. "It had been snowing for nearly 24 hours, when at 11.30 pm on January 5 Army at the COB Karalpura, Kupwara received a distress call from Mr Manzoor Ahmed Sheikh, resident of village Pharkian, Kupwara. The individual informed that his wife is undergoing labour pain and needs to be evacuated to the hospital immediately," said a senior official. ■ PS

Army troops carry a pregnant woman undergoing labour pain for about 2 km to hospital in knee deep snow in Kupwara. — DC

immediately. Due to heavy snowfall and inclement weather neither the community health ser-



Peta urges CM, health min to cancel jallikattu permission

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Cong dharna today seeking Bedi recall

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Rider Santosh in coma after crash



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TRUMP MEN STORM CAPITOL

■ 4 killed as police clear seat of US democracy ■ President accused of inciting riot

Washington, Jan. 7: In an unprecedented assault on democracy in the United States, thousands of supporters of outgoing President Donald Trump stormed the Capitol building here and clashed with police, resulting in four deaths and interrupting a constitutional process by Congress to affirm the victory of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris in the election.

The 78-year-old Democratic leader and his 56-year-old Indian-origin deputy will be inaugurated on January 20, it was announced after the constitutional process was finally completed by a joint session of Congress.

In the violence on Wednesday, four people died, including one woman who was shot by a police officer, amid protests and rioting on Capitol Hill that resulted in dozens of demonstrators being arrested, police said. Metropolitan Police Department Chief Robert Contee called the rioting by pro-Trump demonstrators "shameful" during a news conference.

One woman was shot and killed by Capitol Police during the rioting. Police said three other people - a

woman and two men - died after apparently suffering "separate medical emergencies" near the Capitol grounds. The joint session of Congress, which is normally a ceremonial step, was halted for several hours when supporters of Trump breached the Capitol. Proceedings resumed and continued through the night after the building was cleared. Vice-President Mike Pence brought the Senate session back into order and proceeded with the verification process.

"The announcement of the state of the vote by the President of the Senate shall be deemed a sufficient declaration of the persons elected President and Vice-President of the United States, each for the term beginning on the 20th day of January 2021..." Mr Pence said following the count of all of the state's Electoral College votes.

Earlier on Wednesday, thousands of angry supporters of Mr Trump swarmed over the US Capitol, forcing lawmakers to evacuate their chambers and delaying by several hours a normally routine procedure clearing the way for Mr Biden and Ms Harris to be sworn in President and Vice-President. ■ PS



Supporters of President Donald Trump climb the west wall of the US Capitol on Wednesday. — AP

Congress confirms Biden-Harris win

Washington, Jan. 7: The joint sitting of the US Congress on Thursday confirmed the election of Democrats Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Kamala D. Harris as President and Vice-President, respectively, ending a series of attempts by incumbent President Donald J. Trump to overturn the people's verdict and keep the White House. Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives pushed

through the night with tensions high and completed the work before dawn with Vice-President Mike Pence, presiding over the joint session, announcing the tally 306-232 favouring Mr Biden and Ms Harris. The House and Senate rejected challenges to the Electoral College votes for Mr Biden from Arizona and Pennsylvania clearing the way for certification of his victory in the November election.

Trump concedes, promises peaceful transition

Washington, Jan. 7: In a statement released just after the certification was finalised, US President Donald J. Trump acknowledged his election loss. He said that even though he disagrees with the outcome, "there will be an orderly transition on January 20th."

"I have always said we would continue our ... fight to ensure that only legal votes were counted. While this represents the end of the greatest first term in presidential history, it's only the beginning of our fight to Make America Great Again!" — PTI

- **US riot: World leaders appalled**
- **China goes online to mock 'beautiful sight' of US chaos**

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Noon: President Donald Trump tells a rally of supporters he wanted Vice-President Mike Pence to do 'the right thing'.

2.15 pm: Police alerts congressional staff of an external security threat

2.30 pm: 12-hour curfew declared. Police asks lawmakers to wear gas masks, as doors to the chambers are barricaded. Rioters break glass gallery doors. Police fire tear gas. A woman is shot inside the Capitol.

THE DRAMA



3.13pm: Trump tweets: "I am asking for everyone at the U.S. Capitol to remain peaceful. No violence! Remember, WE are the Party of Law & Order - respect the Law and our great men and women in Blue. Thank you!"

3.36 pm: National Guard has been called.

7.30 pm: Lawmakers return to their chambers.

8 pm: Pence reconvenes the Senate.

Distressed to see news about rioting: Modi

New Delhi, Jan. 7: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday expressed his distress at the rioting and violence in Washington DC, asserting that democratic process cannot be allowed to be subverted. "Distressed to see news about rioting and violence in Washington DC. Orderly and peaceful transfer of power must continue. The democratic process cannot be allowed to be subverted through unlawful protests," he tweeted. — PTI

Twitter, Facebook suspend Trump account

Washington, Jan. 7: In an unprecedented move, Twitter and Facebook suspended US President Donald Trump's accounts after he continued to push conspiracy theories about the election.

Twitter suspended Mr Trump's account for 12 hours and also blocked three of his tweets including a video of his address to his supporters. Facebook said it would be blocking the president's account from posting for 24 hours. — PTI

Economy to contract 7.7%, worst in four decades

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO | FC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 7

As a part of its first advance estimates of the economic growth, the government, on Thursday, said that its economy could shrink by 7.7 per cent in the current financial year 2020-21 (FY21) as compared to 4.2 per cent growth in FY20. The government said the contraction was because of the nationwide lockdown imposed in March 2020 to counter the coronavirus pandemic.

"The Real GDP or GDP at constant prices (2011-12) in the year 2020-21 is likely to attain ₹134.40 lakh crore levels, down 7.7 per cent as compared to ₹145.66 lakh crore in 2019-20," said the National Statistical Office (NSO) in its advance GDP estimates. The Reserve Bank of India's estimate for

- **The NSO estimates significant contraction in mining and quarrying, and trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting**

the current fiscal is 7.5 per cent contraction.

The Real GVA (gross value added) at basic prices is estimated at ₹123.39 lakh crore for 2020-21 as against ₹133.01 lakh crore in 2019-20, showing a contraction of 7.2 per cent.

According to NSO estimates, nominal GDP, or GDP at current prices, in the current fiscal is likely to be ₹194.82 lakh crore as against ₹203.40 lakh crore in year 2019-20.

The growth in nominal GDP during 2020-21 is estimated at -4.2 per cent. ■ PS



Farmers on their way to Tikri border during a tractor rally as part of their ongoing protest against the new farm laws, at Eastern Peripheral Expressway in New Delhi, on Thursday. — PTI

Centre may allow states to take call on farm laws

SANJAY KAW, RAJNISH SHARMA AND PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 7

There is a strong view in the highest quarters of the Central government that the state governments should be allowed to decide whether or not to implement the three contentious agricultural reform laws in their states. The Centre may put this offer before the leaders of the 41 farmers' unions during the fresh round of talks on Friday.

As of now, it is mandatory for the states to implement the new farm laws. But states like Punjab and Rajasthan have already refused to do so. Some sources said if the agitating union leaders agree to the new proposal, the Centre would move forward and leave the decision on implementation of these laws upon the state governments.

- **Union home minister Amit Shah has been keen to find an early way out of the impasse over the farmers; agitation, which has been on for over five weeks at Delhi's borders**

The new laws are repealed. Just a day before the talks on Friday, thousands of farmers on Thursday participated in a tractor rally on the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways in a "rehearsal" for January 26, when they plan to move into Delhi from Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

The farmers started the tractor march around 11 am and moved towards Kundli Manesar Palwal Expressway amid heavy deployment by the Delhi and Haryana police personnel.

The tractor march, led by Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait, moved towards Palwal.

A farmers' group from Haryana met the agriculture minister, seeking to participate in the eighth round of talks on Friday, and saying that it wants to raise the long-pending Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) Canal issue.

Central team of experts in Kerala to assess bird flu outbreak

Alappuzha, Jan. 7: A three-member central team on Thursday took stock of the situation arising out of outbreak of bird flu in Alappuzha district, officials said here.

The team comprising Union Health Ministry's public health specialist Dr Ruchi Jain, Pune National Institute of Virology scientist Dr Shailesh Pawar and Delhi RML Hospital physician Dr Anith Jindal visited the hotspots of the bird flu outbreak in the district, they said.

