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THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | FRIDAY | 8 JANUARY 2021



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Govt lost trust of farmers: Kaur



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FB to block Trump for rest of Presidency

SPORTS | 8

Sourav Ganguly discharged from hospital



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Vol. 20 No. 223 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

WEATHER

Max: 27.7°C
Min: 19.5°C
RH: 53%
Rainfall: 0.2 mm

Forecast: Cloudy sky. Moderate rain. Max/Min temp. 29/18 °C

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+20,261)	(+254)
1,04,12,704	1,50,592
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+379)	(+3)
TS: 2,88,789	1,559
(+295)	(+1)
AP: 8,84,171	7,126

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

8,80,24,536

DEATHS

18,99,015

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Margasira Bahula Dasami till 9.39 pm
Star: Swati till 2.10 pm
Variyam: 7.23 pm to 8.53 pm
Durmuhurtam: 9.04 am to 9.48 am; 12.45 pm to 1.29 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
HJRI CALENDAR
Jamadi-ul-Awwal 23, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.44 am
Zohar: 12.32 pm
Asar: 4.21 pm
Maghrib: 6.04 pm
Isha: 7.15 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.48 AM
SUNSET TODAY 5.57 PM
MOONSET 1.35 PM
MOONRISE 1.41 AM

COUNTER POINT



We should not allow anyone from virus-affected states!

SHORT TAKES

JEE-Adv test for IITs on July 3

New Delhi: Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank" on Thursday said the JEE-Advanced test for admission to Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) will be conducted on July 3 and the eligibility criteria of 75 per cent marks in class 12 has been relaxed.

■ Full report on Page 2

Fashion designer Satya Paul dead

Coimbatore: Fashion designer Satya Paul, known for giving the Indian saree a contemporary touch, has passed away at the age of 79, his son Puneet Nanda said. Paul, who had suffered a stroke in December, breathed his last at Sadhguru's Isha Yoga Center on Wednesday.

■ Full report inside

Loan repay demand not abatement: HC

Nagpur: The Nagpur bench of Bombay High has quashed a First Information Report (FIR) against a finance company employee, charged with abetment to suicide for demanding loan repayment from a borrower, saying it was a part of the employee's duty and cannot be said to have instigated the borrower to end life.



Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Reddy greets Justice Himaa Kohli (right) after she was sworn in as the new Telangana High Court Chief on Thursday.

Hima Kohli takes oath as state's CJ

VUJJINI VAMSHIHARA | DC HYDERABAD, JAN. 7

Justice Hima Kohli was sworn in as Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court here on Thursday. Governor Tamilisai Sunderarajan administered the oath of office at a ceremony in Raj Bhavan where Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Reddy, Union minister of state G. Kishan Reddy, state ministers and high court judges were present. With this, the Telangana High Court got its first woman Chief Justice. She is the only woman Chief Justice in the country at present. Later, Chief Justice Kohli participated in the virtual court proceedings along with Justice M.S. Ramachandra Rao, the senior-most judge of the Telangana HC, forming a division bench. On the first day, the Chief Justice heard 35

Justice Hima Kohli is the Telangana High Court's first woman Chief Justice. She is also the only woman Chief Justice in the country at present.

cases along with Justice Rao and disposed of 60 per cent of these.

During the proceedings, Chief Justice Kohli urged counsels to have due diligence while preparing cases and while coming in for the hearing.

She advised counsels to attend court to argue cases, instead of seeking adjournments. She said adjournment dates will not be given at the sweet wishes of counsels.

The Chief Justice said she would ensure that the conventions and practices being followed at the Telangana High Court are honoured and the opinions of the Bar held in high esteem.

CENTRE: STATES TO GET VACCINE SUPPLY SOON

New Delhi, Jan. 7: The Union health ministry has informed states and union territories that they are likely to receive the first supply of Covid-19 vaccine shortly and asked them to be prepared to accept these consignments.

In a communique, the ministry said vaccine will be supplied to the identified consignee points of 19 states and union territories — Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal — by the supplier.

The vaccine for remaining 18 states and union territories will be received from their respective government medical store depots, said Dr Pradeep Halder, advisor, Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) in the health ministry.

Are protesting farmers safe from Covid, asks SC

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 7

The Supreme Court on Thursday expressed concern over the large gathering of farmers on Delhi borders protesting against the controversial farm laws and asked the Centre whether they were "protected" against the spread of Covid.

Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde, heading a bench also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian, aired the court's concern during the course of the hearing of a petition seeking a CBI probe and various other reliefs in the matter of the Tablighi Jamaat congregation at Nizamuddin Markaz early last year in Delhi and large gathering at the Anand Vihar bus terminus on rumours of buses being provided to those rendered without transport to reach home.

"The same problem is going to arise in farmers' agitation. I do not know if

FARMERS TAKE OUT TRACTOR RALLY, VOW A REPEAT ON REPUBLIC DAY

New Delhi, Jan. 7: Ahead of talks with the government, thousands of farmers on Thursday took out tractor-march from protest sites of Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders and Haryana's Rewasan against the three agriculture laws amid heavy police deployment.

According to the protesting farm unions, this is

just a "rehearsal" for their proposed January 26 tractor parade that will be moved into Delhi from different parts of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Bharati Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan) chief Joginder Singh Ugrahan said that farmers participated in the march with over 3,500 tractors and trolleys.

—PTI

farmers are protected from Covid. So, the same problem is going to arise. It is not that everything is over," Chief Justice Bobde said. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, replied, "Certainly not" and said he would file a report within two weeks.

The plea, filed by the J&K-based lawyer Supriya Pandita, alleged that Delhi police had

failed to control the congregation of people and the Nizamuddin Markaz chief Maulana Saad was still evading arrest and the Centre has not disclosed about the whereabouts of the maulana. The Bench, however, told her advocate Om Prakash Parishar: "Why are you interested in one person? We are on the issue of Covid. Why do you want controversy?"

WILD | CONFLICT

Centre tells states to empower gram panchayats Villages get a say on wild animals

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, JAN. 7

If the Union ministry of environment, forests and climate change has its way, the day may not be far when gram panchayats will be able to take decisions on how to deal with wild animals that may have become a threat to their lives or livelihoods.

In a significant decision that may have far-reaching consequences with respect to protection of wildlife, and how authorities may have to deal with

human-wildlife conflict situations, the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) has advised all states and union territories (UTs) to give gram panchayats powers to deal with situations relating to 'problematic' wild animals.

The Standing Committee of the NBWL, that met in New Delhi this past Monday, approved an advisory that envisages empowering gram panchayats to deal with "problematic wild animals as per the section 11 (1) (b) of Wild Life (Protection) Act."

This provision gives the power to deal with a wild animal to the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWW) or an authorised officer.

As per the law, such an officer or the Chief Wildlife Warden may, if satisfied that any wild animal specified in Schedules II to IV of the Act has become dangerous to human life or to property, may issue orders for it to be hunted.

However, incidents involving animals in Schedule I of the Act, such as the tiger or the leopard and

other big carnivores, will not fall under the purview of the new advisory.

For instance, the gram panchayats in Kumaram Bheem-Asifabad district, that saw two cases of people being killed in November, by a wandering tiger, will not be allowed to take decisions on how to deal with the situation. It would be dealt with according to rules laid down by the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

■ Page 2: Tiger experts not enthused by rule change



Supporters of US President Donald Trump protest outside the US Capitol building on Wednesday in Washington. Demonstrators breached security cordon and entered the Capitol as Congress debated the 2020 presidential election Electoral Vote Certification.

—AP

MODI SAYS ORDERLY TRANSFER OF POWER A MUST, SLAMS MOB FURY

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 7

In a significant comment following the rioting and violence on Capitol Hill in Washington by mobs supporting US President Donald Trump, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "distressed" over the turn of events and pointed out that an "order-

ly and peaceful transfer of power must continue" to the incoming Biden administration. "The democratic process cannot be allowed to be subverted through unlawful protests," he said. While Trump continues to insist that he won the election, Modi's comments make it clear that India, like the rest of the world, accepts Biden as the victor.

CORRUPT WILL BE PUNISHED AFTER WIN: BJP

NARENDER PULLOOR | DC BODHAN (NIZAMABAD), JAN. 7

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh, the Telangana state in-charge of the party, said that an inquiry will be conducted into the corruption practices in Telangana state and severe punishment will be given to the guilty after the 2023 Assembly elections.

The people had fought for Telangana statehood in the hope of a prosperous life but the TRS misrule had dashed their hopes in the new state, Chugh said. The BJP leader said that the state was headed to become *bimaar* (ailing) Telangana instead of Bangaru Telangana under the TRS rule.

The Centre was ready to give a helping hand to the turmeric farmers, if the state government wrote a letter offering ₹10,000 per quintal of turmeric, Chugh said. Turmeric is being sold for ₹1,200 per kg in the market, but farmers were unable to get ₹60 per kg, he said.

Senior leader Medapati Prakash Reddy along with his followers joined the BJP on Thursday night in presence of Chugh and BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar. For the first time, a huge public meeting was conducted during Covid-19 pandemic by observing standard operating protocols.

Chugh said that BJP will come to power in Telangana state in 2023 and end the family rule of the TRS.

Bandi Sanjay said that Owaisi's MIM had won five Assembly seats in Bihar state where the Muslim population is 12 per cent.

IN BRIEF

Tahsildar axed for illegal passbooks

Kamareddy: Rajampet mandal tahsildar K. Mothi Singh was suspended on Thursday for allegedly issuing illegal pattadar passbooks to ineligible persons. Reportedly, Mothi Singh issued pattadar passbooks for government land in Survey No.s 278, 279 in Shreshankar thanda to five persons. Following an inquiry, collector A. Sharath issued the suspension orders.

AJAY KUMAR LAUDS MISSION BHAGIRATHA

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 7

Union Jal Jeevan Mission director Ajay Kumar said that there was no other drinking water project like Mission Bhagiratha in the country. Telangana was the only state that supplied drinking water to every household, and several states were following the model, Kumar said.

A four-member team led by Ajay Kumar arrived in Hyderabad to inspect the Mission Bhagiratha project. They inspected Suryapet, Khammam, Bhadrachalam, Mahbubnagar and Elluru segments as part of their tour on Thursday.

Ajay Kumar's team inspected the intake wells, filter beds and supply of the water to houses. They interacted with beneficiaries in the villages.

58L FARMERS RECEIVE RYTHU BANDHU FUNDS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 7

Agriculture minister Singireddy Niranjan Reddy said that Rythu Bandhu funds have been deposited into the accounts of 58.07 lakh farmers, and the others would get the money in three to four days. The government has so far deposited ₹6,632.74 crore covering 132.65 lakh acres under the Rythu Bandhu scheme.

Niranjan Reddy thanked Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on behalf of the agriculture department for depositing the Rythu Bandhu funds. Due to the pandemic, farmers were suffering financially, and the Rythu Bandhu funds are helpful to them.

He said the highest amount of ₹530.07 crore was given to 4,31,660 farmers in Nalgonda district and the least was ₹26.82 crore for 29,685 farmers in Medchal district.

Khammam, Sangareddy and Siddipet districts have the highest number of beneficiaries after Nalgonda. Medchal, Mulugu and Warangal Urban had less than one lakh beneficiaries.

BHARAT BIOTECH ENROLS 25,800 VOLUNTEERS

Hyderabad, Jan. 7: Bharat Biotech has completed enrollment of 25,800 volunteers for the Phase-3 trials of its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin, Suchitra Ella, joint managing director, Bharat Biotech International Ltd, said on Thursday.

In a message posted on the company's Twitter account, she thanked clinical trial sites, principal investigators and health workers for their support and trust in the "public-private partnership" vaccine discovery.

"My deep appreciation to all the volunteers for reposing and expressing Pro Vaccine Public Health Voluntarism in the phase-3 clinical trials of India's 1st fully indigenous Covid-19 vaccine," she said referring to Covaxin.

The company had said it is the only Phase-3 efficacy study for a Covid-19 vaccine, and the largest efficacy trial (Phase-3) ever conducted for any vaccine in India.

—PTI

KCR cheated Muslims over quota: Shabbir

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 7

Senior Congress leader Mohammed Ali Shabbir has said that the party has ensured political empowerment of socially and economically backward Muslims both in Telangana state and Andhra Pradesh.

Shabbir Ali, in a media statement, informed that 43 Muslim corporators

were elected in the recently held elections for the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC). The number would have been just 13 if the previous Congress government would not have classified socially and economically backward Muslims under Backward Classes category (BC-E). He said a total of 30 Muslims got elected from the seats reserved for

● **SHABBIR ALI**, in a media statement, informed that 43 Muslim corporators were elected in the recently held elections for the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC).

Backward Classes. Shabbir Ali said that Dr Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy's government had implemented four per cent

Muslim quota in jobs and education in 2004. "MIM and TRS leaders, who often ask as to what Congress did for the Muslim community, should look at these figures before making such statements. We promised Muslim quota in jobs and education in the 2004 election manifesto and implemented it 58 days after coming to power. We also extended political reserva-

tion in the lungs. The doctor said that an MRI scan was not required, and the Chief Minister needed to take rest. Pulmonologist Dr Navneet Sagar and cardiologist Dr Pramod ran several tests on the CM. Minister K.T. Rama Rao, MLC K. Kavitha and MP J. Santosh Kumar accompanied the CM to the hospital.

TRS will make TS Bimaar Telangana, says Chugh

Asserts BJP will win in 2023; end KCR family rule

DC CORRESPONDENT
BODHAN (NIZAMABAD), JAN. 7

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh, the Telangana state in-charge of the party, said that an inquiry will be conducted into the corruption practices in Telangana state and severe punishment will be given to the guilty after the 2023 Assembly elections.

The people had fought for Telangana statehood in the hope of a prosperous life but the TRS misrule had dashed their hopes in the new state, Chugh said. The BJP leader said that the state was headed to become bimaar (ailing) Telangana instead of Bangaru Telangana under TRS rule.

The Centre was ready to give a helping hand to the turmeric farmers, if the state government wrote a letter offering ₹10,000 per quintal of turmeric, Chugh said. Turmeric is being sold for ₹1,200 per kg in the market, but farmers were unable to get ₹60 per kg, he said.

