

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
NELLORE | WEDNESDAY | 27 JANUARY 2021

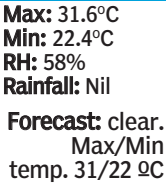


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Vol. 18 No. 201 Established 1938 | 16 pages | ₹6.00

SPORTS 8

Rahane happy to play Kohli's deputy



A beam of Yaganti temple develops crack under the impact of blasting conducted for mining. The Nandi which was referred to Veerabrahmendra Swamy's prophecy centuries ago sits under the cracked the beam. — DC

SHORT TAKES

GUESTHOUSE SITE DOESN'T BELONG TO FORESTS, HC TOLD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 27

The state government in its counter to public interest litigation filed by one Gade Tirupathi Rao of Guntur in the High Court said that the 30 acres of land parcel on which a guesthouse was proposed, does not belong to the forest department.

The petitioner for the government said that Tirupathi Rao belongs to Jana Sena and misled the government that he was an expert in public interest issues. Praveen Prakash, special chief secretary of the AP government's general administration department, who filed the counter, appealed to the court that the PIL be struck down, and Tirupathi Rao be penalised for misleading the High Court.

The government allocated 322 acres in Kapulauppada for Greyhounds, and 30 acres was set aside to construct the government guesthouse. There were no trees as claimed by the petitioner, and only shrubs and bushes spread over the land, and photographs of the same were submitted to the court.

The petitioner in the counter also said an extent of 385 acres was sanctioned for the Greyhounds training centre in Jagannadhapuram in Visakhapatnam and the existing 322 acres land at Kapulauppada would be used as the only operational base. The guesthouse would no way affect the Greyhounds' functioning as claimed by the Jana Sena leader who also pointed out in his PIL that the proposed guesthouse would come in the way of functioning of Greyhounds, counterintelligence and Octopus.

The counter also pleaded that the government had not planned to spend ₹1,000 crore on the guesthouse with partial aid coming from the central government as mentioned by the Jana Sena leader in his petition. The central government sanctioned ₹218 crore in 2018 for construction of the training centre in Jagannadhapuram.

The allegations made by the Jana Sena leader were his imagination and factually wrong, the state government said in its counter.

IN DELHI, FLOWER PETALS WELCOMED PROTESTERS

From Page 1

The violence and chaos in some areas overshadowed the peaceful tractor rally that passed through other parts of Delhi. In some areas there were heartwarming, never-seen-before moments as thousands of people who had gathered by the roads and were perched on rooftops and balconies to watch the tractor parade showered flower petals, offered food and water and greeted farmers with supportive slogans and cheers. Many bystanders termed the farmers as their brothers and guests who were fighting for their rights.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which has been supporting the farmers' agitation, condemned the violence and blamed the Central government for "allowing" Delhi's law and order situation to deteriorate from bad to worse. In a statement, the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP said the violence has weakened the farmers' protest.

Crowds began swelling at Delhi borders at around 8 am. Chants of "Kisan kanoon wapao lo" (Take back the farm laws) rent the air at borders where some tractors were playing patriotic songs such as, Aisa desh hai mera and Sare jahan se achcha.

The protesters were expected to start their tractor rally at noon to avoid interfering with morning Republic Day celebrations in central Delhi. The tricolour and flags of different farmers unions fluttered as marches began from Singhu, Tikri and Ghaziabad border points, much ahead of the time decided for the tractor parade. Security personnel tried to convince the protesters to stick to the designated route and time and maintain peace.

Things suddenly changed at about 8.35 am when some groups of farmers broke barricades to force their way into the capital. At the Ghaziabad border, tractors pushed aside a shipping container placed to block their route while police, outnumbered, stood by helplessly. Elsewhere, thick clouds of tear gas rose over approved march routes as farmers on tractors, on horses and foot forcefully began their rally hours ahead of schedule.

Vijayanagara era grabs attention in Delhi show

AP tableau depicted 5-centuries-old Lepakshi temple in Anantapur

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 26

Vijayanagara era attracted limelight during the Republic Day parade in New Delhi as both AP and Karnataka tableaux happened to be on the historic role of the Vijayanagar Empire.

AP government tableau depicted the five centuries old Lepakshi temple at Lepakshi in Anantapur district. The 27-feet long and 15 feet high of Lord Veerabhadra temple displayed the rich sculpture and tradition of Vijayanagara. The temple was carved in a single stone five centuries ago. It also has the world's biggest Nandi statue. The designs carved on stones have been models for designing sarees.

