

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
VISAKHAPATNAM | MONDAY | 1 FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 29.08°C
Min: 21.4°C
RH: 82%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Mist.
Max/Min temp.
29/21 9C

COVID-19 CUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+8,662)	(+135)
1,07,52,872	1,54,397
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+163)	(+1)
TS: 2,94,469	1,599
(+116)	(+0)
AP: 8,87,836	7,153

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

10,33,06,428

DEATHS

22,33,104

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

219

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Pushya Bahula Chavithi till 6.23 pm
Star: Uttara till 11.56 pm
Variyam: 8.04 am to 9.34 am
Durmuhurtam: 12.52 pm to 1.37pm to 3.07 pm to 3.52 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 pm to 9 pm
HILARI CALENDAR
Jamadi- ul- Akhir 18,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.50 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.45 pm
Maghrib: 6.15 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.29 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.51 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 08.25 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 08.27 AM

COUNTER POINT



Let's hike the prices of placards, banners, flags, tents... to control rallies!

SHORT TAKES

Yamini to head BJP Mahila Morcha

Vijayawada: Women's rights activist Sadineni Yamini Sharma, who has been working for the protection of temples, was appointed state secretary of the AP BJP Mahila Morcha. Morcha president Bollina Nirmala Kishore issued the appointment orders on Sunday. Yamini Sharma had recently conducted protests against the desecration of the Lord Rama idol at the Ramateertham temple and alleged occupation of a hill near Guntur by missionaries.

INDIAN COAST GUARD MAY ACQUIRE 200 SHIPS

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 31

The Coast Guard (ICG), with a meagre force and two vessels in 1977, has now grown into a major coastal security force with 156 ships and 62 aircraft. The force also became the fourth largest in the world after the ones in the US, the UK and South Korea. It proposes to have 200 vessels and 100 aircraft by 2025. Briefing media on the eve of its 45th Raising Day, additional director-general V.S. Pathania said the ICG has played a significant role in securing Indian coasts and enforcing regulations

NATION | 4

Centre allows full capacity in theatres



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WORLD | 5

Pro-Navalny stir: 3,000 arrested



SPORTS | 8

Shastri: PM's words will boost team's morale



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Atchannaidu's aides block rival sarpanch candidate

DC CORRESPONDENT SRIKAKULAM, JAN. 31

Followers of former minister and TD state president K. Atchannaidu have allegedly prevented YSRC supporter Kinjarapu Appanna from filing his nomination from Nimmada in Srikakulam district, home village of Kinjarapu family on Sunday.

Reports said Atchannaidu called Appanna, who also happens to be his nephew, asking him not to file his nomination. Appanna refused stating his wife had lost her government job during TD regime and his family also did not benefit much from the TD.

After Appanna expressed his determination to file his nomination, TD workers and

TD SARPANCH CANDIDATE HUBBY ABDUCTED

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, JAN. 31

The husband of a sarpanch candidate of Banepalli gram panchayat at Rayadurgam belonging to the Telugu Desam was abducted on Sunday.

■ Page 2: Kidnapping in Karnataka

close followers of Atchannaidu rushed to YSRC leader's residence and prevented him from coming out of his house. This led to commotion with the two groups almost coming to blows.

YSRC TURNCOAT TO TD ABDUCTED, LEFT IN FOREST

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, JAN. 31

One Sabbella Srinivasa Reddy of Gollalakunta village in East Godavari district, who switched over to TD from YSRC on Saturday, was kidnapped and dropped in a forest.

■ Report on Page 2

Police rushed to the spot and dispersed the crowd. Appanna finally filed his nomination papers under police escort.

■ Page 2: Deputy CM demands action

SASIKALA DRIVES OUT IN JAYA CAR WITH ADMK FLAG

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR | DC CHENNAI, JAN. 31

Sending the message that she is indeed in charge of the AIADMK, V.K. Sasikala sat on the front seat of the Toyota MUV used by the late J. Jayalalithaa as she rode the distance in Bengaluru, from the Victoria Hospital to a farmhouse in the outskirts, with the AIADMK flag fluttering on the bonnet on Sunday.

Acknowledging the cheerful welcome by supporters, who showered flower petals on the vehicle and raised slogans in her praise, Sasikala waved at them and greeted all those who were around even as she was escorted to her temporary residence by a convoy of vehicles.

As an augury to what might happen in Tamil Nadu politics, Sasikala's nephew and the founder of Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam, T.T.V. Dhinakaran, explained the use of the AIADMK flag saying she was the general secretary of the party.



Expelled AIADMK leader V.K. Sasikala discharged from a hospital after recovering from Covid, in Bengaluru. — PTI

Jagan launches pulse polio drive

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 31

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy launched pulse polio campaign by administering polio drops on children in his camp office at Tadepalli on Sunday. Deputy Chief Minister Alla Krishna Srinivas, Health Principal Secretary Anil Kumar Singhal, Health Commissioner Bhaskar and other officials were present on the occasion.

In a separate programme, Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan launched Pulse Polio Immunization Programme at Raj

Bhavan. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the campaign was launched to eliminate poliomyelitis (polio) in the country by vaccinating all children under the age of five. He said around 52.72 lakh children of less than five years age are to be administered polio drops in the State. He said the success of the programme was that not a single case of polio has been reported in the country since 2011.

Mukesh Kumar Meena, Secretary to Governor, A Md Imtiaz, Collector, Krishna, Dr Devi, State Immunization Officer and other officials were present on the occasion.

FEAR | FACTOR Forest staff believe animal strayed

Leopard's pugmarks leave college in a tizzy

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, JAN. 31

Staff and students of Sri Venkateswara Agriculture College are in a tizzy after they sighted pugmarks of a leopard on the university premises here on Sunday. College staff immediately alerted Forest Department officials, who reached the spot to collect samples.

Eyewitnesses, including night watchmen, saw the leopard and two cubs moving around between the university campus and the nearby forest area. They said for the past two nights, the three wild animals have been



Pugmarks of the leopard

coming out from the forest into the agriculture college premises before returning.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Tirupati divisional forest officer (DFO) M. Hima Sailaja said a

team of forest officials are maintaining a watch on the varsity campus and its surroundings. She confirmed that pugmarks found inside the university campus are that of a leopard. She said the leopard might have trespassed into the varsity premises during the late hours of Friday or Saturday.

Forest officials suspect that animal to be a mother leopard, which may have deviated along with her two cubs from their regular trails in the forests.

■ Page 2: Staff, students told not to venture out

Tikait seeks respectable solution to end farm stir

Refuses to agree under pressure, seeks mid-way resolution

SANJAY KAW | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 31

With more farmers streaming into the protest sites at Delhi's borders, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait said on Sunday that the farmers' unions were ready for a "respectable solution", but they would "never agree to anything under pressure". In Punjab, chief minister Amarinder Singh has called an all-party meeting to show unity with the protesters and evolve a consensus on the way forward on the three contentious agricultural laws.

As the stream of farmers heading for Delhi's borders remained incessant on the 67th day of the massive agitation, Mr Tikait said the Republic Day violence was "part of a conspiracy" and that the government should nab all those behind it. "The violence on January 26 was part of a conspiracy. The tricolour is over and above everything. We will never let anyone disrespect it. It will not be tolerated."

Mr Tikait, who is camping at the Ghazipur border and has now become the face of the agitation, also

MODI SAYS COUNTRY IS SADDENED BY 'INSULT' TO NATIONAL FLAG ON R-DAY

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 31

Breaking his silence on the shocking events that took place at the Red Fort just after the majestic Republic Day parade on January 26, when unruly elements brandishing swords and sticks had attacked policemen and hoisted a flag other than the national tricolour at the iconic venue, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that the "country was saddened by the insult to the tricolour on January 26 in Delhi".



Narendra Modi

Delivering his monthly "Mann ki Baat" address, Mr Modi said "we have to infuse the times to come with new hope and novelty".

urged the government to release all those farmers who were arrested in connection with the tractor rally.

"The government should release our men and prepare an environment conducive for the talks," he said, adding: "We will honour and respect the dignity of the Prime Minister. Farmers don't want that the government or

Parliament to bow down before them... But we will also ensure that the self-respect of farmers is protected. A middle way should be found."

After the mahapanchayat at Baraut in UP's Baghpat district, two more mahapanchayats are being planned in UP's Bijnor and Haryana's Jind districts to mobilise the growing support for the protesting

farmers. While the Bijnor mahapanchayat has been scheduled for Monday, the one at Jind will be held on Wednesday. Prominent western UP Gurjar leader Madan Bhaiyya has also extended his community's support to the farmers.

The Punjab CM has called an all-party meeting to discuss the situation arising out of the recent developments, especially in view of the Republic Day violence, the Singhu border attack on farmers and the massive vilification campaign against them.

Mr Singh said the "crisis" triggered by the farm laws was a matter of concern for the entire state and its people.

"Only through the collective efforts of all Punjabis, and all the political parties of the state, can the crisis be tackled effectively, and the farmers' interests be protected." He went on to add: "Our farmers are dying out there at Delhi's borders for more than two months now. They are being beaten up by the police and assaulted by goons. They are being harassed and are being deprived of basic amenities."

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Maximum Age: 65 Years

Maturity Age:
Minimum Age: 18 years
Maximum Age: 85 Years

Policy Term: 10 - 25 years

SHORT TAKES STAFF, STUDENTS TOLD NOT TO VENTURE OUT

FROM PAGE 1

They might have trespassed into the human habitation looking for stray animals, such as cows and dogs, which usually roam across the varsity premises.

"We have requested staff and students at the campus to avoid venturing out after dark to avoid human-animal conflict. As a precautionary measure, we have also suggested to the college management that they increase lighting at the campus, clear overgrowth, ensure waste management and preventing stray animals from roaming across the varsity premises. Besides, our patrolling parties will maintain surveillance," the DFO maintained.

SEC'S VOTER APPLICATION REJECTED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 31

Guntur district officials have started enquiring into the rejection of voting rights to State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar at his native place Duggirala in Guntur district.

Ramesh Kumar visited his ancestral house at Duggirala on Sunday where he told the tahsildar that he wanted to clear doubts of officials about getting voting rights. Ramesh Kumar had earlier applied for a voter ID in Duggirala but his application was rejected as he was living in Hyderabad.

According to norms, voter ID is issued to the individual based on the place where one lives.

As Ramesh Kumar's permanent address is in Hyderabad, officials in Duggirala refused his application to register his name as a voter. The SEC has rented a house in Vijayawada and he lives there only on working days. Ramesh Kumar appealed to the Guntur district collector to use his discretionary powers and give him voting rights in Duggirala, where he has never lived.

Ironically, the SEC himself admitted this during a press conference and stated that he would move the court for his voter ID from Duggirala.

Guntur district officials informed that an enquiry into the issue was on and it would be resolved soon.

NIMMAGADDA WILL JOIN TD, SAYS SRINIVASA RAO

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 31

Minister for endowments Vellampalli Srinivas Rao expressed his anger at State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar for behaving like a political leader.

The minister made the remark while inaugurating some developmental programmes in Vijayawada west constituency on Sunday.

Srinivas Rao alleged that Ramesh Kumar was degrading the government during his ongoing tour of districts. He said the people would not tolerate the SEC if he degrades Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

He said that despite such tactics by the SEC, eventually Reddy will be victorious as people are supporting YSRC government for its governance. The minister opined that there are a lot of chances that Ramesh Kumar would join TD and all these gimmicks are to have a strong foothold in politics after his tenure as the SEC.

Meanwhile, the minister donated ₹5,01,116 for the construction of Rama temple in Ayodhya.

NOMINATIONS FOR FIRST PHASE OF PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS CONCLUDE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 31

The process of filing nominations for contesting gram panchayat polls in 12 districts of Andhra Pradesh concluded on Sunday.

