

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | TUESDAY | 12 JANUARY 2021



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**Mamata equates  
BJP with Trump**



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to impeach Trump**

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**Vihari and Ashwin save  
game for India**



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**WEATHER**

Max: 32.0°C  
Min: 18.0°C  
RH: 73%  
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Clear.  
Max/Min temp.  
32/18 °C

**COVID-19  
COUNT**

CASES	DEATHS
(+13,753)	(+184)
1,04,79,628	1,51,362

covid19india.org

**STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS**

(+224)	(+1)
TS: 2,90,008	1,566
(+121)	(+2)
AP: 8,85,037	7,131

**CASES AROUND THE WORLD**

9,09,46,072

**DEATHS**  
19,47,428

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES  
**218**

worldometers.info/coronavirus

**ASTROGUIDE**

**Sarvari;** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Margasira Bahula Chaturdasi till 12.24 pm  
**Star:** Mula till 7.37 am; then Purvashadha till 6.21 pm  
**Variyam:** Shesha Variyam up to 7.37 am; 4.43 pm to 6.14 pm  
**Durmuhurtam:** 9.05 am to 9.50 am; 11.06 pm to 11.58 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**HILJRI CALENDAR**  
**Jamadi-ul-Awwal 27, 1442 AH**  
**PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)**  
**Fajar:** 5:30 am  
**Zohar:** 1:30 pm  
**Asar:** 4:15 pm  
**Maghrib:** 5:38 pm  
**Isha:** 8:30 pm  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.35 AM**  
**SUNSET TODAY 5.47 PM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 5.36 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 5.59 PM**

**COUNTER POINT**

**Our boys are amazing!**  
They are firing even during massive power outage!

**SHORT TAKES**

**Virushka blessed with baby girl**

**New Delhi:** A baby girl was born to cricketer Virat Kohli and actress Anushka Sharma on Monday. “We are thrilled to share with you that we have been blessed with a baby girl this afternoon. We thank you all for your love, prayers and good wishes. Anushka and the baby are both healthy and we are feeling beyond blessed to start this new chapter of our lives. We hope you can respect our privacy.” Kohli tweeted.

## High flying women



The all-women crew of the inaugural flight of Air India from San Francisco to Bengaluru, from left, Capt. Papagari Thanmai, Capt. Zoya Aggarwal, Capt. Akansha Sonware and Capt. Shivani Manhas pose for a photo after the landing of their maiden flight, at Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru, on Monday. They flew on the Polar route over the North Pole region instead of the traditional Pacific Ocean Hong Kong or Singapore route. The non-stop 16,000 km flight started at 8.30 pm (local time) on Saturday and landed at 3.07 am on Monday. — PTI

## SC hints at panel on farm laws

**To stay implementation of laws till committee submits report**

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC**  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

The Supreme Court on Monday expressed its strong disappointment with the Narendra Modi government’s handling of the farmers agitation seeking the repeal of three controversial farm laws. The court indicated that it intends to set up a committee that will examine the laws, and till it submits its report the implementation of the laws will be put on hold.

As the farmers’ agitation entered Day 48 on Monday, Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde expressed anguish over the agitating farmers, braving the biting cold of

winter. CJI Bobde, heading a bench that also comprised Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian, said: “We propose to form a committee and if the government does not (on its own offer not to enforce the laws), then we will stay the implementation of the farm laws. We are doing this because you have failed to solve the problem. The government has to take responsibility. The laws have resulted in a strike and now you have to resolve the strike.”

Attorney-general K.K. Venugopal resisted the suggestion to stay the laws. In an apparent concession, CJI Bobde said that they will put on hold

their implementation, making a distinction between the stay of a law and the stay of its implementation. The court said staying the implementation of the laws will ease tensions and prevent the situation getting violent.

Objecting to any stay of the farm laws, Mr Venugopal asserted the laws were beneficial for farmers, and said: “The laws are within the legislative competence of Parliament and are intended to benefit the farmers.”

The court recalled that in past hearings, it had given the Centre an option to make a statement that it will not go ahead with the implementation of the laws.

Discomforted over the court’s taking a dim view of the Centre’s handling of the agitation, solicitor general Tushar Mehta protested and said that the court’s observations were “harsh”, insisting the government did its best to break the deadlock and resolve the issue.

“You did your best, but it did not seem to have any effect”, CJI Bobde then quipped.

The court is likely to pronounce orders on Tuesday on issues related to farm laws and the farmers’ protests at Delhi’s borders and may take a call on setting up a panel headed by a former Chief Justice to find ways to resolve the impasse.

## Higher class kids may take laptops under Ammavodi

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NELLORE, JAN. 11

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Monday said the beneficiaries of the Amma Vodi scheme, whose children are studying in Class 9 to 12, can opt for a laptop instead of the financial assistance of ₹15,000 from the next academic year.

Addressing a large gathering after formally launching the second year Amma Vodi programme at Nellore on Monday, Jagan said the option is available for students availing ‘Vasati Deevena’ scheme. He also reminded his audience that the poor children missed online classes during lockdown because they did not have gadgets

like a laptop or smartphone.

He said the government is also introducing computer literacy courses from Class 8 to allow poor students to compete with the children from the affluent families.

“Previous governments ignored the welfare of children because they are not voters. But today their paternal uncle has become the Chief Minister and he will protect their interests” he said.

He dwelt at length on the special attention being paid by his government to provide the best infrastructure in government schools to offer quality education.

Recalling the days of his Padayatra, Jagan said he had observed the pathetic

conditions of the poor and labourers who failed to educate their children and he has now decided to support such children.

He said the government had last year supported 42 lakh Amma Vodi beneficiaries and this number has increased to 44.48 lakh this year. He said the government had also focussed on mid-day meals and improved the quality of food for the health of the students.

Because of such programmes, the Chief Minister claimed that the number of students who have migrated from private schools to government schools has been increasing significantly.

■ **Page 2: CMO to track students’ complaints: Jagan**

## Fist bump



Australia’s captain Tim Paine (left) and Indian captain Ajinkya Rahane greet each other at the end of the third cricket Test match at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) on Monday. — AFP

## HC stays SEC order on panchayat polls

**State can go ahead with vaccination programme**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 11

In a major relief to the state government busy with the Covid-19 vaccination programme, the Andhra Pradesh High Court on Monday suspended the order of the State Election Commission (SEC) to hold gram panchayat polls. Issuing an interim order, the court posted the case for next hearing on February 15.

Vacation bench judge Justice M. Ganga Rao heard the petition filed by the state government seeking declaration of schedule of elections for local bodies, imposing the model code of conduct and the consequential proceedings banning transfers, as arbitrary as “illegal” on the ground they violated Article 14 of the Constitution. The government also urged the court to issue a direction to the SEC to stop further proceedings relating to the

● **THE JUDGE** stated that the SEC issued the order for conduct of gram panchayat polls without holding proper consultations with the state government

election process.

The judge stated that the SEC issued the order for conduct of gram panchayat polls without holding proper consultations with the state government even as the Supreme Court had directed the SEC earlier to do so. The court opined that the impugned decision of the SEC was violative of Article 14 and 21 of the Constitution.

“The SEC’s decision to conduct elections would hamper the mammoth vaccination programme taken up by the Central government. It would also seriously affect the state government’s efforts to check the Covid-19 spread as also its mutation, affecting the

public health,” the court observed.

The court heard the arguments from advocate general S. Sriram, SEC’s standing counsel N. Ashwani Kumar, standing counsel for SEC and state election commissioner N. Ashwani Kumar and assistant solicitor general for Union of India represented by its secretary to the ministry of health and family welfare and also Union of India represented by home secretary, N. Haranath.

After hearing them, the court issued notice to the respondents to show cause as to why the writ petition should not be admitted, and directed the SEC secretary and election commissioner, Union health secretary and Union home secretary to show cause either by appearing in person or through an advocate before February 15.

■ **Page 2: Courts can’t interfere with polls: SEC**

## SEC sacks JD for indiscipline

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 11

The AP State Election Commission on Monday dismissed its joint director G. V. Sai Prasad on charges of indiscipline and breaching the Code of Conduct.

According to proceedings issued by State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar here, when the commission issued its election notification on January 8 for conduct of gram panchayat polls, all senior employees, including its secretary, were directed to

● **SEC ALSO** found that the JD had abused his authority to influence all employees of the commission to apply for 30 days’ leave en masse.

be available in headquarters and not be absent without prior intimation. Yet, the joint director (JD) Sai Prasad put in a leave letter for 30 days and deserted his station without any intimation. This happened despite him being the senior-most functionary after secretary. SEC also found that

the JD had abused his authority to influence all employees of the commission to apply for 30 days’ leave en masse. Sai Prasad, the commission charged, also goaded employees to desert their office with a view to paralyse functioning of the SEC at a time when the election process has been in progress.

The SEC found these acts to be gross indiscipline and an attempt to subvert the ongoing election process.

■ **Page 2: SEC invokes special powers to dismiss official**

## MINISTER HURT IN ROAD MISHAP, WIFE KILLED

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
with agency inputs  
KARWAR, JAN. 11

Union Minister for Ayush and Defence Shripad S. Naik was injured while his wife Vijaya and his personal assistant died in an accident at Hosakambi on Monday night.

Police officials said that they were travelling from Yellapur to Gokarna when the minister’s car overturned injuring all the six in the vehicle.

The injured were immediately rushed to the Ankola Taluk Hospital for treatment. Sources said that Vijaya Naik and the minister’s personal assistant died in the road mishap.

■ **Full report on Page 4**

## Court rejects Jagan plea on ED cases

**VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC**  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 11

In a blow to Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and MP V. Vijaysai Reddy, the CBI special court here on Monday rejected their pleas for first taking up trial of cases registered by CBI in the disproportionate assets and investments into Jagathi Publications, in which both are accused.

They wanted the trial into the six chargesheets filed against them on the same cases by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under the provisions

of Prevention of Money Laundering Act to be taken up later.

Not agreeing to their contentions, the court made it clear that ED cases, not related to those of CBI, can be tried earlier.

Jagan’s contentions were that ED had filed PMLA cases based on CBI charges against him. If CBI fails to establish the case against him, then, automatically, ED cases will turn infructuous.

He thus requested the court to first hear cases filed by CBI, rather than conducting the trial simultaneously.

**LAW | ABUSE**

**Notices issued to people let their land used for cockfights earlier**

## Cops warn farmers on cockfights

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KAKINADA, JAN. 11

Police have intensified their drive against the organisation of cockfights during the Sankranti festival by identifying grounds where the traditional fight was organised last year and by warning people against allowing their land to be used for organising the cockfights.

The police levelled the grounds and the fields where some of the organisers were making preparations for the cockfights. The East Godavari police



destroyed the grounds under Thondangi, Samalkot and Allavaram police station limits on Monday.

Allavaram sub-inspector B. Prabhakar said notices

were issued to 60 farmers, who had allowed their land to be used for cockfights last year, in his police station limits. He also warned them not to allow gamblers to

organise cockfights. “If the orders were violated, action would be taken according to law,” he said.

He said 50 persons, who allegedly organised or participated in cockfights last year, were taken in Boundover. “If they will participate or organise the cockfights, stringent action would be taken against them,” he said.

East Godavari SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi said that a task force has been formed to curb the cockfights and a campaign is being conducted by the police personnel in the villages to discourage

them to attend cockfights as they were against the law.

Asmi said the police are encouraging the people to participate in different games which help them to maintain their health. He requested the people to celebrate the festival with their family members, relatives and friends without involving in gambling.

West Godavari SP K. Narayan Naick said the police, women welfare officers, village secretaries and ward volunteers and also NGOs should create awareness among the people against cockfights.

## RBI WARNS NPA OF BANKS WILL RISE TO 13.5%

**Mumbai, Jan. 11:** Gross non-performing assets of banks may rise to 13.5 per cent by September 2021, from 7.5 per cent in September 2020 under the baseline scenario, according to Financial Stability Report (FSR) released by the RBI.

If the macroeconomic environment worsens into a severe stress scenario, the GNPA ratio may escalate to 14.8 per cent, the report said. “The stress tests indicate that the GNPA ratio of all scheduled commercial banks may increase o 13.5 per cent,” the FSR report added.



## SHORT TAKES

SUNEETHA FILES  
NOMINATION TO  
CONTEST FOR MLCDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 11

Pothula Suneetha filed her nomination paper representing the ruling YSRC to contest in the bypoll for AP Legislative Council under MLAs quota on Monday.

The Election Commission of India issued a notification to fill up one casual vacancy caused by her resignation as she defected to the YSRC from Telugu Desam last November. Though she has a tenure until 29 March 2023, as she resigned from her elected position, bypoll to be held to fill up the vacancy.

Suneetha met CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at his Camp Office in the morning and latter gave her Form-B as the party's nominee. The bypoll will be held on Jan. 28 and counting will also take place on the same day. With the YSRC Congress having 151 MLAs out of a total of 175 members in the Assembly, her election may be a mere formality.

YSRC COMPLAINS  
AGAINST BANDI FOR  
'BIBLE' REMARKDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 11

YSRC Congress leaders lodged a complaint with the Tirupati Urban District Police against Telangana BJP Chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar for his objectionable comments against the party and also trying to disturb communal harmony by asking voters to choose between Bible and Bhagavad Gita in the forthcoming Tirupati Lok Sabha by-elections.

YSRC SC Sell State Coordinator M.V.S. Mani and YSRC BC Cell Secretary S. Prabhakar and others met the Urban ASP Supraja and submitted a complaint against Bandi Sanjay. In the complaint, the YSRC leaders alleged that the Telangana BJP chief had made extremely disagreeable, communal and hate statements, encouraging hatred.

It may be recalled that Mr Bandi Sanjay Kumar recently stirred a controversy by asking Tirupati voters to choose between Bible and Bhagavad Gita in the forthcoming LS by-polls. He made these comments while inducting Osmania University (OU) JAC leaders into the BJP.

Following this, the ruling party in the state also launched a scathing attack against the BJP leader. Meanwhile, the YSRC leaders in Tirupati sought the police to take action against Bandi, including ordering his arrest and restraining him from making hate speeches and statements that disturb the communal harmony henceforth.

The YSRC leaders also submitted evidence and the complaint, including audio and video clips, paper clippings to ASP Supraja during the Spandana Programme. YSRC State Nayi Brahmin corporation Director Pullaiah, District minority president Shafi Khadri, SC Cell President T. Rajendra and others were also present.

SOMU DARES  
YSRC, TD FOR  
OPEN DEBATEDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 11

Bharatiya Janata Party state unit President Somu Veerajuu on Monday challenged the ruling YSRC and opposition Telugu Desam for an open date on development activities in Tirupati taken up by the BJP-led union government.

Addressing the party workers at a meeting held here on Monday, Veerajuu reiterated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mark is clearly visible in the development of the pilgrim city.

"Hence, BJP is the only party, which has a clear right to appeal votes from the public", he added.

