

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI MONDAY 11 JANUARY 2021



BUSINESS | 7

Union minister Gadkari wants regulator to rein in steel, cement cartels



WORLD | 6

Democrats ready for Prez Trump's second impeachment today

DELHI AGE | 12

After turning a singer, Tiger Shroff steps into yet another shoe, that of a producer



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A cosplayer takes part in a costume event in Hanoi on Sunday. — AFP

US vice-prez Mike Pence will attend Biden inauguration

Washington: US vice-president Mike Pence will attend the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris on January 20, an event the outgoing President Donald Trump has decided to skip. According to US media outlets, word of Mr Pence's intention to watch Mr Biden take his oath of office in person spread after the first major break between him and Mr Trump — when the vice-president defied the Presi-dent by performing his constitutional duty to certify the November 3 poll results. — PTI

Full report on Page 6

TN govt to provide students data card

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu government will provide free data card of 2 GB per day capacity to over 9.69 lakh college students to enable them attend online classes till April this year, chief minister K. Palaniswami said on Sunday.

Sailor found dead on warship in Maha

Mumbai: A Navy sailor was found dead on board a warship on Sunday with a bullet injury, an official said. Ramesh Choudhary (22) was posted on board *INS Betwa*, a Navy spokesperson said in a release. His service issue rifle was found next to him, the release said, but did not specify if it was suicide. — PTI

COUNTERPOINT



Is there any queue for vaccination for bird flu?

WEATHER

Max: 18°C
Min: 17°C
RH: 70%
Rain: 10%

Forecast: Sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Margasira Bahula
Trayodasi till 2.33 pm
Star: Jyeshtha till 9.09 am
Variyam: 6.07 am to 7.37 am
Durmuhurtam: 12.46 pm to 1.30 pm; 2.58 pm to 3.42 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
SUNSET TODAY 5.43 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.15 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 5.18 AM
MOONSET TODAY 3.50 PM

I-T dept forms unit to search for undisclosed foreign assets

New Delhi, Jan. 10: A special unit has been created by the government in the countrywide investigation wings of the income-tax department for focussed probe in cases of undisclosed assets held by Indians abroad and possession of black money in foreign shores, officials said. The Foreign Asset Investigation Units (FAIUs) have been recently created in all the 14 investigation directorates of the tax department located in various parts of the country that are primarily tasked to undertake raids and seizures, and develop intelligence to check tax evasion done by various methods.

A total of 69 existing posts in the tax department were “diverted” by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) in November last for the creation of this unit after approval from Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, a senior officer told PTI.

The CBDT frames policy for the income-tax department. “The FAIUs have been created as new wings within the various investigation directorates of the tax department to bring focus on cases of undisclosed assets held abroad by Indians and black money stashed abroad. “India is now getting voluminous data in this context by way of various fresh treaties signed and some of those which have been re-negotiated in the recent past,” another officer said.

“We are now in a global regime where automatic exchange of tax information is the norm. More and more countries and jurisdictions are following the international protocols set by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) for tax transparency,” he said. — PTI

Outbreak of bird flu confirmed in 7 states: Centre

Delhi, Maharashtra test results awaited

New Delhi, Jan. 10: The Centre on Sunday said bird flu outbreak has been confirmed in seven states — Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, while test results are still awaited for Delhi and Maharashtra samples.

No samples have been confirmed positive in wild birds from Balod district, Chhattisgarh which were tested earlier, the department of animal husbandry and dairying said in a statement.

After confirmation of avian influenza (bird flu) positive samples in poultry (two poultry farms) of Panchkula district of Haryana, the state government has deployed nine Rapid Response team, and containment operation is underway in both the epicentres.

Samples of crow/wild birds have been confirmed for avian influenza from Surat district of Gujarat and Sirohi district of Rajasthan.

“Further, reports of unusual deaths of 86 crows and 2 egrets were



Police personnel use water cannons to disperse farmers who were protesting against Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar's kisan mahapanchayat rally in Kaimla village, Karnal, on Sunday. — PTI

Angry farmers force Haryana CM to cancel kisan panchayat

Teargas, water cannons fail to deter protesters ■ Hearing today in SC

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar was forced to cancel his kisan mahapanchayat programme in Karnal on Sunday after the farmers who are protesting against the Centre's three new agricultural reform laws uprooted tents and damaged the stage at the venue.

The police resorted to a mild lathicharge and used teargas and water cannons to stop hundreds of farmers from reaching a helipad at Kaimla village where Mr Khattar was scheduled to land.

Lashing out at Mr Khattar for using water cannons and teargas shells against the farmers, Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala tweeted: “Respected Manohar Lal ji, please stop this pretence of Kisan Mahapanchayat in Kaimla village. By playing with the sentiments of those who provide us with



Farmers organise a wrestling competition during their protest against the Centre's new farm laws at the Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

food, please stop meddling with the law and order situation.” In another tweet, he said: “If you want to have a conversation, have it with those who have been protesting for the last 46 days.”

In a sharp change of tack, the Centre had on Friday bluntly told the unions protesting at Delhi's borders that the new farm laws could not be repealed, and as the talks were at a stalemate,

it would be best to leave it to the Supreme Court, which is due to hear the protracted dispute on Monday.

BJP-ruled Haryana had hit the headlines in November when it decided to stop the farmers on their way to Delhi from across the state as well as those in Punjab. For days, there have been reports of the police clashing with farmers, using batons, barricades, teargas and

Racism row peaks in Sydney Test

Cricket Australia apologises after India's Siraj is called 'brown dog', 'big monkey'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
CHENNAI/SYDNEY, JAN. 10

The ongoing Third Test between India and Australia plunged into controversy after yet another incident of racist abuse rocked the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday. It was Hyderabad pacer Mohammed Siraj who, once again, fired racist slurs from the crowd even as Cricket Australia (CA) and the New South Wales police are investigating the first incident reported on Saturday.

The game was halted briefly and a bunch of spectators was expelled from the stadium. It is learnt that Siraj was called a “brown dog” and “big monkey”. The International Cricket Council has strongly condemned the incident and sought an action report from CA. Apologising to the Indian team, Cricket Australia promised to take the “strongest measures” against anyone found guilty of vilification. “It is most regrettable that an otherwise excellent Test match contested in tremendous spirit by two friendly rivals has been tarnished by the actions of a small number of spectators



Policemen talk to spectators as the game is stopped after a complaint by Indian players during play on day four of the third Test between India and Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday. — AP

over the past two days,” CA's head of integrity and security Sean Carroll said in a statement.

The behaviour of the Sydney crowd has received widespread condemnation from cricketers. Virat Kohli, who was once fined for showing the middle finger at the SCG crowd, called it “the absolute peak of

rowdy behaviour”. “Having gone through many incidents of really pathetic things said on the boundary lines, this is the absolute peak of rowdy behaviour. It's sad to see this happen on the field. The incident needs to be looked at with absolute urgency and seriousness and strict action against the offenders should set

things straight for once,” Kohli tweeted. Meanwhile, the Australian cricketers showed great solidarity towards their on-field rivals. Skipper Tim Paine joined India's huddle when the play was halted for a few minutes. Coach Justin Langer too condemned the incident. ■ **More on Page 8**

■ **Aadhaar seeding of all who'll get jab**

Govt lays down guidelines for vaccine rollout

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

A week before India begins its vaccination drive against Covid-19, officials of the Central government guided administrators from the states and Union territories on Co-WIN software management. The states have been “advised” to seed the mobile numbers of all vaccine beneficiaries with Aadhaar for registration and communications through SMS and to ensure that there are no “proxies” in this process since the beneficiaries need to be uniquely identified.

“There cannot be any proxies for Aadhaar authentication. It is extremely important to clearly identify person who is getting vaccinated and keep a digital record on who gets vaccinated by whom, when and which vaccine,” said Ram Sewak Sharma, chairman of the Empowered Group on Technology and Data Management to combat Covid-19, and a member of the National

■ **THE TOTAL** number of those infected with the new coronavirus strain from the United Kingdom remains 90, with no addition in the last 24 hours

Expert Group on Vaccine Administration of Covid-19. He also advised the states and UTs that the data collection should meet the purpose of facilitating work and that it needs to be validated at field levels.

Meanwhile, the total number of those infected with the new coronavirus strain from the United Kingdom remains 90, with no addition in the last 24 hours. A sustained decline in the number of daily fatalities too is seen as daily deaths have remained below 300 in the past 16 days. The total Covid-19 cases so far in India are over 1.04 crore, while the deaths are over 1.51 lakh. In the last 24 hours, altogether 18,645 fresh cases and 201 more deaths have been reported. ■ **Turn to Page 4**

J&K plans mega biz summit in April-May

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

The Jammu and Kashmir government will organise a major industrial investment summit inviting top corporate houses in April-May. This comes soon after the Narendra Modi government cleared a whopping ₹28,000 crore industrial policy for the Union territory.

The Union Cabinet last week cleared the ambitious industrial policy that aims to create 4.5

lakh jobs and attract ₹20,000 crores in investments in the private sector.

The policy plans to further increase the existing industrial sector and to set up new units both in the private and public sectors. The package cleared by the Cabinet will remain valid for 17 years, meaning till 2037. The administration is hopeful of investments in the IT and tourism sectors. ■ **More on Page 4**

Divers find parts of jet wreckage in Java Sea

Jakarta, Jan. 10: Authorities said they determined the location of the crash site and black boxes of a Boeing 737-500 on Sunday, a day after the aircraft crashed into the Java Sea with 62 people on board shortly after taking off from Indonesia's capital.

The head of Indonesia's National Search and Rescue Agency, Bagus Puruhito, said officials believe they identified the location of the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder the so-called black boxes because emergency signals transmitted by the devices were detected by a navy ship's sonar system.

“We have determined the position of the plane's black boxes from two signals emitted by the devices,” military chief Hadi Tjahjanto said. Hopefully we can lift the black boxes in short time to determine the cause of the crash. Earlier Sunday, search and rescue operations resulted in parts of the plane being found in the sea at a depth of 23 metres, leading rescuers to continue searching the area. — AP

SHORT TAKES

RGSSH head sent on leave, HC told

New Delhi: The Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital (RGSSH) has defended in the Delhi High Court the decision to send its medical superintendent on compulsory leave over allegations of sexual harassment, saying it was done to ensure he does not influence the inquiry or the witnesses. The hospital also claimed that the MS had himself sought that he be allowed to go on leave as he felt threatened to come to work. The hospital stated this in its affidavit, filed through Delhi government additional standing counsel Sanjoy Ghose, in response to the doctor's plea challenging its decision to send him on compulsory leave. "That pursuant to the requests for leave made by the petitioner (medical superintendent) and considering that he, being in a senior administrative position, could influence the enquiry and witnesses, therefore with a view that enquiry be conducted in an unprejudiced manner, order dated December 23, 2020 sending him on compulsory leave was issued," the affidavit said. The hospital has alleged that the doctor has concealed in his plea that he used 'foul and abusive language' in a conversation with a female staff member. He had made 'scandalous and scurrilous allegations' against various other female staff members, the hospital has claimed. It said in the affidavit that it has received an email from the Indian Medical Association 'calling for strict action against the petitioner (medical superintendent) on account of the comments made against women employees by him'. The hospital has also said that the doctor did not attend the meeting of the internal complaints committee (ICC) held in December last year in connection with his remarks. The high court had on December 31 last year declined to stay the order sending the medical superintendent on compulsory leave in connection with some alleged scurrilous remarks made by him against lady doctors and nurses of the hospital. — PTI

Woman found hanging from tree

Noida: A 45-year-old woman was found hanging from a tree in Greater Noida on Sunday, three days after she had left home following a tiff with her family, police said. The body was found in a forest area under Jarcha police station limits in what appeared to be a case of suicide, additional deputy commissioner of police, Greater Noida, Vishal Pandey said. "A police team involving local officials and forensic experts reached the spot where the body was hanging and collected evidence. The body has been sent for post-mortem," Pandey said. He said the woman's family members have been contacted and they have told the police that she had left home on January 7 after a tiff and without informing anyone regarding her whereabouts. The cause of her taking the extreme step is being investigated, he added. In a separate incident, a man was found dead in his rented accommodation in Noida's Mamura area under Phase 3 police station limits, officials said. "The deceased belonged to Etawah district and was found hanging in his room. The body has been sent for autopsy and further details are awaited," a police spokesperson said. — PTI

Labourer dies at construction site

New Delhi: A labourer died on Sunday after he was trapped under a heap of soil at a construction site in south west Delhi's Dwarka, police said. According to police, the incident took place during basement construction at plot number 4, Sector-12, Dwarka. The labourers working at the site told police that one person was trapped in the soil. Shek Angar (34) was found trapped under the heap of soil. He was shifted to a hospital where he was declared brought dead. Legal action is being taken in the incident, police said. The fire department said it got a call regarding the incident at 5.25 pm, and three fire tenders were rushed to the spot. — PTI



A boy sails a boat as migratory birds fly over the Yamuna, amid a cold and foggy morning in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

Delhi's Sanjay Lake declared 'alert zone' after death of 17 more ducks

New Delhi, Jan. 10: Amid a bird flu scare in different parts of the country, 17 more ducks were found dead at Sanjay Lake here on Sunday, prompting authorities to declare it an "alert zone," officials said. This comes a day after the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) closed the famous water body-cum-park following the death of 10 ducks on the premises. The samples from the dead ducks have been sent for testing to ascertain whether bird flu was the cause of death. Besides, 91 crows have been found dead in 14 DDA parks in the last few days, the officials said. "The deaths of 17 more ducks were reported on Sunday at Sanjay Lake. A total of 27 ducks have died now. The park has been declared an alert zone by the rapid response team as per the directions of the animal husbandry department of the Delhi government," a senior DDA official said. "The rapid response team had visited the lake



