

DECCAN Chronicle

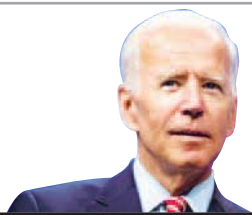
THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

ANANTAPUR | WEDNESDAY | 20 JANUARY 2021



NATION | 4

Shivraj signals end of Covid rules in MP



WORLD | 5

Joe Biden to take charge today

SPORTS | 8

Sindhu sails into Thai Open second round



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WEATHER

Max: 30.0°C
Min: 16°C
RH: 44%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 30/16 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+24,449)	(+155)
1,05,96,107	1,52,743

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+256)	(+2)
TS: 2,92,128	1,581
(+179)	(+1)
AP: 8,86,245	7,142

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

9,62,22,720

DEATHS

20,55,696

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES **219**

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Pushya Shuddha Saptami till 1.16 pm
Star: Revathi till 12.37 pm
Varjyam: Nil
Durmuhurtam: 12.04 pm to 12.49 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Jamadi-ul-Akhir 6,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.08 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 4.11 pm
Maghrib: 5.47 pm
Isha: 7.02 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.17 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.49 PM
MOONSET 8.51 PM
MOONRISE 10.47 AM

COUNTER POINT

SHORT TAKES

Netaji's b'day is Parakram Diwas

New Delhi: The government has decided to observe January 23 as 'Parakram Diwas' every year to commemorate the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Union minister Prahlad Singh Patel said on Tuesday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in the first Parakram Diwas programme in Kolkata on January 23.

No subsidised food for MPs now

New Delhi: Food served in Parliament canteens for MPs and others will become costlier as a subsidy given for it has been stopped, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Tuesday. The Lok Sabha Speaker said the Parliament canteens will now be run by ITDC instead of Northern Railways.

Whatsapp told to drop changes

New Delhi: India has asked WhatsApp to withdraw changes to its privacy policy the messenger, saying the new terms take away choice from Indian users. The demand creates a new headache for WhatsApp and its parent Facebook, which have placed big bets on the South Asian nation.



Indian players pose with the winning trophy after defeating Australia by three wickets on the final day of the fourth cricket test match at the Gabba, Brisbane in Australia on Tuesday. — AP

Improbable win for India

MOSES KONDETY | DC
HYDERABAD, JAN. 19

Brisboon! That more or less sums up the Indian cricket team's ecstatic moment in Brisbane which earned them a 2-1 Test series win on Tuesday that will be talked about for years to come. For it took many years coming. Not since 1988 had any team defeated Australia at this venue. And this Indian team was depleted, inexperienced, weak and written off.

However, young India changed the script, and how! Going into the final

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

NARENDRA MODI,
Prime Minister

Every time we got hit, we stayed put & stood taller. We pushed boundaries of belief to play fearless but not careless cricket. Injuries & uncertainties were countered with poise & confidence. One of the greatest series wins! Congrats India. Every session we discovered a new hero...

SACHIN TENDULKAR

day of the four-match series needing an improbable 324 for victory — the

highest target chased here was 236, seven decades ago — a charged-up India

set out to take the Brisbane bull by its horns.

Opener Shubman Gill (91) and Cheteshwar Pujara (56) did the spadework, before Rishabh Pant strode on to the green Gabba ground and bashed the ball about to drive the side home (329 for 7) in top gear with a stroke-filled 89 not out.

Fuel for the purring Pant engine though was provided by high octane efforts from debutant Washington Sundar (62) and Shardul Thakur (67).

ALL NEW

MOHAMMED SIRAJ | Son of an auto driver from Hyderabad. He lost his father during the tour but decided to stay on. He got a maiden five-for, and picked 13 wickets in 3 Rests. Faced racist abuse.

SHUBMAN GILL | Born in a Fazilka, Punjab, to an affluent farmer family. His grandfather had prepared a pitch in the farm before his father shifted to Mohali to back his ambitions.

SHARDUL THAKUR | From Palghar, Maharashtra, had hit six sixes in an over as a 13-year-old. Travelled to Mumbai daily. Coached by Dinesh Lad, who also coached Rohit Sharma.

WASHINGTON SUNDAR | The name Washington was his father's tribute to his own mentor P.D. Washington, who had sponsored him. His talent as an off-break bowler came to the fore when Rahul Dravid and Paras Mhambrey told him to focus on his bowling.

NAVDEEP SAINI | Son of a bus driver from Karnal, used to play tennis ball matches for ₹1,000. Delhi first-class player Sumit Narwal brought him for the Ranji Trophy nets where Gautam Gambhir picked him up. He was in Australia as a net bowler.

THANGARASU NATARAJAN | From the remote village of Chinnappampatti in Tamil Nadu, the son of a daily wage labourer couldn't buy bowling spikes, till IPL riches came along. He has built a cricket academy at his native place and helps talented but needy cricketers. He was in Australia as a net bowler.

■ Page 3: Siraj halted Australia's second innings

CM: Lift people's living standards

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed officials to give top priority to Jagananna Thodu, YSR Cheyutha and YSR Bhima welfare schemes by completing the loan sanctioning process by March end.

The Chief Minister sought to reach benefits of the Cheyutha scheme to more people via the second phase. He asked officials to concentrate on extending help to the poor for their income generation via initiation of self-employment schemes.

During a review meeting on YSR Cheyutha, YSR Aasara and Jagananna Thodu schemes, the CM asked officials to focus attention on the selection of beneficiaries for employment-creation programmes under the YSR Cheyutha scheme.

"Do so by resort to best practices and ensure coverage of more people in the second tranche," the Chief Minister said.



money the government provided them in ways as to improve their livelihood rather than spending it on their personal needs, he said.

Jagan directed the officials to help provide animal feed and medicines for beneficiaries of the Jeevakranti scheme upon placing orders through Rhythu Bharosa Kendras and look into the possibility of geo-tagging along with the unique ID number for the cattle supplied under the scheme.

He said even if the beneficiaries wanted to sell the cattle, it should be done through RBKs.

■ Page 2: Jagan wants revamp of vet clinics

Backroom warriors get into full gear for LS bypoll

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 19

The upcoming bypoll for Tirupati Lok Sabha seat is set to witness a quadrangular contest between the YSR Congress, Telugu Desam, BJP-Jana Sena, and Congress. Interestingly, backroom warriors have already fully geared up with election data and strategies towards winning the election for their respective clients.

By-election to Tirupati LS seat will be the first major political battle among parties in the state after the 2019 elections.

In a way, it is going to be a referendum on performance of the YSRC government. However, the major challenge is for the Telugu Desam, which is desperate to retain its existence by winning this seat at any cost, while BJP-Jana Sena combine is also trying to prove its strength by winning the by-poll.

As this LS seat has become a battle of prestige, all political parties

are going all out to win it. To woo voters, parties and their candidates are not relying merely on campaigning and poll promises, they are also bringing in specialists tagged as "political strategists" for winning the seat at any cost.

are going all out to win it. To woo voters, parties and their candidates are not relying merely on campaigning and poll promises, they are also bringing in specialists tagged as "political strategists" for winning the seat at any cost.

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu has already engaged political strategist Robin Sharma, co-founder of I-PAC in the past, but now heading his own political consultancy — Showtime Consulting, to work out strategies for the party in 2024 elections. With the Tirupati by-poll coming up, Naidu is learnt to have deployed Sharma to supervise party's preparation for this election.

Sources in TD said a team under supervision of Robin Sharma is working 10-12 hours a day to finalise plans for formally launching the Tirupati by-poll campaign very soon. The team is regularly interacting with party's coordination committee leaders and giving them directions as to how they can go about appealing voters.

A specific strategy readied for the purpose is TD launching a "Dharma Parirakshana Yatra" from Tirupati on January 21. The party is adopting a three-pronged strategy — Garner Hindu votes, counter the government and exposing government failures — to win the poll.

On the other hand, political strategist Prashant Kishor has recently met Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. The meeting has gained significance amidst ongoing vandalising of temples and idol in the state. Sources said they discussed the by-poll, for which a notification is around the corner.



AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy presents a memento to Union Minister Amit Shah during their meeting at Delhi on Tuesday. — By arrangement

HC objects to SEC's remarks on govt

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

The AP High Court reserved its order on the suspension of the State Election Commission's proceedings for holding the gram panchayat polls in February.

A division bench of Chief Justice A.K. Goswami and Justice Ch. Praveen Kumar was hearing the SEC's challenge to an interim order of the

single judge suspending the election proceedings.