"Today, numerous developments including flyover, development of parks, LED bulbs, modernization of Railway Station, over bridges and extension of airport are being carried out in Tirupati under the smart city project. BJP is the only which has vowed to complete all these ongoing projects", he maintained.

He also recalled the establishment of world class educational institutions in the city including the IIT, IISER, Indian culinary institute and other institutes by the union government.

Naidu will remain as  
'Mahila Drohi': Anil

TD chief creating hurdles for govt welfare programmes, says minister

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, JAN. 11

Minister for water resources Dr P. Anil Kumar Yadav that people of the state would teach a lesson to the TD chief for creating hurdles to welfare programmes, including the Amma Vodi programme. He was addressing a huge gathering at SVGS Grounds while taking part in the launch of the second round of Amma Vodi programme on Monday.

He demanded to know whether he will shut down his party if he fails to secure at least 25 per cent of the seats in the ensuing local body elections. He observed that other opposition parties would end up with less than 5 per cent of seats in the coming elections.

Anil Kumar said that the state government forced to offer D-form patts instead of the registration documents to the women beneficiaries under the Housing scheme because of Chandrababu Naidu's legal issues.

The TD chief will remain as 'Mahila Drohi' in the state, he asserted.

Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has stood first place among CM's in the country with respect to popularity among the public, P. Anil Kumar Yadav maintained.

School education Minister Adimulapu Suresh said that the state government had launched the second phase of Amma void programme after overcoming all the hurdles created by the opposition parties in the state.

Chief Minister has introduced reforms in School Education unlike never before, said the minister.

Industries Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy, Rajya Sabha MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy, Nellore MP Adala Prabhakar Reddy and all the legislators of the district were present apart from senior officials.

● Second phase of Amma void programme after overcoming all the hurdles created by the opposition parties, Minister A. Suresh.

CMO TO TRACK  
STUDENTS'  
COMPLAINTS: CM

FROM PAGE 1

Stressing that the state government has introduced the English medium in government schools for the benefit of the poor, the Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said it has launched a massive exercise to give a facelift to state-run schools by spending huge amounts of money on infrastructure.

Pointing to the measures to prevent dropouts and improve attendance in the government schools, he said village volunteers would visit the homes of the students not attending school for more than three days.

He said the government is deducting ₹1,000 from ₹15,000 for toilet maintenance in the schools as contribution gives a right to parents to question the bad conditions. In case of poor maintenance of the toilets, Jagan said students can call 1902 and his office would follow up on the complaints.

## COVID-19 | VACCINE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 11

Andhra Pradesh is likely to administer Covaxin, India's indigenously developed Covid-19 vaccine, on healthcare and frontline workers at 332 session sites on January 16.

Though 3.87 lakh beneficiaries are earmarked to get the vaccine initially, it



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is addressing the gathering at the second round of Amma Vodi scheme in Nellore on Monday.

Amma Vodi is a unique reform  
in education, says SpeakerDC CORRESPONDENT  
SRIKAKULAM, JAN. 11

Speaker Tammineni Sitaram, inaugurating the second phase of Ammavodi programme in Amadalavalasa in Srikakulam district on Monday, called the scheme was one important tool in the reforms launched in the education by the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

"The chief minister realised the importance of the role of mother in upbringing the children and educating them against all the odds. Financial help would help children to pursue their goals," the Speaker said.

He said the world has become highly competitive and children from the weaker sections should stay in the race to stay in the game. The government would play its role by extending financial help, he added.

In addition to Ammavodi, the government was also sanctioning Rs 4,100 crore under the fee reimbursement scheme. To motivate the children, the government was also giving shoes, school bags and uniforms on par with the corporate schools.

POVERTY DOES NOT HINDER  
EDUCATION: AMJAD BASHADC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, JAN. 11

State Deputy Chief Minister S.B. Amjad Basha said that the state government's main objective is to ensure that poverty does not hinder education. He was accompanied by Joint Collector (Development) Saikanth Verma and Kadapa Sub-Collector Prithvi Tej as chief guests at the inauguration of the Amma Vodi scheme at the Corporation Urdu Boys High School in Kadapa on Monday.

The deputy chief minister said that for the second year, the Amma Vodi scheme would provide financial assistance of Rs 6,673 crore across the state and Rs 402.11 crore in Kadapa district and Kadapa constituency. The government is depositing Rs 48.01 crore in the mother's accounts. He said the state government was ambitiously implementing the Amma Vodi scheme with the sole aim

AP UNIQUE AMONG 29 STATES IN  
EDUCATION, SAYS MAGUNTADC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, JAN. 11

Ongole MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy distributed cheques under Amma Vodi scheme to the beneficiaries during a programme held in Ongole on Monday.

He praised the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagannmohan Reddy for devising the unique scheme to ensure education for the poor and for allotting Rs 25,000 crore for the education sector unlike any other government in 29 states.

He said that the Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has been implementing almost 90 per cent of the promises he made during his Pada Yatra and in the manifestos.

The important step, introduction of English medium would be launched at the Anganwadi level from February 1, the Speaker said.

"Children in AP now know only two mamas. One is Chandamama and

The MP also lauded Jagannmohan Reddy for paying special attention to education, health and shelter to the poor.

He appealed to the beneficiaries of the Amma Vodi scheme to use the Rs 15,000 deposited in their accounts only for their children's educational needs.

Madhyapana Vimochana Samithi Chairman Lakshman Reddy called upon the teacher associations to compete for offering quality education to the students.

DEO V.S. Subba Rao said 4,74,552 mothers benefited to the extent of Rs 44.26 crore under Amma Vodi scheme in Prakasam district. Collector Pola Bhaskar and other officials were present.

the other Jagan mama," the Speaker said.

Around 3,48,331 women in Srikakulam district benefited from Ammavodi scheme. Patapatnam MLA Reddy, Shanti and Etcherla MLA and Gorle Kiran Kumar were present in the meeting.

AMMA VODI  
PROGRAMME  
HELD IN EGDC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, JAN 11

Amma Vodi programmes were organized in several places in East Godavari district. In Gandhingar Municipal High School at Kakinada, the Kakinada MP Vanga Gita, Kakinada MLA Dwarampudi Chandrasekhara Reddy, MLC Pandula Ravindra Babu and Kakinada Municipal Commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar participated. Gita said that the CM Jagan aimed at educating all the children in the state and he encouraged the mothers to admit their children without thinking of their economic status and he credited Rs.15,000 to every mother of below poverty line for the purpose. She said that 7,47,596 mothers are eligible for Amma Vodi programme. Chandrasekhara Reddy said that Jagan was giving priority to education, health and housing to poor.

HC decision on local body  
polls was expected, says BotsaDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 11

Minister for Municipal Administration Botsa Satyanarayana said the decision taken by the Andhra Pradesh High Court to suspend the election schedule announced by the State Election Commission was expected by the state government.

"The election commissioner did not take into consideration the present situation prevailing in the State and the massive exercise being taken up for inoculation of Covid-19 vaccine beginning from next Saturday," the minister told Deccan Chronicle from Vizianagaram

Asked about the appeals the SEC will make against the single judge decision, the minister said the government would continue with the same stance and explain the position.

BJP MLC P. V. N. Madhav said his party would respect the High Court's decision in suspending the election schedule. But the party is ready to contest the local polls irrespective of the schedules.

He said it was essential to conduct polls for the panchayat to strengthen the 3-tier system as prescribed by the Indian constitution.

"The local bodies need to be strengthened with self-reliance to serve the local poor," Madhav said.

Former minister and politburo member of TD Ch. Ayyanna Patrudu said Jagan Mohan Reddy was running away from the elections fearing a defeat.

The ruling YSRC will continue to avoid the elections as the realised they would never win another, Ayyanna Patrudu said.

State president of TD and former minister Kinjarapu Atchannaidu said his party would respect the decision taken by the High Court.

Talking to the reporters, Atchannaidu said that peoples' opinion about the ruling party would not change even if they mislead the courts with false information.

"Is Jagan Mohan Reddy scared of free and fair elections? Longing for a favourable election commissioner was nothing but an intention to manipulate the election results," Atchannaidu Naidu.

He asked if there was a virus scare why the chief minister launched the Ammavodi scheme in Nellore which saw a gathering of over 10,000.

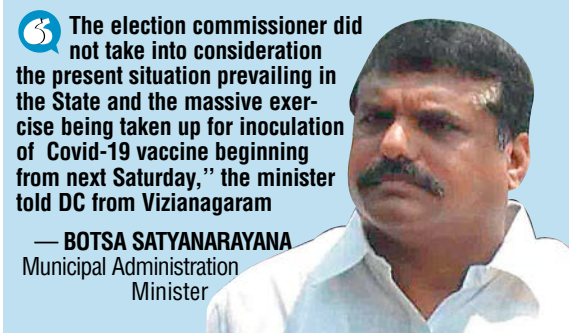
● "Is Jagan Mohan Reddy scared of free and fair elections? Longing for a favourable election commissioner was nothing but an intention to manipulate the election results," Atchannaidu, Telugu Desam leader.

Christians stage dharna,  
demand Naidu's apologyDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 11

Christians and members of the Vizag chapter of Andhra Pradesh Christian Leaders Forum (APCLF) expressed strong displeasure against unwarranted and derogatory remarks by the former chief minister and TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu.

The members took out a rally and staged a dharna at Gandhi statue near RTC Complex on Monday. They raised slogans against Naidu.

APCLF president A. Ravi Babu, addressing a gathering, said that mix-



The election commissioner did not take into consideration the present situation prevailing in the State and the massive exercise being taken up for inoculation of Covid-19 vaccine beginning from next Saturday," the minister told DC from Vizianagaram

— BOTSATATYANARAYANA  
Municipal Administration  
Minister

COURTS CAN'T INTERFERE WITH  
POLL PROCESS: SEC COUNSEL

FROM PAGE 1

Advocate general S. Sriram argued that the SEC had unilaterally notified the election schedule for gram panchayat polls without taking into consideration the efforts of the state government to take up the Covid-19 vaccination programme. He admitted that the state government was having the responsibility to conduct polls.

But, keeping in mind the importance to save the lives of the people, the government was opposing the conduct of polls as announced by the SEC, he said.

The Advocate General also informed the court that the SEC failed to come up with any clarification on the earlier notification issued for conducting the MPTC and ZPTC polls as they too

were halted to safeguard the health of the people.

SEC counsel N. Ashwani Kumar argued that once the election notification was issued, courts were not supposed to intervene in the matter. Referring to the Supreme Court orders issued earlier, he urged the court not to issue any interim order to stop the election process.

Assistant solicitor general representing the Centre, N. Haranath, informed the court that as the Centre was getting ready for taking up the vaccination programme, the states were duty-bound to implement it.

Meanwhile, as the government employees federation and YSR teachers federation also filed lunch motion petitions, the court said that its order would be applicable to such petitions also.

SEC INVOKES SPECIAL POWERS TO DISMISS  
AN OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 243 K

FROM PAGE 1

The SEC has invoked plenary powers vested within it under Article 243 K, read with Article 324 of Constitution of India, to summarily discharge its joint director from service of the Election Commission for safe-

guarding the integrity of ongoing election process in the state.

The SEC went on to underline that JD Sai Prasad is not entitled to any terminal benefits. He has also been barred from entering into any other government service directly or indirectly.

HC VERDICT IS A LESSON FOR SEC,  
SAYS SATYANARAYANADC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 11

R&B minister M. Shankar Narayana observed the High Court decision on putting off election notification was a lesson for State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar who acted with a state of ego instead of positively for people's health during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We never fear local body elections as the people of all sections are in favour of chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

While we wanted to complete the vaccination process for covid, the State Election Commissioner wantedly issued notification and the court slammed on the decision", Mr Shankar Narayana said.

He further added that the State Election Commissioner was on strategy acting according to Telugu Desam's guidance to disturb welfare schemes in the state.

The minister had participated in the Amma Vodi programme launching at Rajendra Municipal High School on Monday.

EX-MP WELCOMES  
SEC DECISION ON  
LOCAL BODY POLLSDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 11

Congress working committee (CWC) Special Invitee and former MP Chinta Mohan welcomed the decision of the State Election Commission to conduct the local body elections.

Speaking to media persons here on Monday, the former MP said that the state government led by the YSRC is in fear over the possible defeat in the ensuing local body elections and hence they are raising objections over the conduct of elections.

Criticizing the state government, Chinta alleged that the IAS and IPS officers in the state are unhappy over the Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's rule. "The Chief Minister has been interacting with only a few officials. It is very unfortunate that the government diverted SC, ST, OBC scholarships, mid-day meals and Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan funds to the Amma Vodi scheme. Taking all into consideration, the YSRC party is in fear to go for the local body elections", he said.

they want to undergo vaccination presuming that it could protect them from the mutant virus also.

Andhra Pradesh Government Doctors' Association convener Dr D. Jayadheer said "We have advised all our healthcare workers to undergo vaccination without fail and make themselves safe from coronavirus."

tion even as its efficacy is not so high and a lot of data on human trials is yet to be out. However, we are ready to take the vaccine as it is meant to safeguard us from coronavirus."

But some healthcare workers are reluctant as they doubt its utility in protecting them from the virus. With the UK mutant strain spreading rapidly,

● The State health authorities did not include lab technicians and counsellors from APSACS from the vaccination programme, even though their services were utilised for conduct of Covid-19 tests and also for uploading data for varied related services.

and other health complications, stated health officials.

A section of healthcare workers are worried lot and feel nervous about the impact of the vaccine on

is only based on the number of doses supplied by the Centre that the health authorities will go ahead with the drive in the state.

Once administered, the vaccine is likely to cause side-effects like low intensity fever, headache, body pains, allergic reactions on the body and may even trigger autoimmune diseases thyroid, psoriasis



## IN BRIEF

**ACB raids RWS  
Vijayawada office**

**Vijayawada:** Anti-Corruption Bureau investigators made a surprise check at the office of executive engineer, rural water supply in the city here on Monday. According to ACB authorities, following allegations on tax collections variations and some irregularities on the contractors, the officials are inspecting the office even at late hours.

**ACB TRAPS  
VILLAGE OFFICER  
TAKING BRIBE**

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIZIANAGARAM, JAN. 11**

The officials of Anti-Corruption-Bureau (ACB) on Monday arrested Pakki Govind, working as the Village Revenue Officer, Grama Sachivalayam, in Ampavalli village under Balijipeta Mandal in Vizianagaram district for demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹4,000 from a farmer Ganta Sivaram. The farmer had applied for the mutation of inherited agricultural lands in Ampavalli village in the name of his father's brother.

Based on the complaint from Sivaram, the ACB officials laid a trap and caught Govind red-handed when he was accepting the money. The accused VRO was produced before the ACB Court in Vizag city and sent to remand.

**ACB UNEARTHES  
₹1.02CR ASSETS  
FROM EMPLOYEE**

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, JAN. 11**

The ACB sleuths unearthed disproportionate assets of ₹1,02,35,000 belong to senior assistant of Godavari Works Division in Dowleswaram Circle Pallakurthi Padma Rao on Monday.

