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HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | 6 JANUARY 2021

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WEATHER

Max: 30.2°C
Min: 18.9°C
RH: 56%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy sky. Misty morning.
Max/Min temp. 29/19 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+16,538)	(+228)
1,03,74,102	1,50,114
covid19india.org	
(+253)	(+3)
TS: 2,87,993	1,554
(+377)	(+4)
AP: 8,83,587	7,122

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES	8,64,19,682
worldometers.info/coronavirus	18,67,379

COUNTER POINT



He will flag off the vaccination drive, but on one condition. Don't force him to take it first!

HC STALLS HCA'S LEAGUE MATCHES OVER BANK ROW

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday stayed all ongoing matches of the League Cricket Championship 2020-21 conducted by the Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA), for not carrying out its orders.

The court had directed the HCA to include the cricket team of the Union Bank of India (formerly Andhra Bank team) to participate in league matches. Justice Challa Kodandaram while dealing with a petition filed by the Union Bank of India team, questioned the draws issued by the HCA refusing to include the team.

Full report on Page 12

Leaders tell AICC not to name PCC chief now

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, JAN. 4

TOP LEADERSHIP was told the move now would create a rift in the party ahead of the bypoll to Nagarjunasagar.

Nomula Narasimhaiah. Sources in the party said that during a meeting between AICC in-charge Manickam Tagore and AICC chief Sonia Gandhi on Monday, the new president's name was almost finalised. But some senior leaders in the state Congress contacted AICC leaders and requested for withholding an official announcement. Bhongir MP Komati-

reddy Venkat Reddy was in the race for the post, but the AICC reportedly favoured candidature of senior leader T. Jeevan Reddy. Venkat Reddy and his brother Rajagopal Reddy have a strong grip over politics in the combined Nalgonda district. They are capable of upsetting the Congress applecart.

Senior leaders from Nalgonda district informed the AICC that the Komatireddy brothers might be upset if Jeevan Reddy is selected, and this resentment could impact the Nagarjuna Sagar bypoll.

■ Page 2: Jana Reddy likely to contest Nalgonda bypoll

British PM cancels R-Day visit, cites UK Covid crisis

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 5

Centre ready to roll out jab in 10 days

VINEETA PANDEY | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 5

Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said on Tuesday that the ministry is ready to roll out vaccines within 10 days of the date of Emergency Use Authorisation," he said.

Niti Ayog member Dr V.K. Paul said all scientific and statutory requirements have been met.

■ More reports on Page 5

BHARAT BIO, SERUM BURY JAB HATCHET

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech have jointly released a pledge on Tuesday for a smooth roll-out of the Covid 19 vaccines for India and the wider world. This after some confusion arose in public mind about the efficacy of their vaccines.

Bharat Biotech chairman Dr Krishna Ella had, in an emotional outburst, created a stir just as the clinical trials of Covaxin were going on. Social media played around with this.

To clear the air, SII CEO Adar Poonawala and Dr Ella have issued a joint statement.

A state-wide Covid-19 vaccination trial and dry run will be held on January 7 and 8 as Telangana gears up to administer the actual vaccine to its healthcare and staff from other frontline departments such as police and civic services to be followed by other sections of society.

Unlike the January 2 limited dry run that saw four hospitals in Hyderabad and three in Mahbubnagar district being tested for their readiness, the second dry run of the Covid vaccine will put all the 1,200 identified Covid-19 vaccination centres in the state through their places.

■ Page 2: SII, Bharat Bio validate their vaccines

■ Page 2: Dry run to test staff's preparedness

SC, ST, BC students lose 93 MBBS seats in state

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

Gross injustice was done to students belonging to Scheduled Castes, Tribes and Backward Classes in the MBBS admissions in Telangana. At least 93 eligible students belonging to the reserved categories were denied seats by the Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences.

The university had already drawn flak for accommodating less meritorious students from Andhra Pradesh at the cost of local students. This time, the uni-

OUT OF 147 seats under local-open category, 139 (95 per cent) were allotted to OCs and the remaining eight to different categories of BCs.

versity virtually converted the Open Category in local quota into a reserved category for students belonging to forward castes (OCs) at the cost of SC, ST and BC students.

An in-depth analysis by Deccan Chronicle revealed that the university filled 147

seats under the quota of "local-open category" in phase 2 counselling. Out of these, 139 seats (95 per cent) were allotted to OCs and the remaining eight to different categories of BCs. Not a single seat was allotted to SCs and STs.

As per the guidelines of counselling, if followed properly by the university, only 54 OC students (37 per cent) out of 139 are eligible while five seats would have gone to SCs, 11 to STs and 77 seats to BCs.

Among BCs, students of sub categories of BC-A are eligible for three seats, BC-

B 38, BC-D 23 and BC-E 13 seats.

In Phase 1 counselling, the cut-off rank for the "local-open category" was 60,668 which means that seats were allotted to students till that rank in the particular quota. The cut-off rank for the same quota was 80,206 in Phase 2 counselling.

In between these two ranks, there are 658 Telangana students from all categories out of whom the top 147 meritorious students fit into the local-open category.

■ Page 3: Kaloji officials deviated from procedure



₹20,000-cr Central Vista project gets SC's 2:1 nod

Majority judgment says change in land use just and proper

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 5

The Supreme Court on Tuesday by a majority judgment of 2:1 gave its nod to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious ₹20,000-crore project for the construction of a new Parliament building and the redevelopment of the Central Vista.

In his dissenting verdict, Justice Sanjiv Khanna held the project was "bad in law" in terms of land use for two reasons. "There is no intelligible disclosure of public participation and no prior approval of the heritage conservation committee," the judge said.

In their 432-page majority judgment, Justice A.M. Khanwilkar speaking for himself and also Justice Dinesh Maheshwari said that the government's decision to change the land use for the project and the environment clearance by the ministry of environment and forests (MoEF) was "just, proper and in

accordance with law."

A batch of petitions had challenged the plan for demolition of old structures and new construction, including a new Parliament building in 86 acres of land in the heart of the national capital.

Apart from the change in

land use, and the manner and procedure adopted for making the changes in the Central Vista precincts, the petitioners had argued that there were irregularities in the process that involved the approval of the design, clearance on monetary allocations, and

the tendering processes, other regulatory clearances on environment and from local municipal bodies.

Holding that there was no "infirmity" in the grant of "no objection" by the Central Vista Committee, "approval" by the Delhi Urban Art Commission and the "prior approval" by the Heritage Conservation Committee, the majority judgment said, "We further hold that the exercise of power by the Central government under Section 11A(2) of the DDA Act, 1957, is just and proper and thus the modifications regarding change in land use... vide impugned notification dated 20.3.2020 stands confirmed."

However the court ordered prior permission of the Heritage Conservation Committee before the actual start of the construction work.

It also directed the ministry of environment to install the smog towers in all future major development projects.



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Variyam: 12.39 am to 2.09 am (Thursday)
Durmuhurtam: 11.59 am to 12.44 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Jamadi-ul-Awwal 21, 1442 AH
PRAYERS

Fajr: 5.43 am
Zohar: 12.32 pm
Asar: 4.18 pm
Magrib: 6.02 pm
Isha: 7.14 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.48 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.56 PM
MOONSET 12.10 AM
MOONRISE --

SHORT TAKES

4-YEAR-OLD BOY SLIPS INTO WATER SUMP, DIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

A four-year-old boy allegedly slipped into a water sump and drowned while playing in front of his house at RK Nagar in Hayathnagar.

According to the police, the boy, identified as Rizwan, is suspected to have been playing alone when he slipped and fell into the sump in his neighbourhood.

"Upon realising his disappearance, his family members started looking for him in the vicinity and found his body in the sump. They fished the body out and tried to revive him but in vain," said the police, who booked a case under section 174 (suspicious death) of the CrPC and began an investigation. The body of the boy was shifted to the Osmania General Hospital morgue for post-mortem.

WEF INVITES KTR TO GLOBAL TECH SUMMIT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

IT and industries minister K.T. Rama Rao has received an invitation from the World Economic Forum (WEF) which will be conducting the Global Technology Governance Summit in Japan from April 5 to 7, 2021.

Inviting minister Rama Rao to the summit, WEF president Børge Brende in the letter, said, "Under your forward-looking leadership, Telangana has been at the forefront of using emerging technologies for societal benefits. Thank you for your support of the AI4AI: Artificial Intelligence for Agriculture Innovation and G20 Smart Cities Alliance. It will be a pleasure to work together to further deepen their impact."

"The emerging technologies of the fourth industrial revolution have a vital role to play as countries recover from and rebuild following the Covid pandemic," he added.

The summit aims to help scale up public-private initiatives to nurture the development of fourth industrial revolution technologies while mitigating their risks.

MAN ARRESTED FOR SELLING BANNED CHINESE MANJA

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

A 38-year-old was arrested by the Mangalhat police for illegally selling banned Chinese manja to the public.

The police teams conducted a raid on the kites selling shop, Yash patang shop, at Aryasamaj in Mangalhat and apprehended the accused, Rakesh Singh. He was caught in possession of 59 banned synthetic nylon coated threads, also known as Chinese manja. Following his detention, a case was registered against him under sections 188 and 336 of the IPC and under section 15 of the Environmental Protection Act-1986 and he was placed under arrest.

"The General public are requested not to purchase and entertain this harmful Chinese manja during this Sankranti festival as it is likely to cause grievous injury and inconvenience to animals including birds as well as human beings," advised the police.

THE POLICE teams conducted a raid on the kites selling shop, Yash patang shop, at Aryasamaj in Mangalhat and apprehended the accused, Rakesh Singh.



Newly-elected BJP corporators protest at the Chief Minister's camp office in Begumpet on Tuesday demanding no further delay in the swearing-in ceremony and elections for the post of Mayor. — S. SURENDER REDDY

Form new GHMC Council, demand BJP corporators

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

North Zone police of Hyderabad foiled the attempts of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) corporators to lay siege to Pragathi Bhavan on Tuesday afternoon. The newly-elected corporators were staging a protest demanding formation of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Council (GHMC) Council, when police reached the spot and took them into preventive custody.

The corporators alleged

that the state government was delaying the formation of the Council although the results of the GHMC elections were announced a month ago. The police posted in front of Pragathi Bhavan promptly closed the gates and did not allow them to cross the barricades.

The corporators were taken into preventive custody and shifted to different police stations. There was a traffic slowdown on the Somajiguda stretch due to the flash protest.

Meanwhile, at around 11

THE CORPORATORS alleged that the state government was delaying the formation of the Council although the results of the GHMC elections were announced a month ago. The police posted in front of Pragathi Bhavan promptly closed the gates.

am, about 25 BJYM (Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha) activists, under the leadership of Bhanu Prakash, the BJYM State president, gathered near

Tivoli theatre and staged dharna on road obstructing the public and vehicular movement.

"Police then took them into preventive custody and shifted them to police station. Upon the request of BJYM president Bhanu Prakash, he was shifted to Devi Hospital in Lothkunta Tirumalagiri, where he was taken to the outpatient ward and the duty doctors informed that he has not sustained any injuries, condition is stable and no treatment is required," said North Zone DCP Kamleshwar.

UoH allows phase-wise return of PG students

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

University of Hyderabad (UoH) has announced a phase-wise return to "in-person classes" for 148 final semester postgraduate students of Science and SN School, following recommendations of a Task Force. This will enable these students to complete laboratory and or practise courses, which they left incomplete during the last semester, or that got postponed to the final semester.

In its announcement on Tuesday, UoH said the move will help students who are to graduate in June 2021. However, campus returning to its earlier rhyme will be a gradual process, which will take a couple of months, keeping in view the current state of Covid-19, including the new variant; potential roll-out of vaccination, and any new Unlock guidelines.

While announcing the phase-wise return of students, university vice chancellor Prof. Appa Rao Podile requested faculty, staff and students of social sciences, economics, humanities, and management to view this as a process of prioritising immediate needs of some students over others.

"It is not that the administration does not understand the enormous difficulties that students

MA Anthropology final year, Bibin, said that he is among students who have been unable to do practical on-field projects. Also, some students will miss out on opportunities owing to unavoidable circumstances. "While the university has facilitated online classes, I personally know many students, who haven't had any access to them because of connectivity issues. The administration is creating a divide among students of different streams," Bibin charged.

UoH students' union has welcomed the decision of students returning to campus in a phased manner.

It has, however, pointed out that delaying return of humanities and non-science-stream students will lead to hierarchy issues on the campus.

In addition to 148 students in the latest phase, central university has already enabled return to campus of over 320 research (M.Phil. and Ph.D.) scholars across various schools of study for enabling them to carry out experimental work and submit their theses in a timely manner. Moreover, all theory classes, including for those who have been permitted to return to campus for practical work, will continue online, the university clarified in an official communication.

SHORT-CIRCUIT CAUSES FIRE AT TV REPAIR SHOP

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

Panic prevailed at the Kukatpally area after a fire broke out following a short-circuit at a TV repair shop on Tuesday evening.

No casualties were reported but electronics and other furniture were damaged in the fire. A short-circuit is suspected to have led to the mishap. Residents in the area who noticed the fire and thick smoke emerging from the premises informed the cops. The shop is surrounded by residential colonies. Upon being alerted, the fire department and Kukatpally police rushed to the spot and two fire engines were sent to the location to douse the flames," said the police, adding that the cost of the property damaged was yet to be estimated.

THE FIRE department and Kukatpally police rushed to the spot and two fire engines were sent to the location.

TECH SNAG HITS METRO TRAINS FOR 20 MINUTES

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

A train of Hyderabad Metro Rail stalled at the Assembly Station on Tuesday morning for 20 minutes, leading to chaos on the Redline between Miyapur and L.B. Nagar "due to technical problems."