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Chugh said that BJP will come to power in Telangana state in 2023 and end the family rule of the TRS.

Bandi Sanjay said that MIM had won five Assembly seats in Bihar state where the Muslim population is 12 per cent. In Telangana state, 82 per cent Hindus would become a vote bank and give a fitting lesson to the TRS,



BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh and BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar at the rally in Dichpally of Nizamabad district on Thursday.

— DC

Mandal-wise roadmap for election campaign

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 7

BJP state affairs in-charge Tarun Chugh instructed party leaders to work hard for the Legislative Council graduates elections from the Hyderabad-Ranga Reddy-Mahbubnagar constituency.

On Thursday, Chugh conducted a review meeting with key leaders, including state party president Bandi

Sanjay, Union minister of state G. Kishan Reddy, party vice-president D.K. Aruna and others on the situation after the GHMC elections result.

Chugh urged them to prepare their campaign with a mandal-wise roadmap as the elections were only two months away. Instilling confidence among youth about BJP capabilities would add to their cause, he said.

Chugh said that the leaders must coordinate with the old guard and the newcomers for bringing a cohesive blend and avoid group loyalties.

He suggested that agitations be held against the TRS government which has failed to provide employment for unemployed youth. The in-charge appreciated the hard work put in by leaders that has helped attract new voters.

he said. "The BJP is not against any religion or party, but it will strongly fight to protect the interests of Hindus," Sanjay said. Leaders of different ideologies should support the Hindu cause to end the misrule

of the TRS, he said. The BJP state president accused the Chief Minister of misleading the people on the funds given by the Centre by changing the names of Central schemes. Nizamabad MP D. Arvind, speaking at the

event, said that the Bodhan Assembly constituency was utterly neglected by the TRS. "I am ready to debate on the problems of turmeric farmers and the farm laws at Mamidipally crossroads in Armoor," he said.



Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao leaves Yashoda Hospital in Secunderabad after blood tests on Thursday.

— R. PAVAN

CM undergoes tests for lung inflammation

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 7

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on underwent medical tests at Yashoda Hospital. It is said that he was suffering from inflammation in the lungs, and his personal doctors conducted tests at the hospital. After completing the tests, the CM left for Pragati Bhavan.

Dr M.V. Rao, the CM's personal doctor, told the media that the Chief Minister's health was very good. He said that the CM undergoes a medical examination every year as part of his general check-up.

Dr Rao clarified that the CM did not have any signs of Coronavirus infection. A CT scan was done due to inflamma-

tion in the lungs. The doctor said that an MRI scan was not required, and the Chief Minister needed to take rest.

Pulmonologist Dr Navneet Sagar and cardiologist Dr Pramod ran several tests on the CM. Minister K.T. Rama Rao, MLC K. Kavitha and MP J. Santosh Kumar accompanied the CM to the hospital.

Mallu Bhatti accuses CM of secret relationship with BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 7

Congress Legislative Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Thursday accused Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao of taking a U-turn on agricultural policies after his visit to Delhi. This showed that he had struck a secret relationship with the BJP at the Centre to safeguard his corruption in the state, Mallu Bhatti said.

On Thursday, the CLP leader, addressing a press conference at the Assembly media point, announced that Congress MLAs would hold a dharna at Indira Park in the city to support farmers who are continuing their protest

● **BHATTI POINTED** out that before going to Delhi, Chandrashekar Rao had supported the farmers bandh call in the state. After his visit, he took a U-turn on the matter.

in Delhi against the Centre's laws.

He expressed dissatisfaction that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar did not visit the farmers who were protesting against the new farm laws and discuss the issue with them.

Bhatti pointed out that before going to Delhi, Chandrashekar Rao had sup-

ported the farmers bandh call in the state. After his visit, he took a U-turn on the matter. "Why did KCR not visit the protesting farmers in Delhi to express his support? It the nature of his politics," the CLP leader said.

He questioned the Chief Minister's claim that the state government would lose ₹7,500 crore by buying agricultural produce.

He alleged that the Chief Minister "colluded" with "middlemen who were planning to loot the farmers" by offering prices for their paddy. "The CM is not the CEO of the state," Mallu Bhatti said and said that the state was no corporate to loot public money.

KEY POLITICIANS BACK PRAVEEN RAO IN FEUD

FROM PAGE 1

But Akhila Priya could not get down to the nitty-gritty of properties and others turned their back, he said.

Nagi Reddy, though belonging to Allagadda in Kurnool, entered Mahbubnagar and had business partnerships with people fronted by Krishna Rao. He used to run cinema theatres and liquor business, he said.

Praveen Rao's brothers continued the cinema business. Rao's family and Subba Reddy continued to work together even after the death of Nagi Reddy.

A minister belonging to the undivided Mahbubnagar district and an MP were allegedly supporting Rao's family as they were assured of a share in the lands, the family member said.

Minister Srinivas Goud reacted to the issue on Wednesday and said that "Rayalaseema goondalism" will not run in Telangana state. He said that on coming to know of the kidnap of Praveen Rao, he had spoken to the local DCP and quickly resolved the kidnap drama.

TRS MP Maloth Kavitha was the first person who alerted the Bowenpally police about the kidnap, the family member said.

A leader in Kurnool said a detailed investigation was required to find out Krishna's motive for joining hands with Nagi Reddy and the assets they had acquired.

HARISH: RYTHU VEDIKAS GOOD FOR AGRI SECTOR

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 7

Finance minister T. Harish Rao on Thursday said that Rythu Vedikas were very useful to bring about the development of farmers in the agricultural sector. The minister was speaking after laying the foundation stone for a soil test lab at the market yard in Gajwel.

Harish Rao said that the Vedikas would provide comprehensive information to the farming community. Farming instructions, fertilisers and pesticides will be provided in stages through the Rythu Vedikas. Soil tests will be done and land records will be provided to the farmers with comprehensive information, he said. The success stories of farmers will be communicated to others through the Rythu Vedika centres. Harish Rao said that the price of crops was being set by the Centre as the minimum support price. BJP leaders were claiming that the new agriculture laws would benefit the farmers.

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 7

Union education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' on Thursday announced that the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE) Advanced-2021 will be held on July 3. He also announced that the condition for 75 per cent marks in the Class 12 board exams as eligibility to take the test has been relaxed for this year too.

The JEE (Advanced) will be conducted by IIT Kharagpur this year. The announcement during

Compare to TRS, BJP strength nominal in TS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, JAN. 7

Minister for roads and buildings, legislative affairs and housing V. Prashanth Reddy said he would resign his post if the BJP state president Bandi Sanjay and Nizamabad MP D. Arvind initiate welfare schemes in BJP ruled states. "If they are unable to do so, they should resign from state BJP president and MP post", he dared.

The minister participated in various developments works in Balkonda Assem-bly constituency and Nizamabad district headquarters on Thursday. Nizamabad urban MLA Bigala Ganesh Gupta, MLCs D. Rajeshwar Rao, V.G. Goud and Akula Lalitha

accompanied the minister. Minister Pras-hanth Reddy criticised that Bandi Sanjay and Arvind took up false propaganda against TRS government. Compared to TRS, BJP strength in Telangana state is nominal, he said and added that if TRS workers revolted BJP leaders failed to move in the state.

Minister also set the foundation stone for National Academy of Construction centre in Nizamabad. He thanked Chief Minister K. Chandrasekar Rao for the sanction of Rs 6 crore for NAC centre. District collector C. Narayana Reddy and other officials were present. Minister V. Prashanth Reddy visited the integrated collectorate building works.

Skoda Auto to launch midsized SUV Kushaq

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 7

Skoda Auto India has said that its latest offering, a midsized SUV, Skoda Kushaq, will be the first in a series of vehicles tailored to meet the needs and demands of customers from the domestic market as well as those in emerging economies the world over. The roll-out of these vehicles will happen over the next 18 months, the company said in a release.

The Kushaq, Skoda said, is the first vehicle designed and developed under the company's 'India 2.0' project. According to Zac Hollis, brand director, Skoda Auto India, the Kushaq offers a combination of the "brand's timeless design ideals, unmatched performance, superior build quality, exemplary value proposition, and enhanced

safety and security." It is deemed to be the best seller in its class, setting the benchmark for functionality, practicality, spaciousness, and convenience, Hollis said.

The name of the Skoda's latest entrant into the Indian auto market is derived from Sanskrit: The word 'Kushak' denotes a king or an emperor; the company said.

The powerful vehicle, the company said, not only personifies its moniker, but also reflects upon Skoda's 125 years of history and heritage, a legacy that substantiates the brand's claim, "Driven by inventiveness and clever ideas — since 1895."

The name, starting with a K and ending with a Q, "also resonates the virtues of the Skoda SUV family — Kodiaq, Karoq, and Kamiq," the automaker said.

TIGER EXPERTS NOT ENTHUSED BY RULECHANGE OVER WILDLIFE SAFETY

From Page 1

"This is in essence, kicking the responsibility of dealing with a conflict situation from one to another," K. Ullas Karanth, respected wildlife biologist and leading tiger expert in the world, told *Deccan Chronicle*.

The CWW has the power under the law to declare any action in a human-animal conflict situation. Somebody will have to accept the responsibility for an action and that will be an officer of the government.

"An advisory is just that, an advisory. Changes in the process will require amendments to the law," Karanth

said. According to Shafat Ali Khan, a well-known hunter of problem animals, "the desired result will not be achieved by such decisions unless there is a change in the mindset when it comes to dealing with human-animal conflicts." Some states, such as Gujarat, already allow gram panchayats to take the decision on dealing with human-animal conflicts but any decision taken by the village governments have to be communicated to the forest officials and the action has to comply with all rules and laws dealing with a problem animal.

BJP FLAYS BALKA FOR ANTI-BANDI REMARKS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 7

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders on Thursday issued a strong counter to Assembly Whip Balka Suman for criticising their state president

Bandi Sanjay Kumar. Party general secretary Bangaru Shrutti and BJP SC Morcha president K. Bhasha speaking to reporters here said that Suman was not in a position to criticise Sanjay Kumar.

JEE ADVANCED-2021 TO BE CONDUCTED ON JULY 3

DC CORRESPONDENT
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The JEE (Advanced) will be conducted by IIT Kharagpur this year. The announcement during

● **THE ONLINE** application process for JEE Main-2021 that began on December 16, 2020, will end on January 16.

2020, will end on January 16. Candidates can make application fee payment till January 17. The JEE Mains will be held in four sessions this year from February to May. The first session will be held from February 23-26 and results will be declared within five days from the last day of exams.

While JEE-Mains is conducted for admission to engineering colleges across the country, it is considered as a qualifying test for JEE-Advanced which leads to admission in the IITs.

OTHER STORIES

RAJAMPET
TAHSILDAR
SUSPENDEDNARENDER PULLOOR | DC
KAMAREDDY, JAN. 7:

Rajampet mandal tahsildar K. Mothi Singh was suspended on Thursday for issuing illegal pattadar passbooks to ineligible persons. District collector A. Sharath issued suspension orders on Thursday. Reportedly, Mothi Singh issued the pattadar passbooks for survey numbers 278, 279 of government lands in Sharesh-ankar thanda to five people. Following an inquiry, the collector issued suspension orders.

PLAY AREA FOR
KIDS IN POLICE
STATION: DCPDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, JAN. 7

Additional DCP for Administration Khammam Injarapu Pooja said that the women police stations should be shaped into a healthy one.

She said that the women and children coming to the police station should feel happy coming to the station where toys were placed. She said that the women used to come to the police station with their kids and the children should be happy there.

ENSURE FRIENDLY
ENVIRONMENT AT
P.S, SAYS DCPDC CORRESPONDENT
PEDDAPALLI, JAN. 7

Police has appealed to the people to be wary of online fraudsters who are trying to cheat by sending letters in the name of well-known companies. The police asked the people not to enter into financial transactions with such fraudsters without knowing all the details.

P. Shyam Patel, assistant sub-inspector of Kamanpur mandal, Peddapalli district, on Thursday said that for the past few days some persons were receiving registered posts in the name of Naaptol, Snapdeal and Amazon informing them that they have won a cash card of ₹15 lakh in a lucky draw. The fraudsters were asking for money in the form of tax and registration fees and other purported services. The police official asked people not to believe such letters. He also asked them not to provide their financial details to any unauthorised persons.

GWMC TO
BEGIN DAILY
WATER SUPPLYDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JAN. 7

The Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) will begin dispensing water every day to all the households from April 14, mayor Gunda Prakash Rao said. Addressing a media conference here on Thursday, he said that out of 2.53 lakh households under GWMC, 1.95 lakh households are being provided with clean drinking water. It is decided to provide water every day from Ugadi festival to the remaining households, 42 merged villages and 93 slum areas.

According to the mayor, 50 per cent of the areas in the city are being provided with water every day and the remaining 50 per cent of the houses are receiving water alternative days. "Once we complete giving another 25,000 tap connections, we will cover the entire GWMC limits. The work to this effect is progressing without any delay. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao is fully cooperative and the municipal minister is conducting reviews, meetings and releasing funds regularly," he said.

Prakesh Rao said the trial run would be conducted on February 25 and a toll-free number will be set up soon for problems related to drinking water, any faults and leaks would be rectified and the water supply would be ready by Ugadi.

The Centre sanctioned ₹153 crore out of the ₹315 crore under the Amrut Schemes and government has appealed to the Centre to release the remaining budget of ₹161 crore.

The mayor informed that the Waddepally, KUC and Desaipt filter beds are being modernised using state-of-the-art technology to provide one hundred percent clean drinking water to the citizens with zero risk of diseases.

People should notice the
growth in TS: Minister

Beneficiaries to keep them clean with proper management

ANUDEEP
CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, JAN. 7

State Panchayat Raj, Rural Development and Rural Water Supply and Drainage Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao handed over 73 double bedroom houses to the beneficiaries from Gollapalli and Devarupula villages in Jangaon district on Thursday. He also unveiled the statue of Srikantha Chary, the first martyr of the Telangana movement. In Gollapalli, 24 double bedroom houses completed costing ₹1 crore 20 lakh were inaugurated. In 49 double bedroom houses completed at Devarupula costing ₹2.47 crore



Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao inaugurating double bed room houses at Devarupula in Jangaon district on Thursday. — DC

were handed over to the beneficiaries.

Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao said that with the blessings of CM KCR and Minister KTR, it gave him immense pleasure to inaugurate

double bedroom houses for the poor.

"People should take note of the development that took place before the arrival of Telangana and the development that took place with the ideas

of CM KCR after coming to Telangana. We provide double bedroom houses for the poor for free with all facilities like electricity, drinking water and roads," he said.

He said there should be a CC road and drainages in front of every house and proposals should be submitted where needed, and any amount of funds would be sanctioned.

The district collector K. Nikhil said while the state government has handed over houses to the poor with good facilities, it is up to the beneficiaries to keep them clean with proper management and contribute to the village's development, the district and the state.

Villagers waylay officials to stop child marriage

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JAN. 7

A team of officials who went to stop the wedding of an under-age girl in Tallakunta thanda under Wardhannapet mandal was turned away by villagers on Wednesday night. A crowd stopped the

officials from reaching the house where the wedding ceremony for the 12-year-old girl was on. The villagers got into an altercation with child protection officers, police and ICDS officials around 11pm. District child development officer (DCPO) G Mahender Reddy said the

villagers paid no heed to the words of the officials and abused them. "Women ganged up against women officers and argued against any outside 'interference' in the issue. They said it was the family's decision as to when their children should get married. There was high ten-

sion, the villagers were in a mood to defy the police," he said. CDPO Padma, supervisor Hemalatha, Wardhannapet police sub-inspector Vamsi Krishna, child protection officer Raju and police constables left the village without being able to halt the marriage event.

Officials geared up for dry run of
vaccination in Karimnagar, WarangalPULI SHARATH
KUMAR | DC
KARIMNAGAR, JAN. 7

Officials of the health department are geared up for the dry run of Covid-19 vaccination in erstwhile Karimnagar district. Vaccination will be administered first to the staff of the health department working in government and private hospitals, then to the staff of Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) followed by frontline workers and those who have crossed 50 years of age and the Under-50 who are suffering from comorbidity.

Buildings (cold chain points) having at least three rooms in government and private hospitals, panchayat raj and municipal buildings and other spots across the erstwhile Karimnagar district have been identified for the purpose. Measures are in place for giving emergency treatment in case some complaint of side-effects after getting the vaccination. Details of persons who get vaccinated will be available on the Co-Win App. District medical and health officer of



District collector Rajeev Gandhi Hanumanthu, DMHO Dr K Lalitha Devi and other officials releasing posters on covid-19 vaccination. — DC

Rajanna Sircilla district, Dr. Suman Mohan Rao chaired a meeting with health officials of Primary Health Centres (PHCs), supervisors and cold chain handlers along with ANMs and organised a training session about the dry run.

Dr. Rao appealed to the people, who will be administered with the Covid-19 vaccination, to take the same company vaccine for the second time and not that of any other company. Karimnagar District Collector, K. Shashanka told a review meeting with health officials to enter details of Cold-chain points that are identified in the Co-Win app.

He also asked them to

enter details if there is any adverse reaction at the main district hospital in Karimnagar, or the area hospital in Huzurabad, Prathima or Chelmada hospitals in case of emergency.

Mean while in Warangal dry-run for the vaccination against Covid-19 would be held at 43 centres across the Warangal Urban district on Friday, said collector Rajeev Gandhi Hanumanthu.

He, along with District Medical and Health Officer Dr. K. Lalitha Devi, inaugurated the posters regarding the vaccination at the collectorate on Thursday. The dry run would be held following the state government's guidelines,

NIT ALUMNI
DONATE LAPTOPS
TO STUDENTSDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JAN. 7

The NIT Warangal Alumni Association and the teaching faculty teamed up to distribute over 100 laptops to students of NIT Warangal on Thursday.

On the occasion, director, NIT Warangal, Prof. N.V. Raman Rao, appreciated the NITW Alumni Association and the teaching faculty for their contribution to the students in this pandemic situation. "In these days, a laptop is more necessary than a book and pen to gain knowledge. Students are requested to utilise this in a proper way. If the students make use of this opportunity and work hard, the results will be fruitful," he said. NITW Alumni secretary Murali K. Gungi spoke that in response to an appeal given by the director to the alumni to donate laptops to needy NITW students, they took the initiative to take up the programme and over 100 laptops were given to the needy students in a short period of time.

Student affairs Prof. J.V. Ramanamurthy, IR and Alumni affairs dean Prof. Selva Raj, were present along with others.

11,200 PEOPLE
TO GET VACCINE
IN FIRST PHASEDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, JAN. 7

District collector R.V. Karnan said that nearly 11,200 persons would be administered Covid-19 vaccine in the first phase in the district against three phases. He said that the dry-run would be conducted in all the primary health centres. The health care personnel of private and government hospitals and Anganwadi and Aasha workers will be administered the first phase followed by police and sanitation staff in the second phase. Senior citizens and others will be given in the third phase.

Hanumanthu said, DMHO Lalitha Devi informed that the dry run would be held at 14 PHCs, 14 UPHCs, five hospitals, Kakatiya Medical College, DMHO office and eight private hospitals with a staff of more than 100.

KCR IS COMMITTED FOR ECONOMICAL
DEVELOPMENT IN DALITS: MLADC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JAN. 7

The Chief Minister, K. Chandrashekar Rao striving hard for enlightening the lives of the people belonging to dalit community and to provide them with plenty of employment opportunities, said the Choppadandi MLA, Sunke Ravi Shankar.

Ravi Shankar chaired a review meeting with the SC Corporation Executive Directors (ED) of Karimnagar, Rajanna Sircilla, Jagtial and Peddapalli districts at his camp office here in

Choppadandi of Karimnagar district on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Ravi Shankar said that for the economical development of the people belonging to dalit community, the state government is sanctioning loans from SC corporation under subsidy for establishment of shops, purchasing of vehicles and machines.

Those who take loan of ₹50,000 will get 100 percent subsidy, for loan of ₹1 lakh 80 percent subsidy and for ₹2 lakh loan beneficiaries will get 70 percent subsidy, he informed.

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 For Accessing the Bid document from NMDC website, the bidder has to register as 'New User' in Bid section at NMDC's website link <http://www.nmdc.co.in/nmcdtender/default.aspx>
 For accessing the Bid documents from Central Procurement Portal www.eprocure.gov.in, the Tenderer has to click on "Latest active Tenders".
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हर एक काम देश के नाम

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
(MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS)
 (Department of Road Transport and Highways)
 B/1178/2017 Date : 05.01.2021

PUBLIC NOTICE
Announcement of Award for acquisition of land for construction of a National Highway for Land owners / persons interested therein
 Kind attention of all land owners / interested persons is invited to the Notification No. 3331 dated 01.12.2017 issued under Section 3A of the NH Act, 1956 for acquisition of land for the building / construction of a National Highway-163 (Manneguda-Ravulapally Section) and the Notification No. 4633 dated 29.11.2018 issued under Section 3D of the NH Act, 1956 and published in the following newspapers:

Sl. No.	Notification	Name of the Newspaper in which published	Date of the Newspaper
1.	Section 3A	Namaste Telangana Telugu Daily Newspaper Deccan Chronicle English Daily Newspaper	03.01.2018
2.	Section 3G	Sakshi Telligu Daily Newspaper The Hindu English Daily Newspaper	16.02.2019

 It is informed that the undersigned has announced the Award in respect of the said land under Section 3G of the NH Act, 1956 vide order No. Nazeerabad B/1178/2017-PRG-7, dated 22.08.2019 of Pargi Mandal. The requisite amount of compensation is available with the acquiring Agency. Notices have also been issued to the concerned land owners / interested persons as required under Section 3E of the NH Act, 1956.
 Accordingly, all the concerned land owners / interested persons are hereby informed / notified through this additional **Public Notice** that the compensation amount is hereby offered to all the land owners. Further it may be noted that:

- The compensation amount in respect of all such land owners, who have already submitted their bank account details viz. bank name, bank branch name, bank account number, IFSC Code, is being credited to their respective bank accounts through PFMS.
- The landowners, who have not submitted their above said bank account details, may do so immediately in the office of the undersigned and amount shall be credited to their accounts.

 It may further be noted that since amount of compensation has been determined and tendered to the concerned land owners/persons interested there in through this additional public notice, any failure to submit the bank account details the compensation amount would be to their account and the amount shall be deemed to have been paid on expiry of the period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice.
 The land owners/persons interested therein are further called upon to surrender or deliver the possession of the subject land to the undersigned, failing which the possession of subject land will be taken with Police assistance on expiry of the period of 60 days.
Sd/-
Competent Authority for Land Acquisition, and Revenue Divisional Officer, Vikarabad Division, Vikarabad District, Telangana State

KALAM FOREVER

Yatra covered 20,800 km through 13 states in 73 days

Tour to highlight Kalam's vision

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, JAN. 7

A Kalam Vision Yatra organised from Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu by the youths of Khammam concluded at Rastrapathi Bhavan in New Delhi the other day. Its aim was to awaken the nation's youth to the dreams of former president Abdul Kalam.

The Yatra covered 20,800 km through 13 states in 73 days. It passed through 11 important places linked to the life of the former President. It touched down at the House of Kalam, his Masjid, the Siva temple, the school and Kalam Museum in Rameswaram; a school Kalam studied in Ramanathapuram, the Saint Josephs College in Tiruchirappalli, the Madras Institute of Technology in Chennai, the DRDA in Hyderabad, the IIM in Shillong and finally at the Rastapathi Bhavan.

The convener of the Vibrants of Kalam, Vijay Kalam, said the present DRDA chairman G Satish Reddy formally concluded the programme with a speech. The message given by the



DRDA chairman Satish Reddy along with Vibrants of Kalam convener and national coordinator Vijay Kalam and Sivaprasad. — DC

● **Reddy says India will lead the world in defence technology.**

● **The DRDA chairman said, "India has a large population of youths. That's our strength. Youth has worked wonders for India. The way they have excelled in information technology, spreading themselves out to all over the world.**

DRDA chairman, who also worked with Kalam, inspired the participants more. The DRDA chairman said, "India has a large population of youths. That's our strength. Youth has worked wonders for India. The way they have excelled in information technology, spreading themselves out to all over the world and conquering all the domains of IT, is the best example.

If these young minds can be ignited, that is going to be the main strength of India." "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been encouraging the youth in a big way. Even in DRDO, we have established five laboratories filled with young scientists below the age of 35. A large number of start-ups are coming up in IT sector. The way our youths are entering defence technology, I am sure they can lead the world in defence technology. With such enthusiasm among our youths, we are sure India will emerge as an economic super power in the world," he added. He urged the youths to follow Abdul Kalam, keep dreaming, "Dream, dream and dream. Dream that you can become a doctor, a great scientist or a professional.

This was what Kalam kept telling youths." The Vibrants of Kalam organisers reached up to Shillong where Kalam's last speech was given. They met Hemango K Dutta, manager of IIM, Shillong, who had taken Kalam to hospital as he fell ill during a visit there.

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SHORT TAKES

'VICTIM SHOULD NOT HAVE GONE OUT IN EVENING'

Budaun (UP), Jan. 7: The brutal gangrape and murder of a 50-year-old woman in Uttar Pradesh's Budaun district could have been avoided if the victim had not gone out in the evening, said a member of the National Commission for Women (NCW) on Thursday while expressing her dissatisfaction with the police action in the case.

"I tell women again and again that they should never go out at odd hours under anyone's influence," said NCW member Chandramukhi Devi after meeting the woman's family members.

"I think if she had not gone out in the evening or was accompanied by any child of the family perhaps this incident could have been avoided. But this was pre-planned as she was called through a phone call. She went (out) and then returned in such a state," she told reporters at the victim's village in the district.

On Sunday, the 50-year-old anganwadi worker who had gone to a temple was found dead under mysterious circumstances. Her family members have accused the temple priest and his aides of raping and murdering her.

A case has been registered against the accused and two of them were arrested on Tuesday night, while the priest is still absconding.

"I am not satisfied with the role of the police. Had timely action been taken, perhaps the life of the victim could have been saved," said Devi, who arrived in the village on Wednesday night.

ODISHA RECORDS FRESH COVID-19 DEATH

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 7

A 70-year-old man from Odisha's Khorda district died of Covid-19 on Thursday, taking the total number of deaths in the disease to 1,888. The fresh casualty came after the state recorded nil death cases on Tuesday and Wednesday.

"Regret to inform the demise of 70-year-old male Covid positive patient of Khorda district who was also suffering from Chronic Liver Disease with Pulmonary Hypertension & Chronic Kidney Diseases," tweeted the state health and family welfare department.

The first death due to Covid-19 was reported on April 7 last year in Odisha after a 72-year-old man of Jharpada area here succumbed to the virus on April 6, 2020 while undergoing treatment at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhubaneswar.

The state has so far recorded 3,31,151 Covid-19 cases, including the 230 new cases reported since Wednesday. As many as 21,652 tests were conducted on Wednesday, the government said on Thursday. While 3,27,008 cases have recovered, 2,202 are still active.

CONG FUMES OVER 'SAMBHAJINAGAR' NAME USE

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 7

The relations within the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government over the renaming of Aurangabad were further strained as the Congress took a strong objection to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's official social media account referring the city as Sambhajnagar. Maharashtra Congress chief Balasaheb Thorat has warned the MVA allies to avoid playing politics on the renaming issue.

"The Directorate of Information and Publicity should not rename cities on its own. It should remember that official government work is a legal document," said Thorat, who was left fuming after Maharashtra CMO in one of the tweets about cabinet decisions mentioned Aurangabad as Sambhajnagar.