The Dakshaynam and Lord Veerabhadra story was part of the AP tableau. The tableau, displaying Lord Vinayaka, seven-headed Nagendra and granite Shivalingams, were additional highlights of the concept, Prasad, a resident of Lepakshi observed.

The Karnataka government picked up Hampi for its tableau, which also highlighted the Vijayanagar Empire. Various structures of Hampi, main capital of Vijayanagar Empire, were part of the tableau's concept.

CHIEF JUSTICE LAUDS STATE'S TRADITIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 26

High Court Chief Justice Aroop Kumar Goswami lauded the AP's traditions and customs. He also appreciated the fellow judges and lawyers and the staff for extending cooperation in the work.

The Chief Justice unfurled the national flag to mark 72nd Republic Day celebrations at the High Court in Nelapadu on Tuesday. Addressing the legal fraternity, the CJ stated that he was attracted by the AP's traditions and customs and conveyed Republic Day wishes to the people in the state. He said that though India secured Independence in 1947, it got total freedom and self-rule after it got the Constitution.

Advocate-General S. Sriram said the Indian Constitution provided equal rights and duties to all the country's citizens.



N. Ramesh Kumar

SEC TO HOLD VC WITH OFFICERS ON POLLS TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 26

State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar to hold a video conference to review preparedness on conducting the gram panchayat polls and Covid-19 vaccination with district collectors, SPs, chief executive officers of Zilla Parishads and district panchayat officers from his office at 11 am on January 27.

The chief secretary, DGP, principal secretaries of finance, health and panchayat raj and commissioners of health and panchayat raj and other state-level officials will also participate in the video conference.

Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das has already issued instructions to all the officials concerned to participate in the concerned without fail.



Governor BB Harichandan presenting Memento to Principal Secretaries Ajay Jain and Sri Lakshmi, First place of Housing Tableau on 72nd Republic Day celebrations in Vijayawada on Tuesday, Chief Secretary Adityanath Das, DGP Gautam Sawang is also seen.

Govt will uphold communal harmony, says Governor

FROM PAGE 1

Governor Harichandan said the government has given a stern warning to elements disturbing peace and amity, and perpetrators of such acts will be brought to book.

"Upholding the harmony of the social edifice is the prime responsibility of the government, no matter what it takes to ensure peaceful coexistence. Desecration of idols, vandalism, arson and all such acts of insanity have no place in our society. Those who do so will be dealt with firmly to restore peace and harmony in the state," he said, adding AP has been making rapid strides in terms of both welfare and development.

The governor said the state has passed through testing times with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the government has effectively handled the situation. He said that the state is marching ahead with an emphasis on education, health care, agriculture and welfare. "The beneficiaries are selected in a transparent manner without any scope for discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, religion or political affiliation, by implementing the schemes in a saturation mode by covering all eligi-



A school girl dressed as Bharatmata, Mother India sits among her schoolmates while they wait for their turn to perform the dance at the 72nd Republic Day celebrations organized by the District Administration at Police Barracks Stadium in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. — DC

ble persons."

Governor Harichandan said the government has put in place necessary infrastructure and mechanisms for the storage, transport and administration of the Covid-19 vaccine. Despite the pandemic, Andhra Pradesh did not neglect welfare programmes or stop initiatives such as delivering rations and groceries, or purchase of agriculture produce, export of aqua products and special Kisan Rail services.

He said the state launched the distribution of 31 lakh house sites for the poor on the occasion of Vaikunta Ekadasi and

Christmas. He stated, "The scheme will ensure not only construction of houses but also that the habitations come up in 17,000 well-defined layouts".

The governor said the state government delivered sale agreements pertaining to 2.6 lakh TIDCO houses to eligible women beneficiaries in urban areas, out of which 1.43 lakh units have been handed over for ₹1. The cost of the Polavaram Irrigation Project has been revised to ₹55,549 crore to stabilise the existing ayacut of 23.5 lakh acres and provide irrigation facility to 7.2 lakh acres.

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U-turn by SEC on 'unanimous' local body elections: Sajjala

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 26

YSR Congress general secretary and government adviser for public affairs, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, said on Tuesday that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy has brought about several changes to fulfill the aspirations of the Constitution-framers with the objectives of fair governance and ushering in a better society.

