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HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 7 JANUARY 2021

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WEATHER

Max: 26.2°C
Min: 21.6°C
RH: 84%
Rainfall: 0.5 mm
Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Moderate rain. Max/Min
temp. 27/21 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+18,341)	(+224)
1,03,92,443	1,50,338

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+417)	(+2)
TS: 2,88,410	1,556
(+289)	(+3)
AP: 8,83,876	7,125

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

8,72,51,023
DEATHS
18,83,650

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 218 worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana
Tithi: Margasira Bahula Navami till 11.56 pm
Star: Chitta till 3.43 pm
Varjyanam: 8.58 pm to 10.27 pm
Durmuhurtam: 10.32 am to 11.16 am; 2.56 pm to 3.40 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Jamadi-ul-Awwal 22, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajr: 5.43 am
Zohar: 12.32 pm
Asar: 4.20 pm
Maghrab: 6.02 pm
Isha: 7.15 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.48 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.56 PM
MOONSET 12.51 PM
MOONRISE 12.43 AM

COUNTER POINT



Let's invite Trump... he never supported our farmers agitation!

SHORT TAKES

Telangana HC CJ to be sworn-in today

Hyderabad: Justice Hima Kohli will be sworn-in as Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court on Thursday at 11.30 am. Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan will administer the oath to the newly appointed Chief Justice.

69K birds culled over bird flu scare

Thiruvananthapuram: Over 69,000 birds including ducks and chicken were culled in Alappuzha and Kottayam districts to contain the H5N8 strain of bird flu. Kerala animal husbandry minister K. Raju said. Nineteen 19 Rapid Response Teams have been engaged in culling birds in the districts and the regions suspected to have infected the birds will be sanitised.

More reports on P7

Arvind accuses My Home Group of illegal mining

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

The Bharatiya Janata Party's Lok Sabha member Arvind Dharmapuri has urged the Telangana state government to take action to put an end to "illegal mining activities in Telangana" by the My Home Group and respond to the Centre's notices on the matter.

The BJP leader, who has been pursuing this issue for some months now, on Wednesday took to Twitter to yet again highlight what he described as "lack of action" by the Telangana state government on the My Home Group on the issue of violations relating to mining

THE BJP MP questioned the Chief Secretary on the "delay in action or investigation against My Home group for its irregularities and violations of mining in reserve forest area."

Arvind said that instead of responding to the notices from the Centre, the TS government was considering allocating more lands for mining operations by the company.

government had received three notices from the Union mines ministry as well as two from the Centre State Division of the Union home ministry on the illegal mining activities.

The BJP MP questioned the Chief Secretary on the "delay in action or investigation against My Home group for its irregularities and violations of mining in reserve forest area."

Arvind said that instead of responding to the notices from the Centre, the TS government was considering allocating more lands for mining operations by the company.

In his letter on Wednesday, Arvind said the state

Expressing concern over the deadlock between the agitating farmers and the government, the Supreme Court said on Wednesday that all petitions challenging the three new agricultural reform laws will be heard together on Monday, January 11. A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde observed that "there is absolutely no improvement in the situation" regarding the farmers' protest.

The bench also said the court's intention was to encourage and facilitate talks between farmers and the government.

Apart from the challenge to the farm laws, the Supreme Court is also hearing petitions seeking the removal of farmers from the protest sites in the Delhi-NCR border areas on the ground that they are causing hardship to the public due to the blockade of roads.

The protests at Delhi's borders have been going on for over five weeks, with union leaders saying their agitation against the three farm laws will intensify in the coming days.

The farmers will also hold a tractor march on Thursday in protest over the farm laws.

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2nd nationwide dry run for Covid vaccine on Jan. 8

STATE SEES 65% JUMP IN COVID CASES IN A DAY

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

New Delhi, Jan. 6: In a simulation of the actual execution of the Covid-19 vaccine roll-out that is expected to begin in a few days, another round of dry run will be conducted in all districts across states and UTs, except UP and Haryana, on January 8 to ensure efficient planning and management of immunisation process.

Each district will identify three types of session sites, similar to the previous dry run conducted on January 2, including a public health facility (district hospital/medical college), private health facility and rural or urban outreach sites, the Union health ministry said on Wednesday.

In this regard, a meeting of Union health minister Harsh Vardhan with the health ministers of states and Union territories is scheduled to take place on January 7 to guide them on conducting the dry run, the ministry said.

"The vaccine dry run will be conducted on January 8 in all districts across India, except for UP and Haryana. Covid-19 vaccine dry run has already been conducted in all districts in UP on January 5 and Haryana is conducting it in all its districts tomorrow (Thursday)," a source said.

The Central government is gearing up for the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccine across the country. The Union ministry of health has been proactively carrying out the preparations for roll-out on Monday, January 4.

The country's drugs regulator on Sunday approved Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield and the indigenous developed Covaxin of Bharat Biotech for restricted emergency use in the country. — PTI

Full report on Page 2

laboration with states and UTs and all stakeholders, over the past couple of months to ensure that the preparations for roll-out are on track," the ministry said in a statement.

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Refusing to stay the laws, a bench headed by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde said it can't decide which provisions of the two laws were oppressive unless it hears the state governments concerned.

The Uttarakhand government has promulgated an ordinance regulating inter-faith marriages and religious conversions and a similar was enacted by the Uttarakhand in 2018.

When advocate Pradeep Kumar Yadav pointed out that the BJP governments in Madhya Pradesh and Haryana were also bringing laws on the lines of the UP ordinance and society is affected, the CJ said the court would not expand the petition's scope.

The bench, also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V.Ramasubramanian, however, agreed to examine the validity of the ordinance and the

laws. The court was hearing petitions, one by Delhi-based lawyer Vishal Thakre and the other by Mumbai-based NGO Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP), challenging the constitutional validity of the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religious Ordinance, 2020, and the Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018.

The petitions under Article 32 stated that the two laws were violative of Articles 21 and 25 as they empower the state to suppress an individual's liberty and the freedom to practice religion of one's choice.

The Chief Minister would also lay the foundation stone for development works at the Kanakadurga temple here with a government fund outlay of ₹70 crore.

Besides these, the government would reconstruct 40 temples in 13 districts of AP.

Minister Srinivas alleged that TD president and then Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had no faith in God and did not respect Hindu religion. "Hence he committed the sin of demolishing temples in Vijayawada during Krishna Pushkaram, and never tried to rebuild those holy temples."

He said the CM decided to reconstruct those temples. Five temples, namely the Dakshinamukha Anjaneya Swamy temple, the Seethamma Vari Paadaalu, the Rahu Kethu, the Boddu Bomma and Gosala Krishna temple would be rebuilt.

SC to hear pleas against agri laws, farmer protest

Farmers to hold tractors' march today against farm laws

PARMOD KUMAR and SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 6

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URGENTLY REQUIRED Sales Executives with 1yr FMCG Experience preferably. Age below 40 Yrs. Two Wheeler is Must. Only serious and committed candidates need to apply. Contact: 9885244108. (HYCL/2021/C02248)

URGENTLY REQUIRED Senior Sales Executives with past experience in wholesale food products in and around Hyderabad. contact: 9885314333. (HYMM/2021/C05484)

WANTED MARKETING Executives to work in Hyderabad, MBA, with good Salary, TA extra. Ph:9008524970, 9908524976. (A/2021/C00467)

SHIELD REQUIRES Experienced Sales & Marketing Executives (Male). Contact in Person with Resume and Photograph between 12pm to 6pm. Sheet Hardware Pvt. Ltd., Osmangunj, Hyderabad-500012. Contact 8019055119, 040-24603158. (B/2021/C0077)

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URGENTLY REQUIRE Civil Execution Engineer with minimum 5 years work experience, contact: 9885134333 (HYMM/2021/C05483)

CANDIDATES M/F with B.Tech (Civil) with Autocad Interested to survey and Design Micro Irrigation systems (Drip & Landscaping), 2 to 3 Lacks package for deserving candidates. Ph:630155989. (L/2021/C00026)

GENERAL

WANTED FEMALE Graduates for Telecallers position with experience in Business 2 Business services, Good communication skills, Good Salary. Contact 939270480 (HYMM/2021/C05495)

HRD & ADMINISTRATIVE

REQUIRED MBA HR Male. Female age 30-35 years with minimum 5 years experience with good Knowledge of MS-Office, Excel is mandatory Submit your CV by Email: amins-admin@aimsqt.com Contact: 040-23546114 (HYCL/2021/C02258)

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REQUERED Sales Executives with past experience in wholesale food products in and around Hyderabad. contact: 9885314333 (HYMM/2021/C05484)

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REQUIRED M/F with B.Tech (Civil) with Autocad Interested to survey and Design Micro Irrigation systems (Drip & Landscaping), 2 to 3 Lacks package for deserving candidates. Ph:630155989. (L/2021/C00026)

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LAW OFFICERS

WANTED EXPERIENCED S/Officer for Kalakkal, Salary Re.20,000/- for 8 hrs. Willing to stay at plant-site preferred. Free Uniform, Free Accommodation, Contact with Originals. Poiner Security Shop#

SHORT TAKES

SHORT CIRCUIT CAUSES FIRE IN GANDHI HOSPITAL

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

A minor fire was reported in the Gandhi Hospital premises late on Wednesday night.

According to officials, the fire was reported in the ante room of an operation theatre on the third floor. The fire was allegedly caused by a short circuit. One fire tender was sent to the spot and the fire was doused within a few minutes. "There was no major damage reported and nobody was injured," said a fire services officer.

ONE ARRESTED IN FALSE JOB PROMISE CASE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

A 32-year-old was arrested by the KPHB police for cheating victims to the tune of ₹4 lakh on the pretext of getting them a job in the postal department.

According to the police, the accused, Mailapally Priyanka, wife of Samuel Vijay Kumar, had cheated victims P. Subba Reddy and Chella Mahesh. She had promised them jobs as junior assistants in the postal department at Anantapur.

"Believing her words, the victims paid her ₹4 lakh. We have booked a case following a complaint and placed her under arrest on Wednesday," the police said.

LAWYERS WANT VACCINE ON A PRIORITY BASIS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

The Telangana High Court has taken up a suo motu PIL on the administration of Covid-19 vaccination to advocates on priority. Mr Ponnam Ashok Goud, former assistant solicitor general, has written a letter to the High Court, explaining the duties of the advocates and said that there was a need to administer the vaccine to the lawyers.

The High Court took the letter into cognisance, converted it to a PIL and directed the state government to take the decision in this regard by Friday.