Ducks at Sanjay Lake

site on January 9 and 10 and samples were collected for suitable action. Meanwhile, requisite preventive measures are being taken," he said. Reports of the samples are awaited, he added. Three other recreational parks in Delhi — Hauz Khas Park, Dwarka Sector 9 Park, Hastsal Park — were also closed on Saturday. While at least 24 crows have been found dead at a district park in South Delhi's Jasola over the past few days, Hauz Khas Park, Dwarka Sector 9 Park, and Hastsal Park have been closed as a precautionary measure,

according to officials. "The crows have been buried deep in the ground and parks have been disinfected. All parks have been reopened other than Hastsal Park," the DDA official said. The 14 parks where crows have died include Golden Jubilee Park, District Park, Vijay Mandal Park at Begumpur, and Central Nursery in Dwarka Sector 5, he said. The DDA owns about 800 parks including Coronation Park in Burari, Japanese Park in Rohini, and various biodiversity parks. — PTI

Maid found hanging in Dwarka flat

New Delhi, Jan. 10: A 19-year-old woman, who worked as a maid, was found hanging from the ceiling at her employer's apartment in Dwarka's Sector-19 area, police said on Sunday. The deceased has been identified as Shivani, a resident of Goyla Dairy, they said. According to police, they received information on Friday that a servant has been found hanging at a flat in Akshardham apartment in Dwarka Sector-19. Police found that Ashish Thakur had taken the flat on rent and had been living there with his wife and two children for the last four to five years. The husband-wife duo work as software engineers in Gurgaon, police said. Shivani was found hanging by a piece of cloth. No external injury was seen on the body, police said. — PTI

Court pulls up cops for arresting man illegally in theft case

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

A local court pulled up the Delhi police for allegedly arresting a man illegally in a theft case and demanding money from his sister for helping in bailing him out, saying the case appeared to have been solved "just to solve it." Additional sessions judge Sonu Agnihotri directed the deputy commissioner of police (DCP) of Dwarka to inquire regarding the alleged demand of money from the sister of the accused by police officials and file a report on January 13. The court further directed the DCP to take action regarding the illegal detention of Ravi Nanda in the case and file an action taken report (ATR) by January 13. It also granted bail to Nanda upon furnishing a bail bond of ₹20,000 with one surety of like amount

in the case. The court's observations came after the investigating officer (IO) said the man was arrested merely on the basis that his sister had a yellow motorcycle with red rims which matched the description as given by the complainant. When the court asked the IO if in Delhi there can be any other yellow motorcycle with red rims, he submitted that there can be. The IO had also told the court that no test identification parade (TIP) of Nanda was conducted as the complainant could not identify the accused as he was wearing a helmet at the time of the theft. During the hearing, Nanda's counsel submitted that ₹50,000 was allegedly demanded from the accused's sister by an assistant sub-inspector for helping in bailing him out. The conversation was recorded by her.

42-yr-old man held for duping banks on forged documents

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police has arrested a 42-year-old man for availing loan on forged documents from several banks. Police said that the accused, who is presently lodged in Tihar prison in another similar case, has involvement in six cases of fraud and cheating registered in Delhi and Ghaziabad. The accused has been identified as Deepak Kumar Malhotra. According to O.P. Mishra, joint commissioner of police, EOW, a complaint was received from Phoenix ARC company that Karnataka Bank had sanctioned OD credit facility of ₹2.50 crore to Mukesh

▶ POLICE SAID that the accused, who is presently lodged in Tihar prison in another similar case, has involvement in six cases of fraud and cheating registered in Delhi and Ghaziabad

Kumar on June 21, 2012 against the equitable mortgage of the entire built up in Vikasपुरी. "The said credit facility was declared NPA on May 1, 2014. Subsequently, the bad loan was assigned to Phoenix ARC which also discovered that Union Bank of India has also disbursed home loan of ₹1.10 crore on October 16, 2015 against the 3rd floor of the said property to Deepak Malhotra," said the Joint CP.

"Further, during investigation, it emerged that accused Mukesh Kumar had also taken a loan of ₹1.80 crore in the name of his firm Elite Enterprises from South Indian Bank in Janakpuri against the very same property by submitting a parallel original chain of title documents," said the joint CP. "During investigation, it was revealed that Deepak Kumar Malhotra filed an objection application before west district court claiming himself to be the tenant in the mortgaged premises concealing the fact that he has purchased the property from Mukesh Kumar. The EMIs of Deepak Malhotra were also paid by Mukesh Kumar," said the joint CP. "The accused Deepak got

■ 399 +ve cases in city in 24 hours, recovery rate 97%

Covid vaccine drive: 89 sites finalised in Delhi, says Jain

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Sunday said the city government has finalised 89 sites to roll out the Covid-19 vaccination drive in the national capital from January 16. "The Centre has finalised around 5,000 sites across the country. As per the directions of the central government, we have finalised 89 hospitals as vaccination sites. The first phase of vaccination will start from January 16," he said. Jain said 40 government hospitals and 49 private ones will have a vaccination site each. "The first batch of vaccines will arrive by Tuesday or Wednesday. In the first phase, health care workers will be vaccinated. Thereafter, frontline workers and those aged above 50 will be given the doses," Jain told reporters.

Teachers will be included as frontline workers, he said. There will be one Covid-19 vaccination centre each in every hospital. Around 10 health care staff will be deployed at each centre, he said. "We are fully prepared to roll out the vaccination programme. We will administer the vaccine as soon as the doses arrive," he said.

The minister said the Delhi government has already requested the Centre to provide vaccines free of cost. Jain said the city has been witnessing less than thousand cases per day for the last 15 days.

Woman, auto driver held for drugs supply in city

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

Delhi Police has arrested a 35-year-old woman and an auto-rickshaw driver for allegedly supplying drugs in the national capital. Police said that they have also recovered a total of 150 grams of heroin worth ₹50 lakh in the international market from the possession of the duo. The accused have been identified as Neema Khatoon (name changed), a resident of Brijpuri, and Waseem (38), a resident of Karawal Nagar. Police said that the drug was brought to the national capital from Bareilly. During interrogation, Khatoon disclosed that she bought the heroin from a man named Sakir, a resident of Bareilly. After getting the heroin, she used to make small paper pouches and supply it to a woman who belonged to the gang of notorious drug peddler Sharafat Sheikh of Nizamuddin using the auto-rickshaw of Waseem.



Satyendar Jain

▶ THE FIRST batch of vaccines will arrive by Tuesday or Wednesday. In the first phase, health care workers will be vaccinated. Thereafter, frontline workers and those aged above 50 will be given the doses, Jain told reporters

"The Covid-19 situation in Delhi has improved a lot and the situation is now under control," he said. Delhi has recorded 399 fresh Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours as the positivity rate dipped to 0.51 per cent on Sunday in the national capital. With the 399 fresh Covid-19 cases, Delhi's total tally of has reached over 6.30 lakh. With a recovery rate of 97 per cent, the gap between active cases and recovered cases is continuously increasing in Delhi. The death toll due to the virus in Delhi currently stands at 10,678. This month, 585 coronavirus cases were reported on January 1, 494 on January 2, 424 on January 3, 384 on January 4, 442 on January 5, 654 on January 6, 486 on January 7, 444 on January 8 and 519 on Saturday.

Video of martyred cop's son involved in scuffle goes viral

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

Videos of a scuffle of late Delhi police inspector Mohan Chand Sharma's son, Divyanshu, with a mobile phone accessories' shopkeeper in Dwarka area have gone viral on social media. Mohan Chand Sharma was martyred in Batla House encounter in Delhi on September 19, 2008.

The incident took place on Saturday at around 3.30 pm. According to the police, Divyanshu alleged that he, along with his cousin, came to install temper glass on his mobile phone, but the work got delayed. Thereafter, some argument took place and the shopkeeper misbehaved with him.

However, it was observed in the footages that both shopkeeper Sanchit and Divyanshu misbehaved with each other, a senior police officer said.

"After a while, Divyanshu again came to the spot with two personal security officers (PSOs). Divyanshu had a stick and the PSOs had weapons with them. Divyanshu again had verbal altercation with the shopkeeper and the PSOs also got

Prisons deptt asks 3,600 staff to enrol for vaccine

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

Gearing up for inoculation drive of Covid-19, the Delhi Prisons Department has asked around 3,600 staff members including security personnel to enrol themselves to receive coronavirus vaccine shots.

According to a senior jails official, around 1,600 jail staff, 1,000 Tamil Nadu Special Police personnel who carry out security duty at Tihar Jail and 1,000 paramilitary personnel are being enrolled.

The date, time and place of vaccination for each person will be intimated to him/her on their mobile number, they said, adding, however, that no inmate will get the shot in the first phase as it has been reserved for frontline workers.

"We appreciate the dedication and hard work done by jail officials and security forces who all were at a high risk for catching

Jain said the city has been witnessing less than 1,000 fresh cases per day for the last 15 days. On December 29 and 30 last year, the city had recorded 703 and 677 fresh coronavirus cases respectively. On December 31, 574 cases were reported.

These new cases came out of the 77,600 tests conducted the previous day,

Covid-19 due to the nature of job. The vaccination will help boost their morale and to work fearlessly in this tough situation," said Sandeep Goel, the Director General of Prisons.

A total of 292 prisons staff have contracted the infection till Saturday, and 289 of them have recovered, while three are still under treatment. As for the inmates, 115 have tested positive for the virus so far of whom 113 have recovered while two died.

"No inmate has tested positive for Covid-19 since December 10 last year though. The last inmate detected Covid-19 positive was on December 3 and he recovered on December 10," said a prison official.

Among the prisons, the first case of coronavirus was reported in Rohini Jail on May 13. Two Covid-19 positive inmates of Mandoli Jail died on June 15 and July 4. Both were senior citizens.

including 45,116 RT-PCR tests and 32,484 rapid-antigen tests, according to the Delhi health department.

According to the bulletin, of the total number of 12,115 beds in Covid hospitals, 10,677 are vacant. The drop in the daily death count is following the decline in the infections that are being detected every day.

(punishment for criminal intimidation), 356 (assault or criminal force in attempt to commit theft of property carried by a person), 427 (mischief causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees), and 34 (common intention) of the IPC has been registered against unknown persons at Dwarka South police station and an investigation was taken up, the DCP said.

The shopkeeper also alleged that the complainant and two policemen, who were in civil dress, also misbehaved with him and slapped him.

In one of the videos, Divyanshu and the shopkeeper can be seen scuffling with each other. One of the PSOs abused the shopkeeper and Divyanshu threatened him to come outside. Subsequently, Divyanshu slapped the shopkeeper.

A not criminally responsible (NCR) under Sections 323 and 506 of the IPC has been lodged, the police said.

To verify the version of both the parties, the CCTV footage of nearby shops and Karoor Society is being analysed. Further investigation is under progress, it added.



Visitors at the India Gate in New Delhi on Sunday.

— PTI

IN BRIEFS

Pregnant rape survivor dies in UP

Bareilly (UP): A 15-year-old rape survivor who was seven months pregnant died of pregnancy-related complications at the district hospital here, police said on Sunday. She was admitted to the hospital on Saturday night and passed away on Thursday night, they said. Additional director and superintendent in-charge of the hospital Dr Subodh Sharma said the girl was brought to the hospital in serious condition and her health deteriorated further. Despite best efforts by the doctors, she could not be saved, he added. Senior superintendent of police, Bareilly, Rohit Singh Sajwan said, "The post-mortem report says that the death took place due to infection." "The viscera of the victim has been preserved," he added. — PTI

Sri Lankan Navy nabs 9 fishermen

Rameswaram (TN): The Sri Lankan Navy has arrested nine Indian fishermen and seized one mechanised boat for allegedly fishing in that country's waters, besides damaging fishing nets in a separate incident, officials said here on Sunday. The fishermen were arrested near Neduntheevu on Saturday. Fisheries department officials said, adding that one boat was also seized by the Lankan navy. In a separate incident, the Lankan navy personnel allegedly damaged fishing nets in 20 mechanised boats near Katchatheevu on Saturday, the officials added. They also allegedly hurled stones and bottles on the Indian fishermen, they said. Fishermen's association representative Sesuraja rued the acts of the Sri Lankan Navy, saying damage to equipment caused distress to the fishermen. Meanwhile, the fishermen operating mechanised boats decided to strike work indefinitely from Monday, urging the Centre to expedite steps for the release of about 52 fishermen from Lankan custody at the earliest. — PTI

KANPUR ZOO SHUT AFTER BIRD FLU CASES

Kanpur: The Kanpur Zoological Park has been closed for visitors till further orders after samples taken from two dead birds found there tested positive for the avian influenza virus, an official said on Sunday. The area up to one kilometre of the zoo has been declared an infected zone and the culling of birds has begun there, said additional district magistrate (City) Atul Kumar. "Four fowls and two parrots were found dead in the zoo in the last five days. Of these, two birds tested positive," Mr Kumar said. According to the official, the samples of dead birds were sent to the animal disease laboratory in Bhopal which confirmed the presence of H-5 strain of bird flu in them. "The zoo has been closed for visitors and morning walkers. The hospital enclosure where the infected birds had been placed has also been shut down," Mr Kumar said. An area of 10 kilometres around the zoo has been cordoned off and declared containment zone for an indefinite period by the authorities and shops selling chicken and eggs there have been asked to down shutters for an indefinite period, an official said. "We have imposed an indefinite ban on the transportation and entry of poultry products in the district as a precautionary measure," DM Alok Tiwari said. — PTI



A Bomb Disposal Squad member of the Indian Army destroys a 2.4kg Improvised Explosive Device (IED) along the Gohlad Mendhar road near LoC in Mendhar area of Poonch district on Sunday. — PTI

Stop trial of Covaxin in Bhopal, demand NGOs

Allege that gas tragedy survivors forced to volunteer

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JAN. 10

Bhopal gas tragedy survivors on Sunday demanded Prime Minister Narendra Modi to halt the ongoing trial of Covaxin, the indigenously developed Covid-19 vaccine, in view of 'violation of laws and guidelines'. In a letter to the Prime Minister, four NGOs, comprising Bhopal gas tragedy survivors, said, "We are writing to you to apprise you of the ground situation with regard to conduct of the trial. Evidence has emerged that the trial in Bhopal is being conducted in gross violation of laws and guidelines governing clinical trials in India.

"This is leading to exploitation and harm to a community of people that are not just economically and socially deprived, but whose health is compromised owing to the destructive impact and its consequences," they said.