According to reports received here, over 13,000 nominations have been filed for posts of sarpanch. More than 33,000 nominations have been received for ward members' posts. Officials will scrutinise these nominations from Monday morning.

The State Election Commission is conducting panchayat polls in four phases. First phase of polls will be held on February 9. Filing of

Nothing 'unanimous' about gram panchayat elections

YSRC at war with SEC and TD on unanimous elections; 'Shadow Teams' to be formed

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 31

The scuffle over unanimous elections between YSR Congress, State Election Commission and opposition parties is heading for a flashpoint with the ruling party completely in favour and the SEC and opposition parties opposing the same.

YSRC maintains that it was legal and constitutional and helps in resolving political differences and factions in villages. However, the SEC warned against abnormal unanimous elections. Interestingly, for the first time, SEC Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar announced forming 'Shadow Teams' to prevent forcible unanimous elections and also to monitor everything at the ground-level. He stated that unanimous elections pose a grave threat to democracy as they are against the spirit of Constitution and such trends tend to deprive downtrodden communities of power. He warned that if anyone is found guilty of forcing unanimous elections, they would be sternly dealt with.

Going a step further, Telugu Desam demanded cancellation of unanimous elections forcibly made in March last year. Around 27 per cent unanimous elections were registered during the MPTC and ZPTC elections, which was 'abnormal'. The TD called its leaders and cadre to prevent unanimous elections and this has turned the gram panchayat unanimous concept into a war between the ruling party, the opposition parties and the SEC.

The YSRC argues that the system of local governance has existed since ancient times. In those times each village had a self-administered governance system. The village governance was shouldered by the Panchas (five wise leaders). The village community used to select the panchas unanimously. The important criteria followed in their selection were the individual's character, truthfulness, benevolence, impartiality and capability of delivering justice without prejudice.



YSR Congress supporters coming in a rally to submit nominations for Gram Panchayat elections at Ramavarappadu in Vijayawada on Sunday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

Polls: Litmus test for YSRC, TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 31

The gram panchayat elections is turning into a litmus test for YSR Congress and its welfare-based administration and to Telugu Desam to re-strengthen itself.

TD is battle-ready with a call centre to receive complaints about violations and teams to keep track and expose violations of the YSRC administration.

Ministers along with ruling party MLAs, MPs and other local leaders, are

striving hard to win a majority in the gram panchayat elections.

According to sources, the party high command has directed all ministers and legislators to win over the people with the help of welfare schemes implemented in the last 20 months. The YSRC is hopeful of winning a landslide as everyone has benefitted from one welfare scheme or the other.

TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu called for blocking unanimous elections so as to

prevent villages from falling into the iron-like grip of ruling party rowdies. Stating that the present elections should be seen as a big test to the leadership at the village level, Mr Naidu said that future leaders would emerge from the panchayats.

Mr Naidu told his party leaders to take photos and videos whenever any ruling party leader tries to pick up arguments or attacks people and opposition workers. He stated that written complaints

should be made to the returning officers and to the party office also. He said that a 24-hour control room has been set up at the TD office and the legal cell would be ready to provide all information on the election process. He asked TD cadres to file nominations in all places without any fear.

The TD round-the-clock control room can be contacted on 73062-99999 or WhatsApp 75575-57744, especially to submit photos and videos pertaining to illegalities of YSRC.

DEPUTY CM DEMANDS ACTION

FROM PAGE 1

Deputy Chief Minister Dharmanra Krishnadasi issued a statement asking State Election Commissioner to take action

The intention of adopting this method was to have unity and harmony among diverse groups of people

against Atchannaidu. He said that holding the responsible post of party president, Atchannaidu should not have resorted to threatening a contesting candidate over phone.

in the village to enhance cooperation between the people, the ruling party points out.

Ministers Botsa Satyanarayana and Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy, leaders Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy and others stated that Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana and Punjab continued to have gram panchayat elections on a non-political party basis.

They claimed that states have adopted innovative methods to encourage

unanimous elections at the village panchayat level. They claimed that the constitution itself is giving preference to unanimous elections with people's consent. They pointed out no election commissioner has so far opposed unanimous elections.

Ramesh Kumar, however, was playing his role in the political conspiracy being hatched by vested interests.

TD leader kidnapped, abandoned in forests in EG

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JAN. 31

One Sabbella Srinivasa Reddy of Gollalakunta village in Jaggampeta mandal of East Godavari district, who switched over to Telugu Desam from YSR Congress on Saturday, was kidnapped and dropped in a forest between Bhavaram and Govindapuram. On Sunday morning, a cattle-herd saw Reddy lying on the ground. He informed the villagers, who came and took him to his house. Later, his wife Pushpaveni filed her nomination papers and Srinivasa Reddy accompanied her.

Meanwhile, Telugu Desam Kakinada Parliamentary district president Jyothula Naveen Kumar said that there was no doubt that the kidnab was at the behest of YSRC leaders. He alleged that the ruling party wants to make village sarpanch posts unanimous by threatening the opposition party candidates. But, he said that the TD would not be silent on such inci-

house and was drinking water, some unknown persons came and covered his face with a hood. Later, they tied him with ropes and dropped him near a forest between Bhavaram and Govindapuram. On Sunday morning, a cattle-herd saw Reddy lying on the ground. He informed the villagers, who came and took him to his house. Later, his wife Pushpaveni filed her nomination papers and Srinivasa Reddy accompanied her.

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S.Srinivasa Reddy, TD supported candidate for Gollaguta Panchayat of Jaggampeta mandal of East Godavari district, who was kidnapped.

dents. Senior TD leader Jyothula Venkata Appa Rao (Nehru) said that a new trend has emerged

after YSRC came to power whereby they threaten opposition candidates. He said that they would lodge

a complaint with the State Election Commission, DGP, SP and Jaggampet police. If the police offi-

cials toe the YSRC diktat, then TD will approach courts for justice.

Meanwhile, Jaggampeta Circle Inspector V. Suresh Babu said that on learning about the incident on social media, he contacted Srinivasa Reddy and tried to enquire. But, he said that he was with his wife who was filing papers for sarpanch post.

MAOISTS CALL FOR BOYCOTT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 31

The CPI Maoist has called for a boycott of the gram panchayat elections in tribal parts of North Andhra Pradesh. The Maoists termed that the local body elections as bogus and appealed to the people to abstain from voting.

Meanwhile, Jaggampeta Circle Inspector V. Suresh Babu said that on learning about the incident on social media, he contacted Srinivasa Reddy and tried to enquire. But, he said that he was with his wife who was filing papers for sarpanch post.

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TEMPLE PRIEST, 2 TD LEADERS HELD FOR IDOL VANDALISING

DC CORRESPONDENT
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM,
JAN. 31

A temple priest Marla Venkata Muralikrishna, 45, Telugu Desam leader Malla Venkata Raju and former TNTUC organising secretary Danthuluri Venkata-pathi Raju have been arrested on Sunday on charges of vandalising the idol at Lord Subrahmanyeswara Swamy Temple in Sriramanagar area of Rajamahendravaram on December 31, 2020.

Special Investigation Team (SIT) deputy inspector general (DIG) of police G.V.G. Ashok Kumar, along with Rajamahendravaram superintendent of police Shemushi Bajpayee told reporters here on Sunday evening that Muralikrishna has been working as a priest of Siddhi Vinayaka Temple in Sriramanagar. He lodged a complaint with police that unknown persons had broken the arms of Lord Subrahmanyeswara Swamy in the temple. Police then formed special teams for investigating the case.

The DIG said the priest has confessed to his crime of colluding with two Telugu Desam leaders.

He stated that the priest was in financial difficulties.

Following continuing attacks on Hindu temples, TD leaders wanted to get political benefit and offered the priest money for vandalising the temple idol.

Ashok Kumar said the matter is being investigated further.

5 SARPANCHES TO BE ELECTED UNANIMOUSLY

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JAN. 31

As the last day of filing nominations in East Godavari district ended on Sunday, there are indications that at least five sarpanches will be elected unanimously.

District panchayat officials said though the time for filing nominations ended at 5 pm, many candidates remained in queue to file their nominations. They have been given tokens and are filing nominations one by one.

According to primary information, at Sankhavaram, Achampet and Jaggampet in Sankhavaram mandal, Poduru in Rowthulapudi mandal, and Lachipalem in Tallarevu mandal, only single nominations have been received for sarpanch posts. In Lachipalem, eight wards have also received single nominations.

As per information made available by election officials, as many as 3,486 nominations have been received, including 777 for sarpanch and 2,709 for ward member posts on the last day of filing nominations on Sunday for the first phase of elections in Kakinada and Peddapuram divisions of East Godavari district. Kakinada division witnessed 344 nominations for sarpanch and 1,023 for member posts in eight mandals.



SHORT TAKES

MAN FOUND DEAD NEAR MANGO ORCHARD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 31

A 30-year-old-man was found dead under suspicious circumstances near a mango orchard at Dibbagudiwalasa under Bobbili mandal in Vizianagaram district on Sunday.

He was identified as I. Ashok Kumar, a mason by profession. The police registered a case and investigating to ascertain the exact reasons for the death of Kumar. The body was shifted to the government hospital for autopsy.

VIZAG POLICE SEIZE 1,600 KG GANJA, 3 HELD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 31

The Vizag rural police seized over 1,600 kgs of ganja and arrested three persons in two separate incidents in the district.

In the first incident, Narsipatnam Rural police intercepted a lorry and seized over 1,500 kgs of ganja and nabbed two persons. In another case, Golugonda police seized 130 kgs of dry ganja and nabbed one person.

The police said that the smugglers procured ganja from parts of Vizag Agency.

DOOR-TO-DOOR RATION DELIVERY WITHOUT POLITICS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 31

The AP High Court has made a few key remarks on the door-to-door ration delivery scheme beginning from February 1. The state government has filed a House Motion Petition in the High Court against the State Election Commission's directions regarding the scheme. The High Court heard the petition and directed that the scheme be carried out without the intervention of political parties and leaders.

The court clarified that an action plan should be prepared on it and the concern officials shall meet the SEC in two days. The court directed the SEC to decide on the matter within five days and further mentioned that there shall be no political party colours involved in the scheme.

HCL VIRTUAL RECRUITMENT TO HIRE 1,000 POSTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 31

HCL Technologies announced a virtual mega recruitment Drive in Vijayawada.

The Corporate Vice President, HCL Technologies, Ms Shivashankar, said that HCL Vijayawada is organising a mega recruitment drive on February 12 and 13, to present opportunities to both freshers and experienced professionals to join the fastest-growing and most exciting New Vistas centres in Vijayawada.

Ms Shivashankar said that HCL Technologies is offering around 1,000 job opportunities for freshers/experienced professionals at HCL Technologies Campus in Gannavaram, Vijayawada. She stated that HCL Technologies Global IT Development Center in Gannavaram has been operational since February 2020 with nearly 1,500 employees. She stated that HCL's Vijayawada centre on approximately 30 acres of land, was envisaged as part of Andhra Pradesh's drive to create new IT hubs in the state.

She said that HCL Vijayawada's "come back home" campaign, reaches out to talent from Vijayawada and encourages them to come back home to exciting careers in engineering services, application and product development.

Ms Shivashankar said that HCL offers best-in-class skill-based training programs for entry-level job roles.

The skill centre in Vijayawada can currently train 1,000 people. Candidates interested in kick-starting their IT career with HCL can apply for its training and hiring programs.

HCL offers training programs for students who have completed XII standard, science and engineering graduates and postgraduates. She appealed interested aspirants to make good use of the mega recruitment drive.