The officials found 1 house worth of ₹27,14,555, one flat worth ₹31,96,400, One house site measuring 220 square yards worth ₹3.30 lakh, two motor cycles worth ₹1.45 lakh and investment of ₹37.50 lakh in Cherukuri Real Estate. Besides, they seized ₹16,000 cash, ₹4.19 lakh bank balance, 300 grams of gold worth ₹10 lakh, 250 grams of silver worth ₹10,000 and household articles worth ₹4 lakh.

According to the officials, Padma Rao was appointed as junior assistant in the year 1997 and worked in Irrigation SE's Office and subsequently he was promoted as senior assistant in the year 2010 and presently he has been working as senior assistant in the office of EE, Godavari Headworks Division.

The accused officer was arrested and produced before ACB Special Judge Court.

**RELAY FASTS  
AGAINST DIVIS  
ENTER 7TH DAY**

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, JAN. 11**

The relay fasts, observed by the CITU activists reached the seventh day on Monday against the proposed pharma unit by the Divis Labs. Also, they demanded the lifting of criminal cases on the farmers and the agitators on the issue. The CITU activists observed the relay fasts from January 5 in front of the collector's office. The CPM District Committee member Karan Prasad Rao said that inaugurated the today's relay fasts and said that there is no comparison for the government's statements and the implementation. He said that the government made clear that if the people are not interested for the unit, the pharma unit would not be allowed.

The Industries Minister Mekapati Gowtham Reddy has given a statement that lifting the criminal cases against the agitators.

However, the Divis management continued its works on the controversial site and 36 agitators are still in remand without granting bail.

He urged the ruling party leaders to give up counter-attacks on the opposition parties and join hands with the agitators to permanently cancel the permissions for the unit permanently in Thondangi mandal.

The CITU leader M. Venkata Ramana, Ch. Padma, Fatima, P. Satyavathi, T. Nagamani, T.K. Venkateswara Rao and others were present.

**Vaccine drive**

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy inspects the vaccine preservative box prior to the Prime Minister's video conference at the camp office on Monday.

— BY ARRANGEMENT

**Drop in black carbon  
aerosol concentrations**

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, JAN. 11**

Scientists at the National Atmospheric Research Laboratory (NARL) have found decreasing trends in the surface (black carbon) aerosol concentrations at several locations in the past one decade.

Aerosols, the tiny particles suspended in the atmosphere, affect life through adverse health effects and have an enormous impact on climate. Aerosol sources include extensive burning of crop residue and forest fires, besides exhaust from vehicles, as also

from other aspects of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation. Any change in the natural and human activities alters the climate and climate-related impacts.

Gadanki, an autonomous organisation under the Department of Space located in Chittoor district, said the testing was done in its lab.

According to a research paper 'Changing patterns in aerosol vertical distribution over South and East Asia' published in the journal 'Nature-Scientific Reports', "substantial imprints of

aerosols are being noticed over South-East Asia, where extensive amounts of man-made aerosols with complex chemical, physical and optical characteristics are being emitted."

"Based on long-term satellite measurements, a 'dipole pattern' in Aerosol Optical Depth (AOD) has been publicised and it indicated a concurrent increase over India and reduction over China. Scientists have credited the reduction over China to clean air actions. Conversely, over India and adjoining seas, a rapid increase in

aerosol loading has been reported," said NARL scientist and Bhatnagar awardee Dr M. Venkat Ratnam.

Dr A.K. Patra, director, NARL, said that the increasing trend in free tropospheric aerosol has important consequences on the background meteorology and dynamics. "Depending on the aerosol types, they can modify the cloud condensation nuclei (CCN) activity directly and the background instability indirectly, thus affecting convection and/or precipitation processes," he said.

**New ornaments**

The deities Veerabhadra Swamy and Bhadrakali Mata were decorated with new gold ornaments on Monday in Alladupalli Veerabhadra Swamy temple in Proddutur mandal of Kadapa district. Hundreds of devotees worshipped the lord on Monday. A few days ago an unknown devotee presented the gold to the temple worth ₹70 lakh. The temple management has renewed the copper kavacham, Kireetam and other ornaments with gold coating. All the ornaments were used for decorating the deities in the temple.

**15 students to  
study in Sweden**

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 11**

The first batch of 15 students of Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Anantapur, in collaboration with Sweden based university for the dual-degree programme, is about to join classes in Sweden. The students got student Visas for Sweden supposed to reach by January 15. JNTUA sources said about five students have already reached Sweden and the rest of the students were about to go by the scheduled date.

JNTUA had introduced dual-degree engineering courses after MoU with BTH (Blekinge Institute of Technology Sweden) three years ago. The university allotted 30 seats, 10 seats each in computer science, ECE and Mechanical departments.

The Rector Dr K. Prahlada Rao said the varsity had MoU with Sweden University.

The students under the dual programme need to stay at Sweden

University in their fourth year after completing a three-year course in JNTUA campus.

The first batch of students who successfully completed a three-year course as part of dual degree programme has to spend one year at BTH (Blekinge Institute of Technology Sweden). Registrar Vijayakumar told DC about 15 students got clearances including student visas to join for their fourth-year degree in Sweden. He observed a good response from students to be part of a dual degree programme in engineering which would improve more skills and attractive placements, including in Sweden.

The Covid-19 will not have impact on students who wish to travel for Sweden, varsity authorities observed.

The Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Anantapur, has also started counselling for admissions to dual degree courses.

**AP RECORDS  
121 COVID-19  
CASES, 2 DEATHS**

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 11**

Andhra Pradesh registered 121 new Covid-19 cases and two deaths in the last 24 hours.

Out of 30,933 samples tested, 121 persons were infected with Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,23,55,607 samples tested so far, 8,85,037 persons were found infected with Covid-19 and of them, 8,75,456 were recovered while 2,450 persons remain still active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of Covid-19, East Godavari registered 24 followed by 23 in Chittoor, 13 in Visakhapatnam, 12 in Guntur, nine in Nellore, eight each in Kadapa and Krishna, six each in Anantapur and Kurnool, five each in Prakasam and West Godavari and two in Srikakulam.

Nellore district reported the highest number of cumulative Covid-19 active cases with 437 followed by 359 in Guntur, 324 in Krishna, 222 in East Godavari, 213 in West Godavari, 191 in Visakhapatnam, 190 in Chittoor, 134 in Kadapa, 119 in Anantapur, 111 in Kurnool, 68 in Prakasam, 56 in Srikakulam and 26 in Vizianagaram.

Two Covid-19 infected patients died, one each in Krishna and Visakhapatnam, raising toll to 7,131. Among the cumulative cases of deaths, Chittoor registered 845 followed by 672 in Krishna, 667 in Guntur, 636 in East Godavari, 597 in Anantapur, 580 in Prakasam, 556 in Visakhapatnam, 539 in West Godavari, 506 in Nellore, 497 in Kurnool, 461 in Kadapa, 347 in Srikakulam.

**Demand to make  
Narasapuram as  
special district**

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, JAN. 11**

The former MLA of Narasapuram Bandaru Madhava Naidu of West Godavari took out a procession in Narasapuram town, demanding the government form Narasapuram Parliamentary Constituency as a special district. He started his procession by walking from his house and reached to Sub-Collector's Office through Gandhi Statue centre, Main Road and Ambedkar Centre. He submitted a memorandum to the Sub-Collector, urging the government to form Narasapuram as a special district. He said that Narasapuram is a centre for coastal area in the district as

Narasapuram was upgraded as Municipal Nagara Panchayat in 1966 and now it is A1 grade municipality. He said that the ONGC is unearthing the oil and gas resources from Narasapuram area under KG Basin. He said that the government proposed to form new districts as each Lok Sabha constituency is a district. But, he alleged that there are efforts to change the district centre for Narasapuram Parliamentary District. Then the town would be mere for division headquarter, but not the district headquarter. He said that he would launch an agitation unless the government declares Narasapuram as District headquarter for the new district.

**Cops arrest loan  
recovery agent**

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 11**

The Visakhapatnam police arrested a loan recovery agent of instant loan financing (online loan) app in connection with the suicide of the 25-year-old woman Mandava Ahalada, a resident of Gajuwaka in Vizag city.

The arrested was identified as Pune based Gautham Mule, working as a loan recovery agent with Hyper Tails at Koregaon Park, Cosmos Bank in Pune of Maharashtra.

The police established the role of three others Parasuram Lahu, Liang Tiantian and H.R. Hakib Sheik in connection with

the suicide of the woman.

DCP (Crimes) V. Suresh Babu said that Mandava Ahalada ended her life by hanging on November 3, 2020, unable to bear the harassment, mental agony and humiliation over non-payment of instant loans availed through online apps.

Based on Ahalada's mother Usha Rani's complaint, the Gajuwaka police registered a case under Section 306 of IPC (abetment of suicide) and handed over the case to central crime station for further investigation.

The family members told police that she was depressed due to the harassment meted out to her for failing to give in to the demands of loan app firm.

**'EDUCATE DIST  
YOUTH IN SKILL  
DEVELOPMENT'**

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, JAN. 11**

District Collector Chevuru Harikiran directed the concerned authorities to make arrangements for training of educated youth in the district in the field of interest towards skill development and immediately formulate action plans to provide skill development training to the youth as required by the industries.

He held a district-level skill development committee meeting in his chamber at the collectorate on Monday, and the joint collectors, C.M. Saikanth Varma and P. Dharma Chandrareddy.

**State farmers' association  
demands facilities at projects**

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, JAN. 11**

Andhra Pradesh Farmers Association district general secretary Gali Chandra and other farmer leaders demanded that infrastructure such as roads, electric lights and drinking water be provided to visit Gandikota, Chitravati, Pydipalem, Vamikonda, Sarvaraya Sagar and Telugu Ganga projects in the district.

Farmer representatives Lingamurthy, CPI senior leaders Chennakeshava Reddy, AITUC district deputy general secretary Badulla, Manohar Reddy, and others visited irrigation projects in the district.

They later told reporters that all the district's irriga-

tion projects had been filled due to heavy rains this year. They said that even if the projects were completed due to decades of struggle, the farmers would not be able to use the water as the crop canals under them would not be constructed. For the first time in history, 26 TMCs in Gandikota reservoir, 10 TMCs in Chitravati, six TMCs in Pydipalem and six TMCs in Mylavaram were flooded with the full water level. They said tourists were

severely affected by the lack of infrastructure such as roads; drinking water and electricity that tourists need to visit. They expressed concern that the Pydipalem Reservoir embankment was completely covered with bushes, threatening the embankment's very existence in the future.

Irrigation officials have been asked to develop a comprehensive plan to protect the current rabi crop in the wake of hopes that the irrigation projects, which are completely flooded to the farmers affected by the successive droughts and cyclones, are raising hopes. They demanded that the strategy be developed as much as possible by next Kharif.





SHORT TAKES

PDP YOUTH LEADER SENT TO 7-DAY REMAND

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, JAN. 11

People's Democratic Party (PDP) youth leader Waheed Ur Rehman Parra was on Monday sent to a 7-day police remand in connection with an alleged politician-militants nexus and terror funding case by a court in Jammu.

A report received from the winter capital said that two days after arresting Parra, a special wing of the J&K police produced him before a court which granted it his custody till January 18 to enable it to interrogate him in connection with a case related to an alleged nexus involving politicians, militants and their Over Ground Workers (OWGs) and sympathisers and illegal money transactions.

The police sources said that the case in which the J&K police's Criminal Investigation Kashmir (CIK) wing rearrested Parra was registered by it under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 sometime ago and has since filed over two dozen FIRs at various police stations across the Union Territory. The sources said that Parra will be brought to Srinagar for questioning.

The sleuths of the CIK had taken 33-year-old Parra in custody within the premises of a Jammu prison soon after he was released from over six week long detection at the weekend.

MP WOMAN SAVES GANG RAPE VICTIM FROM ABDUCTION

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JAN. 11

In a show of courage, a woman in a Madhya Pradesh village challenged four miscreants and rescued a 'gang rape' victim from them. Sribai Dhanak (54) of Abchand village under Sagar district fought single-handedly with the four men who were trying to abduct a woman after allegedly gang raping her, and saved her from their clutches.

"It was around 1 am on September 29, the woman carrying two children, ran towards me pleading to save her. She was completely naked. I was then alone in my farmland harvesting the standing crop", Sribai recounted the incident before Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday. She tried to calm down the woman by assuring to protect her from the four miscreants who later surfaced and threatened to burn her alive by pouring petrol on her if she resisted their move to kidnap the woman.

"I had picked a 'lathi' (stick) and dared them to come close to the woman. I held them back for nearly half-an-hour till my son, Debraj, landed there to take them on. Later, my son called the local police on his mobile phone, scaring the four accused to flee the spot", she recalled.

DIDI LIKENS BJP WORKERS TO TRUMPISTS

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JAN. 11

Equating the BJP workers with former US President Donald Trump's supporters, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday made a forecast that they would erupt like the violent Republican followers if their party loses the next election. In a fresh jibe, the Trinamul Congress supreme also branded the BJP as a "Bharatiya Junk Party" to mock its fill-up of rank and file with tainted leaders from other parties ahead of the Assembly polls.

"They (BJP) first inflicted us with *notebandi* (demonetisation). Then Covid-19 left us *grihabandi* (home confinement). Next they will do *jailbandi* before putting entire India under confinement like Trump has been doing in the US. Like he insisted 'I won, I won' even after his defeat, they will also claim '*Hum Jeeta Hai, Hum Jeeta Hai*' after their loss. There is no difference between them. They are same just like two sides of the same coin," Banerjee told a party rally at Ranaghat in Nadia.

Alleging the rule of "dictatorship through Presidential form of governance" across the country, she claimed, "The BJP is setting the central agencies after people to bring them on its side. Some people who minted lot of money have switched their side under the threat of either the CBI or ED."

Delhi bans livestock from other states

8 samples sent to lab test positive for avian influenza; Dy CM asks people not to panic

DC CORRESPONDENT With agency inputs NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

The national capital on Monday confirmed bird flu cases after eight samples sent to a Bhopal-based laboratory tested positive for avian influenza. "All eight samples — four from a park in Mayur Vihar Phase 3, three from Sanjay Lake and one from Dwarka — have been found positive for avian influenza. The report of the test results arrived on Monday morning," said Dr Rakesh Singh from the animal husbandry unit of the Development

Department. However, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Monday asked people not to panic as there is no cause for concern. "Only samples of duck from Sanjay Lake have tested positive for bird flu. There is no cause for concern. Reports of other samples are awaited," Sisodia said at a press briefing. The Delhi government had also decided to ban the sale of processed and packaged chicken brought from outside the city as a precautionary measure, he said.

"The Delhi government is making all efforts to check the spread of bird flu and monitoring the situation. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is constantly in touch with officials. There is no need to panic as bird flu does not spread from one person to another," he said.

He said Sanjay Lake area was sanitised after the samples of ducks from there tested positive for bird flu, he said.