The NGOs alleged that vulnerable people were being misguided and herded to participate in the trials and the consent procedure and other protocol of testing was being thrown to winds.

"The clinical trial (of the vaccine) should be stopped forthwith and an impartial probe be conducted", they

Covid -ve report not needed to enter Puri temple from Jan. 21

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 10

The Sri Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) of Puri in Odisha on Sunday lifted several restrictions imposed on the entry of devotees to enter the temple and offer prayers to the deities — Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra.

The SJTA chief administrator Dr Krishan Kumar said Covid-19 negative certificates will not be required from January 21 for the devotees to enter the temple for darshan of the deities.

Speaking to reporters after a review meeting at Puri, Dr Kumar said at least 30,000 devotees will be allowed to enter the temple daily till February 21. After February 21, a fresh review will be made and accordingly decisions shall be taken, said the chief administrator, he said.

At present, devotees producing Covid-19 certificates are being allowed to offer prayers at the Jagannath temple.

"The devotees will enter the temple in a queue. Separate queue will be made for elderly persons," said Dr Kumar.

said.

According to Rasheeda Bee, a gas tragedy survivor and social activist, at least 700 out of the 1,700 people on whom this vaccine was being tested, were those poisoned by the Union Carbide gas leak in 1984.

"One gas victim died within 10 days of getting the trial shot and many continue to have health complaints of a serious nature", she alleged. A Covaxin volunteer died nine days after he took the shot, she said.

Meanwhile, Bharat Biotech, a partner in the development of the Covaxin, has issued a statement saying that the volunteer's death was not related to the vaccine.

In a statement issued here, People's College of Medical Science and Research Centre, said the post-mortem report conducted on the deceased by Medico Legal Institute cited that the cause of death was cardio-respiratory failure because of suspected poisoning.

Karnataka Cabinet rejig soon, says BSY

New Delhi/Bengaluru, Jan. 10: Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Sunday expressed confidence of soon getting a final clearance from the central BJP leadership for the much-awaited cabinet rejig in the state after he met senior party leaders including its chief J.P. Nadda and Union home minister Amit Shah.

State party in-charge Arun Singh was also present in an hour-long meeting held at Shah's residence in Delhi. "On cabinet expansion, there was a detailed discussion. You will get good news soon," Yediyurappa told reporters after the meeting.

He said the final names will be cleared as early as possible because there was "positive, fruitful and satisfactory discussion".

"I am happy with the discussion. ...we will wait for their instructions," he said, adding the central leadership has assured its support.

When asked if this was the last meeting on cabinet expansion with the senior party leaders, the CM said, "101 per cent this is the last meeting. They are going to clear the names as soon as possible."

The cabinet expansion in the state has been on the cards for over a year now, but it could not take place, giving some anxious moments to ministerial aspirants and also leading to dissatisfaction.

Further, the CM said he suggested some names and also expressed confidence that the central BJP leadership will respond to that in a positive way. Asked if it would be a cabinet expansion or a reshuffle, the CM said "you will get to know when they inform". Apart from the cabinet rejig, the CM said there were discussions also on the upcoming bypolls in the state for two Assembly and one parliamentary seats. — PTI

HIMACHAL CIVIC POLLS SEE 66% VOTER TURNOUT

Shimla, Jan. 10: The local body elections in Himachal Pradesh recorded a total turnout of 65.80 per cent on Sunday with several Covid-19 patients casting their votes, state election commission officials said.

With Covid protocol in place, around 1.97 lakh people cast their votes for 401 ward members in 29 municipal councils and 21 nagar panchayats of the state.

Six newly-created nagar panchayats were not included in the election process.

Una district recorded the highest voter turnout of 73.40 per cent, followed by Bilaspur (70.20 per cent), Hamirpur (69.80 per cent), Chamba (69.60 per cent) and Kangra (69.50 per cent).

The lowest turnout was recorded in Mandi (55.80 per cent). — PTI

‘Don’t deploy staff charged with lapses in earlier polls’

New Delhi, Jan. 10: Gearing up for elections in five states in the coming months, the EC has reminded these states not to assign any poll-related duty to officials who have been charged for any lapse in any election in the past.

In an advisory to the chief secretaries of Assam, Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, the Election Commission (EC) has also said that officers against whom it had recommended disciplinary action in past and which is pending or has resulted in a penalty should also not be deployed for poll-related work.

The advisory, sent last

month, said any officer, who is due to retire within the coming six months, should not be associated with any election-related duty.

The terms of the legislative assemblies of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry are coming to an end on different dates in May and June this year. Assembly elections are likely to take place sometime in April-May.

The poll watchdog also asked these states to ensure that officers directly connected with the conduct of elections are not posted in their home districts or places where they have served for considerably long period," the advisory said. — PTI

It is usual for the poll panel to issue such directions ahead of Lok Sabha or Assembly polls to ensure that officials do not interfere in the election process in any way and the exercise remains free and fair.

"To ensure free and fair election, the Commission has been following a consistent policy to the effect that officers directly connected with conduct of elections in an election going state/Union Territory are not posted in their home districts or places where they have served for considerably long period," the advisory said. — PTI

BJP chief Nadda to address rally in Assam today

New Delhi, Jan. 10: BJP president J.P. Nadda will be on a two-day tour of poll-bound Assam from Monday during which he will address a rally in Silchar and attend a number of other party programmes.

The party said he will address the rally on Monday.

He is also scheduled to attend a meeting with state party leadership, including Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

The Assembly poll in the northeastern state is likely to be held in April. — PTI

Pak violates ceasefire along LoC, IB in J&K

Jammu, Jan. 10: Pakistani troops violated ceasefire by resorting to unprovoked mortar shelling and firing on forward posts and villages in different sectors along the LoC and the International Border (IB) in Rajouri, Poonch and Kathua districts of J&K, officials said on Sunday.

However, there was no immediate report of any damage on the Indian side, they said.

At about 3 pm, Pakistan (Army) initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms

and shelling mortars along the LoC in Nowshera sector of Rajouri district. Indian Army retaliates befittingly, a defence spokesman said.

The officials said the shelling between the two sides was continuing when last reports were received.

The officials said Pakistan Army also resorted to mortar shelling in Balakote, Digwar and Kirni sectors along the LoC in Poonch district.

The shelling in Balakote sector started around 3.35 pm. — PTI



Fans of superstar Rajinikanth stage a demonstration demanding him to join politics as promised earlier at Valluvar Kottam in Chennai on Sunday. The actor, who finally appeared ready to launch his political party with a "now or never" announcement about a month ago, has now decided to opt for the latter course, citing health concerns. — PTI

Spl panel to probe Maha fire mishap

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, JAN. 10

A day after 10 newborn babies died in fire at a Bhandara hospital in Maharashtra, chief minister Uddhav Thackeray visited the hospital and met the family members of the deceased. He said that Divisional Commissioner of Nagpur, Dr. Sanjeev Kumar and for-

mer chief fire officer of Mumbai, P.S. Rahangdale will also be a part of the committee, which is investigating the fire incident.

Thackeray said that he has ordered fire safety audit of all government hospitals across the state. Meanwhile, the BJP alleged that the police are pressuring victims' parents not to

speak to the media. Many parents of deceased babies have blamed the hospital staff there for dereliction of duty.

"The help of experts will be sought to find out the exact cause of this incident. I have directed to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the incident," Thackeray said.

He also said that necessary arrangements will be made in all government hospitals in the state after finding out the cause of the incident.

The Maharashtra chief minister said that the recommendations of the inquiry committee would be implemented in other hospitals in the state as well.

Rumour of ‘hidden treasure’ trigger ‘gold rush’ in MP dist

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, JAN. 10

Rumours that hidden wealth was buried in a river have triggered a treasure hunt by locals in some riparian villages in Madhya Pradesh, leading to deployment of police forces in the area.

Thousands of people from around a dozen villages under Narasinghgarh subdivision under Rajgarh district have been thronging the nearby Parvati river for the past 5 days in search of the "hidden treasure" buried under its bed, a senior district officer said on Sunday.

Young and old were seen busy digging out the river bed round-the-clock in a stretch of around 500 meters in the



river bed for the past 5 days to try out their luck.

The 'treasure hunters' were even seen setting up tents on the river bank to spend the night. "I have ordered the police to initiate action to maintain law and order in the area when I received the reports that people from some villages under Narasinghgarh subdivision have started digging the river in search of hidden treasure. Rumours that

gold coins were buried in the river bed have triggered the treasure hunt by the villagers", local tehsildar Rajendra Sharma said.

Official sources said the "treasure hunters", gathered in the river bed, were being persuaded through public address systems not to pay heed to such rumours and leave the place to avoid police action.

"We have deployed police at different places

to stop locals from thronging the river. Villagers of Ahmedpur and Sultanpur who were trying to storm the river bed have been turned back by the police", Kurabar police station in-charge Naresh Rathore said. According to the police, some people in the villages of Shivpura and Gudupara, located on the river bank recovered a few old coins from the river 5 days ago and the news spread like wild-fire in the surrounding villages leading to the "gold rush".

"Some people may have retrieved a few coins in the river accidentally. But, there is absolutely no truth in the rumours going round the villages that hidden treasures were buried in the river" Mr Sharma said.

UN | RECOGNITION

Authorisation to done by Switzerland-based INSARAG**NDRF to get global rescue force tag**

New Delhi, Jan. 10: India could soon be a part of the United Nations (UN) mandated international disaster rescue operations as the country's federal contingency force, NDRF, is expected to obtain a globally recognised standardisation later this year, a top ranking official has said.

The authorisation will be done by the Switzerland-headquartered INSARAG (or the International Search

and Rescue Advisory Group) which is a network of more than 90 countries and organisations under the UN umbrella to deal with urban search and rescue related issues.

"Just like we have the Bureau of Indian Standards in the country, the UN agency INSARAG standardises disaster response teams across the world. It is an international gold standard," NDRF director general S.N. Pradhan

said. "We are very much in thick of it and hopefully we will get the standardisation in 2021." He further explained the purpose of this categorisation that is possessed by some of India's neighbours like China and Pakistan.

"If there is a call from the UN to respond to some disaster you will be called upon...you will be an international response force," Pradhan said. "It is not

that we have not been doing that (going for international rescue operations) but when NDRF went to Japan and Nepal in the past it was a bilateral decision between two countries but with this standardisation it will be a UN mandated task," he said.

It will be a matter of great prestige for India that its force is known as an international response force, the DG said. He said an

INSARAG committee, comprising Australian and Singaporean experts, has conducted preliminary review of NDRF teams in September, 2019, but the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic put the process on a back burner for a while. "Hopefully, in 2021 you will see at least two heavy teams of the NDRF notified as INSARAG teams," he said. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Sonu Sood moves HC, challenges demolition notice

SHAHAB ANSARI
MUMBAI, JAN. 9

Bollywood actor Sonu Sood, who had hit the headlines for helping huge number of poor migrant workers reach their home during Covid-19 induced lockdown, has approached the Bombay high court challenging a notice issued to him by the Mumbai civic body for allegedly illegally making structural changes into a residential building in suburban Juhu and converting it into a hotel. The actor has approached through his lawyer D.P. Singh. He has claimed that no illegal or unauthorised construction has been carried out in the six-story Shakti Sagar building as claimed by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM). It has been claimed in the petition that Mr Sood has not made any changes in the building that warrant permission from the MCGM. According to the petition, only those changes have been made in the structure which are allowed under the Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning (MRTP) Act.

Sympathisers of land mafia worried in UP: Adityanath

Farrukhabad (Uttar Pradesh), Jan. 10: Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday justified the drive against "land mafia" claiming that sympathisers of such people are feeling worried, in an indirect attack on SP president Akhilesh Yadav. Mr Yadav, a former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, told reporters in Banda on Friday that the Adityanath government was targeting some people and demolishing their houses. Addressing the inaugural function of the "Mukhyamantri Aarogya Mela", Mr Adityanath said only criminals, mafia and gangsters were feeling afraid in the state. "They are feeling afraid and moving with boards hanging around their necks," the chief minister said. "Today, the government in the state is working with a pledge. Earlier, the land of the poor and traders used to be grabbed by mafia," UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath said, adding while action is being taken against land mafia, the sympathisers of such people are feeling worried. — PTI

Lashkar hideout busted in J&K, militant aide held

Srinagar, Jan. 10: Security forces on Sunday busted a hideout of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and arrested a militant associate in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir, the police said. Based on credible input regarding the presence of LeT militants in a hideout located in a house in Chandhara Pampore village of the south Kashmir district's Awantipora area, security forces launched a search operation early this morning, a police officer said. During the search, the hideout was unearthed in a cowshed and subsequently destroyed, he said. The militant associate of LeT, identified as Adil Ahmad Shah, a resident of Chandhara Pampore, was also arrested, he added. Incriminating material and a cache of ammunition including 26 rounds of AK-47 were recovered from the hideout, the officer said. A case has been registered in the matter, he said. — PTI

Govt lays down guidelines for vaccine rollout

■ **Continued from Page 1** Union health minister Harsh Vardhan tweeted on Sunday saying that the vaccines against Covid-19 were safe and effective and will be available in a phased manner. The health minister added that the beneficiaries will have to register themselves for vaccination and that people should continue to maintain social distancing and wear masks, and follow all other protocols, even after their immunisation.

Mamata promises 'free' Covid vaccine, gets snubbed by Opp.

In 1st phase, we'll provide vaccine to all health workers in state, says Didi

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JAN. 10

With barely three months left for the West Bengal Assembly Election, chief minister and Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee has announced that her government would provide Covid-19 vaccine "free of cost" to all, in her yet another attempt to woo the voters with a promise which however earned her only sharp attack from the BJP and Congress.

"You are aware Covid-19 vaccine is coming. With profound joy I inform that our government is making

arrangements to reaching out to all the people of the state with this vaccine free of cost. In the first phase we will provide this vaccine to all the health workers of Bengal," Ms Banerjee said in an open letter to all the frontline Covid warriors while saluting their service during the pandemic.

Blaming her of jumping to claim credit of what the Centre already announced for the entire country, BJP national IT cell in-charge Amit Malviya on Sunday tweeted, "Pishi (aunt) was a disaster when it came to managing Covid. From doctors to policemen,

everyone protested against chief minister's apathy. But now that the center has announced free priority vaccination for 3 crore frontline workers across the country, Pishi is rushing to take credit."