The court found fault with SEC N. Ramesh Kumar's contention that the government was waiting for his retirement in March.

The court asked as to why he made such an argument and advised self-regulation for those holding key positions.

■ Page 2: Coronavirus intensity declined: SEC

Allergy patients told to avoid Covishield

New Delhi, Jan. 19: People who are severely allergic to any ingredient of Covid-19 vaccine 'Covishield' are advised not to take it, Serum Institute of India said.

According to the fact sheet for the vaccine recipient by the Serum Institute of India, one should not get the Covishield vaccine if the person had a severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of this vaccine.

The ingredients of Covishield vaccine are "L-

Histidine, L-Histidine hydrochloride monohydrate, Magnesium chloride hexahydrate, Polysorbate 80, Ethanol, Sucrose, Sodium chloride, Disodium edetate dihydrate (EDTA), Water for injection," Serum Institute said.

The fact sheet for the vaccine recipient on the website of the Pune-based vaccine manufacturer is to help the recipient understand the risks and benefits of the Covishield vaccine. — PTI

AMITY | CALL

Zahara Begum asks Muslims to donate for Ayodhya's Ram temple

Muslim lady takes Ram temple's cause

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

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

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, she recalled that all communities, including Muslims, would pool efforts to support their

Hindu brothers and sisters in organising *pooja* for Vinayaka Chavithi, Dasara and Ram Navami by offering donations, in the true spirit and tradition of India, and its rich 'Unity in Diversity'.

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

Ms Zahara appealed to



Zahara Begum

fellow Muslims to donate money through Nidhi Samarpna, during the Nidhi Sekarana programme for building of Ram temple at

Ayodhya, purely on a voluntary basis. She said that Muslims can start contributing doate from ₹10 to any larger amount of their choice towards the fund.

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

ty. "Non-Muslims have donated a great extent of cultivable land of their volition to Muslims," she said.

Ms Zahara further said, "We are blessed to be in a country where Lord Ram was born. We are fortunate that the temple is going to be built during our time. Lord Ram has taught 'dharma' as a way of life' and stands as an exemplar for the entire world. Let us participate in this divine activity and help in construction of a great Ram temple."

SHORT TAKES

Suneetha nomination papers accepted

Vijayawada: Vijayawada: The nomination papers filed by Pothula Suneetha, representing the YSRC, to contest in bypoll for AP Legislative Council found to be valid after scrutiny. The returning officer said here on Tuesday that the nomination papers filed by Suneetha were valid and accepted to contest in the bypoll for the Council by MLAs after carrying out the scrutiny.

TD HAILS HC VERDICT, ASKS IF CM WILL RESIGN

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

Former minister and senior Telugu Desam leader Alapati Rajendra Prasad on Tuesday asked whether Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will tender his resignation following the latest order of Andhra Pradesh High Court outright dismissing charges of “insider trading” in Amaravati Capital City lands.

Addressing a press conference here, Rajendra Prasad asserted that the verdict makes clear that all allegations levelled by the Chief Minister and his ministers on capital city lands are baseless and false. He claimed that High Court has clearly said that such allegations cannot be made without basis, as they are not maintainable under any section of the IPC.

The TD leader challenged ruling YSRC ministers to welcome and honour the High Court's latest judgement on insider trading charges, like they had earlier hailed the court's stay order on panchayat elections.

TD MLC DEMANDS PEOPLE-FRIENDLY SAND POLICY

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

Telugu Desam MLC P. Ashok Babu on Tuesday demanded that the YSR Congress government announce a people-friendly sand policy to prevent the state economy from slipping into a deeper crisis, and create confidence among the builders and construction workers.

He asked why chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy was not able to sacrifice just ₹750 crore in revenue as the sand tax, when a free sand policy would revive thousands of crores worth of construction industry and benefit lakhs of construction workers, plumbers, electricians, painters and all others who depended on this sector.

Addressing a press conference here, Ashok Babu said not just the realtors and developers, even the masons and workers were badly hit. “The YSRC policy on sand mining has raised construction cost by 30 to 35 per cent. Workers say they are not able to take enough money home now. Liquor costing ₹60 to ₹70 in the past is now priced at ₹150 to ₹200. The sand crisis has hit all sectors of the state economy.”

Ashok Babu said the AP annual Budget is of the order of ₹2 lakh crore, but Jagan Reddy was not willing to sacrifice even ₹750 crore out of this by way of providing free sand to the construction sector. He alleged that the CM was enjoying his luxuries at his Tadepalli palace just as Roman Emperor Nero kept fiddling with his flute when the Great City of Rome was burning.

YSRC MEN WON'T KEEP QUIET IF CM CRITICISED: ANAM

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, JAN. 19

Venkatagiri legislator Anam Ramanarayana Reddy said YSRC men will not keep quiet if anyone attacked Chief Minister Jagan. Stressing that the CM has devised an outstanding welfare schemes for all sections of the people, he said the Opposition was targeting the CM as it was unable to bear with the overwhelming public response to Jagan's welfare programmes. He was addressing a large gathering during the distribution of house sites at Petluru village in Venkatagiri constituency on Tuesday.

The former finance minister observed that TDP leaders were badmouthing the police system in the state and expressed surprise over their objections to the appointment of R.P. Thakur as RTC MD. Reddy said the people would take a lesson to the Telugu Desam Party.

Eco-friendly industries prioritised: IT minister

Govt to set up 30 skill development centres for more workforce

DC CORRESPONDENT VIZIANAGARAM, JAN. 19

Minister for Industries and IT Mekapati Gautam Reddy said the government was prioritising eco-friendly industries in the state to minimise pollution.

Talking to the reporters after addressing a meeting on ease of doing business attended by various investors, industrialists and officers of several departments, in Vizianagaram on Tuesday, the minister said the chief minister was giving top priority to establish more industries, especially with focus on micro, small and medium enterprises. He added that these could be launched with less expenditure and provides good employment.

“However, at the same time, we will not ignore

● **THE MINISTER** said the chief minister was giving top priority to establish more industries, especially with focus on micro, small and medium enterprises.

● **A SKILL** development university will be established at Tirupathi to equip the youth with various skills.

● **THE NUMBER** of micro industries in Vizianagaram district would be increased to 5,000 from 2,500.

the environment. So the government would give importance to the firms and industrial units, which are eco friendly,” Gautham Reddy said.

He said that the government would establish 30 skill development centres all over the state to produce skilled workforce in various sectors. A skill development university will be established at Tirupathi to equip the youth with various skills.

In addition to the skilled workforce, the minister

said basic infrastructure facilities like water, power and roads would be provided to the investors.

He announced that companies rejected or banned by the other countries would not be permitted to establish in Andhra Pradesh.

The number of micro industries in Vizianagaram district would be increased to 5,000 from 2,500, and 75 per cent of jobs would be given to the local unemployed youth, he added.

He further said that the government had announced a new policy to purchase 25 per cent of the material for government constructions from the firms located in Andhra Pradesh.

The minister suggested local investors start their units to produce doors, windows, gates, and other housing material as the state government would soon undertake the construction of lakhs.

All the permissions, licences are being issued through a single-window system, and the government would soon clear ₹5000 crores of incentives to various industries being set up in the state.

“We released ₹1,100 crores of incentives to MSME units during the Covid-19 pandemic,” he said.

NAIDU SLAMS YSRC FOR RISE IN VIOLENCE IN AP

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday slammed the YSR Congress Government, saying it has turned Andhra Pradesh into a hub of violence. There, he said, were a series of murders, suicides, suspicious deaths and atrocities.

He said the chief minister and the ministers were not behaving like elected people's representatives but bent on unleashing rowdism on all sections of the people. “Over 2,000 farmers committed suicide in the last 20 months, some 400 atrocities were committed on women and physical attacks were made at 1,350 places. Over 16 Telugu Desam activists were murdered during this period,” Naidu said.

Addressing a video conference for party leaders in Tirupati parliamentary constituency, Naidu said a normally peaceful Chittoor and Nellore districts were also witnessing attacks and atrocities. “The YSRC leaders have made it a daily ritual to kill people.”

He lamented that a ruling party MLA was seen threatening the district SP at a public meeting and another MLA's constant harassment caused a woman MPDO to sit on a protest dharna at midnight in front of a police station.