Officials from the Animal Husbandry department briefed the central team about the steps taken by the administration to prevent the spread of the H5N8 strain of bird flu.

They were also briefed by the Health Department officials on the Covid-19 situation in the district.

The central team has been informed that over 20 farmers were hit by the bird flu outbreak in the district. Officials said over 43,000 ducks were culled and 32,550 eggs were destroyed in the district till Thursday to contain the H5N8 strain of bird flu.

Later, the central team visited affected areas of Thakazhy, Pallippad and Karuvatta in Kuttanad region of Alappuzha district. They also held discussions with district authorities at the collectorate.

Nineteen Rapid Response teams have been engaged in culling birds in both Alappuzha and Kottayam districts and the regions suspected to have infected the birds are being sanitised, officials said.

State Animal Husbandry Minister K. Raju has said there is no history of the H5N8 virus being transmitted to humans. Authorities have banned sale of bird meat and eggs in the affected regions. To provide relief to the affected farmers, the state government has decided to compensate them for culling their birds. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

First bone marrow transplant on 6-yr-old

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 7

For the first time, a bone marrow transplant was done on a six-year-old girl from a poor family by doctors of the Kanchi Kamakoti Childs Trust Hospital (KKCTH), a paediatric institute provides world-class health care, and Rela Hospital, a multi-organ transplant quaternary care hospital with special focus on paediatric transplantation.

"This is the first bone marrow transplant done at Kanchi Kamakoti Childs Trust Hospital, gratuitously through full capital assistance from crowd funding agency MILAAP and philanthropic donors, including Devaki Muthiah, wife of A C Muthiah, Chairman of the Childs Trust," said a press release from the hospital. The girl from Chittoor was diagnosed with Thalassaemia major at birth. She underwent surgical correction at 1 year of age after initiating blood transfusion support and required regular blood transfusions every 3 weeks.

String of burglaries in suburbs

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 7

A number of burglaries were reported in the Chennai city suburbs on Wednesday night.

According to the police, an unidentified man struck into four shops in Adambakkam on Wednesday night. The thief broke the shutters of a Dairy shop, Hardware store and two other shops on Karikalalan Nagar.

He reportedly made away with Rs 29,000 kept in the cash boxes from the shops. Cigarette packets, Ghee tins and several other products were stolen from the shops.

On Thursday, the owners of the shops lodged a complaint with the Adambakkam police. They also submitted CCTV footage of a man break-in to the shops as evidence. Adambakkam police registered a case and investigations are underway. In other incidents, Four shops in Agaram- ten Camp Road were burgled. Miscreants stole ₹20,000 from three medical stores in the area, according to the police. The thief also broke into a textile shop in the area, however, due to a censor door, no cash was stolen from the shop. Selaiyur police registered a case.

Gold wrapped in chocolate seized by customs

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 7

The Customs officials at the Chennai international airport seized 3.72 kg gold worth ₹1.97 crore and arrested a person in connection with the case.

A press release issued by the Commissioner of Customs said based on intelligence on Thursday, Padma Balaji (25) of Chennai, who arrived from Dubai by

Emirates Flight EK 544 was intercepted at the exit. On personal search, a big Cadburys dairy milk chocolate was found concealed in underwear. On opening the wrapper, a plastic packet containing 660 grams of gold paste was recovered. On extraction 546 grams of gold valued at ₹28.7 lakhs was recovered and seized under the Customs Act. The woman passenger has been arrested.

Earlier on Wednesday, total of 3.18 kg gold valued at ₹1.69 crore was recovered from 15 passengers who arrived from Dubai and Sharjah in three different cases. In total of 3.72 kg of 24 K purity gold worth ₹1.97 crores seized by Chennai Air Customs. Further investigation is under progress.

Peta urges CM, health min to cancel jallikattu permission

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 7

Citing a letter signed by 50 doctors, the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta-India) has appealed to Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Health Minister Dr C. Vijayabaskar to cancel the permission granted to conduct jallikattu during Pongal in the state. The doctors warned that 'Jallikattu' would pose a grave risk to the people because of Covid-19.

The 50 doctors have stated that "to prevent the rapid spread of Covid-19 and to protect public health, as well as to ease the pressure on healthcare professionals, non-essential activities such as jallikattu, which lead to unnecessary gatherings of people, must not be allowed"

On December 23, the government issued guidelines for the conduct of jallikattu, popular bull-taming sport, ahead of the 2021 Pongal season in January. The government permit-

ted jallikattu' and Erudhu Vidum Nigazhchi, with restrictions.

The 50 doctors have stated that "to prevent the rapid spread of Covid-19 and to protect public health, as well as to ease the pressure on healthcare professionals, non-essential activities such as jallikattu, which lead to unnecessary gatherings of people, must not be allowed." Since the Tamil Nadu government legalised jallikattu in 2017, at least 22 bulls and 57 humans have reportedly

died across the state, while 3,632 humans were injured, the doctors stated and warned of more human deaths because of Covid-19 if jallikattu is allowed in the state.

Peta-India research associate Dr. Ankita Pandey stated that more people are likely to die this year, not only because of jallikattu but also due to Covid-19. If jallikattu events are not stopped and if huge crowds gather to torment bulls, society will be tormented too,' she added.

HC notice to Centre, ECI, CEO on postal ballots

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 7

The Madras high court has ordered notice to the Union government, the Election Commission of India and the Chief Electoral Officer, Tamil Nadu on a petition filed by the DMK party, challenging the Conduct of Elections (Amendment) Rules 2019 and 2020, which provides for postal ballot votes for 'absentee voters' which includes senior citizens and persons with disability.

The First Bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy, before whom the petition filed by the DMK represented by its Organising Secretary R.S.Bharathi came up for hearing ordered notice and posted after four weeks, further hearing of the case.



Marooned in times of monsoon

E.K. SANJAY | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 7

The recent spell of heavy rain all over Chennai, touching as high as 15 centimetres in a single day, has caused largescale inundation in many places.

These pictures show rainwater flooding several residential areas of Semmancheri along Rajiv

Gandhi Salai (Old Mamallapuram Road) in Chengalpattu district.

While young boys frolicked in the water, it was not a pleasure for many others, who were either forced to sit inside their homes or not in position to venture out in the absence of a mode of transport to get past the marooned stretch. Among the worst affected were

families living in apartments, including those living in the slum board tenements of Ezhil Nagar at Semmancheri.

Residents and experts have appealed to the state government to put in place a permanent system to drain monsoon water into the Buckingham Canal so that residential localities do not suffer due to inundation.

Adhere to strict safety norms, reopen schools in limited way

B. Vijayalakshmi

Viewpoint

For the last two days, schools in Tamil Nadu, on the directive of the school education department, have been carrying out a massive exercise of getting the comments of parents on reopening of schools for classes 10 and 12. Schools will submit their suggestions along with parents' inputs in a day or two based on which the government will take a final call. It may be recalled similar meetings were held in November to discuss the possibility of reopening schools for classes 9 to 12. Rounds of meetings evoked a mixed response with some parents urging for a partial reopening of schools and the others opposing the decision. So, the state government decided against reopening schools then.

This time around, parents, though worried over virus spread, seem to have understood the need to send their wards to schools so that teachers can help them prepare



A school in Pallikaranai seeking parents' feedback on reopening of schools.

— DC

well for the board exams. Most of the schools have finished the portions and begun revising them.

Also, schools have explained to parents about the SOPs to be followed which will include avoiding crowding, making proper seating arrangements, disinfecting classes and building every day and thermal screening of staff.

The Gujarat government has decided to reopen schools for students of classes 10 and 12 from January 11 while Punjab reopened all schools from January 7.

Similarly, the Rajasthan government has announced reopening of schools and colleges from January 18. Meanwhile, neighbouring Puducherry reopened half day school from this Monday. Already, schools in Kerala, Karnataka and Assam are functioning with strict Covid regulations.

Meanwhile, vaccine optimism and fall in Covid cases have driven the state government and school authorities to check the feasibility of conducting written board exams. However, a decisive view

on written mode of exams can be taken by taking into consideration the pandemic status, vaccine rollout and also the upcoming Assembly elections in the state.