Speaking at the 72nd Republic Day celebrations held in YSRC state headquarters at Tadepalli on Tuesday, he said the government would take stern action against anyone who distributes money or liquor to win votes in the upcoming local body elections.

Addressing a press meet later, Reddy said the State Election Commission leaving out the MPTC and ZPTC polls in the middle and going ahead with the gram panchayat elections

was inappropriate. It was strange that the SEC, who accepted a proposal for simultaneous elections last March, has now taken a U-turn.

He said the CM has made changes in the law to make local body elections more transparent and also initiated radical and positive changes in the state.

Reddy has appealed to all stakeholders in the gram panchayat (GP) polls to strive for unanimous elections to avoid friction and expenditure and instead avail incentives announced by government. He said elders must sit together and sort out the issue as the polls are being held on non-party basis.

The recently amended legislation has a provision for disqualification and jail term for any irregularities, he said.

He felt that, on the positive side, incentives can be availed for unanimous elections though vested interests are planning oth-

erwise.

Ramakrishna Reddy said that those taking part in these elections should focus full attention on development of their villages, leaving party politics aside. The state government has brought in many fundamental changes to the villages, and is taking the administration through the village secretariat and volunteer system.

He said that a conspiracy to incite communal hatred is being hatched in villages by the opposition leaders and advised the contestants not to fall in their trap.

Ramakrishna Reddy warned that anyone proven guilty of conspiracy and violence would be disqualified under the law. This apart, any attempt to entice the voters with goodies will lead to jail of up to two years and disqualification of candidate for six years.

JAGAN RULE RETAINING ITS ADAMANT ATTITUDE: NAIDU

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 26

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday expressed concern over the manner in which the YSRC government was increased. Gram panchayats with a population less than 2,000 will be awarded ₹5 lakh, those with a population between 2,000 and 5,000 will be given ₹10 lakh, gram panchayats with a population between 5,000 and 10,000 will be awarded ₹15 lakh and those with a population above 10,000 will be given ₹20 lakh.

Municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana said the government has increased the incentives to strengthen the administration at village level with an aim to develop the villages. He said some vested interests are trying to create conflicts among people by encouraging factions in the villages while the state gov-

ernment has been delivering governance with welfare and development as a motto. The state government is of the opinion that if the elections to gram panchayats are held on a party basis, there is a possibility that the political rivalry, enmity and intense animosity may grow among the competing parties resulting in hampering harmony and speedy development of villages.

Moreover, states like Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana and Punjab are having an election to gram panchayats on a non-political party basis while some states even adopted innovative methods to encourage party-less and unanimous election to gram panchayats similar on lines of AP. By doing so, the state government intends to facilitate concentrating the energies of the gram panchayats to take up development works in the villages for the benefit of the people.

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Big panchayats to get ₹20L for no polls

FROM PAGE 1

Mr. Ramchandra Reddy said, under the leadership of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, the Panchayat Raj Act was amended and the incentives were increased. Gram panchayats with a population less than 2,000 will be awarded ₹5 lakh, those with a population between 2,000 and 5,000 will be given ₹10 lakh, gram panchayats with a population between 5,000 and 10,000 will be awarded ₹15 lakh and those with a population above 10,000 will be given ₹20 lakh.

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Govt employees decide to join election duties

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 26

The AP Non-Gazetted Officers' Association (APNGOA) decided to cooperate with the State Election Commission to conduct local body elections in the state. Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das conducted a meeting with the APNGOA leaders on Tuesday and appealed

to them to cooperate for the smooth performance of the Panchayat elections.

The APNGOA president, Mr N. Chandrasekhar Reddy, and the general secretary, Mr Bandi Srinivas Rao, said that they sought Rs 50 lakh compensation to employees like Covid-19 warriors and further sought protection to government employees during elections.

IN BRIEF

**2 youngsters
drown in stream**

Nellore: Two youngsters drowned in a stream, Paletivagu, at Yeluruvaripalli in PC Palli mandal when they went swimming on Tuesday. The deceased identified as Lakshmi Narayana, 14, and Karthik, 13, are students of a government school in Yeluruvaripalle.

People living in the vicinity rushed to the waterbody and fished out the bodies after some passers-by alerted them when they noticed the duo drowning in the water.

**AP GOVERNOR
CONGRATULATES
PADMA WINNERS**

**DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 26**

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan congratulated the Padma award winners.