Cancer awareness



Women take a selfie while they take part in Cancer Awareness Walk on the beach road in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. — K. MURALIKRISHNA

Iron Age protohistoric monument neglected

The menhir is the only extant monument of its kind in Nakrekal in TS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 31

Structures of archaeological importance belonging to the Iron Age at Padurivaripalem near Chandupatla village in Nakrekal mandal in Nalgonda district in Telangana state are under serious threat. Archaeologists worry that the destruction of many burials built by huge boulders arranged in circular fashion near the local tank called Chinnacheruvu are being bulldozed out for want of land for agricultural operations.

Dr E. Sivanagi Reddy, archaeologist and CEO, Cultural Centre of Vijayawada and Amaravati, came to the spot in Chandupatla village along with Tanguturi Saidulu, amateur archaeologist, with a view to sensitising villagers on the significance of preserving these Iron Age monuments.

After conducting a survey of these proto-his-

toric structures, Dr Reddy said that out of 100 burials, only 10 are left here and there is no guarantee for their safety unless steps are taken to protect it.

Dr Reddy inspected a huge granite stone, known as a menhir, erected in the memory of a dead chieftain of the megalithic tribe near Netturu Sthambham Chelka area of Padurivarigudem. He said the menhir, the only extant monument of its kind in Nakrekal, measures 11 feet above ground level, six feet in width and is half a foot in thickness and is buried at least six feet deep underground. Such an invaluable monument cries for protection, he bemoaned. He said it is interesting to note that the menhir is locally known as Netturu Sthambham, meaning 'pillar of blood', as it turns into red colour during summer season due to mineral composition.

Dr Reddy also surveyed the surroundings of



Archaeologist E. Sivanagi Reddy inspects the pre-historic Iron Age monuments at Padurivaripalem near Chandupatla village in Nakrekal mandal in Nalgonda district on Sunday.

Kandimallavarigudem, a hamlet, 2 km from Chandupatla, where an inscription dated to November 27, 1289 AD, is located. He observed the

near extinct burials of 10 Iron Age, built by boulders encircling a cist chamber arranged with huge slabs at the centre in the periphery of an

irrigation tank.

He found a huge quantity of pot shards of megalithic period comprising red ware, black ware and black and red ware (typical pottery of Iron Age) and bones scattered around the damaged burials by bulldozers by miscreants due to lack of historical awareness.

Dr Reddy, as part of an awareness campaign, 'Preserve Heritage for Posterity', launched by the CCVA, sensitised local communities in Padurivarigudem and Kandimallavarigudem on the historical significance of Iron Age monuments and the need to preserve them for future generations.

Keeping the archaeological potential of these monuments, he made an appeal to the Department of Heritage, Telangana, to declare the site and Menhir, protected under the provisions of the Archaeological remains and Historical monuments of Telangana Act.

NTR, unlike Chiranjeevi, never took people for granted, says biographer

A recently launched biography of the late N.T. Rama Rao, titled 'Maverick Messiah', written by journalist Ramesh Kandula, chronicles and analyses the political life of NTR and its impact on both the state and the nation. An objective assessment of the late leader, the book has been well-received for its critical insight and diligent research.

What set NTR apart from later day movie stars entering politics? Is the Telugu Desam a Kamma party meant to empower the community and is it dying? In this two-part interview with Sriram Karri, author Kandula defends the party and explains what set NTR apart.

Q. Why did NTR remain the last real actor phenomenon to achieve political success? Tamil superstar Rajanikant has now announced he won't enter politics, while Chiranjeevi and Pawan Kalyan had great fan networks but could not convert them into political parties that could debut with electoral wins.

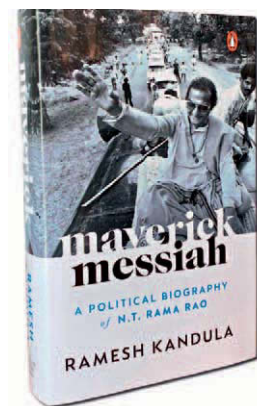
A. Film actors who

PART -1

entered politics in the past, especially M.G. Ramachandran (MGR) and later on, N.T. Rama Rao (NTR), had a strong artistic urge to connect with the people. The social bonding they enjoyed with their audiences was qualitatively different from actors who strayed into politics in recent years. Despite enormous adulation they enjoyed, neither MGR nor NTR took the people for granted when entering politics. Unlike MGR, NTR did not have a political pedigree, but spared no effort in understanding and articulating public issues that impacted the masses.

Chiranjeevi enjoyed many advantages but failed to convince the voting public that he was an alternative to the existing set-up. His campaign began with an assumption that he was a chief-minister-in-waiting and he had to just walk through elections to occupy the chair.

While NTR used his celluloid image to reach out to the public, he never relied on his glamour alone. The political content of NTR's campaign was more focused and



The book has been well-received for its critical insight and diligent research.

serious, while Chiranjeevi's was more style than substance. I think Pawan Kalyan also suffers from the same failings (as his brother). Actors cannot succeed in politics unless they carry a serious political message.

Q. Did the kind of films NTR played, particularly mythologies, give him any advantage? Why did he have such high credibility with masses? What in your estimate justifies calling him a messiah of any kind, even if of a

maverick kind?

A. An interesting aspect of NTR's mythologies were that they were pan-Indian stories, and not directly related to Telugu nationalism and pride that NTR propounded politically. During NTR's time, screen adaptations of mythologies became known for a distinctive Telugu, which was formal and ceremonial. As several researchers have pointed out, NTR's mastery over language, considered a quintessential Telugu experience, did help in his emergence as a Telugu cultural symbol.

My hypothesis is that NTR carried over the linguistic identity of these films into his political campaign, but not his screen 'divinity'. His political credibility was not a by-product of his playing godly characters. He worked towards it consciously both in his film career and later on in politics.

As for the tag of messiah, NTR burst on to the political scene in 1982 as a ray of hope and captivated the imagination of the Telugus like no other leader. His campaigns were the greatest spectacles of democracy in action. Shortcomings notwithstanding, NTR

emerged as a larger-than-life personality and brought a sea-change in the socio-political landscape of AP.

The maverick apart, NTR was a man of strange contradictions. He believed in the power of people, but his democratic credentials were suspect because he had no qualms in turning his party into a one-man show. He was secular to the core but exhibited a peculiar religious streak. He entered politics on the plank of regionalism but remained a committed nationalist throughout.

Q. How did people relate to his dramatics and eccentricities?

A. His dramatics entertained the masses but some sections of people intensely disliked the theatrics he brought into politics. He carried this urge to be the centre of attraction from reel to public life. However, common folks were not particularly put off by this, because of his ability to convey seriousness of intent. Despite the nickname 'Drama Rao', NTR was a very serious man in private and rarely cracked a joke. But a common person felt warmth in his presence.

₹3 cr to be spent on renovating desecrated temple

DC CORRESPONDENT
RAMATEERTHAM
(VIZIANAGARAM), JAN. 31

The 10th century Sri Kodandarama Swamy temple atop Bodikonda hill in Nellimerla of Vizianagaram district, which drew attention of the entire nation for wrong reasons, is set to regain its past glory with the state government planning to spend ₹3 crore on its development and renovation.

The temple is mostly visited by farmers of north coastal Andhra. Every pilgrim makes it a point to visit the Kodandarama Swamy either at the beginning or end of their pilgrimage to the area. Many villagers come from far away in bullock carts and stay at the temple for four days to celebrate Maha Sivaratri and Ramanavami. "When news about decapitation of the statue spread, it was farmers who were the most hurt," stated Ch. Rama Raju, a structural engineer by profession, whose family has been living in Ramateertham since four generations. Another local resident Vekatalakshmi, who is in her 60s, said during her childhood, there was a hot spring in the middle of the pond. It was then believed that idols of Lord Rama, Lakshmana and Seetha installed at the temple had been found in the pond's deep water. Pusapati Gajapathi Raju's family thought it was a blessing for the local people and built a temple there.

Both temples of Ramaswamy and Srikodandarama Swamy attract thousands of pilgrims in the post harvest season till Ramanavami. Noted historian and former department of history and archaeology chief Prof K. Suryanarayana said inscriptions

of Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism (Durga) dated from 10th Century have been found atop the Bodikonda hill. "This has been confirmed by British archaeologist Prof Alexander Rea, who worked mainly in South British India, in 1908," he stated. Assistant commissioner of R a m a t e e r t h a m Devasthanam, Ch. Ranga Rao said they are trying to revive the rich religious traditions of Hinduism at the temple. He said since it is difficult to go up the hill using the existing steps, structural engineers are planning to lay a road to the temple. He said the sanctum sanctorum of the temple will remain the same, while new structures for the God and people will be built around it. In addition, there will be a yagasala and kalyanamandapam with all facilities. Idols of Lord Rama, Lakshmana and Seetha have been consecrated recently at Balalayam. They will be shifted to Bodikonda temple after completion of renovation works at the temple, Ranga Rao underlined.

Tourism officials said after its renovation, the temple will be added to the pilgrimage circuit comprising Simhachalam temple, Suryanarayana Sun Temple and Srikrurman temple in Srikakulam district.

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31-01-2021 Correspondent

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SHORT TAKES

GUNMEN OPEN FIRE IN PAK, KILL POLICEMAN

Peshawar, Jan. 31: A Pakistani police officer was killed and two others were injured when unidentified gunmen opened fire on them here on Saturday, officials said. Counter Terrorism Department Inspector Khushdil Khan was killed, while his two colleagues — Assistant Sub-inspector Bakht Zeb Khan and constable Iftikhar — sustained bullet wounds when the assailants ambushed their vehicle near the central jail, Peshawar Police chief Ahsan Abbas said.

PALESTINIAN KILLED FOR KNIFE ATTACK

Jerusalem, Jan. 31: The Israeli army said it killed a Palestinian who carried out an attempted knife attack Sunday in the Gush Etzion area of the occupied West Bank. “A knife attack was reported at the Gush Etzion junction, south of Bethlehem,” the army said in a statement. “The attacker is neutralised.” The attacker “is dead”, the army said, confirming that the military had killed the assailant. The military later said the incident took place at a bus station, where soldiers were providing security to Israelis, with the suspect “running” at the forces while brandishing a stick with three knives fastened to it. It said no military personnel were wounded in the attack. Gush Etzion is a bloc of two dozen Israeli settlements and outposts near Bethlehem. There is frequent friction at the nearby junction, which has been the site of numerous so-called lone wolf Palestinian attacks. Israel has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War.

MEXICO: FOUR OF 19 BODIES IDENTIFIED

Ciudad Victoria, Mexico, Jan. 31: Mexico has identified at least four of the 19 bodies found shot and burnt near the US border, prosecutors said Saturday. Two Guatemalans — believed to be migrants — and two Mexicans were identified by their DNA after authorities discovered the bodies on January 22, the prosecutor's office in the northern state of Tamaulipas said in a statement. It said members of the Interior Ministry's national search commission had been added to the investigation for “greater transparency”, in collaboration with the foreign ministry and the Guatemalan embassy in Mexico. “It was determined that 16 correspond to the male sex, one to the female sex, and two are pending clarification” due to the severity of the burning, the prosecutors said. A team of forensics experts, dentists, geneticists and criminology specialists has been formed to identify the victims. Residents of the Guatemalan town of Comitancillo suspect at least a dozen of the victims are their relatives, according to authorities in the Central American country.

CYCLONE IN FIJI: ONE DEAD, FIVE MISSING

Suva, Fiji, Jan. 31: At least one person was dead and five were missing Sunday as Fiji was battered by a tropical cyclone for the second time in a month. Cyclone Ana, a Category Two storm, slammed into the South Pacific island nation with winds up to 140 kilometres an hour and heavy rain, causing widespread flooding. The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) said a 49-year-old man drowned while four fishermen and a three-year-old boy were missing. More than 7,600 people, many of them rescued from flooded villages, were taking shelter in evacuation centres. Local media reports said the three-year-old went missing when he accompanied his grandfather to check their boat. NDMO director Vasiti Soko said people continued to ignore warnings against venturing out during the storm. “We are in the midst of a cyclone with widespread flooding throughout the country, yet we continue to receive reports of members of the public, adults and children alike wandering around,” she said. In December, four people died and 23,000 people fled their homes when super cyclone Yasa flattened entire villages with wind gusts of up to 345 kilometres an hour.