Many of those commuting to their offices suffered due to the delay. All trains on this corridor, which run at a frequency of six minutes each, had to stop at various stations along the Redline.

Hyderabad Metro Rail authorities clarified that there was indeed a failure in one of the signal switches, which was rectified within a "few minutes". Trains had to be then run in manual mode for some time, as all checks had to be carried out before gradually putting the system back on CBTC automatic mode.

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

Telangana state has been placed on a high alert to keep a watch on any possible unnatural deaths of either wild birds or poultry following the reporting of outbreaks of bird flu disease in five other states in India.

Tuesday saw state forest and animal husbandry departments instruct their staff across the state to keep their eyes open for potential or suspect bird deaths that could indicate a possible case of bird flu, the avian disease that can

kill wild birds in their hundreds or thousands, and can pose a serious threat to the poultry industry. "We are in a safe zone and there are no incidents of bird flu anywhere in Telangana state," animal husbandry department director Dr V. Laxma Reddy, told *Deccan Chronicle* on Tuesday. However, as a matter of abundant precaution, all the assistant directors of the department and veterinary officers have been placed on an alert and instructed to inspect all poultry farms and report any incidents of bird deaths, whether wild or

BIRD FLU has been confirmed so far in five states — Himachal Pradesh, MP, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Haryana.

Officials and staff have been asked to patrol all water bodies in forest areas and look for any dead birds. "Similarly, all beat officers have been told to watch out for any unusual bird deaths in the forests and if any dead bird is found, instructions have been issued to safely pack those remains and send them to the Veterinary and Biological Research Institute in Hyderabad for testing," a senior forest department official said.

Kaloji move helps pvt managements**Varsity V-C defends method of counselling**

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

and get them converted into management quota.

Rankers from Andhra Pradesh who already secured admission in top colleges like Andhra Medical College Visakhapatnam, Guntur Medical College, Rangareddy Medical College Kakinada, Kurnool Medical College and S V Medical College Tirupati applied for the mop-up phase of counselling in Telangana.

While the college managements get a fee of ₹60,000 for each seat in convener quota, it gets at least ₹1 crore as fee following the conversion of seats into C or management category. The amount will be more in some colleges.

University vice chancellor Dr B. Karunakar Reddy warned private colleges against blocking seats at the time of Phase 2 counselling itself, but did not take any steps to plug the loopholes in counselling.

The rules framed by him covertly help the managements to block the seats

and removed students who took admission elsewhere from the merit list for the mop-up phase. NTRUHS even obtained data from the KNRUHS to identify and delete students who have already joined in colleges. But, the KNRUHS scheduled the mop-up phase before NTRUHS gave the 'free exit' option to its students, so that students from other states can still apply here.

The vice chancellor, while reacting to the news in *Deccan Chronicle*, defended his method of counselling though it opened the floodgates for Andhra students.

He asserted that the alternative method of counselling would lead to several seats falling vacant and getting converted to management quota.

Ironically, as many as 18 out of 23 students who did not join after the mop-up phase belonged to the neighbouring state.

KALOJI OFFICIALS DEVIATED FROM PROCEDURE

From Page 1

But, the university allotted seats to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and BCs from among 147 in respective categories and filled the quota with OCs.

Had the 93 meritorious reserved category students been allotted seats in the Open Category in accordance with the rules, an equal number of seats would be vacant in the respective categories which have to be exclusively filled with the respective category students down in the order. Now, their dream to pursue medicine was shattered.

In every phase of counselling, the open category seats should be filled first followed by the reserved categories. This is because several students from the reserved categories get seats by virtue of their merit. The same procedure was followed in Phase 1 but a deviation was made in the subsequent phases of counselling," a senior official of the university admitted.

DN

Hemendranath Reddy, counsel for the petitioners, brought to the notice of the court that even the photographs of the said 256 voters were also not published — which is mandatory to be included as per rule 22(6)(a) of the societies act. The act mentioned that the name and photograph must be published.

Further, no member can be removed from the list without giving an opportunity of being heard as mandated by the proviso. But, without intimation, the petitioners were deleted from the list, Hemendranath Reddy said. Convinced, the court set aside the prepared voters list and directed the secretary to prepare the list afresh in accordance with the rules.

Justice MS

Ramachandra Rao of the high court was dealing with two petitions filed by several members of the society seeking the court's intervention to rectify flaws in the voters list prepared by the society and its former president.

They have prepared a voters list with 256 persons being eligible to vote out of 4,980 members the society, the petitioners alleged, and noted that the society's area of operation is Banjara Hills and Jubilee Hills, places where politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, former CMs,

and

lawyers, sitting and former judges of the high court and the apex court, artists of the Telugu film industry and many prominent citizens of Hyderabad resided.

The respondents argued

that they have prepared

the voters list after deletion of members who have dues payable to the society and members who did not attend the general body meetings.

But no material was placed by them to show that they followed the prescribed procedure to disqualify any member.

DN

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The court gave two weeks' time to call for objections, if any, after publishing the fresh list.

Registrars of Societies

must do a verification to

certify the eligible voters.

The list of all provisionally selected candidates is available on tsbie.cgg.gov.in.

DEADLINE FOR SCHOLARSHIPS SCHEME EXTENDED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

The Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education (TSBIE) on Tuesday announced the extension of the deadline for both fresh and renewal applications of all National Scholarship Schemes of the MHRD, up to January 20, and the last date for institutional verification up to February 5.

Interested students can apply online at scholarships.gov.in.

The list of all provisionally selected candidates is available on tsbie.cgg.gov.in.

The disease can pose threat to poultry industry**Telangana on Bird flu alert**

BALU PULIPAKA | DC

HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

accounts linked to these companies and a large number of international transactions have also been identified through bitcoins. Bulk of transactions had taken place over the last six months and further investigation is continuing. "We have addressed letters to different agencies including RBI seeking data as part of the further investigation including to find out the web of financial transactions," the official said. "On the financial transactions we received data from one of the payment gateways; we have asked two other payment gateways to give transaction details." — PTI

SHORT TAKES



Vennelakanti Rajeswara Prasad

POPULAR LYRICIST VENNELAKANTI PASSES AWAY

PATHRI RAJASHEKAR | DC NELLORE, JAN. 5

Famous lyricist and dialogue writer Vennelakanti Rajeswara Prasad, 63, passed away at his residence in Chennai following a massive heart attack on Tuesday afternoon.

A native of Nellore City, he is survived by his wife Prameela and sons Shashank Mouli and Rakendu Mouli.

Popular as Vennelakanti, he had penned dialogues for hundreds of successful Tamil films, which were dubbed into Telugu. He had also contributed to a few Hindi and English movies. The lyricist and dialogue writer began his career as a songwriter for *Anna Chellelu* and *Sri Ramachandrudu*, but came to limelight with *Murali Krishnudu* (1988), produced by S. Gopal Reddy.

He has more than 2,000 songs to his credit, including hit numbers, such as *Maatarani Mounamidi* (*Maharishi*), *Mavayya Anna Pilupu* (*Muddula Mavayya*) and *Rasaleela Vela* (*Aditya 369*). Vennelakanti, however, became more popular as a dialogue writer for superhit films of Kamal Haasan in Tamil, which got dubbed into Telugu, like *Dasavataram*, *Pancha Thanthram*, *Bhamane Sathyam*, *Bhamane*, apart from *Jurassic Park* in English and *Hum Aap Ke Hai Kaun* in Hindi.

GOVT HOSPITAL OUTSOURCING STAFF STAGE STIR

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

Contract workers at government hospitals in Telangana have started a one-hour strike from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. commencing Tuesday demanding that state government pay them minimum wages, as stipulated by the Supreme Court way back in 2016.

Striking under the banner of Telangana State Medical Contract Employees and Workers Union, they have threatened to go on a full-day strike on January 9 if the state government does not implement the Supreme Court order, which the union quoted as saying, "Non-implementation of minimum wage is equal to bonded labour."

Union secretary M. Laxmi Bai, who is sanitation worker on contract at the Osmania General Hospital (OGH), said, "I have been working in this hospital since 20 years. After all mandatory cuts, I get just ₹8,400 per month as salary; whereas those on government payrolls are paid between ₹40,000-50,000." OGH has around 450 outsourced contract workers.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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S/ A.V.SRAVAN KUMAR

Advocates

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What about EWS quota: HC to TS

Except in MBBS, BDS, quota is not being given in other courses, says PIL

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday sought the Telangana state government's stand on the implementation of 10 per cent reservations to the economically weaker sections (EWS) in pursuance of the 103 Amendment of the Constitution of 2019.

The amendment provides for 10 per cent reservations of the seats in educational institutions and appointments in pub-

lic services to the EWS.

The division bench comprising Justice A. Rajashekar Reddy and Justice B. Vijayashree Reddy was dealing with a PIL by the BJP activist Ale Bhasker Raaj, son of Ale Narendra, who challenged the inaction of the state government in providing the reservations as guaranteed in the Constitution.

Counsel for the petitioner Rajashekar Thallapally brought to the notice of the court that except in the MBBS and BDS

Courses, the reservation is not being implemented in other courses like BTech and MBA.

Students who come under this quota had lost opportunities to get the seats in 2019 and 2020, he said and submitted that even in the notifications issued for employment, the government has not mentioned these reservations.

Government Counsel Palle Nageshwar Rao sought four weeks time to submit the stand of the government.

Now, order food online from street vendors

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

Street vendors within Greater Hyderabad area will now be able to attract business through e-commerce platforms like Zomato, Swiggy, and Uber under PM SVANidhi scheme launched in the city on Monday.

As per a count, there are 1,45,000 street vendors who will benefit under the scheme.

GHMC launched the scheme on Tuesday by issuing 1.35 lakh ID cards to street vendors in the city. The civic body has also created 30 Town Vending Committees, along with 584 common interest groups for collecting

data on street vendors. PM SVANidhi is already under implementation in cities of Ahmedabad, Chennai, Delhi, Varanasi, and Indore, where it has yielded positive results.

GHMC has decided to follow the model these cities have used for mobilising street vendors into camps, onboarding them digitally, training them in digital transactions, sanctioning and disbursing loan amounts, and educating street vendors about timely repayment of EMIs, so that they become eligible for interest subsidy granted under PM SVANidhi. Moreover, this will enable them to apply for a higher loan in the next tranche.

These activities will be conducted under Government of India's "Mai bhi Digital" camp being conducted between January 4 and January 22.

In this context, GHMC zonal commissioners have been instructed to coordinate in organising training in digital transactions for selected candidates, motivating them to expand business through e-commerce platforms, coordinating with banks for sanctioning loans, uploading disbursement details under the scheme, forming zonal and local level committees to take up socio-economic profiling of those who have benefited under the scheme.

HARISH REELS OUT KCR PLAN FOR 50K JOBS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

Telangana Finance Minister T. Harish Rao announced here on Tuesday the decision of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao to recruit 50,000 persons for jobs in various state government departments in the coming weeks.

The minister stated this while participating in a function at which New Year diaries of several associations were released at Telangana Bhavan. He said that by the end of this month, the government will complete the promotions of employees and issue notifications for filling the vacancies.

The minister inaugurated the private employees' association's diary and said the government was also trying to create jobs in the private sector for unemployed people. The unemployment rate in Telangana, he said, was lower as compared to the national rate.

He recalled that the private employees' association played a key role in the Separate Statehood movement. Now, the organisation is engaged in activities for welfare of employees. Employees had faced police offensives and tear gas shells while participating in the agitation, he noted.

Harish Rao praised the vision of the Chief Minister and said several international companies were coming to Hyderabad and investing thousands of crores in projects here.

At Reddy Hostel Abids, the minister inaugurated the Telangana agriculture officers' association dairy along with agriculture minister S. Nirjanan Reddy. He said agriculture issue was the main political agenda in elections.

SOYAM SAYS ADIVASIS CAN JUSTIFY KILLING OF TIGERS

DC CORRESPONDENT KOMARAM BHEEM ASIFABAD, JAN. 5

general insurance. They had sold the policies to needy people for huge sums.

Explaining their modus operandi, police said that the accused persons used to operate pollution testing vehicles on highways and near RTO offices. "Whenever a vehicle came for pollution testing, they would inquire with the vehicle owners about insurance policies. If they did not have one, the accused persons would convince them to buy vehicle insurance. They would then issue the insurance bond and cheat them," said the police.

As an appeal to the public, cops said that one must check the authorisation of the agent/agency before taking insurance policies.

"Insurance policy bonds will be obtained after a minimum period of 12 hours, anyone giving it instantly is handing you a fake one. Insurance policies will be delivered only by post and pollution control vehicles do not give authorisation for issuance of insurance policies. If someone knowingly takes fake insurance policies, they are also liable to be booked under a cheating case. If you suspect any fake insurance sellers please Dial 100 or complaint through Cyberabad WhatsApp number 9490617444," added the police.

Adilabad MP Soyam Bapurao has given a legal twist to the man-animal conflict and tiger attacks in the agency and rural areas in the erstwhile Adilabad district.

After consoling the family members of the two tiger victims, Vignesh in Digida village in Bejjur mandal and Nirmala in Kondapalli village in Penchikalpet mandal during his tour in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district, Soyam Bapurao called upon Adivasis to lodge complaints with the local police and the forest officials.

He said Adivasis would have a chance to justify their action even if they killed the tiger in self-defence when the officials have failed to catch them to save their lives from the tiger attacks even after submitting the representations to the authorities.

Soyam Bapurao said Adivasis should follow the Indian constitution and the rule of law and added that Adivasis could resolve the tiger menace with strong agitation only. Soyam said Adivasis could try to resolve the tiger problem on their own if the police and forest offices failed to resolve the problem within a period of time. He questioned why more number of tigers have suddenly surfaced in the forest area and that too in the area where Adivasis have been living for a long time.