As the Centre announced Padma Vibhushan, the country's second-highest civilian award, to the well-known playback singer S.P. Balasubrahmanyam, posthumously, Governor expressed happiness over it. He congratulated Padma Shri award winners from AP including Rama Swamy Annavarapu in the field of art, Prakasarao Asavadi in the field of literature and education, Nidumolu Sumathi in the field of art for their contribution.

**VELIGONDA FIRST
PHASE TO BE
READY BY AUG.**

**DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JAN. 26**

Steps are being taken to complete the first phase of works pertaining Pula Venkata Subbaiah Veligonda Project by August this year and second phase work by December 2022.

Out of the ₹965.41 core budget allocation to the project in 2020-21, ₹171.09 crore has been spent so far, and the works are in the brisk phase.

Prakasam District Collector Pola Bhaskar disclosed this while addressing a gathering on Republic Day celebrations held at the Police Parade grounds at Ongole on Tuesday.

He said that Kandula Obuli Reddy Gundlakamma Reservoir Project's works are also in progress while pointing to ₹635.73 crore spent on the project out of the estimated cost of ₹753.83 lakh.

According to the Collector, ₹113.70 crore has been spent out of an estimated ₹177 crore on Yarram China Polireddy Korisapadu lift irrigation scheme.

In Pothula Chenchaiyah Paleru Reservoir Project, all previous agreements with contractors have been cancelled, and revised proposals for ₹224 crore have been sent to the government for approval.

Mr Bhaskar said that measures to provide drinking water to the Ongole Municipal Corporation from Gundlakamma reservoir through 17.76 KM under AMRUT scheme are in progress.

Similarly, 15 MLD Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) works were taken up at an estimated ₹30.9 crore in Ongole under the AMRUT scheme.

The collector said that the proposed Institute of Driving Training & Research (IDTR) at an estimated ₹18.5 crore is coming up at the Industrial Corridor near Donakonda.

He thanked the officials, judiciary, police and media for their cooperation in developing the district.

● The collector said that the proposed Institute of Driving Training & Research (IDTR) at an estimated ₹18.5 crore is coming up at the Industrial Corridor near Donakonda.

Patriotic fervour

Andhra Pradesh tableau passes through Rajpath during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations, in New Delhi, Tuesday.

— PTI

**Offering incredible services to
pilgrims is our top priority: TTD****Tirumala to get a makeover with more greenery, plastic-free**

**DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 26**

Inspite of Covid-19 lockdown, TTD has overcome all sorts of crisis with the team efforts of the strong workforce of the temple body and even the nithya kainkaryam are continued in ekantham without deviation of Agama Sastra with efforts of religious staffs under the supervision of Tirumala Jeeyangar Swamijis, said TTD EO Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy.

After unfurling the National Flag on the occasion of 72nd Republic Day celebrations at the Parade Grounds behind TTD Administrative Building

here on Tuesday, the TTD EO thanked all the religious, workforce, sanitation workers, volunteers and above pilgrims for their support even during the high time. He said, it is their top priority to continue offering incredible services to pilgrims.

He said, TTD has been providing comfortable Srivari Darshan to devotees as per Covid-19 guidelines and won worldwide accolades from dignitaries and devotees.

He claimed to have consulted nearly 26 Peetadhipathis to organise the 10-day Vaikunta dwara darshan, resulting in providing a cheerful darshan to 4.26 lakh pil-

**TIRUMALA IS A SPIRITUAL CAPITAL
OF HINDUS: TTD ADDITIONAL EO**

**DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 26**

Describing Tirumala as the spiritual capital of Hindus, TTD additional

EO A.V. Dharma Reddy said that the temple management has taken up more development works including the renovation of rest houses, gardens,

grims.

He said, under the directives of AP CM Jagan Mohan Reddy to promote sanatana Hindu Dharma, TTD has launched the Gudiko

parakamani hall, potu, Alipiri footpath etc, which will be completed by this year and come to the pilgrim foot soon.

He addressed the gathering after unfurling the National Flag on the occasion of 72nd Republic day celebrations at Tirumala on Tuesday.

Gomata programme of donating a pair of cow and calf to temples across the nation from holy Karthika month last year.

The EO also mentioned

various Srivari temple constructions which have been completed, under way and being contemplated at Hyderabad, Vizag, Jammu and Kashmir etc. He said Tirumala is also going to get a makeover with more greenery, plastic-free, pollution-free environment soon.