Alleging that a section of the police was conniving with miscreants, Naidu said criminal gangs were having a field day thanks to the patronage they got from the YSRC. “Jagan has already surpassed ‘Sisupala’ by committing more than a hundred serious mistakes. The decline of the YSRC would start with the Tirupati bypoll and the TDP victory would bring the YSRC violence to an end in the state as Lord Venkateswara Swamy would never tolerate attacks and violence,” Naidu asserted.



Police arrest former minister D. Uma Maheswara Rao at Gollapudi one centre, who was trying to protest against the comments of Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao, in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

— DC

Ruckus between TD, YSRC at Gollapudi, Uma detained

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

Tension prevailed for a while at Gollapudi amid the Deeksha protest by former minister and Telugu Desam leader Devineni Umamaheswara Rao. Police swung into action and detained the TD leader and his supporters as YSRC men too came in strength to confront the TD leader.

Notably, state minister for civil supplies Kodali Venkateswara Rao alias Nani had challenged Umamaheswara Rao for a debate on the corruption and scams of the earlier TD government and on the TD election manifesto. Accepting the challenge, Uma tried to hold a protest Deeksha and challenged the ruling YSRC to stop him from the Deeksha.

The police imposed a ban order in the area under Section 144 and denied permission to TD leaders including Uma to

hold the Deeksha.

Uma, wearing a mask and covering his face with a cap, came to Gollapudi and tried to garland the statue of NTR. Police stopped Uma when he was climbing the stairs to garland the statue while the TD cadres raised slogans.

Gannavaram MLA Vallbhaneni Vamsi who was distancing from TD rushed to Gollapudi with his supporters and started a retaliatory protest against Uma. The supporters of the two leaders engaged in a heated argument. Police immediately detained Uma and his supporters.

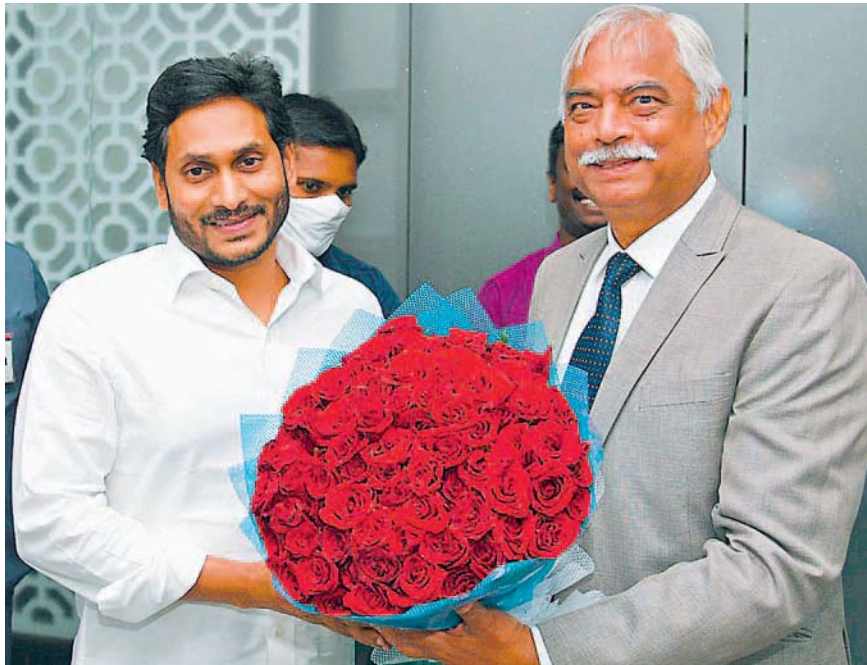
While the police tried to shift Uma to Ibrahimpatnam police station, the TD cadres resisted this. Then he was moved to Pamidimukkala police station and released from there in the evening.

Uma objected to the “foul” language used by Nani and said that such language was unbecom-

ing of a minister. He tried to conduct only a peaceful Deeksha but the police restrained him on advice from the minister; he said and added that the TD would continue its fight against the “corruption” of the YSRC government.

TD chief Chandrababu Naidu and the party president Kinjarapu Atchannaidu objected to the forcible detention of Uma and condemned the attacks by the YSRC on TD cadres at Gollapudi.

Gannavaram MLA Vamsi said YSRC had accepted the challenge of Uma and hence they reached Gollapudi to speak out about the corruption and scams of the previous TD government. He stressed that the YSRC men did not come to create any ruckus but the TD leaders were bent on creating a law and order problem. “Chandrababu Naidu, Uma and other TD leaders have lost their mental balance,” he said.

Good wishes

Chairman of AP Pollution Control Board A.K. Parida (retired IAS) meets Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday at CM's Camp Office in Tadepalli. Parida earlier served as special CS of environment and forest department and in the Environment Protection and Research Institute (EPTRI). He praised the CM for his overview vision of turning AP into an environment-friendly state. The CM asked newly-appointed chairman Parida to strictly implement the environmental laws for ecological balance through implementation of environmental policies, laws, regulations, and developing frameworks to manage both wastes and natural resources of the state.

— By Arrangement

CM SEEKS RELEASE OF CENTRE'S ARREARS

From Page 1

He said the state's revenue deficit is ₹1,22,948.76 crores but the Centre has identified only ₹4,117.89 crore and sought the release of pending funds.

The Chief Minister has also updated Mr Shah about the progress of Covid vaccination in the state.

“The state is taking steps to complete the vaccination of all health personnel in the next 10 days. We are taking steps to strengthen the public health sector in the state. The number of doctors and nurses needs to be increased for quality medical services. It has been decided to set up 13 new medical colleges for this purpose,” the Chief Minister informed the Union home minister. Jagan said three colleges have already been sanctioned by the Central government and requested for the sanction the remaining 13 colleges and their affiliated nursing colleges.

The Chief Minister also sought the release of arrears pending due to AP State Civil Supplies Corporation Limited.

He also requested the Centre to increase the project cost for Anganwadi building from ₹5 lakh to ₹15 lakh and sought the release of ₹3,707.77 crore pending for employment guarantee scheme.

He further sought the immediate release of ₹1,312.5 crore for Rural Local Bodies under the second tranche as directed by the 15th Finance Commission.

The Chief Minister also urged the Centre to take steps to get the Disha Bill and the Special Courts Bill and the AP Land Titling Act approved. He sought permission for the Rayalseema Lifting Scheme.

● **Jagan also requested the Centre to increase the project cost for Anganwadi building from ₹5 lakh to ₹15 lakh.**

CM lauded for Dalit welfare schemes

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

Former MLC Jupudi Prabhakar Rao commended the state government for ensuring welfare of Dalits through various programmes launched by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

In this regard, Dalit leaders led by Prabhakar Rao met chief secretary Aditya Nath Das and also congratulated him for assuming charge as CS. He appreciated state government officials for efficiently implementing numerous welfare

schemes for betterment of Dalits, poor and weaker sections. He underlined that this helped remove economic and social inequalities to a large extent.

Dalit leader Kunche Venkata Ramana Rao said CM Jagan is a true reformer, as he has assigned many crucial posts to Dalit leaders. He said Jagan Mohan Reddy has ensured that poor in the state reaped the fruits of Constitution drafted by Dr B. R. Ambedkar. The CM will thus remain in the hearts of Dalits forever, Ramana Rao added.

CM wants revamp of vet clinics

From Page 1

The CM asked officials to maintain the complete health records of the cattle and ensure reaching all services to them from ‘feed to sale’ in RBKs across the state.

The authorities have proposed to fill the vacant posts of veterinary surgeons in the department of animal husbandry and set up a new toll-free number for treating cattle. The CM approved the proposals and told officials to revamp the veterinary hospitals in ways similar to the Nadu-Nedu scheme.

Discussing the YSR Cheyutha scheme, Jagan stressed on officials monitoring the scheme by ascertaining the steps required for its implementation in a more transparent manner and ensuring positive impact by way of transforming the beneficiaries' lives.

The CM asked officials to reach the benefits of the scheme to all the eligible by weeding out the ineligible. He asked banks to extend loans for eligible beneficiaries of the Jagananna Thodu scheme. The CM also stressed on setting up of more retail shops with government aid and told officials to tag the Cheyutha beneficiaries to

the top companies in their respective field.

As for the YSR Bhima scheme, Jagan directed officials to accelerate the selection process for beneficiaries of the insurance scheme by coordinating with bankers and making sure the benefit reached all the eligible. He asked officials to review the implementation of YSR Bhima on a fortnightly basis.