With most of the parents and schools agreeing to reopening of schools, the government may go for staggered classes after Pongal with Covid precautions. The availability of vaccines will be the key in determining the next academic year's timetable amid concerns over 2020's lost academic activities.

No new release of Covid villain in housefull theatres



Sanjay Pinto

Thank God the Centre has stepped in to draw the curtains on what could have been the theatre of the absurd. Poorly ventilated closed halls, air conditioning, no physical distancing, no masks (or no way of enforcing it) a frenzied crowd shouting and whistling for two and a half to three hours with an inter-

mission, queues at snack counters and packed toilets. Join the dots and one can conjure up the dirty picture of the possible spread of the dreaded spiked virus. That's if we have not heard the alarm bells sounded by epidemiologists.

Close on the heels of the IIT Madras and star hotel clusters, we would have set the stage for an ominous hat-trick. With little known about the new UK variant that has made its way to our State through a passenger on a London flight, who thereafter travelled from Delhi to Chennai, the risk of a second wave that other countries are battling is



real. Do we know when the vaccine will be administered? Or its side effects? Are partying and watching movies seated cheek by jowl in theatres a bigger priority than staying safe under the

present circumstances? We've waited ten months. Why take chances in hopelessly the last lap before the vaccination?

The most important aspect of any Standard Operating Procedure vis a vis crowd management is physical distancing. The hundred per cent seating nod negated this most basic precaution. It is still unclear if medical experts were privy to this decision.

Section 75 of the Tamil Nadu Public Health Act, 1934, empowers the authorities to prohibit assemblies of more than 50 persons if it is "likely to become a means of spreading the disease or

of rendering it more virulent." A full capacity audience in a movie theatre is upto at least ten times that number. A classic case of the fence being made to allow pests a free run to eat the crop?

The State has a duty to improve and protect Public Health under Article 47 of the Constitution, especially when one person's stupidity and recklessness can adversely affect others. Under Section 6 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the National Authority has the power to lay down guidelines to be implemented by States. The Tamil Nadu Government Order

was a dilution of the Union Home Ministry's Standard Operating Procedure.

Falling numbers are a welcome sign but using it as an argument to open up, is tricky. Corona positive cases are linked to the number of tests done. What if there are more asymptomatic people? If there are no symptoms, people will not go to get tested. Asymptomatic folks can be carriers. So temperature checks at theatres as part of the Standard Operating Procedure may not help in certain cases. A handful of asymptomatic movie goers can wreak havoc. Those who get infected inside the

cinema hall would end up spreading the virus back home to their elderly parents or grandparents with comorbidities. At any rate, a falling graph is no reason for complacency.

I do empathise with the film industry. Huge investments have been pumped into production of movies. Fifty per cent seating was not financially viable for distributors to screen films. It's a tough situation.

This is where the doctrine of 'Res Extra commercium' or 'things beyond commerce' comes into play. In the prevailing scenario, I am of the opinion that the Fundamental Right to Life

guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution must be placed at a higher pedestal than the Right to Practise any Profession, Trade or Occupation under Article 19(1)(g). The latter is subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(6) which are the statutory provisions to safeguard public health.

Public entertainment must inevitably take a backseat. The final scene must not be an anti climax - a ticket to the ICU.

(The writer is an advocate at the Madras high court, columnist & author)

DECCAN Chronicle

8 JANUARY 2021

Trump's 'insurrection' was the final straw...

The violence unleashed by an invading mob ransacking the citadel of modern democracy was unbelievably shocking not only because they took place on Capitol Hill in Washington DC. The insurrection was sparked by the President of USA, Donald Trump, who incited his hard-core supporters to riot against this highly regarded symbol of the free world. All this would have been unthinkable if not for it being too predictable, as it was triggered by one of the most quixotic men to occupy the White House.

A day of such chaos as to shake the core of American democracy proved so futile in the end that its mastermind Mr Trump conceded he would respect the results of the election. Joe Biden of the Democratic Party had indubitably won the Electoral College votes as well as the voice of the people by seven million and is set to succeed him, after his victory was formally certified by the Congress at four o' clock in the morning. Reason as well as law and order had dawned again.

It would be extremely charitable of the Republican Party that Mr Trump belongs to if it were not to give greater force to the thought that he should be declared mentally unfit and stripped of presidency less than two weeks before his term runs out. After seeing Mr Trump elected to the highest office without winning all the people over in 2016, the Republicans lost the majority in the House of Representatives in 2018, the Presidential election in 2020 and a majority in the Senate in the two runoff elections in Georgia in 2021.

The first ever Senate wins for the Democrats in a long time in Georgia were a final rebuke to Mr Trump, who had contributed by sowing doubts in democratic elections. How they allowed such a leader so much latitude in behaving as he did post November 3 is a mystery. Senior leaders like Mitch McConnell and Mike Pence did the right thing finally in disavowing their President. Vice-president Pence had, in the nick of time, upheld the highest traditions of democracy in carrying out the transfer of power, which is the very bedrock of democracy.

The scope allowed by the police forces in the Capitol for lumpen elements of the far Right to vandalise the Speaker's office and lord it over the Senate chamber for a while was appalling. And while a tweeting Mr Trump acted out the modern version of Nero playing the fiddle, Mr Pence ordered in the National Guard to secure the Capitol and save it from a perfidious set of rogues set loose on the word of an obnoxious master.

It is no more a puzzle how blind loyalty can drive people as illustrated in an overzealous lady who had to be shot outside the door of the chambers into which lawmakers had been locked in for their safety. Of course, the greater is the responsibility among leaders to discipline their flock. Mr Trump's biggest failure lay not in his buffoonery while in office and not even in his inability to lead when it came to personally dealing with an adverse poll result. His devilish goading of people to violence was responsible for the mayhem for which he will never be forgiven. He deserves his place in the dustbin of history.

Bird flu: Remain on alert

Most nations hit by pandemic Covid-19 are not in a position to face another health exigency but India has been called upon to pull up its socks against the avian flu which has till now killed thousands of migratory birds and poultry in four states and threatens to spread to more areas. The Union government has sent an alert to all states to monitor their avian stock especially in forest areas and in water bodies. As of now, 12 epicentres of the flu have been identified in four states — Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala.

It has been clarified that the flu this time is spread mainly through migratory birds that travel thousands of kilometres from the icy cold climes to their tropical destinations from October to February. The government's attempt is to stop the secondary spread of the virus, and the state governments have already started addressing the issue. Thousands of infected ducks have already been culled in Kerala.

Economic activity on the ground has been halted for almost a year now, and a bird flu outbreak is a shock most poultry farmers would not be able to absorb, especially at a time when the markets have started slowly looking up. The government must work with the farmers to ensure that all the infected birds are properly dispensed with and that all the farmers who comply with the norms are compensated forthwith. The government must also think of extending financial help to encourage farmers to upscale their hygiene standards so that they do not fall prey to such outbreaks so easily. There must also be a mechanism to ensure that even the slightest of suspicions of the disease is scientifically addressed and acted upon without loss of time. All these measures call for close coordination among the state and central institutions and agencies. They could draw from the experience they have gathered while fighting Covid-19.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Subhani

Hindus and patriotism: Why RSS chief is wrong



Karan Thapar

As I See It

We are all prone to saying foolish things. I do so quite often. In fact, it's probably one of the qualities that makes us human. On the other hand, robots or creatures that work on artificial intelligence are never foolish, although they could be wrong. However, there's a significant difference between the harmlessly foolish and the defiantly stupid. The latter, particularly when its acted upon, can be dangerous. I'm afraid that the comments made by the *sarsanghchalak* of the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh fall squarely into the latter category. I know my saying so will infuriate RSS members and the *sarsanghchalak's* army of fans but that can't be helped. I would have to call a spade a fruit fork if I opted for gentler terminology!

At a book launch last Friday Mohan Bhagwat said: "If someone is Hindu, he has to be patriotic, that will be his or her basic character and nature". Just in case that wasn't clear enough, he added: "A Hindu can never be anti-Indian". Much as he might want that to be the case, it simply isn't true.

First of all, our history establishes that there is no shortage of Hindus who have been traitors — it's another matter that the country may not have been called India at the time. Amongst the earliest was Raja Aambhi of Taxila. Apparently, he had helped build the bridge cross the Indus river which enabled Alexander to invade the country. That was way back in 326 BC.