Meanwhile, the parade feat performances by NCC Cadets, horses stood as cynosure during the entire event. For the services offered by the employees, merit certificates were given to 38 senior officers and 243 employees of various departments in TTD by EO and other top officials.

**SOFTWARE PARK
ON THE ANVIL AT
TADA MANDAL**

**DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JAN. 26**

A mega industrial hub is being established in 2,000 acres near Kavali in view of a port proposed at Ramayapatnam in the neighbouring Prakasam district, located close to Kavali.

Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu said the industrial hub would generate employment opportunity for 25,000 jobless youth in the region. He revealed this while addressing the Republic Day parade after unfurling the National Flag in Nellore on Tuesday.

He said they have plans to set up a software park at an estimated ₹100 crore in Tada mandal and a furniture park in Ozili Mandal with ₹1,250 crore apart from a skill development college in Venkatagiri.

The collector said that Nellore district is poised for a big leap in the industrial front while pointing to prestigious projects of Midhani, Kribhco, Concor, and Greenlam units coming up in the region.

The ₹948 crore estimated MSME park proposed at Atmakur would be the distinctive one.

**Students lauded for top
ranks in national tests**

**DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JAN. 26**

Even during the pandemic, the students of Space Central School at Sriharikota showed extraordinary performance and obtained higher education seats at the National level reputed institutions by obtaining good ranks in tests like JEE for IIT's and NEET for Medicine.

In addition to this, two students of Space Central School bagged gold and silver medals in the National level Sports Meet (Athletics).

Director of Satish Dhawan Space Centre A. Rajarajan disclosed this while appreciating both students and teachers during 72nd Republic Day celebrations held at Shar on Tuesday.

The director unfurled the National Flag and inspected the parade of CISF. He wished all the students, parents, teachers a Happy Republic Day and informed that the students and youth should be courageous to meet the challenges and difficulties which they may not be aware that they encounter in their future.

They should be coura-

● Director of Satish Dhawan Space Centre A. Rajarajan lauded the services rendered by the Covid-19 warrior's, doctors, nurses, safaiwalas, drivers, cisf personnel, and the canteen staff for 24x7 duties during the pandemic and offered a big salute.

● Director also hailed the services, leadership, and the management of CISF who protects the prestigious Spaceport of India, SDSC SHAR.

geous to think different, give, invent, discover the impossible, travel to the unexplored path, share the knowledge, reach the un-reachable.

They should find out the solutions for the problems and show interest in search, research and development in various fields with courage for the nation's development, he observed.

He lauded the services rendered by the Covid-19 warrior's, doctors, nurses, safaiwalas, drivers, cisf personnel, and the canteen staff for 24x7 duties

during the pandemic and offered a big salute.

Director also hailed the services, leadership, and the management of CISF who protects the prestigious Spaceport of India, SDSC SHAR.

"The SDSC SHAR employees performed in excellence with high discipline following the Covid-19 SOP's and contributed to two successful launches. Extensive progress was achieved even in the pandemic for the new projects like Gaganyaan, PIF, ASMP. Considerable progress was shown by delivering the motor's for SSLV" Mr Rajarajan said.

The Birth Centenary Celebrations of Dr Vikram A. Sarabhai and Prof Satish Dhawan, the two Legends in Space Research in India were conducted last year, he noted.

The Principal, Space Central School proposed the vote-of-thanks for the programme. Apart from the Brazil Scientists, N. Srinivasulu Reddy, Controller, SDSC SHAR, Jitendra Kumar Tiwari, Sr Commandant, CISF, P. Gopi Krishna, GD, MSG, many students, teachers and employees attended the function.

**SHANKAR
READY TO
INTRODUCE
FILM COURSE**

**DC CORRESPONDENT
RAJAMAHEN-
DRAVARAM, JAN. 26**

The film director N. Shankar will introduce film courses in Adikavi N a n n a y a University if the university permits him. He visited the University on Tuesday and met the Vice-Chancellor Mokka Jagannadha Rao.

The V-c said that the film courses would benefit the poor and middle-class students in both East and West Godavari Districts. The people of these districts are having good experience and contacts with the cine industry. He suggested that the cine director Mr Sankar encourage film study courses by bringing many cine elders to the university to train them. He also requested Mr Sankar to prepare a picture for the University song.