AP AMUL PROJECT: Officials briefed the CM on the AP Amul project, which is currently being implemented in three districts — Prakasam, Chittoor and Kadapa. The officials said the project will be extended to Guntur and West Godavari districts in the first week of February and to other districts across the state by March 31, 2022.

Ministers Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy, Seediri Appalaraju, special chief secretary Poonam Malakondaiah, principal secretary for Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Gopalakrishna Dwivedi, AP Dairy Development Cooperative Federation MD A. Babu, special commissioner for Labour Department G Rekharani and other officials were present at the review meeting.

Coronavirus intensity has declined in state, says SEC

From Page 1

If the SEC was not ready to accept the state government's version on the issue, that the state was now busy with the Covid vaccination programme, he could reject it with proper reasons, the court ruled.

Advocate general S. Sriram informed the court that by Monday evening, 45,000 healthcare workers were given Covid-19 vaccine in the state. In the next 10 days, the state would administer the vaccine to 3.7 lakh health workers. In the first week of February, the vaccine would be given to seven lakh frontline workers including the police, revenue, municipal administration and pan-

chayat raj staff. So far, AP received 9.4 lakh doses of vaccine from one company and 20,000 doses from another company. This, he said, was a gargantuan task for the government to oversee and implement.

However, SEC counsel B. Adinarayana Rao, in his reply, informed the court that the state government was showing vaccination as a pretext to defer the conduct of polls. “The intensity of the spread of Coronavirus has come down. As a result, temples, schools, cinemas halls and other entertainment centres have been opened wherein large numbers of people were gathering. The state government is also organising several programmes and cond-

ucting public meetings. So, the question is, what is wrong in conducting polls?”

SEC counsel D.V. Sitharama Murthy argued that the courts were not having the right to prevent a constitutional authority from discharging his duty. He urged the court to look first at the procedure adopted for issue of election schedule for Gram Panchayat polls, instead of looking at the state's move in taking up the vaccination programme and its schedule.

Later, the court struck down the implead petitions filed by the government employees federation and the YSR teachers federation, stating that they were not maintainable.

Buying property is fundamental right: HC

From Page 1

One of the accused was Kilaru Srihasa, wife of Lokesh's close aide Rajesh. Dealing with petitions filed by the accused seeking quashing of the case, Justice

Ch Manavendranath Roy said, “The prosecution of the petitioners is wholly unjustifiable and clearly opposed to all cannons and basic tenets of criminal law. This amounts to a sheer abuse of the process of law, warranting intervention of this court.”

The verdict gained major significance as the state government registered an

● **THOSE WHO** purchased such lands include the Lalitha Super Speciality Hospital, Thottampudi Venkateswara Rao, CD Murali Mohan and BVR Sarma, Gayathri Realtors Ltd, Kilaru Srihasa w/o Rajesh, a close associate of former CM Chandrababu Naidu, Good Life Estates and others.

● **CID REGISTERED** the case citing offences punishable under sections 420, 409, 406 and 120B of IPC.

FIR also against former Advocate General D Srinivas and kin of a Supreme Court judge.

Aggrieved by the order, the state government decided to file a Special Leave Petition in the Supreme Court.

Maintaining that acquiring property is a fundamental right, Justice Roy

said private sale transactions carried out with the willingness of the sellers cannot be seen as a criminal act. No criminal liability can be attributed to the accused in the FIR, the court ruled.

The insider trading is essentially an offence in the field of stock market. This is “totally alien to the

Indian Penal Code and unknown to our criminal jurisprudence under the IPC,” the court stressed.

Disagreeing with the action of the state in charging the accused with “dishonest concealment” of information regarding the setting up of the capital from the sellers, the court observed that a buyer had no legal obligation to disclose any information relating to latent advantages in the purchase of land. “No offence of conspiracy to do an illegal act or commit an offence is made out from the facts of the case,” the court ruled.

IN BRIEF

Ganta daughter's house robbed

Visakhapatnam: Unidentified persons broke into the villa of the daughter of former minister and Visakhapatnam north MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao and decamped with gold and silver ornaments. Though the incident took place between January 10 and January 11, the incident came to light recently. She was away from Vizag and camping in Bhimavaram. She had two maids to keep the house. When the police checked the CCTV footage, they found it did not record the movements on these two days. Sources said the PM Palem police took one person into custody and questioning him.

Three arrested in robbery case

Visakhapatnam: The Visakhapatnam police arrested three persons for their involvement in a robbery case. They were identified as Asanala Yesh (20), Jajalu Venkata Swami (23), and Pendra Krishna (26), all natives of Vizag city. The trio intercepted a lorry and looted ₹12,000 in cash and a mobile phone from them after beating the driver and assistant driver. The incident took place at the industrial suburb of Gajuwaka in Vizag city. Based on the complaint of the victims, the police arrested the trio and recovered ₹10,300 cash, four mobile phones and one bike from the gang.

SIRAJ HALTED AUSTRALIA'S SECOND INNINGS

From Page 1

Tough tailenders put on an incredible seventh-wicket stand of 123 after India were knocked down at 186 for 6 in the first innings, and fast bowler Mohammed Siraj, who took 5 for 73 in Australia's second innings.

It's been a bumpy ride to Brisbane though. The wheels had come off in the first Test in Adelaide last month when Virat Kohli's men were bowled out for a humiliating 36 in the second innings to lose the game by eight wickets. They then lost their captain to pater-nity leave, and at least six other players to injuries, most of them done in by hostile bowling.

Led by stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane, the battered and bruised boys bounced back by punching big to win the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne, fought out a draw in the following game in Sydney before breaching the home side's fortress in Brisbane after 32 years. No wonder they were grinning from ear-to-ear — see 32 tests?

Then there is 33, Australia's new Catch-22 perhaps. It was the third time that the Aussies lost to India after taking a 33-run lead — at Kanpur in 1979, Adelaide in 2003 and Brisbane now.

G.H. Vihari and Ravichandran Ashwin were India's other heroes during the thrilling series. With the top half gone, they had hung in for four and three hours to score 23 and 39 respectively while enduring hostile bowling to snatch a draw in Sydney that kept the series alive and India floating like a butterfly, before the bee sting in Brisbane.

TRIBUTES PAID TO SONTI RAMAMURTHY ON HIS DEATH ANNIV**DC CORRESPONDENT**
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

Services of Sonti Venkata Ramamurthy, the first generation civil servant who initially proposed the Polavaram project, were remembered on occasion of his 57th death anniversary observed on Tuesday at Bapatla.

Addressing a gathering to mark the anniversary, Bapatla Agricultural College associate dean G. Ramachandra Rao pointed out that Sonti Ramamurthy was the first Indian to serve as Chief Secretary to Government of Madras Presidency and first-generation civil servant who brought name and fame to all Telugu people.

His great services led to Sonti Ramamurthy being made the Governor of Bombay Presidency. Even the British honoured him as Knight Commander of Indian Empire.

Ramachandra Rao recounted that Ramamurthy had met the then Indian Viceroy Lord Wavell and also Prime Minister of free India Jawaharlal Nehru and explained to them the need of Polavaram Project.

Token of appreciation

DGP Gautam Sawang on Tuesday announced that the central government has announced Antrik Suraksha Seva Patak 2020 for those police officials who performed efficiently in Naxal-affected areas of the state. In this regard, he also awarded medals to five police officials of the state – DIG (Technical) Palaraju, DIG Kranti Rana Tata (Anantapur Range), DIG Rajasekhara Babu (Law & Order), SP Bhaskar Bhushan (Nellore) and SP Vishal Gunni (Guntur Rural).

— DC

AP records 179 fresh Covid cases, 1 death**Tests held on over 2L samples per one million population****DC CORRESPONDENT**
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

Andhra Pradesh registered 179 fresh cases of Covid-19 and one death in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin on Tuesday reporting that out of 39,099 samples tested for confirmed Covid-19, 179 persons were infected with the virus.

Out of a total number of 1,26,43,313 samples tested for the virus so far, 8,86,245 persons were found infected with the virus while 8,77,443 were recovered in the course of treatment while 1,660 are active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of confirmed Covid-19, Chittoor registered the highest number of 40 followed by 35 in Krishna, 24 in Guntur, 18 in Visakhapatnam, 15 in East Godavari, 11 in Kurnool, nine each in Kadapa and

18,917 persons get Covid-19 vaccine**DC CORRESPONDENT**
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

State health authorities administered Covid-19 vaccination to 18,917 targeted beneficiaries at 362 session sites by 6 pm on Tuesday.