KPHB POLICE NABS MAN FOR KILLING WIFE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

A man was booked by the KPHB police for allegedly murdering his wife, stuffing the body in a bag and abandoning it. Her body was found on Tuesday night at SS Colony in KPHB police station limits.

The woman, identified as Sravanti, had married the accused, Sekhar, a few years ago, said the police.

"Shekar hit her on the head and strangled her to death with a dupatta before stuffing her body in a bag and dumping it on the roadside two days ago. The incident came to light on Tuesday night when the domestic help noticed a foul smell emanating from the bag that was found at an isolated place near the couple's residence," said the police, who registered a case and launched an investigation.

SHEKAR HIT her on the head and strangled her to death with a dupatta before stuffing her body in a bag and dumping it on the roadside two days ago, police said.

Chilly morning



Clouds covered the sky throughout the day on Wednesday. Though the city also received light rains there was a rise in minimum temperature. — GANDHI

Bird migration in full swing in Telangana

Bar-headed geese found in lakes surrounding the city

Hyderabad, Warangal zoos take safety steps

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

The two zoos in Telangana state, in Hyderabad and Warangal, are on alert in the wake of bird flu outbreaks in different states. The zoos with their large protected premises, woods and water bodies, attract some migratory birds every year.

"You can find bar-headed geese in Gandipet, Pocharam, Manjeera and many other water bodies. However, it is not to say that every bird that migrates carries disease. It is not known if the ones found with bird flu were late arrivals, or somehow caught it after coming to India," Humayun Taher, coordinator for the Asian Waterbird Census 2021 for Telangana state and Andhra Pradesh, told *Deccan Chronicle*.

"We have established sanitation stations at the entrance of the bird enclosures. All the animal keepers have been asked to use the foot bath. To prevent flocks of birds from entering or perching on the trees within the zoo, we have placed reflective ribbons which would drive them away," an official of the Nehru Zoological Park told *Deccan Chronicle*.

An official from Kakatiya Zoo in Warangal said that they are keeping a tab on crows and other birds which fly into the zoo.

"We are cleaning the enclosures frequently. We do not want any bird to get infected due to the virus," said the official.

Meanwhile, R. Shobha, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, who issued a series of instructions to depart-

ment officials and staff on the subject, said rapid response teams are being created at Manjeera bird sanctuary, Sangareddy, the Pakhal wildlife sanctuary including Pakhal lake and Siwaram and Kinnerasani wildlife sanctuaries for patrolling the shorelines of the water bodies and check areas where birds might congregate.

The department requested anyone from among the public to call the toll-free 18004255364 phone number in case they come across a dead bird or birds. This wildlife crime control cell toll-free number will be available round the clock, it said.

For the first time in the run-up to the summer, at least five bar-headed geese that were found dead in Himachal Pradesh have tested positive for bird flu.

"This year, we expect a wider spread of wintering water birds. After good rains, the lakes and ponds are well-stocked with water," Taher said.

It is very possible that migratory birds that are wintering in Telangana state are not carrying any disease, he said adding that volunteers taking part in the census will be keeping an eye out for remains of wild birds.

According to J.V.D. Murthy, president of Deccan Birders, many water birds, such as

ducks, birds that spend their time on lake shores such as sandpipers and plovers, among others, winter in the state in large numbers every year.

The nearly 50-year-old group of birders in the state was called Birdwatchers Society of Andhra Pradesh before the bifurcation of the two Telugu states.

Escaping the harsh winters in their northern homes that stretch from Siberia in Russia to Afghanistan, the bar-headed geese go all the way down till Sri Lanka. They begin returning home sometime in

February when it starts getting warm in India in the run-up to the summer. At least five bar-headed geese that were found dead in Himachal Pradesh have tested positive for bird flu.

"This year, we expect a wider spread of wintering water birds. After good rains, the lakes and ponds are well-stocked with water," Taher said.

According to J.V.D. Murthy, president of Deccan Birders, many water birds, such as

No sign of bird flu in TS, says minister Talasani

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

Animal husbandry minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav clarified that there are no signs of bird flu in the state as of now. He appealed that the people need not worry despite false news being spread on social media and other platforms.

On Wednesday, the minister conducted an emergency meeting with animal husbandry, NECC, Sneha Chicken and other

representatives on measures to be taken for the prevention of bird flu.

Minister Srinivas Yadav said that there was no possibility of a bird flu outbreak in the state due to precautionary measures taken by the government.

He stated that 1,300 officers, formed into rapid response teams, were conducting regular medical examinations and awareness programmes on bird flu. The teams tested 276 samples from

poultries, all of which were negative.

The minister said Telangana has the third largest poultry industry in the country. Authorities at all levels have been alerted about bird flu.

Srinivas Yadav said bird flu was detected only in Rajasthan, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh. He said there was a small chance of bird flu being spread by migratory birds but not so much.

treatment outcomes.

Several of those who have lost jobs or suffered economic crisis due to closure of businesses want to abort the unplanned child. In the last two months, gynaecologists carrying out abortions say they are seeing as many as 20 couples a month, whereas the normal was of five to eight.

Many are now visiting hospitals for treatment also because the fear about catching Covid has come down.

Dr Prabha Agrawal, senior consultant gynaecologist and obstetrician, said: "Due to lack of access to contra-

ception methods in the past several months, couples say there was conception, and now want to abort. We take up only cases that are legally allowed. Those who have exceeded more than three months of pregnancy should not abort."

Dr Shanta Kumari, senior gynaecologist and obstetrician, says, "Contraception is better option and women have to be counselled for the same. That will help them take better care of their reproductive health. Abortions are risky and often we counsel them to avoid it. Instead, preventive methods are advised."

RAIN, CLOUDY SKY MARK RISE IN MIN. TEMP

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

Surprise light rains, cloudy skies and fog marked the city weather on Wednesday. The clouds and drizzle was attributed to a trough spreading from the Comorin coast of Tamil Nadu, coupled with winds from the Bay of Bengal by officials of the Indian Meteorological Department-Hyderabad (IMD-H).

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Dr K. Nagarathna, director, IMD-Hyderabad, "There would be very light rains in the city on Thursday. After that we do not predict any rains. The sky, however, would continue to be cloudy."

Till 7.30 pm, the gauges at the Telangana State Development Planning Society (TSDPS) recorded rain at Kandikal Gate (6 mm), OYC Community Hall (3.8 mm), Maruthinagar Mahila Sabha Centre (3.5 mm), Sivarampalli and Khilwat Community Hall, 2.3 mm each. Despite the drizzle and the cloudy skies, the minimum temperature rose to 21.6°C from Tuesday, a rise of about 3°C from Tuesday. The maximum temperature was recorded at 26.2°C.

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SHORT TAKES
**CONG. WANTS
TPCC CHIEF TO BE
SELECTED SOON**

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, JAN. 6

Many Congress leaders and activists opined that the party high command should speed up the selection of TPCC president and announce the name quickly so that second-rung leaders and cadre can confidently go to the people and agitate on public issues.

The long process of selecting the TPCC chief is testing the patience of the leaders and cadre and is also giving rise to divisions among them.

A leader said much time will be taken to strengthen the party from the grassroots even after the announcement of the TPCC president. The delay is indirectly helping the TRS and the BJP who can lure Congress leaders into their parties, the leader said.

**ZP MEETS YIELD
NO SUBSTANTIAL
DISCUSSIONS**

PILLALAMARI SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, JAN. 6

Zilla parishad (ZP) general body meetings of Mancherial, Komaram Bheem Asifabad, Nirmal and Adilabad districts are lacking substantive discussions on public issues like drinking water, roads, sanitation, crop loans, seasonal diseases or poor implementation of welfare schemes for people by the government.

What is happening mostly is ZPTC members, whether belonging to ruling party or opposition, are making sensational statements to draw public attention than discussing any serious issues related to public. Even MLAs are not showing much interest in taking part in general body meetings of the four ZPs.

Another development is earlier, zilla parishes used to get funds from the central government and allocation used to be done at the ZP level. But now, the centre is directly releasing the 14th Finance Commission funds to gram panchayat and mandal-level institutions. As a result, ZPs have lost their importance, unlike in the past.

Moreover, chairmen and vice-chairmen of all four ZPs belong to the ruling TRS. There is no strong opposition in terms of ZPTCs seats. Discussions that can corner the ruling party are not being held. This is leading to only trading of charges between the ruling and opposition parties. For example, at the zilla parishad meeting of Adilabad district held recently, ZP chairman Janardhan Rathod and Congress ZPTC Goka Ganesh Reddy verbal attacked each other, so much so, the chairman went on to announce the suspension of Congress ZPTC. Shocking all, both Ganesh Reddy and Janardhan Rathod soon held a joint press meeting, announcing they had compromised among themselves and there is no public issue involved.

A senior Congress leader said a strong opposition is essential if people's needs are to be served. Only then, public issues will come up for discussions in the ZP general body meeting. "Unfortunately, in all the four districts, TRS is in power with the chairmen, vice-chairmen and majority of ZPTCs belonging to the ruling party," the Congress leader observed.

• CHAIRMEN AND vice-chairmen of all four ZPs belong to the ruling TRS. There is no strong opposition in terms of ZPTCs seats. Discussions that can corner the ruling party are not being held. This is leading to only trading of charges between the ruling and opposition parties.

**LOST OF DOCUMENT
(PUBLIC NOTICE)**

General Public is hereby informed that, the original Sale Deed dated 29/04/1969 vide Document No.1241 of 1969, Original Will registered on 02/06/1984 vide document No. 78 of 1984, both registered at District registrar office, Hyderabad and other relevant documents pertaining to House bearing GHMC No.3-6-369/A/13/A, (PTI No.3-6-369/A/13/A, [Part of House No.3-6-369/A-13 Old], admeasuring 72.00 Sq.yards, situated at Street No.1, Himayathnagar, Hyderabad, have been lost and misplaced by me Lalit Kumar Soni while transit from Begum bazar to Shahinathgunj on 15-10-2020 at 7.30 P.M, but till date the said documents could not be traced.

If any person or persons found it, they may contact me at below address alongwith original documents and they will be suitably rewarded.

Lalit Kumar Soni Manoj Kumar Jain
R/o. Flat No.103
Signature Apartments, 302, Blue Chip Arcade,
Himayathnagar, 3-6-11, Chirayat Nagar,
Hyderabad, T.S. Hyderabad - 500 029
Mobile : 9989711959 Mobile : 9550747475

Power from fruit, veg waste: Mantri

Reddy: CM keen on making farmer king

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

Agriculture minister S. Niraj Reddy said on Wednesday that Telangana state will take steps to produce power from wastes of fruits and vegetables collected from the agriculture and other markets.