4th ANNIVERSARY
"The righteous shall be in ever lasting remembrance" Psalms 112:6

BODI PHILIP SAMUEL
S/o Late Rev. Bodu Philip & Mariamma.
Born: 06.07.1933
Entered Glory: 06.01.2017
Inserted by: FAMILY MEMBERS
Ph: 9032675227

BREACH IN SRSP KAKAYTIYA CANAL

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, JAN. 5

Indiramma Colony houses. Alerted about the incident, officials went to the spot and erected barricades and opened the escape regulator gates. Pancayat raj minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao and tribal welfare minister Satyavathi Rathod rushed to the water inundated the

₹2cr allotted for Peddagattu Jatara

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 5

The state government on Tuesday sanctioned ₹2 crore for the biennial Peddagattu Jatara of Sri Linamanthulu Swamy in Darpally village in Suryapet district.

Chief Minister K.

Chandrashekhar Rao, on a request from the Suryapet district collector who sought ₹2.48 crore for the event, asked the finance department to release the funds.

The funds were sanctioned under the Special Development Fund for

Welfare and Developmental Activities scheme for the current fiscal. The district administration has been directed to take up necessary works on a war-footing and make arrangements to hold the festivities which will be held in February this year.

OBITUARY

OBITUARY

With sincere regrets and sorrowing hearts, we inform you about the Sad Demise of Sri Mangina Seetha Ramanujam. A beloved family member and guiding light to many, whose smile, gentle & caring conduct remains a beacon of loving memories. Left us on 2-1-2021. Deeply mourned by: Family Members & Staff Mob: 9876540808

OBITUARY

Ms. GOUTAMI NAIDU DOB: 14-03-1971 - 27-12-2020. May your soul rest in peace. 11th Day Ceremony is being held on Wednesday 6th Jan. 2021 at our residence. Inserted by: K.V. Rani (Mother), KT Naidu, KP Naidu (Brothers), K. Shivakami Naidu (Sister), Arvind Kumar (Brother-in-law), Deepesh & Vaishnavi (Son & Daughter)
Cell: 9700000662
S/2021/D01035

IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE

I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Psalms 23:6

Mrs. VOLA GLORY DANIEL PRASAD (M.A., M.Ed.) (Retd. Head Mistress, HAL School)

DOB: 15-07-1949 Promoted to Glory on 30-12-2020

"A loving daughter, devoted wife, Godly mother, inspiring teacher and guide to many."

Inserted by: CHILDREN & GRAND CHILDREN Ph: 9985449185, 9493173259.

(S/2021/D01035)

11th DAY CEREMONY

Ms. GOOTAMI NAIDU DOB: 06-01-1996 Please join us for a memorial service to honor the loving memory of late Smt. K. Kusuma

6th January 2021 DINALU (11th Day Ceremony) Followed by LUNCH. 8th January 2021 KAUSU, Followed by LUNCH.

Inserted by: Mr. P. J. Sunil Naidu (Laxmi) & Family Members Contact: 9666347272, 770290239

(S/2021/D01035)

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8th January 2021 KAUSU, Followed by LUNCH.

Inserted by: Mr. P. J. Sunil Naidu (Laxmi) & Family Members Contact: 9666347272, 770290239

(S/2021/D01035)

10th ANNIVERSARY

STEPHEN BERNARD MILLS DOB: 21-04-1961 DOD: 06-01-2011

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

Inserted By: Wife - Sylvia Andrews & Family

SAD DEMISE

SANATH KUMAR MALREDDY

24.12.1971 - 04.01.2021

You will be fondly remembered in every prayer, during every occasion.
The values you imbibed in us will stay with us forever.

- ASP TECHNOLOGIES, USA
- ASP INFRA
- SL Tanvi Infra Projects
- Sai Tanvi Infra Projects
- SV Tanvi Realtors and Developers
- SL Tanvi Realtors and Developers
- Stepsworth
- The Skill Enhancers (TSE)
- Total Skill Sigma PVT. LTD.

S/o Late M. Raghuma Reddy Ex. MP Nalgonda & Smt

DECCAN Chronicle

6 JANUARY 2021

Nod for Central Vista: SC gives govt latitude

In a 2:1 judgment, the Supreme Court on Tuesday approved the Modi government's deeply controversial Central Vista project, which is an egregious example of executive excess. This paves the way for the spending of ₹20,000 crore to build a new Parliament House, a new residence for the vice-president, the demolition of some half-a-dozen fine standing buildings along the Rajpath lawns which house ministries, and their replacement along this majestic boulevard with new structures. The government has not offered cogent reasons for a new house for the PM and the vice-president, but if news reports are anything to go by, then the explanation for a fancy home for the PM may be thought to be embedded in the notion of vanity, like the idea of a special aircraft for the exclusive use of the PM (on the lines of Air Force One of the US President).

Why a new Parliament House? The government's answer is that the present structure is old, it is not spacious enough, and the building also has problems to do with age (it is less than a hundred years old). Were extensions, renovations, not possible as are routinely done with the centuries-old British Parliament?

The Supreme Court was only too willing to see reason in the government's justifications, actions, and possible motives which have been ripped apart by the country's top experts in architecture, design, city planning, heritage professionals, environmentalists, besides retired top civil servants

planning, conservationists, heritage professionals, environmentalists, besides retired top civil servants.

There is another important issue. Do we need to spend the officially estimated ₹20,000 crore on this blatantly futile venture when the economy is hovering around the negative growth territory? In the time of pandemic, is this the best use for the country's dwindling resources? Or, is this a foolish luxury the nation can ill afford? The Central Vista in New Delhi leads the gaze down from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate and is regarded as among the most majestic views among the world's principal cities, with green lawns on either side for public use. It is crowded with grand heritage buildings, including the Houses of Parliament. If there is a no-go area for urban destruction, redesign of spaces and change of land use in New Delhi, it is this. Major changes here are akin to changing the land use of the Taj Mahal complex in Agra or the Vatican in Rome.

From start to finish, the technically required official permissions — pertaining to change in land use, and heritage and environmental clearances — have been rushed through in record time, cutting corners, as if magically. Opaqueness of procedure was rampant. To deliberate over such a venture, which strikes at the root of history and heritage, the Parliament was never summoned. But the Supreme Court is unseeing. Maximum government, minimum judiciary, is a sorry maxim.

Trump must leave gracefully

The US President Donald Trump's never-ending effort to overturn the result of an election that he has lost has become much more than an embarrassment to some elements in his Republican Party. Mr Trump may seem like a drowning man flailing when his fate has been sealed but such antics are posing a serious threat to the very foundational principles that have governed the world's oldest working democracy tracing its election history 200-plus years. The President's phone call to Georgia's Secretary of State, Brad Raffensburger, asking him to change the result by somehow finding close to 12,000 votes for him is the most brazen abuse of power by a White House occupant, which warrants criminal prosecution. There has also been a fleeting thought in Mr Trump's growing bank of critics that he should be impeached before January 20, which is the date Joe Biden should be taking over.

The US presidential election was long over with all 50 states certifying their results. Mr Trump's legal challenges aimed at sowing doubts over an election that drew a record number of voters have been summarily dismissed by judges right across the country. Under the circumstances, what the country's elected representatives must do in Congress on Wednesday is to formally declare Mr Biden as the winner and ask Mr Trump to go home. He can leave his task of disrupting future elections to young and eager mavericks, who are taking after him in mocking the system and trying to subvert the will of the voters.

Such events as witnessed after the poll on November 3 are more in keeping with authoritarian parts of the planet and banana republics than in the citadel of freedom that the Capitol Hill housing the Senate, the Houses of Representatives and the Supreme Court represents. It is important for every part of the free world that the clownish Donald Trump depart the White House and allow the likes of his Vice-President Mike Pence to retain his dignity while preserving democracy in its very fount.

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Sanjivani
Sahni

Subhani



Challenges for Modi as world faces Biden era

K.C. Singh

The new year brought some cheer for a Covid-infested world with several vaccines — Pfizer, Oxford-AstraZeneca and Moderna — cleared to join battle to counter the pandemic, which cost the planet a year of social freedom, economic growth and mental peace. However, a second spike across Europe and the United States, a bitter American presidential election and clever repositioning by China have left international relations in an uncertain flux. Meanwhile, global stock markets have soared, reflecting more a sanguine assessment of the future than the troubled present.

The lone black swan is Donald Trump and Iran settling scores in the dying moments of Mr Trump's presidency, with unforeseen consequences. Otherwise, three developments will condition global geopolitics hereafter. One, the swearing-in of Joe Biden as the next US President on January 20. Two, China quickly spearheading two major agreements; the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a trade agreement centred around the 10 ASEAN nations plus Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and China; and a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) between the European Union and China. Both were under negotiation for almost a decade. While the former was finalised in mid-November 2020, days after the US election, the latter followed a month later. India was part of the negotiating process of the former, but chose in 2019 to walk out, dissatisfied with the guarantees available in a playing field that appeared to be tilted towards the better positioned producers of goods in China, South Korea and Japan. Three, the suc-

cess of the vaccination programme in pushing back the pandemic in developed Western countries, especially the US, and reviving jobs, demand and growth. Normally, outgoing US Presidents lower their profile after their successor is elected and the two administrations create policy and implementation coordination through their transition teams. Mr Trump, who keeps repeating on the social media and whenever he's in front of a microphone that his win has been stolen, has undermined that seamless process, which undermines trust in the United States. Mr Biden's national security adviser (designate) Jake Sullivan tweeted on December 21 that they would "welcome early consultations with our European partners on our common concerns on China's practices". Despite that, the EU under the half-yearly presidency of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, 10 days later signed the CAI with China. This reflected both European concern that Mr Trump may have lost but Trumpism survives and can return the loser having polled 74 million votes, as indeed the European dependence on the Chinese market. While Chinese investment in Europe is 120 billion euros, European return investment in China is 140 billion euros. All but Ireland already had investment agreements with China, but these were to protect investments, whereas the CAI assures market access in goods and services and provides one set of rules for all 27 EU members. China has also promised to enter the International Labour Organisation (ILO) accords on labour protection and thus satisfy the common complaint about forced labour.

This undermines President-elect Biden's hope for a united front of democra-

cies and like-minded nations against China. All may not have been lost yet as the agreement will take time to be implemented. Similarly, by finessing the RCEP, China negated Mr Trump's attempt to isolate and decouple trade and investment from it. If the CAI sends a signal to the Nato allies of the US abandoning it on economic and trade issues, the RCEP has shown that even in its immediate Asian neighbourhood, and despite its expansionist and aggressive conduct, China has managed to use the carrot to offset the stick.

After four years of being Trump bhatas, where does it leave the Indian government? The disruption caused by Mr Trump even in the Islamic world, by exacerbating the Shia-Sunni and intra-Sunni divisions, has immediate implications for India on multiple counts, due to India having ridden the American wave rather than eke out an independent course. For instance, the excessive chumminess with the UAE and Saudi Arabia, built on existing excellent relations, begot increased counter-terror cooperation and their distancing from Pakistan. But the cost has been India damaging its bridges with Iran, Qatar and Turkey. Thus, like the rest of the world, India is now running to cover the exposed ground as the sun sets on the Trump administration. India's external affairs minister S. Jaishankar surfaced in Doha, Qatar, on December 27-28. This was not surprising as the last high-level visit was in 2016 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi went to Qatar. Since 2017, when Mr Trump began his foreign travel as President

All this could also be valid advice for the Modi government, that is nearing its two-year mark in its second term. The drawbacks are mainly two. It must win the trust of farmers and stop minority baiting by its various state governments and using bigotry as ballast for its electoral machine. Otherwise, while the Chinese have redeployed geopolitically, keeping one foot on India's neck in Ladakh, the US shall not show Trumpian indulgence for its majoritarianism. Meanwhile, more and more Indians are beginning to ask whether the Modi government is all theatre or really a defender of the people and national interests.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.

LETTERS

FARMERS' PLIGHT

The plight of farmers is pitiable (*No repeal of law, move SC: Centre tells farmers, DC, Jan. 5*). The adamant attitude of the government has not only watered down their hopes, but also disappointed one and all.

Syed Amjad Ali
Hyderabad

BIBLE PARTY IN AP

The Election Commission is yet to register any Bible party in Andhra Pradesh (*AP people must pick Bible party or Gita party: Bandi, DC, Jan. 5*). BJP leaders who make such statements need to get their mental health examined.

Devanad
Hyderabad

Temples being vandalised and idols getting desecrated in Andhra Pradesh must be condemned. It is a pity that elected governments who must correct the situation have maintained a studied silence and are fishing in troubled waters to gain politically.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao
Hyderabad

GREAT ACHIEVERS

The reports of a circle inspector father saluting his DSP daughter and the tribal boy reaching a top post from the depths of poverty is a whiff of fresh air in an age of hate crimes, shameless defections by politicians and the pandemic. Hats off to the achievers.

Abdul Hakeem
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN CHRONICLE

Statehood for Himachal from January 26

NEW DELHI, Jan. 5 Himachal Pradesh will be ushered in as the eighteenth State of India on the eve of the Republic Day, it is learnt. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, is likely to inaugurate the State on January 25.

Parliament has already approved the elevation of the status of Himachal Pradesh, now a Union territory. The Act provides for a separate Governor for the State and also a separate High Court. The Union Government in the next few days will announce the appointments of the Governor and the Chief Justice. Himachal Pradesh has four seats in the new Lok Sabha. Delimitation work is already in hand and is expected to be completed well in time. —PTI.

A view is gaining wider acceptability that the precondition for sustainable, all-round progress in India is structural change in our governance model.