Jump a few centuries to Raja Jaichand. In 1192, he supported Muhammad of Ghor against Prithviraj Chauhan. It didn't matter to him that Chauhan was his son-in-law. It's said the desire for revenge because Chauhan had eloped with his daughter outweighed any qualms about assisting the Afghan invader.

However, don't assume it's only in ancient or medieval times that Hindus were traitors. Modern Hindus are really no different. We have several examples of Hindu treachery from the British Raj. One of the most striking is Jayajirao Scindia, the Maharaja of Gwalior, who in 1857 supported our conquerors. There are accounts that suggest his part in helping the British capture the Rani of Jhansi was by no means inconsequential. And so to our own time. I'm not sure how one should think of the likes of Chhota Rajan, Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi or, even, Lalit Modi. I certainly wouldn't accuse them of treason, but I would hardly call them patriots. And remember, every one of them is a Hindu.

However, I suspect that Mr Bhagwat would simply brush aside all the evidence of history that I have just marshalled. I believe his actual, but unstated, point is that India's minorities cannot be as patriotic as its Hindu citizens. This, presumably, is what he means when he said a Hindu is patriotic by "his or her basic character and nature", and "a Hindu can never be anti-Indian".

Alas, even by this interpretation, the *sarsanghchalak* is simply wrong. And since it is acts of valour against the Pakistanis that are most likely to impress

him, let me gently remind him of the honours won by Muslim soldiers in battles against our western neighbour — although he has no business to have forgotten about them! Havildar Abdul Hamid won the Param Vir Chakra, India's highest award for gallantry, in 1965. Brig. Mohammad Usman posthumously won the Maha Vir Chakra in 1947. Lt. Col. Salim Caleb in 1965.

If this fails to convince Mr Bhagwat, then let me add what should be the clincher. The Army Chief who defeated Pakistan in 1971 — a victory that the RSS holds in high esteem — was a Parsi. The general who by common consensus has been accorded the greatest credit for India's military performance in 1965 was a Sikh. The chief of staff of the Eastern Command who left Pakistan's Lt. Gen. A.A.K. Niazi no option but to surrender in Dhaka in December 1971 was a Jew. None of the three would have been offended to be called a Hindu, but each of them would have considered the *sarsanghchalak's* statement ridiculous.

Unfortunately, it's a lot more than that. It's dangerous. The *sarsanghchalak's* statement divides us, the people of India, on the spurious grounds that Hindus are automatically and naturally patriotic whilst the rest of us are not. This is not just untrue, it's also wicked. It seeks to sow the seeds of doubt, suspicion, distrust and, eventually, difference between Indians.

The undeniable truth is that patriotism is

If we want our country to survive and flourish, let's stop trying to define patriotism as a Hindu attribute and let's discard the belief that Hindus are special or better. Otherwise, we could end up like Yugoslavia.

defined by the love of one's country, not by the character of one's religion. And it's important to remember the opposite is also true. Hindus are as capable of hating their country as an Indian of any another religion.

There is, however, a further, though tiny, question the *sarsanghchalak* hasn't asked himself. What would patriotism amount to for the millions of Hindus who have left India to settle abroad and become citizens of another country? They carry British, Canadian or United States passports. Often their children don't speak an Indian language. In fact, only in terms of origin do they accept their connection with India. In every other way they consider themselves British, Canadian or American. Does Mr Bhagwat realise and accept that for them patriotism would be love of the country they were born in, whose passport they hold and whose future will determine their own?

Let me make one last point. The *sarsanghchalak* has also said that "if one loves his country, that doesn't only mean the land, it means its people, rivers, culture, traditions and everything". Here I agree with him but only because this is a statement of the obvious. More importantly, it's not something that applies only to Hindus who love India. It's as true of the French and the Germans, Nigerians and Burundians, Australians and Argentinians and even, dare I say it, the good folk of Lapland.

I guess the point I'm making is simple. If we want our country to survive and flourish, let's stop trying to define patriotism as a Hindu attribute and let's discard the belief that Hindus are special or better. Otherwise, we could end up like Yugoslavia.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

CAPITOL HILL VIOLENCE

The outrageous act of storming of Capitol Hill and the violence unleashed by the supporters of outgoing US President Donald Trump in an ostensible bid to disrupt the ceremonial gathering of US Congress to formally declare the President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the November 2020 presidential poll will go down as a 'Black Day' in the history of world's oldest democracy. Rather than conceding his defeat in the presidential poll, Mr Trump had persisted with his inflammatory and provocative rhetoric targeting his opponents. Mr Trump's repeated assertion that the election was stolen from him and the concomitant fury it generated among his supporters had finally culminated in mayhem and violence let loose by mobs targeting the Capitol Hill.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

APROPOS YOUR editorial *Trump must leave gracefully* (Dec. 6). Perhaps with clairvoyance or premonition you have correctly judged and suggested Mr Trump to leave gracefully with an apprehension that he will not quit without fireworks. And he did it in inciting his supporters to march towards Capitol Hill which resulted in rioting and a few deaths. What baffles is, in American history this is probably only the second time that the defeated president made so much hubbalo and behaved like a crank who is mad after power and reluctant to leave the White House gracefully despite defeat at the polls. Mr Trump, with his clownish antics, has forced his own cabinet and the Democrats to discuss invoking the 25th Amendment to remove him. Not only many world leaders ridiculed him but his own Vice President Mike Pence too rebuked his supporters who ran berserk. The Americans should thank their stars for getting rid over of such a maverick, unpredictable, arrogant president who brought disgrace to USA, the greatest democracy of the world.

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

OCCUPANCY IN THEATRES

THE CENTRE has correctly asked the Tamil Nadu government to strictly adhere to the MHA guidelines of 50% occupancy in cinema theatres outside containment zones. The State has to keep its powder dry while announcing relaxation measures, as a little complacency or carelessness can spoil all the good work of the government in containing the spread of the deadly pandemic. That said, the decision of the Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami in this matter can be taken immediately in this digital age. Why should it be delayed till the Chief Minister returns from his election tour?

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

Mary Mitzy



Ensuring justice in virtual courts: Who controls the mute button?

On this day last year, people all over the world were nursing new resolutions. The coronavirus shattered their hopes and dreams in no time. It spared none — not even the most important pillar of democracy — the judiciary. After the initial onslaught, it is said to have partially resumed its duties. So how did the Supreme Court of India function during the pandemic?

The Court completely shut the entry of advocates into its premises. In an epoch-marking decision, it threw all its former reservations vis-à-vis digital operations to the winds, and finally went online. The Court revived the e-filing portal, introduced long back but not in use by advocates. And, only urgent matters were taken up for the "virtual hearing". The platform used by the Court is the Vidyio app.

During the initial stages of this changeover, the registry gave instructions to advocates over phone on how to log into the Vidyio app, when to log in, and so on. This was almost nine months ago. Today, nine months on, the

Supreme Court still takes up only urgent matters for hearing. Its functional can at best be said to be partial. Most benches now have three judges sitting on alternate days for a few hours.

The online system is convenient for many advocates who returned to their hometown during the lockdown and don't want to return to Delhi. Today we have lawyers appearing from various parts of the country before the Supreme Court as well as other courts. That aside, it has not been smooth sailing. Tech glitches and lack of Internet savvy plays a spoilsport in the day-to-day work of the court even after so many months have gone by.

Indian courts follow the system of an open court hearing. Everyone can watch the proceedings. But the Vidyio app has a limit in terms of the number of participants who can be admitted and the Supreme Court, too, came out with a notification restricting the advocates from sharing the link for appearance. It has affected mostly young advocates keen to learn court craft from watching the courts function.

But there's been worse happening. Many a time, during hearing a case, the advocate was logged out at the relevant moment and was unable to log in. This resulted in the case being decided in their absence. It is with great difficulty that one gets one's case listed for hearing and if it is decided in one's absence then one's entire effort becomes futile. On top of that, there is the pain of humiliation before one's client.

The appearance of the advocates before the court is run by the control room, comprising a team of technical hands who are almost completely unfamiliar with the legal process. It is their job to identify the lawyers for each case as per the item numbers written before their names. The control room decides whose mic should be unmuted and whose video made visible.