**Superstition beliefs
prevail in some
educated people**

**AVINASH P.
SUBRAMAYNAM | DC
TIRUPATI, JAN. 26**

The double murders in Madanapalli have once again thrown a spotlight on superstitious beliefs and occult practices that continue to kill people. Although modernisation and access to better health facilities and infra have changed the face of the world and people's beliefs in ancient practices, superstition still prevails not only in the underprivileged communities but also in well-educated people.

The police investigation into the Madanapalli deaths has thrown up some material evidence pointing to an educated family's deep faith in superstitious beliefs. Probing the double murder case showed evidence of strange salvation rituals practised by the family members, objects of tantric worship, strange books and photos of Gods and Swamijis hanging on walls in the house.

The primary accused in this case V. Padmaja, who is a gold medalist in M.Sc (Maths) and running a private coaching institute for IIT aspirants, has allegedly bludgeoned her daughters to death, while her husband V. Purushotham Naidu, an associate professor of chemistry at government degree college, remained a mute spectator.

According to the police, they did so with the belief that their daughters would come back to life the next morning. They claimed that kali yoga would end on Sunday night and Monday would see the rise of 'Satya yuga', with their daughters born again in a purer form. This shows how much the educated couple have transcended into the peaks of spiritualism.

Psychologists who investigated what role superstitions play have found that

the believers derive from the assumption that a connection exists between co-occurring, non-related events. For many who engage in superstitious beliefs, they provide a sense of control and reduce anxiety, indicating why superstition levels increase at times of stress and angst, particularly during economic crises and social uncertainty.

"Generally, research on superstition has focused on people's cognitive disorders. Superstitious beliefs are not limited to individuals with cognitive deficits; many smart, educated, emotionally stable adults have superstitions. It depends on upbringing and culture. The deep-rooted superstitions are hard to dispel in common people and even harder in educated people, however irrational they may be," said Dr Bharathi Sibbala, a psychiatrist.

If the Madanapalli double murder case turns is linked with the superstitious beliefs and occult practices, it would not be a singular case but rather an extension of dangerous practices and trends that appears to have picked up in recent years. Such a trend was particularly observed in underprivileged communities but is now witnessed among the educated communities.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), over 45 people were reported to have been sacrificed in the country to appease gods – 12 in 2016, 19 in 2017, two in 2018 and 10 in 2019. The most worrying factor is that over 371 people were killed due to witchcraft between 2016-19, with a break up of 134 in 2016, 73 in 2017, 62 in 2018 and 102 in 2019. A close analysis of the crime reports shows that Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand contribute more to the number of human sacrifice and witchcraft cases every year.

**Police arrest couple in
doubt murders case**

**DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, 26TPT2**

The Madanapalli sub-division police on Tuesday arrested the mother and father duo, who killed their two daughters, two days ago, did so hoping that they will come back to life within 24 hours due to spiritual powers.

Almost 48 hours of the incident, the police finally

moved the couple to the government general hospital in the Madanapalli town on Tuesday morning for medical examinations. A case was also registered under relevant sections against Dr V. Purushotham Naidu and V. Padmaja on charges of murdering both their daughters Alekhyia, 27, and Sai Divya, 22.

Police facing a hard time with Padmaja.

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WELL | DESERVED

The noted writer from Rayalaseema already received more than 75 awards

Asavadi gets Padma Shri for literature, avadhanam

**DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 26**

Services of Asavadi Prakasa Rao, a native of Penukonda belonging to the Dalit community, have been recognised with a Padma Shri being awarded to him for his exemplary services in literature and avadhanam.

The noted writer from Rayalaseema has already received more than 75 state-level awards from both from Andhra Pradesh and

Telangana states in the fields of literature, academia, culture and social work.

Not one to believe in confrontation, vindictive or rebellious behaviour, Asavadi has imbibed the age-old, time-tested quintessential Indian cultural ethos, which aims at universal peace and harmony. Refusing to be lured away from his original faith, notwithstanding the historical injustices meted out to subaltern castes like his, he

continues to stand testimony for his devotion to perennial Indian values, which he has been consciously propagating through his multifarious activities for over five decades.

After post-graduating in Telugu, Asavadi served as a lecturer and then as principal of various government degree colleges. Asavadi's literary output comprises 48 books across various genres – poetry, its extempore version, collection of

literary essays, translations, monographs and collection of reviews. Four of his works deserve a special mention, three of them commissioned by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

Under the Bhagavatam Project, Asavadi rendered the 3rd canto of Potana's Bhagavatam into a lucid prose, which was published by TTD in 1986. He emended the unpublished palm-script Chellapillarayana Charitram, originally writ-

ten by Tallapaka Annaya, grandson of famous saint-composer Tallapaka Annamacharya, which is the tale of Lord Balaji's marriage with Bibi Nanchari. The story has an undercurrent of communal harmony. This was published by TTD in 1982 and reprinted in 2009.