Under a project, the government would collaborate with the Mahindra group. The Andhra Pradesh government has collaborated with this firm on producing power, the minister noted while addressing the Agro Board meeting at the minister quarters here. Niraj Reddy

said the government formed a committee to study how to collect waste from vegetables and fruits. It would visit and study the existing power production units in Tirupati, Adoni and Pidugurallu in Andhra Pradesh and the unit at Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The committee will submit a report, based on which the government would take a final decision on implementation aspects.

"The government has major focus on vegetable cultivation. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao's intention is to make farmer the king. The government has

encouraged farmers to convert to modern agriculture. We directed the agriculture department to provide technical advice to farmers for conversion to modern agriculture from traditional ones that are not benefiting them," the minister said. Niraj Reddy said the CM promoted agriculture and allied sectors. The government's goal is to support the development of farmers' forums and their welfare. Farmers should be able to sustain their income levels. Agriculture secretary Janaiah Reddy, Agro MD K. Ramulu and others were present.



MP Dharmapuri Arvind and BJP leaders visiting Bodhan in Nizamabad district on Wednesday to oversee arrangements for Thursday's meeting. — DC

Cong. leader set to join BJP in Bodhan today

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JAN. 6

• SENIOR CONGRESS
leader Medapati Prakash Reddy along with his followers will join BJP in the presence of Tarun Chug and Bandi Sanjay Kumar at a public meeting in Bodhan.

and Bandi Sanjay Kumar at a public meeting in Bodhan. Reddy has resigned from the primary membership of the Congress party and also from the Telangana PCC official spokesperson post.

A motorbike rally will be held from Indalwai toll plaza to the Madhavanagar Saibaba mandir in Nizamabad

to welcome the BJP leaders. The BJP leaders' convoy will proceed to Bodhan town. Tarun Chug would inaugurate the party office at Anil Talkies Road in Bodhan. A public meeting will be held at the Kottha Ramakanth function hall on Rudrur Road, strictly under Covid-19 protocol.

Nizamabad MP

Dharmapuri Arvind, BJP district president Baswapuram Laxminarayana and other leaders inspected the arrangements for the public meeting in Bodhan.

Medapati Prakash Reddy and his followers were in the forefront of making the arrangements.

20-yr-old hit by lorry dies

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

was heading towards Shalibanda from Bahadurpura when the accident occurred.

He sustained severe injuries and succumbed on the spot. Upon information, a police team was sent to the spot and shifted the body for the post-

mortem examination to the Osmania General Hospital mortuary," said the police, adding that a case was booked under Section 304-A (death by negligence) of the IPC by the police and the lorry driver was taken into custody.

'Go Sadak bandh' to block highway

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

As part of 'Gow Sadak bandh' the Vijayawada National Highway will be blocked at LB Nagar on Friday.

Supporters of declaring cow as the national animal have threatened that they will not allow any vehicle entering Telangana state if the demand of protecting cow and declaring it as a national animal were not assured.

Kalpana Gayathri, president of Bharatiya Brahmana Seva Samiti, said, "This is the time when all Hindus should show solidarity while demanding protection of cows. The time is right for implementing our long-pending demand for making cow the national animal."

The foundation staged a protest along with a daylong hunger strike at Dharna Chowk, under the Gau Mahadnya banner.

Vinay quizzes Bandi on struggle for state

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JAN. 6

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay needs to get his act together and speak sensibly, said Chief Whip Dasym Vinay Bhaskar referring to Sanjay's comments against Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao.

Vinay Bhaskar said the BJP leaders are creating communal division by instigating people for gaining political advantage referring to Sanjay's recent remarks in which he asked voters in Tirupati to choose between the Bhagavad Gita and Bible.

Speaking to media persons here on Wednesday, he questioned where the BJP leaders were during the Telangana agitation.

"When all TRS MLAs

resigned their posts in support of a separate state, the

current Union minister G. Kishan Reddy did not resign his seat," Vinay said.

He asked Sanjay how much funds he had brought to the state since becoming an MP and said the BJP leaders are unable to see the development in the state.

No BJP leader came to help when incessant rains wreaked havoc in Warangal, he said.

Vinay criticised the BJP leaders for creating ruckus over land on which the government wants to construct Smriti Vanam in memory of Prof Jayashankar.

MLA Nannapaneni Narendra said that Sanjay was behaving like a gully leader.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself lauded the development model in Telangana, he said, advising Sanjay to learn before making a statement.

25th ANNIVERSARY



Late T.N. Rajaiah

Ex: 07-01-1997

Your memories remain with us forever you are living in our hearts for you are so dear to us. We can never forget you.

Son's : T Mallesh & Ramesh family Members

Founder of: M/S. TOOLS & SPARES CORPORATION
M/s. BEARINGS & TOOLS CENTRE & M/s. T.S.C. ENTERPRISES



**11th DAY CEREMONY
Dr. A. RAJENDER**

D.O.B: 5th January, 1950,

Passed away on 28th December, 2020.

"May his soul rest in peace"

We cordially invite all to
11th Day Ceremony on
Thursday 7th January, 2021 at 1 P.M.
at our Residence Plot No: 50,
A.P. Text Book Colony,
Secunderabad

Your Prayers and presence is requested.
Please accept this as a Personal Invitation.
**Mrs. SULOCHANA ANUMAGALLA &
FAMILY MEMBERS & FRIENDS.**

OBITUARY



Shri BOORUGU MURALIDHAR

Date of Birth 23 October 1948

With profound grief we inform that
Shri BOORUGU MURALIDHAR left for
heavenly abode on Wed., 6th January 2021.

Mourned by:
BOORUGU FAMILY



Shri BOORUGU MURALIDHAR

DOB: 23-10-1948 DOD: 6-1-2021

We are deeply grieved to know about
the untimely demise of
Shri BOORUGU MURALIDHAR.

Our heartfelt condolences to all
the family members on the sad demise
of Shri BOORUGU MURALIDHAR.

Inserted by:
CM Prakash Rao & Family.



Shri BOORUGU MURALIDHAR

DOB: 20-10-1945 DOD: 28-12-2020

You left us peaceful memories,
your love is still our guide;
and though we cannot see you,
you are always at our side.

Wife : Anuradha Koriwi
Sister : Kamalamma
Sons / Daughters in Law
Daughters / Sons in Law

Grand Children
Near & Dear

Inserted by:
Moothiala Chandrasekar & Family

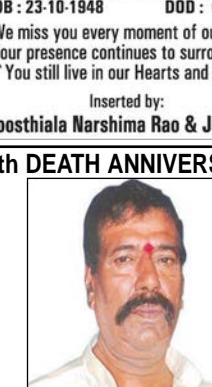


Shri BOORUGU MURALIDHAR

DOB: 23-10-1948 DOD: 6-1-2021

Sadly missed along life's way ...
Lovingly remembered every day ...
No longer our life to share,
but in our hearts you are always there.

Inserted by:
Moothiala Chandrasekar & Family



Shri BOORUGU MURALIDHAR

DOB: 23-10-1948 DOD: 6-1-2021

We miss you every moment of our lives.
Your presence continues to surround us.
You still live in our hearts and minds.

Inserted by:
Moothiala Narshala Rao & Jayasree



PITLA KRISHNA

DOB: 18-08-1948 DOD: 07-01-2012

You are always remembered in our hearts forever.

Inserted by: Wife - PITLA SADAGUNA,
Son - SRIDHAR, RAGHAVENDER,
SANTHOSH & FAMILY MEMBERS
M/s. SAI ENTERPRISES
Ph: 9849995073

RESPECTFUL HOMAGE



Shri BOORUGU MURALIDHAR

DOB: 23-10-1948 DOD: 6-1-2021

We are deeply grieved to know
about the sudden and untimely demise
of Shri BOORUGU MURALIDHAR.

Inserted by:
Kavukuntla Madhavi,
Ramesh Kumar, Vikarabad.

22nd ANNIVERSARY



Sri. MANIK SINGH

Municipal Commissioner (Retd.)

D.O.B: 07-01-1999

SHORT TAKES

REPORT: CITY MAKES REVIVAL IN HOUSING SUPPLY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

Hyderabad is among the few cities that saw a real estate revival in the fourth quarter, according to the half-yearly report of the 14th edition of Knight Frank India.

Despite the supply challenges owing to Covid-19 and exodus of guest workers in Q2 and Q3 Indian markets, Hyderabad's office market recorded second highest annual supply numbers. It said that 0.8 million square metres (sq. m) (8.7 million sq. ft) of new office space entered the market in 2020, which is much higher than the decadal average of 0.4 mn sq. m (4.6 mn sq ft) for a year. According to the report, in Q4 2020, Hyderabad's office space transactions grew by 640 per cent compared to Q3 2020.

Covid-19 also spiked the residential real estate market in Hyderabad, where sales in Q4 jumped up by 127 per cent as compared to Q3. Key contributors to the increase in residential demand, include the festive season promotions and the pandemic-induced push for new homes with better layout thereby accommodating the new requirements of work from home and digital learning arrangements for kids and working parents.

Hyderabad's residential market launches stood at 8,404 home units in H2 2020 and 12,826 home units. The city recorded sales of 5,260 home units in H2 2020 and 10,042 home units in 2020. The Knight Frank report notes that home sales in India's top eight cities was recorded at 94,997 units during H2 2020. As the country moved towards normalcy, residential sales reached almost 54 per cent of the 2019 quarterly average with 33,403 units during Q3 2020 and recovered almost completely to the pre-Covid levels at 61,593 units in Q4 2020. Total housing launches across the country have been recorded at 1,46,628 units, lower by 34 per cent YoY in 2020.

MEDIAPERSONS BOOKED FOR FAKE NEWS ON IDOLS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JAN. 6

In a surprise move, the Singayakonda police arrested several media personnel including reporters of three mainline TV channels and a truck driver on Wednesday over circulation of news, messages, images about damage to the idols of Lord Narasimha Swamy and Goddess Lakshmi in Singayakonda in Prakasam district.

Cases have been booked against them for "spreading falsehood on social media, print media, and on television."

Police said they registered cases against reporters of five popular electronic channels — NTV, HMTV, ABN, TV 5, and ETV — and of some YouTube channels, as they placed posts in a conspiratorial manner on facebook, WhatsApp, twitter etc apart from broadcasting false news on television.

Cases have been booked under sections 120(B), 153(A), 295(A), 504(r/w 34)IPC and under section 16 of the cable network act. Additional SP (Admin) of Prakasam B. Ravichandra said they received complaint from Bairagi, EO of the temple. He said the cement scales on the statues had cracked and broken. This was not a recent development, he said, and referred to the report on a popular news channel highlighting the damage in November last.