Now, the cases heard by the Supreme Court have anywhere between two and 30 parties. Who decides who will be unmuted? A control room that has no idea about the proceedings of a case?

Advocates keep sending requests to be unmuted or for the senior advocate to be allowed to speak. But only if they are lucky will their request be granted before the case is over. Or else, you just count yourself to be on the "unlucky list". Besides, in a virtual court, there are limitations to the ways in which an advocate can try and persuade the bench to unmute them, once it has muted them to do which it has the powers. In a physical court hearing, the practice is to try and persuade the bench to hear them even if it puts the file down, and many do succeed in their efforts.

Then there is the interesting question of how come those who don't want themselves to be visible appear on the screen when they are least expecting to be seen. The new practice is that, once the court starts hearing a case, the screen will show only those advocates who are arguing that particular case. But many a time, lawyers were caught on screen dressed casually and doing something else even when their case was not being

heard. It led to much embarrassment in legal circles. Such situations could have been avoided if the control room had been more careful.

But the larger question is this: Are we going to continue to function in such a handicapped manner, and for how long? There are a large number of cases needing proper disposal. Many litigants' lives depend on the disposal of their long awaited cases. Some of them are languishing in jails, some are waiting for their salary, some waiting to be appointed to a job to sustain themselves and their families. Is it not time for the highest court of the country to resume physical functioning like every other organisation, observing strict social distancing rules?

If this anarchy continues, people may have to turn to other ways to redress their grievances and one fine morning we may find that we can do without the services of the judiciary.

The writer is a Supreme Court lawyer

Govt announces ₹28k crore industrial package for J&K

Bid to create 4.5 lakh jobs; Package to remain in force for 17 years

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, JAN. 7

The government on Thursday announced a ₹28,400 crore industrial package for Jammu and Kashmir and said that it would help towards creating as many as 4.5 lakh jobs besides paying the way for ₹20,000 crore investments in the Union Territory.

“The package approved by the Centre will give boost to J&K’s industrial potential and will remain in force for 17 years,” said UT’s Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, at a press conference in Jammu.

Called ‘Industrial Development Package-2021’, the scheme aims at providing a huge boost to the existing industrial sector, he said, asserting that the Government of India “has once again showed its commitment towards sowing the seeds of growth, prosperity and employment in J&K”.

He said, “This is a historic industrial package that will give a boost to the industrial sector in J&K, create employment and pave way for outside investments as well.” He added that the package will act as a big relief to the existing industries and will cover the manufacturing units as well as the service sector that includes the Tourism and Information Technology. “This will give J&K’s economy a new boost and lead the UT towards growth and sustainable

development,” Mr. Sinha said. He stated that the administration headed by him was working on a long and short term strategy for streamlining the power infrastructure in J&K. He said, “J&K has earned the first slot on road connectivity front and in the near future, every village will be connected through a better road. In 2023, people of J&K will travel in metro for the first time.”

Elaborating on the new industrial package, he said its main purpose is to generate employment beyond government jobs in both manufacturing and service sectors which directly leads to the socio-economic development of the region.

“The scheme is being implemented with the vision that industry and service led development of J&K needs to be given a fresh thrust with emphasis on job creation, skill development and sustainable development by attracting new investment and nurturing the existing ones. It will provide a major support to local industry, besides creation of new business opportunities”, he said. He said the scheme is also about bringing radical transformation in the existing industrial ecosystem of J&K with emphasis on job creation, skill development and sustainable development by attracting new investment and nurturing the existing ones, “thereby enabling J&K to compete nation-

L-G says 4G services may be restored soon

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, JAN. 7

Jammu and Kashmir’s Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday gave hints on restoration of high speed 4G internet services in the remaining 18 districts of the Union Territory soon. “I know 4G is working in just two districts of J&K. There is a committee examining the issue. Hopefully, there will be good news soon in the coming days,” he said while replying a question at a press conference in Jammu.

J&K witnessed a complete communication blackout for weeks after the Centre stripped it of its special status and split it up into two UTs on August 5, 2019.

Though landline and mobile phone services have been restored fully, the high speed

internet services continue to remain suspended in 18 out of the 20 districts of the UT.

Even 2G bandwidth services are frequently suspended at places on the pretext of law and order issues, causing huge inconvenience to people particularly students, traders and media persons. 4G services were restored in two districts - Udhampur and Ganderbal - a few months ago “on experimental basis” following Supreme Court’s observations on the issue.

Replying another question, Mr. Sinha said that he was aware of the conflicting versions put forth by the Army and J&K police and the families of three Valley youth on purported encounter that took place in Srinagar’s Lawaypora last week and that he will come up with facts on it at appropriate time.

Victim should not have gone out in evening: NCW member

Budaun (UP), Jan. 7: The brutal gangrape and murder of a 50-year-old woman in Uttar Pradesh’s Budaun district could have been avoided if the victim had not gone out in the evening, said a member of the National Commission for Women (NCW) on Thursday while expressing her dissatisfaction with the police action in the case.

“I tell women again and again that they should never go out at odd hours under anyone’s influence,” said NCW member Chandramukhi Devi after meeting the woman’s family members.

“I think if she had not gone out in the evening or was accompanied by any child of the family perhaps this incident could have been avoided. But this was pre-planned as she was called through a phone call. She went (out) and then returned in such a state,” she told reporters at the victim’s village in the district.

On Sunday, the 50-year-old anganwadi worker who had gone to a temple was found dead under mysterious circumstances. Her family members have accused the temple priest and his aides of raping and murdering her.

A case has been registered against the accused and two of them were arrested on Tuesday night, while the priest is still absconding.

“I am not satisfied with the role of the police. Had timely action been taken, perhaps the life of the victim could have been saved,” said Devi, who arrived in the village on Wednesday night.

The SSP has told me that the woman was found in an unconscious state and had she got treatment, her life could have been

saved. The FIR was filed late and the post mortem examination was also done much later, she said, adding that the autopsy report explains that the incident was “most sickening and unfortunate”.

Devi, as part of the team from the NCW, on Thursday met the victim’s family members as well as officials and took stock of the action taken in this connection. SSP Sankalp Sharma had on Wednesday said the post-mortem report has confirmed rape and there are injuries in the victim’s private parts and a fracture in her leg.

The station house officer of Ughaiti police station has been suspended for laxity in the case, he had said.

The NCW member said the incident is “most heinous and strict action should be taken. The government is very serious on these matters and yet such incidents take place”.

She said the woman was earning the livelihood of her family.

Suspending a station officer is not enough. I have told the SSP that no one involved should be spared under pressure, Devi said.

She said such incidents are taking place despite campaigns like ‘beti bachao-beti padhao’ and ‘mission Shakti’ as criminals have no fear of police, and people’s faith will be restored only when action is taken against criminals.

Meanwhile, former Samajwadi Party MP Dharmendra Yadav alleged that the police and administration purposely delayed the post mortem examination and did not disclose the report.

— PTI

AFTER A 2-DAY HIATUS, ODISHA RECORDS FRESH COVID DEATH

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 7

A 70-year-old man from Odisha’s Khorda district died of Covid-19 on Thursday, taking the total number of deaths in the disease to 1,888. The fresh casualty came after the state recorded nil death cases on Tuesday and Wednesday.

“Regret to inform the demise of 70-year-old male Covid positive patient of Khordha district who was also suffering from Chronic Liver Disease with P u l m o n a r y Hypertension & Chronic Kidney Diseases,” tweeted the state health and family welfare department.

The first death due to Covid-19 was reported on April 7 last year in Odisha after a 72-year-old man of Jharpada area here succumbed to the virus on April 6, 2020 while undergoing treatment at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhubaneswar.

ARMY HELPS WOMAN

FromPage 1

The troops at Karalpura along with battlefield nursing assistant and medical comforts reached the spot on time.

The troops escorted the lady and the family for about 2 kilometres in knee deep snow till the road head, from where she was taken to Karalpura hospital. On reaching hospital the lady was immediately attended by the medical staff which coordinated beforehand by the Army with the civil administration.

The father came to the COB to distribute sweets to all troops in after being blessed with a healthy boy.

Block Medical Officer Shafi also called up the army camp to say: "Thank you, Army! It's a baby boy!"

Trump’s supporters storm Capitol as Congress meets

From Page 1 House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced after hours of chaos around the white-columned edifice that police had secured the building.