To understand this better and more simply, let's listen to what three eminent thinkers, who have vast experience in governance, in the government and in the private sector, in think tanks and more, have to say:

Arun Maira, who among multiple achievements was mandated when in the Planning Commission to catalyse fresh thinking on solving this problem, says: "What is the solution then? Going back to the basics, to the ground, and to the people. There are some good ideas emerging and being applied in many parts of the world. The essence is realising that solutions at the top are not working -- and cannot work with the present framework, they are built on a different frame."

Wajahat Habibullah, who was part of former PM Rajiv Gandhi's team in developing the panchayati raj concept, states: "The answer lies in more closely ensuring people's participation in governance as conceived by the Mahatma who identified the panchayat as an instrument of self-governance. That is still in my view the only viable alterna-

tive, but not in the form as it exists even after the 73rd and 74th Amendment."

Kiran Karnik brings a technology edge to the discussion: "To me a long-term solution is structural: we need to decentralise in a serious and substantial way. The framework exists in the constitutional amendments (73rd and 74th) that create a formal third layer of government by devolving powers to panchayatis and urban bodies. If this can actually be implemented, by ensuring the 3 F's needed (finance, functions and functionaries), we will have more accountable, transparent and effective governance and be substantially liberated from the whims and tyrannies of the Centre (or even states). Such decentralisation may not be sufficient by itself, but it is a necessary condition."

As a solution, he also refers to the influence of technology: "What is exciting is that new technologies make such decentralisation of politics and manufacture possible. Dispersal of factories and offices, jobs close to home, decongestion of cities, less pollution, lower crime: these and many other consequences make this almost utopia. The vector is important; while a slower speed will mean that we may not get there for long, the direction is clear."

Recent economic thought is also from

a different route coming to a similar broad viewpoint. Arun Maira said productivity, particularly labour productivity, increases encouraged by policy initiatives, similar to what Japan did in the 1970s. Dr Rathin Roy emphasised that economic growth will arise from meeting the needs of the currently poorer, deprived sections of society in contrast to the limited higher net worth segment. These include: Low-cost housing; Food — a balanced basket of nutrition; Affordable clothing; Education; Healthcare. All these for the masses.

This emphasis, changed from catering to middle class needs, is also in the direction of meeting the needs of "the bottom of the pyramid". "Small is beautiful" and profit at the bottom of the pyramid are thought processes which converge with such proposed structural changes.

There is enormous management literature and practice which highlights the need of decentralisation for success, rather than control and giving directions from the top. In other words, even in the corporate world, there is recognition of the desirability of decentralised structures. Therefore, there is underlying congruence in this thought process at multiple levels but it is cur-

rently most deficient in government and most required in that domain.

While on all of the above, there can be little disagreement, the ground reality still requires some additional steps to help get there.

Assume there is merit in recognising that decentralisation is a central theme relevant and necessary for most (not all) forms of governance. The effort should be to see how this thought can be mainstreamed. Approaches are required from multiple directions which not only encourage it in their respective domains but also string it together as a national theme. This is a challenge which needs working upon.

Since this is a long-term challenge, the catalyst to get there must focus on young people. At one level, potential young leaders need to be won over.

In practice, as potential champions of the cause, think of Sachin Pilot, Raghav Chadha, Mahua Moitra, Kanhaiya Kumar and others from politics.

In the corporate world, talent is plentiful. The young have become unicorns — Vijay Shekhar Sharma, Paytm; the Bansals of Flipkart fame; Ritesh Aggarwal, Oyo. Young Indians are heading leading global corporations — Satya Narayana Nadella at Microsoft;

Sundar Pichai at Alphabet and Google; besides many others. They are already champions but need to be persuaded and inducted to champion this cause.

Even in established business houses, control is going to the next generation — Roshni Nadar, HCL Technologies, Rishad Premji, Wipro. Several similar examples are available from the world of sports and entertainment. Some prominent names in the last category include Swara Bhaskar and Anurag Kashyap.

Diversified champions from amongst these need to be won over, who will highlight the underlying thought process in multiple domains and encourage its deployment. Their collective voice will have a better chance of making an impact. Therefore, there is a vital need for avenues and forums through which this can be exercised.

The key next steps, apart from the changes in the governing setup, without which nothing will happen, are winning over the younger generation, making champions from amongst them, and providing a collective forum to help make decentralisation a central artery.

The writer is a management and economic adviser

India requires key structural changes in way it is governed



SHORT TAKES

DEATH OF CROWS TRIGGERS PANIC IN MP VILLAGES

RABINDRA NATH CHOWDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JAN. 5

Panic has gripped many villages in Madhya Pradesh after scores of crows were found dead on the roads and farmlands in the past couple of days.

At least seven districts in the state have reported deaths of crows. "We have received reports of at least 400 crows deaths from seven districts in the state. The deaths were caused due to a virus," state animal husbandry director Dr. R.K. Rokre said on Tuesday.

Samples of the dead crows retrieved from Khargone and Mandsaur were sent to the High Security Animal Disease Laboratory at Bhopal for tests to identify the virus that caused death of the birds, sources said.

Earlier, strains of H5N8 avian flu have been detected from the dead crows recovered from Indore.

The district officials in Indore have conducted a door-to-door survey within a radius of one km from the premises of a local college where maximum numbers of crows were found dead.

"No one has been found to have any symptoms. But, 10 people in the area have been found to have caught cough and cold," a senior district official said. The Indore zoo has been alerted to take necessary steps in view of the development.

PRAGYA EXEMPTED FROM COURT APPEARANCE

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 5

A special NIA court in Mumbai on Tuesday granted exemption from regular personal appearance to BJP MP Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur during 2008 Malegaon bomb blast case trial. The court, however, asked Sadhvi Pragya, who had appeared before the court on Monday, to attend the court as and when directed. She had sought exemption on health and security issues.

After defying the court's directive to appear before it multiple times, Thakur appeared before a special NIA court on Monday.

The special judge P.R. Sitre granted her exemption from appearing before the court after Sadhvi's lawyer J.P. Mishra filed a written application pointing out that she has difficulty in travelling regularly due to her health and security reasons.

According to the lawyer, Thakur has multiple illnesses and is undergoing treatment at AIIMS. Even while she was in Mumbai (on Monday) she had undergone some tests at Kokilaben Hospital where doctors told her she was having multiple complications and needs to be treated by a team of doctors, the lawyer told the court.

Talking about threat to Thakur's life, the lawyer said that due to the threat, the Madhya Pradesh police has provided her six armed police personnel for her security.

Besides them, two personal aids accompany her wherever she goes. "It is very difficult for her to travel with all these security personnel," he added.

THAIPPOOSAM DECLARED PUBLIC HOLIDAY IN TN

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JAN. 5

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami declared Thaipoosam, the festival of Tamil god Lord Murugan that falls on January 28 this year, would be a public holiday hereafter.

"During my tour of the districts, the common people demanded that a public holiday be announced for Thaipoosam as it is done in countries like Sri Lanka and Mauritius," Palaniswami said in a statement on Tuesday.

Taking into consideration the public demand, Thaipoosam would be included in the list of government holidays from this year onwards, the release said, adding that the festival is celebrated in Kerala and in countries like Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Mauritius and Indonesia.

Thaipoosam, which is celebrated on the full moon day of the Tamil month Thai, marks the handing over of 'Vel' (spear) to Lord Murugan by Parvathi, according to legend.

I-T DEPARTMENT QUIZZES VADRA FOR 2ND DAY

New Delhi, Jan. 5: The Income Tax department questioned Robert Vadra, son-in-law of Congress president Sonia Gandhi, for the second consecutive day on Tuesday in connection with its probe against him under the benami assets law, official sources said.

A team from the Chandigarh investigation unit of the department, that is handling the probe, was seen going inside Vadra's office in the Sukhdev Vihar area of the national capital around 3 pm. Vadra is married to Congress leader and Sonia Gandhi's daughter Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

After he was questioned on the first day on Monday, the 52-year-old had said the aim of the tax department's action was to "digsress" from the "real issues" concerning the country like the farmers' agitation.

On Monday, he was questioned for about eight hours and his statement was recorded as part of the proceedings related to the Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, sources had said.

Tax department sources had said Vadra was asked to join the investigation at their office but as he cited the prevailing Covid-19 restrictions, I-T officials decided to visit his premises.

Officials had said the questioning was linked to the purchase of some land parcels by a firm linked to Vadra in Rajasthan's border town of Bikaner in which another central probe agency, the Enforcement Directorate, had filed a money laundering case in 2015. The ED has questioned Vadra in this case in the past and had attached assets worth ₹4.62 crore of his firm Ms Sky Light Hospitality (P) Ltd (now LLP) in 2019. — PTI

Bird flu scare is back



Women carry dead ducks in a village in Alappuzha district of Kerala on Tuesday. A special team of health officials has been deployed to cull the birds, in order to contain the further spread of the Avian Influenza (bird flu), which has been detected in some parts. J&K sounded an alert and started collecting samples from migratory species after Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh also reported cases of the avian influenza. — PTI

Assam: Saikia loses status of LoP in Assembly

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, JAN. 5

The Congress had won 26 seats in the 2016 Assembly elections to take the second spot after the BJP bagged 60 seats.

Six months later, Baithalangso MLA Mansing Rongpi quit the Congress and got re-elected on a BJP ticket. In 2019, Jania MLA Abdul Khaleque resigned after winning the Barpeta Lok Sabha seat as the Congress candidate. The All India United Democratic Front's Rafiqul Islam won the seat in the by-election.

Between February and November 2020, the Congress' Sibsagar MLA Pranab Kumar Gogoi and former chief minister Tarun Gogoi, who represented Titabar, passed away. In December 2020, two Congress MLAs — Ajanta Neog (Golaghat) and Rajdeep Goala (Lakhipur) — quit and joined the BJP.

Reacting to the notification, Assam Legislative Assembly has withdrawn the status from Saikia as the present strength of the Congress is one less than the required number of 21 MLAs. Saikia represents Nazira constituency in eastern Assam.

The notification stated, "The present strength of the Indian National Congress Legislature Party, Assam Legislative Assembly, is not equal to the quorum fixed to constitute a sitting of the House that is one-sixth of the total number of Members of the House as required... therefore, the Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly, has been pleased to withdraw the recognition of Debarata Saikia, MLA, as Leader of the Opposition, with effect from January 1, 2021."

There are four major districts of Punjab that share their border with Pakistan — Gurdaspur, Pathankot, Amritsar and Taran Taran. Sources claimed that additional border forces between 4,000-5,000 have been deployed along these four districts. This is in addition to the regular deployment specially by the BSF Frontier Zone.

Reacting to the notification, Congress MP Abdul Khaleque said that it is not logical to withdraw the status. The notification of the acting secretary is illogical and that he has done it under the pressure of the government.

More than 100 women personnel have joined NDRF over the last few months

cuers' team is already on ground. Recently, the UP government requisitioned an NDRF team and they (women) went there (Garh Mukteshwar). The team handled the rescue boats and related equipment," NDRF director general S.N. Pradhan said.

"These personnel have all the skills to be called complete rescuers," he said.

The move to include women personnel in the NDRF combat ranks was in the works for some time. The force, since it was raised over a decade

ago, was till now an all-male affair.

More than 100 women personnel have joined the NDRF over the last few months and they are being deputed with its battalions across the country as soon as they finish their pre-induction course and training, the DG said.

He said the numbers are expected to go over 200 women personnel in the near future.

The female personnel who are joining are in the constabulary and sub-officer (Sub Inspector and Inspector) ranks.

● ADDITIONAL 4,000-5,000 troops have been deployed in sensitive border districts of Gurdaspur, Pathankot, Amritsar and Taran Taran following specific intelligence inputs that Pakistan would try large-scale infiltration into Punjab.

ments that is done by the BSF. Following these additional deployments security sources claimed that the Pak border in Punjab sector has been "virtually sealed."

There has been an increased activity from the Pakistan side along the border areas of Punjab. Sources claimed they had specific intelligence inputs that Pakistan would try large-scale infiltration into Punjab and was now focusing on this region instead of the Kashmir Valley.

Following these developments intense security review was conducted for the border districts of Punjab by multiple agencies and it was decided to further increase deployment specially by the BSF Frontier Zone.

There are four major districts of Punjab that share their border with Pakistan — Gurdaspur, Pathankot, Amritsar and Taran Taran. Sources claimed that additional border forces between 4,000-5,000 have been deployed along these four districts. This is in addition to the regular deployment specially by the BSF Frontier Zone.

Reacting to the notification, Congress MP Abdul Khaleque said that it is not logical to withdraw the status. The notification of the acting secretary is illogical and that he has done it under the pressure of the government.

Over the last few days several attempts have been made to infiltrate from Punjab border. Further drones have been spotted frequently which has even dropped sophisticated weapons some of which were recovered by security forces in the Gurdaspur region. This increased activity by Pakistan is being linked to the ongoing farmers agitation in Punjab.

"Indian Army with assistance from Indian Air Force, mobilised troops including accretionary forces in a very short duration including heavy equipment like guns, tanks as also ammu-

nition, rations and clothing. Own engineers constructed roads, accommodation shelters and bridges to assist troop deployment," said the report.

It said that Advance Winter Stocking (AWS) and winter preparations for the enhanced troops strength has been completed.

The report said that defending the territorial integrity of India in Galwan Valley has been the most shining example of the valour of "our forces this year in which 20 brave India soldiers made the supreme sacrifice."

"The Chinese also suffered significant casualties," said the report.

The report pointed out that later on August 28-29, Indian troops in a precautionary deployment, pre-empted Chinese expansionist designs and occupied heights along southern bank of Pangong Tso.