Saffron tints TD's yellow

Naidu harps on Hindutva agenda to restrain BJP from relegating TD

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 6

Saffron and yellow parties are competing with one another by whipping up Hindutva sentiments in Andhra Pradesh.

Telugu Desam, which has always projected its secular credentials, is gradually shedding the secular veil and donning the role of 'Hindutva' protector, which gets evidenced from the scathing attacks against the YSR Congress and accusing it of promoting religious conversions.

The state's main Opposition party started an agitation against desecration and attacks on temples six months ago but the party never portrayed YSRC as a Christian party. However,

now the TD has been openly terming Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, home minister Mekathoti Sucharita, and DGP Gautam Sawang as Christians who are unable to protect temples. Going a step further, they are alleging that the ruling party is into promotion of religious conversions.

Similarly, the BJP

is noticing that Christians are supporting the ruling party, TD has raked up the issue of Christian conversions. To attract the majority Hindu votes, TD is whipping Hindutva sentiments, which they hope to take advantage of in the Tirupati by-election.

BJP is aiming to emerge as the second biggest party after YSRC, TD is hijacking Hindutva agenda in order to win over the electorate.

Senior political analysts state that as both TD and BJP are eyeing the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat in the by-election, they started communal politics. They said that as

out a rally and staged protest ahead of the BJP, which responded a day later.

Analysts opine that for the past 18 months, TD's attempts to make amends with BJP were all in vain. In order to salvage prestige and not to lose out to BJP, Naidu is harping on Hindutva agenda to restrain the saffron party from relegating TD. Many point out that the traditional BC vote bank of TD has had a change and many are pitching for YSRC. Noticing that Christians are supporting the ruling party, TD has raked up the issue of Christian conversions. To attract the majority Hindu votes, TD is whipping Hindutva sentiments, which they hope to take advantage of in

the Tirupati by-election. In a first for the party, it had Hindutva issue in the agenda of the politburo meeting. It decided to continue its fight for the protection of temples and religion donning the role of 'Hindutva saviour'.

Meanwhile, YSRC ministers, Vellappalli Srinivas Rao, Kodali Srivenkateswara Rao, and Perni Venkataramaiah allege that Naidu, who had no faith in God and religion, is changing his colours for political gains. They said that for the first time, TD has brought religion into politics but the people would not tolerate such unhealthy politics and would teach a befitting lesson to both TD and BJP.

MOTHER SEEKS EAM TO RESCUE DAUGHTER

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

The mother of a woman from Hyderabad has requested the external affairs ministry to rescue her daughter who was allegedly raped for four days by a Sudanese national in Dubai, where she had gone for work.

The victim was working at private hospital in Shamsheergunj in Hyderabad. One Fatima of Vattpally offered her a job as a nurse in Sharjah, UAE, and promised her a monthly salary of ₹40,000, the mother said. The victim agreed.

She travelled to Sharjah on December 15, her mother said, and was received by one Ammar Ahmed who took her to his house. There she found one Nazmeen, who used to accompany Fatima in Hyderabad.

The victim approached the police in Dubai for help but was directed to the Indian consulate. A few NRIs had admitted her to a hospital. They initially advised her to lodge a complaint against Ammar for raping her, but later asked her to withdraw it as there could be a problem in her repatriation.

They told her that that she would be sent back after Coronavirus tests. She has been kept in a house in isolation for 15 days and is awaiting her return.

The mother claimed that Nazmeen had told the victim that said that she had entered into a contract marriage with Ammar but the torture was too much to bear. The victim had been sent by Fatima as a replacement for Nazmeen, the mother claimed.

DON'T ALLOT ANY MORE LAND TO MY HOME: MP

From Page 1

The group, the BJP MP said, has not only been violating Forest Conservation Act but also provisions of the Mining Amendment Act.

He urged the Chief Secretary to ensure that no further lands are allotted to the company for mining.

The state government, he said, should also respond to notices it received on the leases given to My Home Group for mining from the Union ministries of mining, and environment and forests, and initiate immediate action on the company.

Arvind said that he was sending all the relevant documents relating to the case "proving the group's violations and irregularities," the notices received by the state from the Centre and relevant judgements by the Supreme Court.

The BJP MP, who had been seeking action by the state government on this matter for many months, in his letter to the Chief Secretary, said: "Hope your administration replies to this letter at least."

An NRI professor asked me to remain silent

From Page 1

● TWO DAYS later, ministry of home affairs security agency personnel alerted him to arsenic poisoning, the scientist said. This helped the doctors focus on the exact remedy.

grandson would be accommodated in a top notch college in USA.

"I declined and he left my office at 1430 hrs (2.30 pm). And my thirty plus years contributing career was consigned to a sinecure position at 1630 hrs (4.30 pm). On the same day I was removed from all responsibilities, including SAC directorship," Misra said.

He alleged on July 12, 2019 — two days before the scheduled launch of Chandrayaan-2 (which was however postponed to July 22) — he was poisoned again, spent a long period in hospital, and is still under treatment.

Misra also alleged of a plan to defame him by doctoring the CCTV recording of his room on January 23 and 24 last year. He sought help for his safety.

Misra wrote, "We, in Isro, occasionally heard about the highly suspicious death of Professor Vikram Sarabhai in 1971. Also heard occasional doubts about the sudden death of Dr S. Srinivasan, director of VSSC (Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre) in 1999. Case of Shri Nambiarayanan in 1994 is well known. But I never thought that I would be at the receiving end of such a mystery."

Career Chronicle



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Kidnapping triggered by land dispute

From Page 1



"They claimed it to be a raid and flashed their 'official' ID cards. The men searched the premises and separated people inside the house by bringing Praveen, Naveen and Sunil, the paternal uncles, in the hall and confining the remaining members in the bedroom," Manish said in his complaint.

It was only when their neighbour Sarita opened the door and after checking CC cameras that they noticed the men taking away the trio in three vehicles.

The family told the police they suspected the involvement of their relatives A.V. Subba Reddy, Akhila Priya, her husband Bhargava Ram and their henchmen and the deed was done in the context of a previous land dispute.

Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar said multiple teams from Telangana state and AP police were keeping track of the kidnappers via their cellphone movement. "An alert was issued to the toll plazas in Telangana state and en route. Around 3.30 am, the kidnappers left the three victims at Narsingi toll plaza and they were rescued.

"It emerged during investigation that Bhuma Akhila Priya and husband Ram were involved in the kidnapping," said the official. Akhila Priya was arrested at her residence in Kukatpally on Wednesday morning and taken to the Bowenpally police station. "She was put through a medical examination at

Gandhi Hospital. We are verifying the involvement of Srinivas Chowdhary alias Guntur Srinu, Prakash, Sai and Chanti," the official said.

Officials said Praveen Rao had purchased 25 acres of land at Hafeezpet, Hyderabad, in 2016 with the help of mediator Subba Reddy who took the help of late Bhuma Nagi Reddy, the father of Akhila Priya.

Trouble erupted when Subba Reddy and Bhuma Nagi Reddy developed differences. After the TD leader's demise, his daughter Akhila Priya approached Praveen Rao for a share of the property. Praveen refused, saying the process of transaction had been completed lawfully. She began threatening him.

"Earlier, a case was registered against Subba Reddy at Miyapur police station. "She was put through a medical examination at

for trespassing and threatening. In order to get the share in the land, Akhila Priya and her husband hatched a conspiracy and kidnapped the victims," police said.

Hyderabad police booked Akhila Priya, Bhargava Ram and Subba Rao under Section 452 (trespass), 419 (cheating by impersonation), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), 506 (criminal intimidation), 149 (unlawful assembly), 120 (b) (criminal conspiracy), 147 (gathering with purpose of riot), and 342 (assault) of the IPC.

The Telangana state police have sent teams to Andhra Pradesh to nab the absconding accused. "Akhila Priya and Subba Reddy are the prime accused in planning the kidnap," the Hyderabad commissioner police added.

DECCAN Chronicle

7 JANUARY 2021

Scrap laws, ask farmers, don't skip due process

The seventh round of talks between the government and farmers protesting against the three new laws regulating agriculture in India on Monday produced no immediate result other than fixing the date for a new round. However, two things have emerged after the talks ended in stalemate: the government has offered to sit with the farmers' unions and discuss the laws "clause by clause"; two, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is understood to have directed officials in the agriculture ministry to look for an amicable solution to the issue.

Given Mr Modi's initiative and the offer to discuss the laws threadbare, it looks like an open approach to the issue could solve it so that the lakhs of farmers could call off their agitation they are holding now braving the gripping cold and pouring rains on the outskirts of the capital city. It could allow them to drop the plan to take out a tractor rally on the Republic Day and spare the nation from having to watch the spectre of more of its *annadatas* dying on the streets and adding to the present toll of 50.

The catch, however, lies in the openness of the government. In our country, laws, especially those that have an implication for large sections of people, are passed after an elaborate process, which includes discussions in Parliament, parliamentary committees and even outside. This process, though painstakingly slow, ensures that the safeguards necessary to protect the interests of the stakeholders are not overlooked or omitted.

But the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, especially its second edition, does not seem to believe in such democratic niceties. Laws that sought to alter the basic idea of India such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 and the virtual annulment of Article 370 of the Constitution were pushed through Houses of Parliament after a single day's discussion each.

As for the farm laws, the government has done too little to take the stakeholders into confidence. The government which is now willing to discuss the laws "clause by clause" had not bothered to persuade its own partners, resulting in the exit of the Shiromani Akali Dal, one of the oldest allies of the BJP, from the Cabinet and the NDA. The bill was not sent to the House committee either. Worse, there was no proper voting on the bill in the Upper House of the Parliament. The protesters have little reason to trust the government.

The NDA government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have spared no occasion to champion the farmers' cause. Mr Modi has long promised to double the income of farmers by 2022; Niti Aayog brought out an action plan in 2017 proposing to achieve it; and the first budget of the new government finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented in 2019 talked of promoting zero-based farming as a means to achieve the target. But the farmers saw little action on the ground. If the government is serious, and if farmers' welfare is its priority, then it should keep the laws in abeyance, sit with them and draft new ones that address their concerns.

Scale down the parade

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who had accepted India's invitation to be the chief guest for the Republic Day celebration this year, has had to back out unexpectedly on account of domestic complications caused by a renewed surge of Covid-19 infections in the UK. We sympathise with his situation. Since this is a last-minute problem, let us just be practical about it and not bother tearing our hair to find a suitable replacement at such a late stage.