Sisodia also listed steps taken by the government to prevent the spread of the disease, especially since park areas in Delhi have reported several deaths among crows and ducks in the last week.

The government has also closed down Ghazipur poultry market and banned entry of livestock from outside Delhi.

Sisodia said that the Delhi government has decided to ban sale of processed and packaged chicken brought from outside the city as a precautionary measure. The poultry market in



Horticulture team members gather geese for medication following reports of bird flu cases at Sanjay Lake in New Delhi on Monday.

— PTI

Ghazipur has been temporarily shut down.

Meanwhile, the Himachal Pradesh government on Monday banned the supply of all poultry products from other states for a week amid the bird flu scare, an official spokesman said.

In a statement issued here, Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur said the ban was imposed to ensure that infection sources do not come from other states through poultry items. Meanwhile, 122 more migratory birds of various species were found dead in Pong Dam Lake Wildlife Sanctuary on Monday, wildlife department officials said.

With this, the death toll of migratory water birds has risen to 4,357. "Most of the dead birds stuck in the inaccessible swampy areas have been retrieved and the area cleared of carcasses," Chief Wildlife Warden Archana Sharma said. Besides, around 215 other birds including crows have also been found dead in various parts of the state.

Five districts in Maha hit by bird flu, health alert issued

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 11

Maharashtra has become the ninth state in the country to be hit by bird flu as crows and birds from five districts were found positive for avian influenza by the Bhopal-based National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD). State Health Minister Rajesh Tope has called for a health alert to be issued across the state to tackle the disease.

The Bhopal-based lab confirmed that two crows from Mumbai died due to bird flu while three pond egrets and a parrot from neighbouring Thane were found positive for avian influenza virus. In addition to this, a chicken and two herons from Parbhani, while crows

from Beed and Dapoli (in Ratnagiri district) were infected by avian influenza virus.

Apart from Maharashtra, bird flu cases have so far been confirmed in Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi.

In Mumbai, 11 more dead crows were found near Tata Colony in Chembur's RCF area, whereas in Thane as many as 20 birds, including pond herons, parakeets have been found dead over the last four days. Some 800 chickens in a poultry farm were found dead due to bird flu at Muramba village in Parbhani.

"Culling of all birds will now be undertaken up to a

1km radius of the infected zone in Parbhani where the poultry samples were found positive. The district administration has decided to cull nearly 8,000 birds in the Muramba village," Parbhani district collector Deepak Muglikar said.

The Maharashtra animal husbandry department has so far recorded 1,205 deaths of various birds since January 8.

Tope said that there is a need to issue a health alert across the state to tackle the disease.

"It has now been confirmed that bird flu has entered Maharashtra. To prevent the spread of the disease, the health and animal husbandry departments should issue a health alert," he said.

LUCKNOW ZOO CLOSES AVIARY FOR VISITORS

**Lucknow, Jan. 11:** The Lucknow Zoo has suspended its bird exchange programme and closed its aviary for visitors after Uttar Pradesh confirmed outbreak of the avian influenza when samples of a couple of bird carcasses in Kanpur zoo were found positive for the disease.

The Kanpur Zoological Park has already been closed for visitors till further orders.

"The bird section of the Lucknow Zoo was closed on Sunday and the bird exchange programme has been temporarily suspended. The bird-exchange programme is carried out on a regular basis. Last year, we had brought two to three birds in exchange," Zoo official said. — PTI

BJP will take care of Assam's unique culture, says Nadda

MANOJ ANANDI | DC GUWAHATI, JAN. 11

Bharatiya Janata Party president J.P. Nadda on Monday said that his party will always take good care of the state's unique culture and language. Nadda, who is on a two-day visit to poll-bound Assam, addressed a public rally in Silchar. He highlighted the Modi government's achievements while referring that the Bodo crisis which was hanging for nearly 50 decades as well the Bru-Reang crisis were resolved by the BJP-led government at the Centre. Targeting the Congress-led opposition in Assam, Nadda said that the state got only ₹50,000 crore for development during the Congress regime, however, the Modi government provided ₹3 lakh crore for the development of the north-eastern state.

Listing down BJP government's achievements,



BJP national president J.P. Nadda addresses a public meeting in Silchar on Monday.

— PTI

Nadda said that Assam is 100 per cent open defecation free, and out of the 11 crore toilets built, 35 lakh were built here. He also lauded the achievement of the state in the health sector while referring to the low mortality rate from the previous regime.

The BJP chief said, "Lotus is blooming across India. The NDA always talked about giving importance to the state of Assam in India. If the identity of Assam has been strengthened at national level, it was done by the NDA government only".

ASSAM TO WAIVE MFI LOANS FOR WOMEN

DC CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI, JAN. 11

In a series of freebies announced by the government in the run up to the Assembly polls in April this year, Assam finance minister and senior BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Monday announced that the state government will waive off the loans borrowed by women from micro-finance institutions (MFI).

Sarma while addressing a public meeting said, "We have decided to waive off the loans taken by our mothers and sisters from MFIs as soon as possible so that they can lead a dignified life. We cannot let them be harassed by the brokers of MFIs."

Aim is to get 30-cr vaccinated: PM

VINEETA PANDEY | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday held a meeting, through video conferencing, with the chief ministers and administrators of all states and Union Territories to review the status and preparedness for Covid-19 vaccination that will kick off from January 16.

The PM said India aims to achieve vaccination for about 30 crore people in the next few months and added that the state governments will not have to bear any cost towards the inoculation of the 3 crore health workers (including private sector), frontline workers, police, paramilitary and civil defence personnel, sanitation workers and revenue officials associated with containment and surveillance in the first stage.

The PM, however, remained silent on who pays for the rest of the population though the Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan had said

earlier that the vaccines will be free of cost for all.

The PM said that the priority of who gets the vaccine first has been decided as per the advice of the experts and scientific community after consultation with the states. He also cautioned that there will be no out-of-turn vaccination for politicians and, instead of jumping the queue, they should wait for their turn. The PM's statement came after requests from Haryana and Punjab state government to include their elected representatives like MPs and MLAs in the first phase vaccination list.

The Prime Minister said that the country is in a decisive phase of this fight, with the start of the world's biggest vaccination campaign from January 16. "From January 16, India will begin the world's biggest vaccination campaign. It is a matter of pride that the two vaccines which have been given approval for emergency use are made in India," PM said. He underlined that "the

most important thing in this vaccination campaign is the identification and monitoring of those who have to be vaccinated. For this, a digital platform named CoWin has also been created using modern technology."

The government will use Aadhaar to register genuine beneficiaries and for the timely second dosage. After a person receives the first dose of vaccination, CoWin will immediately generate a digital vaccination certificate. This certificate will also act as a reminder for the second dose, after which a final certificate will be given.

The PM noted that the booth-level strategy used for elections needs to be used here as well and added that during vaccination, people must maintain appropriate behavior to stave off any spread of infection. "We must continue to follow Covid-19 protocols during the vaccination campaign. All states and UTs must ensure that rumours around the vaccination programme are not

allowed to spread," the PM said.

It is learnt that the government has placed order with the Serum Institute of India (SII) for its Covishield vaccine at a price of ₹200 per vial for the first 100 million doses. SII CEO had told the media that the vaccine is likely to be priced at about ₹1,000 per dose in the private market once the government allows for that. If the government does not fund or subsidise the vaccines for the rest of the population then the two-dose vaccination schedule will cost a person ₹2,000.

Though the daily fresh cases of Covid-19 in India are on a decline — 16,311 cases were reported in the last 24 hours — the country is facing a fresh challenge from the new variant of the mutated Covid-19 virus that has been imported through the UK returnees. The number of persons with the new variant of the virus has reached 96. In the last 24 hours the daily fatality figures fell down below 200 and were 161 on Monday.

SRIPAD NAIK INJURED IN ROAD MISHAP, WIFE KILLED

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs KARWAR, JAN. 11

Union Minister for Ayush and Defence Shripad S. Naik was injured while his wife Vijaya and his personal assistant died in an accident at Hosakambi on Monday night.

Police officials said that they were travelling from Yellapur to Gokarna when the minister's car overturned injuring all the six in the vehicle.

The injured were immediately rushed to the Ankola Taluk Hospital for treatment. Sources said that Vijaya Naik and the minister's personal assistant died in the road mishap.

Four others including the minister were seriously injured. They were shifted to hospital in Goa.

Naik is being brought to Goa Medical College for further treatment, the official said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken to Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant to ensure proper medical treatment for the minister, sources said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also spoke to Sawant about speedy medical treatment of Naik (68).

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa condoled the demise of Naik's wife and conveyed his wishes for Naik's speedy recovery.

Police said Naik, along with his wife, personal assistant Deepak, his close confidante Sai Kiran, gunman and the driver were heading from Yallapur to Gokarna on Monday night.

On the way, the driver lost his control over the car near Hosakambi village in Ankola Taluk of Uttara Kannada and the vehicle overturned.

"It was not a collision between vehicles. Prima facie it appears to be the case of the driver losing control of the car" a police officer said.

PEDOPHILE | HELD

CBI brings him to Delhi for detailed forensic, medical and psychological assessment

CBI probe finds 70 kids abused by UP govt engineer

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

A CBI probe into the Uttar Pradesh child porn racket has revealed that 70 children were allegedly exploited by the Uttar Pradesh government junior engineer Ram Bhawan, who was arrested last year.

Sources in the agency said, "the victims include children as young as 4 years to adults of age 22 years. Some of the exploited children are relatives of Ram Bhawan." The arrest

ed junior engineer Ram Bhawan is now undergoing certain tests at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in the national capital, sources said, adding he will also be examined for his mental stability apart from HIV.

The CBI has brought the junior engineer to the national capital for a detailed forensic, medical and psychological assessment by a team of AIIMS doctors, officials said.

He will undergo tests to assess psychological state, voice analysis and potency

by experts, officials said. The team of AIIMS experts will conduct an exhaustive analysis of his psychological condition, they said. His voice analysis will be done at Central Forensic Science Laboratory to compare it with the voice in videos recovered during searches at his residence, they said.

In addition, he will also undergo a potency test to discard any future claim by the accused about his inability to perform sexual acts, they said.

The accused is believed

to have told CBI investigators that he was silently operating in the three districts — Hamirpur, Banda and Chitrakoot — for the last 10 years, preying upon poor children between 5-16 years of age, they said.

He used to buy their silence using cash and gifts of electronic gadgets such as mobile phones, officials said.

The modus operandi adopted by the accused helped him to keep away from the radar of investigating agencies.

"Apart from the physical

abuse of these children, the accused also allegedly recorded their acts using their mobile phones, laptops and other electronic devices.

"It was further alleged that these photographs and video films containing child sexual abuse material were published and transmitted by the accused using the Internet," CBI had said after the arrest.

In November, CBI arrested Ram Bhawan (40) for sexually abusing minors for several years and sell-

ing the content on the Internet. The CBI also arrested two other persons last week, including an engineer, for the sale and purchase of videos of sexual abuse of children over Instagram and other social media platform.

"Investigators also found that the porn videos the accused sold on the dark web were of high quality. The agency has in its possession about 100 videos found on pen drives and a laptop it received from an anonymous whistle-blower. It recovered spy cam-

eras and video making equipment during the searches it carried out as part of its investigation", sources said. The agency is also investigating the role of family members of Ram Bhawan, sources said adding if required the agency may also analyse their call detail records.

Meanwhile, it is also believed that another central probe agency — Enforcement Directorate — may initiate a separate probe under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.



## SHORT TAKES

## CHINA: NO BIRTH CONTROL IN XINJIANG

Beijing, Jan. 11: A Chinese official on Monday denied Beijing has imposed coercive birth control measures among Muslim minority women, following an outcry over a tweet by the Chinese Embassy in Washington claiming that government police had freed women of the Uighur ethnic group from being “baby-making machines.”

Xu Guixiang, a deputy spokesperson for the Xinjiang regional government, said Monday that birth control decisions were made of the person's own free will and that “no organisational or individual can interfere.” “The growth rate of the Uighur population is not only higher than that of the whole Xinjiang population, but also higher than that of the minority population, and more significantly higher than that of the (Chinese majority) Han population,” Xu said.

## KIM ASSUMES LATE FATHER'S MANTLE

Seoul, Jan. 11: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has had his official party title changed, state media reported Monday, assuming a position previously held by his late father in what analysts said was a move to bolster his authority.

The North Korean economy is struggling in the face of self-imposed coronavirus isolation, and is subject to multiple sanctions over its banned nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

At the same time, nuclear talks with the United States have been deadlocked since the collapse of the Hanoi summit between Kim and President Donald Trump in February 2019. The ruling Workers' Party of Korea “unanimously adopted” a decision to elect Kim as general secretary at its congress on Sunday, the official KCNA news agency reported. “All the delegates expressed full support with stormy applause in great excitement,” it said.

## JIHADISTS KILL 13 SOLDIERS IN NIGERIA

Kano, Jan. 11: Thirteen soldiers have died in an ambush by jihadist fighters from the Islamic State West Africa Province group in volatile north-eastern Nigeria, two army sources said on Monday.

Heavy gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades hit a military convoy in Gazagana village, 30 kilometres from Yobe state capital Damaturu on Saturday. “We lost 13 soldiers in this ambush and several were injured,” an officer said.

The convoy was headed for a military base at Buni Yadi, another 20 kilometres from Damaturu, said the second army source, who gave the same death toll.

“It was a fierce battle and the terrorists also suffered casualties,” he said, without giving a figure. The ISWAP group carries out regular attacks in Buni Yadi region on soldiers and travellers, with the violence spilling over into Borno state.

Since 2009, the jihadist campaign in northeast Nigeria has focused on Borno where the Boko Haram group is also active.

## AZERBAIJAN, ARMENIA HOLD TALKS IN RUSSIA

Moscow, Jan. 11: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday hosted his counterparts from Armenia and Azerbaijan, their first meeting since a Russia-brokered truce ended six weeks of fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh.

As he sat down for talks in the Kremlin with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Putin said that the peace agreement has been successfully implemented, laying the foundation for a fair settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He noted that senior officials from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia will now discuss further moves to restore traffic links in the region after the decades-long conflict. The November 10 peace deal ended 44 days of hostilities in which the Azerbaijani army routed Armenian forces and reclaimed control over large parts of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas. Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but was under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia.

## Biden taps career diplomat William Burns as CIA chief

Taps a retired veteran diplomat who helped lead secret talks with Iran

Washington, Jan. 11: US President-elect Joe Biden on Monday announced William Burns as his pick to lead the Central Intelligence Agency, tapping a retired veteran diplomat who helped lead secret talks with Iran.

Burns, along with Biden's nominee for director of national intelligence, Avril Haines, will be tasked with rebuilding the US spy community's reputation after it was heavily politicized under outgoing President Donald Trump.

Currently president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a leading Washington foreign policy think-tank, Burns will be the first career diplomat to lead the CIA. Presidents have generally turned to intelligence or military veterans or politicians to lead the largest, best-funded component of the sprawling US intelligence community.