New UK visa for HK residents who want to flee

Hong Kong, Jan. 31: A new visa scheme offering millions of Hong Kongers a pathway to British citizenship went live on Sunday as the city's former colonial master opens its doors to those wanting to escape China's crackdown on dissent. Anyone with a British National (Overseas) passport and their dependents can now apply online for a visa allowing them to live and work in the United Kingdom. After five years, they can apply for citizenship. The immigration scheme is a response to Beijing's decision last year to impose a sweeping national security law on Hong Kong to snuff out the huge and often violent democracy protests. Britain has accused China of tearing up its promise ahead of Hong Kong's 1997 handover that the financial hub would maintain key liberties and autonomy for 50 years, and has argued it has a moral duty to protect its former subjects. “We have honoured our profound ties of history and friendship with the people of Hong Kong, and we have stood up for freedom and autonomy,” Prime Minister Boris Johnson said of the



Daniel Pearl

PEARL'S FAMILY TO CHALLENGE ACQUITTALS

Islamabad, Jan. 31: The family of American journalist Daniel Pearl will challenge an order by Pakistan's top court to release a British-born militant acquitted of masterminding his kidnapping and brutal murder in 2002. The Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the acquittal of Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and three other men last year, triggering outrage from the US. Pearl was the South Asia bureau chief for *The Wall Street Journal* when he was abducted and beheaded by jihadists in Karachi in January 2002 while researching a story about Islamist militants. “The Pearl family intends to file a review petition against the illegal and unjust majority decision,” parents Ruth and Judea Pearl said in a statement that was tweeted by the murdered journalist's friend and former *Wall Street Journal* colleague Asra Nomani. They join both the federal government and Sindh provincial government in launching a plea for the latest verdict to be reviewed. Lawyers for Pearl's family have argued that Sheikh played a crucial role in organising the abduction and detention of the journalist before ordering his captors to kill him. — AFP

ANYONE WITH a British National (Overseas) passport and their dependents can now apply online for a visa allowing them to live and work in the United Kingdom. After five years, they can apply for citizenship.

scheme this week. The website for visa applications went online at 5pm in Hong Kong (0900 GMT). China has reacted with fury to the visa offer, announcing that it would no longer recognise the passports as a legitimate travel or ID document. The move was largely symbolic as Hong Kongers tend to use their own passports or ID cards to leave the city. But Beijing said it was prepared to take “further measures”, raising fears authorities might try to stop Hong Kongers from leaving for Britain. On Sunday, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of China's State Council said it strongly condemned the British for violating its promise not to give BN(O) passport holders right of residence. — AFP

3,000 held in pro-Navalny stir

Protesters defied govt warnings on rally, demand release of Kremlin critic

Moscow, Jan. 31: Police detained more than 3,000 people across Russia and blocked off the centre of Moscow Sunday in a massive clampdown on protests demanding the release of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny. Thousands of protesters defied government warnings to rally from Vladivostok to Saint Petersburg in a second weekend of mass demonstrations over the arrest of President Vladimir Putin's most prominent critic. Navalny was detained at a Moscow airport in mid-January after flying back to Russia from Germany where he was recovering from an August poisoning he blames on the Kremlin. The 44-year-old anti-corruption campaigner is being held in a Moscow detention centre and faces years of potential jail time in several different criminal cases, despite calls from Western governments for his release. In moves not seen in years in Moscow, authorities locked down the centre of the capital Sunday, with hundreds of police lining the streets, central Metro stations closed and the movements of pedestrians restricted. Protesters who had hoped to gather outside the headquarters of the FSB security service were instead scattered to various parts of the city as organisers made last-minute



Police detain a man during a rally in support of jailed Opposition leader Alexei Navalny in Saint Petersburg on Sunday. — AFP

changes in locations. AFP journalists saw dozens of protesters detained and taken into police vans. It was unclear amid the chaos how many people took part in the demonstration. Independent monitor OVD-Info said at least 3,062 people had been detained across the country, including 844 in Moscow, and arrests were continuing. It

reported more than 4,000 detentions during similar protests last Saturday. The Russian Union of Journalists said around 35 people working for media outlets were also detained on Sunday. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Twitter condemned “the persistent use of harsh tactics against peaceful protesters and journalists

by Russian authorities for a second week straight.” The Russian foreign ministry hit back, accusing the United States of “gross interference” in its affairs and of using “online platforms controlled by Washington” to promote the protests. Hundreds marched through the centre of Moscow chanting “Freedom!” and “Putin is a thief!” before

arriving outside Matrosskaya Tishina prison where Navalny was being held. Several dozen were detained at the prison, with police chasing down protesters in the snow outside the complex. “The people in power don't want to listen to anything or to anybody,” 34-year-old vet Darya said at the Moscow rally. — AFP

Protesters disrupt vaccination site in LA

Pentagon pauses vax plan for Guantanamo detainees

Los Angeles, Jan. 31: Protesters briefly disrupted a coronavirus vaccination distribution centre at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, United States media reported Saturday. Several dozen people carrying signs demanding the end of lockdowns and promoting anti-vaccination conspiracy theories gathered at the entrance to the site, one of the largest in the US, social media posts showed. “There appears to be only about 30 protestors total. It's not clear why they've shut off the whole facility,” tweeted social media user Mikel Jollet. Officials shut the site down for nearly an hour, US media reported, citing fire department officials — though the Los Angeles police department later insisted that the site had not been shut down and that all the vaccines would be distributed. The incident represents just the latest challenge to the vaccine rollout in the US, which has the highest number of cases and deaths in the world from Covid-19. More than 26 million people have been infected and 439,000 have died in the country since the start of the pandemic, a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University showed Saturday. President Joe Biden has pledged to have 100 million people vaccinated within his first 100 days — but the rollout began slowly under former President Donald Trump. Los Angeles county, where Covid-19 cases have surged this winter, is currently only vaccinating frontline medical workers and people aged 65 and over. Even among those groups, appointments are extremely difficult to obtain, with Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna shots in limited supply. — AFP

THOUSANDS JOIN FUNERAL, FLOUT RESTRICTIONS

Jerusalem, Jan. 31: Thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews defied Israel's Coronavirus restrictions to attend a rabbi's funeral on Sunday, prompting Defence Minister Benny Gantz to demand the community's repeated breaking of lockdown rules must end. A huge crowd, many not wearing masks, packed the streets in Jerusalem for the funeral of 99-year-old Rabbi Meshulam Dovid Soloveitchik, head of the influential Brisk yeshiva, or religious educational institute. Soloveitchik died earlier on Sunday. — AFP

Tycoon Carlos Slim leaves hospital after Covid bout

Mexico City, Jan. 31: Mexican telecoms billionaire Carlos Slim, one of the world's richest men, has been discharged from hospital and is doing well after a bout with Covid-19, a source close to his family said Saturday. The 81-year-old tycoon “has been at home since January 28 and is in very good health,” the source with the Slim family's Grupo Carso said. On Monday Slim's son, Carlos Slim Domit, announced on Twitter that his father was being treated for Covid-19 and had only

mild symptoms. “He's very well. He is making very good progress with Covid-19 after more than a week of minor symptoms,” Slim Domit wrote at the time. Slim and his family, who control mobile telecom giant America Movil, are worth an estimated \$58.5 billion, according to *Forbes* magazine, making him Latin America's richest man. Through his foundation, he is helping to fund joint production in Mexico and Argentina of the Coronavirus vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford for distribution in Latin America. Slim's infection came a day after Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador announced he had tested positive for Covid-19. On Friday Lopez Obrador said he still has the disease but “the critical phase is passing.” Mexico has officially registered around 1.8 million Coronavirus cases and more than 155,000 deaths, one of the world's highest fatality tolls. — AFP

VACCINE DELAYS: GERMANY MULLS LEGAL ACTION

Berlin, Jan. 31: Germany's government on Sunday threatened legal action against laboratories failing to deliver Coronavirus vaccines to the European Union on schedule, amid tension over delays to deliveries from AstraZeneca. “If it turns out that companies have not respected their obligations, we will have to decide the legal consequences,” Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said. “No company can favour another country over the EU after the fact,” he added. There has been growing tension in recent weeks between European leaders and the British-Swedish pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca, which has fallen behind on promised deliveries of its vaccine. — AFP

ISRAEL TO GIVE SOME VACCINES TO PALESTINIANS

Jerusalem, Jan. 31: Israel Defence Minister Benny Gantz's office says Israel has agreed to transfer 5,000 doses of the Coronavirus vaccine to the Palestinians to immunise frontline medical workers. It is the first time that Israel has confirmed the transfer of vaccines to the Palestinians. Israel has come under criticism from UN officials and human rights groups for not providing vaccines to the Palestinians. Israel is one of the world's leaders in vaccinating its population after striking procurement deals with drug giants Pfizer and Moderna. — AP

PERTH GOES INTO SNAP LOCKDOWN OVER SINGLE CASE

Sydney, Jan. 31: The Australian city of Perth will begin a snap five-day lockdown after a security guard at a quarantine hotel tested positive for Covid-19, authorities announced Sunday. Roughly two million residents of the city must stay at home as of Sunday evening, as will those living in the nearby Peel and South West regions. A scheduled return of schools on Monday will be delayed, with locals only permitted to leave their homes for exercise, medical care, essential work or to buy food. The new rules follow the first case of community transmission in Western Australia state for 10 months, officials said. — AFP

STIMULUS | PROPOSAL

It is one of Washington's boldest adjustments in US social and labour policy in decades

Biden, Dems seek hike in US minimum wage

New York, Jan. 31: When President Joe Biden unveiled a \$1.9 trillion stimulus proposal earlier this month, few were surprised by the plan's hefty price tag or sweeping scope. More striking was Biden's inclusion of a measure to more than double the federal minimum wage to \$15. The move, backed by leading Democrats including left-wing Senator Bernie Sanders, establishes the fight for higher wages as a top priority for the new administration, potentially leading to one of

Washington's boldest adjustments in US social and labour policy in decades. The fate of the initiative — which so far lacks support from Republicans — will help determine whether Biden delivers on a core pocketbook issue as US income inequality widens during the Covid-19 pandemic. Sanders, a former presidential candidate, called the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour a “starvation wage” as he unveiled the proposal for an increase in Congress.

● **WHEN PRESIDENT** Joe Biden unveiled a \$1.9 trillion stimulus proposal earlier this month, few were surprised by the plan's hefty price tag or sweeping scope. ● **The fate of the initiative** — which so far lacks support from Republicans — will help determine whether Biden delivers on a core pocketbook issue as US income inequality widens during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The senator said he hopes Republicans “will understand the severity of the crisis,” but added that Democrats should be prepared to enact the policy on a narrow party-line vote. Such an increase would boost wages for

more than 32 million US workers, according to the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive think tank. The Sanders bill proposes “a significant increase in the minimum wage,” Ben Zipperer, an economist at the institutesaid.