"While the Indian Army is prepared for any eventualities, talks are also progressing to resolve the issue in an amicable manner," said the report.

The RJD has been of the view that midterm election is likely in the state owing to the internal conflict within the NDA especially after six of the seven MLAs in Arunachal Pradesh joined the BJP in December. The NDA-led by Nitish Kumar had won 125 seats, three more than the number required to form the government in Bihar.

However, it was the RJD which emerged as the single largest party with 75 seats. The BJP became the second-largest party with 74 seats while Nitish Kumar's JD(U) slipped to number three position in the state.

After the results were declared in November, Tejashwi had issued an ultimatum to the NDA government led by Nitish Kumar to keep its poll promises of creating job opportunities.

Trinamul minister quits party

Laxmi Ratan Shukla resigns as minister on Didi's birthday

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JAN. 5

As West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee turned 66 on Tuesday, former cricketer Laxmi Ratan Shukla resigned from her government as minister of state for sports and youth services and also quit the Trinamul Congress, in a shocking birthday blow ahead of the Assembly elections.

Shukla is the second rebel minister after Shubhendu Adhikari to quit Mamata's Cabinet.

Seeking relief from politics, he resigned because he wants to return to cricket. That is what he wrote to me. I certainly want him also to play because he is from sports. My good wishes are with him. There is no misund

erstanding in it.

Senior TMC MP Sougata Roy said, "I am sad to learn about Laxmi's resignation. He was a good cricketer and minister. He never shared his problems within the party. We urge him to withdraw his resignation.

Let him be... though it's the CM's prerogative on who is in the Cabinet."

Standing by Shukla another rebel TMC MLA from Howrah, Baishali Dalmiya, alleged, "He faced obstacles in working freely and was hurt. There are some negative-minded people who once held posts in the party and are creating a disturbance. They don't allow anyone to work. They also belittle and oppose others."

The Bally legislator said, "Whenever we faced insults, it came from our own party leaders rather than the CPI(M), Congress or BJP. Tomorrow Laxmi may be called a traitor. But aren't those nibbling the party like termites the actual traitors? They should be thrown out first."



Tejashwi Yadav
RJD TO TAKE OUT DHANYAWAD YATRA SOON

NAYEER AZAD | DC PATNA, JAN. 5

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav is preparing to take out 'Dhanyawad Yatra' to thank people of the state for voting in favour of the party during recently held Assembly elections.

Sources said that the party is making preparations to take out the Yatra in a phased manner after Makarsankranti and workers have been asked to make necessary arrangements in their districts.

According to RJD spokesperson Shakti Yadav, "Tejashwi Yadav will thank the people of the state for making RJD a single largest party in Bihar. The idea is also to strengthen our party's base and seek public support in case of a mid-term poll held in the state".

The RJD has been of the view that midterm election is likely in the state owing to the internal conflict within the NDA especially after six of the seven MLAs in Arunachal Pradesh joined the BJP in December. The NDA-led by Nitish Kumar had won 125 seats, three more than the number required to form the government in Bihar.

However, it was the RJD which emerged as the single largest party with 75 seats. The BJP became the second-largest party with 74 seats while Nitish Kumar's JD(U) slipped to number three position in the state.

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WOMEN | RESCUERS

More than 100 women personnel have joined NDRF over the last few months

India gets its 1st women's team in disaster combat

New Delhi, Jan. 5: In yet another example of shattering of the proverbial glass ceiling, the first batch of over 100 women disaster combatants and rescuers have been inducted in the country's federal calamity force NDRF.

An all-woman team of freshly trained National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel was recently deployed for contingency duties on the banks of the Ganga river in Uttar Pradesh's Garh Mukteshwar town, a senior force officer said.

The move to include women personnel in the NDRF combat ranks was in the works for some time. The force, since it was raised over a decade

ago, was till now an all-male affair.

More than 100 women personnel have joined the NDRF over the last few months and they are being deputed with its battalions across the country as soon as they finish their pre-induction course and training, the DG said.

He said the numbers are expected to go over 200 women personnel in the near future.

The DG said the women personnel who are joining are in the constabulary and sub-officer (Sub Inspector and Inspector) ranks.

As per authorisation, each NDRF battalion of over 1,000 personnel can have 108 women rescuers.

Pradhan, however, said as there are "pre-existing" vacancies in the feeder agencies or the paramilitary forces who send them to the disaster response force on deputation, it will take more time for the full strength of female combatants to join.

The DG said the women personnel will add to the strength and skills of the force in rescuing disaster victims and even in calamity mitigation.

"We can deploy both components of an all-woman NDRF team or a mix squad of male and female personnel for responding to a situation. We prefer the second because if there is complement of women personnel it makes a great difference on the ground where women, children and old persons are being rescued," Pradhan said.

"The skill sets of women are stronger in some aspects... so that can be leveraged especially in situations where women are victims," he said.

The DG added the force is continuously creating women-oriented infrastructure at its existing and futuristic bases across the country.

He said the initial feedback to the first women's team in disaster combat has been good. "They are performing well. From initial feedback, I think they will be a great efficiency multiplier and also a great symbol of pride, inclusion and gender sensitivity which is also part of the Prime Minister's ten-point agenda for disaster response," he said.

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CINEMA



SUDARSHAN 35MM
11.00am, 2.15, 6.00, 9.00pm

BRAMARAMBA 70MM
11.30am, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30pm

MEGHA 70MM 11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

ARJUN 70MM 11.30, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30

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

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

AMB CINEMAS - Gachibowli 11.00am, 1.40, 4.05, 7.30, 10.10pm

TIVOLI TIVOLI - Sec-11 : 11.30, 2.10, 7.20, 10.10pm

PVR CINEMAS

FORUM MALL - Kukatpally

10.45, 11.45, 12.45, 1.45, 2.45, 3.45, 4.45, 5.45,

6.45, 7.45, 8.45, 9.45, 10.45pm

GALLERIA - Punjagutta 10.45am, 12.00, 1.45,

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

INORBIT MALL - Cyberabad

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

CENTRAL - Punjagutta

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

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

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

ICON - HITECH CITY

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

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

ASIAN CINEMAS

GPR MALL - Kukatpally 1.50pm, 7.00, 10.00pm

CINEPLANET - Komppali 1.20pm, 7.00, 10.00pm

RADHIKA - Kapra 1.50pm, 4.30, 9.45pm

CINESQUARE - Uppal 1.50pm, 7.30, 10.10pm

M CUBE - Attapur 1.20pm, 7.10, 10.00pm

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

SHIVAGANGA - Dilsukhnagar 2.00pm & 6.00pm

SHASHAHENSA - Chintal 2.00pm & 9.00pm

LAXMIKALA CINEPRIDE - MOOSAPET

11.15am, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15pm

INOX

GVK MALL - Banjara Hills

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

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

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

M P MALL - Kachiguda 11.25am, 1.15, 4.20, 7.25, 9.30, 10.30pm

Cinépolis

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

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

6.50, 7.25, 10.20pm

CCPL - Malakajgiri

11.00am, 12.15, 3.15, 4.20, 6.20, 7.25, 9.00, 10.15

M Balanagar 12.45, 2.00, 3.45, 5.00, 8.00, 9.45pm

Chandanagar 12.15pm, 3.15, 6.15, 9.15pm

MATTELU GALLERIA BVK - LB Nagar : 12.30pm, 3.30, 6.30, 9.30pm

Mallapur : 12.00am, 1.30, 3.00, 4.30,

6.00, 7.30, 9.00, 10.30

PLATINUM CINEMAS - Gachibowli :

10.00, 12.30, 3.00, 5.30, 7.00, 8.00, 9.30, 10.30

CARNIVAL CINEMAS Amerpet - 1.15pm, 4.00, 7.00, 10.00pm

JYOTHI IDA BOLARAM SRI LAXMI 70MM JYOTHI 70

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00 12.00, 3.00, 7.00, 10.00 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SUSHMA 70 ALANKAR PRATAP SUPER 70

11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

GANESH 70 RANGA 70 GOKUL 70

11.15, 2.15, 6.00, 9.00 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SAI RAM 70 VLS SRIDEVI BR HITECH

11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15 11.15, 2.30, 6.15, 9.30 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

VYJAYANTI 70 SENSATION SAI RANGA 70

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00 11.15, 2.30, 6.15, 9.30 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SREERAMANA SRIKRISHNA ASIAN MUKUND

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00 11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00



DEVI 70MM R.T.C X ROAD
11.00am, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm

RAJDHANI Complex DILSHUKHNAGAR

11.15am, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15pm

VISHWANATH 70MM KUKATPALLY

11.45am, 2.45, 6.45, 9.45pm

TIVOLI - 11.20am, 4.40, 10.00pm

AMB CINEMAS - Gachibowli

10.50am, 1.10, 4.30, 7.05, 10.10pm

ASIAN CINEMAS

GPR - Kukatpally : 1.40, 4.40, 7.30pm

CINEPLANET Komppali:1.30,4.20,7.20,10.20

RADHIKA - Kapra : 10.40am, 4.40, 7.30pm

CINE SQUARE - Uppal : 1.40, 4.10, 7.00, 9.45

M CUBE - Attapur : 4.10pm, 7.20pm

SHIVAGANGA - Dilisukhnagar : 6.15, 9.00pm

SHASHAHENSA - Chintal : 11.15, 6.30, 9.30

LAXMIKALA - Moosapet : 11.15am, 6.15pm

AMBA 70MM SRI RAMULU 70

11.30,2.30,6.30, 9.30 11.30,2.30,6.30,9.30

VIJETHA 70MM 11.00,2.00,6.00, 9.00

PONGAL ATTRACTION MASS MAHARAJ POWERFUL ACTION ENTERTAINER

JAN 9TH SANKRANTHI 2021 RELEASE

KRACK

RTC X ROADS SANDHYA 70MM (ENJOY 4K DIGITAL PROJECTION & DOLBY ATMOS)

SANDHYA 35MM (Enjoy 4k Digital Projection & Dolby Atmos) 11.00 & 2.00PM

RAJDHANI COMPLEX-DSNR 11.15,2.15,6.15,9.15PM

SIVAPARVATHI-KUKATPALLY 11.30,2.30,6.30,9.30PM

MANJU70MM SRISAPOOJA 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00

SIVASAKTHI KRISHNAGARAM 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00

SRILAXMIKALAMANDIR-ALWAL 11.30,2.30,6.30,9.30PM

VIMALBALANAGAR-11.15,2.15,6.15,9.15PM

LAXMIKALA CINEPRIDE 11.30,6.30,9.45PM

AMB CINEMAS 12.50,4.20,7.15,10.25PM

Sivaganga-2.15,9.15PM Radhika-1.30,7.00PM Mcube-1.30,4.30,7.25PM Gpr-1.30,4.30,10.15PM Cinesquare-1.50,7.40,10.00PM

CHINTHAL 2.30,6.00PM TIVOLI 7.00,10.00PM 1.40,7.10 11.15,2.30 6.00,9.00 1.30,4.25,6.00,9.00 7.30,10.15PM GLOBAL CINEMAS RELEASE

GRAND RELEASING TOMORROW ADULT HORROR COMEDY

ADULT HORROR COMEDY

SANDHYA 35MM-RTC X ROADS (ENJOY 4K DIGITAL PROJECTION & DOLBY) 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00PM

VISWANATH70MM-KUKATPALLY 11.45,2.45,6.45,9.45PM

RAJDHANI COMPLEX-DILSHUKHNAGAR 11.15,2.15,6.15,9.15PM

MANJU70MM SENSATION70MM 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00PM

SRISAPOOJA70MM KRISHNAGARAM 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00PM

VIJETHA70MM VYJAYANTHI70MM 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00PM

SUPER70MM SREERAMANA70MM 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00PM

SUSHMA70MM ALANKAR70MM 11.15,2.15,6.15,9.15PM

SAIRANGA70MM SRIDEVICH.GUDA 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00PM

LAXMIKALAMANDIR 11.30,2.30,6.30,9.30PM GANESH70MM 11.30,2.30,6.30,9.30PM

OAMB AMB CINEMAS LAXMIKALA-MOOSAPET

ASIAN CINESQUARE-UPLL ASIAN RADHIKA-KAPRA ASIAN MCUBE-ATTAPUR ASIAN GPR MALL-KUKATPALLY ASIAN SIVAGANGA-DILSHUKHNAGAR

CINEPLANET KOMPALLY SHA COMPLEX

GLOBAL CINEMAS LLP

Forum-12.45pm, 3.45pm, 6.45pm, 9.45pm Inorbit Mall-01.15pm, 4.15pm, 7.15pm, 10.15pm Central -12.00pm, 3.00pm, 6.00pm, 9.00pm RK Mall-01.30pm, 4.30pm, 7.30pm Hitech-12.15pm, 3.15pm, 6.15pm, 9.15pm L&T -1.00pm, 4.00pm, 7.00pm, 10.00pm Irrum manzil-11.00am, 2.00pm, 5.00pm, 8.00pm Moosarambagh-12.45pm, 3.45pm, 6.45pm, 9.45pm

INOX Mp mall-12.30,3.25,6.20,9.15pm 01.15,4.15,7.15,10.15pm GVK-12.15,3.15,6.15,9.15pm 01.15,4.15,7.15,10.15pm Mattapur

Chandanagar-12.45pm, 3.45pm, 6.45, 9.45pm Balanagar-12.15pm, 3.15pm, 6.15pm, 9.15pm Sha-11.00,6.00pmMcube-11.00AM, 7.00PM Gpr-11.00AM, 1.45PM, 7.30PM, 10.00PM Mcube mall-10.55AM 7.30PM cinesquare-11.00AM 1.45PM

SHORT TAKES

20 migrants sink en route Panama

Bogota: Rescue workers in Colombia are trying to locate more than 20 migrants whose boat sank as it tried to reach Panama. The sinking was reported on Monday by officials in Acandi, a municipality along the Gulf of Uraba, an inlet of the Caribbean sea that is lined by dense jungle. Thousands of undocumented migrants cross the gulf each year on small boats. Migrants traveling through the Uraba region are mostly trying to make it to the United States. Many come from Cuba and Haiti. But it is also common to see migrants from Africa and Asia along this route. Colombia's navy confirmed the shipwreck and says it is still trying to determine how many migrants were on the boat, and how many survived the accident.