But Burns has deep experience in security and intelligence matters after spending over three decades in the US foreign service, including a stint as ambassador to Russia from 2005-2008.

“Bill Burns is an exemplary diplomat with decades of experience on the world stage keeping our people and our country safe and secure,” Biden said in a statement.

Burns will replace Gina Haspel, an agency veteran who became the first female CIA director after Tr-



In this file photograph taken on January 16, 2010, a reporter from Iranian television (L) asks a question of US diplomat Williams Burns (C) as he leaves a meeting of the Iran 6 in New York.

ump moved Mike Pompeo to be secretary of state.

One of Trump's most trusted aides, politically ambitious Pompeo was accused of catering to his boss's whims and allowing intelligence material to be twisted to serve Trump's policy desires while he led the agency.

Haspel, in the position since 2018, has been more low-key and disciplined, intelligence experts say, and even openly fell out of

favour with the president in his final months in office when Trump rejected intelligence that Russia was again meddling in the election to help him.

But Haspel's long tenure in the agency included taking part in the torture of Al-Qaeda suspects after the September 1, 2001 attacks, now clearly illegal activity that is one of the darker blemishes on the CIA's reputation — though Trump thought it was a

good thing. Broadly respected and having served in top positions under both Democratic and Republican administrations, Burns and Haines should have little trouble gaining approval by the Senate.

Burns, 64, served in the US diplomatic corps for 33 years, in jobs that took him around the world, including important roles in the Middle East in addition to his Russia posting. He was central in the

back-channel negotiations by the previous administration of Barack Obama that set the stage for the 2015 deal to limit Iran's nuclear capabilities — a deal that Trump summarily quit in 2018, with the support of Pompeo but not everyone in US intelligence circles.

At Carnegie since 2014, Burns defended the idea that Washington should remain a leader and support multilateralism as Trump radically reshaped the US world role, cancelling treaties, bullying allies, and taking a US-first, go-it-alone stance.

“If Donald Trump had been reelected for a second four years as president, then American democracy would have gone straight into the intensive care unit,” Burns said in an online conference last month. After “erratic” and “unsteady” policies under Trump, Biden will have “the most difficult inheritance that any new president has faced since Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the height of the Great Depression 90 years ago,” he said. “Recovering the power of America's example of our competence after the experience of the last few years is going to be a critical driver of our foreign policy.” The biggest geopolitical test for the United States going ahead, he said, is “going to be managing an intense, long-term competition with China.” — *AFP*

## Democrats start impeachment of Trump in House

Washington, Jan. 11: Democrats began the process of impeaching President Donald Trump for a second time on Monday if Vice President Mike Pence and the Cabinet do not remove him from office.

Democrats introduced a resolution calling on Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment of the Constitution and remove Trump from the White House for being unfit to discharge his duties.

Republicans blocked an immediate vote on the resolution and Democrats followed up by introducing an article of impeachment of Trump for “incitement of insurrection” over his role in Wednesday's storming of the US Capitol by his supporters.

The dramatic moves came just nine days before Trump is to leave the White House and President-elect Joe Biden is to be sworn in as the 46th president of the United States. Democratic Representative Steny Hoyer of Maryland introduced the resolution calling on Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment and declare Trump “incapable of executing the duties of his office.” Republican Representative Alex Mooney of West Virginia objected to passing the resolution by what is known as “unanimous consent” and it will be put to vote on Tuesday.

After Republicans blocked the resolution, a single article of impeachment against Trump was

## SCHWARZENEGGER COMPARES CAPITOL MOB TO NAZIS

Washington, Jan. 11: Former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appealed for unity Sunday after the violent attack on the US Capitol, which he described as an attempted coup by President Donald Trump, drawing comparisons to Nazi Germany.

In a video posted on Twitter that quickly went viral, the Hollywood star compared the attack by Trump supporters to Kristallnacht, or the “Night of Broken Glass,” when Nazis carried out pogroms in Germany in 1938 that included breaking the windows of Jewish-owned stores. — *AFP*

introduced in the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives.

Trump was impeached by the House in December 2019 and now risks being the first president ever to be impeached twice.

It is unclear whether the body would hold a trial this time to consider the latest charges. Though time is running short, Democrats likely have the votes in the House to impeach Trump again and could draw increased Republican support for the move. — *AFP*

## PLANE'S BLACK BOXES: SEARCH INTENSIFIES

Jakarta, Jan. 11: The search for the black boxes of a crashed Sriwijaya Air Jet intensified Monday to boost the investigation into what caused the plane carrying 62 people to nosedive at high velocity into the Java Sea. The Boeing jet disappeared minutes after taking off from Jakarta during heavy rain on Saturday, and the search has yielded plane parts and human remains but no survivors.

Authorities have said signals from the boxes were detected between Lancang and Laki islands in the Thousand Islands chain just north of Jakarta's coast. — *AP*



An Indonesian National Transportation Safety Committee investigator inspects the debris found in the waters around the location where Sriwijaya Air passenger jet crashed at Tanjung Priok Port in Jakarta on Monday. — *AP*

## Pope says women cannot be priests

Rome, Jan. 11: Pope Francis changed church law Monday to explicitly allow women to do more things during Mass, while continuing to affirm that they cannot be priests. Francis amended the law to formalise and institutionalise what is common practice in many parts of the world: That women can read the Gospel and serve on the altar as eucharistic ministers.

Previously, such roles were officially reserved to men even though exceptions were made. Francis said he was making the change to increase recognition of the “precious contribution” women make in the church, while emphasising that all baptised Catholics have a role to play in the church's mission.

But he also noted that doing so further makes a distinction between “ordained” ministries such as the priesthood and diaconate, and ministries open to qualified laity. The Vatican reserves the priesthood for men.

The change comes as Francis remains under pressure to allow women to be deacons — ministers who perform many of the same functions as priests, such as presiding at weddings, baptisms and funerals. Currently, the ministry is reserved for men even though historians say the ministry was performed by women in the early church. Francis has created a second commission of experts to study whether women could be deacons. — *AP*

## Mallya legal fees: Funds not given

London, Jan. 11: A UK court hearing an urgent application on Monday refused to sanction the release of substantial sums held with the Court Funds Office (CFO) as part of bankruptcy proceedings being pursued against liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya by a consortium of Indian banks, led by the State Bank of India (SBI).

Judge Sebastian Prentis, who presided over a remote hearing at the Insolvency and Companies Court (ICC) of the High Court in London, concluded that Mallya had failed to provide the “basic information” required for such a validation order

and agreed only to allow sufficient funds to cover an appeal hearing scheduled in the bankruptcy case for Wednesday.

“As to the urgency of this application, I remain puzzled,” the judge noted, as he raised questions about updated evidence on full disclosure of assets at Mallya's disposal, including jewellery and a “fine suite” of high-value luxury cars that were listed as being owned by him.

The 65-year-old former Kingfisher Airlines chief seeks approval to use 2.8 million pounds of the estimated 2.9 million pounds held by the court. — *PTI*

## Covid origins: WHO team in China on Jan. 14

Beijing, Jan. 11: China said on Monday that a group of experts from the WHO will arrive in the country on Thursday for a long-anticipated probe into the origins of the Coronavirus pandemic, ending the uncertainty and delay which drew sharp criticism from the world health body.

Experts from the WHO will conduct a field visit to China on January 14, the state-run CGTN quoted China's National Health Commission as saying in a report. Confirming the visit, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing on Monday that China supported scientists around the world to conduct a global study on the origins and transmission routes of the virus. Zhao declined to provide

details of the schedule of the experts and whether they would be permitted to visit the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV). US President Donald Trump, who has termed coronavirus “China virus”, has alleged that the virus may have emanated from WIV and called for a probe into it. WIV has denied the allegation, saying it is politically motivated.

The 10-member team of WHO experts is expected to visit Wuhan, but it is not clear yet whether they would visit WIV too. When asked about it, Zhao directed the questions relating to the schedule of the WHO experts to relevant authorities. “China stands ready to closely cooperate with WHO and international experts. With specific details of itinerary, I refer to you to competent

authority,” he said.

“The origin tracing may involve more countries. The WHO needs to conduct similar studies in other countries and regions,” Zhao said, highlighting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's recent comments that China “raced against time” and was the first country to report Coronavirus cases to the world.

“More and more research suggests that the pandemic was likely to have been caused by separate outbreaks in multiple places in the world” he said. The team's visit to China, especially to Wuhan where the virus first emerged in December last year, has become a bone of contention as Beijing, which questions the widely-held view about the virus' origins in Wuhan. — *PTI*

## Biden pushes for \$2,000 stimulus

Washington, Jan. 11: US President-elect Joe Biden has called for a \$2,000 “stimulus checks” to his fellow Americans, arguing that the current \$600 Coronavirus relief payment is not enough to choose between paying rent or putting food on the table.

Biden has called the current \$600 round of cash a “down payment,” and early last week he said \$2,000 checks would go out “immediately” if his party took control of both houses of Congress. With the Democrats now having a majority in the House of Repres-

entatives and in the Senate, and Biden set to be sworn in as the 46th President of the US on January 20, the former vice president is likely to push for a new stimulus package later this month. “\$600 is simply not enough when you have to choose between paying rent or putting food on the table. We need \$2,000 stimulus checks,” Biden said on Sunday.

Outgoing US President Donald Trump has also pitched for a \$2,000 check. In December, the House of Representatives also passed a bill. — *PTI*

## GOING | GREEN

Mayor Hidalgo has led efforts to reduce traffic in the city, with two main road arteries closed

## Champs-Elysees to be turned into new Paris garden

Paris, Jan. 11: Paris's famed Champs-Elysees avenue is to be given a green makeover to transform it into what the mayor says will be an “extraordinary garden”.

The French often call it “the most beautiful avenue in the world” but the decision follows years of campaigning by activists who complain that traffic and mass retail have turned it into a noisy and bland district shunned by Parisians.

The greening will take place in stages. First the car-clogged Place de la Concorde square at the bottom of the thoroughfare — scheduled to be completed before the Paris Olympic Games in 2024 — and then the whole of the avenue.

It's going to be another extraordinary garden,” Mayor Anne Hidalgo told the *Journal du Dimanche* newspaper.

The plan is in keeping with other efforts by the

Paris, Jan. 11: Ending the confusion over the fate of Paris Fashion Week, French fashion's regulatory body has said that this month's Paris men's and haute couture shows will be strictly audience-free

over Coronavirus fears. The Federation of *la Haute Couture et de la Mode* has told luxury houses they will not be allowed to invite guests this season, after instruction by police. The federation said that

Socialist city leader to create green spaces in the densely populated French capital, where elegant squares

and tree-lined boulevards are often overwhelmed by vehicles. A Champs-Elysees lobby

“we confirm that there can be no public gatherings”, adding that “houses can still organise ‘real’ runway shows with models broadcast live, provided events take place behind closed doors.” — *AP*

group pushing for the project said it was “delighted with this announcement and welcomes the decision

by the mayor's office which appears to want to make the makeover of the Champs-Elysees one of its main urban projects of this decade.” Hidalgo has led efforts to reduce traffic in the city, which has seen the closure of two main road arteries that ran along the river Seine and the building of new infrastructure for bikes and electric scooters.

In 2019, American landscape architect Kathryn Gustafson was put in charge of a makeover for the Eiffel Tower area, where roads will also be turned into lawns and trees.

The Champs-Elysees was first laid out in 1670 but was given a revamp by Baron Haussmann, the architect behind the transformation of Paris under Napoleon III in the mid-19th century. It is also used as the route for the Bastille Day military parade, which celebrates the French republic and its armed forces on July 14. — *AFP*



# DECCAN Chronicle

12 JANUARY 2021

## Will FM offer India the mega-stimulus it needs?

With the Union Budget just 20 days away, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman must be giving the final contours to her second full-fledged financial statement for the country — the third if one were to include the interim budget that she presented in 2019. Coming in the middle of a rare pandemic that wiped out several businesses in the service sector, plummeted consumer demand and left hundreds of thousands of people unemployed, all eyes in the country will be looking at Ms Sitharaman's Budget for relief.

Though the Reserve Bank and the government had announced steps, including a loan moratorium, emergency working credit, and cash transfers to women from the economically low-income families, the concerted action fell short of addressing the collapse of consumer demand. Despite its grandstanding announcements, the government had provided a stimulus that worked to be just around 1.2 per cent of GDP and the economy continued to wobble. The government, however, promised to unleash its economic firepower at a later stage, which raised hopes of a belated stimulus in the Union Budget that could put the economy back on its tracks.

**Without a credible revenue-raising plan, the Union Budget 2021-22 may end up being a statement of intent rather than action.**

Of late, there have been several hints of the finance minister presenting an expenditure-heavy Budget on February 1. However, there is no clarity on the avenues for revenue mop-up, especially in the wake of a not-so-healthy state of tax collections in a recession-hit economy. Some reports suggested the possibility of a cess — possibly named after Covid-19 — to raise revenue to boost government spending. However, the jury is out on how a new tax that takes away money from people's pockets would help to revive consumer demand. It was suggested that it could be levied on super-rich individuals. But will it be enough to finance a mega stimulus that the people of this country are expecting from the government? The answer is very unlikely. Without a credible revenue-raising plan, the Union Budget 2021-22 may end up being a statement of intent rather than action. The government should, therefore, shed some of its worries about the fiscal deficit and unleash its spending power on productivity projects such as metro rail projects and dedicated freight corridors that have long-term utility of reducing India's dependence on imported fossil fuel. Alternatively, it could guarantee or refinance construction loans for subprime borrowers who already own land where they intend to build or rebuild houses. While this would be an expenditure neutral measure for the government, this step would create an upsurge in the construction activity that will have a positive ripple effect on many other sectors and create lakhs of jobs. The government could also ease up on fiscal deficit to invest on health infrastructure that the country woefully lacks by building primary healthcare centres on its land and let private healthcare professionals run it on a public-private partnership model.

Borrowing for creating value for the future generations is always seen as better than doling out handouts — a principle that the ruling BJP always claims it has believed in. The finance minister will hopefully be guided by this principle while preparing for the Union Budget on February 1.

## Indonesia: Air disaster again

It is tragic but it was probably predestined that the New Year's first air disaster should occur in Indonesia, the country with the worst aviation safety record with 104 civilian airliner accidents and over 1,300 related fatalities since 1945. Not much time flies by without the nation of 17,508 islands witnessing aviation incidents. The last major disaster was a Lion Air Boeing Max going down without giving the pilots a chance of re-establishing control of the aircraft thanks to the controversial anti-stall software programme. The event last week involved a much older Boeing 737-500 plane of Sriwijaya Airlines, which went down into the Java Sea, probably from mechanical failure or pilot error, which can be established only after studying data from the black boxes that divers have located.