"Approval has been granted to additional 165 beds and creation of 360 new posts at the government medical college and cancer hospital in Sambhajnagar (Aurangabad)," said the CMO tagging minister for medical education Amit Deshmukh, who belongs to Congress. Reacting strongly to it, Thorat, who is also a revenue minister in the state government, said that renaming cities is not part of the MVA's common minimum programme. "We again want to reassert that we are opposed to renaming any city to ensure that social harmony prevails."

Govt announces ₹28k crore industrial package for J&K

Bid to create 4.5 lakh jobs; Package to remain in force for 17 years

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, JAN. 7

The government on Thursday announced a ₹28,400 crore industrial package for Jammu and Kashmir and said that it would help towards creating as many as 4.5 lakh jobs besides paving the way for ₹20,000 crore investments in the Union Territory.

"The package approved by the Centre will give boost to J&K's industrial potential and will remain in force for 17 years," said UT's Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, at a press conference in Jammu.

Called 'Industrial Development Package-2021', the scheme aims at providing a huge boost to the existing industrial sector, he said asserting that the Government of India "has once again showed its commitment towards sowing the seeds of growth, prosperity and employment in J&K".

He said, "This is a historic industrial package that will give a boost to the industrial sector in J&K, create employment and pave way for outside investments as well." He added that the package will act as a big relief to the existing industries and will cover the manufacturing units as well as the service sector that includes the Tourism and Information Technology. "This will give J&K's economy a new boost and lead the UT towards growth and sustainable development," Mr. Sinha said.

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, JAN. 7

Jammu and Kashmir's Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday gave hints on restoration of high speed 4G internet services in the remaining 18 districts of the Union Territory soon.

"I know 4G is working in just two districts of J&K. There is a committee examining the issue. Hopefully, there will be good news soon in the coming days," he said while replying a question at a press conference in Jammu. J&K witnessed a complete communication blackout for weeks after the Centre stripped it of its special status and split it up into two UTs on August 5, 2019. Though landline and mobile phone services have been restored fully, the high speed internet services continue to remain suspended in 18 out of the 20 districts of the UT.

Even 2G bandwidth serv-

He stated that the administration headed by him was working on a long and short term strategy for streamlining the power infrastructure in J&K. He said, "J&K has earned the first slot on road connec-

ties are frequently suspended at places on the pretext of law and order issues, causing huge inconvenience to people particularly students, traders and media persons. 4G services were restored in two districts — Udhampur and Ganderbal — a few months ago "on experimental basis" following SC's observations on the issue.

Replying another question, Sinha said that he was aware of the conflicting versions put forth by the Army and J&K police and the families of three Valley youth on purported encounter that took place in Srinagar's Lawaypora last week and that he will come up with facts on it at appropriate time.

He said, "Let me tell you that J&K is a very sensitive place. I have noted all versions including that of the (security) forces and the families (of the slain youth). I will come up with facts before you at appropriate time."

Major General H.S. Sahi,

General Officer Commanding (GoC) of the Army's counterinsurgency Kilo Force, had told reporters here last week that the slain were militants "who were planning a big strike on the Srinagar-Baramulla highway to gain publicity."

He also claimed that weapons including an AK-47 assault rifle, two pistols and a few hand grenades were found on them after they were killed in an encounter at Lawaypora.

But the families of the youth Aijaz Maqbool Ganai, Athar Mushtaq Wani and Zubair Ahmed Lone have questioned the Army's claim and termed it a fake encounter in which "our innocent children were brutally murdered."

They claimed that the youth — two being students and the third a mason by profession — had suddenly disappeared after leaving their respective homes in twin districts of south Kashmir on December 29 morning. — PTI

tivity front and in the near future, every village will be connected through a better road. In 2023, people of J&K will travel in metro for the first time."

Elaborating on the new industrial package, he

said its main purpose is to generate employment beyond government jobs in both manufacturing and service sectors which directly leads to the socio-economic development of the region.

● **L-G SAID,** This is a historic industrial package that will give a boost to the industrial sector in J&K, create employment and pave way for outside investments as well.

"The scheme is being implemented with the vision that industry and service led development of J&K needs to be given a fresh thrust with emphasis on job creation, skill development and sustainable development by attracting new investment and nurturing the existing ones. It will provide a major support to local industry, besides creation of new business opportunities", he said. He said the scheme is also about bringing radical transformation in the existing industrial ecosystem of J&K with emphasis on job creation, skill development and sustainable development by attracting new investment and nurturing the existing ones, "thereby enabling J&K to compete nationally with other leading industrially developed states and UTs of the country". He said it is anticipated that the scheme is likely to attract unprecedented investment and give direct and indirect employment to about 4.5 lakh persons. Additionally, because of the working capital interest subvention, the scheme is likely to give indirect support to about 35,000 persons.



Farmers sit around a bonfire to warm themselves on a cold evening at Delhi-UP Ghazipur border on Thursday.

— PTI

Centre may make farm laws optional for states

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 7

There is a growing view among the highest quarters in the government that states could be given the choice to implement the contentious farm laws rather than making it mandatory.

States like Punjab and Rajasthan have already refused to implement the new Bills. Union home minister Amit Shah has been holding a series of meetings with agriculture minister Narendra Tomar and other senior government functionaries ahead of a crucial meeting with farmers unions on Friday.

Sources claimed that Centre was keen to find an early resolution to the ongoing farmers agitation. Thus, the home minister has been playing a very active role even though formal talks are being led by the agriculture minister.

Shah has held several

rounds of discussions with Tomar, railway minister Piyush Goyal and senior BJP leaders from Punjab.

The home minister had also held one round of discussion with the farmer leaders about a fortnight ago. However, the deadlock continues as farmers are adamant on their two main demands that the three laws are repealed and a new law be framed to assure the Minimum Support Price.

Now ahead of the next round of talks Centre is keen to find a way of forward and can possibly offer the agitating farmers a new proposal that the decision to implement the three new farms laws would be left to the respective states. As of now it is mandatory for the states also to implement the new laws but Centre is willing to make this "optional" if the farmer unions agree to the same.

Central team to inspect Karuvatta

Alappuzha, Jan. 7: A three-member Central team arrived here on Thursday to assess the situation arising out of outbreak of bird flu in Alappuzha and Kottayam districts, official sources said.

The team comprising Union health ministry's public health specialist Dr Ruchi Jain, Pune National Institute of Virology scientist Dr Shailesh Pawar and Delhi RML Hospital physician Dr Anith Jindal held discussions with district authorities at the collectorate here, they said.

Later, the team left for Karuvatta, one of the hot-spots of the flu outbreak. According to the state government, over 69,000 birds, including ducks and chicken, were culled in the districts of Alappuzha and Kottayam till Wednesday to contain the H5N8 strain of bird flu.

The outbreak was initially reported in four panchayats of Nedumudi, Thakazhy, Pallippad and Karuvatta in Kuttanad region of the Alappuzha district and Neendoor in Kottayam district.

19 Rapid Response Teams have been engaged in culling birds in both the districts and the regions suspected to have infected

the birds will be sanitised on Thursday. State animal husbandry minister K. Raju has said there is no history of the H5N8 virus being transmitted to humans. Authorities have banned sale of bird meat and eggs in the affected regions. To provide relief to the affected farmers, the state government has decided to compensate them for culling their birds.

Culled birds which are over two-month-old will be given ₹200 each and those under the age of two-months will be compensated at ₹100 each, the government has said.

Eggs destroyed due to avian flu will be given a compensation of ₹5 each. The minister said 61,513 birds including ducks and chicken have been culled in Alappuzha while 7,729 were culled in Kottayam.

Culling of ducks, hens and other domestic birds in and around one km radius of the affected areas in Alappuzha and Kottayam districts is being conducted as per the guidelines issued by the government. The operation was launched after results of the samples tested at the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases in Bhopal confirmed the outbreak. — PTI

White blanket



An aerial view of Dal Lake and its surrounding areas after heavy snowfall in Srinagar on Thursday. The Srinagar-Jammu National Highway was shut for traffic for the fifth consecutive day on Thursday in the wake of heavy snowfall over the past four days, even as the minimum temperature across the Valley stayed below the freezing point, officials said.

- PTI

VITAL | EVENT

ITBP, camel-mounted band of BSF will also be part of parade

NSG commandos to be part of R-Day event

New Delhi, Jan. 7: A contingent of the NSG 'black cat' commandos and a tableau of the country's largest paramilitary force CRPF will be part of the forthcoming Republic Day parade in the national capital, official sources said on Thursday.

Marching and band contingents of the Delhi Police, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police and the famed camel-mounted band of the Border Security Force will also be part of the annual parade on January 26 that is going to be curtailed this year due to the Coronavirus pandemic, they said.

The National Security Guard (NSG) commandos, who first came on the Rajpath for this event in 2017, are making a come-

back this year, sources said.

The commandos, called 'black cats' due to their black-coloured overalls and stealth techniques, will be seen sporting their sophisticated weapons like the MP-5 assault rifle, dagger, night vision headgear, bullet proof jackets and counter-terror equipments like hydraulic lifts and anti-hijacking van 'sherpa'.

The special force was raised in 1984 as the federal unit to undertake specialist counter-terror, counter-hijack and hostage rescue operations across the country.

The NSG, every year, also provides a sniper and combat security cover to the Republic Day event as part of its "immediate backup support" to secure

● **THE NSG,** every year, also provides a sniper and combat security cover to the Republic Day event as part of its 'immediate backup support' to secure the Rajpath.

● **THE ANNUAL** parade displays India's military might, rich cultural diversity and socio-economic progress.

the Rajpath and its nearby areas.

The Central Reserve Police Force tableau will depict the three primary areas of its deployment in the country — anti-Naxal operations theatre, duties in Jammu and Kashmir and counter-insurgency

duties in the north east of the country — apart from assisting in various law and order duties like guarding the annual Amarant Yatra route, sources said.

The about 3.25 lakh personnel strong force is designated as the lead internal security force of the country and this is the first time that its float will roll down the Rajpath as part of the parade.

Band personnel of the border guarding force BSF, dressed in their ceremonial regalia and sitting atop caparisoned camels, will play martial tunes and patriotic songs during the parade, like every year, sources said.

This 'ship of the desert' contingent first became part of the Republic Day parade in 1976 after it

replaced a similar squad of the Army which had been participating in the procession since it first took place in 1950.

Mountain force ITBP, tasked to guard the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, will have its troops and band personnel marching one after the other during the parade, they said.

The annual parade displays India's military might, rich cultural diversity and socio-economic progress and as per sources, its duration and the capacity of people who can watch the parade from the ground has been brought down drastically this time to ensure that Covid-19 related protocols of safe distancing can be better followed.

— PTI

PLEA SEEKS BAR ON LAWMAKERS' RE-ELECTION TO SAME HOUSE

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 7

The Supreme Court on Thursday sought response from the Centre and the Election Commission on a petition seeking to debar the lawmakers from re-contesting election during the term of the same House (assembly/parliament) after quitting it or being disqualified under 10th Schedule of the Constitution — anti-defection law.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde also comprising Justice A. S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian gave the Centre and the ECI four weeks time to respond to the plea that any member of the House giving up the membership of a political party and resigning from the legislature should also

come under the purview of 10th Schedule of the Constitution and attract the consequences of disqualification under the anti-defection law.

The PIL petitioner Madhya Pradesh Congress general secretary Jaya Thakur has sought the implementation of the Article 191(1)(e) of the Constitution, read with para 2 of the tenth Schedule.

"Once a member of the House incurs disqualification under the Xth Schedule, he cannot be permitted to contest again during the term for which he was elected. Article 172 makes a membership of a House co-terminus with the term of 5 years of the House except in circumstances mentioned therein," Jaya Thakur has stated in her petition.

SHORT TAKES

WOMAN SHOT DEAD IN CAPITOL A DON SUPPORTER

Washington, Jan. 7: The woman who died Wednesday of a bullet wound during the violent storming of the US Capitol was shot by police, authorities said. The only fatality tied to Wednesday's unrest was the woman, reportedly a dedicated Donald Trump backer and air force veteran who was among a throng of supporters of the president that invaded the US legislature.

Washington police chief Robert Contee said three other people, one woman and two men, had died Wednesday in the area around the Capitol, but did not link those deaths to the violence.

Each of the three "appeared to have suffered medical emergencies which resulted in their deaths," Contee told reporters.

HOST OF OFFICIALS RESIGN AFTER CAPITOL PROTEST

Washington, Jan. 7: US Deputy National Security Advisor Matt Pottinger, first lady Melania Trump's chief of staff Stephanie Grisham and White House Deputy Press Secretary Sarah Matthews have resigned following the violence at the US Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump.

Grisham, who previously served as the White House press secretary before making way for current White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany in April, was the first to submit her resignation on Wednesday. "It has been an honour to serve the country in the White House," Grisham said in a statement posted on Twitter. Matthews also tendered her resignation. "As someone who worked in the halls of Congress, I was deeply disturbed by what I saw today," she said.

Trump's deputy national security advisor Pottinger also resigned. White House social secretary Rickie Niceta also submitted her resignation.

2 CONVICTED IN CHINA'S #METOO MOVEMENT

Taipei (Taiwan), Jan. 7: In a potential blow to the #MeToo movement in China, a young man and woman were convicted of defaming a prominent Chinese journalist for publishing an account accusing him of sexual misconduct.

A court in the eastern city of Hangzhou ruled on Tuesday that the evidence provided by former journalists Zou Sicong and He Qian against Deng Fei was "not enough to allow someone to firmly believe without any hesitation that what was described truly happened."

The court ordered He and Zou to pay 11,712 yuan (\$1,813) in damages. The pair plan to appeal the ruling. The case was based on an article written by He that Zou published online in 2018, in which he alleged Deng lured her to a hotel room in 2009 to discuss story ideas, then took off her clothes while trying to kiss and grope her. He said that at the time, she was a 21-year-old intern at a news magazine where Deng was chief reporter.

SYRIA RESPONDS TO 'ISRAELI AGGRESSION'

Damascus, Jan. 7: Syrian air defence forces responded late Wednesday to "Israeli aggression" in the south of the country, the state news agency said.

Israel launched missiles in the air attack from the disputed Golan Heights at around 11 pm (2100 GMT), SANA reported, citing a military source.