There is no harm in saying pass this year. Since this is an unusual period for all of the world, the pandemic provides us a perfectly good reason to not go scouting for a dignitary after the British leader has been obliged to drop out.

Late in 2018, when US President Donald Trump informed us that he was unable to accept the invitation to be chief guest on account of scheduling difficulties, we were fortunate that President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa did not stand on ceremony and agreed to step in at a late hour. South Africa is a good friend and its President was most gracious. Nevertheless, the pandemic poses a problem for all and it is not fair to put friendly nations in a quandary by asking them when barely three weeks remain.

Although institutional memory may have faded in this regard, it may be recalled that in the years 1952, 1953, and 1966 no invitation was extended to an international dignitary to be chief guest. Of course, since then invitations have gone out each year. There have also been somewhat unusual situations. In 2018, for example, the ten leaders of Asean nations were collectively invited to be chief guest. In 1956, there were two chief guests — Britain's chancellor of the exchequer as well as the chief justice of Japan.

Hospitality being a part of diplomacy, Republic Day chief guests are chosen from countries that India may want to be especially solicitous toward for reasons of geopolitics or geo-economics in a given year. Not having one in a particular year just speaks of extraordinary circumstances.

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Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-255284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234
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Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu

India's toppers no longer find civil services a dream career?

Is the civil service no longer a dream career for aspiring youngsters in India? The recent survey of national school board toppers over 20 years suggests that it may be so.

Of the 86 men and women who topped in their school board exams between 1995 and 2015, more than half live abroad, and most are working or pursuing advanced degrees in science and technology. Of those working most are in the tech sector, followed by medicine and finance. More than half grew up outside India's metros in Tier-II and Tier-III cities. No surprises there!

What is surprising is that only one of these toppers joined the civil service. Subhankar Mohapatra, who topped the Class X CBSE exam in 2006, chose to

become a civil servant (after studying at medical college). He cleared the IAS exam in 2016, the IPS in 2017 and finally the UPSC in 2018. The Odisha cadre officer is presently posted as sub-collector and SDM in Kandhamal, Odisha. Two others from the Toppers Club are preparing for the civil service exam. That's it.

Could it be that there are many more attractive alternative career paths available now that are more rewarding financially and career-wise than what the civil service can offer to our brightest? For decades, the civil services have enjoyed an unparalleled social standing. While there have always been officers who have quit the civil service for better opportunities outside the government in the private sector and even politics,

largely, the IAS and allied services have been a top draw, as seen in the lakhs of hopefuls who appear for the UPSC. But that seems to be changing now.

NEW TRANSFER POLICY FOR POLL-BOUND TAMIL NADU

The Election Commission has already started gearing up for the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections due in May 2021, starting with the babus who will be on election duty. In a recent letter to the state Chief Electoral Officer, Sathyabrata Sahoo, and chief secretary K. Shanmugam, the Election Commission has stressed the need for effective transfer of officers who have completed three years and to ensure that no officer is posted in their native district.

Officers who are retiring within

six months and those who are facing disciplinary actions recommended by the Election Commission for earlier poll duty lapses should not be designated for poll duty. Further, officials who will complete three years in an election-related post before May 31 should be transferred.

Sources say that the Tamil Nadu government has transferred more than 50 IAS and IPS officers, including district collectors and district superintendents of police of more than 20 districts in the last two months.

A THORNY ISSUE

The Punjab government has appointed 1995-cadre IPS officer G. Nageswara Rao as secretary in the department of home affairs and justice, a post that has traditionally

been held by the IAS cadre. The appointment is part of a larger reshuffle of officers effected by the Congress government of Captain Amarinder Singh.

The move is unlikely to help in the long ongoing tussle between IAS and IPS officers. The IAS officers are likely to see this as another encroachment on their turf, a trend that has become more pronounced at the Centre after the Modi *sarkar* came to power. The rivalry between the two elite services — be it at the Central or state level — is also over issues like pay parity, promotions, central empannelment and avenues for deputation and training courses.

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Subhani



Why trust needs to be the key word in 2021

Patralekha Chatterjee
Dev 360

India has a good story to tell when it comes to vaccines — it produces more than 60 per cent of all vaccines sold across the globe.

Why then has India's final approval of two Covid-19 vaccines kicked up such a storm, with many respected health experts and scientists calling it a hasty decision?

Unless you have been living under the rock the past few days, you probably know the answer.

In brief, last weekend, India's drugs regulator gave the green signal for the emergency use of two coronavirus vaccines. One, called Covishield, is developed by AstraZeneca-Oxford University and is being made in India by Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine producer by the number of doses produced.

The controversy, however, is more about the drug regulator's emergency approval to the second coronavirus vaccine, the indigenously produced Covaxin, before critical efficacy data of the third phase of clinical trials are out. Covaxin is being made by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Institute of Virology. Bharat Biotech is a well-known vaccine maker and has a track record of clinical trials in 20 countries.

But Covaxin has completed only two of the three required phases of clinical trials. The vaccine is safe. The critical Phase 3 trial, meant to test efficacy, started last November. The company expects to release the efficacy data by March.

What further complicates the situation is the drug regulator saying that Covaxin would be administered in "clinical trial mode". This has led to questions about whether those being vaccinated with Covaxin in the immediate future will, in effect, be taking

part in a clinical trial. Why could India's regulatory authorities not wait for a few more weeks for all the three phases of the clinical trial to be over and approved an indigenous vaccine of proven efficacy?

Till date, there is no convincing answer.

Perplexingly, over the past few days, we have also been witnessing bizarre incidents such as the Drugs Controller-General of India not taking any questions from journalists at a press conference, and the two companies which have got the green signal engaging in a temporary slanging match about the merits of their respective vaccines.

All this plays havoc with public trust in oversight mechanisms when there are signs of vaccine hesitancy in the country.

How do we restore trust?

"Transparency breeds trust, and trust is very important during a health crisis like a pandemic," says virologist Shahid Jameel, director of the Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University. "Science does not work on beliefs. Science works on data, and we still don't have data on the efficacy of one of the approved vaccines. Science does not say it has answers to everything but there should be clear communication about what is not known, and this has to be communicated openly and transparently."

"A common man who does not understand the difference between the different vaccines needs to be told what exactly is known and what is not known," Dr Jameel adds. "Otherwise, there is a risk of vaccine hesitancy spreading."

Leena Menghaney, South Asia head of the access campaign at humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières, also points out that transparency is a key component to building trust. And it is important to adopt it as a public health strategy.

Ms Menghaney cites the example of the European Medicines Agency (EMA), that has set a minimum level of transparency for itself. In many areas, the agency has decided to go beyond what the law requires. During the pandemic, EMA is implementing exceptional measures to maximise the transparency of its regulatory activities on treatments and vaccines for Covid-19 that are approved or are under evaluation. This includes making public the detailed minutes of various committee meetings.

In 2019, the World Health Assembly adopted a resolution on improving the transparency of markets for medicines, vaccines and other health products in an effort to expand access. The resolution urges member states to enhance public sharing of information on actual prices paid by governments and other buyers for health products, and greater transparency on pharmaceutical patents, clinical trial results and other determinants of pricing along the value chain from laboratory to patient.

A trust deficit can arise due to multiple reasons, acting independently and together. There is a lesson from India's victory in the battle against polio. Then too, there was a trust deficit in some quarters, though due to different reasons. Distrust was dispelled through concerted trust-building efforts by civil society, universities like Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia, health officials and international agencies like Unicef, as Dr Jameel points out. Many respected Imams worked hard to build trust among communities resisting the vaccine.

While researching a report on a sudden spurt of polio cases in parts of Uttar Pradesh in 2006, I saw firsthand how lack of trust could derail a public health intervention. Official explanations attributed the spike to rumours and fear among the Muslim minority. But a visit to Moradabad, one of the worst affected districts.

Trust and transparency during a crisis mean that not only should the political and administrative leadership be decisive, it must also convincingly explain to all groups that whatever is being done is being done in their interest.

Opacity in decision-making, attempts to gloss over mistakes or polarise the populace on any count will punch holes in the trust narrative.

We must not let that happen in 2021.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

LETTERS

NETAS FIRST

In India, if anyone has to set an example, it should be the politicians. This way, people can trust and take the Covid-19 vaccine. Why are they insisting on frontline workers taking the vaccine first? Since there are a lot of doubts about the vaccines not both Indian and foreign, politicians must be given the vaccine first because they are the rulers and policy-makers.

S. Laxmirajam
Hyderabad

IDOLS OF GODS

Members and supporters of the BJP and the RSS and their affiliates should know that man-made idols cannot be all-powerful Gods. They are personified concepts of various competing supernatural powers of the long bygone Vedic period. In that period, too, numerous and inclusive intra-religious sectarian wars were waged for supremacy. Be it religion or politics, it is all a question of domination over others.

V.N. Ramaswamy
Hyderabad

BIRD FLU

With humans facing their worst-ever pandemic, birds are also not spared now with a few states in India confirming return of the bird flu and others on high alert (*Telangana on Bird Flu alert, DC, Jan. 6*). Many birds like chickens, crows and sparrows have lost their lives in last one week and many are ailing. This will surely have an adverse impact on the poultry industry. Treatment of ailing birds as well as safe disposal of dead ones should be a high priority amidst the Covid-19 situation.

Jitesh Mathur
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Concern over Sheikh's talks with Pak. envoy

JAMMU, January 6

The Ruling Congress here has "taken serious view" of Sheikh Abdullah's meeting with the Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi yesterday, according to the senior Vice-President of the Jammu and Kashmir Congress Committee, Mr. Mohd. Ayub Khan.

Mr. Ayub Khan said in a statement, the Government of India should prevent "unfriendly countries like Pakistan" from interfering in the affairs of the State through the Plebiscite Front at this juncture. He appealed to the people of the State to remain vigilant and protect the Constitution and secular traditions.

been held by the IAS cadre. The appointment is part of a larger reshuffle of officers effected by the Congress government of Captain Amarinder Singh.

The move is unlikely to help in the long ongoing tussle between IAS and IPS officers. The IAS officers are likely to see this as another encroachment on their turf, a trend that has become more pronounced at the Centre after the Modi *sarkar* came to power. The rivalry between the two elite services — be it at the Central or state level — is also over issues like pay parity, promotions, central empannelment and avenues for deputation and training courses.

Share a *babu* experience! Follow [dilipcherian@Twitter.com](#). Let's multiply the effect.



UK denies bail for WikiLeaks Assange

London, Jan. 6: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange must remain in custody in Britain, while the US appeals a court decision to block his extradition to face charges there for leaking secret documents, a judge in London ruled on Wednesday.