“Unfortunately, we have quite a big hole to dig out of in terms of providing what low-income workers need.” The bill would put the United States on par with a growing number of states and cities that have already enacted the hike at the urging of the “Fight for \$15” movement launched by fast-food workers in the early 2010s. “The bump up made it a little bit easier,” said Maggie Breshears, who works at grocery store and retailer Fred Meyer in Seattle and has gone from

making about \$10 per hour in 2013 to \$17.59 after Seattle lifted its minimum wage in 2014. The US minimum wage was first enacted in 1938 as part of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal reforms. The measure has been periodically increased since then, most recently in 2007, when Congress lifted it gradually from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour, which would equal a \$15,000 annual salary. Barack Obama was unable to win a boost during his eight-year presidency from 2009 to 2017. In

2019, the House of Representatives approved an increase, but the bill died in the Republican-led Senate. Supporters of an increase draw hope from rising public support apparent in 2020, when Florida voters backed a hike to \$15 per hour at the same time the state voted for Republican President Donald Trump, who ended up losing reelection. In Arkansas, another Republican state, 68 percent of voters in 2018 backed gradually increasing the wage to \$11 an hour. — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

1 FEBRUARY 2021

Pass a resolution on MSP, drop cases against farmers

In his address to the all-parties' meeting on the eve of the first sitting of the Budget Session of Parliament, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday that the government's offer on farm laws still stands, and that his agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar was "only a phone call away". This is the first signal after the violence and chaos of January 26 in the national capital that the government remained open to the idea of resuming talks with the agitating farmers. The impression had formed that talks with the farmers had collapsed following the events of Republic Day.

While the prospect of talks re-starting is no bad thing, the first thing is that the perspective should be clear. Here it is necessary to understand that the "government's offer" to keep the three controversial farm laws in abeyance is in reality a suggestion of the Supreme Court and no generosity of the government. The farmers, of course, had not accepted the idea of an 18-month reprieve since the government left no stone unturned to impress upon all concerned that it was not prepared to write the idea of the availability of MSP into law.

There is a further legal hurdle to be crossed. It appears that while a government can repeal a law passed by Parliament, it has no authority to "suspend" a law. The most it can do is to delay framing the rules for the implementation of laws. But what's to happen after 18 months? The government's refusal to yield on the MSP question makes the gap between the government's stand and that of farmers unbridgeable.

Perhaps a way forward can be found through the resolution route. A suitable resolution, which reposes faith in the idea of an MSP for agriculturists, can be passed by Parliament. The wordings of this can be cleared with the farmers through discussions. Then, it should be permitted to gain the concurrence of the non-NDA parties so that it can be passed unanimously. Indeed, if other parties are brought on board and not just the government parties, the Budget Session can be conducted with mutual suspicions abating as between the government and its opponents. The farmers' issue has brought up a wall between the government and the Opposition parties. This was on view when 20 parties boycotted the President's Address to the joint sitting of the two Houses to inaugurate the Budget Session.

However, in order to create a congenial atmosphere for the resumption of talks with the farmers, the government must immediately drop cases lodged against the farmers' leaders, accusing them of the Republic Day violence. These are the same individuals who had been holding talks with the farmers. How can they be invited for fresh talks with the sword of criminal cases hanging over them? Enough material is now available that indicates that the main body of farmers remained peaceful on January 26 and only a very small group of agents provocateur took the law into their own hands. There is much to be gained if the government accepts this proposition.

Judicial correction

The Supreme Court collegium has reportedly withdrawn its recommendation to make an additional judge of the Bombay high court permanent following a series of back-to-back controversial judgments she recently delivered, of which two have attracted national attention, and condemnation. In one order, the judge decided that a person accused of groping a 12-year-old girl should not be given the maximum punishment under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act), 2012, because there was no skin-to-skin touch. In the second, she concluded that a man holding the hands of a minor girl and opening the zip of his pants cannot be convicted for 'sexual assault' under POCSO Act but for 'sexual harassment' under Indian Penal Code. The Supreme Court stayed the first order the very next day but its collegium chose to send the recommendation of the collegium to make her permanent. It has gone back on that decision now.

The two judgments triggered widespread outrage among the general public as well as the legal circles. too. The judge refused to understand the legislative intention of POCSO Act, a special Act brought to protect the interests of children, one of the most vulnerable sections of society. The apex court is right in deciding that the judge needed better sensitisation on the subject.

This is not the first time that a judgment has assaulted the sense of justice of fair-minded people. A Supreme Court judgment referred to satisfying the "collective conscience of society" while confirming a death penalty. This not the first time a well-thought out piece of legislation has been turned upside down; the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014, which sought to replace the self-made collegium system of appointing judges in the higher judiciary, is a prime example. It is time the judiciary started taking steps to correct itself, and this could well be a major step towards that direction.

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KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27809390-4; Fax : 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-255284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234

Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285

Rajahmundry: Venagiri, Dhawaleswararam Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208

Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904

Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433

Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580

Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/ 48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325

Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph : 0422 2231255
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Subhani



Elite clubs bastions of hereditary entitlement



Mohan Guruswamy

The control of the prestigious Delhi Gymkhana Club is now a bone of contention with the Central government seeking to take over its managing committee. Recently, a petition was filed by the ministry of corporate affairs in the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) seeking action under Sections 241 and 242 of the Companies Act, which allows a member of a company or the government to seek relief if the affairs of the entity are being run in a manner "prejudicial to public interest" or is "oppressive", among other things. The government had used the same provisions of the Companies Act to get NCLT approval to supersede the board of the bankrupt IL&FS in October 2018.

Incredibly, the Central government had cited "parivarvaad", or nepotism, nepotism, financial irregularities, misuse of allocated land and issues related to membership, as the primary reasons for it to acquire the club. While it is at it, it might as well take a look at all other such elite clubs where nepotism is more rampant and where the real estate is often bigger and more valuable.

Every major city in India has such clubs. Most of the better-known ones are relics of the Raj and were meant as a private place for the ruling elite to socialise and fraternise. Being the ruling elite, they gave themselves tracts of public land for their private enjoyment. At a time when the whole country was for their private enjoyment, this raised few questions. After the white man departed, these clubs turned into a preserve of the new Indian elite — many called them the "brown

sahibs". The brown sahibs too have long gone and cannot aspire to memberships. Unlike the clubs of the past, which were extensions of a ruling hierarchy, today's clubs are mostly watering holes for the well-born, and more for card games than field games.

Generally speaking, an elite means a more capable group of people. In sociological terms, an elite is a group of people who control a disproportionate share of wealth or power. C. Wright Mills in *The Power Elite* describes the power elite as "those political, economic, and military circles, which as an intricate set of overlapping small but dominant groups share decisions having at least national consequences". But most of our "elite" clubs defy such descriptions and have ceased to be based on social or official hierarchical or professional considerations, where membership was dependent on attainments and achievements. They are increasingly an association of neither the more capable people or a social elite or a power elite. They are just social clubs where membership is dependent on birth. The term "parivarvaad" used by the government in its petition describes a uniquely Indian system that combines dynastic succession and clan nepotism.

Clubs all over India are being increasingly taken over by a hereditary membership. Most of these clubs have framed rules for themselves, which automatically confer their children membership, by virtue of being dependent members, a classification for members' children of a certain age group. Since these dependents are given priority, it is almost impossible for a non-dependent to become a

member. Most people who become members through the direct route do so late in their life, which means their children invariably cannot become dependent members.

The constitutionality of hereditary membership is questionable, but who among the members will go out and challenge it? There are other implicit issues as well. Many of India's clubs are private clubs enjoying public land or land that could be deemed as "commons". The term "commons" refers to the cultural and natural resources that should be accessible to all members of a society, including natural materials such as air, water, and a habitable earth. The "common good" is a utilitarian ideal, which means "the greatest possible good for the greatest possible number of individuals". Many, like the philosopher Michael Sandel, believe that promoting the "common good" should be the main ideal of a democracy. Implicit in this is that the "commons" must only be for the "common good".

In 2014, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, then making an entrance into national politics, specifically referred to the Delhi Golf Club as a prime instance of corruption and cronyism that allowed a small number of people to take possession of public property. Like the Delhi Gymkhana, the Delhi Golf Club comes under the jurisdiction of the Central government.

Compared to the 27 acres of land occupied by the Delhi Gymkhana, the Delhi Golf Club is in possession of 220 acres of

The Secunderabad Club has 3,998 permanent members, of which 2,295 have made the cut by virtue of being members' children. Incidentally, this club only has 173 ladies as permanent members.

common land and enjoying it for the exclusive benefit of its 3,000 "members", of whom only 900 have the right to vote, and most of these are hereditary members.

Across India, a majority of those who are members of such clubs are a hereditary elite, unlike the white colonials who largely set up these establishments, who came to India as a "selected" elite by going through a very rigorous process. For instance, the Secunderabad Club has 3,998 permanent members, of which 2,295 have made the cut by virtue of being members' children. Incidentally, this club only has 173 ladies as permanent members. A more recent addition for cornering the "commons" for the recreation of the elite is the HGA golf course and club promoted by the Telangana government on 105 acres of the Golconda fort's 155 acres. Though a good part of its membership is for government officials, this club too now has a system of hereditary membership. One irony must not be missed here. Those who become members by virtue of being government officials, and hence bypass the long waiting list of the less privileged, are able to confer the hereditary benefits for posterity by bequeathing the automatic membership rights to their descendants.

In a few decades, these public commons too will become the preserve of a hereditary elite. It has even gone one better than most such clubs by making its membership fungible, affording indigent members a soft landing by transferring membership to a person of his or her choice.

It's only in the fitness of things that a government headed by a *chaiwala's* son is now challenging this growing system of hereditary legitimacy.

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

LETTERS

AMMA VODI SOP

Students eligible under Amma vodi scheme are being denied benefit citing zero attendance last year even though students had full attendance. No option is provided on website to complain. There is no response from the school. Hundreds of eligible students are waiting for benefit.

Supriya Umesh
Visakhapatnam

DESTITUTE

It is very sad and distressing to read that workers of Indore Municipal Corporation dumped homeless elders by the side of the highway (*Elderly destitute left on roadside, DC, Jan. 31*). The civic staff have brought disgrace and ignominy to the commercial capital of Madhya Pradesh. Further, the city was adjudged cleanest city for the last four years. Clean and kind heart is far more important than a clean city. The culprits should not be spared.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

PM'S PROMISE

Even though the Prime Minister reiterated his promise to suspend farm laws, the SKM is unlikely to budge from its stand to repeal the laws after being emboldened by the resurgence of their agitation. The only course left for the government is to make the implementation optional to the states since agriculture is, after all, a state subject.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Rs 4.4 crore relief granted to city

HYDERABAD, JANUARY. 31 The Central Government had sanctioned Rs 4.4 crore towards various measures for providing relief to the victims of the floods in the twin-cities.

It has sanctioned another sum of Rs 2.5 crore for flood relief works in Nizamabad district.

Chief Minister, Mr K. Brahmananda Reddi, who returned from Delhi here today, told reporters that of the amount sanctioned for the twin cities, Rs 230 lakh was marked for repairs to the surface and underground drainage systems including the embankments of the Musi river and Rs 75 lakh for repairs to roads and buildings.

The vaccine wars have broken out! The EU is imposing export control on vaccines manufactured on its territory from being exported to the UK.

spices — even selling their products door-to-door. Kirit abandoned his college studies but brought management savvy to the business selling the stuff to White British — and not just Indian — families. This was in the 70s when Madhur Jaffrey's book on Indian cuisine came out and British middle classes were trying to make *masala dosa* at home. It was all about Patak spices, sauces and pickles. Kirit Patak eventually sold his business in UK for £60 million and retired to Dubai. Patak (shortened from Pathak to make it easy for the locals to pronounce) remains and will continue to remain an iconic brand.

Kishwar Desai is an award-winning author. The Longest Kiss: The Life and Times of Devika Rani is her new book.

stronger and smarter.

Whitehall may have done many things wrong but it was very smart at ordering vaccines in advance. The Oxford project was the first to announce their intentions so Boris ordered 100 million in a real gamble. Then when the Pfizer vaccine glimmered on the horizon, UK ordered 60 million. Quick approval followed and by early December, the above-80s and care workers began getting inoculated. By now eight million have been inoculated.