State BJP chief Dilip Ghosh slammed Ms Banerjee, wondering, "Has the CM invented the vaccine? Prime Minister Narendra Modi already announced that all the citizens of our country would be provided free Covid vaccine. Then who first talked of saving us? After stealing rice from homes, the CM is now after the vaccine."

Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Chowdhury said, "Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal already announced to give Covid-19 vaccine free of cost to all. Now the Bengal CM has done the same but to get votes in exchange of what I say: poll bribe."

But TMC minister Subrata Mukherjee claimed, "Whoever takes the credit of the vaccine is irrelevant. The state government, even if it stakes a claim to it, is also an elected one like the central government. It takes credit for its work instead of giving lectures which does not help."

Odisha CM grows richer by ₹71L in FY 2019-2020

Patnaik owns assets worth ₹64.98cr; has ₹1.25cr liability

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 10

Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik has been richer approximately by ₹71 lakh in financial year 2019-20, in comparison to the previous fiscal.

By March 31, Mr Patnaik owned assets worth around ₹64.98 crore.

As per the declaration made by the chief minister, his total assets stood at ₹64,98,197.63 which included movable property worth ₹13,404,503.1 and immovable inherited properties valued at ₹63,64,07,261.

In 2020, Naveen's assets

was estimated over ₹64.26 crore which included movable property of ₹23,26,554.52 and immovable inherited property was valued at over ₹63,64,15,261.

The cash deposits at Naveen's several bank accounts increased from ₹60.45 lakh in 2019 to ₹1.31 crore in 2020. The CM has an Ambassador car of 1980 model which is valued at around ₹8,905 and he possesses jewellery worth around ₹2,89,587, revealed the CM in his declaration made on Sunday.

The CM has a farm land and building in an area of

22.7 acre at Tikri Khara village of Faridabad valued at ₹10,75,51,071, as per the valuation done in March, 2017.

Similarly, Naveen owns 50 per cent share of his ancestral property situated at APJ Abdul Kalam Road in New Delhi valued at ₹43,36,18,000. Besides, the BJD president owns two-third share of Naveen Niwas worth over ₹9,52,46,190.

The five-time CM also has a financial liability of ₹1.25 crore which he had taken as an advance against the sale of farmland at Faridabad vide an agreement dated September 18, 2019.



Devotees during a bike rally in Ghaziabad on Sunday to collect funds for the construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

— PTI

Maharashtra govt reduces security of Fadnavis, Raj

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, JAN. 10

In a major move, the Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government in Maharashtra has reduced the security of several opposition leaders, including former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and his family, union minister Ramdas Athawale and MNS chief Raj Thackeray. It has also withdrawn the security cover of state BJP chief Chandrakant Patil and former chief minister Narayan Rane.

The changes in security cover were based on 'prevailing threat perception', said government officials. According to the notification issued on January 8, Mr Fadnavis will now get "Y-plus security with escort", instead of the "Z-plus" cover, as the bullet-proof vehicle has been withdrawn from this security cover. The security of his wife Amruta Fadnavis and daughter Divija has also been downgraded from Y-plus with escort to "X" category. Raj Thackeray's security cover has been downgraded from "Z" to "Y-plus with escort", whereas Mr Athawale will get only "wireless" instead of the "Y-plus with escort".

The BJP has slammed the decision to reduce the security cover of its leaders with the Keshav Upadhye calling it a "vendetta politics".

2 IPS officers go to HC over cattle smuggling case

Seek relief from appearance, face grilling

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JAN. 10

Two senior West Bengal IPS officers, summoned by the CBI in the high-profile cattle smuggling case last week, have moved the Calcutta high court for their relief from appearance and face questioning.

They are inspector general (intelligence branch) of the state police Kallol Ganai and deputy commissioner of police of the Asansol Durgapur police commissionerate Angshuman Saha. Their plea is expected to come up for hearing before Justice Sabyasachi Bhattacharyya this week. Mr Ganai, who earlier served as the deputy inspector general of Murshidabad Range, and Mr Saha, who was posted as the additional superintendent of Murshidabad previously, were called by the CBI's anti-corruption branch to appear at its office in Nizam Palace and face questioning in the case.

But the IPS duo challenged the summons at the high court stating that since the state government withdrew its general sanction to the CBI two years ago, the CBI can not call them in

■ The CBI is however likely to oppose their move when their petition may be heard in the next two days

■ IT HAS also summoned 3 relatives of Enamul Haque, the arrested kingpin of the cattle smuggling network

absence of the state government's permission. The CBI is, however, likely to oppose their move when their petition may be heard in the next two days.

It has also summoned three relatives of Enamul Haque, the arrested kingpin of the cattle smuggling network for their questioning. All eyes would however be on Trinamul Congress leader Vinay Mishra who has again been asked in a fresh summons to appear at the CBI office on January 12 to face questioning in the same case after he skipped his first date on January 4.

The key aide of chief minister Mamata Banerjee's MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee also carries a lookout notice against him since his two residences in the city were raided by the CBI on December 31.

J&K plans mega biz summit in April-May

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN 10

The Jammu and Kashmir administration is planning to organise a major industrial investment summit inviting top corporate houses in April-May. The move comes close on the heels of the Modi Government clearing a whopping ₹28,000 crore industrial policy.

The Union Cabinet had earlier this week cleared the ambitious industrial policy which aims at creating 4.5 lakh jobs and attracting ₹20,000 crore investments in the private sector also in the newly created Union Territory.

The policy plans to further increase the existing industrial sector and setting up new units both in private and public sector. The package cleared by the cabinet will remain valid for a period of 17 years which means till 2037.

Sources said both

Centre and the J&K Administration were extremely hopefully that with improved security situation in the UT and a new industrial policy a lot of big private sector players will come to invest in J&K. The UT Administration feels that the situation was favourable for investments in sectors like tourism and IT.

A senior home ministry official said that this was an unprecedented industrial package and policy announced by centre and will help bring J&K's economy back on track following nearly three decades of militancy in the Kashmir Valley.

"The main aim of the new industrial policy is to provide a smooth and progressive ecosystem for business plans of industrial houses. With our transparent policies, we aspire to become a growth pillar for India in the current decade," the official further added.

5 kg landmine planted by suspected Naxals recovered

AGE CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 10

Five kilograms of a 5 kg landmine, suspected to have been planted by the Maoists, was on Sunday recovered from Gorasetu forest under Chittrakonda block of Malkangiri district.

Apart from the landmine, the Border Security Force (BSF) jawans also recovered Maoist uniforms, walkie-talkies and other articles from the spot.

Following the detec-

tion of the landmine, BSF jawans intensified combing operations in the region. The landmine was successfully diffused.

Continuously chased and haunted by the security personnel under the direct supervision of state director general of police (DGP), Shri Abhaya, the Red rebels are reportedly trying all possible means to target the security forces engaged in anti-Maoist operations in the state.

Siddaramaiah seeks blanket ban on cow slaughter

Bengaluru, Jan. 10: Senior Congress leader Siddaramaiah on Sunday demanded a blanket ban on cow slaughter across India and prohibition of import and export of beef.

In a veiled attack on the BJP government in Karnataka, which recently promulgated an ordinance banning cow slaughter in the state, Siddaramaiah said it was raising emotional issues without considering the impact of such laws on the state economy.

"I demand a total ban on the slaughter of cattle across India. Why have

Kerala, Goa and North East been exempted?" the Congress stalwart asked during an interaction with reporters here.

He also demanded that import and export of beef be banned.

"Ban beef import too. They say that beef coming from foreign countries can be eaten. Isn't the cow in foreign land Go Mata?"

His third demand was to prohibit leather export. "Ban leather export. Ban

Ban beef import too. They say that beef coming from foreign countries can be eaten. Isn't the cow in foreign land Go Mata?

— Siddaramaiah, Cong leader

from the BJP, who are now trying to hoodwink people.

He expressed concern over the impact of such bans on the leather industry.

Describing the BJP as "fascist", Mr Siddaramaiah said the ruling party raised emotional issues without explaining the impact of such policies on the economy.

"They (BJP leaders) simply talk of worshipping Go Mata (Mother Cow). How many times do they worship Go Mata at home?" he asked.

According to Mr Siddaramaiah, the cattle

becomes a financial burden on the cowherds after 10 years when they grow old and become non-productive.

On the Centre's new farm laws, he said the party would take the fight to the streets and also carry out a "Jail Bhara" movement.

On the occasion, the former chief minister also released a booklet titled "Aidu Qade, Asankhyat Sullugalu" (Five Laws, Myriad Lies) explaining the drawbacks of the farm laws introduced by the Union government. — PTI

Farmers force Khattar to cancel kisan panchayat

■ Continued from Page 1

set up on the way to the venue. The agitating farmers, however, managed to breach six of the checkpoints and arrived near the helipad, forcing the authorities to move the landing spot for Mr Khattar's helicopter to a different location.

The farmers then moved to occupy the venue of Mr Khattar's kisan mahapanchayat, where about 2,000 farmers, most of them being BJP supporters, were waiting. The protesting farmers flung chairs, tore up banners and vandalised other arrangements made for the meeting.

A clash also broke out between farmers marching towards the helipad and the police, which was trying to stop the protest-

ers. As the protesters reached the venue, the villagers assembled for the mahapanchayat tried to stop the protesting farmers.

The protesters outnumbered the police and the pro-mahapanchayat organisers and ransacked the venue, sending policemen scurrying for cover. The police then used teargas in an attempt to contain the crowd. The protesting farmers assembled around the venue while the police's attempt to control the situation with the help of locals failed.

The farmers' union leaders first gathered at Karnal's Bastara toll plaza on National Highway 44, better known as the Delhi-Chandigarh highway. Jagdeep Singh Aulakh, a local

leader of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) Charuni, accused the chief minister and the BJP leadership of attempting to divide farmers by holding such meetings. "What is the logic of holding such meetings in the favour of the agriculture laws when the farmers' stir at Delhi's borders (against the laws) has entered its 45th day," he asked.

In Haryana, various senior leaders of the BJP and its JJP ally have been facing protests during their public appearances for the past many days. In one such incident, Mr Khattar's cavalcade was also obstructed by an agitated mob of farmers in Ambala a few days ago. After the CM's convoy was stopped, Ambala's then SP Rajesh Kalia

was shunted out of the district.

Earlier, Haryana home minister Anil Vij's convoy had also hit a blockade as angry farmers shouted anti-government slogans. Many others, such as deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala, agriculture minister J.P. Dalal, education minister Kanwar Pal and several BJP MPs have faced protests outside their residences and during their public appearances as well.

The farmers also disrupted the BJP's programme in Barwala Saturday, that led to huge chaos. The farmers had earlier said they would not allow any BJP or JJP leader to hold public events across the state unless the three farm laws were repealed.

MLA booked for obtaining flats under scheme for poor

Nagpur, Jan. 10: A BJP MLA from Maharashtra's Chandrapur district has been booked by the police for allegedly obtaining two flats here under a scheme meant for the homeless by the Nagpur Improvement Trust (NIT) on the order of a local court, a police officer said on Sunday.

The FIRs were registered in Imambada and Sakkardara police stations in Nagpur against Chimur legislator Kirti Kumar alias Bunty Mitesh Bhangadia, the officer said.

The offences were registered after an order was issued by Judicial Magistrate First Class undersection 156(3) of the Criminal Procedure Code.

The complaint against the MLA was lodged by Tarun Parmar, a resident of Nagpur.

"Bhangadia submitted false affidavits with the NIT to obtain two flats in Imambada and Ayurvedic Layout areas between the years 2007 and 2009.

"The scheme was aimed to provide shelters to homeless," the police said in a release.

In his affidavit, Mr Bhangadia had falsely claimed that he did not own any house, a flat or a plot of land.

Imambada and Sakkardara police have registered offences under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), it said. — PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

11 JANUARY 2021

How moving court over agri row may go wrong

The latest round of talks between farmers' unions and the Union government has produced little more than déjā vu: Both sides stuck to their positions and decided on the date on which the next round of talks would be held. However, there are reports about the government suggesting to the farmers unions that the issue be settled in the court of law. As per them, the government has said if the court pronounces them unconstitutional or illegal, then it will repeal the laws and if the court sustains them, then the farmers should withdraw their agitation. Representatives of the farmers unions have made it public that they have no plans to go by the suggestion.

Leaving such an important issue to the court is not the way to settle it. This is so for several reasons. The farmers have consistently made it clear that they are not questioning the constitutionality or legality of the issue. For them, it's a policy decision by the government to withdraw from supporting agriculture and leave it to the whims and fancies of the corporate sector. This will undermine whatever sense of security the farming community enjoys at present, they say. They have opposed the proposed amendment to the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which, they feared, will cut power subsidies for the farming sector. Their grouse has been that all the bills together reflect the policy of the government — it is plotting to eliminate the agriculture market system in the garb of giving farmers more options, as the laws allow corporates unbridled freedom to monopolise procurement of agriculture produce and make farmers their captive producers. They warn the government to abandon it, legal or not.

Courts, especially the Supreme Court, show no enthusiasm to wield that constitutional power when it is required, and required urgently

There is a section of legal experts who hold the view that the Centre has legislated on agriculture which is a state subject and hence moving the court makes sense. And the courts are expected to make use of the all-powerful tool of judicial review to test pieces of legislations against the Constitution. They have done it in the past and held several of the laws unconstitutional. However, courts, especially the Supreme Court, show no enthusiasm to wield that constitutional power when it is required, and required urgently. The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and the virtual annulment of Article 370 are two legislative steps this government has taken which many perceive to be questioning the very idea of India as reflected in the Constitution. They have moved the apex court but the court has not found it compelling enough to take up. The petitions have been pending with the court for more than a year now. There is no guarantee that the courts will treat this issue differently.

Democratic governments have the right to legislate and the government has exercised that power, though in a questionable way — that the bills were rushed through Parliament is a fact even the government would not oppose. Now, the affected people are exercising their right, the right to protest, to compel the government to go back on its move. It is a matter to be decided in the spirit of democracy; calling upon an even-otherwise-reticent judiciary to decide on policy is hardly an option.