Judge Vanessa Baraitser, who on Monday refused to grant his extradition, told Westminster Magistrates Court that if released there were "substantial grounds" to suspect Assange would "fail to surrender" for future appeal hear-

ings. "Mr Assange still has an incentive to abscond from these as yet unresolved proceedings," she said.

"As a matter of fairness the United States must be able to challenge my decision. If Mr Assange absconds during this process then they will have lost the opportunity to do so." Outside court, lawyer Stella Morris, Assange's fiancée and the mother of two of his children, called the decision "a huge disappointment" and urged the US Justice Department to drop the

charges. A lawyer for the US government earlier urged Baraitser not to release the controversial Australian publisher, and detailed how it planned to challenge her decision to block his extradition on mental health grounds.

"We respectfully submit on behalf of the United States that there are insurmountable hurdles to Mr Assange being granted bail," Clair Dobbins said.

She added there were "no conditions that could guarantee his surrender" in future. —AFP

CINEMA



SUDARSHAN 35MM

11.00am, 2.15, 6.00, 9.00pm

BRAMARAMBA 70MM

11.30am, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30pm

MEGHA 70MM 11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

ARJUN 70MM 11.30, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30

SVC ESHWAR - 11.00am, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm

PRASADS - Khaibard : 12.45pm, 3.15, 5.45, 8.15, 10.45pm

AMB CINEMAS - Gachibowli 1.40, 4.35, 7.00, 10.25pm

TIVOLI - Sec-bad : 11.30, 2.10, 7.20, 10.10pm

PVR CINEMAS

FORUM MALL - Kukatpally

10.45, 11.45, 12.45, 1.45, 2.45, 3.45, 4.45, 5.45, 6.45, 7.45, 8.45, 9.45, 10.45pm

GALLERIA - Punjagutta 10.45am, 12.00, 1.45,

3.00, 4.45, 6.00, 7.45, 9.00, 10.45pm

INORBIT MALL - Cyberbad

11.00am, 2.00, 3.45, 5.00, 6.45, 8.00, 9.45pm

CENTRAL - Punjagutta

11.30am, 1.00, 2.30, 4.00, 5.30, 7.00, 8.30, 10.00

IRRUM MANZIL

12.00pm, 1.15, 3.00, 4.15, 6.00, 7.15, 9.00, 10.15

RK - BANJARA HILLS 1.30pm, 4.30, 7.30, 10.30

ICON - HITECH CITY

1.00pm, 2.30, 4.00, 5.30, 7.00, 8.00, 10.30pm

MOOSARAMBAGH

12.15pm, 1.15, 3.15, 4.15, 6.15, 7.15, 9.15, 10.15

ASIAN CINEMAS

GPR MALL - Kukatpally 1.50pm, 7.00, 10.00pm

CINEPLANET - Kompa 1.20pm, 7.00, 10.00pm

RADHIKA - Kapra 1.50pm, 4.30, 9.45pm

CINESQUARE - Uppal 1.50pm, 7.30, 10.10pm

M CUBE - Attapur 1.20pm, 7.10, 10.00pm

M J SQUARE - Narapally 1.20pm, 7.00, 10.00pm

SHIVAGANGA - Dishuknagar 2.00pm & 6.00pm

SHA-SHAHENSHA - CHINTAL 2.00pm & 9.00pm

LAXMIKALA CINEPRIDE - MOOSAPET

11.15am, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15pm

INOX

GVK MALL - Banjara Hill

11.00am, 12.30, 2.30, 3.35, 5.40, 6.40, 8.45, 9.45

GSM MALL - Miyapur 11.00, 12.00, 1.15, 2.05,

3.05, 4.20, 5.10, 6.10, 7.25, 8.15, 9.15, 10.30pm

M P MALL - Kachiguda

11.25am, 1.15, 4.20, 7.25, 9.30, 10.30pm

Cinépolis

DSL - Uppal 11.15, 12.15, 2.20, 5.25, 6.50, 10.20

MANTRA - Attapur 11.15am, 12.15, 2.20, 5.25,

6.50, 7.25, 10.20pm

CCPL - Malkajgiri

11.00am, 12.3, 15.3, 15, 4.20, 6.20, 7.25, 9.00, 10.15

III - Balanagar 12.45, 2.00, 3.45, 5.00, 8.00, 9.45pm

Chandanagar 12.15pm, 3.15, 6.15, 9.15pm

METROPLEX - BVK - L.B Nagar 12.30pm, 3.30, 6.30, 9.30pm

Mallapur 12.00am, 1.30, 3.00, 4.30,

6.00, 7.30, 9.00, 10.30

PLATINUM CINEMAS - Gachibowli : 10.00, 12, 30, 3.00, 5.30, 7.00, 8.00, 9.30, 10.30

CARNIVAL - Ameerpet 1.15pm, 4.00, 7.00, 10.00pm

SUPER 70MM

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SRI KRISHNA 70MM SREERAMANA COMPLEX

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SAI RAM 70MM

11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

RANGA 70MM ASIAN MUKUND

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

BR HITECH 70MM

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

RAJADHANI 70MM SHIVAPARVATHI 70MM

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm

ANJALI70MM SSV CINEPARK

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm

KRISHNAGARAM VENKATASAI 70

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm

KRI LAKSHMI PICTURES-9296509333



MASS MAHARAJ POWERFUL ACTION ENTERTAINER

KRACK

Sorosuothi Films Division

JAN 9TH SANKRANTHI 2021 RELEASE

RTC X ROADS

SANDHYA 70MM

(ENJOY 4K DIGITAL PROJECTION & DOLBY ATMOS)

SANDHYA 35MM

(ENJOY 4K DIGITAL PROJECTION & DOLBY ATMOS)

SUDARSHAN 35

(ENJOY 4K DIGITAL PROJECTION & DOLBY ATMOS)

DEVI 70-RTC X ROADS

(ENJOY 4K DIGITAL PROJECTION & DOLBY ATMOS)

AMB CINEMAS

LAXMIKALA-MOOSAPET

ASIAN CINESQUARE-UPPAL

ASIAN RADHIKA-KAPRA

ASIAN MCUBE-ATTAPUR

ASIAN GPR MALL-KUKATPALLY

ASIAN SIVAGANGA-DILSHUKNAGAR

PLATINUM

PRASAD MULTIPLEX

PVR CINEMAS

FORUM MALL | GALLERIA | RK PLEX

IRRUM MANZIL | MUSARAMBAGH

ICON MALL | INORBIT | PRESTON | CENTRAL

Mantra | Sudha | CCPPL | Manjeera

INOX LIVE THE MOVIE

AMEERPET LEONIA

MIRAJ CINEMAS

CHANDANAGAR BALANAGAR

BCK Cinemas you matter

RAJADHANI 70MM SHIVAPARVATHI 70MM

11.00, 2.30, 6.15, 9.15pm

ASIAN MUKUND

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

BR HITECH 70MM

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SRV EESHWAR 70

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm

SVC EESHWAR 70

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm

TALLUR 70MM ECIL X ROADS

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm

SENSATIONSUN KAIRATABAD

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm

YADAGIRI 70MM SANTOSH NAGAR

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm

SREERAMULU 70MM MOOSAPET

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	48,174.06
Nifty 50	14,146.25
S&P 500*	3,773.05
Dollar (₹)	73.11
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.75
Euro (₹)	90.21
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	51,125.71
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	54.43
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.894
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.030
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.075

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Services sector expands at a slower rate

Services sector activity expanded at a slower pace in December as growth in sales eased to a three-month low and hiring came to a halt amid weak business optimism. The India Services Business Activity Index fell from 53.7 in Nov. to 52.3 in Dec. "Although the news that the service sector remained in expansion mode during Dec. is welcome, the fact that growth lost momentum yet again shouldn't be disregarded," IHS Markit said.

DoT: Spectrum auction bidding to start in March



Bidding for the sixth round of spectrum auction for radio-waves worth Rs 3.92 lakh crore will start from March 1, according to a DoT notice. The long-awaited spectrum auction is being held after a gap of four years and over two years after the Trai recommended the base price for the radiowaves. The DoT has fixed January 12 for the pre-bid conference. Telecoms will need to submit their application by February 5.

Housing sales decline in 2020: Knight Frank

Housing sales in Delhi-NCR fell 50 per cent in 2020 to 21,234 units on low demand because of the pandemic, property consultant Knight Frank India said. The sales of residential properties fell 37 per cent to 1,54,534 units in 2020 across eight major cities versus 2,45,861 units. Mumbai saw 20 per cent decline at 48,688 units. The sales of residential properties in Hyderabad declined 38 per cent to 10,042 units from 16,267 units.

SpiceJet to run 21 new flights from next week

SpiceJet said it would operate 21 new domestic and international flights from January 12. It will introduce two weekly flights on the route from Mumbai to Ras Al-Khaimah in the UAE and increase frequency on the Delhi-Ras Al-Khaimah route to four weekly flights. The airline has launched new daily non-stop flights connecting Hyderabad with Visakhapatnam, Tirupati and Vijayawada. It will also connect Jharsuguda with Mumbai.

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IIFCL could be merged with new company Govt mulls infra bank with ₹1 lakh-cr corpus

SIDDHARTHA SINGH
JAN. 6

India is considering a proposal to create a bank to help fund port, road and power projects as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government aims to lift Asia's third-largest economy out of the recession.

The new entity, likely to be part of the budget announcement in February, may have an equity capital of Rs 1 lakh crore (\$13.7 billion), people with knowledge of the matter said, asking not to be identified as the matter isn't public. The existing India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd., which has a Rs 2,000-crore corpus, will be merged with the bank, they said.

Initially, the institution will be funded by the government, which will later invite investors, the people said. It could be on the



lines of state-run National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Ltd., which counts the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, Asian Development Bank and Abu Dhabi Investment Authority among its investors.

The finance ministry has prepared a note for the cab-

inet to discuss the proposal. The spokesperson at the ministry declined to comment.

India faces the challenge of boosting spending on productive assets that aid economic growth after being forced to direct the bulk of stimulus last year on the poor and the farm-

quarter, according to Parminder Chopra, director (finance).

"We want to explore an alternative source of funds," Chopra said in a telephone interview. "Fixed deposit rates are quite low, so there could be interest from the public to get a bit better rate."

Power Finance Corp has previously sold notes to retail investors, but those were tax-free infrastructure bonds, Chopra said. This planned offering would be the company's maiden tax-

dragged down rates that households get on bank savings. The rate on term deposits maturing in three years at the country's largest lender, State Bank of India, is 5.3 per cent, the lowest since September 2004.