The European Union, on the other hand, has had a slow start. Their regulators took their time. After all, they have 27 countries to worry about. So now they are on a warpath with the UK, whom they feel has booked up all the vaccines, and the EU wants a large chunk of them. The vaccine can be invented in Oxford or Vienna but they are manufactured in many locations round the world. AstraZeneca who manufacture the Oxford vaccine have some assembly locations on the continent and others in UK. Same for the Pfizer.

The Vaccine Wars have broken out! The EU is imposing export control on vaccines manufactured on its territo-

ry from being exported to UK. Boris can at last put on his helmet and police the coastline to wait for 'our' vaccines to come to us. So be assured that the memoirs of Boris/Churchill (no doubt being already dictated) will be a bestseller.

But no country can afford to be complacent. Yes, the vaccination programme is ongoing — with huge inequalities. Some countries are moving ahead and others have barely started. The Vaccine Wars may yet take a wider, global form.

That apart, Covid has also created new stars, and put pressure on old ones! Entertainers and influencers are hatching more and more bizarre schemes to remain in the limelight, as there are no public platforms except the Internet which is getting very crowded. Our newspapers are full of desperate looking people in costumes, weird cookery columns, unimaginable YouTube hits and unbelievable Instagram displays. You have to feel sorry for these people with no early chance of theatres or cinemas or music festivals restarting. And now musicians need separate visas for each EU country they want to perform in.

The British government in their hurry to Brexit forgot people need the bigger audience in Europe to earn their living. You can only do so much Zoom.

Meanwhile, some stars have even gone to the extent of breaking the lockdown rules openly. Rita Ora booked a restaurant in Notting Hill, invited friends, persuaded the restaurant to black out all the CCTV cameras and partied. The photos taken by her publicity staff were obviously much more glamorous than the CCTV cameras'. She was fined £5000 — and her name was splashed in all media. Now was it because she could never have managed so much publicity for so little? Hmmm.

A real rags-to-riches story which transformed the British perception of India and Indian food came to a sad end last week when Kirit Patak, the owner of Patak Spices, died. Those of us who arrived here and craved Indian food know how much the Patak brand meant for our taste-buds. His parents had arrived in the mid-50s with the proverbial £5 in their pocket from Kenya. They worked the usual 16 hours a day preparing Indian recipes — samosas, pickles, ground

Kishwar Desai
London Diary



King of Spices to be dearly missed; Boris really hated the 'L' milestone

We have had every kind of weather in London — but then that is the norm isn't it? It snowed one early morning and we woke up to white blankets on our road and trees and grass. Then there have been days when the sun shone brightly warming us all up though only for a few hours. Otherwise, the dull days of winter are only tolerable because there is no place to go but home! One cannot imagine that London — where the city never slept, where every form of entertainment was available 24/7, would be like this!

The lockdown continues and our death toll crossed 100,000, the worst in Europe and higher per million people than even America. Boris Johnson has always fancied himself as Winston Churchill, the wartime leader with Britain standing alone (apart from armies of India, Canada and Australia-New Zealand). But this was a milestone he hated announcing. For once he was sombre, nearly in tears at his press conference, when he had to pronounce the hated 'L' word.

But his luck has turned. The Vaccine Wars have saved him — and made the UK look

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	46,285.77	-1.26
Nifty 50	13,634.60	-1.32
S&P 500*	3,714.24	-1.93
Dollar (₹)	72.94	0.14
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.04	-0.34
Euro (₹)	88.33	0.12
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,690▲286	0.002
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.04	-0.11
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.949	00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.071	2.14

GST revenues touch record ₹1.20 L cr in Jan.

GST collections for January touched an all-time high of Rs 1.20 lakh crore, the finance ministry said. It said in line with the trend of recovery in the GST revenues over past five months, the revenues for January 2021 are 8 per cent higher than that in the same month last year. The gross GST collected is Rs 1,19,847 crore, of which CGST is Rs 21,923 crore, SGST is Rs 29,014 crore, IGST is Rs 60,288 crore and cess is Rs 8,622 crore.

Sitharaman to present Union Budget today



Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday will deliver her promised "budget like no other" that is expected to provide relief to the common man as well as focus on driving the economic recovery through higher spending on healthcare, infrastructure and defence. The ninth budget under the Modi government, including an interim one, is widely expected to focus on boosting spending on job creation and development.

Power demand touches all-time high of 189.6 GW

Power demand touched an all-time high of 189.64 GW on Saturday, power secretary S. N. Sahai said. "Power demand galloping. All India demand: 1,89,644 MW (189.64 GW) at 10.39 hrs today (Jan.30) crossed the previous highest all-India demand of 1,88,452 MW (188.45 GW) on 28th January," he tweeted. Last week, power minister R. K. Singh had said power demand will cross the 200-GW mark soon.

MF investment in Reits jumps 6-fold to ₹3,970 cr

Emerging investment instrument Reit is finally gaining popularity among investors, with mutual funds investing Rs 3,972 crore in such units in 2020, a six-fold jump from the preceding year. Green Portfolio co-founder Divam Sharma said that with names like DLF, Brookfield and Godrej in the process of launching Reit, more interest from mutual funds in such offerings is expected in the coming years.



Govt wants to save cash and honour Cairn may be offered fields in lieu of \$1.4 bn

New Delhi, Jan. 31: The government may give Cairn Energy one of the surrendered oil fields such as Ratna R-Series in lieu of the \$1.4 billion it has pay to the British firm, helping prevent seizure of foreign assets in case of default as well as get an experienced operator in the struggling E&P sector, sources said.

Cairn Energy gave India its biggest onland oil discovery but exited the country after it was slapped with a Rs 10,247-crore tax demand using a legislation that gave the government the powers to tax companies retrospectively. The firm has now won an international arbitration against the tax demand and the government has been ordered to return the value of shares of Cairn it had sold, dividends it had seized and tax refund it had withheld to recover the tax demand.

For a government struggling to find revenue to boost a Covid-19 battered economy, options of appeal against the arbitration award are limited and it may not have the financial bandwidth for such a payout, two sources with knowledge of the development said.

"One option is to give Cairn one or more of the oil and gas fields that the government now owns after they are surrendered by operators for various reasons," one of them said. "The government could give the Ratna and R-Series oil and gas field in the Arabian Sea that taken away from Essar Oil-



Premier Oil consortium in 2016 because contractual terms had changed."

The Barmer oilfield in Rajasthan, which was originally discovered by Cairn Energy, could be another option. Vedanta Ltd, which now operates the field after it bought out Cairn's Indian subsidiary a decade back, has so far not agreed to the government conditions for getting an extension of contract beyond its original end day of May 2020.

Under Vedanta, which continues to operate the field on monthly extensions till its legal challenge to government conditions is settled, Rajasthan oil-fields have seen a steady decline in output.

"It's a win-win—the government settles its liability without paying a single penny or upsetting investor sentiments by not honouring the arbitration award through endless legal challenges and at the same time getting back an established exploration and production (E&P) firm

back," another source said. No major oil and gas discovery has been made in the past seven years since the retrospective tax demand was raised.

In case the government chooses not to honour the arbitration award, it risks the prospect of its assets in foreign countries being seized, just like US oil firm ConocoPhillips did with Venezuela to recoup multi-billion dollar of compensation awarded in arbitration.

Earlier this month, Cairn Energy's chief executive officer Simon Thomson wrote to the Indian government saying that the arbitration ruling is final and binding, and failure to comply would breach the international rules.

Cairn Energy has asked the Indian government for an early indication of implementing the arbitration award, well before the announcement of its full year earnings on March 9 for clarity of its shareholders, according to the letter.

—PTI

CEA PITCHES FOR PRIVATE SECTOR-LED BAD BANK



K.V. Subramanian

KUMAR DIPANKAR & CHANDRA SHEKHAR NEW DELHI, JAN. 31

Chief economic adviser K. V. Subramanian has made a strong case for setting up a bad bank led by the private sector to effectively deal with the non-performing assets of the financial sector, which may see a surge once regulatory forbearance to deal with the impact of Covid-19 is withdrawn.

The proposal to set up a bad bank has been under the government's consideration for long and some steps may be announced in Monday's Budget 2021-22.

Bad bank refers to a financial institution which takes over bad assets of lenders and undertakes resolution. Lenders have been making a case for setting up a bad bank to ease the pressure of bad loans on them in these difficult times.

"The bad bank will certainly help in consolidating some of the non-performing assets. It's important to also think about implementing the bad bank in the private sector that enables (faster) decision making," he told PTI in an interview.

—PTI

Crypto players want to be heard before ban decision

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JAN. 31

As the government plans to ban "private cryptocurrencies", digital currency platforms hope that the government will consult them before taking a decision.

"Since the government is considering introducing the bill during this session of the Parliament, we are sure the government will definitely listen to all the stakeholders before taking any decision. We are talking to other stakeholders and will definitely initiate deeper dialogue with the government and showcase how we can actually create a healthy ecosystem in unison," Sumit Gupta, co-founder and CEO of CoinDCX said.

The government is planning to introduce a bill "The Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official



Digital Currency Bill, 2021" that will prohibit "all private cryptocurrencies" in India. It will also provide a framework for creating an official digital currency that will be issued by the Reserve Bank of India.

"The digital currency bill to be introduced before the Lok Sabha is a welcome step forward. Its success will depend on the details, particularly the definition of what the bill calls "private cryptocurrencies". This is not a common term. Bitcoin

is not privately owned by anyone. It is a public good, like the internet," said Rahul Pagidipati, CEO at ZebPay.

According to him, Bitcoin and most crypto assets are more like gold and not an alternative to government-issued legal tender. Crypto assets and digital government currency can coexist and together, they can bring tremendous benefits to the Indian economy.

"We hope the Lok Sabha members and advisors will consult crypto and blockchain companies as they make their decisions. Millions of Indians have already invested in this new asset class. Millions more want the same opportunity to build wealth that investors in other countries already have. We have faith in the government and hope that this bill will move India forwards, not backwards", he said.

China giant reports \$10 bn fraud

Beijing, Jan. 31: Three units of HNA, once China's most acquisitive conglomerate, said nearly \$10 billion had been embezzled by shareholders, in disclosures to stock exchanges that come amid a government-led probe into the deeply indebted group.

A total of 61.5 billion yuan (\$9.57 bn) had been embezzled by shareholders and other related parties, Shanghai-listed Hainan Airlines Holding Co, HNA Infrastructure Investment Group Co and Shenzhen-

listed CCOOP Group Co said late on Friday.

The identities of the shareholders were not disclosed in the statements.

The three companies and their subsidiaries had also provided non-compliant guarantees for 46.5 billion yuan in financing, according to the statements filed after creditors of their parent applied to a court for the conglomerate to be placed in bankruptcy and restructured.

The move came after a local government-led working team concluded

due diligence at HNA earlier in January, and laid out risk disposal plans, enabling it to move to the next stage of resolving a multi-year liquidity crisis.

The government-appointed working team expects as many as 500 companies linked to HNA Group to go into bankruptcy restructuring, Chinese financial magazine Caixin reported on Saturday, citing sources that it did not identify.

Caixin previously reported that HNA owns more than 2,300 companies.