Indian-American is Ohio senator

Washington: Niraj Antani has been sworn-in as Ohio's senator, making him the first Indian-American to serve in the state's Senate. Antani, 29, who was elected to the Ohio state Senate from the 6th District, was sworn-in on Monday. "I am so grateful to be able to represent the community in which I was born and raised as a State Senator," Antani said soon after being sworn-in. Antani will serve a full four-year term. "I will continue to work hard every day for each Ohioan so that they can have the opportunity to achieve their American dream. In this uncertain economic and health time, we must diligently strive to enact policies for the benefit of all Ohioans," Antani said. Antani formerly served as State Representative for the 42nd Ohio House District since 2014.

Don-appointed US attorney resigns

Atlanta: The top federal prosecutor in Atlanta left his position Monday, a day after an audio recording was made public in which President Donald Trump called him a "never-Trumper." Byung J. "B.Jay" Pak, who was appointed by Trump, announced his resignation as US attorney for the Northern District of Georgia in a news release. The statement did not say why Pak was leaving or what he plans to do next. "It has been the greatest honour of my professional career to have been able to serve my fellow citizens as the US Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia," Pak said in the release. "I have done my best to be thoughtful and consistent, and to provide justice for my fellow citizens in a fair, effective and efficient manner. I am grateful to President Trump and the United States Senate for the opportunity to serve, and to former Attorneys General Sessions and Barr for their leadership of the Department."

JIHADISTS KILL OVER 100 IN NIGER VIOLENCE

Dakar (Senegal), Jan. 5: More than 100 civilians were killed in Niger over the weekend by extremists who attacked two villages, as insurgent violence mounts in the West African nation.

The attacks on the western villages of Tchombangou and Zaroumdareye took place on the same day that Niger announced that presidential elections would go to a second round on February 21.

Niger's Prime Minister Brigi Rafini visited the two villages on Sunday. "We came to provide moral support and present the condolences of the president of the republic, the government and the entire Niger nation," he said. The villages in the insecure Tillaberi region were attacked on Saturday after residents killed two rebel fighters, local officials said.

The attacks are among the deadliest in Niger and come on the heels of several others, including one by the Islamic State West Africa Province in the Diffa region a few weeks ago in which dozens of people were killed. Niger and neighboring Burkina Faso and Mali are battling the spread of deadly extremist violence which is displacing large numbers of people, despite the presence of thousands of regional and international troops. A year ago, extremists staged mass attacks on Niger's military in the Tillaberi region, killing more than 70 in December 2019 and more than 89 in January 2020.

UK enters tough lockdown

New rules to stay in place till mid-Feb with review based on infection rates

London, Jan. 5: The UK entered a tough new stay-at-home lockdown on Tuesday after Prime Minister Boris Johnson said it has been "both frustrating and alarming" to see the speed with which the new variant of the Coronavirus is spreading and declared that hospitals in the country are under more pressure from the deadly virus than at any time in the pandemic.

While Scotland's new rules, which involve school and business closures become legal from Tuesday, England's rules — akin to the stringent measures of the first wave of the pandemic in March 2020 — become law in the early hours of Wednesday. However, Johnson has urged the public to begin following the strict work from home rules right away.

The new rules are expected to stay in place until mid-February with a review planned based on vaccine rollout data and infection rates. "Our scientists have confirmed this new variant is between 50 and 70 per cent more transmissible — that means you are much, much more likely to catch the virus and to pass it on," Johnson said in his televised address to the nation on Monday night.

"We must therefore go into a national lockdown which is tough enough to contain this variant. That means the government is once again instructing you to stay at home. You may only leave home for limited reasons permitted in law, such as to shop for essentials, to work if you absolutely cannot work from home, to exercise, to seek medical assistance such as getting a Covid test, or to escape domestic abuse," he said.

The devolved regions of Wales and Northern Ireland were already



The Trafalgar square is empty as Britain enters a national lockdown in London on Tuesday. England's six-week lockdown, which began at midnight, emulates the first national Coronavirus curbs in place from March to June — but goes further than another instituted in November when schools remained open.

— AFP

France promises speedy virus vaccination process

● ACCORDING TO the latest data, in England alone,

the number of Covid-19

patients in hospitals has

increased by nearly a third

in the last week, to almost

27,000.

under strict lockdown measures since the middle of last month.

According to the latest data, in England alone, the number of Covid-19 patients in hospitals has increased by nearly a third in the last week, to almost 27,000. That number is 40 per cent higher than the first peak of the pandemic in April. On December 29, more than 80,000 people tested positive for Covid across the UK — a new record — and the number of deaths is up by 20 per cent over the last week. — PTI

Paris, Jan. 5: Amid public outcry, France's health minister has promised an "exponential" acceleration of his country's slow Coronavirus vaccination process.

After barely 500 people in France were vaccinated in the first six days, Health Minister Olivier Veran defended the government's strategy of giving the vaccines first to residents of nursing homes. But he vowed on Tuesday to simplify a bureaucratic consent process blamed in part for France's lagging

vaccinations. Veran said the government will expand the number of vaccination centres and categories of people eligible for early vaccines, and allow people to sign up for vaccinations on an app or by phone. The growth of vaccinations in the coming days "will be exponential, rest assured," he said on RTL radio. But he insisted that the government would not forego safety guidelines in a country facing broad vaccine scepticism.

While neighbouring countries are imposing strict new lockdowns amid surging infections, Veran said France is weighing its options and "cannot relax," but announced no new measures. Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer said on radio that he doesn't want to "deprive children of school." Veran said France has confirmed 10 or 15 cases of the new, more contagious virus variant identified in Britain, and that overall French infections and hospital rates are currently at a plateau.

— AP

Pak orders rebuilding of temple

Islamabad, Jan. 5: Pakistan's Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered the Evacuee Property Trust Board (EPTB) to start reconstruction of a century-old Hindu temple that was vandalised and set on fire by a mob in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province last week, saying the attack has caused "international embarrassment" to the country.

The apex court, which took notice of the attack and ordered the local authorities to appear before the court on January 5, also directed the board to submit in court details of all func-

tional and non-functional temples and gurdwaras across Pakistan. Dawn newspaper reported. The attack on the temple in Terri village in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) Karak district on Wednesday by members of radical Jamiat Ulema-Islam party (Fazal ur Rehman group) drew strong condemnation from human rights activists and the minority Hindu community leaders.

During the hearing on Tuesday, a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed also directed the EPTB to clear encroachments from

temples across the country and take action against officials involved in the encroachments. Justice Ahmed said that the Karak incident had caused "international embarrassment to Pakistan." The EPTB is a statutory board that manages religious properties and shrines of Hindus and Sikhs who had migrated to India following the partition. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief secretary, police chief, and Dr Shoaib Suddle, the head of a commission on minorities' rights, were also present during the hearing. — PTI

HK judge warns on law reforms

Hong Kong, Jan. 5: Hong Kong's outgoing top judge said on Tuesday that calls for reform of the city's judiciary cannot be based on dissatisfaction with court rulings, as pro-Beijing figures and state-owned media step up criticism of the city's legal system.

"(The) judiciary's position has all along been the same. If there's any room for improvement, we will pursue it. We will consid-

er it," Chief Justice Geoffrey Ma said at a news conference ahead of his retirement on Sunday.

"But it's not particularly satisfactory if there's a call for reforms simply on the basis of a result one doesn't like," he said. "It is certainly not a good starting point or acceptable to say 'I want reforms to ensure that I will always get the result which I want.'" — AP

IMRAN SAYS PAK OPPN 'DIED ITS OWN DEATH'

Islamabad, Jan. 5: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that there was no threat to his government from the Opposition alliance protesting to remove him from office, saying the PDM has "almost lost and died its own death".

The 11-party Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was formed in September last year with the objective to force the government to hold early elections. The PDM held several big rallies last year and has threatened to march on Islamabad in February to turn on the heat on Khan's government if it does not resign by January 31. The alliance also said its lawmakers will resign and make Parliament dysfunctional. — PTI

Saudi to lift Qatar embargo

Dubai, Jan. 5: Saudi Arabia will open its airspace and land border to Qatar in the first step toward ending a years-long diplomatic crisis that deeply divided US defense partners, frayed societal ties and tore apart traditionally clubby alliance of Gulf states, officials said late on Monday.

Qatar's only land border has been mostly closed since mid-2017, when Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain launched a blockade against the tiny Gulf state, accusing it of sup-

porting Islamist extremist groups and of having warm ties with Iran. The Saudi border, which Qatar relied on for the import of dairy products, construction materials and other goods, opened briefly during the past three years to allow Qataris into Saudi Arabia to perform the Islamic hajj pilgrimage. It was unclear what concessions Qatar had made or is promising to make regarding a shift in its policies.

Kuwait, which had been mediating throughout the dispute, was first to announce the diplomatic

Georgia election to decide fate of Biden presidency

Atlanta, Jan. 5: Polls opened in the US state of Georgia on Tuesday in two runoff elections that will determine control of the US Senate and shape the first years of the new Democratic presidency — after a hard-fought campaign that pulled in Donald Trump and president-elect Joe Biden.

For nearly 20 years Georgia has voted reliably Republican in presidential election and Senate contests.

But Biden pulled out a shock victory in Georgia in November, one of several states that he flipped to win the White House, and the races for the Senate have come down to the wire in the biggest, most expensive congressional runoffs in US history.

Polls opened at 7:00 am (1200 GMT) in the southern state. A record three million-plus people have voted early, election officials say, and final results may not be known for several days.

A staggering \$832 million has been spent on the two contests, including spending in the primary and general elections, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

"The stakes in this election could not be higher," Trump told a raucous rally in Dalton, Georgia hours after Biden's Atlanta showing. "Make sure your vote is counted." — AFP

Xi asks military to stay on high alert

Beijing, Jan. 5: Chinese President Xi Jinping has asked the military to strengthen training to hone its combat skills and remain on high alert as the new revised defence law expanding the powers of the armed forces came into force from this year.

The 67-year-old leader, who also heads the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) besides the Central Military Commission (CMC) — the overall high command of the two million strong military — signed the commission's first order for 2021, which listed priorities in the training of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the People's Armed Police Force (PAP), official media here reported on Tuesday.

The order instructed the armed forces to stick to Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era as their guiding principle and uphold Xi

Foreign Affairs, Anwar Gargash, tweeted that his country was keen to restore Gulf unity. However, he cautioned: "We have more work to do and we are in the right direction." The lifting of the embargo by Saudi Arabia paves the way for Qatar's ruler to attend an annual summit of Gulf leaders on Tuesday that will be held in the kingdom's ancient desert site of Al-Ula. The summit would be chaired by Saudi King Salman, though his son and heir, the crown prince, may instead lead the meeting. — AP

Photos published by the court showed Lai standing up and facing the judge to be sentenced, flanked by two police officers wearing face masks.

The sentencing brings an end to one of the country's biggest financial crime cases, and comes as Beijing takes an increasingly tough stance on corporate wrongdoing. Critics say the wide-ranging anti-corruption campaign launched under President Xi Jinping has also served as a way to target his opponents and those of the Communist Party leadership. — AFP

Lai Xiaomin found guilty of bigamy after living with a woman outside his marriage

China's ex-banker gets death for \$260 mn bribery



Lai Xiaomin

Huarong is one of four companies set up in 1999 to help clean up bad debt piles choking China's banking system, and the company later expanded into investment, loan and property businesses.

Lai's downfall began in April 2018 as investigators removed him from his job and stripped him of his party position.

He was also alleged to have used his position to embezzle over 25 million yuan (\$3.8 million) in public funds between 2009 and 2018.

During his TV confession, Lai said he "did not spend a single penny, and just kept it there... I did not dare to spend it." He had referred to the apartment where he kept the money as the "supermarket", given his regular visits there to deposit cash.

CCTV showed luxury cars and gold bars reportedly accepted as bribes by Lai, who worked in the central bank and the China Banking Regulatory Commission prior to his leadership roles in Huarong. The channel often broadcasts interviews with suspects admitting to crimes before they have appeared in court — a practice that has long been condemned by lawyers and rights organisations as forcing confessions under duress. The court said Lai would have all personal assets confiscated and be stripped of his political rights. — AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	48,437.78
Nifty 50	14,199.50
S&P 500*	3,712.92
Dollar (₹)	73.18
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.34
Euro (₹)	89.81
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,969▲335
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	53.12
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.850 -0.008
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.942 0.025

* As of 8:30 PM IST

RBI imposes ₹2.5 cr penalty on Bajaj Finance

The RBI has imposed a penalty of Rs 2.5 crore on Bajaj Finance, for violation of directions, including on recovery and collection practices. "This penalty has been imposed... taking into account the failure of the company to ensure that its recovery agents did not resort to harassment or intimidation of customers as part of its debt collection efforts and thereby failing to adhere to the ...directions issued by RBI," the RBI said.

Google Cloud appoints Bajwa as Apac leader



Google Cloud announced the elevation of Karan Bajwa as its new leader for Asia Pacific. He currently leads Google Cloud in India. Bajwa will lead all regional revenue and go-to-market operations for Google Cloud, including on Google Cloud Platform and Google Workspace from Jan. 5, a statement said. He succeeds Rick Harshman. Bajwa is currently based in Gurgaon, but will relocate to Singapore in 2021.