"Today, a shameful assault was made on our democracy," Ms Pelosi said. "It was anointed at the highest level of government. It cannot, however, deter us from our responsibility to validate the election of Joe Biden," she said.

Amidst the violence Mr Biden said he was shocked and sad to see the US has "come to such a dark moment".

"At this hour, our democracy is under unprecedented assault. Unlike anything we've seen in modern times. An assault on the citadel of liberty, the Capitol itself. An assault on the people's representatives and the Capitol Hill police, sworn to protect them. And the public servants who work at the heart of our Republic..." he said in an address to the nation.

"Let me be very clear. The scenes of chaos at the Capitol do not reflect a true America. Do not represent who we are. What we're seeing are a small number of extremists dedicated to lawlessness. This is not dissent. It's disorder. It's

chaos. It borders on sedition. And it must end now," Mr Biden said.

"I call on President Trump to go on national television now to fulfill his oath and defend the Constitution by demanding an end to this siege," he said.

Ms Harris also demanded an end to the assault on the US Capitol by the supporters of Trump.

"I join President-elect Joe Biden in calling for the assault on the Capitol and our nation's public servants to end, and as he said, "allow the work of democracy to go forward", Ms Harris said in a tweet. — PTI

Plea seeks bar on leaders’ re-election

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 7

The Supreme Court on Thursday sought response from the Centre and the Election Commission on a petition seeking to debar the lawmakers from re-contesting election during the term of the same House (assembly/parliament) after quitting it or being disqualified under 10th Schedule of the Constitution – anti-defection law.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde also comprising Justice A. S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian gave the Centre and the ECI four weeks time to respond to the plea that any mem-

ber of the House giving up the membership of a political party and resigning from the legislature should also come under the purview of 10th Schedule of the Constitution and attract the consequences of disqualification under the anti-defection law.

The PIL petitioner Madhya Pradesh Congress general secretary Jaya Thakur has sought the implementation of the Article 191(1)(e) of the Constitution, read with para 2 of the tenth Schedule.

“Once a member of the House incurs disqualification under the Xth Schedule, he cannot be permitted to contest again

during the term for which he was elected. Article 172 makes a membership of a House co terminus with the term of 5 years of the House except in circumstances mentioned therein,” Jaya Thakur has stated in her petition.

She has pointed to the recent trend across the country by the political parties rendering the 10th Schedule redundant as the ruling party MLAs resign to make the government collapse and then they are given the ministerial posts in the new government and given the ticket to re-contest in the by-elections.

The petitioner has highlighted the instances of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Manipur to

buttress her contention seeking to extend the provisions of disqualification even to those lawmakers who quit State assemblies for political gains.

“In the state of Karnataka, 17 MLAs who resigned/were disqualified by the Speaker for anti-party activities, sought reelection and 11 of them got re-elected. Ten of them got ministerial berths in the new Government that was formed after the earlier government fell. Recently, in Madhya Pradesh MLAs elected to the Assembly from one party resigned and defected and were immediately made ministers without being MLAs,” the petition says.

WORLD

US riot: World leaders appalled

Some single out Trump for harsh criticism, say there should be a peaceful transfer of power

London, Jan. 7: Leaders around the world condemned the storming of the US Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump on Wednesday, expressing shock at the chaos unfolding in a country they once relied upon for global leadership. “Disgraceful scenes in US Congress,” tweeted Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain, a staunch ally of the United States over generations. “The United States stands for democracy around the world and it

is now vital that there should be a peaceful and orderly transfer of power.” Other allies were similarly appalled at what they described as an attack on American democracy, though some said they believed US democratic institutions would withstand the turmoil. Some leaders singled out Trump for harsh criticism.

“Trump and his supporters should finally accept the decision of the American voters and stop trampling on democracy,” German

Foreign Minister Heiko Maas wrote on Twitter. “From inflammatory words come violent deeds.” He added that “contempt for democratic institutions has disastrous effects.” “The beauty of democracy?” with a shrug emoji was the reaction tweeted by Bashir Ahmad, a personal assistant to the president of Nigeria, which has seen several coups since independence — including one led decades ago by President Muhammadu Buhari, who most

recently entered the office via a vote.

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera and Colombian President Ivan Duque were among those in Latin America who denounced the protesters, but both also said they were confident that American democracy and the rule of law would prevail. “In this sad episode in the US, supporters of fascism showed their real face: anti-democratic and aggressive,” tweeted Luis Roberto Barroso, Brazilian Supreme

Court justice and the head of the country’s electoral court. He said he hoped “American society and institutions react with vigor to this threat to democracy.”

Venezuela, which is under US sanctions, said the events in Washington show that the US “is suffering what it has generated in other countries with its politics of aggression.” Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has survived US-backed opposition efforts to oust him despite accusa-

tions of human rights abuses, civil unrest and a humanitarian crisis that has forced millions to flee the oil-rich country.

In Puerto Rico, many people took to social media and joked that the US territory no longer wanted statehood. Independence, they said, looked appealing for the first time in decades. In fact, it was that pursuit of independence that marked one of the last times the US Congress was stormed violently. — AP

SYRIA RESPONDS TO ‘ISRAELI AGGRESSION’

Damascus, Jan. 7: Syrian air defence forces responded late Wednesday to “Israeli aggression” in the south of the country, the state news agency said.

Israel launched missiles in the air attack from the disputed Golan Heights at around 11 pm (2100 GMT), SANA reported, citing a military source.

“Our anti-air defences responded, targeting most of the missiles,” the source added. The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) later said that the Israeli strikes caused “deaths and injuries” but did not give details.

SOHR said the Israeli raids targeted several positions south of Damascus and came two days after a delegation of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard visited the area.

Israel has not commented on the incident.

China goes online to mock ‘beautiful sight’ of US chaos

Beijing, Jan. 7: China’s internet erupted in mirth at America’s troubled democracy after supporters of President Donald Trump broke into the US Capitol, with Beijing criticising the “sharp contrast” between Washington’s response to the chaos and the 2019 Hong Kong anti-government protests.

On Thursday morning, state media tabloid *Global Times* tweeted side-by-side photo comparisons of Hong Kong protesters occupying the city’s Legislative Council Complex in July 2019 with Wednesday’s Washington riots.

The latter saw hardcore Trump fans invade the US Capitol to protest the election defeat, taking selfies, scuffling with security and

ransacking parts of the building. “@SpeakerPelosi once referred to the Hong Kong riots as ‘a beautiful sight to behold,’” the *Global Times* said in the tweet, referring to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi’s June 2019 comment about Hong Kong’s mass pro-democracy demonstrations, which at that time were mostly peaceful.

“It remains yet to be seen whether she will say the same about the recent developments in Capitol Hill.” China’s Communist Youth League also described the unrest as a “beautiful sight” on the Twitter-like Weibo platform.

Beijing’s foreign ministry echoed those sentiments, saying “the reaction of some people in the US, inc-

luding that of some media outlets, is completely different.” Speaking at a press briefing Thursday, ministry spokeswoman Hua Chinying said that the “sharp contrast (in reactions) makes one ponder, and deserves serious and profound reflection.”

The hashtag “Trump supporters storm US Capitol” pinballed across China’s Weibo on Thursday, racking up 570 million views, as users compared the global support for Hong Kong’s protesters with the outpouring of condemnation for the pro-Trump mob. “At present, all European countries’ leaders have shown double standards and condemned it (Washington rioting),” read one Weibo comment which gained over 5,000 likes. — AFP

FB BANS TRUMP TILL BIDEN INAUGURATION

Washington, Jan. 7: Facebook will bar President Donald Trump from posting on its system at least until the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden, the platform said Thursday. In a post announcing the unprecedented move, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg said the risk of allowing Trump to use the platform is too great following the president’s incitement of a mob that touched off a deadly riot in the US Capitol on Wednesday. Zuckerberg says Trump’s account will be locked “for at least the next two weeks” but could remain locked indefinitely.

Twitter on Wednesday began limiting the reach of tweets stoking an assault on the US Capitol by a mob intent on overturning the election results.

“We have been significantly restricting engagement with tweets labeled under our Civic Integrity Policy due to the risk of violence,” the Twitter support team said.