"Our anti-air defences responded, targeting most of the missiles," the source added. The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) later said that the Israeli strikes caused "deaths and injuries" but did not give details.

SOHR said the Israeli raids targeted several positions south of Damascus and came two days after a delegation of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard visited the area.

Israel has not commented on the incident.

Last month, Israel said it had hit about 50 targets in the neighbouring country in 2020.

The Jewish state has consistently vowed to prevent its arch-enemy Iran from gaining a foothold in Syria, where Tehran has backed President Bashar al-Assad throughout the nearly decade-long war.



Violent protesters, loyal to President Donald Trump, storm the Capitol on Wednesday in Washington. — AP/PTI



People stand around media equipment destroyed by Trump supporters outside the US Capitol in Washington DC on Wednesday. — AFP



Trump supporters face off with police and security forces in front of the US Capitol in Washington DC on Wednesday. — AFP

US riot: World leaders appalled

Some single out Trump for harsh criticism, say there should be a peaceful transfer of power

London, Jan. 7: Leaders around the world condemned the storming of the US Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump on Wednesday, expressing shock at the chaos unfolding in a country they once relied upon for global leadership. "Disgraceful scenes in US Congress," tweeted Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain, a staunch ally of the United States over generations. "The United States stands for democracy around the world and it is now vital that there should be a peaceful and orderly transfer of power."

Other allies were similarly appalled at what they described as an attack on American democracy, though some said they believed US democratic institutions would withstand the turmoil. Some leaders singled out Trump for harsh criticism.

"Trump and his supporters should finally accept the decision of the American voters and stop trampling on democracy," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas wrote on Twitter. "From inflammatory words come violent deeds." He added that "contempt for democratic institutions has disastrous effects." "The beauty of democracy" with a shrug emoji was the reaction tweeted by Bashir Ahmad, a personal assistant to the president of Nigeria, which has seen several coups since independence — including one led decades ago by President Muhammad Buhari, who most recently entered the office via a vote.

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera and Colombian President Ivan Duque were among those in Latin America who denounced the protesters, but both also said they were confident that American democracy and the rule of law would prevail. "In this sad episode in the US, supporters of fascism showed their real face: anti-democratic and aggressive," tweeted Luis Roberto Barroso, Brazilian Supreme Court justice and the head of the country's electoral court. He said he hoped "American society and institutions react with vigor to this threat to democracy."

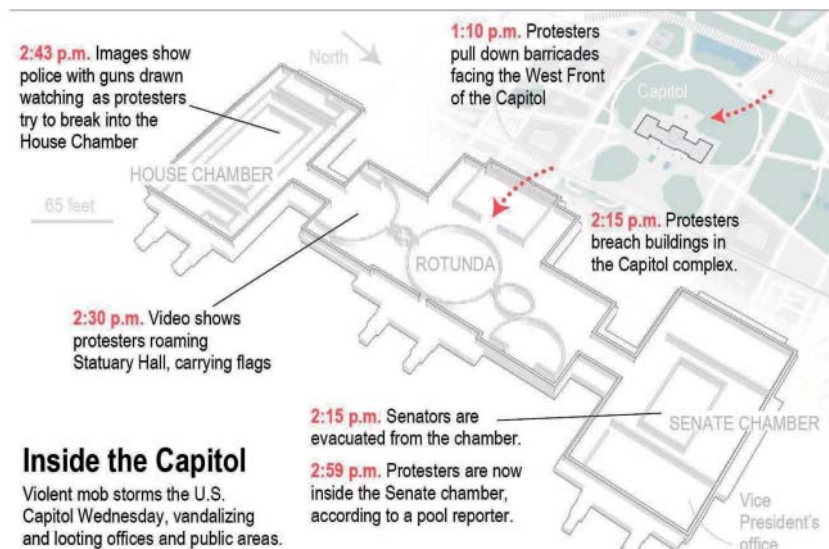
Venezuela, which is under US sanctions, said

the events in Washington show that the US "is suffering what it has generated in other countries with its politics of aggression." Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has survived US-backed opposition efforts to oust him despite accusations of human rights abuses, civil unrest and a humanitarian crisis that has forced millions to flee the oil-rich country.

In Puerto Rico, many people took to social media and joked that the US territory no longer wanted statehood. Independence, they said, looked appealing for the first time in decades. In fact, it was that pursuit of independence that marked one of the last times the US Congress was stormed violently. Four members of Puerto Ricos Nationalist Party opened fire on the House floor in March 1954, wounding five lawmakers. Italians watched the events with shock, having always considered the US to be the model of democracy and the country that rescued Italy after its fascist descent during World War II.

"This is the widely anticipated outcome of Trumpism," tweeted a retired Italian center-left politician, Pierluigi Castagnetti. "And unfortunately it won't end today. When politics is replaced by deception and fanaticism of the people the drift is inevitable." European Parliament President David Sassoli, who leads one of the largest legislatures in the world, also denounced the scenes at the Capitol.

The European Union has spent four cantankerous years dealing with the Trump administration, and its top officials have repeatedly said they are looking forward to a better relationship under President-elect Joe Biden. "This is insurrection. Nothing less. In Washington," tweeted Carl Bildt, a former prime minister of Sweden. Turkey, a NATO ally that has sometimes been at odds with Washington, expressed concern over the images of angry Trump supporters trying to thwart the certification of Biden as the new president. The chaos forced lawmakers to be rushed from the building. A Turkish Foreign Ministry statement urged all parties in



China goes online to mock 'beautiful sight' of US chaos

Beijing, Jan. 7: China's internet erupted in mirth at America's troubled democracy after supporters of President Donald Trump broke into the US Capitol, with Beijing criticising the "sharp contrast" between Washington's response to the chaos and the 2019 Hong Kong anti-government protests. On Thursday morning, state media tabloid *Global Times* tweeted side-by-side photo comparisons of Hong Kong protesters occupying the city's Legislative Council Complex in July 2019 with Wednesday's Washington riots.

The latter saw hardcore Trump fans invade the US Capitol to protest the election defeat, taking selfies, scuffling with security and ransacking parts of

the building.

"@SpeakerPelosi once referred to the Hong Kong riots as 'a beautiful sight to behold'," the *Global Times* said in the tweet, referring to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's June 2019 comment about Hong Kong's mass pro-democracy demonstrations, which at that time were mostly peaceful. "It remains yet to be seen whether she will say the same about the recent developments in Capitol Hill." China's Communist Youth League also described the unrest as a "beautiful sight" on the Twitter-like Weibo platform.

Beijing's foreign ministry echoed those sentiments, saying "the reaction of some people in the US, including that of some media

outlets, is completely different." Speaking at a press briefing Thursday, ministry spokeswoman Hua Chinying said that the "sharp contrast (in reactions) makes one ponder, and deserves serious and profound reflection." The hashtag "Trump supporters storm US Capitol" pinned across China's Weibo on Thursday, racking up 570 million views, as users compared the global support for Hong Kong's protesters with the outpouring of condemnation for the pro-Trump mob.

"At present, all European countries' leaders have shown double standards and condemned it (Washington rioting)," read one Weibo comment which gained over 5,000 likes. — AFP

the United States to use "moderation and common sense."

"We believe that the United States will overcome this domestic political crisis with maturity," the ministry said. The ministry statement also urged Turkish citizens in the United States to stay away from crowds and demonstrations. Trump issued a restrained call for peace well after the melee was underway but did not immediately ask support-

ers to disperse. Later, he urged them to go home and called them "very special people." Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his country was "deeply disturbed" by the events in the US, Canada's closest ally and neighbor. "Violence will never succeed in overruling the will of the people. Democracy in the US must be upheld — and it will be," Trudeau tweeted. Volkan Bozkir, president of the 193-member United

Nations General Assembly, said he was saddened by the developments. But, he tweeted, "I believe that peace and respect for democratic processes will prevail in our host country at this critical time." Polish President Andrzej Duda, who twice visited Trump at the White House and hosted him in Poland, said on Twitter that his country had "full confidence in the power of American democracy." — AP

FB bans Trump till Biden inauguration

Washington, Jan. 7: Facebook will bar President Donald Trump from posting on its system at least until the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden, the platform said Thursday. In a post announcing the unprecedented move, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg said the risk of allowing Trump to use the platform is too great following the president's incitement of a mob that touched off a deadly riot in the US Capitol on Wednesday. Zuckerberg says Trump's account will be locked "for at least the next two weeks" but could remain locked indefinitely. Twitter on Wednesday began limiting the reach of tweets stoking an assault on the US Capitol by a mob intent on overturning the election results. "We have been signifi-

● **TWITTER ON** Wednesday began limiting the reach of tweets stoking an assault on the US Capitol by a mob intent on overturning the election results.

cantly restricting engagement with tweets labeled under our Civic Integrity Policy due to the risk of violence," the Twitter support team said.

"This means these labelled tweets will not be able to be replied to, retweeted, or liked." Twitter and other social platforms were facing challenges amid the unrest after President Donald Trump, a fervent Twitter user, had rallied supporters in the capital city as Congress was set to certify the November election won by Joe Biden. — AFP

UN chief, UNGA Prez show concern

United Nations, Jan. 7: Top United Nations leadership expressed sadness and concern over the violence in Washington DC by pro-Trump demonstrators who stormed the United States Capitol as lawmakers gathered to certify the presidential election results.

"The Secretary-General is saddened by the events at the US Capitol in Washington, D.C.," on Wednesday, Stephane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, said in a note to correspondents.

"In such circumstances, it is important that political leaders impress on their followers the need to refrain from violence, as well as to respect democratic processes and the rule of law," the United Nations chief said.

President of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Volkan Bozkir, tweeted that as

president of the 193-member UN body, "I'm saddened & concerned by today's developments at the Capitol in #WashingtonDC. The US is one of the world's major democracies. I believe that peace & respect for democratic processes will prevail in our host country at this critical time."

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an international organisation that promotes world-wide parliamentary dialogue and representative democracy, also denounced the violence. The IPU and the parliamentary community strongly condemn the violence and the assault on the US Capitol by protesters, it said in a statement.

"The integrity of this bastion of democracy and of the representatives of the people of the United States must be respected," IPU said.

— PTI



Supporters of US President Donald Trump protest outside the US Capitol, in Washington, DC on Wednesday. — AFP



A demonstrator loyal to President Donald Trump, is removed by police, Wednesday, at the Capitol. — AP/PTI



Supporters of US President Donald Trump enter the US Capitol on Wednesday, in Washington, DC. — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

8 JANUARY 2021

Trump's 'insurrection' was the final straw...

The violence unleashed by an invading mob ransacking the citadel of modern democracy was unbelievably shocking not only because they took place on Capitol Hill in Washington DC. The insurrection was sparked by the President of USA, Donald Trump, who incited his hard-core supporters to riot against this highly regarded symbol of the free world. All this would have been unthinkable if not for it being too predictable, as it was triggered by one of the most quixotic men to occupy the White House.

A day of such chaos as to shake the core of American democracy proved so futile in the end that its mastermind Mr Trump conceded he would respect the results of the election. Joe Biden of the Democratic Party had indubitably won the Electoral College votes as well as the voice of the people by seven million and is set to succeed him, after his victory was formally certified by the Congress at four o' clock in the morning. Reason as well as law and order had dawned again.

It would be extremely charitable of the Republican Party that Mr Trump belongs to if it were not to give greater force to the thought that he should be declared mentally unfit to rule and stripped of the presidency less than two weeks before his term runs out.

It would be extremely charitable of the Republican Party that Mr Trump belongs to if it were not to give greater force to the thought that he should be declared mentally unfit and stripped of presidency less than two weeks before his term runs out

The first ever Senate wins for the Democrats in a long time in Georgia were a final rebuke to Mr Trump, who had contributed by sowing doubts in democratic elections. How they allowed such a leader so much latitude in behaving as he did post November 3 is a mystery. Senior leaders like Mitch McConnell and Mike Pence did the right thing finally in disavowing their President. Vice-president Pence

had, in the nick of time, upheld the highest traditions of democracy in carrying out the transfer of power, which is the very bedrock of democracy.

The scope allowed by the police forces in the Capitol for lumpen elements of the far Right to vandalise the Speaker's office and lord it over the Senate chamber for a while was appalling. And while a tweeting Mr Trump acted out the modern version of Nero playing the fiddle, Mr Pence ordered in the National Guard to secure the Capitol and save it from a perfidious set of rogues set loose on the word of an obnoxious master.

It is no more a puzzle how blind loyalty can drive people as illustrated in an overzealous lady who had to be shot outside the door of the chambers into which lawmakers had been locked in for their safety. Of course, the greater is the responsibility among leaders to discipline their flock. Mr Trump's biggest failure lay not in his buffoonery while in office and not even in his inability to lead when it came to personally dealing with an adverse poll result. His devilish goading of people to violence was responsible for the mayhem for which he will never be forgiven. He deserves his place in the dustbin of history.

Bird flu: Remain on alert

Most nations hit by pandemic Covid-19 are not in a position to face another health exigency but India has been called upon to pull up its socks against the avian flu which has till now killed thousands of migratory birds and poultry in four states and threatens to spread to more areas. The Union government has sent an alert to all states to monitor their avian stock especially in forest areas and in water bodies. As of now, 12 epicentres of the flu have been identified in four states — Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala.

It has been clarified that the flu this time is spread mainly through migratory birds that travel thousands of kilometres from the icy cold climes to their tropical destinations from October to February. The government's attempt is to stop the secondary spread of the virus, and the state governments have already started addressing the issue. Thousands of infected ducks have already been culled in Kerala.