No room for racism

The India-Australia Test series was hit by complaints of racist abuse from spectators at the Sydney Cricket Ground. The touring Indian team was right to bring it to call it at once and the host board, too, reacted with alacrity not only in expelling at least six spectators but also profusely apologising for the despicable racist behaviour of some Australians in the crowd on two successive days of the third Test. There is just no place for racism in sport, whether such overt acts of discrimination come from within the game and its players or from a source beyond like spectators who come to watch games.

We are often reminded that cricket is a gentleman's game that prides itself on having been a constant metaphor for fair play. But sport also mirrors the society it is played in. Stray elements like rowdy or drunken spectators cannot be expected to eternally preserve a safe and inclusive environment. The only thing cricket can do is to keep such elements out of the arena. It must be seen acting with an iron fist at every instance of racially coloured comments. Cricket Australia has also promised to pursue the Sydney Test matter with law enforcement and in the courts.

Given its racial history as the country that had a "White Australia Policy" starting in 1901 and in place for decades, Australian society might be facing a real problem in racism even as it works hard on achieving equality amid diversity and to promote inclusivity. Soccer may have a much larger problem in tackling racism as well as hooliganism but it has firm policies that leave no room for racism anywhere — "in the stands, not at home, not on the streets". The universally popular sport of football has built a track record of acting against racist elements with sanctions against match-staging authorities too. Cricket must do, too, and not only in Australia but in India as well where racist abuse from the stands is common enough a phenomenon but doesn't get as much attention due to the language barrier.

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T. VENKATRAM REDDY
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A.G. Noorani



When Shaheen Bagh sit-in won global respect, exposed govt

Recent events in India have brought to the fore the dimensions of the right to protest, which is itself absolute except in cases of extreme necessity. The problem arises, as it does in all cases of human rights, where the fundamental rights of other citizens and also the legitimate, recognised rights and duties of the state are involved. Protest can be expressed through the media, public meetings, or processions marching through public streets. Mammoth processions and sit-ins pose the greatest challenge.

One was the famous Shaheen Bagh meeting comprising mostly women, Muslim women at that. It predictably polarised society, with the BJP pouring scorn on the protesters. The law and administrative measures Modi's extremist government proposed affected mostly, if not only, Muslims. The sit-in was spontaneous and efficient. They prayed and protested, and aroused international admiration.

A petition was filed in the Supreme Court challenging their

right to do a 'sit-in' similar to those of the 1960s US civil rights movement. The court delivered a brief judgment, noting that "the grievance... was that the persons opposing the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens had adopted a method of protest which resulted in the closure of the Kalindi Kunj — Shaheen Bagh stretch, including the Okhla underpass. It was submitted that the public roads could not be permitted to be encroached upon in this manner..."

In their pursuit of an out-of-the-box solution, the court considered it appropriate to appoint two interlocutors to meet the protesters and submit a report. The court noted, "In what manner the administration should act is their responsibility and they should not hide behind the court orders or seek support therefrom for carrying out their administrative functions. The courts adjudicate the legality of the actions and are not meant to give shoulder to the administration to fire their guns from. Unfortunately,

despite a lapse of a considerable period of time, there was neither any negotiations nor any action by the administration, thus warranting our intervention."

That is a tall order to the police; for involved are complex issues of law that troubled in Indian, British and US courts in the past. India's apex court tried to come to grips with them years ago. A century ago, Justice Benson of the Madras high court said, "No doubt a highway is primarily intended for the use of individuals passing and re-passing along it in pursuit of their ordinary avocations, but in every country, and especially in India, highways have, from time immemorial, been used for the passing and re-passing of processions as well as of individuals and there is nothing illegal in a procession or assembly engaging in worship while passing along a highway, any more than in an individual doing so."

He added, "The practice of using the public highways for religious processions has existed in India for thousands of years. ... That alone is

sufficient to raise a presumption that it is lawful and to throw on those who allege it to be unlawful the onus of showing that it is forbidden by law, but this it admittedly is not. The law recognises the use of the highway by processions as lawful, and gives the magistrate and superior officers of police powers to direct the conduct of assemblies and processions through the public streets and to regulate the use of music in connection with them."

In 1973, the apex court ruled that processions may be regulated to a reasonable degree but that conferment of absolute discretion in the police was violative of the fundamental right to assemble peaceably without arms.

The best statement of law was made by Justice K.K. Mathew: "Public meeting in open spaces and public streets forms part of the tradition of our national life. ... [T]he people have come to regard it as a part of their privileges and immunities. The state and local authority have a virtual monopoly of every open space... [I]f the state or

municipality can constitutionally close both its streets and its parks... the practical result would be that it would be impossible to hold any open-air meetings in any large city. The real problem is that of reconciling the city's function of providing for the exigencies of traffic [and] recreation... with its other obligations, of providing adequate places for public discussion in order to safeguard the guaranteed right of public assembly."

Politics has marched ahead of the law. Unresponsive regimes create public dissatisfaction. The Supreme Court appointed 'interlocutors' in the Shaheen Bagh case. For over a month, Punjab's farmers have assembled in huge numbers on the borders of Delhi. Their organisation inspires respect. Old and young women and the youth set up a virtual city, sleeping in the bitter cold. Try and teach the law to them. It is sincere conciliation that is called for. This concept is alien to Narendra Modi.

By arrangement with Dawn

Subhani



Sitharaman's Third Act: What'll be her Big Idea?



Sanjaya Baru

Sanjayovacha

Despite her best efforts, Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has not yet secured her place in the history books. It may not be fair to expect ministers in the Narendra Modi government to aspire for a place in history given the towering and overshadowing personality of the Prime Minister. But then, some finance ministers have been able to carve out a place for themselves with their proposals or at least their speeches. Dr Manmohan Singh's 1991 Budget gave him a place in the history books long before he earned it again as Prime Minister with the India-United States civil nuclear deal. Palaniappan Chidambaram will be remembered for his "dream budget" that slashed income tax rates. Arun Jaitley will always be remembered for launching the Goods and Services Tax. Ms Sitharaman should also aim to leave her imprimatur on some idea.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown economics of 2020 have, without doubt, intervened to queer the FM's pitch. We now know from official data that the economy has shrunk by close to 8.0 per cent, and that India is among the worst performing economies this year in terms of growth and employment generation. While all this has spurred the government into action, the fruits of much of this action will take time to ripen. The FM can spend money and secure early results and Ms Sitharaman has promised to spend a trillion rupees on infrastructure investment. Her fiscal management, praised and criticised in equal measure, can nur-

ture the green shoots of economic revival, but with some inflationary consequences.

Opinion on such revival is sharply divided among the economy-watchers. While the finance ministry insists that the economy is on the rising arm of a V-shaped recovery, the government's critics believe that the shape of the recovery is at best a W, with the spike in the middle a mere bump rather than pyramidal in shape. The real alphabet to worry about is K — a mix of a V on top for some and an inverse-V at the bottom for others. Rising inequality, high levels of unemployment and the still hesitant improvement in investment suggest that some sections of society may well be experiencing a V-shaped improvement in their fortunes, but others are living through the downside of an inverse-V.

What ought to be the central message of this year's Budget speech? Clearly, it will have to boost the confidence of all sections of society that the economy can return to the medium-term trajectory of 7.6 per cent growth experienced through much of the Manmohan Singh era (2004-2014). During Dr Singh's first term (2004-09), the average annual growth rate was a record 8.0 per cent — the highest in recorded history for a five-year period — and in his second term (2009-14), it slipped to 7.0 per cent. The decline began in 2012.

While the Narendra Modi government has claimed that its growth record is no worse than its predecessor's the fact remains that after six years in office it has not been able to turn the investment rate up. The percentage share of

gross investment in national income (gross domestic product) fell to a low of 28.0 per cent, having climbed all the way up from below 30.0 per cent at the turn of the century to nearly 37.0 per cent in 2010. The government may have succeeded in getting consumers to consume, but getting investors to invest and savers to save remains a challenge.

In an essay written for a book I have recently edited on the post-Covid economy (*Beyond Covid's Shadow: Mapping India's Economic Resurgence*, Rupa, 2021), Dr C. Rangarajan, a former chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, among other things, underscores the fact that the lockdown has weakened an already weak pre-Covid economy and the Budget has to kickstart economic growth by stimulating investment, savings, demand and employment generation. Kickstarting the trillion rupee infrastructure programme, along with the privatisation of public enterprises, increased spending on education, health, research and development and encouraging the growth of employment-generating sectors can restore momentum to the economy.

In his essay in my book, economist and Parliament member Subramanian Swamy bemoans the lack of strategic thinking on economic policy and recommends a balanced mix of incentives for savings and investment with a more open and competitive economy that increases productivity of capital. He believes that Prime Minister Modi has so far not been able to

give a clear direction to the economic growth process. Rather than promise too many things to too many constituencies, this year's Budget should define the roadmap to make India a \$5 trillion economy by 2025. All policy must aim to serve that end. In their essays, both Bibek Debroy, currently chairman of the PM's Economic Advisory Council, and Rajiv Kumar, vice-chairman of the Niti Aayog, assure us that the government is aware of the nature of the challenge and that it would address it convincingly to ensure the revival of growth.

However, not everyone within the so-called Sangh Parivar seems to be equally aware of the negative impact that the politics of the ruling party is having on the economics of its government. Experience around the world through the past century shows that sustained high economic growth is a function of domestic political stability and moderation. Even China's growth acceleration began only after its domestic politics became more moderate and stable. The biggest challenge for economic policy today is not just to end the post-Covid and post-lockdown uncertainty but also for the Bharatiya Janata Party to re-establish its credentials in offering a development-oriented administration rather than one that is obsessed with divisive religious and communal issues.

Finally, a friendly word of advice for Ms Sitharaman. Get a good speechwriter. At least this year one prays that the FM's mouth will not go dry and she runs out of breath reading a long, boring speech. Budget speeches are remembered, both for content and style. A smart finance minister should get both right at least to earn good editorials if not a footnote in the history books.

The writer is a public policy analyst, a former newspaper editor and adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

LETTERS

FLYING COFFIN

Yet another Boeing aeroplane has ended as a flying coffin after a Sriwijaya aircraft carrying 50 passengers and 12 crew members plunged into the sea north of Jakarta. The Boeing 737-500 disappeared from radar four minutes after taking off from Pontianak, the West Kalimantan province's capital. While our hearts go out to the passengers, crew, and their families, the authorities would do well to determine what caused the tragedy.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

A TALL ORDER

THIS REFERS TO the report, "Vaccination drive to start on January 16" (January 10). The government has drawn up a list of people who shall be accorded priority in terms of vaccination. It includes frontline health workers and citizens above 60 years of age ab initio. It shall, however, pose practical challenges to families as all members have to frequent the hospital for inoculation. The best strategy is distributing the vaccine on a first-come-first-basis with prior appointment. Moreover, the cost of the vaccine has not been spelt out so far. Vaccinating a humongous population with many strings attached may render the drive unmanageable.

Deepak Singhal
Noida

GO, GIRLS!

THE INAUGURAL FLIGHT of Air India's longest direct route — San Francisco-Bengaluru — with four women pilots took off on Sunday morning. They created history by becoming the first all-women crew to operate a flight over the North Pole on their way to Bengaluru. The pilots are Captain Zoya Agarwal, Capt. Papagari Thanmai, Capt. Akanksha Sonawane, and Capt. Shivani Manhas. Way to go, ladies!

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Kajal Chatterjee (Jan. 9). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

SHORT TAKES

LANDSLIDES
IN INDONESIA
LEAVE 11 DEAD

Jakarta, Jan. 10: Two landslides triggered by heavy rain in Indonesia left at least 11 dead and 18 injured, officials said on Sunday.

The second landslide in Cihanjuang village in the Sumedang district of West Java province occurred as rescuers were still evacuating people following the first disaster on Saturday, said National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Raditya Jati. Rescuers were among the victims, he said.

The rain stopped on Saturday night. A bridge and roads were blocked by the landslides as authorities struggled to bring in heavy equipment to clear the debris. Seasonal rains and high tide in recent days have caused dozens of landslides and widespread flooding across much of Indonesia, a chain of 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near fertile flood plains close to rivers.

QATAR-SAUDI
REOPEN
LAND BORDERS

Abu Samrah, Jan. 10: Qatar and Saudi Arabia reopened their land border on Saturday as they restored ties following a landmark deal to end a three and a half year rift.

Saudi shut its side of Qatar's only land border in June 2017 as part of a package of sanctions it said was a response to Doha's backing radical Islamist groups and closeness to Iran.

Qatar always denied the charges. *AFP* correspondents saw cars making the crossing on Saturday. A Qatari source said traffic at the Abu Samrah crossing, 120 kilometres (75 miles) south of Doha, had resumed around 0700 GMT.

Saudi Arabia, along with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, all of which also imposed embargoes on travel and trade, had agreed to lift the restrictions at a Gulf Cooperation Council summit in the kingdom on Tuesday.

ROADSIDE BOMB
KILLS THREE IN
AFGHAN CAPITAL

Kabul, Jan. 10: A roadside bomb exploded in Afghanistan's capital on Sunday, killing at least three people in a vehicle, the latest attack to take place even as government negotiators are in Qatar to resume peace talks with the Taliban.

Tariq Arian, spokesman for the interior minister, said a spokesman for the ministry's public protection forces — a security force — was one of the three killed in the attack. One other person was wounded, he said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for multiple attacks in the capital in recent months, including on educational institutions that killed 50 people, most of them students. IS has claimed responsibility for rocket attacks in December targeting the major U.S. base in Afghanistan. There were no casualties.

BREXIT 'RULES
OF ORIGIN'
SPARK DOUBTS

London, Jan. 10: Many British businesses are swiftly discovering that they must now pay duties on exports bound for the European Union, despite the breakthrough Brexit free trade deal clinched over Christmas. The development, which has already helped spark sliding freight traffic to Ireland, is part of trade disruption that has become increasingly evident this year after Britain's Brexit divorce was finalised on December 31.