Power Finance has previously sold notes to retail investors, but those were tax-free infrastructure bonds, Chopra said. This planned offering would be the company's maiden tax-

ers to protect them from a pandemic-induced slowdown. Citigroup Inc economists wrote last year that spending should be directed on infrastructure, rather than populist measures, to cushion the economy headed for the deepest slump among emerging nations.

Attracting foreign investment is also crucial to meet Modi's goal of spending \$1.5 trillion on new roads, rail links and other infrastructure over the next five years as public finances deteriorate.

The government pumped nearly Rs 1.7 lakh crore into public sector banks in the two years to March 2020. But a widening budget deficit and weak revenue growth put a brake on any further recapitalisation plans for the current financial year.

— Bloomberg

PFC plans ₹10,000-crore retail bond issue

DIVYA PATIL & RAJESH KUMAR SINGH
JAN. 6

India's biggest lender to the power sector plans to sell bonds to individual investors as it tries to attract savers dissatisfied with deposit rates at a 16-year low.

Power Finance Corp has filed a draft prospectus for a Rs 10,000-crore offering (\$1.4 billion), and plans to raise the entire sum this

quarter, according to Parminder Chopra, director (finance).

"We want to explore an alternative source of funds," Chopra said in a telephone interview. "Fixed deposit rates are quite low, so there could be interest from the public to get a bit better rate."

Unprecedented monetary stimulus to help cushion the economy from damage wrought by the Covid-19 crisis has

dragged down rates that households get on bank savings. The rate on term deposits maturing in three years at the country's largest lender, State Bank of India, is 5.3 per cent, the lowest since September 2004.

Power Finance has previously sold notes to retail investors, but those were tax-free infrastructure bonds, Chopra said. This planned offering would be the company's maiden tax-

able issuance to individual buyers, she said.

The New Delhi-based company has hired Trust Investment Advisors Pvt Ltd, A.K. Capital Services Ltd, Edelweiss Financial Services Ltd and JM Financial Services Ltd as lead managers for the offering. It plans to issue the AAA rated notes in one or more tranches, according to the draft prospectus.

— Bloomberg

'Saudi oil output cut signals demand risks'

Jan. 6: Saudi Arabia's pledge to cut its oil output by more than required under its pact with other Opec+ producers points to weakening oil demand following new Covid-19 lockdowns and sets the stage for a tighter market in the second quarter, Goldman Sachs said in a note released on Tuesday.

"Saudi's action and the prospect for a tight market in 2Q21, as the rebound in demand stresses the ability to restart production, will likely support prices in coming weeks, leading us to reiterate our bullish oil view," the analysts wrote.

Benchmark Brent oil prices on Wednesday hit their highest level since February after Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, said it would cut by an additional, voluntary 1 million barrels per day (bpd) in February and March.

Two Opec+ members—Russia and Kazakhstan—will bump up their output by a combined 75,000 bpd while other producers will hold production steady.

Producers are wary of the impact of new lockdowns on oil demand.

UAE to produce Sinopharm vaccine this yr

FARAH ELBAHRAWY
JAN. 6

The United Arab Emirates, which aims to inoculate half of its population in the first quarter, plans to start manufacturing Sinopharm Group Co's vaccine this year, according to *The National*.

The country is seeking to achieve herd immunity later this year by vaccinating as many as 70 per cent of its residents, the Abu Dhabi-based newspaper reported, citing an interview with Nawal Al Kaabi, chairwoman of the National Covid-19 Clinical Management Committee, and Ashish Koshy, chief executive officer of G42 Healthcare.

Sinopharm unit China National Biotech Group, which developed the vaccine, delivered 3 million doses to the UAE so far.

The UAE is offering vaccines free of charge for its residents. On Tuesday, a top health official said the Gulf nation administered more than 826,000 doses so far.

The UAE has approved the Pfizer Inc-BioNTech SE Covid-19 vaccine, along with the Sinopharm shot.

— Bloomberg

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 6

Global government debt is estimated to have increased by about \$10 trillion in 2020 to \$77.8 trillion, equivalent to 94 per cent of the world GDP, according to rating agency Fitch.

Nearly all governments have coped with the economic fallout of the pandemic similarly—by boosting spending on health sectors and providing support to households and businesses, while running up debt to pay for it.

Both the increase and level of debt will be records, Fitch said. The previous \$10 trillion tranche took seven years to build, from 2012 to 2019.

"The rapid and widespread increase in debt has had a significant effect on sovereign credit ratings, with a record 51 downgrades of 33 sovereigns in 2020, 27 of which are emerging markets. The sovereigns downgraded multiple times were all emerging markets," James McCormack, global head of sovereigns,



Fitch Ratings said.

There are three primary consequences of the high and rising emerging-market debt burden, all of which are already in play, according to Fitch.

First, there will be additional episodes of credit stress and default.

There were five defaults in 2020—Argentina, Ecuador, Lebanon, Suriname and Zambia—a record yearly high.

"We expect there to be more defaults in 2021, along with greater attention on debt-remedy initiatives," Fitch said.

"Second, some emerging markets that are not at risk of default and have well-developed local-currency debt markets will continue to explore unconventional monetary

policies."

"In emerging markets, government debt increased seven-fold to \$19 trillion, and interest payments jumped to an estimated \$680 billion in 2020 from \$220 billion in 2000. While the increase in interest payments did not fully keep pace with the increase in debt, there has been an uninterrupted rise," McCormick said.

Comparing 2010 with 2020, the median effective interest rate for developed-market sovereigns fell from just over 4 per cent to just under 2 per cent. For emerging markets, the rate went in the other direction, increasing from 4.3 per cent to 5.1 per cent.

The third consequence will be, if developed-market rates sink even lower, there may be a greater incentive for emerging-market sovereigns to turn to foreign-currency funding.

On current trends, Fitch forecasts interest payments by governments in developed and emerging markets will converge by 2022 at about \$360 billion.

Motown Buzz

Toyota Fortuner facelift launched

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, JAN. 6

Toyota Kirloskar Motor on Wednesday introduced the 2021 Toyota Fortuner SUV with prices starting at Rs 29.98 lakh for the base petrol variant and going all the way up to Rs 37.43 lakh at Delhi showroom for the range-topping four-wheel drive diesel automatic variant.

The company has also launched a sportier variant called Legender priced at Rs 37.58 lakh.

TATA SAFARI ALL SET FOR A COMEBACK

Tata Motors, Jan. 6: Tata Motors on Wednesday announced that it is bringing back its iconic brand 'Safari' with its forthcoming flagship SUV codenamed the Gravitas. "Tata Safari introduced India to the SUV lifestyle, and glorified the segment in India for other players to follow. For over two decades, Safari has represented prestige and performance, and in its new avatar, the Safari will carry forward this rich idea," the firm said.

KIA MOTORS UNVEILS NEW LOGO, SLOGAN



New Delhi, Jan. 6: Kia Motors on Wednesday said it has come up with a new corporate logo and global brand slogan signifying its transformation and all-new brand purpose. "Kia's new logo represents the company's commitment to becoming an icon for change and innovation," said president and CEO Ho Sung Song.

AGRITECH | BLOOMING Firm helps improve predictability, efficiency and sustainability of crops

Startup CropIn bringing AI technology to farms

SARITHA RAI
JAN. 6

CropIn, an artificial intelligence and data-based agritech startup, has raised \$20 million in a funding round led by Temasek Holdings Pte-backed ABC World Asia, as the coronavirus pandemic accelerates the adoption of digital technologies in farming.

The Bengaluru-headquartered agricultural AI startup provides software-as-a-service, or SaaS, products to farms and development organisations globally to improve predictability, efficiency and sustainability of crops.

Additional new investors in the Series C funding include Infosys co-founder Kris Gopalakrishnan's family office and a fund of the UK government, CDC Group.

CropIn has raised \$33.1 million so far. The company was set up in 2010 by Krishna Kumar, who hails from a family of farmers in central India and quit a career at General Electric Co to found the startup after being deeply affected by widespread rural suicides in his country.

The firm analyses data such as aerial imagery, ground scouting, hyper-local weather and market price fluctuations from 13 million acres across 4 million farms worldwide to predict productivity and monitor risks for thousands of variants of crops. That allows the company to provide warnings to small farms on what disease will hit a particular crop or when to expect an adverse climate event such as morning frost. "Covid has brought

home for countries the risks of disrupted food supply chains, food safety and food security," Kumar, also the startup's chief executive officer, said in a phone interview. "Every country and every agribusiness wants to monitor and safeguard the supply chain." Backed by early investors, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Singapore-based VC BeeNext, CropIn has customers and partners in 52 countries, including Basel-headquartered Syngenta Corp, the World Bank, Canada-based McCain Foods Ltd and Germany's BASF SE. The new funding will fuel further global expansion and help strengthen its technology.

India's agritech space is abloom, with dozens of startups sprouting up in the last few years to disrupt traditional farming practices and bring more efficiency into a massive industry dominated by small land holdings. One in nine agritech startups globally are from the South Asian nation, which had 450 such businesses in 2019, according to a report by the Indian body Nasscom. That's piqued the interest of investors such as Tiger Global and Accel, which have plowed tens of millions into early-stage companies. Though much of the focus has been on supply chain improvements through practical approaches like aggregating farm produce and renting farm equipment, deep tech startups like CropIn working in areas like crop diagnostics and farm automation are also earning recognition.

— Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Claire 1st female official in Tests

Sydney: Australia's Claire Polosak is set to become the first female match official in a men's Test match when she takes up the fourth umpire's role in the third Test between India and Australia starting here from Thursday.

The 32-year-old from New South Wales has already earned the distinction of being the first woman on-field umpire in a men's ODI match in ICC's Division 2 league between Namibia and Oman played at the Windhoek in 2019. As per ICC rules for Test matches, the fourth umpire is appointed by the home cricket board from their nominees to the International Panel of ICC Umpires and from the host country.

Polosak, who is a resident of New South Wales's Goulburn city, has also had the distinction of being the first female match official in a men's List A game in Australia. — PTI

Indian shuttlers to start training

New Delhi: The entire Indian badminton contingent cleared the Covid-19 test on Wednesday and is set to begin training ahead of the Yonex Thailand Open, starting next week. The Indian team, part of the Green Zone, consisting of players and all stakeholders such as umpires, line judges, personnel from BWF,

Badminton Association of Thailand, medical staff, and TV production crew, were tested after arrival in Bangkok.

The Asia leg in Bangkok consists of two Super 1000 events — Yonex Thailand Open (January 12-17) and Toyota Thailand Open (January 19-24) followed by the \$1,500,000 HSBC BWF World Tour Finals (January 27-31).