Economic activity on the ground has been halted for almost a year now, and a bird flu outbreak is a shock most poultry farmers would not be able to absorb, especially at a time when the markets have started slowly looking up. The government must work with the farmers to ensure that all the infected birds are properly dispensed with and that all the farmers who comply with the norms are compensated forthwith. The government must also think of extending financial help to encourage farmers to upscale their hygiene standards so that they do not fall prey to such outbreaks so easily. There must also be a mechanism to ensure that even the slightest of suspicions of the disease is scientifically addressed and acted upon without loss of time. All these measures call for close coordination among the state and central institutions and agencies. They could draw from the experience they have gathered while fighting Covid-19.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Printer & Publisher

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Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



Hindus and patriotism: Why RSS chief is wrong



Karan Thapar

As I See It

We are all prone to saying foolish things. I do so quite often. In fact, it's probably one of the qualities that makes us human. On the other hand, robots or creatures that work on artificial intelligence are never foolish, although they could be wrong. However, there's a significant difference between the harmlessly foolish and the defiantly stupid. The latter, particularly when its acted upon, can be dangerous.

I'm afraid that the comments made by the *sarsanghchalak* of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh fall squarely into the latter category. I know my saying so will infuriate RSS members and the *sarsanghchalak*'s army of fans but that can't be helped. I would have to call a spade a fruit fork if I opted for gentler terminology!

At a book launch last Friday Mohan Bhagwat said: "If someone is Hindu, he has to be patriotic, that will be his or her basic character and nature". Just in case that wasn't clear enough, he added: "A Hindu can never be anti-Indian". Much as he might want that to be the case, it simply isn't true.

First of all, our history establishes that there is no shortage of Hindus who have been traitors — it's another matter that the country may not have been called India at the time. Amongst the earliest was Raja Aambhi of Taxila. Apparently, he had helped build the bridge cross the Indus river which enabled Alexander to invade the country. That was way back in 326 BC.

Jump a few centuries to Raja Jaichand. In

1192, he supported Muhammad of Ghor against Prithviraj Chauhan. It didn't matter to him that Chauhan was his son-in-law. It's said the desire for revenge because Chauhan had eloped with his daughter outweighed any qualms about assisting the Afghan invader.

However, don't assume it's only in ancient or medieval times that Hindus were traitors. Modern Hindus are really no different. We have several examples of Hindu treachery from the British Raj. One of the most striking is Jayajirao Scindia, the Maharaja of Gwalior, who in 1857 supported our conquerors. There are accounts that suggest his part in helping the British capture the Rani of Jhansi was by no means inconsequential.

And so to our own time. I'm not sure how one should think of the likes of Chhota Rajan, Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi or, even, Lalit Modi. I certainly wouldn't accuse them of treason, but I would hardly call them patriots. And remember, every one of them is a Hindu.

However, I suspect that Mr Bhagwat would simply brush aside all the evidence of history that I have just marshalled. I believe his actual, but unstated, point is that India's minorities cannot be as patriotic as its Hindu citizens. This, presumably, is what he means when he said a Hindu is patriotic by "his or her basic character and nature", and "a Hindu can never be anti-Indian".

Alas, even by this interpretation, the *sarsanghchalak* is simply wrong. And since it is acts of valour against the Pakistanis that are most likely to impress

him, let me gently remind him of the honours won by Muslim soldiers in battles against our western neighbour — although he has no business to have forgotten about them! Havildar Abdul Hamid won the Param Vir Chakra, India's highest award for gallantry, in 1965. Brig. Mohammad Usman posthumously won the Maha Vir Chakra in 1947. Lt. Col. Salim Caleb in 1965.

If this fails to convince Mr Bhagwat, then let me add what should be the clincher. The Army Chief who defeated Pakistan in 1971 — a victory that the RSS holds in high esteem — was a Parsi. The general who by common consensus has been accorded the greatest credit for India's military performance in 1965 was a Sikh. The chief of staff of the Eastern Command who left Pakistan's Lt. Gen. A.A.K. Niazi no option but to surrender in Dhaka in December 1971 was a Jew. None of the three would have been offended to be called a Hindu, but each of them would have considered the *sarsanghchalak*'s statement ridiculous.

Unfortunately, it's a lot more than that. It's dangerous.

The *sarsanghchalak*'s statement divides us, the people of India, on the spurious grounds that Hindus are automatically and naturally patriotic whilst the rest of us are not. This is not just untrue, it's also wicked. It seeks to sow the seeds of doubt, suspicion, distrust and, eventually, difference between Indians.

The undeniable truth is that patriotism is

If we want our country to survive and flourish, let's stop trying to define patriotism as a Hindu attribute and let's discard the belief that Hindus are special or better. Otherwise, we could end up like Yugoslavia.

defined by the love of one's country, not by the character of one's religion. And it's important to remember the opposite is also true. Hindus are as capable of hating their country as an Indian of any another religion.

There is, however, a further, though tiny, question the *sarsanghchalak* hasn't asked himself. What would patriotism amount to for the millions of Hindus who have left India to settle abroad and become citizens of another country? They carry British, Canadian or United States passports. Often their children don't speak an Indian language. In fact, only in terms of origin do they accept their connection with India. In every other way they consider themselves British, Canadian or American.

Does Mr Bhagwat realise and accept that for them patriotism would be love of the country they were born in, whose passport they hold and whose future will determine their own? Let me make one last point. The *sarsanghchalak* has also said that "if one loves his country, that doesn't only mean the land, it means its people, rivers, culture, traditions and everything". Here I agree with him but only because this is a statement of the obvious. More importantly, it's not something that applies only to Hindus who love India. It's as true of the French and the Germans, Nigerians and Burundians, Austrians and Argentinians and even, dare I say it, the good folk of Lapland.

I guess the point I'm making is simple. If we want our country to survive and flourish, let's stop trying to define patriotism as a Hindu attribute and let's discard the belief that Hindus are special or better. Otherwise, we could end up like Yugoslavia.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

ANOTHER NIRBHAYA

The gangrape in UP yet again proves that mere laws cannot check crimes against women. The mind-set of society about women needs to change (UP: 50-year-old gang raped, killed by priest, aides, DC, Jan. 7). It is a pity that UP which gave most PMs including the present one, tops in crimes against women as per NCRB report.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao
Hyderabad

FARMERS' LIVES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi complained against erstwhile PM Manmohan Singh being unable to make important decisions in running the government. Now, let him show his decision-making skills by solving the farmers' crisis. More than 70 farmers have died protesting. His demonetisation cost hundreds of lives.

Sayed Nooruddin
Hyderabad

BAD PRECEDENT

Non-prior approval of the heritage conservation committee and lack of consensus have set a bad precedent (₹20,000-cr Central Vista project gets SC's 2:1 nod, DC, Jan. 6). Time and again MPs belonging to the Bharatiya Janata Party harp that people have elected 303 of them. But have they been given rights to bulldoze any dissent including dissent on new farm laws and non-conservation of heritage and so on?

B. Raghunadha Rao
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

TPS claim on PM's assurance denied

HYDERABAD, January. 7 TELANGANA Praja Samithi Chairman M. Chenna Reddy's statement, that the Prime Minister has conceded "in principle" the demand for a separate Telangana State, was today described as "incorrect and misleading" by the Ruling Congress Party circles.

The Ruling Congress circles expressed their surprise and concern at the reported statement of Dr. Chenna Reddy.

A spokesperson of the Pradesh Congress Committee emphatically denied any knowledge of "such thinking on the part of the Prime Minister."

Mary Mitzy



Ensuring justice in virtual courts: Who controls the mute button?

On this day last year, people all over the world were nursing new resolutions. The coronavirus shattered their hopes and dreams in no time. It spared none — not even the most important pillar of democracy — the judiciary. After the initial onslaught, it is said to have partially resumed its duties. So how did the Supreme Court of India function during the pandemic?

The Court completely shut the entry of advocates into its premises. In an epoch-marking decision, it threw all its former reservations vis-à-vis digital operations to the winds, and finally went online. The Court revived the e-filing portal, introduced long back but not in use by advocates. And, only urgent matters were taken up for the "virtual hearing". The platform used by the Court is the Vidyio app.

During the initial stages of this changeover, the registry gave instructions to advocates over phone on how to log into the Vidyio app, when to log in, and so on. This was almost nine months ago. Today, nine months on, the

Supreme Court still takes up only urgent matters for hearing. Its functional can at best be said to be partial. Most benches now have three judges sitting on alternate days for a few hours.

The online system is convenient for many advocates who returned to their hometown during the lockdown and don't want to return to Delhi. Today we have lawyers appearing from various parts of the country before the Supreme Court as well as other courts. That aside, it has not been smooth sailing. Tech glitches and lack of Internet savvy plays a spoilsport in the day-to-day work of the court even after so many months have gone by.

Indian courts follow the system of an open court hearing. Everyone can watch the proceedings. But the Vidyio app has a limit in terms of the number of participants who can be admitted and the Supreme Court, too, came out with a notification restricting the advocates from sharing the link for appearance. It has affected mostly young advocates keen to learn court craft from watching the courts function.

But there's been worse happening. Many a time, during hearing a case, the advocate was logged out at the relevant moment and was unable to log in. This resulted in the case being decided in their absence. It is with great difficulty that one gets one's case listed for hearing and if it is decided in one's absence then one's entire effort becomes futile. On top of that, there is the pain of humiliation before one's client.

The appearance of the advocates before the court is run by the control room, comprising a team of technical hands who are almost completely unfamiliar with the legal process. It is their job to identify the lawyers for each case as per the item numbers written before their names. The control room decides whose mic should be unmuted and whose video made visible.

Now, the cases heard by the Supreme Court have anywhere between two and 30 parties. Who decides who will be unmuted? A control room that has no idea about the proceedings of a case?

Advocates keep sending requests to be unmuted or for the senior advocate to be allowed to speak. But only if they are lucky will their request be granted before the case is over. Or else, you just count yourself to be on the "unlucky list". Besides, in a virtual court, there are limitations to the ways in which an advocate can try and persuade the bench to unmute them, once it has muted them to do which it has the powers. In a physical court hearing, the practice is to try and persuade the bench to hear them even if it puts the file down, and many do succeed in their efforts.

Then there is the interesting question of how come those who don't want themselves to be visible appear on the screen when they are least expecting to be seen. The new practice is that, once the court starts hearing a case, the screen will show only those advocates who are arguing that particular case. But many a time, lawyers were caught on screen dressed casually and doing something else even when their case was not being

heard. It led to much embarrassment in legal circles. Such situations could have been avoided if the control room had been more careful.

But the larger question is this: Are we going to continue to function in such a handicapped manner, and for how long? There are a large number of cases needing proper disposal. Many litigants' lives depend on the disposal of their long awaited cases. Some of them are languishing in jails, some are waiting for their salary, some waiting to be appointed to a job to sustain themselves and their families. Is it not time for the highest court of the country to resume physical functioning like every other organisation, observing strict social distancing rules?

If this anarchy continues, people may have to turn to other ways to redress their grievances and one fine morning we may find that we can do without the services of the judiciary.

The writer is a Supreme Court lawyer

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
aSensex	48,093.32	-0.17
Nifty 50	14,137.35	-0.06
S&P 500*	3,803.45	1.48
Dollar (₹)	73.31	-0.25
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.68	0.07
Euro (₹)	89.97	0.26
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	50,335▼714	1.41
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	54.51	0.21
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.892	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.073	0.031

* As of 8:30 PM IST

State Bank raises \$600 mn at 1.8% coupon

State Bank of India raised \$600 million by selling bonds to international investors at a coupon of 1.80 per cent. The issue, oversubscribed by 2.1 times, is part of the bank's \$10 billion medium-term note programme, the ratings of which were withdrawn by Moody's on Wednesday. The 5.5-year issue denominated in US dollars was priced at 140 bps over the US treasury, which is the lowest pricing for any Reg S/144a issue in India, SBI said.

PM to interact with economists for Budget views



Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with economists and sectoral experts on Friday to deliberate on measures that may be included in the upcoming Budget. The virtual meeting is being organised by Niti Aayog. It will also be attended by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Participants include Arvind Panagariya, K. V. Kamath, Rakesh Mohan, Shankar Acharya, Shekhar Shah, Arvind Virmani and Ashok Lahri.

Elon Musk, world's richest man, is worth \$188.5 bn

Tesla's Elon Musk surpassed Amazon's Jeff Bezos to become the world's richest man, Bloomberg News reported on Thursday. Including the day's gains in Tesla shares, Musk, 49, had a net worth of over \$188.5 billion, \$1.5 billion more than Bezos. Tesla shares were up as much as 7.4% on Thursday at a record high of \$811.61. Reacting to the development, Musk tweeted, "How strange. Well, back to work."

LIC provides another chance to revive policies

LIC has launched a Special Revival Campaign starting from January 7 till March 6 for its customers to revive their lapsed individual policies. It has authorised its 1,526 satellite offices to revive policies where special medical tests are not required. "Policies of specific eligible plans can be revived within five years from the date of the first unpaid premium subject to terms and conditions," LIC said.



■ Manufacturing could contract by 9.4% NSO sees 7.7% dip in growth in FY21

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, JAN. 7

As a part of its first advance estimates of the economic growth, the government, on Thursday, said that its economy could shrink by 7.7 per cent in the current financial year 2020-21 (FY21) as compared to 4.2 per cent growth in FY20. The government said the contraction was because of the nationwide lockdown imposed in March 2020 to counter the coronavirus pandemic.

"The Real GDP or GDP at constant prices (2011-12) in the year 2020-21 is likely to attain Rs 134.40 lakh crore levels, down 7.7 per cent as compared to Rs 145.66 lakh crore in 2019-20," said the National Statistical Office (NSO) in its advance GDP estimates. The Reserve Bank of India's estimate for the current fiscal is 7.5 per cent contraction.

The Real GVA (gross value added) at basic prices is estimated at Rs 123.39 lakh crore for 2020-21 as against Rs 133.01 lakh crore in 2019-20, showing a contraction of 7.2 per cent. According to NSO estimates, nominal GDP, or GDP at current prices, in the current fiscal is likely to be Rs 194.82 lakh crore as against Rs 203.40 lakh crore in year 2019-20. The growth in nominal GDP during 2020-21 is estimated at -4.2 per cent.