Out of planned 364 session sites for administration of Covid-19 vaccine, 362 sites were in operation for the vaccination. One case of adverse

effects following immunisation was reported at Prakasam district.

On the other hand, AP received another consignment of 4,08,500 Covishield vaccine doses from the Centre. The state health authorities are making arrangements to distribute them to the districts in the state as the first phase of the vaccination programme to be taken up to Jan. 20.

West Godavari, six in Srikakulam, four each in Anantapur and Prakasam, three in Nellore and one in Vizianagaram.

Krishna registered the highest number of cumulative active cases with

apur, 49 in Srikakulam and 33 in Vizianagaram.

Among the daily cases of Covid-19 deaths, only one person died in Guntur district, rising the toll to 7,142.

Chittoor district continued to be the worst hit with the highest number of cumulative deaths at 846 followed by 676 in Krishna, 669 in Guntur, 636 in East Godavari, 597 in Anantapur, 580 in Prakasam, 559 in Visakhapatnam, 539 in West Godavari, 506 in Nellore, 487 in Kurnool, 462 in Kadapa, 347 in Srikakulam and 238 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities discharged 231 infected persons from several hospitals after recovery in the last 24 hours in the state.

AP conducted Covid-19 tests on 2,36,766 samples per one million population and registered a positive rate of 7.01.

266 followed by 260 in Guntur, 193 in East Godavari, 184 in Kadapa, 141 in Nellore, 138 each in Chittoor and Visakhapatnam, 79 in West Godavari, 70 in Prakasam, 57 in Kurnool, 52 in Anant-

Covid vaccine beneficiaries hesitant to get the shots**DC CORRESPONDENT**
KURNOOL, JAN. 19

With less prevalence of Covid-19 compounded by fears of reactions and the unknown risks involved, beneficiaries identified to get the vaccine are hesitant. The District Medical and Health Officer Dr Rama Giddaiah said 27 primary health centres have been carrying on the vaccine drive each with an allotted 100 beneficiaries per day. But

the reason for not so encouraging response was, he said that some might be waiting to see how others are recouping or any biological infractions were reported. In the past four days, the dis-

trict did not report any inconvenience due to the vaccine intake.

Dr C. Prabhakar Reddy, who officiated as the State Covid Special Officer during the height of the pandemic, said he had got the vaccine shot on Tuesday at the Kurnool General Hospital. He did not face any inconvenience. He said the worst is that antibodies may develop in the body. Otherwise, there is nothing to worry about over the vaccine, he added.

RTA books 147 bus owners**DC CORRESPONDENT**
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 19

The RTA authorities in their special drive, conducted during the Sankranti holidays, filed cases against owners of 147 private buses for various types of violations. Taking advantage of

fewer rail services to some destinations, the private operators took advantage and overloaded the buses with passengers against the rules and Covid-19 safety regulations. A senior officer said they have also slapped cases for carrying commercial

luggage and using buses as stagecoaches.

Claiming non-stop services, the buses picked up passengers at random to make extra money. Some owners did not mention the list of the passengers while others failed to pay the taxes.

● **PENUMUR POLICE, who recorded the statement of the victim's friend — the lone eyewitness, registered cases against the accused under Disha and Nirbhaya Acts.**

their homes.

Following the unexpected development, Dilli Babu, who developed a grudge on Gayatri after she started avoiding him, has waylaid her at Emparalla Kotturu at around 1 pm on Tuesday when she was going home

with her girl-friend on a bike.

"Dilli Babu stopped Gayatri's bike on pretext of talking and later stabbed her six to seven times in her stomach with a kitchen knife, which he brought along with him. He later dropped the knife and fled away from the spot, when the victim's friend, who came out of shock after a while, raised an alarm for help. She was later rushed to a hospital in Vellore, but died while undergoing treatment", the DSP said.

Penumur police, who recorded the statement of

DGP ORDERS ACTION TO CURB TEMPLE ATTACKS**DC CORRESPONDENT**
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

AP Director General of Police (DGP) Gautam Sawang has ordered district superintendents of police and commissioners to sternly deal with attacks on temples by holding thorough investigations and arresting the culprits.

Addressing a webinar on Tuesday, Sawang observed that some people are deliberately resorting to such attacks. He suggested that services of village defence committees could be used to curb attacks on temples and nip in bud conspiracies to incite religious hatred.

The DGP felt political malice appears rampant in attacks on temples. He underlined that the accused should be caught with proof. The evidence and facts should also be made public.

SI ENDS LIFE OVER AFFAIR ALLEGATIONS**DC CORRESPONDENT**
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

Gudivada two town Sub-Inspector of police Pilli Vijay Kumar allegedly committed suicide at his residence on Monday night. Colleagues and family members suspect that an extramarital affair with a beautician could be the reason for his suicide.

According to reports, the deceased Vijay Kumar committed suicide by hanging himself from a ceiling fan at his apartment. Vijay Kumar who hailed from Eluru, West Godavari District was a 2012 Batch SI and took charge at Hanuman Junction. He married a woman from Eluru three months ago. However, it is alleged that he continued his illicit relations with the beautician and stayed with her in the apartment and did not bring his wife to Gudivada.

MAN KILLS BABY DURING FIGHT WITH WIFE**DC CORRESPONDENT**
KURNOOL JAN. 19

A one-month-old girl died after her father allegedly threw her on the floor on Monday late night at Jupadu Bungalow mandal headquarter, but it came to light on Tuesday morning. The deceased was identified as Dhurga.

Her father Balli Reddy (35) threw the baby on the floor while exchanging blows with his wife enraged over a family issue. The sub-inspector of Jupadu Bungalow police station P. Tirupallu told that the baby fell from her mother Lakshmi's hands and was severely injured. This family has been living on the roadside old government building compound and were surviving by begging from the locals.

The baby succumbed after sustaining severe injuries, the SI said.

The victim's friend — the lone eyewitness, registered cases against the accused under Disha and Nirbhaya Acts. A search operation has been initiated by the police to nab the accused who is at large.

In the meanwhile, angry parents and relatives of the victim had ransacked the boy's home and set it on fire in vengeance.

They also attacked the accused's parents, before setting their home on fire. On being informed, police reached the village and pacified the victim's relatives.

GANG BUSTED 23 CRUDE BOMBS SEIZED**DC CORRESPONDENT**
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 19

Anantapur CCS police and the Kalyanadurgam police, on Tuesday, busted a six-member gang and also seized 23 crude bombs when the gang was on a plan to eliminate faction rivals as retaliation for killing their family members.

SP Satya Esubabu said E. Gopal, close relative of E. Rajasekhara of Thippipalli in Kambadur mandal and Devarakonda Ramachandra was killed in Kanaganipalli mandal in 2010 by rivals in connection with extra marital affair. In another incident, E. Durgappa was murdered by a land mine in

Kambadur mandal in 2019.

E. Chandrasekhara and E. Gangadhar were accused in both cases. Rajasekhara and Ramachandrapa hatched plan to eliminate rivals Chandrasekhara and Gangadhar as retaliation for double murder. They approached Lingaraju of Thippipalli in Kambadur mandal, Hari of Vepakunta of Kanaganipalli and V. Nagesh of papampeta and Syndicate Nagar Nagesh. They prepared crude bombs in Lingaraju's fields to kill enemies.

In a tip-off, CCS police and Kalyanadurgam police nabbed six people in Thippipalli in Kambadur mandal and seized 23 crude bombs.



Thridandi Chinna Jeeyar Swamy takes part in a programme during a visit to the Gayathri Goshala in Kurnool on Tuesday.

CHAITANYA YATRA FOR PROTECTION OF TEMPLES IN STATE GATHERS MOMENTUM**DC CORRESPONDENT**
KURNOOL JAN. 19

The Chaitanya Yatra taken up for protection of Hindu temples gathers momentum as Chinna Jeeyar Swamy reaches out to vandalised temples and Goshalas in the Kurnool district.

The statewide yatra launched at Mantralayam on January 17 is generating good response from the public. The Swamy visited the vandalised temples at Sajjala Guddam Hanuman temple in Kosigi mandal, Vagur Lakshmi Narasimhaswamy temple, and Gudur Anjaneya Swamy temple.

On a visit to the Gayathri Goshala in Kurnool on Tuesday, the Thridandi Chinna Jeeyar Swamy inaugurated the Dhyana Mandir and was appraised of the works at fodder warehouse

which can feed 1000 cows through the year. The Goshala has come up with the MP grants of ₹ 30 lakh provided by T.G. Venkatesh.