Aviation is no more dangerous than it was before the Covid-19 pandemic struck, but pilots are complaining the downtime in 2020 due to severe travel curbs, when they have had to do with simulator training rather than frequent flying, may be affecting their performance somewhat. While aviation experts believe the plane climbing out of Jakarta may have been going too slowly for 10,000 feet altitude, the fall within a few seconds must have been horrendous. The budget flight had already faced a weather delay and Indonesian aircraft also face unique problems like flights through volcanic ash that may affect engine performance because of ingestion. And in any case, poor maintenance is a problem that has dogged Indonesian aviation.

The families of the 62 unlucky people on board may get some sense of closure only from the fact that it appears to be an accident, and not due to diabolical corporate carelessness as in the Boeing Max disasters or the Malaysian aircraft that may have been flown to extinction. However, it is no comfort that open skies in an era of lackadaisical attitude to air safety could be an invitation to such poor advertisements for aviation. Ironically, this comes as an all-woman crew steered Air India's longest flight over the North Pole on the way from San Francisco to Bengaluru, epitomising air safety.

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Subhani



## The Three Ks: Some old ideas revisited

Asad Durrani

View from Pakistan

Khursheed Ali Khan was no run-of-the-mill general. Behind a laissez-faire demeanor, he was a serious practitioner of military art, with a sterling soldierly character. In a war game, he tasked me with making a plan, but then suggested I modify it to bring out a few lessons. Nothing unusual, except whenever a visitor would pick holes in my design, K always clarified why it was forced upon me.

As NWFP governor, he asked me — as I had recently left the service — to outline a few ideas on how to address some intractable issues. The paper I wrote was titled “Three Ks that defy resolution”. These were Kabul, Kashmir and Karachi. The K word was to acknowledge the proposal's sponsor. A quarter century may have elapsed, but in a discussion the other day when similar subjects came up, I had to revisit my old thesis. It was based on some ideas that we from the military used to pester the political governments with, and having headed the National Defence College, one believed our core issues needed a structured approach. The concept was heavy on strategy and avoided concrete steps unless they were required to illustrate an argument.

It was really self-evident. Issues with a long gestation period — all three Ks were brewing for decades — would need to be thought through for the long haul. Over time, there would be developments needing adaptation or modification of original assumptions, even of plans.

In Afghanistan, for instance; after the Soviet pullout, infatuated with the resistance we realised at great cost that the tribesmen may have pur-

sued a common agenda against the occupiers, but were now rivals for Kabul's throne. A historian in the decision-making echelons would have sounded the right alarm. Genuine Afghan hands were strongly opposed to using unconventional warriors in set-piece battles like Jalalabad, and later against the Northern Alliance. When the Taliban emerged as an anti-Mujahideen force, its momentum may have surprised us; but not the old Communist cadres growing beards to drive militia tanks and fly the helicopters.

Later we may have factored in the role of spoilers, but our counter-measures were mostly transactional. India's Afghan strategy was of course Kautilyan, but because of our neighbourhood advantage it could be contained. But our official sources exaggerated it to the extent that paranoid Afghans were convinced our involvement in Afghanistan was essentially to keep India out. After the Soviets left, America's interests were never aligned with ours. We still sucked up to them — and even believed post-9/11 that our bilateral ties were again “strategic”.

Besides improving ties with Iran and Russia, and keeping China and Turkey on board, we did well to retain leverage with Taliban against great external pressure for two decades and could thus bring them to the table whenever required. But we now need some experts in Afghan psyche and those with credibility among the key factions to steer the intra-Afghan dialogue, or to disengage from this messy affair.

The Kashmir imbroglio was no less complex. Surprised by the robustness of the popular surge for independence in early 1990s, we never really got a handle over the multi-

ple challenges such movements present — providing an effective political umbrella; influencing the militancy so that it didn't lead to any unintended consequences; and creating the necessary rapport with resistance groups. Finding the right mix of military and non-military prongs required a more subtle direction than swinging between arming the resistance to abandoning it. Engaging India in the Composite Dialogue framework was wise, and there may have been even some collateral benefit in Gen. Pervez Musharraf's four-point salvo; but if anyone believed Indians would voluntarily give up their position of advantage, he should have his head examined. After August 5, 2019, the handling of developments in the Valley clearly showed there were hardly any experienced hands in our Kashmir policy cells, and our responses were therefore limited to cartography and rewriting milestones.

I don't think I ever understood the rise and fall of Karachi, but it was quite clear our once vibrant multi-ethnic megapolis was heading for an implosion — and all of us with our eyes wide shut.

Even a cursory look at this narrative suggests issues with roots in history, or simply too complex, were beyond the depth of our state structures. On core issues, one needed a core group to charter a course, steer its conduct, and adapt it to the evolving environment. A bureaucratic or politically partisan system could not be entrusted with this — not only because its key members were mostly on the move, but also as those at the helm often force the pace to add a feather in their otherwise colourless cap.

K took the paper to BB

**After August 5, 2019, the developments in the Valley showed there were hardly any experienced hands in our Kashmir policy cells**

— then in her second incarnation as PM — who didn't seem terribly pleased as with the Taliban now taking big strides in Afghanistan, she didn't want to share the spoils of the “victory” with a hybrid group that had the Opposition on board. Nevertheless, she appointed a pretty clued-up security adviser, who all by himself had no sway with the hands on the Afghan wheel, which only moved in the military track. Before that Nawaz Sharif had made it clear his Kabul policy would be conducted by his kitchen cabinet, not the Afghan cell. Soon thereafter he outsourced the Kashmir struggle to a private contractor. However, both mainstream parties had a common approach on Karachi: break up the MQM and let the devil take the hindmost.

It is of course unfair to put all the blame for fly-by-night policies on the political leadership. Members of the Deep State were reluctant to permit any rank outsiders, regardless of experience or expertise, in the decision-making corridors. Who knows when a group, even if dominated by the civil and military hierarchy, working under the chief executive and essentially in an advisory role, would get enough traction due to its sound judgment. That could blow the myth of the State's claim to total wisdom.

No surprise there. People in power are always protective of their turf. But the worst part is that they seldom pick up the courage to tell their political masters, civil or military, that most of our festering issues may not be fixed in an estimative timeframe — and therefore their management should take priority over a wishful outcome.

A council of wise men has always been a good idea since Plato's days.

*Lt. Gen. Asad Durrani (Retd) is a former director-general of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, has participated in several Track II initiatives, and an author and commentator*

### LETTERS

#### FARMERS' STRIKE

As the apex court had rightly opined that the government's response to the protracted protest is disappointing. As both sides are standing firm, the number of rounds of talks have increased. But the Centre has more responsibility in finding a solution. The manner in which the new laws were introduced is the reason for suspicion. To suspend them or repeal them, may not cause much harm to the sector right now.

**Dr D.V.G. Sankararao**  
*Vizianagaram*

#### BLAME GAME

It has become a practice for political parties in power to blame the Opposition for stalling development and social welfare schemes. This is either to cover up their shortcomings or “create” misinformation to divert the attention of people. Earlier, the Naidu regime used to blame the YSRC for obstructing development programmes. Now, the Jagan government is doing the same. Whom to blame for this farce and falsification of the facts? The common man and democracy is suffering.

**Govardhana Myneedu**  
*Vijayawada*

#### CARELESS HOSPITALS

There is utter disregard for safety measures that is the root cause for fire accidents (*After Maha fire GVMC notice to hosps, DC, Jan. 11*). No lessons have been learnt from the death of Covid-19 patients in a fire accident at a hospital in Rajkot. Gujarat happened in November last year. Further, builders, hospitals, fire authorities and civic bodies need to work in tandem to avoid such incidents.

**Dr C. Ghanshyam**  
*Visakhapatnam*

### 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

#### 3 killed, 30 hurt in firing in Varanasi

VARANASI, January. 11 Three persons including an eight-year-old boy were killed and more than 30 persons were injured today in a succession of clashes between police and angry student mobs which led to a police firing and imposition of a 12-hour curfew on the city.

The deaths were announced by authorities of S.P. Gupta Hospital where 19 persons have been admitted.

Thirteen of them with bullet injured.

Aakar Patel



## On Republic Day, time to reclaim our basic rights

This month we will celebrate Republic Day, which is different from Independence Day. The difference may not be fully understood or appreciated. On August 15 we mark the anniversary of the day that India stopped being ruled by outsiders. We refer to this as freedom. On January 26, Republic Day, we mark the day when we put in force the laws that make the people of India sovereign. It must be noted that for some reason we mark Republic Day with a celebration of militarism. The marching in formation of armed men and their machines. We might want to ask those in parts of India which have experience of the military, such as the Northeast and Kashmir, what they make of this celebration or whether they consider this a proper way to mark the formation of the republic.

A republic is more than a democracy. A democracy is a system of majority rule government through elected representatives. Universal adult franchise — meaning the right to vote for these elected representatives — is only one aspect of being a republic. The other two aspects are guaran-

teed fundamental rights and civil liberties. These are equally important and without them you can have a democracy but not a republic. These include the right to freedom of expression, right to peaceful assembly, right to freedom of religion, right to form associations and to practise any occupation and the right to life and liberty. You could have a nation where adults can vote and elections are carried out, but none of these rights and liberties exist in a meaningful way. It would be a democracy, but it would not be a republic. The rights would not really be with the people but with the State, meaning the government and those who run it.

To give you an example, Indians have the right to peaceful assembly. It is actually a fundamental right, meaning one that enjoys a high degree of protection from encroachment. But do Indians have the right to peaceful assembly? They do not. They have the right to make an application to the police and the authorities seeking permission for a peaceful protest. The State has the right to approve, reject or not respond. Similarly, the right to occupation

does not exist (there is a Supreme Court judgment which says the rights of the cow surpass those of a butcher), nor does the right to freedom of religion as the new laws in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and several old laws and judgments show. The freedom of expression is legally criminalised in India through laws on sedition, defamation and contempt. Indeed, none of the rights and liberties that the Constitution saw initially as being “fundamental” are present in the original form today. It is safe to conclude that India is a democracy, but is it a republic? The reality is that today the rights are not with the citizen, they rest in the main with the State.

This has happened with the passage of time. The Constitution initially gave Indians all the rights referred to above in more or less unrestricted form, as they exist in other republics like the United States. It was the amendments that came later which began to cut away the freedoms to the extent that it can now be honestly said that they do not exist at all. The State appropriated sovereignty from the people. This happened, as many

will know, through footnotes to the Constitution, added as amendments to Part 3, which is the part on Fundamental Rights. The right to freedom of speech was now qualified. And the footnote reads that nothing shall prevent the State from making any law imposing reasonable restrictions on free speech which affect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

Who will determine whether these restrictions are reasonable? The State. The people, who through the Constituent Assembly had granted themselves the right to freedom of expression, were now made subordinate to their government.

The restrictions came not because of popular demand but because the government felt that it could not allow people too much freedom.

Similarly footnotes and their interpretations took away the real meaning of other rights, including the one to life and liberty.

The State in India can jail individuals without a crime having been committed.

This is called preventive detention, and it upends Articles 21 and 22 through a footnote. What is the difference between a government that wants this power over citizens and the British Raj?

The question is what can be done about this. The solution is obviously to get the State to undo the damage it has done over the years.

Article 13 says that the “State shall not make any law which takes away or abridges the rights conferred by this Part and any law made in contravention of this clause shall, to the extent of the contravention, be void”. Clearly, the State has committed overreach against its citizens.

Our pledge on this Republic Day must be to use those parts of the Constitution that are still on our side and take back our rights and liberties lawfully from the State, which has usurped them. That would be truly worth a celebration.

*The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist*



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49269.32	1.00
Nifty 50	14484.80	0.96
S&P 500*	3,809.27	-0.40
Dollar (₹)	73.42	-0.23
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.01	0.60
Euro (₹)	89.26	0.43
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,866.389	0.79
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.60	-0.70
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.924	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.131	2.14

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Govt not to print Budget documents

The voluminous budget documents will not be printed this year following the Covid-19 protocol and will instead be distributed electronically to the MPs. This will be the first time since the presentation of independent India's first budget on Nov. 26, 1947, that the documents containing income and expenditure statement along with finance bill, detailing new tax and other measures for the new financial year, will not be printed.

## Vani Manja is Boehringer's country MD



Drug firm Boehringer Ingelheim said it has appointed Vani Manja as country MD for India, effective Jan. 1. Vani will look after the businesses in India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. She will also join the board. Vani succeeds Sharad Tyagi, who retired on Dec. 31. She was formerly the global head of Boehringer Ingelheim's go-to-market and business steering organisation, based in Germany. She joined the group in the US in 2011.

## Agdhi's AI-based tech to check quality of seeds

Agri-start up Agdhi launched an Artificial Intelligence-based technology to check quality of seeds. Traditionally seeds are inspected manually. The Bengaluru-based firm said its AI vision technology—along with photometry, radiometry and computer vision—offers efficient methods for seed classification and seed quality analysis. The colour, texture, size, and shape, is extracted from images of seeds.

## Gail to consider share buyback, dividend on 15th

GAIL (India) Ltd, the nation's largest gas distribution firm, will on Friday consider buyback of shares with a view to returning surplus cash to shareholders, the biggest being the Government of India. In a stock exchange filing, the company said its board will meet on January 15 to consider share buyback as also payment of interim dividend for the fiscal year ending March 2021. It did not give details.



## ■ Closer to ₹200-L cr m-cap milestone Sensex moves past 49K-mark

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, JAN. 11

India's most widely tracked equity index, the Sensex, seemed cruising to the 50000-mark, an unthinkable milestone a few years ago, as it closed above the 49000-mark for the first time, gaining 486.8 points to close the day at 49,269.32. The new record high came on positive global cues and third quarter earnings expectations, fall in daily Covid cases and high expectations from the upcoming union budget.

The Nifty 50 Index, too, closed at a new high of 14484.75, up 137 points, or 0.9 per cent.

With the ongoing massive rally, the BSE's market capitalisation is getting closer to the Rs 200-lakh crore mark, as it is now at Rs 196.56 lakh crore.

After the IT sector bellwether Tata Consultancy Services posted impressive third quarter performance last Friday, IT stocks made hefty gains on Monday, with the BSE IT Index moving up 3.63 per cent.

Another sector that helped market benchmarks gain close to 1 per cent was automobile. The BSE Auto Index was up 2.56 per cent.

The top gainers included Infosys (4.90 per cent), Wipro (3.87 per cent), Tech Mahindra (2.54 per cent), TCS (1.75 per cent) and HCL Technologies (6.09 per cent).

TCS hit a new all-time high of Rs 3,224 before closing at Rs 3,175. TCS market capitalisation soared to Rs



## NSE LAUNCHES DERIVATIVES ON NIFTY FINANCIAL SERVICES INDEX

New Delhi, Jan. 11: The National Stock Exchange on Monday launched derivatives on the Nifty Financial Services Index, which will give more flexibility to institutional and retail investors to manage their hedge. This is the first time the exchange has made available weekly futures for the stock index derivatives.

The index consists of 20 stocks and is designed to reflect the behaviour and performance of the Indian financial market, which includes banks, financial institutions, housing finance, insurance companies and other financial services firms.