Practically raises ₹28 crore from Series B funding

Hyderabad-based edutech firm Practically on Tuesday announced to have raised around ₹28 crore in pre-Series B funding round led by Siana Capital. Existing investors YouNest Venture Capital and Exinity Ventures also participated in the funding round. Practically co-founder Charu Noheria said revenue generation for its platform has begun in AP and TS markets, which is in the run rate of upto ₹28 crore a year.

Renault to unveil compact SUV Kiger on Jan. 28

French automaker Renault said it will unveil its upcoming compact SUV Kiger in India later this month. Renault will be globally premiering the eagerly awaited Kiger in India on January 28, the automaker said. The company plans to launch the model in India first and then follow the same in other markets. Renault said Kiger will come loaded with several smart attributes and features.

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■ US treasury+145 bps bonds lapped up Exim Bank sells \$ bonds at 2.25%

Mumbai, Jan. 5: The Exim Bank has started the new year on a high note raising \$1 billion through a dollar-bond sale to international investors, offering just 2.25 per cent for the ten-year money, setting a new low in pricing.

The issue was oversubscribed four times or worth \$4 billion as against \$1 billion on offer, managing director David Rasquinha said, adding that in Asia the issue was oversold within three hours of the launch with the order book hitting \$1.75 billion on Monday morning.

"At 2.25 per cent (US treasury+145 bps), the coupon is a record low for any 10-year bond issuance out of the country," he said.

The issue has many a firsts, Rasquinha said, pointing to the lowest coupon (2.25 per cent per annum) ever for a large USD bond offering by a domestic issuer and is also the first investment-grade dollar bond sale from Asia ex-Japan in 2021. Besides, this is the first EMBI (Emerging Market Bond Index) eligible 144a/RegS bond from Asia ex-Japan in 2021.

Regulation S/144a bonds are issued by foreign issuers in the US debt market and are denominated in US dollars. I-bankers are expecting higher debt money to come to domestic shores this year given the record low interest rates. Companies will also be raising money



to meet the likely capex need or repayment demands as the economy returns to normalcy after the year-long pandemic.

In January 2020, the Exim Bank had raised \$1 billion in 10-year dollar money offering US treasury plus 1.70 bps. Normally, the bank issues 5, 7 and 10-year debt to meet its project export needs.

For Exim Bank, the current issue saw the largest order book and over-subscription (four times) for a RegS issuance.

The Exim Bank, with a substantially dollarised balance sheet, is one of the largest domestic issuers of long-term debt in international debt capital markets and its paper is treated as quasi-sovereign as the bank is fully owned by the government.

The funds from the sale will be used to support project exports, overseas investment by way of long-term credit and its export lines of credit portfolio, the bank said.

Taking a cue from the massive over subscription in Hong Kong and

Singapore, the bank tightened the initial price guidance by 40 bps from T+185 bps. At close, with US investors chipping in, the issue was oversubscribed by over four times, the bank said.

As much as 55 per cent of demand came in from Asia, 29 per cent from the US and 16 per cent from the EMEA (Eastern & Middle-eastern Africa) region and 68 per cent of the issue was snapped by fund managers, 17 per cent by sovereign wealth funds, central banks and insurers, 14 per cent by banks and the remaining 1 per cent by private banks, others.

The issue is rated BBB by Fitch and Moody's. Harsha Bangari, deputy managing director of the bank said this is the only 10-year sale by a domestic financial institution in the last one year.

The EMBIG index eligibility of the bonds has helped in price tightening by 40 bps, demonstrating strong confidence of investors in the India story and in Exim Bank," she said.

—PTI Bloomberg

Job postings up in select sectors

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 5



Though some sectors like textiles, telecom and IT and software services have indicated positive growth in new job postings on a month-on-month basis, only retail has seen a growth against last year, according to employment websites.

Textiles and garments, telecom, paper, fertilisers and pesticides, IT and software services, tyres and healthcare reported positive growth in new job postings in November against the previous month, according to Naukri JobSpeak.

As per the Monster Employment Index, a few more sectors, including FMCG, food and packaged products, retail, BFSI and

on-year growth, as per Naukri JobSpeak. However, Monster.com found retail to have seen some positive growth over the previous year.

Defence & government

was the worst affected in terms of job postings both in terms of yearly and monthly performance as this sector de-grew by over 30 per cent. The hospitality, airlines, restaurants and travel sector was down by 60 per cent on a yearly basis.

However, a majority sectors continued to de-grow in terms of new job postings on a month-on-month basis. None of the sectors reported a year-

meanwhile, rose sharply to 9.1 per cent in December 2020, the highest since the beginning of the recovery from the lockdown in June, according to CMIE, a private think-tank.

The unemployment rate stood at 10.99 per cent in June 2020. It has been coming down in the subsequent months and had touched 6.5 per cent in November.

"The influx of people looking for work swelled. The labour force increased from an estimated 421 million in November to 427 million in December. But, labour markets were not ready for this surge of six million people in the labour market. It thus left them largely unemployed," the report said.

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—PTI Bloomberg

JEEP TO LAUNCH FOUR NEW SUVs IN TWO YEARS; COMPACT SUV TO FOLLOW

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, JAN. 5

This investment is in addition to about Rs 3,289 crore or \$450 million that it has put in its India operations in five years.

"Our new investment of \$250 million will give us a competitive edge in multiple segments with our new

Jeep SUVs rolling out of Ranjangaon factory near Pune," Partha Datta, MD at FCA India, said.

He said the four new cars would be launched in India by the end of 2022. While the new Jeep Compass would be introduced on

January 7, the first ever mid-size three-row 7-seat Jeep, codenamed the H6, the iconic Jeep Wrangler and the nextgen Grand Cherokee SUVs would be assembled in Ranjangaon which would drastically reduce the prices.

The BSE Bankex gained

Audi launches A4 sedan at ₹42.34 L

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, JAN. 5

Audi, India's third biggest luxury car maker, has lined up a raft of product launches for this year, as part of its product offensive strategy to boost sales, with models such as the A3, Q3, Q5, Q7, in the Indian market.

The German brand, which ruled the roost as numero uno, has its strategy in place for this year to take on rivals

Audi is set to launch a new car every other month, but will stick to a petrol-only line-up.

On Tuesday it launched the new version of its popular sedan Audi A4 with prices starting at Rs 42.34 lakh. "The fifth generation new Audi A4 is a perfect blend of class, elegance and sporty appeal. The car is equipped with the latest technology," Balbir Singh Dhillion, head of Audi India, said.

Setting aside Bezos'



total of the top 10 donations last year, at \$2.6 billion, was the lowest since 2011, even as many billionaires vastly increased their wealth in the stock market rally that catapulted technology shares in particular last year.

According to the left-leaning Americans for Tax Fairness and the Institute for Policy Studies, from March 18 through Dec. 7, Bezos' wealth surged by 63 per cent from \$113 billion to \$184 billion.

Phil Knight, who with his wife, Penny, made the second- and third-largest donations last year, increased his wealth by about 77 per cent over the same March-to-December period. Knight and his

wife gave more than \$900 million to the Knight Foundation and \$300 million to the University of Oregon.

Fred Kummer, founder of construction company HBE Corporation, and his wife, June, gave \$300 million to establish a foundation to support programmes at the Missouri University of Science and

Technology. Facebook's founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, delivered the fourth-largest donation on the Chronicle's list: A \$250 million gift to the Center for Tech and Civic Life, which worked on voting security issues in the 2020 election.

Zuckerberg, whose wealth nearly doubled to \$105 billion in the March-to-December period, according to Americans for Tax Fairness and the Institute for Policy Studies, has been widely criticised and been called to testify before Congress for his company's handling of disinformation in the runup to the 2020 presidential election.

In the fifth spot was

hunting body for selecting CEOs of state-owned banks and insurance firms, conducted virtual interviews of five candidates on Monday to pick a CMD for the insurer.

"The members of Banks Board Bureau interfaced with 5 candidates on January 04, 2021 for the forthcoming vacancy of CMD in OICL. Keeping in view their performance in the interface and their overall experience, the Bureau recommends Anjan Dey for the position of chairman-cum-managing director of OICL. Besides, the BBB has also kept Suchita Gupta, GM, GIC Re, as a standby candidate for the vacancy.

The CMD post has been lying vacant since November after the then CMD S.N. Rajeswari was appointed as the member (distribution) of Irdai.

BBB, the official head-

Though Rajeswari has been appointed as the member Irdai in November, she is yet to join the Hyderabad-based insurance regulatory body as the Ministry of Finance wants a new CMD to take charge of the company before she moves to the Irdai, a ministry source.

The year 2021 is expected to witness large-scale top-notch vacancies in the PSU insurance companies, including Life Insurance Company and the Irdai where Subhas Khuntia, chairman, will be completing his three-year tenure in May. There will also new CMDs in all the four PSU general insurers this year.

Anjan Dey chosen to head Oriental Insurance

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, JAN. 5

Public sector general insurer Oriental Insurance Company (OIC) will get a new chief as the Banks Board Bureau (BBB) has recommended Anjan Dey, director and general manager (GM) of GIC Re, for the position of chairman-cum-managing director of OIC.

OIC, the BBB, the official head-

body for selecting CEOs of state-owned banks and insurance firms, conducted virtual interviews of five candidates on Monday to pick a CMD for the insurer.

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BBB, the official head-

Brand ambassador penalised

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 5

Celebrities who endorse consumer goods as brand ambassadors will have to be cautious hereon. A consumer redressal forum in Kerala has asked a film actor to pay compensation for promoting a hair cream brand.

Malayalam actor Anoop Menon and Dhatthri Ayurveda, a Kerala-based manufacturer of personal care products, have been asked to pay Rs 10,000 each to a consumer for making "false promises" in an advertisement.

Anoop Menon had featured in an advertisement of Dhatthri Hair Cream, which claimed "lush hair

growth within six weeks".

The consumer, Francis Vadakkam, who had bought the product in January 2012 after watching Menon's advertisement, approached the District Consumer Redressal Forum in Thrissur seeking compensation of Rs 5 lakh.

He alleged that there was no improvement despite using the cream and was humiliated after being ridiculed by family and friends for buying the product.

Menon said he "never used the product". On this, the forum commented: "It is clear that the brand ambassador appeared in the advertisement without even using the product".

The Consumer Protect-

ion Act, 2019 makes the endorser of a brand liable for a misleading ad.

In another development involving brand ambassador, Adani Wilmar has paused all advertisements featuring former Indian skipper Sourav Ganguly, who has been endorsing Fortune Rice Bran Cooking Oil as a "heart healthy oil".

Ganguly was recently diagnosed with heart ailments. Following criticism on social media, the company said Ganguly will continue as the brand ambassador. "We have only taken a temporary break in our TV commercial till we again sit with him and take things forward," a company official said.

Earnings outlook drives up IT, financial shares

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 5

Stocks from the IT and financial sectors lifted Sensex and Nifty higher, as the market gained for the tenth consecutive session on Tuesday. Despite early morning fall on global cues, the market shrugged off the news of the UK lockdown and the US market fall and recovered along with other Asian markets.

The Sensex gained 26

SHORT TAKES

Athletic events to pick Hyd side

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad District Athletics Association is conducting the Hyderabad District throws, middle and long distance Junior Athletics Championships on January 9 at Nizam College grounds from 6.30 am in the following age groups and events:

Boys and girls 14 years: 600 metres, shot put; **Boys and girls 16 years:** 800m, 2000m, shot put, javelin and discus throws; **Boys and girls 18 years:** 800m, 1500m, 3000m, shot put, discus and javelin throws; **Boys and girls 20 years:** 800m, 1500m, 3000m, shot put, discus and javelin throws.

The competition will serve as selection trials to pick the team for the Telangana State Junior Athletics Championships to be held at Suryapet on January 17.

Cricketers for Warangal camp

Hyderabad: The following players have been selected on the basis of performances from the recently concluded TCA Kakatiya Cup, for a camp to be held at Warangal from January 17: K. Ravi (Bhadradri Kothagudem), K. Raviteja (Bhadradri Kothagudem),

Rajesh Bolle (Bhadradri Kothagudem), Ramesh Rammi (Yadadri), Akshay (Yadadri), Md Basha (Gadwal), Bhavish Kumar (Warangal Urban), Saikumar (Warangal Urban), Manoj (Warangal Urban), Aditya (Warangal Urban), Sidhu (Warangal Urban), N. Naveen Kumar (Medak), Sumith Reddy (Kamareddy), Sameer (Mulugu), Siddharth (Mulugu), Y. Vinay Kumar (Adilabad), J. Gangappa (Adilabad), B. Sai Kumar (Adilabad), Ch Raju Yadav (Nalgonda), Naga Pravarthan Naidu (Nalgonda), M. Shankar (Nalgonda), Nikhil Nakirekanti (Nalgonda), DSDK Praise (Nalgonda), Mahesh (Nirmal), S. Ramu (Nirmal), Yashwanth (Nirmal), Md Feroz (Mahabubnagar), Jagadeesh Chada (Karimnagar), Usmad (Suryapet), Avinash Kailas (Suryapet), Manish (Suryapet), Raghu (Suryapet), G. Shashi Vardhan (Vikarabad), Kalyan Pawar (Vikarabad), Sai Abhinav (Warangal Rural).

Becker's ex-coach Brett no more

Paris: Australian Bob Brett, who coached Boris Becker in his standout 1989 season during which he won Wimbledon and the US Open, died Tuesday of cancer at the age of 67. Brett coached Becker from

November 1987 to February 1991, a period when the German also became world number one on the back of 18 tour-level titles won together.