"The Asian Leg in Bangkok received a boost with all 824 participants in the Green Zone quarantine bubble testing negative for Covid-19," BWF said in a statement. — PTI

Woman footballer Alex catches Covid

Los Angeles: Alex Morgan, a two-time World Cup winner with the US women's football team, has tested positive for Covid-19, the star striker said on Twitter on Tuesday.

"Unfortunately, my family and I closed out 2020 learning that we had contracted Covid while in California over the holidays,"

Morgan, 31, said in a Tweet. "We are all in good spirits and recovering well. After our isolation is completed, I will follow

US Soccer's return to play guidelines to ensure my body is fully recovered and I can join my teammates back on the field soon," the tweet added.

Morgan is married to former Los Angeles Galaxy midfielder Servando Carrasco, and the couple have a seven-month old daughter, Charlie.

The family returned to California from London, where Morgan had appeared in five matches for Tottenham in the Women's Super League before announcing her intention to return to the US to play in 2021. — AFP

Kevin does well in Dakar's Wadi loop

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: After a fine stage on Tuesday, with a one-two for Joan Barreda and Ricky Brabec who claimed the top of the overall rally standings, Wednesday was the turn of Kevin Benavides. The Argentinean Monster Energy Honda Team rider finished the Dakar 2021 third stage in runner-up spot, just short of the leadership.

The Wadi Ad-Dawasir loop, over 630 total kilometres, including 403 km against the clock, once again turned the Dakar standings on their head. Second place at the end of the first looping stage went to Kevin Benavides. The rider, hailing from Salta, Argentina, got off to a strong start, hoping to clinch a partial victory, but eventually had to settle for the second best time of the day.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia vs India: Third Test — Day Two from 5 am (Friday) on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

Big Bash League: Hobart Hurricanes vs Sydney Thunder from 12.40 pm; Brisbane Heat vs Melbourne Stars from 3.50 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Bengaluru FC vs East Bengal from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

OPENING GAMBIT

Rohit and India ready to change Sydney script

Sydney, Jan. 6: Having touched nadir and zenith in a span of 10 days, Ajinkya Rahane's India will look to start afresh against Australia with the big-hitting Rohit Sharma's presence adding a new dimension to what promises to be an enthralling third Test starting here on Thursday.

The Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), despite being witness to some extraordinary batting performances from the touring Indian sides over the years, has not exactly been a happy hunting ground with six defeats. The lone win came a good 42 years back.

If Rohit's side can go 2-1 up and ensure the retention of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, it will be one of the finest hours in the history of Indian cricket. Making it even more special is the fact that the side has been without two world class performers and a senior pacer against a nearly full-strength Australian team.

Seldom has an Australian batting unit, that boasts of a player of Steve Smith's calibre, looked so circumspect and literally intimidated by an Indian bowling unit, which isn't operating at full-strength.

Pacer Navdeep Saini will make his debut here, replacing Umesh Yadav who went home following an injury.

The pressure is understandable as Australia are literally pushing a 70 per cent fit David Warner out there in the middle to combat fire with fire even as his statements make it clear that he is not at all comfortable with the idea.

And in this backdrop, enters Rohit Sharma, whose last couple of months have been loads of off-field drama.

But, his mere presence has added spring in the strides of the team and the youngsters in this current set-up swear by him.

On the other hand, Australia need Smith to be back in form and someone like Travis Head to deliver as he has failed to get a hang of both pace and spin. — PTI



India's Rohit Sharma prepares to bat in the nets during a training session at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday, ahead of the third Test against Australia. — AFP



Australia's David Warner bats during a training session at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday. — AFP

WE'RE A BETTER TEAM WITH WARNER: PAINE

Sydney, Jan. 6: David Warner's mere presence makes Australia a better side and fills the other 10 on the park with exuberance and energy, skipper Tim Paine gushed on Wednesday as the opener looks set for return to Test cricket when the third match against India begins here Thursday.

Warner missed a lot of action since India arrived as he sustained a groin injury during the second ODI.

"Hopefully, if he gets in and gets away, that puts pressure back on opposition right away. Regardless of whom we are playing, we are a better team when David Warner is in that team from the runs he scores or the energy he brings into the group," Paine said.

"He protects our middle-order a bit with Marnus Labuschagne and Steve coming in. Other guys coming when bowlers are a bit tired, it's an advantage. So David has got a huge role for us," the skipper said even as the senior opener is battling against time to get closer to full fitness.

"David has been awesome. Fills the guys with lot of confidence. He is a player you love having on your side. Always got plenty to say, really energetic, professional and I have always loved playing with him," he further added. Paine also admitted that "tension is boiling under the surface" after unnamed sources from the Indian camp expressed apprehensions about playing the final match of the series in Brisbane from January 15. — PTI

Captain Jinks all praise for Ashwin and Jadeja

Sydney, Jan. 6: The ever inquisitive Ravichandran Ashwin, who has a knack for learning new things, and much-improved batsman Ravindra Jadeja have stood out for India in the first two Tests against Australia, skipper Ajinkya Rahane said on Wednesday.

While Ashwin is currently leading the wicket-takers' chart with 10 scalps, Jadeja's half-century and the hundred plus stand with Rahane in the second Test formed the cornerstone of India's eight-wicket win in Melbourne. Rahane said,

"He is always looking to learn new things. He has good skills but is always looking to learn new things, and that's what makes Ashwin great."

He is always looking to learn new things. He has good skills but is always looking to learn new things, and that's what makes Ashwin great.

— AJINKYA RAHANE

India's stand-in Test captain

If Ashwin's improvisation has impressed Rahane, he is mighty pleased with Jadeja's Test match application which adds the necessary balance the team has often lacked.

"As a batsman Ravindra Jadeja has improved a lot and that is a massive point as a team's perspective," Rahane said.

"When you know that your number seven can contribute with the bat, that becomes really easy for you to actually get that (decent) total and obvious-

ly in the field, you have seen him taking some brilliant catches."

"So yes his addition in the team helped us a lot and he has been really fantastic and it is really great for us," he said.

Also, Rahane tried to douse the quarantine controversy, stating that his team is "not annoyed" with strict bio-safety protocols but conceded that it was "challenging" to be confined when life outside their five-star facility here seems to be "normal".

— PTI

Kiwis sweep series, are No.1 in Tests

Christchurch (New Zealand), Jan. 6: Towering paceman Kyle Jamieson completed an 11-wicket match haul on Wednesday as New Zealand thrashed Pakistan in the second Test to become the world's top-ranked team.

Jamieson was near unplayable in Pakistan's second innings, finishing with six for 48 after his five for 69 in the first innings, to give New Zealand victory by an innings and 176 runs.

The win inside four days in Christchurch, which completed a 2-0 series sweep, also confirmed New Zealand had overtaken Australia to be the world's number one Test side for the first time.

New Zealand batted Pakistan out of contention with a first innings 659 for six, with Williamson's masterful 238 supported by Henry Nicholls (157)



New Zealand players pose for a team photo with their trophy after defeating Pakistan to claim the series 2-0 at Hagley Oval in Christchurch, New Zealand, on Wednesday. — AFP

Rohan hits ton as HCA league halts

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 6

G. Rohan Yadav of Central Excise completed his century but the Hyderabad Cricket Association's A-1 Division three-day league matches were stopped midway through the second day on Wednesday following an order from the Telangana High Court, which was dealing with the raw deal meted to the Union Bank of India team.

Resuming at his overnight score of 71, Rohan went on to score 136 with the help of 26 boundaries and a six as Central Excise replied to EMCC's 126 with a strong 306 for 3 in 64.1 overs. J. Anshul Lal, the other overnight batsman, made 87 while No.4 P. S. Chaitanya Reddy was batting on 63 when play was stopped.

HCA joint secretary Naresh Sharma said the stalled matches would be replayed as fresh games at the end of the season. "However, the performances of players over the past one-and-a-half days of action will be taken into account. They will count," he assured.

Naresh was confident that the next round of matches, starting on Tuesday, would not be affected. "I am sure things will be sorted out by then," he said.

The Telangana High Court had on Tuesday stayed all ongoing matches of the league conducted by the HCA, for not carrying out its orders — the court had directed the HCA to include the cricket team of the Union Bank of India

(formerly Andhra Bank team) to participate in league matches for the season.

Teams were into the second half of the second day when a message from HCA secretary R. Vijayanand addressed to the Joint Secretary, League Committee and other Grounds In-charges brought the games to a halt, at 1.10 pm. "Dear all, in the light of the interim stay order issued by the Honourable Court, you are hereby informed that all the ongoing league matches stand postponed with immediate effect. Kindly be guided accordingly," the message read.

Brief scores:

A-1 DIVISION (THREE-DAY)

Group A, Day-2

■ EMCC 126 in 43.4 overs vs Central Excise 306 for 3 in 64.1 overs (G. Rohan Yadav 136 — 144b, 26x4, 1x6, J. Anshul Lal 87, P. S. Chaitanya Reddy 63 n.o.). Match called off following Court order.

ENGLISH | LEAGUE CUP



Son Heung-min (right) of Tottenham Hotspur controls the ball during the EFL Cup semifinal against Brentford at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London on Tuesday. Tottenham carved out a 2-0 victory. — AP

Tottenham ride on Son's exploits

London, Jan. 6: Jose Mourinho urged Tottenham to kick on after Son Heung-min fired them into the League Cup final with the decisive goal in a 2-0 win against Brentford on Tuesday.

Moussa Sissoko put Mourinho's team ahead in the semifinal at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

But Tottenham were still searching for the knockout blow against spirited second tier Brentford until Son netted with 20 minutes remaining.

Tottenham will face Manchester United or holders Manchester City, who meet in the second semifinal on Wednesday, at Wembley on April 25.

It will be the club's first domestic final since losing

THE RESULTS

Tottenham Hotspur	2
(Sissoko 12, Son 70)	0

Brentford

the 2015 League Cup showpiece against Chelsea, and their first final in any competition since the 2019 Champions League defeat against Liverpool in Madrid.

"The final is now in a pocket for three months, we have to wait for the final so we have to focus on what we have coming up," Mourinho said.

Mourinho, appointed in November 2019, is hoping to lead Tottenham to their first major trophy since the 2008 League Cup. — AFP

ONLINE CHESS AT WEEKEND

Hyderabad, Jan. 6: The Brilliant Chess Academy is conducting the 176th Brilliant Trophy Open Chess Tournament Online on Saturday and Sunday. A total of ₹10,000 prize money will be given to Top 20 places in the Open category. Special prizes will be given to two places in Juniors category — Under 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 age groups for boys and girls separately. For further details contact J. Subrahmanyam on phone number 9247399717.