Trade has also been badly hampered by new Covid-19 border restrictions, with the roll-out of testing for lorry drivers as Britain races to curb a rampant variant of the deadly virus. At the heart of the Brexit deal, which came into force on January 1, is the so-called "rules of origin" condition applied to all goods crossing the border.

The rules of origin, a key aspect of all major trade deals, can rapidly turn into a costly headache for businesses. Under the Brexit provision, any good will be subject to a customs levy if it arrives in Britain from abroad and is then exported back into the European Union.

Democrats ready for Trump's
second impeachment today

Move to impeach comes amid continued fury over the storming of US Capitol

Washington, Jan. 10: US Democrats on Saturday were readying for an unprecedented second impeachment of Donald Trump as the defiant president showed no signs of stepping down after the deadly violence at the Capitol.

Democrats said impeachment proceedings could begin as early as Monday — an extraordinary acceleration of a process that historically has taken weeks, but one that might not be completed before President-elect Joe Biden is sworn into office on January 20.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi warned that Democrats will launch the process unless Trump resigns or Vice President Mike Pence invokes the 25th Amendment, where the cabinet removes the president.

"He's deranged, unhinged and dangerous. He must go," Pelosi, referring to Trump, tweeted on Friday.

The move to impeach came amid continued fury over the storming of the Capitol on Wednesday by angry Trump supporters, which left five people dead, including a Capitol policeman.

Authorities announced new arrests and charges Saturday over the incursion, including a tattooed man in a horned headdress whose image was beamed around the world.

That man, Jacob Anthony Chansley, also known as Jake Angeli, and two others — one of them a newly elected state official from West Virginia — were charged in federal court in connection with the violence, according to the US attorney's office for the District of Columbia.

The impeachment text — signed by at least 180 members of Congress so far, according to Democratic congressman Ted Lieu — laid blame squarely at the president's feet.

"In all of this, President Trump gravely endangered the security of the United States and its institutions of government. He threatened the integrity of the democratic system, interfered with the peaceful transition of power, and imperiled a coordinate branch of government," it reads.

Trump, who had urged his supporters to come to Washington on Wednesday for a rally opposing his November election loss, has remained defiant, even after finally posting a video Thursday in which he belatedly promised an



Counter-protesters spray pepper spray as they clash with people during a 'Patriot March' demonstration in support of President Trump, in the Pacific Beach neighborhood of San Diego, California.

— *AFP*

Pence to attend Biden's inaugural

Washington, Jan. 10: Mike Pence will attend the upcoming inauguration of Joe Biden, multiple media reports said Saturday, the vice president becoming the latest longtime loyalist to abandon an increasingly isolated President Donald Trump.

Relations between Trump and Pence — previously one of the mercurial president's staunchest defenders — have nose-

dived since Wednesday, when the vice president formally announced Biden's victory in November's election.

A mob of far-right demonstrators stormed the US Capitol the same day in a failed bid to stop Congress from certifying Biden's win, in a riot blamed on Trump that left five dead.

Multiple media reports on Saturday cited senior

administration officials as saying that Pence — who was forced to take shelter from the intruders during the riot — had decided to attend Biden's inauguration on January 20.

The president-elect earlier in the week said Pence would be welcome at his formal swearing-in, due to take place in a scaled-down format due to the Covid-19.

"I think it's important

that as much as we can stick to what have been the historical precedents of how an administration changes should be maintained," Biden told reporters.

"We'd be honored to have him there, and to move forward in the transition." In his final tweet before being removed from Twitter on Friday, Trump said he would not attend the inauguration. — *AFP*

Amazon pushes Parler offline
after violent US Capitol attack

San Francisco, Jan. 10: Amazon will suspend Parler, the tech giant confirmed Saturday, sending the social media network offline after it was banned by Apple and Google for allowing "threats of violence" in the wake of a deadly riot at the US Capitol.

The Parler social network has become a haven for conservatives who say they have been censored by other social media platforms. It had soared in popularity in recent months, becoming the No. 1 free app on Apple's App

Store on Saturday after the much larger Twitter decided to permanently ban US President Trump from its platform for his role in inciting violence at the Capitol.

Messages of support for the Wednesday's rioters along with calls for new demonstrations had flourished on the platform, leading Google to remove it from its app store on Friday, followed by Apple on Saturday.

Amazon then moved to wipe it from its cloud hosting Amazon Web Services, pushing it offline

entirely. In a letter to Parler first published by Buzzfeed, Amazon said the network was not acting quickly enough against violent content on the platform.

"We've seen a steady increase in this violent content on your website, all of which violates our terms of service," the letter, the contents of which were confirmed by Amazon. Given the riot at the Capitol this week, the letter continued, there was a "serious risk that this type of content will further incite violence." — *AFP*

Elizabeth, Philip get vaccine

Rome, Jan. 10: The pope and Britain's Queen Elizabeth became the latest high-profile figures to join the global vaccination campaign against the Coronavirus as Germany on Sunday reported 40,000 fatalities since the pandemic began a year ago.

And German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned that the worst was still to come.

More than 1.9 million people worldwide have now died from the virus, with new variants adding to soaring cases and prompting the re-intro-

duction of restrictions on movement across the globe — even as with mass inoculation drives underway.

Pope Francis urged people to get the vaccination saying he would be inoculated against the virus himself next week when the Vatican begins its campaign and denouncing opposition to the jab.

"There is a suicidal denial which I cannot explain, but today we have to get vaccinated," the pontiff tells Canale 5 in an interview to be broadcast Sunday.

Britain's Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip received their Covid-19 vaccinations on Saturday, said Buckingham Palace.

A source told that the queen, 94, and Philip, 99, were given the injections by a royal household doctor at Windsor Castle.

More than 1.5 million people in Britain have so far been inoculated, in the biggest immunisation programme in national history, with the elderly, their carers and health workers first in line.

Countries across the

world are following suit with coronavirus shots approved including those by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna and domestically made jabs from Russia and China.

Britain is racing to protect as many people as possible as a new variant believed to be more contagious pushes infections and deaths to unprecedented levels.

Health authorities announced more than three million coronavirus infections since the pandemic began last year.

— *AFP*

Witnesses heard
explosion before
Indonesia crash

Jakarta, Jan. 10: Indonesian rescuers pulled out body parts, pieces of clothing and scraps of metal from the Java Sea early Sunday morning, a day after a Boeing 737-500 with 62 people onboard crashed shortly after takeoff from Jakarta, officials said.

Officials were hopeful they were honing in on the wreckage of Sriwijaya Air Flight 182 after sonar equipment detected a signal from the aircraft. Transportation Minister Budi Karya Sumadi told reporters that authorities have launched massive search efforts after identifying "the possible location of the crash site." "These pieces were found by the SAR team between Lancang Island and Laki Island," National Search and Rescue Agency Bagus Puruhito in a statement.

Indonesian military chief Air Chief Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto said teams on the Rigel navy ship equipped with a remote-operated vehicle had detected a signal from the aircraft, which fit the coordinates from the last contact made by the pilots before the plane went missing. "We have immediately deployed our divers from navies elite unit to determine the finding to evacuate the victims," Tjahjanto said.

More than 12 hours since the Boeing plane operated by the Indonesian airline lost contact, little is known about what caused the crash. Fishermen in the area around Thousand Islands, a chain of islands

north of Jakarta's coast, reported hearing an explosion around 2:30 pm Saturday. "We heard something explode, we thought it was a bomb or a tsunami since after that we saw the big splash from the water," fisherman Solihin, who goes by one name, told *The Associated Press* by phone.

"It was raining heavily and the weather was so bad. So it is difficult to see around clearly. But we can see the splash and a big wave after the sounds. We were very shocked and directly saw the plane debris and the fuel around our boat."

Authorities have yet to say why the Sriwijaya Air Boeing 737-500 went into a steep dive about four minutes after it left Soekarno-Hatta international airport on Saturday afternoon.

But, on Sunday, they said that they had pinpointed the location of its black boxes — cockpit voice and flight data recorders — that could be key to explaining why the plane slammed into the Java Sea off the sprawling city's coast.

The search and rescue agency said it had collected body bags filled with human remains, as well as debris from the wreckage, in waters about 23 metres (75 feet) deep.

Passengers Ihsan Adhlan Hakim and his new bride Putri were headed to Pontianak, the city on Indonesia's section of Borneo island which had been flight SJ182's destination, about 90 minutes away.

— *AFP, AP*

US lifts curbs on
Taiwan relations

Washington, Jan. 10: The United States is ending decades-old restrictions governing official contacts with Taiwan, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement Saturday.

He said the "complex internal restrictions" on contacts with Taipei by diplomats, service members and others had been imposed "in an attempt to appease the Communist regime in Beijing."

Pompeo added, "No more." The declaration may be more symbolic than substantive in effect, but it nonetheless appears certain to anger China, which sees Taiwan as its own territory.

It comes in the final weeks of the Donald Trump administration, and at a time of already heightened tensions between Beijing and both Washington and Taipei.

It was not clear what the change means in practice, with Pompeo saying executive branch communications with Taiwan will be handled by the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), which is owned by the US government and serves as the de facto embassy.

The shift comes after a year of mounting US-Chinese tensions.

Trump has sent multiple senior officials to Taipei over the last year, even as he clashed with China on a host of issues, ranging from its handling of the coronavirus pandemic to disputes over trade, security and human rights.

The complex internal restrictions" on contacts with Taipei by diplomats, service members and others had been imposed "in an attempt to appease the Communist regime in Beijing."

— **MIKE POMPEO**
Secretary of State

Pompeo's statement also came just two days after China warned the United States it would pay a "heavy price" if its United Nations ambassador, Kelly Craft, made good on plans to travel to Taiwan on Wednesday.

Beijing opposes any diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. Craft's scheduled three-day visit will come just a week before Joe Biden's inauguration as US president, adding to a string of diplomatic headaches facing the incoming administration.

"The United States will pay a heavy price for its wrong action," the Chinese mission to the UN said in a statement responding to Craft's planned trip. "China strongly urges the United States to stop its crazy provocation, stop creating new difficulties for China-US relations... and stop going further on the wrong path."

An American statement said Craft's visit, which Taiwan has officially welcomed, would "reinforce the US government's strong and ongoing support for Taiwan's international space." — *AFP*

WEATHER | TROUBLE

Deadly snowstorm Filomena killed three, causing chaos across Spain

Spain races to clear snow before cold snap

Madrid, Jan. 10: After the worst snowstorm in decades, Spanish officials were racing on Sunday to clear the roads of snow before a cold snap transforms them into icy death traps.

Storm Filomena killed three people during its passage through Spain and kept emergency services workers and army snow ploughs busy through Saturday freeing 2,500 drivers trapped in their vehicles.

The storm also brought

● **A FLEET** of snow-ploughs and gritters were out on the streets of Madrid on Sunday where the city's mayor, Jose Luis Martinez-Almeida, said on Sunday there was not a minute to be lost.

heavy rains before moving through eastern Spain into southern France.

Spain's weather forecasters AEMET predicted heavy frost overnight Sunday to Monday in large parts of Spain. In moun-

tainous areas temperatures would drop below -10 celsius (14 Fahrenheit), conditions that could last until Thursday, the agency added.

Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska said Sunday that the danger was that the piles of snow could transform into ice because of the unprecedented low temperatures expected.

But despite the conditions, he said, the country's vaccination campaign against the coron-

avirus would go ahead as scheduled, with 350,000 doses due to be delivered on Monday.

A fleet of snow-ploughs and gritters were out on the streets of Madrid on Sunday where the city's mayor, Jose Luis Martinez-Almeida, said on Sunday there was not a minute to be lost. "Our aim is to make the most of every minute before Monday when the drop in temperature happens," Martinez-Almeida told Sexta television late Saturday. — *AFP*



A snowplough removes snow after a heavy snowfall in Madrid on Sunday.

— *AFP*

quick
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,782.51	1.43
Nifty 50	14,347.25	1.48
S&P 500*	3,811.72	0.21
Dollar (₹)	73.24	0.10
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.61	0.06
Euro (₹)	89.64	0.36
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,763*614	1.23
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.52	2.10
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.892	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.088	0.017

* As of Friday/Saturday

Currency in
circulation rises
by ₹3.23 lakh cr

The currency in circulation (CIC) grew by around 13 per cent in the first nine months of the current fiscal as people preferred holding on to cash as a precautionary measure amid the pandemic. CIC grew by Rs 3,23,003 crore, or 13.2 per cent, to Rs 27,70,315 crore as on January 1, 2021 from Rs 24,47,312 crore as on March 31, 2020, according to RBI data. In the April-Dec. period of FY2020, it had grown by nearly 6 per cent.

Gold ETFs attract
₹6,657 crore
inflow in 2020



Economic downturn due to the pandemic and weakness in the US dollar encouraged investors to infuse Rs 6,657 crore in gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs) in 2020 compared to just Rs 16 crore in 2019. The inflow came after witnessing a net pullout from safe-haven assets for six consecutive years. Meanwhile, a Crisil report said the mutual fund industry's AUM has gone past the Rs 31 lakh crore mark for the first time in December.

Foreign investors
put ₹4,819 cr in
equities in Jan.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have pumped Rs 5,156 crore into Indian capital markets in the first six trading sessions this year amid expectations of strong third-quarter earnings and a reformist budget. As per depositories data, FPIs invested a net Rs 4,819 crore in equities and Rs 337 crore in the debt segment between January 1 and 8. This took the total net investment to Rs 5,156 crore.

Special unit in I-T
dept. to probe
foreign assets

A special unit has been created by the government in the countrywide investigation wings of the Income Tax department for focussed probe in cases of undisclosed assets held by Indians abroad and possession of black money in foreign shores, officials said. The Foreign Asset Investigation Units (FAIUs) have been recently created in all the 14 investigation directorates of the tax department.