The first day witnessed volumes of 1.4 lakh contracts being traded.—PTI

11.91 lakh crore, close to top company by market-cap, Reliance Industries (Rs 12.02 lakh crore) as the latter's stock price fell 1.8 per cent to Rs 1,897 on the BSE.

Recounting the day's market movement Shrikant Chouhan, analyst-equity technical research, Kotak Securities, said, "Another day with tremendous gains for the market. Markets closed higher for the day, led by auto, IT, pharmaceuticals and select FMCG stocks...It seems that the market has gained momen-

tum due to the bright possibilities of bold announcements in the forthcoming union budget."

The top auto sector gainers included Tata Motors (11.11 per cent), Ashok Leyland (3.8 per cent), Maruti (2.75 per cent), Bajaj Auto (2.40 per cent) and Mahindra & Mahindra (2.37 per cent).

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers on Monday of equities worth Rs 3,138.90 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 2,610.13 crore.

## NEXT TRANCHE OF MINING AUCTION SOON: MINISTER

New Delhi, Jan. 11: Coal minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday said the next tranche of commercial mines auction will be launched this month and stressed that further rounds will continue thereafter.

Speaking at the agreement signing ceremony for commercial coal mining and launch of single-window clearance system, he said commercial coal mining has been made a part of the system now.

"The next tranche of commercial mining auction would be launched in January 2021, and further tranches will continue thereafter," he said.

Speaking at the function, home minister Amit Shah said the country has reached a position where the coal sector can be the biggest contributor towards the target of India becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2025.

He said despite having the world's fourth-largest coal reserves, India is importing coal and this is not right for the country.

The coal minister said the single-window clearance portal is in the spirit of minimum government and maximum governance.

At present, about 19 major approval or clearances are required before starting a coal mine. In the absence of a unified platform for clearances, the companies were required to approach different departments, he said.—PTI

## Pandemic shrinks women workforce more than men

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JAN. 11

The coronavirus pandemic has affected women workforce disproportionately compared to men. The women labour force in India shrank by 10.5 per cent against 2 per cent for men between October 2019 and October 2020, finds the Asian Development Bank.

Despite being a universal crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women, says an ADB blog.

Between March and April 2020, 37 per cent of the female workforce, or 15.4 million women, lost their jobs versus 28 per cent of men. The labour force shrank by 10.5 per cent for women versus 2 per cent for men between October 2019 and October 2020.

Women-owned small businesses, which largely operate in consumer-facing sectors such as textiles, food processing and handicrafts, witnessed a sharp demand shock, with revival being slow. In the informal sectors, anecdotal evidence points toward men being preferred for re-employment as the economy opens.

Women also face additional mobility restrictions. Even before Covid-19, only 54 per cent of women were allowed to go to a nearby market alone. Only 48 per cent could visit places outside their village or community by themselves, according to the National Family and Health Survey conducted in 2015-



IN AN UNEQUAL WORLD

► Women-owned small businesses, which largely operate in consumer-facing sectors, witnessed a sharp demand shock

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► The labour force shrank by 10.5% for women versus 2% for men between October 2019 and October 2020

16. With the pandemic, women now require strong reasons to leave home, inhibiting their ability to work, run businesses, study or even avail of health care services and government aid.

The pandemic has led to an increase in domestic work. On an average, women spent five hours per day on unpaid household and care-giving work compared to 30 minutes for men, according to a survey conducted in 2019. As school closures continue and families remain at home during Covid-19, women's care work has increased by almost 30 per cent.

Further, the digital gender divide has worsened inequity in access to education, health and work opportunities. In India, 63 per cent of adult women own a mobile phone compared to 79 per cent adult

men. Only 21 per cent use mobile internet compared to 42 per cent adult men. Women are systematically denied access to technology, with phone use governed by male relatives. With online classes, telemedicine and work from home becoming the norm, women are at risk of getting left behind, unable to acquire the skills required to participate in a digital economy, say the ADB.

However, government has taken a few steps that have benefitted women. Direct cash transfers, free grains for ration cardholders, increase in collateral-free lending limits for women self-help groups and increase in the number of person days under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme are some of them.

## Housing launches grow YoY for first time since lockdown

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JAN. 11

The December quarter saw yearly growth in new launches of housing units, the first time after the pandemic. While new launches of housing units have gone up in the October-December quarter both on a quarterly basis and yearly basis, sales were actually down against year-ago quarter.

As many as 54,329 new units were launched in the eight prime residential markets during the three months. New launches grew by 173 per cent over 19,865 units launched in the July-September quarter. This also reflected a 12 per cent growth over the 48,530 new units that were launched in the December quarter in 2019. This was the first quarter that witnessed a yearly growth since the onset of the pandemic, signalling a turnaround in the market, finds PropTiger.

NCR, Chennai,



Hyderabad, Kolkata and Pune saw yearly growth in new launches. An increase in home-buying interest and muted new launches in the prior three quarters helped growth. Units in the sub-Rs 45 lakh category were the largest contributor to the overall supply, with a 46 per cent share.

However, for the entire 12-month period in 2020, only 122,426 units were launched and this was about half the new supply in 2019 at 244,256 units.

Similarly, home sales declined by 27 per cent compared to the

December quarter of 2019 despite showing 68 per cent improvement over the preceding quarter. As many as 58,914 units were sold during the December quarter. However, compared to the overall sales registered in 2019, 182,639 units sold in the pandemic-hit 2020 showed a 47 per cent decline.

Except Ahmedabad, home sales increased across all other cities when compared to the preceding quarter.

Stamp duty cuts by the Maharashtra government supported sales in Mumbai and Pune markets. Low interest rates, stagnant housing prices and attractive offers by developers were the other factors which supported sales.

According to Knight Frank India, driven by the Covid-induced need for larger homes, the share of Rs 50 lakh and above ticket sizes in total sales has gone up from 44 per cent in the second half of 2019 to 57 per cent in H2 2020.

## Cars set best monthly growth in this fiscal

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, JAN. 11

December finally marked the best growth in retail sales of passenger vehicles (PV) as new launches, cheaper finance and pre-buying to escape the January price rise helped boost demand in Asia's third biggest car market.

The segment also recorded the second-best monthly total this financial year. PVs comprise cars, SUVs and vans.

PV sales grew 24 per cent in December to 271,249 units as against 218,775 units recorded in the same month last year; as per data sourced from 86 per cent of the regional transport offices (RTOs), shared by the Federation of Automobile Dealers Association, or Fada, on Monday.

Wholesales dispatches to dealers by 14 PV manufacturers during December stood at 276,544 units, a growth of 18 per cent compared to the same month last year. The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, or Siam, will issue sales later this week.

The inventory days for PVs currently ranges between 15-20 days while for two-wheelers it ranges between 30-35 days, according to Fada.

The two-wheeler segment scored better, posting the best monthly retail sales this year in December. A total of 1.42 million two-wheelers were sold last month, marking a growth of 12 per cent compared to 1.27 million units sold in the same month last year.

Commercial vehicle sales, however, slipped 13.52 per cent year-on-year to 51,454 units against 59,497 units. Similarly, three-wheeler sales fell 52.75 per cent to 27,715 units from 58,651 units a year ago.

Tractor sales, however, grew by 35.49 per cent to 69,105 units against 51,004 units 2a year ago.

Total sales across categories increased 11.01 per cent to 1.84 million.

However, supply-side issues in PVs continued for the second month, thus making waiting period as high as eight months in select vehicles.

## STANCHART SEES INDIA CHARTING COURSE TO A TIGHTER BUDGET



Nirmala Sitharaman

ANIRBAN NAG  
JAN. 11

India will seek to narrow its budget deficit next financial year, amid expectations of improved revenue collections and economic rebound, according to Standard Chartered Bank Plc.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman will likely target fiscal deficit - the gap between income and expenditure - at 5.3 per cent of gross domestic product in the budget for the year starting April 1, the bank's chief South Asia economist Anubhuti Sahay wrote in a report to clients. That will be slimmer than the current year's number, which Standard Chartered expects to be 6.7 per cent of GDP, or even as high as 8.4 per cent if factoring in off-budget spending to help the economy shake off the pandemic fallout.

Although the government announced stimulus steps worth 15 per cent of GDP in the current year, the actual fiscal cost is seen at less than 2 per cent of GDP with most of the measures taking the form of loan guarantees. That compares with direct spending of about 3 per cent of GDP on average in other emerging markets, according to S&P Global Ratings.

The gains will be "driven by improved tax collection, higher divestment proceeds and reduced pandemic-related expenditure amid a better growth environment," Sahay said. "The fiscal consolidation path for FY22-26 will be keenly watched to assess medium-term market impact," she said.

Sitharaman, in an interview in December, said she would carefully balance her next budget to ensure the momentum in the economy isn't lost.

—Bloomberg

## TROUBLE | BREWING Findings cast fresh shadow on operations, compliance practices

## Carlsberg probes find potential bribes, lapses

ADITYA KALRA  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 11

An investigation of alleged unlawful practices at Carlsberg India found "potential improper payments" to government officials and other regulatory lapses, its former auditor said in a document seen by Reuters. Reports by a different global consultancy, also seen by Reuters, disclosed other lapses at Carlsberg India Pvt Ltd in 2018, including child labour.

The findings cast a fresh shadow on operations and compliance practices at the Indian joint venture of Danish brewer Carlsberg A/S, which according to IWSR Drinks Market Analysis has a 17

per cent share of India's \$7 billion beer market.

Carlsberg's probes and a boardroom dispute come amid other challenges: an antitrust investigation last year concluded Carlsberg India colluded for years on prices with rivals, though a final ruling is pending.

An India affiliate of the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) network recently resigned as Carlsberg India's financial auditor after declining for two years in a row to give an opinion on the brewer's financials, amid boardroom tussles and internal probes into local practices.

Since at least 2019, Carlsberg had been probing allegations levelled by



some past and current employees around promotion of alcohol in prohibited areas, kickbacks and bribery, according to regulatory filings and the document prepared by local PwC affiliate Price Waterhouse Chartered Accountants LLP.

The investigation "concluded that there were internal control weak-

nesses... potential improper payments made to government officials/other persons and possibility of misappropriation of company's funds over past years by certain customers," says the PwC document, which details the basis of the firm's resignation.

"However, the amount of misappropriation and other amounts relating to inappropriate practices could not be ascertained." Responding to questions from Reuters, Carlsberg said, "We cannot rule out breaches of our policies and code of conduct." The company said it does everything possible to prevent such incidents.

The investigations "specified that Carlsberg

Group's policies were breached in the period until 2018" and the probes identified the need for further strengthening of controls, the company said.

"Carlsberg India has taken several actions as a consequence of the findings, including... dismissal of and formal warnings to employees," it said.

Carlsberg told Reuters in November the auditor had quit because of "highly disruptive side-effects" of a commercial conflict with its joint venture partner, the Nepal-based Khetan Group. Three nominee directors from Khetan refused to approve the last two annual results. —Reuters



## SHORT TAKES

## Hyd dist meet for jumps &amp; hurdles

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 11

**Hyderabad:** The Hyderabad District Athletics Association is conducting the Jumps, Hurdles, Middle and Long Distance Championships at the GMC Balayogi Stadium in Gachibowli, Hyderabad, on Friday, January 15, from 6.30 am.

Following are the events and age categories in which competitions will be held:

**Boys and Girls 14 years:** High Jump.

**Boys and Girls 16 years:** 80 metres hurdles, high jump.

**Boys and Girls 18 years:** 110 metres hurdles, 400m hurdles, high jump, triple jump and 2,000 metres steeple chase.

**Boys and Girls 20 years:** 110 metres hurdles, 400 metres hurdles, high jump, triple jump and 3,000 metres steeple chase.

## India, Oz retain top-2 Test spots

**Sydney:** Australia and India on Monday held on to their top two positions in the World Test Championship (WTC) standings following the engrossing draw in the third Test here.

India's remarkable show saw them stay marginally ahead of third-placed New Zealand in the WTC points tally.

"An incredible battle in Sydney has helped both teams retain the top two spots in the ICC World Test Championship standings. A difference of 0.2 per cent between India and New Zealand," ICC wrote on its twitter handle.

New Zealand had earlier achieved the number one position in the ICC Test Team Rankings for the first time in history following their clean-sweep of Pakistan and West Indies. Both Australia and India bagged 10 points each after the draw. — PTI

## Racial abuse is upsetting: Rahane

**Sydney:** India skipper Ajinkya Rahane on Monday said the racial abuse that his teammates endured from the crowd during the third Test against Australia here was unacceptable and found support from his Australian counterpart Tim Paine, who said he stands with the tourists on this issue.

"We have lodged a complaint and I spoke to the match referee and umpires whatever I had to speak. Whatever happened is not acceptable at all and shouldn't happen anywhere in the world and we were upset about it," Rahane said.

Paine, who had won hearts by joining the Indian team's huddle on Sunday, said he did so to "make sure that the visitors knew that he and his team were against any sort of abuse". — PTI

## Ind-Oz final Test is on at Brisbane

**Sydney:** The Indian cricket team is all set to leave for Brisbane on Tuesday after BCCI secretary Jay Shah's assurance to Cricket Australia ended the uncertainty over the fourth and final Test at the venue, which has reduced its crowd capacity to 50 per cent for the game.

"I want to thank the Queensland Government for their cooperation and willingness to working closely with CA and the BCCI so we can deliver the fourth Test as planned," CA interim CEO Nick Hockley said in a statement.

"...but more importantly delivering on a plan that places the safety and wellbeing of the players, match officials and the wider community as a top priority," he added. — PTI



Ravichandran Ashwin (left) is congratulated by captain Ajinkya Rahane as Hanuma Vihari (second from right) is congratulated by teammate Mohammed Siraj after play on the final day of the third Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Monday. — AFP

## DRAWSOME!

## Vihari, Ashwin pull off memorable draw to keep Test series alive

**Sydney, Jan. 11:** Ravichandran Ashwin and Hanuma Vihari battled pain and a hostile Australian bowling attack while resolutely displaying the largely extinct art of Test-saving batsmanship to snatch a remarkable draw for India after Rishabh Pant raised visions of an improbable win here on Monday.

Chasing a Herculean target of 407, Pant (97 off 118 balls) and the ever-steady Cheteshwar Pujara (77 off 205 balls) produced an amazing 148-run stand before India were forced to down the shutters finishing on 334 for 5 in 131 overs when players shook hands.

## Draw is as big as win for Rahane

**Sydney, Jan. 11:** India captain Ajinkya Rahane on Monday said the heroic draw that his side pulled off in the third Test against Australia was as good as a victory and especially commended Hanuma Vihari, who battled the excruciating pain of a hamstring injury to stay at the crease.

"...today we all saw that special knock. I think this knock was more special than his hundred (in 2019 in the West Indies) especially the way he batted after getting injured," Rahane said after the match.