“This means these labelled tweets will not be able to be replied to, retweeted, or liked.” — AFP

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e-TENDER-INVITATION FOR BIDS NO.51/2020-21 Dt: 07.01.2021
1. For details, visit www.tntenders.gov.in & www.tnphc.com
2. e-Bids are invited by the Superintending Engineer/CC/TNPCH Ltd., for the Construction of Urban Police Station Building at Muthapudupet in Chennai city. (SE/CC/DB/206/2020).
3. Approximate value of work : Rs.108.36 Lakhs (with GST)
4. Date and time for Downloading /Uploading of bid documents through online : **18.01.2021 at 12.00 Noon to 25.01.2021 upto 6.00 P.M.**
5. Date & time of opening of the bid : **27.01.2021 at 11.15 a.m.**
6. Other details can be seen in the bid documents.

Superintending Engineer/CC
TNPCH Ltd., Chennai.

DIPR/113/TENDER/2021

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU / THANJAVUR CITY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
THANJAVUR SMART CITY LIMITED
TENDER NOTICE

Bid Notice No. 12792/2020/MCEA
Sealed Tenders are invited by The Managing Director & Commissioner, Thanjavur City Municipal Corporation from the Registered Contractors, for the following work upto **3.00 PM on 21.01.2021**. The Tenders will be opened by the Corporation Commissioner (or) his authorized official in the Corporation Office on the same day at **3.30 P.M.** If the office happens to be closed on the date of receipt of the Tender specified, the Tender will be opened on next working day. The Contractor who wish to participate in the Tender may down load the Tender documents through <https://tntenders.gov.in> by using E. Token / Digital Signature Cards on or before **20.01.2021 upto 3.00 P.M.** Any other information's may be obtained from the Corporation Executive Engineer, Thanjavur at the above office during office hours. The Managing Director & Corporation Commissioner has every right to cancel / postpone the Tender in view of Administrative reasons.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Estimate Cost (Rs.in Crore)	Earnest Money (Rs.in Lakhs)
1.	Procurement of Wallie Talkie as Smart Components for ICCO to Monitor Solid Management Water Supply and UGSS Activity in Thanjavur City Municipal Corporation under Smart City Program	1.50	1.50

Contractor Class : Class - I
DPR/22/Tender/2021
Commissioner & Special Officer, Thanjavur City Municipal Corporation.

**மதுரை மாநகராட்சி**
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SHORT TAKE



BCCI president Sourav Ganguly waves as he leaves for his residence after being discharged from a hospital in Kolkata on Thursday.

— Pritam Bandyopadhyay

Dada discharged from hospital

Kolkata: Sourav Ganguly, the former test captain who is president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, was discharged from a hospital on Thursday after treatment for a mild heart attack.

The 48-year-old Ganguly "suffered a blackout" while exercising at his personal gym last Saturday morning and was taken to a Kolkata hospital, where he underwent an angioplasty.

On the first day of the third test between India and Australia in Sydney, the BCCI posted an update on Twitter to say Ganguly had been released from the hospital.

"I thank the doctors at the hospital for the treatment," Ganguly was quoted as saying in the BCCI post. "I am absolutely fine. Hopefully, I will be ready to fly soon." Ganguly, a left-handed opening batsman, scored 7,212 Test runs with 16 centuries. — AP

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Dry after drizzle

Oz recover from early blow on rain-hit day

Sydney, Jan. 7: Debutant Will Pucovski and Marnus Labuschagne smashed half-centuries as Australia recovered from an early setback to build a promising first innings in the rain-hit third Test against India Thursday.

Following David Warner's departure for five, the hosts recovered to 166 for two at stumps after more than three hours' play was lost due to persistent drizzle at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Labuschagne was not out 67 while Steve Smith, who has struggled for runs this series, hit an attacking unbeaten 31. Pucovski contributed 62 in an impressive maiden Test innings.

Fellow debutant Navdeep Saini and Mohammed Siraj, in only his second Test, shared the wickets in a clash both sides are desperate to win with the four-match series level at 1-1.

After captain Tim Paine won the toss and chose to bat in front of 8,692 socially-distanced fans, just under the quarter of capacity allowed, the rain started falling 35 minutes into the opening session.

It was enough time for Siraj to grab the key wicket of Warner on his return from injury, caught by Cheteshwar Pujara to put Australia on the back foot.

But a 100-run partnership between Pucovski and Labuschagne swung the momentum back in Australia's favour before the 22-year-old fell lbw to Saini.

The patient Labuschagne, who has been Australia's best batsman this series, survived an edge off Jasprit Bumrah



Australia's Marnus Labuschagne plays a shot on way to his half-century against India on the first day of their third Test at Sydney Cricket Ground on Thursday.

— AP

on 11, which just failed to carry to slip, but was otherwise authoritative.

He brought up his ninth Test 50 with a boundary off Siraj, while Smith looked in ominous touch at the other end after failing to reach double figures in his four previous innings.

Smith hit five bound-

aries in his 31 which came off 64 balls. Pucovski resumed on 14 and Labuschagne two when play finally restarted at 3pm after the lengthy rain delay. Australia have high hopes for Pucovski, who scored two double centuries in the Sheffield Shield this season but had been sidelined with a con-

cussion, the ninth of his short career. India tried to unsettle him early on with short balls and he rode his luck, being dropped twice.

The first came on 26 when Ravi Ashwin enticed a thin edge, only for wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant to miss what should have been a simple catch.

— AFP

IPL TRADE WINDOW TO CLOSE ON FEBRUARY 4

New Delhi, Jan 7: The IPL's governing council has decided that the eight franchises will be allowed to submit the names of their retained players by January 21, league's chairman Brijesh Patel said on Thursday.

Patel and members of the IPL GC recently had a virtual meeting earlier

this week where the planning and preparations of the next IPL was discussed at length.

"We will have the players' retention till January 21 and the trading window for the franchises closes on February 4," Patel, the former India Test batsman said while informing that the date of the auc-

tion is yet to be finalised.

It is expected that the mini auction that is supposed to be held this year for the existing eight teams will be held in the second or third week of February.

The eight IPL teams enjoy a players' purse of Rs 85 crore and Patel said that thre will be "no

increase of purse" for the 2021 auction.

It is expected that Chennai Super Kings, one team that only had ₹15 lakh left after the last auction, would release at least two big salaried players in Kedar Jadhav and Piyush Chawla and increase their purse.

— PTI

Rider Santosh in coma after crash

New Delhi, Jan. 7: Renowned Indian motorcycle racer C. S. Santosh suffered a crash during the ongoing Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia and was put in a medically-induced coma after being airlifted to a hospital in Riyadh.

The 37-year-old Santosh, who was representing Hero MotoSports in one of the world's biggest rallies, suffered the crash on Wednesday.

"We are pleased to share that he has no major physical injuries except for the dislocated right shoulder and head trauma. The latest scans have also shown no major issue that could impact his full recovery," Hero MotoSports said in a statement.

"The medical team attending to him have decided that the best



C. S. Santosh

approach to manage the injury is to reduce the body functions to a minimum and keep him in a sedated condition or an artificial coma," it added.

"He is receiving the best possible medical care and will continue to be under constant observation for the next few days," the statement further added.

— PTI

SYED MUSHTAQ ALI TROPHY

Tamil Nadu keen to go all the way

NEHA SURANA | DC CHENNAI, JAN. 7

Tamil Nadu who stumbled at the final hurdle last season are keen to go all the way when the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament begins in Kolkata from January 10. Coach D. Vasu is confident of accomplishing the mission.

"We have to win every game that we play. That's my goal. We came to both finals (Syed Mushtaq Ali & Vijay Hazare Trophy) last year in the shorter format. This year we are very keen to take at least one trophy home, if not two," he said.

Tamil Nadu's 30-member squad had left for Kolkata last week and now are under quarantine. They take on Jharkhand in the opener on Sunday. The coach understands that bio-bubble can be difficult, but believes that it is a sacrifice to be made if the sport has to be restarted.

"I know the bubble can be mentally very draining and will definitely not be easy for the players. To keep them motivated during the quarantine period, we had regular interactions through the online

platform, where we guided them on what to do and set daily schedules for them.

Now, we just have two days to prepare the boys for the game and we have to manage with it rather than complaining as it is the same situation for every team," added Vasu.