—Reuters

Stocks encounter Budget hurdle

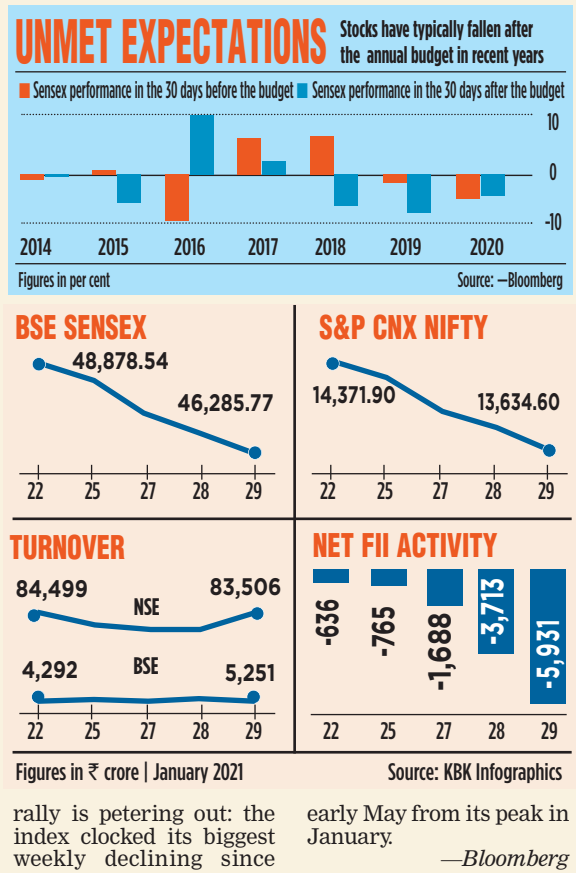
NUPUR ACHARYA & RONJOY MAZUMDAR JAN. 31

If history is a guide, the recent rough ride for Indian stocks will continue after Monday's budget.

The Sensex has climbed in the month after budget day on only two of the past seven years since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power, while falling or staying range-bound on other occasions. Risks are compounded in 2021 given stretched valuations.

"There are expectations that the government will keep aside fiscal prudence and open its pockets to spend more," said Ajit Mishra, vice president of research at Mumbai-based Religare Broking Ltd. "Investors and businesses are pinning high hopes on the budget and any disappointment could lead to profit-taking."

The Sensex had a blistering advance last quarter—even as data showed that the economy had plunged into recession. But there are signs the



FPIs INVEST OVER 19,470 CRORE IN EQUITIES IN JAN.

New Delhi, Jan. 31: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have remained net buyers to the tune of Rs 14,649 crore in Indian markets in January, amid availability of global liquidity.

Depositories data shows overseas investors pumped-in a net of Rs 19,473 crore into equities but pulled out Rs 4,824 crore from the debt segment between January 1 and January 29. Thus, the net investment in January stood at Rs 14,649 crore.

Geojit strategist V. K. Vijayakumar said due to uncertainty over the budget proposals, FPIs have been a bit apprehensive about the direction of the market and, therefore, have seen selling in the past few days.

—PTI

Trade & hotels to see 21% dip in real GVA

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JAN. 31

Trade, hotels, transport and communication will see the steepest decline of 21.4 per cent in gross value added (GVA) in FY21. Except the primary sector, which includes agriculture, all the other sectors will see a decline in GVA, finds the Economic Survey.

As per the first advance estimate for FY21, the real GVA at basic prices of trade, hotels, transport and communication sectors will be around Rs 20.26 lakh crore against the provisional estimate of Rs 25.77 lakh crore in FY20—a decline of 21.4 per cent. These sectors had recorded a growth of 3.6 per cent in FY20 and 7.7 per cent in FY19.

Manufacturing might see a decline of 9.3 per cent to Rs 33.19 lakh crore in FY21 against Rs 36.59 lakh crore in the previous fiscal. Manufacturing, too, has been witnessing positive growth for the past several years, though in FY20, the

growth was almost flatish at 0.7 per cent. However, in the previous two years, manufacturing was growing at 6 and 6.5 per cent.

In the case of financing, insurance, real estate and business services, the decline will be marginal at 0.8 per cent to Rs 28.91 lakh crore. In FY20, these sectors had grown by 4.6 per cent and 6.8 per cent in FY19.

Community, social and personal services, which had grown by 10 per cent in FY20, also will see a decline of 3.7 per cent.

The primary sector, which includes agriculture, fishing, mining and quarrying, is the saving grace. These sectors will grow their real GVA by 0.9 per cent to Rs 23.25 lakh crore against Rs 23.03 lakh crore in the previous fiscal. As per the provisional estimate of FY20, these sectors had grown by 3.9 per cent.

The total GVA added at basic prices will decline by 7.2 per cent against a growth of 3.9 per cent in the previous fiscal.

OLECTRA GETS ₹600-CR PUNE ORDER FOR 350 ELECTRIC BUSES



MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, JAN. 31.

The Secunderabad-based Olectra Greentech, the BSE-listed manufacturer of electric buses, and its sister concern Evey Trans have received the letter of award from Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal for 350 electric buses.

The order is under the FAME-II (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles) scheme for supply of 350 electric buses on gross cost contract (GCC) / Opex model basis for a period of 12 years.

Evey Trans will procure these 350 electric buses from Olectra Greentech and deliver them within seven months. The maintenance of these buses shall also be undertaken by the company during the contract period.

"The value of this order from Pune is about Rs 600 crore," Sharat Chandra, CFO, Olectra Greentech told Financial Chronicle.

Olectra Greentech, which has been declared as the least quoted bidder for 300 electric buses from the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL), is also likely to get the order for a 12-year contract. "The order from BMTCL is expected shortly and the value of this tender is about Rs 570 crore to our firm," Chandra said, adding the se 300 buses would be delivered in 12 months.

"We have in hand an order book of 1,250 electric buses to deliver across Indian cities over 12-15 months," he said.

Olectra already operates 150 buses in Pune.

MAKING | IN INDIA

Over ₹7,300 crore offered is little for global players to relocate

Mait seeks ₹20K cr PLI for IT hardware

New Delhi, Jan. 31: IT hardware makers urge the government to allocate Rs 20,000 crore under the production-linked incentive scheme, to boost manufacturing of personal computers, tablets and servers in the country.

The proposed amount of around Rs 7,000 crore is insignificant for global players to relocate their facilities to India, said industry body Mait.

The Manufacturers' Association of Information Technology (Mait), whose members include Apple, Dell, HP and Lenovo, wants the government to address various disabilities that the sector faces, including improvement in export infrastructure to support growth under the PLI scheme.

Mait president Nitin Kunkolienker told PTI,



"We are looking for higher funds for the PLI scheme. For laptops, servers, etc, the government has just proposed Rs 7,325 crore.

"I don't think that, for PCs, if you relocate and reposition supply from China or other parts of the world, it will be possible with just these kinds of funds. They are very insignificant."

He said the mobile phone industry got around Rs 41,000 crore, where there has been sustained effort

for the past 10 years to push manufacturing, and even it does not come under ITA-1 (information technology agreement).

"You gave them (mobile industry) duty arbitrage earlier. There was some base created for mobile manufacturing; whereas for PC, laptop, servers and tablets, there was an inverted duty regime from 2005 to 2014 that impacted manufacturing of these products. Now, we need to re-invent," Kunkolienker

said.

Under ITA-1, members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) were not allowed to impose tariff barriers on IT products, which include personal computers, set-top boxes and servers.

The enforcement of ITA-1 led to many companies shutting their manufacturing unit in India, as import of finished IT products became cheaper compared to their production in the country.

Kunkolienker said there is a need to recreate and reposition India's market. "At least Rs 20,000 crore is required (under PLI). It is based on value addition potential that exists in the country.

"There is an immense potential for Indian MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) to

become part of the global manufacturing ecosystem. There is a disability in MSMEs to borrow capital," Kunkolienker said.

He said currently, India has major challenges in terms of manufacturing ecosystem, including logistics.

"For real make in India to happen, there is a need to address disabilities. It won't be possible by giving 2 per cent. It does not even cover up for loss of transactions. Relocating the supply chain is not an easy target.

"To achieve this target, you need to have an export-centric approach. Shipping lines may offer competitive rates. We support the strategy of export-led growth but export infrastructure is very uncompetitive," Kunkolienker said. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Messi's contract biggest in sports

Madrid: Lionel Messi's most recent contract with Barcelona is worth up to 555 million euros (\$673 million) over four seasons, the *El Mundo* newspaper reported on Sunday.

The Spanish daily said it had access to the document Messi signed with the Catalan club in 2017, which included fixed incomes and variables that could reach nearly 138 million euros (\$167 million) each season. The newspaper said it is the most expensive contract ever agreed with an athlete in any sport.

Messi would have to pay about half of that in taxes in Spain. The report said the 33-year-old player has already secured more than 510 million euros (\$619 million) of the total.

Barcelona denied responsibility for leaking the document and said it would take legal action against the newspaper.

Messi did not immediately make any public comments about the report. — AP

Hyderabad FC too hot for Chennaiyin

Vasco: Hyderabad FC strengthened their chances of qualifying for the play-offs with a 2-0 victory over Chennaiyin FC in the Indian Super League, here on Sunday.

Goals from Fran Sandaza (28th minute) and Joel Chianese (82th) were enough to secure all three points for the Nizams and propel them to third place on the table.

Hyderabad made their intentions clear right from the start, winning a corner in the fifth minute. The promising Asish Rai, who is enjoying a breakthrough season, was the architect of the move, sprinting into the Chennaiyin box and finding Mohammed Yasir.

After Yasir's cross was put behind for a corner, Rai got another chance but sent his cross over.

Hyderabad kept attacking in the first quarter and got their reward just before the half-hour mark when Sandaza broke the deadlock. — PTI

Gill blazes to title in Coimbatore

Coimbatore: Gaurav Gill was in blazing form at the wheels of his Mahindra XUV as he and navigator Musa Sherif showed immense skills and patience to win the Rally of Coimbatore on Sunday and again emerge national champions.

By winning two legs on tarmac in Itanagar last month and coming to the leafy environs of Kethanur, 40km outside Coimbatore, Gill showed he was also the king on gravel as well.

For JK Tyre, the return to the rallying scene with a bang after a long hiatus could not have been sweeter. The comeback to the latest season in a year of the pandemic has been simply captivating.

It was a brave decision on part of the FMSCI's INRC and the competing teams to go ahead with the rally season despite fears over the Corona virus. From Saturday to Sunday afternoon, Gill had a lot of problems, though by sheer dint of experience and his large heart he conquered the elements and technical glitches in the car.

Jesus wins it for Manchester City

London: Manchester City opened up a three-point lead at the top of the Premier League with a game in hand to come as Pep Guardiola's men beat Sheffield United 1-0, while Manchester United played out a goalless draw at Arsenal on Saturday. Gabriel Jesus scored the only goal inside the first 10 minutes at the Etihad as City extended their winning run to 12 games in all competitions. Ferran Torres and Jesus were two of five changes made by Guardiola and they combined to make the breakthrough. — AFP

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Odisha vs Jamshedpur from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

WWE

Raw: Bouts from 6.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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MOEEN TARGET

England allrounder Ali looks to get Test career back on track

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, JAN. 31

England all-rounder Moeen Ali has fond memories of the 2016 Test series in India. Moeen had started and ended the series with centuries even though England didn't have much to cheer about, having lost 0-4.

Back in Chennai where he scored his last Test ton, Moeen is now looking to get his red-ball career back on track. England coach Chris Silverwood has hinted that Moeen is in contention to play the Chennai Test.

This would be his first Test since he was dropped during the 2019 Ashes.

"I enjoyed the break and played in a few leagues around the world. But ultimately it is Test cricket that I missed. I've waited long enough," said Moeen.

Nineteen wickets short of joining the 200-wicket club, Moeen has set his sights on completing the milestone in India.

"That is my biggest motivation. I still feel I've got wickets and runs in me and match-winning performances within me. I have small targets I want to achieve first."

"I am not too far away from getting 200 wickets. I know people say they don't look at these things but it would be something I would look at. Then I would set another target after that," said Moeen.

Moeen was part of the England squad that toured Sri Lanka recently, but the 33-year-old spent most of his time in isolation after testing Covid-19 positive.