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■ Minister has taken up issue with Prime Minister
Gadkari wants regulator to
bust steel, cement cartels

Mumbai, Jan. 10: Big players in the steel and cement industry are indulging in cartelisation to jack up prices, union road transport and MSME minister Nitin Gadkari has said, pitching to place a regulator for the sectors. It will be difficult to achieve Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of making India a \$5 trillion economy if the steel and cement prices keep going up, Gadkari said. It can be noted that allegations of such cartelisation have been made in the past as well, especially by the real estate industry, which is impacted by the high input costs. "Regarding steel and cement, this is really a problem for all of us. Actually, I feel this is a cartel by some big people are doing in cement and steel," Gadkari said while speaking at a virtual event

TEXTILE MILLS SEEK REMOVAL OF
ANTI-DUMPING DUTY ON VSF

New Delhi, Jan. 10: The National Committee on Textiles and Clothing (NCTC) has appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking removal of anti-dumping duty on viscose staple fibre and redressal of VSF spun yarn availability and price issues to prevent job losses across the VSF textile value chain. Taking a serious view of the high price of VSF in India, captains of various segments of VSF value chain have submitted a joint representation to the Prime Minister. —PTI

finding out the solution for that. Your (BAI's) one of the recommendations is for a regulator for steel and cement, which is also a good suggestion. I will look into it," Gadkari said. The minister, however, conceded that having a regulator is not in his hands and promised to speak with the finance ministry and the Prime Minister to get the proposal moving. "It is also one of the important issues where I am also very much worried about," he reiterated. As per an official statement, the BAI also requested for a mechanism for the early release of bills against the government contracts, streamlining in GST implementation, and royalty payment to be taken care by the state governments during the meeting with the minister. —PTI

Inflation-hit FMCG firms may hike prices

New Delhi, Jan. 10: Consumers may have to shell out more for their daily use products as FMCG firms, which are facing inflationary pressure on their key raw material inputs, are considering raising their product prices. FMCG companies like Marico and others have already gone for a price hike, while some firms, including Dabur, Parle

and Patanjali, are closely monitoring the situation. FMCG players have been trying to absorb the price increase of raw material inputs such as coconut oil, edible oil and palm oil, but they are unlikely to hold the prices for a long time as that will impact their gross margins. "We have seen a significant rise in input cost and especially edible oil in the last three to four months

and that is putting pressures on our margins and costs. As of now, we have not taken any price hike but we are closely monitoring it and if it goes like this then probably, we may go for a price hike," Parle Products senior category head Mayank Shah said. Dabur India CFO Lalit Malik said the recent months have seen inflation inching up for some key raw materials like

amla and gold." "Going forward too, we expect some inflationary pressure in key commodities. Our efforts will be to absorb the raw material price increase," he said. Patanjali is still in a 'wait and watch' mode. "We always try to absorb the market oscillation but if compelled by the market factors, we would take a final decision," its spokesperson said. —PTI

Life insurance sector to
grow 12-15%: LIC chief

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

Despite having a de-growth in life insurance businesses during lockdown periods last year, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), India's largest public sector insurer, believes that the life insurance industry is likely to grow by up to 15 per cent in coming years.

"Life insurance business, being done by 24 players in the country, is expected to grow by 12 to 15 per cent in the coming years. The industry has added 1,06,035 agents to the force by the end of November last year," LIC chairman M.R. Kumar said while addressing an event.

"We can expect the number of agents will grow steadily in the coming years, too. Keeping in mind the unlimited opportunity of life insurance business in India, life insurers will continue to play a vital role in the job market under this new normal as well," Kumar added.

Due to the lockdown and related restrictions, which impacted the mobility of the marketing force, the life insurance industry, at the end of May 31, 2020, recorded a de-growth of 27.92 per cent in first year premium (FYP) to Rs 20,466.75 crore as com-



M.R. Kumar

pared to Rs 28,395.89 crore and a de-growth of 51.02 per cent in policies-14,24,373 policies compared to 29,08,093 in the previous year, he said. "However, the phased unlock process started from June 2020 resulted in increased economic activities, and our industry adopted innovative digital business processes in meeting the expectation of the market. As on November 30, the life insurers clocked a FYP of Rs 16,6662.96 crore compared to Rs 1,69,251.19 crore. The de-growth was brought down to 1.53 per cent," he said.

"The Ulip policies are giving an opportunity to market savvy customers to reap higher benefits in the new normal," Kumar said. He said the rural market holds promise for insurers to expand their business. Irdai data for 2018-2019 shows out of the 286.48 lakh new policies sold, the share of the rural sector was just 66.37 lakh.

VEDANTA PARENT
LAUNCHES
OPEN OFFER
FOR 10% STAKE

BIJOU GEORGE
JAN. 10

Vedanta Resources launched an open offer for a 10 per cent stake in its India unit, two months after a failed delisting attempt for Vedanta Ltd. The London-based parent of Mumbai-listed Vedanta Ltd will buy as many as 371.75 million shares, comprising 10 per cent of the outstanding equity of the Indian unit, according to an exchange filing on Saturday.

The open offer, which will be managed by JPMorgan Chase & Co's India unit, will be a voluntary open offer, with no minimum level of acceptance by Vedanta, according to the filing. If Vedanta Ltd holders were to accept share tenders for the entire 10 per cent, the consideration for the deal would be Rs 5,948 crore (\$812 million). —Bloomberg



US revenues, cost savings
to bolster pharma results

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 10

Brokerages expect a good third quarter performance from pharmaceutical companies, driven by good growth in the US market, recovery in branded markets, continued cost savings and low bases for select companies, such as Lupin.

ICI Securities expects moderate top line growth of around 8 per cent, led by India business and marginal growth in US business with 130 basis points year-on-year (YoY) improvement in Ebitda margin to 22 per cent.

Emkay Global expects top pharma companies YoY revenue, Ebitda and earnings growth of 9 per cent, 21 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively.

"Cipla and Dr Reddy's have the potential to beat our and consensus estimates," Emkay Global said.

"We expect easing of lockdown to support some recovery in acute portfolio and injectable products. US revenues may witness marginal growth sequentially, led by improvement in volumes of injectables, specialty portfolio and new launches. We estimate

5G rollout to create
more job opportunities

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 10

Hiring activity for the rollout of 5G services has started in a modest way. Industry expects numbers to swell multi-fold as the rollout begins.

While uncertainties still prevail and telecom service providers are seeking clarity on 5G auctions, the job opportunities would be huge once the rollout happens. "The application of 5G is across domains and hence the impact will be witnessed across sectors from manufacturing to telecom to e-commerce to agriculture. With advantages such as increased range to low latency, and more importantly less energy intensive, this tech will connect more users than before. Overall, the opportunity for 5G and its ecosystem is limitless...Hiring for this domain will continue for at least the next two to three years," said Vijay Sivaram, CEO of Qness IT Staffing.

According to Aditya Narayan Mishra, director and CEO of CIEL HR Services, "Currently, some of the IT service providers like Tech Mahindra, HCL, Accenture and smaller IT companies have started hiring professionals for software architecting, development and testing in 5G. The positions open for the next three months would be somewhere around 5,000. These jobs are mostly in cities like Benaguru and Gurgaon."

However, the telecom service providers have not yet started hiring people in a big way. "Telecom companies have been operating in a subdued environment for some time. In the backdrop of the pandemic, they will not be initially aggressive about investing heavily," says Rituparna Chakraborty, co-founder and executive vice president, TeamLease Services.

However, once the rollout happens, for the next



six months we would see increased hiring activity. The positions open could be more than 50,000 in the future," said Mishra. Telecom service providers also might train their existing staff for the new technology as the number of people who have the required skills is also limited. 5G being a new technology, not many people with more than five years of experience are available globally.

"While the demand is high, the overall availability of talent is yet to catch up, hence models such as 'train and hire' are becoming more common. Telecom service providers will hire a mix of freshers and experienced candidates as global services firms are also hiring in big numbers," said Sivaram.

NEW ZEALAND CENTRAL BANK HIT BY CYBER ATTACK

Wellington, Jan. 10: New Zealand's central bank said it was responding with urgency to a "malicious" breach of one of its data systems, a third-party file sharing service that stored "sensitive information". Reserve Bank of New

Zealand governor Adrian Orr said the breach had been contained and the system was taken offline but it would take time to determine what information had been accessed. "We are working closely with domestic and interna-

tional cyber security experts," Orr said. "The nature and extent of information that has been potentially accessed is still being determined, but it may include commercially and personally sensitive information." —AFP

ANNUAL OIL
USAGE FALLS
BY 11%

DEBJIT CHAKRABORTY
JAN. 10

India's petroleum consumption fell for the first time in more than two decades in 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic shuttered businesses and factories, hurting demand from one of the world's largest users of the fuel.

Total petroleum demand declined 10.8 per cent last year from 2019, and was at a five-year low of 193.4 million tonnes, according to Bloomberg calculations of provisional data published by the oil ministry's Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell. The annual contraction was the first on record, going back as far as 1999.

Consumption of petroleum fuels by Asia's second-biggest oil importer collapsed by as much as 70 per cent after it embarked on one of the world's most stringent nationwide quarantines in March. The drop resulted in a sharp cutback in crude processing and operations at petrochemical plants.

The strict restrictions ravaged the Indian economy, which is set for its biggest contraction in annual gross domestic product in records going back to 1952. The government has relaxed most of the curbs to pull Asia's third-biggest economy out of the slump.

Demand is picking up as restrictions are eased. Monthly consumption of petroleum fuels, a proxy of crude oil demand, was about 1.8 per cent short of previous year's levels in December, and touched an 11-month high.

Petrol consumption last month rose 9.3 per cent year-on-year, the highest since May 2019, on increased use of personal vehicles. Diesel demand was 2.8 per cent lower from a year earlier. —Bloomberg

NOWHERE TO GO

Ship leaves China after more than six months' wait at port

GE Shipping caught in China-Oz spat

RAJESH KUMAR SINGH
JAN. 10

An Indian ship with 23 crew members on board has been allowed to leave China's Jingtang port after unsuccessfully waiting for more than six months for clearance to offload its cargo, Great Eastern Shipping Company Ltd, which operates the ship, said.

The bulk carrier was set to leave for Japan's Chiba port later on Saturday, where Mumbai-based Great Eastern's back-up



crew has been waiting to take over, the company's spokeswoman Anjali

Kumar said by phone. Arrangements had been made for the stranded sea-

farers to fly back to India, she said.

Indian-flagged Jag Anand, loaded with Australian coal, arrived at Jingtang in mid-June. By November, at least 21 bulk carriers with almost 400 crew members were queuing up at the Chinese port, roughly 230 kilometers east of Beijing.

The deadlock played in the backdrop of a diplomatic spat between China and Australia that was escalating into a trade war, China blacklisting a range of Australian com-

modities from coal to lobsters for imports. While the vessels remained anchored, a humanitarian crisis was unfolding, as the port authorities restricted movement of the crew members, citing Covid rules.

"We are still waiting for instructions from the charterer about the cargo," Great Eastern's Kumar said on Saturday. "Right now, our top priority is to help our crew members reach home. We have all the permissions needed for that." —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Holders Arsenal in FA Cup 4th round

London: Emile Smith Rowe had a red card overturned and scored in extra time to help holders Arsenal reach the fourth round of the FA Cup beating Newcastle 2-0. The substitute was issued a red card by referee Chris Kavanagh for a tackle on Sean Longstaff at the end of the 90 minutes, but the card was downgraded to yellow on a VAR review. "Obviously the incident wasn't ideal and it definitely wasn't intentional, so I'm happy to get the goal and go through to the next round," Smith Rowe said.

It proved decisive, as he grabbed the opener in the 109th minute followed by captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang confirming the victory eight minutes later with a tap-in.

"We knew coming into the game how tough it was going to be and it was just about breaking them down, and we got there in the end," Smith Rowe told the BBC. — AP

Ball youngest to score triple-double

Charlotte, North Carolina: LaMelo Ball became the youngest player in NBA history to record a triple-double with 22 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists, and the Charlotte Hornets beat the Atlanta Hawks 113-105 for their third straight win. The 19-year-old Ball replaced Markelle Fultz as the youngest NBA player to record a triple-double by 177 days. Ball, the third overall pick in the NBA draft, was 9 of 13 from the field as the Hornets handed the struggling Hawks their fourth straight loss. He became only the fifth rookie in NBA history to record a triple-double and the first Hornets player ever to reach that plateau coming off the bench. Terry Rozier scored 23 points for the Hornets. Nikola Jokic had 15 points and 12 assists to lead Denver past Philadelphia, beating a 76ers team that had only seven available players because of injuries and Covid-19 protocols. — AP

Rakshna, Panwar win air rifle trials

New Delhi: Tamil Nadu's C. Kavi Rakshna and Rajasthan's Divyansh Singh Panwar won the women's and men's 10m Air Rifle events respectively at the National Shooting T2 trials here on Sunday. Kavi Rakshna, who has come through the ranks of the junior programme, emerged on top in a quality field which included current world number one Elavenil Valarivan as well as Tokyo Olympics quota holders Apurvi Chandela and Anjum Moudgil, among others. Rakshna shot 251.4 in the finals to win the event ahead of Rajasthan's Nisha Kanwar (250.7). Gujarat's Elavenil, who had won the T1 trials earlier, finished third. Nisha had topped the 60-shots qualifying round with a score of 630.7 while Rakshna had shot 627.7 to qualify in seventh spot. In the final though, Rakshna led from start to finish. — PTI

Chennaiyin FC, Odisha split points

Bambolim: Odisha FC and Chennaiyin FC traded missed chances to play out a goal-less draw in their Indian Super League match here on Sunday. The match saw both teams failing to convert clear-cut chances. That Odisha had three shots on target while Chennaiyin managed just two exemplified how much both sides cancelled out each other. Chennaiyin, the better side in terms of possession, though had a couple of chances to get a winner but their forwards were unable to convert them. It was Chennaiyin who dominated the opening exchanges, creating multiple chances in the opening quarter.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament: Delhi vs Mumbai from 11.55 am; Kerala vs Puducherry from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Mohun Bagan vs Mumbai City from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

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MONKEYGATE 2.0

Siraj called 'brown dog', 'big monkey' from SCG stands; ICC seeks report

Sydney/New Delhi, Jan. 10: Indian cricketers, especially pacer Mohammed Siraj, endured racist slurs for a second successive day in the third Test against Australia here, causing a brief halt in fourth day's play, expulsion of some spectators from the ground and an all-round condemnation of the incidents.