As per the estimate, there was contraction in almost all sectors, with the exception of agriculture. The manufacturing sector is

ESTIMATES POINT TO SUSTAINED V-SHAPED RECOVERY: FINMIN

New Delhi, Jan. 7: The finance ministry said the latest GDP estimates suggest a continued resurgence in economic activity in second half of the current fiscal and point at post-lockdown sustained V-shaped recovery. The ministry was commenting on the first advanced estimates

(AE) of the national income. "The AE (advance estimates) of 2020-21 reflect continued resurgence in economic activity in Q3 and Q4 which would enable the Indian economy to end the year with a contraction of 7.7 per cent," it said in a statement.

—PTI

likely to see a contraction 9.4 per cent against flat growth of 0.03 per cent in the previous year. The NSO estimates significant contraction in mining and quarrying, and trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting.

Reacting to the government's advance estimate, economists and industry captains are of view that the recovery momentum seen in the last few months will need to be further sustained in the coming months.

While Chandrajit Banerjee, director general, CII, said, "The advance estimate for the full year pegged the contraction in GDP at 7.7 per cent, showing a much shallower decline than earlier expected. Government spending did much of the heavy lifting in supporting growth along with a healthy agriculture performance, which was aided by a good

monsoon. In the last few months, there has been a strong economic recovery which will require to be nurtured especially in supporting the critical pillar of consumption."

Aditi Nayar, principal economist, Iera, said, "While the advance estimates of GDP for FY2021 have been based on data that is available for only the first six to eight months, the modifications made in the extrapolation process seem to have captured the impending upturn expected in the remainder of this extremely tumultuous year."

The GDP growth rate contracted by 7.5 per cent in the second quarter (July-September), after shrinking by an unprecedented 23.9 per cent in April-June. Last month, the Reserve Bank of India had predicted the growth rate may enter the positive territory in the October to December quarter.

India to have 50-plus unicorns in 2021: Nasscom

New Delhi, Jan. 7: India saw 12 new unicorns being created in 2020, the highest ever addition in a single year, and is on track to have a 50-plus strong 'unicorn club' in 2021, a Nasscom-Zinnov report said.

Unicorns are companies having valuation of more than \$1 billion.

The report said the Indian tech start-up base is witnessing a steady growth of 8-10 per cent year-on-year, and over 1,600 tech start-ups were added in 2020.

Although cautiously optimistic, the report said 2021 promises a return to normalcy for the Indian tech start-up ecosystem and deep-tech, and new start-up hubs will continue to grow at 40-45 per cent CAGR.

India is on track to have a 50-plus strong 'unicorn club' in 2021 (from 38 in 2020), and M&A deals and IPO pipeline are also expected to accelerate in 2021, said the report, titled Indian Tech Start-up Ecosystem on the March to Trillion Dollar Digital Economy.

It said over 2,100 start-ups are leveraging deep-tech, up from over 1,600 in 2019, and 20 per cent of the deep-tech start-ups are based outside known start-up hubs.

Fintech, health-tech, edtech, agritech and enterprise tech segments are witnessing rapid digital adoption, it said.

—PTI

Real estate stocks rally on Maha incentive

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 7

Shares of real estate sector companies rallied after the Maharashtra government reduced construction premium by 50 per cent.

The BSE Realty Index rose over 3.5 per cent intra-day and closed the day up 1.23 per cent.

"With reduced cost of premiums, a developer can look to pay the entire approval cost upfront and potentially launch a new project at an attractive price owing to cost savings and drive higher sales bookings during the initial launch of a project," analysts wrote.

Currently, the various FSI (Floor Space Index, also known as Floor Area Ratio) premiums/fungible FSI and payments for other concessions account for 25-33 per cent of the overall project (including land) and the waiver may result in a 12-17 per cent saving on overall project cost, analysts said.

Earlier in August the state had reduced the stamp duty charges, which triggered a huge rise in real estate buying on pent-up demand.

The top gainers included Indiabulls Real Estate (14.28 per cent), Sobha (7.61 per cent), Brigade Enterprises (2.44 per cent), Mahindra Lifespace Developers (2.26 per cent), Sunteck Realty (2.20 per cent) and DLF (1.89 per cent).

"The Government of Maharashtra's Urban Development Department in a notification issued on January 6 has approved a



MAHA PREMIUM CUT TO BOOST DEMAND: CREDAI & NAREDCO

New Delhi, Jan. 7: Realtors' apex bodies Credai and Naredco on Thursday hailed the Maharashtra government's decision to cut premiums charged on realty projects, saying it will lead to reduction in construction cost and boost property demand.

On Wednesday, the state government cut premiums levied by the civic bodies on real estate development by 50 per cent till December 31, if the developers bear the homebuyers' stamp duty burden.

"The 50 per cent cut in various premiums levied by the Maharashtra government on construction

projects till December 31, 2021, is the first-of-its-kind step taken by the state government," Credai national chairman Jaxay Shah said.

"We hail the proactive and progressive measure as it will have a strong impact on investments in the affordable housing sector," Shah said.

Naredco president Niranjan Hiranandani said: This move will go a long way in expediting the project completion and the industry will witness new launches in the market. The industry applauds this booster dose making many projects viable."

—PTI

50 per cent discount/concession on all the various premiums levied by the government on construction projects till December 31, 2021. This also includes concessions in the premiums levied by all planning authorities/local administrations in Maharashtra," ICICI Securities said in a note.

"A rider is that develop-

ers availing the discount need to bear the stamp duty costs of 5-6 per cent of agreement value on behalf of buyers," it said.

"Developers with significant Mumbai exposure, including Oberoi Realty, Godrej Properties, Phoenix Mills, Prestige Estates and Sunteck Realty stand to benefit," ICICI Securities said.

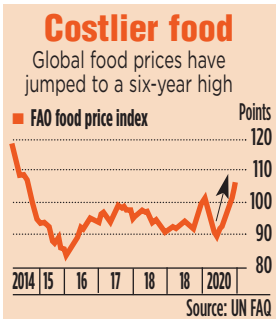
Global food prices at six-year high, set to go up further

AGNIESZKA DE SOUSA & MEGAN DURISIN
JAN. 7

Global food prices reached a six-year high in December and are likely to keep rising into 2021, adding to pressure on household budgets while hunger surges around the world.

A United Nations gauge of food prices has jumped 18 per cent since May, as adverse weather, government measures to safeguard supplies and robust demand helped fuel rallies across agricultural commodities from grains to palm oil. Prices will likely climb further, the UN's Food & Agriculture Organization said.

The spike threatens to push up broader inflation, making it harder for central banks to provide more stimulus to shore up economies, while stirring memories of food-price crises a decade ago. It's bad news for consumers whose incomes have been hurt by the Covid-19 crisis, and adds to concerns about global food security



that's being affected by conflicts and weather shocks. That's especially true for the poorest countries having to contend with limited social safety nets and purchasing power, said the FAO.

"We do at this point see more factors pushing up global food prices," said Abdolreza Abbassian, an economist at the FAO. "Food inflation is a reality. While people have lost income, they are as we speak going through a tremendously difficult hardship."

Corn and soy futures rallied to six-year highs as drought threatens crops in South America at a

time of surging Chinese demand, while palm oil—used in about half of all supermarket goods—is near a 10-year high. Protectionist measures are also propping up markets, with Argentinian farmers planning a protest strike after the government suspended corn-export licences, while wheat giant Russia will curb grain exports from mid-February to tame food inflation.

Commodities priced in dollars should remain supported as the greenback falls further this year, Abbassian said. Plus, an economic recovery in some parts of the world will probably fuel consumer spending and food demand.

The FAO's food price index has risen for the past seven months, with annual prices capping the highest average in three years. Still, costs remain well below peaks in 2008 and 2011, when soaring prices caused political and economic instability around the world.

—Bloomberg

WTO: India main user of anti-dumping duty

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 7

India has been cracking down on cheap imports from certain destinations in the last few years to safeguard domestic manufacturing. No wonder the country has emerged as the main user of anti-dumping duty under the WTO regime. The average tariff rates levied by the country on imported goods have also increased in the last five years, as per India's trade policy review underway at the World Trade Organisation.

"India continues to be an active user of anti-dumping measures; it is currently the main user of anti-dumping measures in the WTO," finds the trade policy review.

Between 2015 and 2019, India initiated 233 investigations on complaints of dumping of products. This was a sharp increase compared to the 2011-14 period when the number of initiations stood at 82.

Most of the investigations initiated relate to products originating in China, followed by those

from the Republic of Korea and the EU-28. By the end of 2019, India had imposed 254 anti-dumping duties.

These duties were mainly levied on chemicals and products, which account for 40.6 per cent of all measures. The average length of anti-dumping measures in force as at December 2019 was 5.9 years. However, 58 measures, which applied mainly to imports originating in China, have been in place for more than 10 years.

During 2015-20, India initiated 20 countervailing investigations, and there were 11 measures in place. Most of the measures applied to imports originating in China. India is also an active user of safeguard measures and as of June 2019 India had initiated 46 investigations. These are 12 per cent of all the safeguard investigations initiated by WTO members.

Further, the review found that the average Most Favoured Nation tariff levied on imports by India has gone up from 13 per cent in 2014-15 to 14.3

per cent in 2020-21. MFN tariffs are normal non-discriminatory tariffs charged on imports, excluding preferential tariffs under free trade agreements and other schemes.

According to the review, there has been a decrease in the percentage of lower rate tariffs. As a result, while tariff rates continue to range from zero to 150 per cent, the share of tariff lines with rates between 0 per cent and 10 per cent declined from 79.1 per cent in 2015 to 67.8 per cent in 2020-21.

The share of tariff lines that bear rates between 10 and 30 per cent increased from 12.1 per cent in 2014-15 to 21.3 per cent in 2019-20 and to 22.1 per cent in 2020-21.

Further, those with rates above 30 per cent rose from 2.8 per cent in 2014-15 to 4 per cent in 2020-21. The highest rates—above 60 per cent—apply to products such as alcoholic beverages (150 per cent), followed by animals and their products, fruit, vegetables and plants, coffee and tea and certain motor vehicles, all with tariffs of 100 per cent.

Q3 AUTO DEMAND RECOVERY LOOKS STRONGER: MOFSL

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 7

Automobile sector companies are expected to announce stronger third quarter performance on pent-up demand, robust rural demand and a shift to private transport from public, a brokerage said.

"Demand recovery has been stronger than expected across segments, excluding three wheelers. This is attributable to pent-up demand, positive agr economies, and a shift to private from public transport. This has led to consistent upgrade in volume estimates," a Q3 preview by Motilal Oswal Financial Services said.

"But there are near term uncertainties too in the form of supply-side disruption due to a global shortage of semi-conductors, sharp commodity cost inflation led price increases and risk to demand from a price hike, fading benefit of Covid-19 to private transport," Motilal Oswal said.

"Volume recovery seen in second quarter, continued in third quarter of FY21. Strong retail momentum was witnessed for tractors and passenger vehicles whereas two-wheelers retail was marginally lower than last year..We estimate volumes to grow strongly for tractors, PVs and two wheelers," the report said.

BMW DRIVES IN MINI PADDY HOPKIRK

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, JAN. 7

BMW on Thursday launched a special edition of Mini Paddy Hopkirk three-door hatchback priced at Rs 41.70 lakh at Delhi showroom. The German automajor will import only 15 completely built-up unit (CBU) units of the Mini Paddy Hopkirk Edition for the Indian market.



MUNICH RE | REPORT Six of the most expensive disasters happened in the US Second-warmest year costs world \$210 bn

BRIAN K. SULLIVAN
JAN. 7

The second-warmest year on record brought storms, fires and floods that killed at least 8,200 people and cost the world \$210 billion in losses, according to a report by Munich Re. The insurer is still calculating where 2020 ranks against other calamitous years but said damages last year exceeded those of 2019, which saw \$166 billion in losses.

"Natural catastrophe losses in 2020 were significantly higher than the previous year," Torsten Jeworrek, a member of Munich's board of management said in the report. "Record numbers for many relevant haz-



ards are a cause for concern, whether we are talking about the severe hurricane season, major wildfires or the series of thunderstorms in the

United States."

Six of the most expensive disasters happened in the US, including a destructive derecho in the Midwest, a record num-

ber of tropical storms and hurricanes strikes and an all-time high acreage burn in California. US damages totalled at least \$95 billion, with \$67 billion of that in insured losses, said Munich.

The disasters piled up as the world came within 0.01 Celsius of tying the warmest year on record set in 2016, Munich said. While it didn't draw direct link between 2020's disasters and climate change, the insurer said the ongoing issues caused by a warming world would raise the potential for more perilous years ahead.

"Even if the weather disasters for one year cannot be directly linked to cli-

mate change, and a longer period needs to be studied to assess their significance, these extreme values fit with the expected consequences of a decades-long warming trend for the atmosphere and oceans that is influencing risks," said Ernst Rauch, chief climate and geoscientist at Munich Re.

The year's single worst disaster was flooding across China during its monsoon that amounted to \$17 billion, of which only about 2 per cent was insured, Munich said. Globally, 60 per cent of 2020's losses weren't insured. The growing Asian economies saw the least number of insured losses.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES



BCCI president Sourav Ganguly waves as he leaves for his residence after being discharged from a hospital in Kolkata on Thursday.

— Pritam Bandyopadhyay

Dada discharged from hospital

Kolkata: Sourav Ganguly, the former test captain who is president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, was discharged from a hospital on Thursday after treatment for a mild heart attack.

The 48-year-old Ganguly "suffered a blackout" while exercising at his personal gym last Saturday morning and was taken to a Kolkata hospital, where he underwent an angioplasty.

On the first day of the third test between India and Australia in Sydney, the BCCI posted an update on Twitter to say Ganguly had been released from the hospital.

"I thank the doctors at the hospital for the treatment," Ganguly was quoted as saying in the BCCI post. "I am absolutely fine. Hopefully, I will be ready to fly soon." Ganguly, a left-handed opening batsman, scored 7,212 Test runs with 16 centuries. — AP

IPL trade window to close on Feb. 4

New Delhi: The IPL's governing council has decided that the eight franchises will be allowed to submit the names of their retained players by January 21, league's chairman Brijesh Patel said on Thursday.

Patel and members of the IPL GC recently had a virtual meeting earlier this week where the planning and preparations of the next IPL was discussed at length.