In a 46-year career, Brett also worked with Johan Kriek, Goran Ivanisevic, Mats Wilander and Marin Cilic, as well as many national tennis associations. Becker said in his 2004 autobiography that the Melbourne-born coach "was tough — exactly what I needed".

"He made it very clear what he expected from me: willingness, discipline, willpower, punctuality. Three hours' training in the morning, three hours in the afternoon. 'What you do afterwards doesn't interest me.' It was a pure business relationship. Brett treated me like a grown-up," Becker said.

In a four-year partnership with Ivanisevic, the Croat won nine titles from 17 tour-level finals, with runner-up finishes at Wimbledon in 1992 and 1994. — AFP

Nasser victorious in Dakar 3rd stage

Wadi Ad-Dawasir, Saudi Arabia: Qatari driver Nasser al-Attiyah won the third stage of the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, holding off the challenge of French arch-rival Stephane Peterhansel.

The three-time winner of the Dakar sped through a 403km loop around Wadi ad-Dawasir, the gateway to the Empty Quarter, a vast sand desert that covers much of the southern Arabian Peninsula, in 3hr 17min 39sec to take the victory. Already winner of the prologue and Monday's second stage, Al-Attiyah finished 2:27 ahead of Toyota teammate Henk Lategan of South Africa.

Peterhansel, a 13-time Dakar winner, consolidated his lead in the overall standings with a third-placed finish, 4:05 off the pace.

The Frenchman said a mixed terrain including big rocks, sandy canyons, dunes and a fast plateau had made it "a really complete stage". "The result is not perfect because of the puncture," he further said in reference to an early incident. — AFP



Jack Stephens (centre) of Southampton vies with Liverpool's Roberto Firmino (right) for the ball during their English Premier League match at St Marys Stadium in Southampton, southern England, on Monday. Southampton won 1-0. — AFP

DANNY DAZZLES

Liverpool stumble again against Southampton

Southampton (United Kingdom), Jan. 5: Jurgen Klopp admitted Liverpool are suffering a "rusty moment" after a 1-0 defeat at Southampton extended the defending champions' winless run in the Premier League to three games.

Danny Ings's stunning second-minute goal earned three points which moved Southampton into sixth and led to Saints manager Ralph Hasenhuttl breaking into tears of joy on the final whistle.

Liverpool remain top of the table on goal difference over Manchester United, but have now played a game more than the Red Devils, who they face in their next league game at Anfield on January 17.

"That's a rusty moment, we have to admit it," said Klopp.

"Only if you know the problem can you solve the problem, we are not blind. We have to fight and play through this," he added.

A first league defeat in three

That's a rusty moment, we have to admit it. Only if you know the problem can you solve the problem, we are not blind. We have to fight and play through this.

— JURGEN KLOPP
Liverpool manager

months may hasten Liverpool's search for a centre-back in the January transfer window.

Without the injured Virgil van Dijk, Joe Gomez and Joel Matip, Klopp started two of his first-choice midfielders from their title-winning campaign, Fabinho and Jordan Henderson, together at the heart of his defence.

Liverpool had not scored in their last three games to temper their hopes of a push for European football, but took just two minutes to break the deadlock in style through former Liverpool striker Ings.

Trent Alexander-Arnold did not deal with James Ward-Prowse's angled free-kick into the box and

Ings perfectly hooked his shot over Alisson Becker into the far corner.

PERFECT GAMEPLAN

The visitors could easily have found themselves 2-0 down before the break when Southampton substitute Nathan Tella was inches away from his first senior goal.

If Klopp's men were too passive in the first-half, they started the second-half with the intensity they have made their trademark in recent seasons as Southampton were pinned inside their own half.

Sadio Mane was the visitors' biggest threat on his return to St Mary's as Jack Stephens made a

last-ditch challenge to block his route to goal before Kyle Walker-Peters was lucky to escape without conceding a penalty for obstructing another burst from the Senegalese into the box.

Even, Thiago Alcantara range of passing could not cut through Southampton's determined defence.

Mane had Liverpool's only shot on target 15 minutes from time when his tame effort was easily beaten by Forster low to his left.

Southampton could have sealed a huge win moments later when Alisson was caught well off his line by Yan Valery, whose shot lacked the power to beat Henderson in a race to the goal line.

Liverpool so often dug themselves out of problems with late goals in romping to the title last season, but have failed to do so over the festive period, also dropping points against struggling West Brom and Newcastle. — AFP

VALENCIA PLAY 1-1 STALEMATE WITH CADIZ

Valencia (Spain), Jan. 5: Forward Maxi Gomez equalised late for Valencia to draw with Cadiz 1-1 at home in the Spanish league.

Coach Javi Gracia had to deny beforehand any rift with Gomez after not playing the Uruguayan in their previous league match last week at Granada.

Gracia started Gomez this time and he produced their best chances — both saved — before Anthony Lozano struck for Cadiz in the 58th minute.

Lozano almost secured a win but his header from a corner hit the right post.

Moments later, Gomez's header to a cross from Jose Gaya did go in and spoiled Cadiz coach Alvaro Cervera's first appearance at Mestalla Stadium since 1995 when he was a winger for Valencia.

Defender Mouctar Diakhaby almost stole the result for Valencia in injury time but both of his chances were saved.

Cadiz improved to 10th in the standings, and Valencia to 17th. — AFP

● **Anthony Lozano struck for Cadiz in 58th minute but Maxi Gomez's 79th minute equaliser saved Valencia from blushes and the match ended in a 1-1 stalemate.**

THE RESULT

Valencia (Gomez 79)	1
Cadiz (Lozano 58)	1



In this file photo, Mongolian-born sumo grand champion Hakuho performs a ring-entering ceremony at Meiji Shrine in Tokyo. — AFP

Sumo champ Covid +ve

Tokyo, Jan. 5: A top-ranked sumo wrestler has tested positive for the Coronavirus.

The Japan Sumo Association on Tuesday said the wrestler, who goes by the name of Hakuho, underwent a polymerase chain reaction test positive for Covid-19.

Hakuho is a yokozuna, a grand champion in sumo wrestling, and one of the best in the traditional Japanese sport has ever seen. In an interview last year he pointed out that his late father was a silver medalist in wrestling for Mongolia in the 1968 Olympics. He

also competed in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

Japan, with a population of 125 million, has managed the pandemic relatively well, with about 3,500 deaths attributed to Covid-19.

But new cases have been surging over the last several weeks and Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has been asked to impose a state of emergency for Tokyo and three neighboring prefectures. — AP

MAN U BOSS SETS EYES ON LEAGUE CUP

London, Jan. 5: Ole Gunnar Solskjær believes winning the League Cup would be a "big step" in Manchester United's development as he prepares for Wednesday's semifinal showdown with Manchester City at Old Trafford.

United went out to Pep Guardiola's men in the final four of the competition last season, before losing in the semis of the FA Cup and Europa League.

However, the Red Devils had a third-place finish in the Premier League behind City and runaway winners Liverpool to show for Solskjær's first full season in charge.

United have pushed on again this season in the league to find themselves level on points with Liverpool at the top of the table with a game in hand on the champions.

"A semifinal is a chance to get to the final, to get your hands on a trophy in the next round and for this team it would be a very, very big step getting your hands on a trophy," said Solskjær.

"We've developed a lot in the last six months, last 12 months since the last semi in the Carabao (League) Cup so of course it's not just learning to win semis," he added. — AFP

● **A semifinal is a chance to get to the final, to get your hands on a trophy in the next round and for this team it would be a very, very big step getting your hands on a trophy.**

— OLE GUNNAR SOLSKJAER
Manchester United manager

Giannis towers to choke Pistons

Los Angeles, Jan. 5: Milwaukee's two-time reigning Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo poured in 43 points as Milwaukee Bucks downed Detroit Pistons 125-115.

● **In another game, Jayson Tatum scored 40 points as Boston Celtics rallied from an early deficit to beat the Toronto Raptors 126-114.**

The first meeting of the teams since Boston eliminated Toronto in the second round of the playoffs in September was in Tampa, Florida, where the Raptors are based, amid continuing coronavirus restrictions on travel to Canada.

DALLAS DEFUSE ROCKETS

The Dallas Mavericks won a Texas tussle with the Rockets in Houston on the back of Doncic's first triple-double of the season.

Doncic, who sat out Sunday with a quadriceps contusion, returned with a vengeance with 33 points, 16 rebounds and 11 assists as Dallas held off a late Rockets push for a 113-100 victory. The Slovenian star notched his 26th career triple-double. Tim Hardway Jr. added 30 points off the bench for Dallas, who led by as many as 16 in the third quarter.

The Rockets, with 23 points from Christian Wood and 21 from James Harden, tied it up with 10 minutes remaining, but the Mavericks relentlessly pulled away again.

Also, Julius Randle's 28 points helped New York Knicks get better of Atlanta Hawks 113-108. — AFP



Jayson Tatum (right) of Boston Celtics shoots over Stanley Johnson of Toronto Raptors during their NBA match in Tampa, Florida, on Monday. — AP

Strict mask rules for NBA players

Miami, Jan. 5: The NBA is adopting a tougher policy regarding masks, telling teams that players on the active roster will have to wear the face coverings in the bench area until they enter games.

That memo was released on the same day the Brooklyn Nets ruled All-Star forward Kevin Durant out for Tuesday's game against Utah in accordance with the league's health and safety protocols for dealing with Coronavirus.

Among the new rules, which took effect on Tuesday, players who are dressed for games and eligible to participate must wear a face mask until they enter the game.

Following the holiday season, if players are working with trainers or therapists away from the team facility, they're also being reminded to wear masks and take all possible precautions. Regarding the updated mask rules, a player who comes out of a game is not required but strongly recommended, the league said to put on a mask after returning to the bench area. The rules reset at halftime; players who aren't in the game to start the third quarter need to wear masks until going into the game.

Inactive players have been required to wear masks for the duration of the game, and that rule remains unchanged. Coaches are also mandated to wear masks while on the sideline. — AP

SHORT TAKES

Saina lambasts badminton body

Bangkok: India's Saina Nehwal on Tuesday lashed out at Badminton World Federation for denying the athletes, among other things, access to trainers and physios ahead of the upcoming tournaments in Thailand and urged BWF to address the issues at the earliest.

In a series of tweets, Olympic bronze-medallist Saina expressed her displeasure at the restrictions imposed by BWF as part of its Covid-19 protocols for the bio-security bubble. "The physios and trainers cannot meet us during the entire tour after all (al) of us have tested negative? @bwfmedia @bwf_ac. 4 weeks of this how is it possible to maintain ourselves. We want to play the tournament in good condition. Please sort this @bwfmedia," Saina tweeted.

With March being the cut-off date for Tokyo Olympics qualification, Saina is worried that the lack of proper training might have an impact on her performance. Saina said she tried contacting the BWF, but to no avail. "Practice only for an hour everyday for the entire team? Gym timings the same ... considering March being the important Olympic qualification period this is not good enough to be in good shape."

In another tweet, Saina wrote, "No time for warm ups / taping / cool downs / stretches...we are talking about the best players in the world competing isn't it? "We've spent a lot of money getting the physios and trainers along with us. If they can't help us then why was this not told before?" she added. — PTI

Djokovic, Nadal to return for ATP Cup

Sydney: ATP Cup champion Novak Djokovic and runner-up Rafael Nadal are set to return for the season-opening men's team tennis event starting February 1, but the United States will be missing because of a change in format that has halved the field.

The inaugural event last year featured 24 teams and was played in three Australian cities, with Djokovic's Serbia team beating Nadal and Spain in the final at Sydney's Ken Rosewall Arena. The second edition will involve 12 teams and be played entirely at Melbourne Park amid Covid-19 restrictions, along with WTA and ATP tournaments, in the week leading into the Australian Open.

The draw will be held January 20, with teams divided into four groups. The winner of each round-robin group will advance to the semifinals. — AP

Bajrang's camp in US gets extension

New Delhi: Olympic-bound wrestler Bajrang Punia's training stint in the USA has been granted a one-month extension and will now go on till the first week of February, the Sports Authority of India said on Tuesday. Punia, who qualified for the Tokyo Games in the men's freestyle 65kg category, has been training at Cliff Kean Wrestling Club in Michigan since December 4. The additional one month training will cost 11.65 Lakhs and will be borne by the SAI. "This decision was taken at the Mission Olympic Cell meeting that took place last week," a press release from SAI said. "All facilities here are available, there is a gym, moreover I am getting very good sparring partners. The college boys who train here are good as well. I am getting access to everything I need to improve my level," Punia said. — PTI

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

Big Bash League: Perth Scorchers vs Sydney Sixers from 1.45 pm on Sony Six

FOOTBALL

Italian League: Napoli vs Spezia from 10.30 pm; AC Milan vs Juventus from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

WWE

NXT: Bouts from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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PACERS' PUZZLE

Shardul, Saini up for 3rd seamer's slot, Rohit replaces Mayank



Indian pacer Mohammed Siraj (left) talks to teammate Navdeep Saini during a training session at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Tuesday, ahead of their third Test against Australia.

If the conditions are overcast and there is more moisture on the strip, then Thakur is expected to be preferred.

If the track is on the flatter side, Saini, with his pace and ability to reverse the old ball, could prove to be a handful against a batting order that is struggling to put up even 200 runs on the board.

If Saini plays, it will be his debut in the longest format while for Thakur, it would be like a debut as he couldn't even finish his first over when it was officially his debut two years back.

There is a third angle to the pacer's debate and that is T. Natarajan, who has had a meteoric rise in the past four months.

— PTI
India expected squad (from 12 in batting order): Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane (captain), Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Mohammed Siraj, Jasprit Bumrah, Shardul Thakur/Navdeep Saini.

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