"Kurnool is a land of temples and the spiritual vibrations here are divine," said the Swamiji as Ahobilam Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple and Srisaillam very ancient and historic temples nestled in the district.

He said religious bigotry in any form spread displeasure in the society. People should strive to promote peace and harmony among religious diversities and help society grow on all fronts.

Chinna Jeeyar Swamy Chaitanya Yatra would cover all the four districts of the Rayalaseema region namely Kurnool, Kadapa, Anantapur, and Chittoor districts.

SENIOR IRRIGATION OFFICIAL IN ACB NET**DC CORRESPONDENT**
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 19

ACB sleuths trapped a senior irrigation official while accepting the bribe of ₹1.50 lakh on Tuesday.

According to ACB authorities, Rayana Srinivasa Rao working as deputy executive engineer, river conservancy sub-division, Krishna central division in Vijayawada, demanded a bribe of ₹1.50 lakh from Bhattu Vijaya Sagar, a resident of Challapalli in Krishna district. The official asked for a bribe to give permission to decast

sand in the lands taken on lease by complainant Vijaya Sagar in Gajjalalanka village, Kolluru mandal in Guntur district and to forward the clearance letter to the executive engineer, Krishna Central Division and for further onward submission to the assistant director of mines and geology in Guntur.

The ACB sleuths raided the office and caught the official red-handed while accepting the tainted amount and seized it from him. The accused will be produced before the special judge for ACB cases in the city.

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SHORT TAKES

BIRD FLU: RED FORT SHUT TILL REPUBLIC DAY

New Delhi, Jan. 19: A sample of a dead crow from Red Fort has tested positive for bird flu and orders have been issued to restrict the entry of public into the monument, officials said on Tuesday.

Around 15 crows were found dead in the premises of Red Fort a few days ago. A sample from a dead bird was sent to a Jalandhar-based laboratory for testing, Rakesh Singh, the director of the Delhi government's animal husbandry department said.

Entry of public into monument has been restricted till January 26 as a precautionary measure, he said.

On Saturday, samples from a dead owl in the Delhi zoo had tested positive for avian influenza.

Last week, the Delhi government had banned the sale of processed and packaged chicken brought from outside the city and ordered the closure of the Ghazipur poultry market in east Delhi for 10 days after samples taken from crows and ducks at parks and lakes in the national capital tested positive for avian influenza.

Municipal corporations of the city had also imposed a temporary ban on sale and storage of poultry or processed chicken meat in view of the bird flu situation here.

However, the ban was lifted on Thursday after all the 100 samples taken from Ghazipur, Asia's largest poultry market, tested negative.

GUJARAT: 14 GUEST WORKERS CRUSHED TO DEATH

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

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

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

The tragedy took place near Kosamba village, around 60 km from Surat, police said. The truck driver, who apparently lost control over the vehicle after hitting a sugarcane laden tractor, has been booked under sections of the IPC and Motor Vehicles Act, police said.

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

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

S-400 TRAINING TO BEGIN SOON IN RUSSIA

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 19

Indian Military personnel will soon be leaving for Moscow for training courses for the Russian S-400 air defence systems that India is acquiring, Russia announced on Tuesday. India had already inked the US\$ 5.4 billion deal with Russia way back in October, 2018, for acquisition of the S-400 Long Range Surface to Air Missile System despite the threat of US sanctions and will receive the missile systems in due course.

New Delhi is hoping that it will get a sanctions-waiver from the United States. China, meanwhile, has already acquired the S-400 missile systems from Russia. The Russian Embassy on Tuesday said it had "hosted a protocol event in honour of the first group of the Indian military specialists heading to Moscow for the S-400 air defence systems training courses".

Speaking on the occasion, Russian Ambassador Nikolay R. Kudashov said that the "agreement on the S-400 supplies is one of the flagship initiatives of bilateral military and military-technical cooperation, which constitutes the main pillar of the special and privileged strategic partnership between Russia and India". He also said, "Very soon the first group of the Indian military specialists will depart to Russia for the S-400 air defence systems training courses."



Narendra Modi

AASU THREATENS TO RESUME ANTI-CAA STIR

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JAN. 19

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) here on Tuesday announced to resume anti-CAA movement by staging demonstrations across the state during the proposed visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah to express their resentment against the BJP-led government.

The Prime Minister is scheduled to visit Jerega Pathar in Upper Assam's Sivasagar district on January 23, where he is likely to distribute land pattas to over 1 lakh beneficiaries in a public function. He is also slated to address a public rally.

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

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

He announced that the AASU will hold mass torch rallies on January 22 across the state. On January 23, the day Prime Minister is scheduled to visit Jerega Pathar in Sivasagar, all district and regional units of AASU will wear black badges and stage demonstrations.

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

Restrictions on transfer of employees due to pandemic to be withdrawn

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JAN. 19

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

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

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

A dozen ministers in the Shivraj ministry including the Chief Minister had tested positive for Coronavirus. All of them have since recovered.

Till date, the Chief Minister has been holding cabinet and other official meetings through video conferences in view of the pandemic.

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

As on Monday, MP has reported a total 2,51,882 positive cases and 3,756 deaths.

Total 2,42,996 Coronavirus patients have so far recovered in the state.

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

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



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

— PTI

Odisha: Health workers refusing vaccination may miss free shots

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 19

● MANY HEALTH workers have informed in writing that they will not take vaccines as a mark of protest to non-fulfilment of their certain demands.

● AS MANY as 32,526 health workers were immunised in 375 sessions against the government target of 31,902 on Monday.

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

"Many health workers have informed us in writing that they will not take vaccines as a mark of protest to non-fulfilment of their certain demands. We appeal to them to come forward and get themselves vaccinated so that they would be safe as well as family members. Those who remain absent during

the vaccination, will be considered subsequently but those who refuse to take the vaccine may not get the same free of cost later," said state health director Bijay Panigrahy. Panigrahi said that the second day of the first phase was successful. As many as 32,526 health workers were immunised in 375 sessions against the government target of 31,902. The government achieved a 102 per cent target by vaccinating more health workers on Monday, he added. As many as 192 sessions

were conducted on Tuesday vaccinating 16,261 health professionals, he pointed out.

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

On Saturday, Covid vaccines were administered at 161 session sites across the state after the roll out of the vaccination initiative while the government stalled the inoculation drive on Sunday. About 15,000 multipur-

pose health workers have refused to take Covid-19 vaccine in protest against the state government's alleged callousness in cadre restructuring and designation change.

The health workers, under the banner of Odisha state male and female multipurpose health workers'/health supervisors' united association, wore black badges on Friday as a symbolic protest and refused to take the vaccination if their demands are not met.

In a related development, the phase-II Covishield vaccines on Tuesday reached Bhubaneswar at 4 pm by a special Spice Jet flight. The vaccines — 33,450 vials — will be dispatched to various district headquarters in the next three days, sources added.

France announces vital 'strategic triangle' with India and Japan

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 19

In a major move, France on Tuesday announced that there would be a "strategic triangle" along with India and Japan "committed to a rules-based Indo-Pacific" region. The announcement made by French ambassador Emmanuel Lenain in New Delhi during an "India-France-Japan Workshop on the Indo-Pacific" organised by thinktank Observer Research Foundation is being seen by foreign policy watchers as significant, given the increasing Chinese military and economic assertiveness in the

region. France, though essentially a European nation, has territories in the Pacific Ocean and Southern Indian Ocean and so is also an Indo-Pacific nation. France is also a major strategic partner of India. It may be recalled that India, along with the United States, Japan and Australia, is already a member of the four nation Quad, an arrangement that aims to preserve a "rules-based order" in the Indo-Pacific region.

"We are building a strategic triangle between Paris, Tokyo and New Delhi, committed to a rules-based Indo-Pacific and in keeping with our

● FRANCE, THOUGH essentially a European nation, has territories in the Pacific Ocean and Southern Indian Ocean and so is also an Indo-Pacific nation.

values. Our joint work focuses on maritime security and digital connectivity," Lenain tweeted.

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

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

Speaking at the workshop, Indian foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said, "An Indo-Pacific guided by norms and governed by rules, with freedom of navigation, open connectivity, and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states, is an article of faith for India.

Farm reforms much-needed, repeal won't help: SC panel

SANJAY KAW | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 19

Under sharp attack from the protesting farmers' unions for their "pro-government" public stand on the three contentious agricultural reform laws, members of a panel set up by the Supreme Court to resolve the crisis said on Tuesday they will "keep aside their own ideology and views" while consulting various stakeholders, even as they indicated a complete repeal won't augur well for the much-needed agriculture reforms.