Teams such as Bengal and Karnataka had played their own T20 leagues a few months back, however, Tamil Nadu's Premier League was cancelled. Vasu said his team had good preparation.

"If they have played cricket, I am sure it will definitely benefit them. But it mostly depends on the consistency and overall approach of wanting to win the game. That makes a difference. And, we have played four or five practice matches under lights as well in Chennai before leaving for Kolkata. So we have had good preparation and the boys are ready and keen to start off," he said.

Speaking about the camp in Chennai, Vasu said, "We did not push them too hard to start with because you know it's been a long break. All of them are enthusiastic to restart cricket".

FINANCIAL Chronicle

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
aSensex	48,093.32 -0.17
Nifty 50	14,137.35 -0.06
S&P 500*	3,803.45 1.48
Dollar (₹)	73.31 -0.25
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.68 0.07
Euro (₹)	89.97 0.26
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,335₹714 1.41
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	54.51 0.21
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.892 -0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.073 0.031

* As of 8:30 PM IST

PM to interact with economists for Budget views



Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with economists and sectoral experts on Friday to deliberate on measures that may be included in the upcoming Budget. The virtual meeting is being organised by Niti Aayog. It will also be attended by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Participants include Arvind Panagariya, K. V. Kamath, Rakesh Mohan, Shankar Acharya, Shekhar Shah, Arvind Virmani and Ashok Lahri.

■ Manufacturing could contract by 9.4% NSO sees 7.7% dip in growth in FY21

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, JAN. 7

As a part of its first advance estimates of the economic growth, the government, on Thursday, said that its economy could shrink by 7.7 per cent in the current financial year 2020-21 (FY21) as compared to 4.2 per cent growth in FY20. The government said the contraction was because of the nationwide lockdown imposed in March 2020 to counter the coronavirus pandemic.

"The Real GDP or GDP at constant prices (2011-12) in the year 2020-21 is likely to attain Rs 134.40 lakh crore levels, down 7.7 per cent as compared to Rs 145.66 lakh crore in 2019-20," said the National Statistical Office (NSO) in its advance GDP estimates. The Reserve Bank of India's estimate for the current fiscal is 7.5 per cent contraction.

The Real GVA (gross value added) at basic prices is estimated at Rs 123.39 lakh crore for 2020-21 as against Rs 133.01 lakh crore in 2019-20, showing a contraction of 7.2 per cent. According to NSO estimates, nominal GDP, or GDP at current prices, in the current fiscal is likely to be Rs 194.82 lakh crore as against Rs 203.40 lakh crore in year 2019-20. The growth in nominal GDP during 2020-21 is estimated at 4.2 per cent.

As per the estimate, there was contraction in almost all sectors, with the exception of agriculture. The manufacturing sector is

ESTIMATES POINT TO SUSTAINED V-SHAPED RECOVERY: FINMIN

New Delhi, Jan. 7: The finance ministry said the latest GDP estimates suggest a continued resurgence in economic activity in second half of the current fiscal and point at post-lockdown sustained V-shaped recovery. The ministry was commenting on the first advanced estimates

(AE) of the national income. "The AE (advance estimates) of 2020-21 reflect continued resurgence in economic activity in Q3 and Q4 which would enable the Indian economy to end the year with a contraction of 7.7 per cent," it said in a statement.

—PTI

likely to see a contraction 9.4 per cent against flat growth of 0.03 per cent in the previous year. The NSO estimates significant contraction in mining and quarrying, and trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting.

Reacting to the government's advance estimate, economists and industry captains are of view that the recovery momentum seen in the last few months will need to be further sustained in the coming months.

While Chandrajit Banerjee, director general, CII, said, "The advance estimate for the full year pegged the contraction in GDP at 7.7 per cent, showing a much shallower decline than earlier expected. Government spending did much of the heavy lifting in supporting growth along with a healthy agriculture performance, which was aided by a good

monsoon. In the last few months, there has been a strong economic recovery which will require to be nurtured especially in supporting the critical pillar of consumption."

Aditi Nayar, principal economist, Iera, said, "While the advance estimates of GDP for FY2021 have been based on data that is available for only the first six to eight months, the modifications made in the extrapolation process seem to have captured the impending upturn expected in the remainder of this extremely tumultuous year".

The GDP growth rate contracted by 7.5 per cent in the second quarter (July-September), after shrinking by an unprecedented 23.9 per cent in April-June. Last month, the Reserve Bank of India had predicted the growth rate may enter the positive territory in the October to December quarter.

India to have 50-plus unicorns in 2021: Nasscom

New Delhi, Jan. 7: India saw 12 new unicorns being created in 2020, the highest ever addition in a single year, and is on track to have a 50-plus strong 'unicorn club' in 2021, a Nasscom-Zinnov report said.

Unicorns are companies having valuation of more than \$1 billion.

The report said the Indian tech start-up base is witnessing a steady growth of 8-10 per cent year-on-year, and over 1,600 tech start-ups were added in 2020.

Although cautiously optimistic, the report said 2021 promises a return to normalcy for the Indian tech start-up ecosystem and deep-tech, and new start-up hubs will continue to grow at 40-45 per cent CAGR.

India is on track to have a 50-plus strong 'unicorn club' in 2021 (from 38 in 2020), and M&A deals and IPO pipeline are also expected to accelerate in 2021, said the report, titled Indian Tech Start-up Ecosystem on the March to Trillion Dollar Digital Economy.

It said over 2,100 start-ups are leveraging deep-tech, up from over 1,600 in 2019, and 20 per cent of the deep-tech start-ups are based outside known start-up hubs.

Fintech, health-tech, edtech, agritech and enterprise tech segments are witnessing rapid digital adoption, it said.

— PTI

Real estate stocks rally on Maha incentive

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 7

Shares of real estate sector companies rallied after the Maharashtra government reduced construction premium by 50 per cent.

The BSE Realty Index rose over 3.5 per cent intra-day and closed the day up 1.23 per cent.

"With reduced cost of premiums, a developer can look to pay the entire approval cost upfront and potentially launch a new project at an attractive price owing to cost savings and drive higher sales bookings during the initial launch of a project," analysts wrote.

Currently, the various FSI (Floor Space Index, also known as Floor Area Ratio) premiums/fungible FSI and payments for other concessions account for 25-33 per cent of the overall project (including land) and the waiver may result in a 12-17 per cent saving on overall project cost, analysts said.

Earlier in August the state had reduced the stamp duty charges, which triggered a huge rise in real estate buying on pent-up demand.

The top gainers included Indiabulls Real Estate (14.28 per cent), Sobha (7.61 per cent), Brigade Enterprises (2.44 per cent), Mahindra Lifespace Developers (2.26 per cent), Suntek Realty (2.20 per cent) and DLF (1.89 per cent).

"The Government of Maharashtra's Urban Development Department in a notification issued on January 6 has approved a



MAHA PREMIUM CUT TO BOOST DEMAND: CREDAI & NAREDCO

New Delhi, Jan. 7: Realtors' apex bodies Credai and Naredco on Thursday hailed the Maharashtra government's decision to cut premiums charged on realty projects, saying it will lead to reduction in construction cost and boost property demand.

On Wednesday, the state government cut premiums levied by the civic bodies on real estate development by 50 per cent till December 31, if the developers bear the homebuyers' stamp duty burden.

"The 50 per cent cut in various premiums levied by the Maharashtra government on construction

projects till December 31, 2021, is the first-of-its-kind step taken by the state government," Credai national chairman Jaxay Shah said.

"We hail the proactive and progressive measure as it will have a strong impact on investments in the affordable housing sector," Shah said.

Naredco president Niranjan Hiranandani said: This move will go a long way in expediting the project completion and the industry will witness new launches in the market. The industry applauds this booster dose making many projects viable."

— PTI

50 per cent discount/concession on all the various premiums levied by the government on construction projects till December 31, 2021. This also includes concessions in the premiums levied by all planning authorities/local administrations in Maharashtra." ICICI Securities said in a note.

"A rider is that develop-

ers availing the discount need to bear the stamp duty costs of 5-6 per cent of agreement value on behalf of buyers," it said.

"Developers with significant Mumbai exposure, including Oberoi Realty, Godrej Properties, Phoenix Mills, Prestige Estates and Suntek Realty stand to benefit," ICICI Securities said.