Moeen said he is fit and raring to go now.

"Once I tested positive, I just wanted to get it over and done with really. It has been tough but I'm a big believer in 'after hardship comes



A file photo of England allrounder Moeen Ali (left). — ECB

He's (Virat Kohli) a great guy and a good friend of mine — we don't talk too much about cricket. I don't know how we're going to get him out because I don't think he has any sort of weakness but we have a good bowling attack, some pace in the line-up.

— MOEEN ALI
England allrounder

ease'. Hopefully there is ease after this," said Moeen.

The off-spinner who took 10 wickets, including that of Virat Kohli, during the 2016 series knows the importance of

removing the Indian skipper early.

"How do we get him out? He's obviously an amazing player, world-class, he's very motivated to do well and I'm sure he'll be even more motivated after they did well in Australia and he had to leave for the birth of his child," said Moeen.

Moeen and Kohli are teammates at Royal Challengers Bangalore. "He's a great guy and a good friend of mine — we don't talk too much about cricket. I don't know how we're going to get him out because I don't think he has any sort of weakness but we have a good bowling attack, some pace in the line-up," he added.

AFTER FRESH GUIDELINES, 50% SPECTATORS LIKELY FOR 2ND TEST

New Delhi, Jan. 31: Spectators might be allowed in the second India-England Test in Chennai after the central government's fresh Covid-19 guidelines permitted crowd attendance at fifty per cent of capacity at sporting venues.

The BCCI and the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association had deliberated on entry of spectators earlier also before deciding that the first two matches would be held closed doors. But the fresh home ministry guidelines on easing of restrictions on public movement

have changed the scenario.

"There is no time to allow entry of spectators for the first Test starting on February 5 as we only received the government notification on Saturday. You can't organise entry of spectators at such a short notice," a senior TNCA official said on conditions of anonymity.

"But yes, now with fresh guidelines, there is every possibility that second Test starting from February 14 might have spectators as per notification," he added.

The Chepauk has a capacity of 50,000. — PTI

Strike-rate doesn't really matter at times: Pujara

New Delhi, Jan. 31: There are times when balls faced matter a lot more than runs scored and the recent tour of Australia was all about that for India's Test batting mainstay Cheteshwar Pujara, who finds the "strike-rate talk" overrated.

Pujara had collected a lot more runs (521 at 41.41 strike rate and three hundreds) in his player of the series performance to ensure a historic win in Australia two seasons ago but considering the "extraordinary circumstances" of the recent showdown that just went by, he rates his effort (271 at 29.20 and three half-centuries) equally special.

"Both tours have been fantastic for the team and personally I did well on both tours but the cir-



Cheteshwar Pujara

cumstances were completely different. This time I was starting up after a long time, almost eight months (due to Covid-19), there were no first class games also," Pujara said.

The 31-year-old stood like a rock through the series, quite literally in the final Test in Brisbane, where he took multiple blows on the body to keep a relentless

Australian attack at bay.

"It wasn't easy at all in terms of preparation and the Australian team had a thorough game plan for each of us. To get back into rhythm took a little bit of time but luckily all went positive in the end."

"Numbers wise, it may not look like a very, very good series for me but if you look at the pitches, not many runs were scored this time. It was more challenging than last time without a doubt."

The 81-Test veteran said the balls faced, 928 to 1,258 two years ago, mattered more than runs scored, given the challenging pace attack, nature of pitches and barrage of injuries that the Indian team suffered through the four games. — PTI

DOMESTIC | TWENTY20

TN pip Baroda for second title

Ahmedabad, Jan. 31: Tamil Nadu produced an impressive batting display after left-arm spinner M. Siddharth's four-wicket haul as they lifted the coveted Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy after defeating Baroda by seven wickets in the final here on Sunday.

This was Tamil Nadu's second Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy triumph, after winning their first title way back in 2006-07. Baroda, who had won the title twice in the past (in 2011-12 and 2013-14), ended runners-up this time.

Siddharth (4/20) spun his web around the Baroda batsmen to restrict them to a meagre 120 for 9 and then Tamil Nadu overhauled the target in 18 overs, with opener C. Hari Nishaanth top-scoring with 35.

Chasing 121 for a win, Tamil Nadu lost opener Narayan Jagadeesan (14) early as pacer Lukman Meriwala (1/34) picked up the first wicket, with the opposition at 26/1.

But Nishaanth continued playing his shots and was joined by Baba Aparajith (29 not out off 35 balls) as

Tamil Nadu reached 61/1 after 10 overs.

However, medium-pacer Babashafi Pathan removed Nishaanth in the 12th over, as he holed out in the deep, to reduce TN to 67/2 and give Baroda a glimmer of hope.

Skipper Dinesh Karthik played his part to perfection with a 16-ball 22 but perished when his side needed 20 runs off 23 balls.

Aparajith and Shahrulkh Khan (18 not out) then took TN home. Shahrulkh, fittingly, finished the game with a boundary.

Earlier, Siddharth's brilliant bowling upfront enabled TN to restrict Baroda to 120 for 9 on a difficult track.

It was largely due to the 58-run seventh wicket stand between Vishnu Solanki (49) and Atit Sheth (29) that Baroda after being reduced to 36/6 managed a three-figure total. — PTI

BRIEF SCORES

Baroda 120/9 (Vishnu Solanki 49, Atit Sheth 29; M Siddharth 4/20; M. Mohammed 1/16) lost to **Tamil Nadu 123/3** (C. Hari Nishaanth 35, Baba Aparajith 29 not out; Atit Sheth 1/20) by 7 wickets.

Antonsen, Tai emerge champs

Bangkok, Jan. 31: Top-ranked Tai Tzu-ying won a dramatic cliffhanger women's badminton World Tour Final in Bangkok on Sunday, blocking reigning Olympic champion Carolina Marin's bid for a hat-trick of titles in three weeks.

The all Danish men's singles final was equally nail biting as Anders Antonsen denied Viktor Axelsen a third tournament win in three weeks.

Marin beat the Taiwanese 26-year-old two weeks in a row during the previous Thailand Open tournament finals.

The Spaniard had a shaky start Sunday as Tai exploited holes in her defence early, but Marin mounted a successful comeback in the later stages winning the opener 21-14.

Marin was loud and fiery in her verbal celebrations, but a visibly annoyed Tai soon found her own voice.

In the second game Tai dominated early and dictated a commanding pace, eventually triumphing 21-

8. The decider was filled with fast and furious rallies — both players yo-yoed up and down the scoreboard — but two late spectacular drop shots were critical in sealing Tai's victory 21-19.

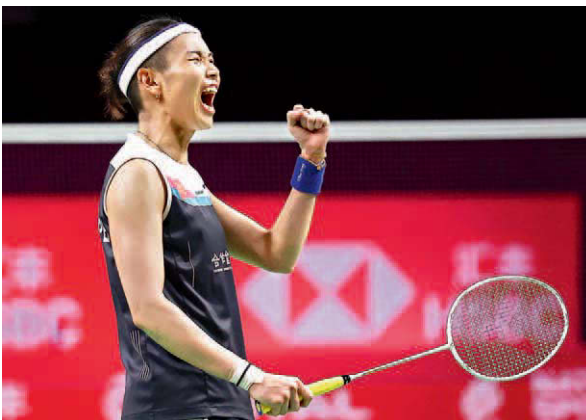
"Before this match today I kept telling myself that I had to play patiently. In the previous matches, all my mistakes were caused (by) my own impatience," Tai said.

Thailand has hosted three consecutive badminton tournaments in a bio-secure bubble to guard against the pandemic.

Axelsen, ranked fourth, couldn't control his nerves — losing the first game 16-21 — his body language showing immense frustration as errors piled up and shots landed wide.

He managed to regroup to win the second game 21-5.

But in the decider Antonsen had all the right answers, triumphing 21-17 to claim the game and the hour-long match against an increasingly ruffled Axelsen. Antonsen is the only man to beat Axelsen in three weeks. — AFP



Taiwan's Tai Tzu-ying reacts after beating Carolina Marin of Spain in the women's singles match at the World Tour Finals in Bangkok on Sunday. — BADMINTON ASSOCIATION OF THAILAND/AFP

Ranji survived World War, freedom struggle but not Covid



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

The recent news that the Ranji Trophy has been suspended for the 2020-21 season caused a dampener in what has otherwise been a fabulous season for Indian cricket. It has been 86 years since MJ Gopalan bowled the first ball in a first class fixture for Madras (Tamil Nadu) against Mysore (Karnataka) in the inaugural game of the Ranji Trophy. The tournament that was conducted unabated since that match played in Madras, has been the lifeline of Indian cricket and is considered the

most important contest to be played by Indian cricketers, barring Test cricket.

What began with 14 teams in the inaugural season has now morphed into a mammoth tourney featuring 38 teams from across the country. The decision taken by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) was after consultation with their stakeholders (teams, players, etc.) is a correct one considering the current situation. The gigantic logistical efforts needed to conduct the national tournament in these times (with the

threats still being posed by the pandemic) prompted the BCCI to take this unfortunate step to put player and public safety on top priority.

Just how important the Ranji Trophy is for Indian cricket and its growth is not too difficult to demonstrate to the present generation that has been weaned on the shorter formats of the game. For Zoomers (Generation Z) whose birth years range from the mid-to-late 1990s to the 2000s, the Ranji Trophy will not have the same importance as shorter tournaments such as the Indian Premier League that has complete top-of-the-mind recall. The recent exploits of the Indian team in Australia in the Test series are ample proof of how the Ranji Trophy has contributed to the growth of Indian cricket.

The way the bench players put their hands up to take India to a convincing win over the Australians just goes to show how deep cricket has penetrated into the country. Performances by members of the team (who started the tour down under as 'net bowlers') wowed audiences in India and also passed a strong message to followers of the game abroad that Indian cricket cannot be taken lightly. The strength of any team does not lie only in its playing stars but is uncovered when their replacements show their hunger for success. And that's what was on show during the series, particularly in the final Test match at the Gabba.

Former Australian great, Greg Chappell commended the domestic structure in India and called it the main reason for the superb

turnaround that was caused by stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane and team. In his column the former Aussie skipper wrote: "An India wannabe gets the cricket equivalent of the Gurkha military training programme — arguably the toughest physical and mental induction regime in the world." Having coached India for two years, Chappell saw, at first hand, the Indian cricket system (from age-group cricket onwards) and understood the rigours of coming up through the same.

In a summation, Chappell went on to call their young cricketers 'weekend warriors' as compared to their Indian counterparts. He mentioned the cut-throat competition that a young Indian cricketer has to survive from the Under-16 age

group level till he reaches the first class level, saying: "As cricket is THE major sport in India, the best athletes in the country are playing the game and competition for state places is fierce."

Indian legend Sunil Gavaskar has often written about the 'hunger' that a young Indian cricketer has as he undertakes the sharp climb, up from the age group level to the Ranji Trophy.

In recent times, many experts often talk about the influence of the IPL in getting an Indian cricketer ready for the international stage. That, in a sense, is partly true as we have seen many youngsters catch the eyes of cricket experts thanks to their performances in the tournament. What they probably don't realise is the hard work all these cricketers have gone through performing in far

corners of the country playing the Ranji Trophy to reach the IPL level.

There will be discussions about T. Natarajan's penchant to bowl good yorkers for his IPL franchise but not about the 67 wickets he has snared in only 21 first class (Ranji included) matches. It was his, and Mohammed Siraj's experience playing the long format Ranji Trophy that gave them the edge while playing Test cricket, not the IPL. In a sense, the IPL has given players the right attitude while playing at the international level but the real experience will always be due to their hard work in the competitive Ranji Trophy which (unfortunately) will be missed this year. The tournament survived a World War and the freedom struggle but not the pandemic.