After their first meeting at Delhi's Pusa Agriculture University on Tuesday, a key panel member and president of the

Maharashtra-based Shetkari Sanghatana, Anil Ghanwat, said the farm sector reforms were much needed and no political party in the next 50 years would ever attempt them again if these laws were repealed.

He said the panel would listen to all farmers, including those supporting and those opposing the laws, and then prepare a report for the Supreme Court.

Noting their "biggest challenge" was to convince the protesting farmers to appear before the panel, Ghanwat said the first meeting with the stakeholders had been scheduled for Thursday. So far, nine rounds of talks have also taken place

between the government and the agitating unions without any concrete resolution. The next round of talks between the farmers' representatives and the Centre are now scheduled for 2 pm on Wednesday at New Delhi's Vigyan Bhavan.

Ghanwat said the court-appointed committee had decided to listen to the views of the protesting unions on a priority basis, as it wants them to end their two-month agitation at Delhi's borders at the earliest.

He also said, however, that the laws implemented over the last 70 years were not in the interests of farmers, and 4.5 lakh farmers have committed suicide.

POLITICAL SCENE

People's Conference cites breach of trust between partners for decision

Lone's party quits Gupkar alliance

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, JAN. 19

People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an alliance of Jammu and Kashmir's regional Opposition parties and their allies from the national Left parties, suffered a major setback on Tuesday as People's Conference (PC), one of its important constituents, pulled out of it saying there has been a breach of trust between the partners.

It cited fielding of proxy candidates by some constituents in the recently held District Development

Council (DDC) elections as the main reason for its parting of the ways.

"There has been a breach of trust between partners which we believe is beyond remedy," said PC chairman and former minister Sajad Gani Lone in a letter to the PAGD president Farooq Abdullah. He, however, assured Abdullah that the PC would continue to adhere to the objectives for which the alliance was forged.

'Gupkar Declaration' was a pledge for defending Article 370 and 35A by Kashmir's mainstream parties which they took at a meeting held at

Abdullah's residence along Srinagar's Gupkar Road on August 4, 2019, a day before the state was stripped of its special status and split up into two Union Territories.

The alliance performed well in J&K's maiden DDC elections by winning 110 out of the 278 seats last month.

However, Lone who was the official spokesman of the PAGD has complained that many of the alliance's official nominees had to face serious issues due to the presence of proxy candidates in the fray.

"I am writing to you in reference to the recently

held DDC elections and a spate of statements issued by leaders belonging to our party. The recurring theme of the statements was the fielding of proxy candidates by constituent parties against the officially mandated candidates of the PAGD," he said in the letter.

He claimed that the predominant feeling in the PC meeting was that the PAGD sentiment at top was not emulated on the ground. He said that the sad reality that emerged was that in majority of the places the party fielding the candidate on behalf of PAGD was left to fend for

itself and secured the votes that his party managed. "In most places other parties were silent bystanders or worst compounded the problem by fielding proxy candidates," the letter said.

Lone further said, "We believe that the votes polled against the PAGD are majority the votes cast by proxies of PAGD constituent parties against official PAGD candidates. And the net outcome of selectively voting for and against PAGD is a very poor vote share. This is certainly not the vote share that people of J&K deserved post August 5...we look at the

statistics but out there on the ground people look at our actions and our intentions."

Lone informed the PAGD president that it was difficult for the PC to stay on and pretend as if nothing had happened. "There has been a breach of trust between partners which we believe is beyond remedy. The majoritarian view in our party is that we should pull out of the alliance in an amicable manner rather than waiting for things to get messier," he said adding "we will no longer be a part of the PAGD alliance."

Mumbai/Bhopal, Jan. 19: The makers of *Tandav* on Tuesday agreed to implement changes to their controversial webseries after several FIRs were filed against the political drama for alleged inappropriate depiction of Hindu deities and calls for its ban.

The day also saw many political leaders expressing the need for close monitoring of OTT platforms besides protests at some places with the demonstrators burning effigies of series director Ali Abbas Zafar among others. — PTI

NEW TAKES



BIDEN PLANS TO REVERSE TRUMP POLICIES

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

COVID-19 CRISIS

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

CLIMATE

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

IMMIGRATION

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

Biden to be sworn in President today

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Top Indian Americans will address AAPI Inaugural Ball

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

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

and honour America’s diversity in advance of the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris on January 20. “We Are One” is the other event hosted to honour and celebrate all within the Black Community and African Diaspora, featuring powerful speakers, inspiring stories, and entertaining performances.

“Latino Inaugural 2021: Inheritance, Resilience, and Promise” is the third

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

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

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

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

The scaled down inaugu-

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

Biden family. Andrea Hall, the first African American female firefighter to become captain of the Fire Rescue Department in South Fulton, Georgia, will recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Singer-dancer Lady Gaga will sing the national anthem and Amanda Gorman, who became the country’s first Youth Poet Laureate in 2017, will read a poem she has written for the occasion called “The Hill We Climb.”

She would be followed by a performance by actress-singer Jennifer Lopez. Silvester Beaman, pastor of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Wilmington, Delaware, will deliver a benediction. After the swearing-in ceremony, Biden and Harris will attend a traditional Pass in Review with members of the military on the East Front of the Capitol, signifying the peaceful transfer of power to a new commander-in-chief. — PTI

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Biden team says will not lift travel ban

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

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

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

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

Just minutes prior to Psaki’s tweet, President Trump said he would lift the travel ban on Europe and Brazil, although travel bans for China and Iran would remain in place. “This action is the best way to continue protecting Americans from Covid-19 while enabling travel to resume safely,” he said in

a statement released by the White House.

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

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

for Covid-19 within three days of their departure.

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

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

Biden will be inaugurated on Wednesday, after a

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

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

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

Mideast-mothers count days to Biden

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

Biden has pledged that, on his first day in office, he would reverse a ban ordered by Donald Trump on travel to the United States for citizens of many mostly-Muslim countries. “I’m counting the days until I get my next visa,” Idriss said, sitting in her comfortable Damascus liv-

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

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

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

Trump mulls pardons on final day

KEY DATES OF THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY

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

FIRST MOVES

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

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

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

ECONOMY

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

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

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

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

DIPLOMACY

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

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

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

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

DEFEATS

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

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

DIVISION

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

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

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



TRUMP DECORATES BAHRAIN KING ON LAST OFFICE DAY

Dubai, Jan. 19: US President Donald Trump bestowed a rare award on King Hamad of Bahrain on Tuesday, acknowledging the Gulf state’s normalisation of ties with Israel on his last full day in office.

Trump, who sees Arab recognition of Israel as a key overseas achievement of his presidency, already conferred the same award on King Mohammed VI of Morocco last week for his move to restore ties.

Announcing his bestowal of the Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander, on King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Trump also paid tribute to Bahrain’s hosting of a June 2019 conference on the economic dimensions of his controversial Middle East peace plan, which broke with decades of international consensus and was boycotted by the Palestinians.

“King Hamad has shown extraordinary courage and leadership through his support of the Vision for Peace and his decision to establish full diplomatic relations with the State of Israel,” the official Bahrain News Agency quoted Trump as saying. — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

20 JANUARY 2021

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

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

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

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

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

Handle Nepal with sensitivity

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

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

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

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

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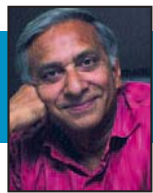
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Subhani



Biden has tough task, to keep autocrats in check



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ing about benighted places like Afghanistan or Iraq.

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

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

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

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

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LETTERS

UNSAFE FOR WOMEN

The recent cases of rape and murder across the country reflect the grave loopholes in the laws. The debate about their clothing, the derogatory language that people use makes the women feel guilty, which is heinous. The demand for capital punishment for rapists will not erase the rotten mindset which can't accept women standing up and demanding their rights.

Ratnaraj Jain

Rajamahendravaram

PROTECT PILGRIMS

That thugs tried to rob a devotee family walking on the Alipiri route for darshan of the Lord means there is laxity on the part of the security. More so when such robbers make their escape. The route is almost always busy, and yet a robbery attempt took place. The need of the hour is to arrange proper lighting and installation of CCTV cameras with control rooms at Tirumala and Tirupati.