"To show that kind of motivation, hunger and hang in there for your team, that's what shows the character of an individual. It's all about what the team wants and credit to him. There was pressure and the way he batted was special," said Rahane, lauding the

SCORECARD	
<b>Australia 1st Innings 338</b>	
<b>India 1st Innings: 244</b>	
<b>Australia 2nd Innings 312/6 decl.</b>	
<b>India 2nd Innings (Overnight 98/2):</b> Rohit Sharma c Starc b Cummins 52, Shubman Gill c Paine b Hazlewood 31, Cheteshwar Pujara b Hazlewood 77, Ajinkya Rahane c Wade b Lyon 4, Rishabh Pant (wk) c Cummins b Lyon 97, Hanuma Vihari not out 23, Ravichandran Ashwin not out 39. Extras (lb-3, w-2, nb-6) 11. <b>Total (for 5 wickets in 131 overs) 334.</b>	
<b>Forw-171:</b> 2-92, 3-102, 4-250, 5-272.	
<b>Bowling:</b> Mitchell Starc 22-6-66-0, Josh Hazlewood 26-12-39-2, Pat Cummins 26-6-72-1, Nathan Lyon 46-17-114-2, Cameron Green 7-0-31-0, Marnus Labuschagne 4-2-9-0.	

The series stands at 1-1 going into the fourth Test in Brisbane but an Indian team which has turned into a 'mini-hospital' would be walking away with a lot of pride. They put up a proper fight in

adverse circumstances already soured by racist chants and abuses from the crowd here during the course of the game.

Pant's innings will be remembered for a long time but none can forget

that Ashwin (39 no, 128 balls) and Vihari (23 off 161 balls), battling a hamstring injury, put their bodies on line to save a game which could have been lost in a jiffy after their two best batsmen were gone on the day.

Pat Cummins (26-6-72-1), Josh Hazlewood (26-12-39-2), Mitchell Starc (22-6-66-0) and Nathan Lyon (46-17-114-2) threw everything they had, peppering them with short balls, hitting the patches with a few jumping from the spot.

"...this one's a tough one to swallow. Our bowlers were superb, Lyon bowled well. Just that we (especially me) didn't hold onto our catches," said

Australian skipper Tim Paine after the match.

The duo, in 42.4 overs, scraped their way for a 62-run stand, which certainly would have made Rahul Dravid proud on his 48th birthday.

Vihari hobbled with a torn hamstring but defended dourly, Ashwin got hit on the ribs but carried on manfully while also engaging in some chatter with Tim Paine and close-in fielders.

Catches landed in no man's land and that was the slice of luck they needed. When Marnus Labuschagne was brought in the 112th over, one knew that they had done their job. — PTI

## HANUMA OUT OF FINAL TEST, MAY MISS ENG SERIES

**New Delhi, Jan. 11:** India's injury woes in the Test series against Australia compounded on Monday after the hero of their drawn game in Sydney, Hanuma Vihari, was ruled out of the fourth Test with a hamstring tear that could keep him out of action for a considerable time.

Vihari was taken for scans after the match.

A BCCI source confirmed that Vihari is unlikely to be fit in time for the next Test starting in three days. "The extent of Vihari's tear can only be ascertained after scan reports. But even if it's a grade 1 tear, he is out for at least four weeks and then will need some rehabilitation time. So it's not only Brisbane Test but also, he won't be a part of England Tests at home," a source said. — PTI

Pant was promoted to No.5 on the day and Rahane gave him credit for executing the plan to perfection. — PTI

## VIHARI'S KNOCK WAS EQUAL TO SCORING A TON: ASHWIN

**Sydney, Jan. 11:** Ravichandran Ashwin on Monday equated Hanuma Vihari's unbeaten 23 off 161 balls in a match-saving stand of 62 runs with him in the third Test against Australia here to scoring a hundred.

"After Pujara and Pant's wicket and with Vihari injured, it was going to be difficult to go for a win. Touring Australia is never easy so Vihari can be proud of himself. It was a knock equal to scoring a

hundred," Ashwin told Channel 7.

Ashwin said the confidence gained from productive net sessions helped him finally come good against Australia as he and Vihari saved the third Test.

"I have been batting well in the nets, so it was great to spend some time in the middle. Chasing 400 in Sydney was never going to be easy, as the ball was going up and down. That knock by Pant set us up," he said. — PTI

young man from Andhra Pradesh.

For Rahane, the credit of the draw goes to all those who performed in pressure situations

responding to the team's requirements.

"This is as good as winning a Test match. When you come abroad and play a match like this, it was



TWEET

TALK

Really proud of #TeamIndia! Special mention to @RishabhPant17, @cheteshwar1, @ashwinravi99 and @Hanumavihari for the roles they've played brilliantly. Any guesses in how dressing room the morale will be high? #OneTeamOneCause #AUSvIND.

— SACHIN TENDULKAR  
cricket legend

Hope all of us realise the importance of pujaara,pant and Ashwin in cricket teams..batting at 3 in test cricket against quality bowling is not always hitting through the line ..almost 400 test wickets don't come just like that..well fought india..time to win the series.

— SOURAV GANGULY  
BCCI president and former India captain

Loved the fight and determination of India all day today. Starting with Pant and Pujara, and then for Vihari and Ashwin to withstand Australia and look largely in control for most of the day was very impressive. Can't wait for Brisbane now. #AUSvIND

— RICKY PONTING  
Former Australia skipper

A fitting birthday gift for Rahul Dravid. An extraordinary display of resistance, fight and patience by India today.

— INTERNATIONAL CRICKET COUNCIL

Unbelievable Grit, determination and character shown by #TeamIndia. What an unbelievably spirited effort and some serious grind. Well done men. test cricket at its best

— K.L. RAHUL  
India batsman

Even a half-strength, battled, bruised, injured, ridiculed, abused, bio-bubble fatigued India is difficult for a full strength Australia to beat at home. No praise high enough for this herculean effort. Told you this is a damn good team. Cherish it. #AUSvsIND

— WASIM JAFFER  
Former India batsman

Feel so so proud of the Team, Pant showed why he needs to be treated differently & d grit showed by Vihari, Pujara & Ashwin was unbelievable

— VIRENDER SEHWAG  
Former India opener

Some incredible fight shown today by @BCCI @cheteshwar1 @ashwinravi99 @Hanumavihari @RishabhPant17 and all involved in that performance throughout. Well done to my good mate @RaviShastriOfc. Long live test cricket.. #INDvAUS #TestCricket #TeamIndia #fight

— SIMON DOULL  
Former New Zealand pacer

## Delhi hammer giants Mumbai

**Mumbai, Jan. 11:** Delhi started their campaign at Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy with a thumping 76-run win over domestic heavyweights Mumbai in an Elite Group 'E' game at the Wankhede Stadium here on Monday.

Put in to bat, Delhi rode on a blazing 74 off 37 balls by two-down Nitish Rana to post a mammoth 206 for 4 and then bundled out Mumbai for a meagre 130, with left-arm pacer Pradeep Sangwan (3/20) leading from the front.

Delhi openers Shikhar Dhawan (23) and Hiten Dalal (24) started in an aggressive manner putting 38 in 4 overs. However, Dhawan could not convert his start, and Delhi were 56/2 at one stage.

However, one-down Himmat Singh (53 off 32 balls) and Rana took the Mumbai attack to cleaners and added 122 for the third wicket.

The left-handed Rana hammered seven fours and five sixes, while Singh struck three boundaries and four maximums as Mumbai bowlers were made to toil hard.

Mumbai never got going in the chase as they lost half their side for 52. Mumbai batters Yashasvi Jaiswal (0), Aditya Tare (3), Suryakumar Yadav (7), Siddhesh Lad (4) and Sarfaraz Khan (15) fell cheaply.

All-rounder and India player Shivam Dube hit a whirlwind 42-ball 63, with three fours and five sixes, but that was too little and too late. India speedster Ishant Sharma, who returned to competitive cricket after sustaining a side strain during IPL, ended with figures of 2/16.

In Chennai, Bihar beat Arunachal Pradesh by 18 runs in their opening Plate group match. Opting to bat, Bihar were bowled out for 122 in 20 overs. In reply, Arunachal faltered after a bright start and were restricted to 104/9. — PTI

## BRIEF SCORES

■ Delhi 206/4 in 20 overs (Nitish Rana 74, Himmat Singh 53; Shams Mulani 2/43) bt Mumbai 130 in 18.1 overs (Shivam Dube 63; Pradeep Sangwan 3/20, Ishant Sharma 2/16).

■ Andhra Pradesh 107/6 in 20 overs (Ricky Bhui 39; Jayant Yadav 2/13, Yuzvendra Chahal 2/21) lost to Haryana 108/4 in 15.5 overs (C.K. Bisnoi 42 n.o, S. R. Chauhan 35).

## Jaweed, Swachit, Sameer, Sarthak top performers

## Sagar, Abhishek, Askari, Anurag, Rohit, Yash, Shreyas, Shanawaz, Vinay, Jayasuriya, Sankeerth, Radhakrishna, Trishank, Pramod also shine

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 11

Mir Jaweed Ali and K. Swachit Kumar took the top honours in batting and bowling respectively in Monday's action at the Hyderabad Cricket Association's A-1 Division three-day league matches.

Jaweed scored an unbeaten double century while Swachit took 6 for 35 for his second five-wicket haul of the season.

Action resumed after the previous round was halted by a High Court order that directed Union Bank of India team to be included in the league. The bankmen fared poorly on the first day though, allowing Budding Star to amass 482 for 8 in 90 overs. Jaweed smashed 32 boundaries in his 237 not out that came off 204 balls while his teammate Divesh Singh scored 103 to pump up the Stars' total. Right arm pacer Swachit of



Shaik Sameer



Sarthak



Swachit Kumar



Sagar Chaurasia



Syed Askari



Yash Kapadia



Abhishek



K. Pramod

Zinda Tilismath ran through the Evergreen batting line up to bowl them out for a humiliating 53. His figures read an impressive 9.5-3-35-6. Neel Chakravarthy played a good supporting role with 4 for 17. Shaik Sameer of Sportive and Sarthak Bharadwaj of Khalsa scored their second successive centuries in the top league while Sagar Chaurasia of Cambridge XI registered his second ton of the season. Sameer slammed 173 in 264 balls with the help of 13 fours and six sixes while his teammate Abhishek Murugan hit 159 as Sportive CC posted 493

for 7 against Jai Bhagwati. Sarthak's 219-ball 141 that included 17 boundaries took Khalsa to 342 against Secunderabad Nawabs. Sagar's 123 coupled with Syed Askari's 142 guided Cambridge XI to 432/8 in 90 overs against MP Colts. Anurag Vittal (169) and Rohit Rayudu (110) of Jai Hanuman; Yash Kapadia (155) and Shreyas Vala (128) of Deccan Chronicle; Shanawaz Khan (149), Aliga Vinay (133) and A. Jayasuriya (136) of Rohit XI; and G. Sankeerth (103 n.o.) of Continental were the other centuries. Among the other bowlers who

did well were Hyderabad Bottling's M. Radhakrishna (5/25), G. Trishank Gupta (5/47) of Charminar CC and K. Pramod (5/82) of Goud's XI. **Brief scores (Day-1):**

## A-1 DIVISION (THREE-DAY)

## Group-A

■ Budding Star 482/8 in 90 overs (Kamal Sawariya 71, Mir Jaweed Ali 237 n.o. — 204b, 32x4, Divesh Singh 103 — 116b, 8x4, M.A. Khader 3/69) vs Union Bank of India.

■ Jai Hanuman 457/9 in 90 overs (Anurag Vittal 169 — 201b, 19x4, 5x6, Rohit Rayudu 110 — 92b, 11x4, 6x6, Sai Purnanand Rao 35, Irfan Khan 55, C. Durgesh 3/68, Chiranjeevi 3/104) vs BDL.

■ Deccan Chronicle 421/7 in 90 overs (Yash Kapadia 155 — 272b, 16x4, 2x6, Shreyas Vala 128 — 215b, 11x4, 2x6, A. Varun Goud 55) vs Central Excise.

■ R. Dayanand 251 in 75.4 overs (M. A. Shanmukha 91, B. Yathin Reddy 49, R. Shiv Shankar 31, Mohd Mussar 4/44, A. Aslam 3/48) vs Income Tax 11 for no loss in 5 overs.

■ SBI vs Sporting XI (teams did not report to the ground). Points: SBI 0, Sporting XI 0.

**Group-B**

■ Evergreen 53 in 18.5 overs (K. Swachit Kumar 6/35 — 9.5-3-35-6, Neel Chakravarthy 4/17) vs Zinda Tilismath 155/8 in 58 overs (Shashank Lokesh 72, G. Aniketh Reddy 3/28).

■ Cambridge XI 432/8 in 90 overs (Rishiket Sisodia 39, Syed Askari 142 — 218b, 19x4, 2x6, Sagar Chaurasia 123 — 158b, 13x4, 3x6, Abhishek 65 n.o, Praneeth Raj 3/82) vs MP Colts.

■ Concorde CC 123 in 47.5 overs (M. Pratyush Kumar 51, M. Radhakrishna 5/25 — 11.5-4-25-5, Kavin Gupta 3/37) vs Hyderabad Bottling 109/3 in 26 overs (M. Radhakrishna 35 batting).

■ Sportive CC 493/7 in 90 overs (Shalk Sameer 173 — 264b, 13x4, 6x6, Abhishek Murugan 159 — 156b, 22x4, 4x6, Nitish Rana 34 n.o.) vs Jai Bhagwati.

■ Rohit XI 55 in 88 overs (Shanawaz Khan 149 — 180b, 13x4, 3x6, Aliga Vinay 133 — 133b, 25x4, 1x6, A. Jayasuriya 136 — 116b, 14x4, 2x6, V. K. Siddharth 58, Nitin Sai Yadav 30, K. Pramod 5/82 — 18-2-82-5, Narayan Teja 3/95) vs Goud's XI.

■ Khalsa 342 in 80.5 overs (Sarthak Bharadwaj 141 — 219b, 17x4, Aryan Krishna 70, Jaldev Goud 3/59, Takshit Rao 3/53) vs Secunderabad Nawabs 29/1 in 4 overs.

■ Balaji CC 145 in 43.2 overs (H. K. Simha 35, Geeta Krishna 31, G. Trishank Gupta 5/47 — 14.2-2-47-5, Mohd Adnan 4/38) vs Charminar CC 129/4 in 39 overs.

■ Mahmood CC 264 in 85.3 overs (Tanay Nemani 56, Srinieth Reddy 45, Durga Balaji 43, Naresh Kumar 3/42, Amir Bin Ali 3/70) vs Apex 24 for no loss in 5 overs.

## Live on TV

## BADMINTON

**Thailand Open:** Round of 32 from 7.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

## CRICKET

**Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament:** Jharkhand vs Bengal from 11.55 am; Assam vs Tamil Nadu from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

## FOOTBALL

**English Premier League:** Wolverhampton Wanderers vs Everton from 1.45 am (Wednesday) on Star Sports Select 2; Burnley vs Manchester United from 1.45 am (Wednesday) on Star Sports Select 1

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