"We will have the players' retention till January 21 and the trading window for the franchises closes on February 4," Patel, the former India Test batsman said while informing that the date of the auction is yet to be finalised.

It is expected that the mini auction that is supposed to be held this year for the existing eight teams will be held in the second or third week of February.

The eight IPL teams enjoy a players' purse of ₹85 crore and Patel said that there will be "no increase of purse" for the 2021 auction. — PTI

76ers pip Wizards despite Beal's 60

Los Angeles: Joel Embiid's 38 points and 28 from Seth Curry saw the Philadelphia 76ers withstand a 60-point performance from Washington's Bradley Beal in a 141-136 NBA win over the Wizards on Wednesday.

Tobias Harris and Shake Milton scored 19 points each and Ben Simmons added 17 points and 12 assists as the 76ers notched their fifth win in a row and pushed their league-leading record to 7-1.

The Sixers led by as many as 21 points in the third quarter, but the Wizards hung around and knotted the score at 131-131 with four minutes left to play.

In Orlando, Terrence Ross scored 20 points and Dwayne Bacon added 19 to lead the Magic to a 105-94 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers. — AFP

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

Big Bash League: Adelaide Strikers vs Melbourne Renegades from 12.40 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

UAE vs Ireland: First ODI from 11 am on Eurosport, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: North East United vs Hyderabad FC from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

FA Cup: Aston Villa vs Liverpool from 1.15 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

WWE

SmackDown: Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

Dry after drizzle

Oz recover from early blow on rain-hit day

Sydney, Jan. 7: Debutant Will Pucovski and Marnus Labuschagne smashed half-centuries as Australia recovered from an early setback to build a promising first innings in the rain-hit third Test against India Thursday.

Following David Warner's departure for five, the hosts recovered to 166 for two at stumps after more than three hours' play was lost due to persistent drizzle at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Labuschagne was not out 67 while Steve Smith, who has struggled for runs this series, hit an attacking unbeaten 31. Pucovski contributed 62 in an impressive maiden Test innings.

Fellow debutant Navdeep Saini and Mohammed Siraj, in only his second Test, shared the wickets in a clash both sides are desperate to win with the four-match series level at 1-1.

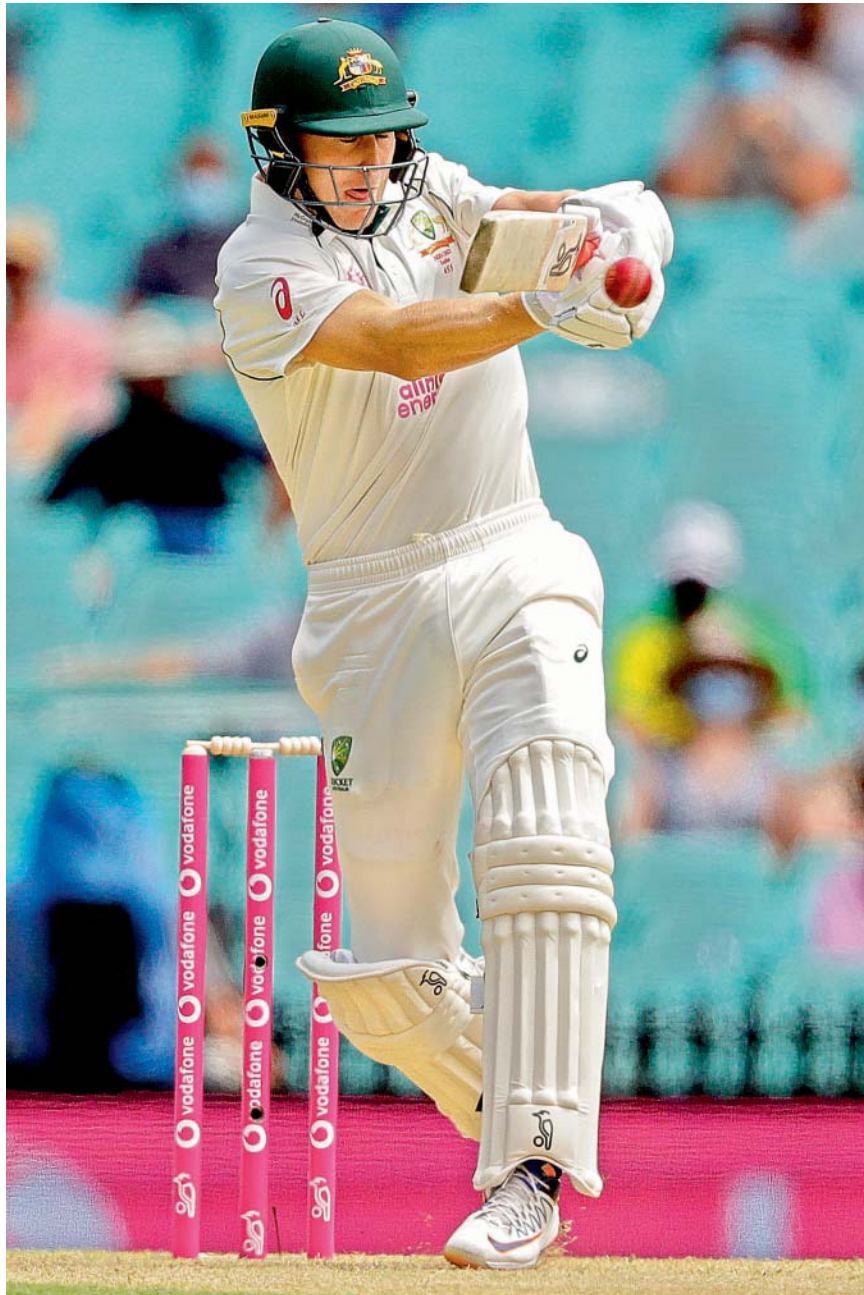
After captain Tim Paine won the toss and chose to bat in front of 8,692 socially-distanced fans, just under the quarter of capacity allowed, the rain started falling 35 minutes into the opening session.

It was enough time for Siraj to grab the key wicket of Warner on his return from injury, caught by Cheteshwar Pujara to put Australia on the back foot.

But a 100-run partnership between Pucovski and Labuschagne swung the momentum back in Australia's favour before the 22-year-old fell lbw to Saini.

The patient Labuschagne, who has been Australia's best batsman this series, survived an edge off Jasprit Bumrah on 11, which just failed to carry to slip, but was otherwise authoritative.

He brought up his ninth Test 50 with a boundary off Siraj, while Smith looked in ominous touch at the other end after failing to reach double figures in his four previous innings.



Australia's Marnus Labuschagne plays a shot on way to his half-century against India on the first day of their third Test at Sydney Cricket Ground on Thursday. — AP

Smith hit five boundaries in his 31 which came off 64 balls. Pucovski resumed on 14 and Labuschagne two when play finally restarted at 3pm after the lengthy rain delay. Australia have high hopes for Pucovski, who

scored two double centuries in the Sheffield Shield this season but had been sidelined with a concussion, the ninth of his short career.

India tried to unsettle him early on with short balls and he rode his luck,

being dropped twice.

The first came on 26 when Ravi Ashwin enticed a thin edge, only for wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant to miss what should have been a simple catch.

Three overs later and Pant did it again. — AFP

Siraj looks to unsettle Aussies

Sydney, Jan. 7: India pacer Mohammad Siraj called the Sydney pitch a batting beauty but said the turn it is offering to spinners has given his side a lot of hope moving forward after Australia claimed day one honours in the third Test here.

"It is very a flat wicket. Our plan was to build pressure and not try too much as it is a very easy wicket for the batsman. Even the bouncers are not carrying as well it was in the earlier games," said Siraj.

"But Test cricket it is all about patience and we must keep that in mind," he added.

The odd short balls from the fast bowlers did not trouble the home batsmen on the opening day.

Trusting the trueness of the pitch, the likes of Smith and Labuschagne



India's Mohammed Siraj celebrates after taking the wicket of Australia's David Warner during Day One of the third Test match at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Thursday. — AFP

were not afraid to even step out against the spinners. But the turn late in the day has given India encouragement for Friday.

"It is because of the easy nature of the surface

that their batsmen stepped out but when they saw the ball turning sharply late in the day, they went back to the crease," Siraj observed.

"Let's see what happens tomorrow. The plan is to

bowl in one tight channel and build pressure," he added.

When the Indian national anthem was played out before the start of the game, Siraj got teary-eyed thinking about his father, who died in November. He had stayed back in Australia to fulfil his dream of seeing him play for India.

Asked about Thursday's emotional moment that was captured on camera, Siraj said, "Just remembered my father at that time. I was really emotional. He wanted me to see playing Test cricket."

"Wish he could see me playing for India," he further added.

On to the match again and Siraj said the bowlers made a conscious effort to send down an odd short bouncer to Will Pucovski. — PTI

SCORECARD

Australia 1st Innings: Will Pucovski lbw b Navdeep Saini 62, David Warner c Cheteshwar Pujara b Mohammed Siraj 5, Marnus Labuschagne (batting) 67, Steven Smith (batting) 31. Extras (NB-1) 1. **Total (for 2 wickets in 55 overs) 166.**
Fow: 1-6, 2-106.
Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 14-3-30-0, Mohammed Siraj 14-3-46-1, Ravichandran Ashwin 17-1-56-0, Navdeep Saini 7-0-32-1, Ravindra Jadeja 3-2-2-0.

NUMBERS GAME

● Navdeep Saini became the 299th Indian Test player. The allrounder made his Test debut after playing 46 first class matches. He also played seven one-day internationals and 10 Twenty20 Internationals before making his debut in Tests.

● William Jan Pucovski became 460th Australian player to appear in a Test match. The right hand batsman from Malvern, Victoria, made his Test debut after playing 23 first class matches.

● The 100-run stand for the second wicket between Marnus Labuschagne and Will Pucovski was Australia's 16th century stand for this wicket against India. It was 43rd time when over 100 runs were added for the second wicket at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

● Steven Smith became the 10th Australian and 48th batsman overall to hit 800 fours in Test cricket. The first four off fast bowler Bumrah during his unbeaten 31-run knock was his 800th in 136 innings of 76 Test matches.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

Rider Santosh in coma after crash

New Delhi, Jan. 7: Renowned Indian motorcycle racer C. S. Santosh suffered a crash during the ongoing Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia and was put in a medically-induced coma after being airlifted to a hospital in Riyadh.

The 37-year-old Santosh, who was representing Hero MotoSports in one of the world's biggest rallies, suffered the crash on Wednesday.

"We are pleased to share that he has no major physical injuries except for the dislocated right shoulder and head trauma. The latest scans have also shown no major issue that could impact his full recovery," Hero MotoSports said in a statement.

"The medical team attending to him have decided that the best approach to manage the injury is to reduce the body functions to a minimum and keep him in a sedated condition or an artificial coma," it added.

"He is receiving the best possible medical care and will continue to be under constant observation for the next few days," the statement further added.

According to reports, he was conscious when paramedics arrived on the scene before he was rushed to Riyadh.

The incident occurred on the same stage where last year, Hero MotoSport rider Paulo Goncalves died



C. S. Santosh

while competing in the Dakar 2020. Hero MotoSport withdrew from the rally after the death of Goncalves.

Santosh crashed around 135km into the stage on a gravel track and had to forfeit the stage.

This was Santosh's seventh attempt at the Dakar Rally, considered the world's most gruelling off-road motorsport event.

He was the first Indian to complete the race in 2015, and replicated the effort in two further editions.

Santosh had a near-fatal accident during the 2013 Abu Dhabi desert challenge, suffering burns to his neck after his Suzuki MX450X caught fire.

The January 2-16 rally divided into 12 stages has competitors traversing 7646km. Stage 4 is, incidentally, the longest stage of the rally, spanning a total of 813km. — PTI

BARTY, SERENA FOR OZ OPEN WARM UP EVENTS

Melbourne, Jan. 7: World number one Ashleigh Barty and 23-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams will spearhead the two WTA tournaments in Melbourne ahead of the Australian Open, with the top 32-ranked women split evenly across the simultaneous events, organisers said Thursday.

Players will arrive in Australia from January 15 and undergo a mandatory two-week quarantine before two WTA 500 and two ATP 250 events are held alongside the ATP Cup, all at Melbourne Park.

That will see the women play the Gippsland Trophy and Yarra Valley Classic from January 31-February 6, marking Barty's first appearance in 11 months after opting out of the US and European swing last year over Coronavirus fears. As well as Williams, the likes of world number two Simona Halep, defending Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin and previous Australian Open winners Naomi Osaka, Victoria Azarenka and Angelique Kerber will take part. — AFP

Printed and Published from Karimnagar by K.Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Deccan Chronicle Press, H.No. 1-21/12/1, Cherlabhukur Road, Mugdumpur Village, Karimnagar - 505 186 - Telangana State Regd. No. H/SD-2/2K RNI Registration No. APENG/2001/04766 Ph: 9121181123 Grams: CHRONICLE Editor: Kaushik Mitter



John Stones (right) of Manchester City celebrates after scoring the opening goal of his team against Manchester United during their English League Cup semifinal at Old Trafford in Manchester, England, on Wednesday. Manchester City won 2-0. — AP

FERNANDINHO, STONES SCORE AS CITY SPARKLE IN MANCHESTER DERBY

Manchester, Jan. 7: Manchester City reached the League Cup final for fourth consecutive season as they inflicted more semifinal pain on Manchester United with a 2-0 win at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

John Stones and Fernandinho were the unlikely goalscorers for Pep Guardiola's men, who will face Jose Mourinho's Tottenham in the final at Wembley on April 25. City great Colin Bell was remembered before kick-off after he died, aged 74, on Tuesday with his former teammate Mike Summerbee reduced to tears as he watched on from the stands.

Stones breathed a sigh of relief that Marcus Rashford was flagged for offside after the ball rebounded off the defender and into the net after Rashford's initial effort was saved by Zack Steffen. At the other end Ilkay Gundogan thought he had continued his fine goalscoring form of late when he swept home Phil Foden's cross, but the German was also offside. — AFP