Govardhana Myneedu

Vijayawada

VACCINE CONFUSION

The only answer to doubts on Covaxin is by setting an example. This is because the people's psyche is poised against Covaxin that's still in Phase 3 trials stage and a signed undertaking is being taken - thus exacerbating the unease further. It's better if the PM and his Cabinet colleagues volunteer to take Covaxin.

K. Nehru Patnaik

Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

PM inaugurates work on Vizag plant today

HYDERABAD, January. 19

The Hyderabad Municipal Corporation proposes to undertake an urban redevelopment programme.

If the proposal materialises, the programme — the first phase of which alone is Rs. five crores — will be the biggest development by the civic body so far.

It is learnt that the Corporation will implement the programme, in three phases, with financial assistance from the Centre.

Skand Tayal



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

At the eighth congress of the ruling Workers' Party on January 5-12, North Korea's supreme leader Kim Jong Un (KJU) was bestowed with an additional title of "general secretary". In Communist parties, the general secretary of the central committee is the most powerful post as the party secretariat controls personnel, internal affairs and discipline. In the old Soviet Union, Josef Stalin eliminated all rivals as the CPSU's general secretary. After the abolition in 1962 of the post of chairman of the Communist Party of China, the country's paramount leader is the central committee general secretary, a position held by President Xi Jinping. In North Korea, KJU's father Kim Jong Il as well as the republic's founder Kim Il Sung had occupied this powerful position.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a former Indian ambassador to South Korea

quick BITES

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

* As of 8:30 PM IST

J&K Bank to transfer 8.23% stake to Ladakh

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

SBI, ICICI & HDFC systemically important banks



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

Siddhartha Mohanty named as MD of LIC

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

Panel for uniform professional indemnity policy

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



Most sectors see employment recovery Jobs move to low productivity fields

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JAN. 19

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

year-ago quarter of December 2019.

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

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

PVR predicts return of big-bang releases

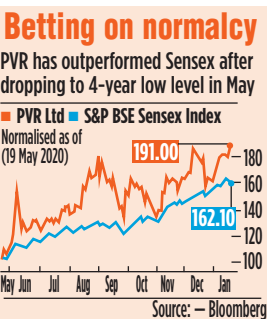
ASHUTOSH JOSHI JAN. 19

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

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

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

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



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

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

PVR's shares, which snapped eight years of gains to fall about 30 per cent in 2020, have risen almost 14 per cent this year.

The Gurgaon-based company reported a loss of Rs 49.1 crore in the December quarter. —Bloomberg

HOME FIRST IPO OPENS TOMORROW

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 19

Home First Finance Company's initial public offering, aiming to raise Rs 1,153 crore, opens on January 21 in the price range of Rs 517 to Rs 518 per share of Rs 2 face value. Home First Finance is an affordable housing finance company with 65 branches across 60 districts in 11 states and a Union territory, with major presence in markets such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat.

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

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

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



RACHEL MORISON JAN. 19

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

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

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

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

Foreign investment rules in e-com may be tightened

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

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

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

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

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

Stocks soar as institutional buyers stay on sidelines

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 19

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

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

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



institutions were net sellers by Rs 199.30 crore.

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

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

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

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

SALESFORCE INVESTS IN CLOUD STARTUP DARWINBOX

SARITHA RAI JAN. 19

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

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

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

ing Lightspeed India, Sequoia Capital and 3one4 Capital.

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

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

SBI MF LAUNCHES RETIREMENT BENEFIT FUND



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 19

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

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

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

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

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

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

NO EASY WAY OUT Sustained geopolitical tensions may affect chip supplies

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

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

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

sions will emerge as much more serious issues.

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

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

The problem as Yuan sees it is more systemic.



Chinese electric car

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

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

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

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

Cars also have longer

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

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

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

SHORT TAKES

Shastri in tears after 'unreal' win

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

As a 22-year-old captain of the India U-25 team back in 1984, he had stopped the team manager from telling rookie Mohammed Azharuddin about his grandfather's ill health to ensure that the player, who was on the verge of breaking into the Indian team did not leave a match and hamper his chances.

He is a *khadoos* (resilient in Marathi) Mumbaikar who will hardly get mushy. But that was before Tuesday when he watched Rishabh Pant take a lap of honour with the national flag, hand it over to a proud Mohammed Siraj and then to Shardul Thakur.

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

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

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

— PTI

Team to get ₹5cr bonus from BCCI

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

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

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

"It cannot get better than this. I am so proud of everyone. Congratulations to Ajinkya Rahane and Ravi Shastri and the rest of the touring party for this remarkable feat," he said. BCCI secretary Jay Shah echoed the sentiment.

"Heartiest congratulations to every member of the Indian cricket team. The team overcame the odds, injuries and a tough opposition and showed great character, resolve and courage to win the historic Test series in Australia for the second time in a row." — PTI

Kohli returns for Eng Test series

New Delhi: Virat Kohli returned to lead India against England in the upcoming home Test series while the selectors also recalled all-rounder Hardik Pandya and pacer Ishant Sharma to bolster the squad, announced by the BCCI on Tuesday. Kohli, who headed back to India on a paternity leave after the Adelaide Test, was named in the 18-man squad along with pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who missed the final Test in Brisbane against Australia due to an abdominal strain. The squad was named only for the first two Tests of the four-match series, starting on February 5 in Chennai.

Ajinkya Rahane was named as the vice-captain. Mohammed Siraj and Shardul Thakur also kept their places along with Mayank Agarwal. The second Test will also be played in Chennai (February 13-17) while Ahmedabad will host the third (February 24-28) and fourth (March 4-8). — PTI

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

— AP

RISHABH!

Rishabh leads India to series win after rookies demonstrate daredevilry

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

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

The result has the potential to end Tim Paine's reign as Australia captain having lost back-to-back home series against India.

"Whether it was with bat, ball or field, every time we had a chance to go ahead in the game, we let it slip," Paine said after the rather poor performance by his team.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST LOSS AT GABBA AFTER 1988

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

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

PANT SURPASSES DHONI

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

INDIA'S JOINT 4TH SMALLEST WIN IN TESTS

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

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

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

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

Biggest moment of life for Pant

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

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

India did not play Pant in

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SCORECARD

Australia 1st Innings 369
India 1st Innings 336
Australia 2nd Innings 294

India 2nd Innings (overnight 4/0): Rohit Sharma c Paine b Cummins 7, Shubman Gill c Steven Smith b Lyon 91, Cheteshwar Pujara b Cummins 56, Ajinkya Rahane c Paine b Cummins 24, Rishabh Pant not out 89, Mayank Agarwal c Wade b Cummins 9, Washington Sundar b Lyon 22, Shardul Thakur c Lyon b Hazlewood 2, Navdeep Saini not out 0. Extras (b-18, lb-8, nb-3) 29. **Total (for 7 wickets, in 97 overs) 329.**

FOW: 18-1, 132-2, 167-3, 228-4, 265-5, 318-6, 325-7.

Bowling: Mitchell Starc 16-0-75-0, Josh Hazlewood 22-5-74-1, Pat Cummins 24-10-55-4, Cameron Green 3-1-10-0, Nathan Lyon 31-7-85-2, Marnus Labuschagne 1-0-4-0.

Rahane credits team effort for win

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

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

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

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

— AJINKYA RAHANE
India stand-in Test captain

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

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

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

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

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

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

this. What we did here is historic and we want to enjoy this win tonight and once we land in India we will think about the England series," said Rahane, who too got emotional after Rishabh Pant hit the winning runs.

Chasing 328 at Australia's fortress was a herculean task but Rahane said they were only focussed on playing their normal game.

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

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



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



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

Just a remarkable win...To go to Australia and win a test series in this way ..will be remembered in the history of Indian cricket forever ..Bcci announces a 5 cr bonus for the team ..The value of this win is beyond any number ..well done to every member of the touring party.
— SOURAV GANGULY
India legend and BCCI prez

Great..Great Job India..!! Winning the series after the dismal 36 is simply out of this world..Congrats @ajink-yarahane88 for breaking the jinx of Gabba...Super..Super team effort...Hail India..!!
— BISHAN SINGH BEDI
Former India cricketer

Many congratulations Team India for the fabulous show of character and skill. A wonderful test series with the perfect result. Hopefully the end of discussion of 4 day tests for a while.
#INDvsAUS.
— ANIL KUMBLE
Former India player, coach

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

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

TeamIndia has proved it again by team efforts, great character, courage & max determination! Despite the bruises, the team made it possible for our country. That's why we play for the country's flag to go high every time we perform.
#INDvsAUS.
— ISHANT SHARMA
India bowler

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

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