Siraj, still grieving the death of his father a little over a month ago, was called a "Brown Dog" and "Big Monkey" from the SCG stands, BCCI sources said.

The 26-year-old, on his maiden tour Down Under, followed the protocol and promptly went up to his skipper Ajinkya Rahane and the on-field umpires, who halted play for about 10 minutes and called in the security, which evicted six people.

This was after the bowler and his senior pace partner Jasprit Bumrah were abused by a drunk man on Saturday. The BCCI has already complained about it to ICC match referee David Boon.

CA APOLOGISES

"As series hosts, we unreservedly apologise to our friends in the Indian cricket team and assure them we will prosecute the matter to its fullest extent," said Sean Carroll, Cricket Australia's Head of Integrity and Security, in a press release affirming zero tolerance to racism.

"Once those responsible are identified, CA will take the strongest measures possible under our Anti-Harassment Code, including lengthy bans, further sanctions and referral to NSW (New South Wales) Police," he added.

In Dubai, the ICC also issued a statement, condemning the turn of events and seeking an action taken report from CA. Australia coach Justin Langer expressed his disgust too, calling racism one of his greatest pet hates. "I mean, I have hated it as a player, I have hated it as a coach, we have seen in different parts of the world, it is really sad to see this happen in Australia," he said. The incidents of racial abuse revived memories of the infamous 'Monkeygate' episode during the 2007-08 series.

Incidentally, that controversy too flared up during



India captain Ajinkya Rahane (centre) and his teammate Mohammed Siraj (right) speak to the umpire as the game was halted after allegedly some remarks were made by the spectators on the fourth day of the third Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday. — AFP

the Sydney Test when Andrew Symonds claimed that Harbhajan Singh hurled the racist slur at him multiple times.

However, the Indian off-spinner, who denied the charge, was cleared after a hearing on the matter.

On Saturday, the abuses were directed at Bumrah and Siraj while they were fielding during the Australian second innings. India's regular skipper Virat Kohli, who is on paternity leave right now, offered his support to the team via social media.

"Racial abuse is absolutely unacceptable. Having gone through many incidents of pathetic things said on the boundary lines, this is the absolute peak of rowdy behaviour," — PTI

Ashwin reveals he faced abuse in SCG earlier too

Sydney, Jan. 10: Seasoned off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on Sunday said racist abuse from the crowd at the SCG is not new and needs to be dealt with an iron fist after some spectators were asked to leave for targeting Indian players during the ongoing third Test against Australia here.

Speaking at the end of the fourth day's play, Ashwin said the Indian players have faced

racism in Sydney earlier too and "disappointment" will be a "mild word" to describe how they are feeling after young pacer Mohammed Siraj was subjected to racial slurs on two consecutive days.

"Look, I would like to point out something. This is my fourth tour to Australia. Sydney, especially here, we have had a few experiences even in the past," Ashwin said at the virtual press conference to a query as to how the team is looking at the unsavoury incident.

He said in no unequivocal terms that this needs to be dealt with an iron fist. "This roots back to upbringing and the way one sees, this needs to be definitely dealt with iron fists. We must make sure it doesn't happen again."

Ashwin said that the team didn't face any racism in the earlier Test venues like Adelaide and Melbourne. — PTI

JADEJA MIGHT BAT WITH INJECTIONS IF REQUIRED

Sydney, Jan. 10: All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who dislocated his left thumb on Day Three of the third Test against Australia on Saturday, has been ruled out of the first two games in the upcoming series against England.

Jadeja was not able to bowl in Australia's second innings after a short ball from Mitchell Starc hit him on the gloves, requiring immediate medical attention.

"Ravindra Jadeja is out of first two Tests against England. He will need 4-6 weeks minimum to recuperate and complete rehab which rules him out of first 2 Tests," a BCCI source said.

The four-Test series against England starts with a double header in Chennai from February 5. The left-handed cricketer, who made a valuable 28 and took four wickets in the first innings might take a painkiller injection and come out to bat on the final day of the game at SCG as India seek to save the Test.

"He might bat if needed with injection to save the Test," the source added.

India have been hit by a slew of injuries in the ongoing series with senior pacers Umesh Yadav and Mohammad Shami already flown back home.

Batsman K.L. Rahul too was ruled out with left wrist injury. — PTI

Uphill task for India batsmen

Sydney, Jan. 10: Cheteshwar Pujara was left to summon his trademark doggedness with skipper Ajinkya Rahane after India lost their openers in pursuit of an improbable 407, setting the stage for an intriguing final day of the third Test against Australia in which the visitors will primarily try to bat out three sessions here.

Having drawn flak for his 50 off 176 balls in the first innings, none would mind such an effort from India's Test specialist after the visitors finished the fourth day on 98 for 2 largely due to a 71-run opening stand between Rohit Sharma (52) and Shubman Gill (31).

Rohit's untimely dismissal at the fog end, trying to pull Pat Cummins, did hurt India but it's two best defensive players Pujara (9 batting off 29 balls) and skipper Ajinkya Rahane (4 off 14 balls) were at the crease when stumps were drawn.

The pitch, with variable bounce and the dark patches acting like snake pits for Nathan Lyon, would pose its own set of challenges for a team with two injured batsmen in their line-up.

Both Rohit (52 off 98 balls) and Gill (31 off 64 balls) showed admirable application under pressure

● **Rohit's untimely dismissal at the fog end, trying to pull Pat Cummins, did hurt India but it's two best defensive players Pujara and Rahane were at the crease when stumps were drawn.**

but most importantly didn't let the bad deliveries go unpunished.

The three cover drives off Rohit's blade and a cross-batted straight drive of Gill were out of top drawer.

Rohit, for good measure, pulled Cameron Green over mid-wicket for a six and they both looked comfortable while negotiating the Australian attack.

It was after 53 years that an Indian opening pair had struck two 50 plus partnerships in the same Test Down Under.

Last time also it was in Sydney where Farokh Engineer and Syed Abid Ali had a decent outing albeit in a lost cause.

It took a peach of a delivery from Josh Hazlewood (1/11 in 8 overs), coming for his second spell, which straightened after pitching and the resultant nick, ended an impressive 71-run stand. — PTI

SCORECARD

Australia 1st Innings 338

India 1st Innings: 244

Australia 2nd Innings (overnight 103/2): David Warner lbw b Ashwin 13, Will Pucovski Saha b Siraj 10, Marnus Labuschagne W Saha b Navdeep Saini 73, Steven Smith lbw b Ashwin 81, Matthew Wade c Saha b Navdeep Saini 4, Cameron Green c Saha b Bumrah 84, Tim Paine not out 39. Extras (b-1, lb-4, nb-3) 8. **Total (for 6 wks, in 87 overs) 312 decl.**

FoW: 16-1, 35-2, 138-3, 148-4, 208-5, 312-6.

Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 21-4-68-1, Mohammed Siraj 25-5-90-1, Navdeep Saini 16-2-54-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 25-1-95-2.

India 2nd Innings: Rohit Sharma c Starc b Cummins 52, Shubman Gill c Paine b Hazlewood 31, Cheteshwar Pujara batting 9, Ajinkya Rahane batting 4. Extras (lb-1, nb-1) 2. **Total (for 2 wks, in 34 overs) 98.**

FoW: 7-1, 92-2.

Bowling: Mitchell Starc 6-0-27-0, Josh Hazlewood 8-3-11-1, Pat Cummins 9-1-25-1, Nathan Lyon 9-3-22-0, Cameron Green 2-0-12-0.

All-round Krunal wins it for Baroda

Vadodara, Jan. 10: Krunal Pandya's all-round show helped Baroda beat Uttarakhand by five runs in their opening game of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy here on Sunday.

Put into bat in a Group C game, hosts Baroda first rode on Pandya's blazing 76 to post a competitive 168/7 on the board before the bowlers held their nerves to restrict Uttarakhand to 163/6 despite a fighting 77 by Dikshanshu Negi.

Krunal, who is Baroda's captain, also contributed with the ball handsomely to return with figures of 2/33.

He along with Smit Patel conjured a crucial 89 run stand for the fourth wicket and rescued the team after they were reeling at 41/3 at one stage.

For Uttarakhand, right-handed batsman Negi hammered nine boundaries and six in his 57-ball 77 run knock, while Kunal Chandela, who came in at number seven, stuck a 26-ball 48 but the two could not take their side home.

BENGAL DRUB ODISHA, TN BEAT JHARKHAND

Host Bengal began their campaign in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament with a thumping nine-wicket win against Odisha in an Elite Group 'B' match, here on Sunday.

In another match in the group, Tamil Nadu posted a crushing 66-run win over Jharkhand, courtesy opener C. Hari Nishanth's unbeaten 92-run knock and an all-round effort by the bowlers. Debutant medium-pace R Sonu Yadav picked up three for 31 to star in the winning start.

In the Bengal-Odisha match, the host team's skipper Anustup Majumadar won the toss and sent the opponents in to bat. The Odisha batsmen found the going tough in the face of some good bowling by the highly-rated Ishan Porel (3/26) and Akash Deep (2/20).

Brief Scores: Baroda 168/7 (Krunal Pandya 76, S Patel 41; A Madhwal 3/16) **bt Uttarakhand 163/6** (D. Negi 77 not out; Kunal Chandela 48; Krunal Pandya 2/33).

Tamil Nadu 189/5 (C. Hari Nishanth 92 not out, Dinesh Karthik 46) **beat Jharkhand 123/7** (Anand Singh 28 not out, Sonu Yadav 3/31, Sandeep Warrier 2/22).

Paine joins India huddle, Langer calls him class act

Sydney, Jan. 10: The iconic Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday witnessed the good, bad and ugly in varying degrees for sure if not in equal measure.

While the cricket community exploded after Indian players were subjected to racial abuse during the fourth day of the third Test at the SCG, Australian skipper Tim Paine won hearts by joining the visiting team's huddle.

Australian coach Justin Langer called Paine a "class act".

"It was nice to have Tim out there when that incident happened today. He's a class act as we



Tim Paine

know. The game of Test cricket is always going to be played tough but there's been a really good feeling amongst both teams and let's hope that continues," Langer said.

Paine was batting at

the time.

The former Australia Test opener was disappointed that incidents like these are threatening to tarnish a hard-fought series played in the right spirit between the two teams.

Speaking further about Paine's gesture, Langer said, "We talked at tea about what was going on. As hosts, we never want to see our visitors being treated poorly do we? And there's different levels of that."

"We were in England last year and some of our guys have felt it before, there's nothing pleasant about it." — PTI

Saha's glove work is much superior to that of Pant



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

When Wriddhiman Saha dived to his left to catch Marnus Labuschagne off the bowling of Navdeep Saini, the radio commentator shrieked "it was a sensational catch." The wicket keeper had anticipated the shot (a flick) and had made enough ground to fly and get (not one) but both his gloves under the ball, which otherwise would have raced towards the fine-leg boundary. Instead of the red cherry, the young Australian batsman had to trudge towards the

ropes on his way to the dressing room after scoring a well compiled 73, his second fifty of the match.

An internet search will reveal Saha's nicknames as 'Flying Saha' and 'Superman' both of which justify the wicket keepers act, the only thing missing being a furling red cape. Watching that brilliant catch, took me back to the pictures coming in from Australia in the 70s showing the legendary Rodney (Rod) Marsh levitating mid-air while pouching catches off Dennis Lillee

and Jeff Thomson.

Marsh had made his debut in the 1970-71 Ashes series replacing Brian Taber (thanks to his better batting capabilities) and was dubbed "Iron Gloves" thanks to the number of catches he had dropped.

Saha, who has 38 matches under his belt since he made his Test debut a decade ago, was dropped after India's debacle in the first Test at Adelaide. He came in to keep wickets in the second innings of the ongoing Sydney Test (as a keeping substitute) due to an injury suffered by Rishab Pant while batting in India's first innings.

Saha's axing for the second (Melbourne) Test match had created a controversy. The reason being his failure with the bat (not so much his gloves) which

made him a soft target for those baying for blood.

Pant's inclusion in the second and third Test matches once again brought up the debate of whether the team needs a wicket-keeper batsman or the other way around. His dropped catches in the first innings of the Sydney Test flared up the argument further with purists going for a specialist wicket-keeper who can bat rather than one whose skills with the bat are better. The preference of Pant over Saha in many Tests over the last few years is because he is perceived as a better batsman. This needs to be looked at a bit more closely.

A dispassionate analysis between their skills will throw a bit of light on who is the better bet for the

team in that position. Pant's batting average of 38.31 is almost 10 runs over that of Saha who averages 29.09. Saha has three hundreds compared to Pant's two, which came against England and Australia at the Oval and Melbourne, in trying circumstances. The senior player scored against the West Indies (at Gros Islet), Bangladesh and Australia (at home). Pant's ability to pump up the strike rate and take the fight to the opponents makes him a better choice if batting needs to be considered the bigger yardstick for the job.

When it comes to guarding the area behind the stumps, it is another matter altogether. His coach at Delhi Capitals, Ricky Ponting believes that Pant has got some work to do

with his wicket-keeping and that he has dropped more catches than any other keeper in the world ever since his Test debut. It is a fact that Saha is much above Pant as a custodian especially when it comes to standing up to the stumps while the spinners are operating. Saha's anticipation, rising up with the ball, soft hands and overall technique make his glove work much superior to that of Pant.

Pant is a destructive batsman who has the potential to add strength to the (mostly) brittle Indian batting order in foreign conditions. The downside, though, is his lack of consistency which is a result of his impetuosity and eagerness to up the ante. Saha, on the other hand is a safe 'keeper-batsman

in the mould of old timers like Alan Knott and Syed Kirmani, brilliant behind the stumps and more than a handful with the bat.

So should it be Saha or Pant? Purists like me will always pump for a specialist 'keeper who can bat rather than one who is a destructive batsman but muffs up simple, regulation catches with more consistency than scoring runs. Pant would do well to have a chat with Rod Marsh whose iron gloves turned to silken ones as his career progressed, finishing as one of the best in the business. Irrespective of what happens on the last day of the Sydney Test, the Indians should look at Saha for the last Test at Brisbane simply because of the adage that still stands - 'catches win matches.'