Bhartrihari Vairagya Sati (2014) is an exegesis that received wide applause from scholars.

The poetic translation of the original Sanskrit slokas

into Telugu was done by Chepyala Ramakrishna Rao.

In 2016 under the Brahman-Okkate series of TTD, Asavadi wrote Mala Dasari along with commentary. It is the story of a parish devotee of Lord Vishnu.

Asavadi's most outstanding literary contribution is his performance of Avadhana – a uniquely creative, intricate and formidable classical poetic feat. It involves impromptu composition by the Avadhani.

SHORT TAKES

TRACTOR MARCH HELD PEACEFULLY IN AURANGABAD

Aurangabad, Jan. 26: A tractor march organised here in Maharashtra on Tuesday to extend support to the protesting farmers in New Delhi passed off peacefully.

Around 150 to 200 people, five tractors, cars, and two-wheelers participated in the morcha, which started from Delhi Gate and culminated at Bhadkal gate, separated by a distance of about 2.2 kms.

The march was organised by the Maharashtra Rajya Kisan Sabha and the Maharashtra Rajya Lal Bawta Shetmajur Union.

Some workers of the Congress also joined the procession.

Ram Baheti, one of the organisers of the march, told reporters that around 4,000 volunteers from Aurangabad had recently visited Delhi and participated in the agitations being held at borders of the national capital.

He said the three agri laws were anti-constitutional since the government didn't send the draft bills to a joint parliamentary committee.

On eruption of violence during the tractor parade in New Delhi earlier in the day, Baheti said the lathicharge by police on farmers is condemnable. "The clashes occurred because of the stubborn stand of the Central government," he added.

PROTESTER UNFURLS TRICOLOUR

Mumbai, Jan. 26: Thousands of cultivators, who had arrived here from parts of Maharashtra to protest against the Centre's farm laws, left for their homes on Tuesday after an elderly woman agitator hoisted the national flag at the Azad Maidan in Mumbai.

To mark the Republic Day, the flag hoisting was held at the ground in south Mumbai at around 9.30 am following which the protesters headed towards their native places, the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) said.

The farmers held a rally at the Azad Maidan on Monday to express solidarity with peasants agitating near Delhi borders against the Centre's three new farm laws.

NCP president Sharad Pawar, Maharashtra Congress chief Balasaheb Thorat, Peasants and Workers Party leader Jayant Patil and various farmers' representatives had attended the rally on Monday.

Around 15,000 farmers had arrived in the state capital for the rally, the Maharashtra unit of the AIKS earlier said.

"The flag hoisting ceremony was held at the Azad Maidan on Tuesday morning. After that, farmers headed towards their homes. The movement is in line with what we had decided earlier," AIKS president Ashok Dhawale said.

PATEL CONDEMNS ACTION OF FARMERS

New Delhi, Jan. 26: Union minister of tourism and culture Prahlad Patel on Tuesday condemned the actions of a section of farmers who entered the Red Fort as part of their tractor rally and said it violated the symbol of dignity of India's democracy.

Deviating from the designated route for the proposed tractor parade, a section of protesting farmers who were pushed back by the police form the ITO in Central Delhi drove their tractors to Red Fort complex.

The crowd swelled at the monument as some protesting farmers and 'Nihangs' (traditional Sikh warriors) were seen entering the Red Fort and hoisting a flag from the staff from which Prime Minister unfurls the tricolour on Independence Day.

"The Red Fort is a symbol of the dignity of our democracy. The farmers should have stayed away from it. I condemn the violation of this dignity. It is sad and unfortunate," Patel said in a tweet.

Earlier, a clash broke out between police and protesting farmers after the latter reached ITO and tried to push towards Lutyen's Delhi, prompting the force to resort to lathicharge and use tear gas shells against them.

The farmers who began their march from different border points, much before the time permitted to them for their tractor rally, reached ITO in Central Delhi despite the force denying them permission for it.

Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan chants fill the air

Shouting slogans farmers poured into Delhi on tractors, horses, cranes and motorbikes

New Delhi, Jan. 26: Chanting *rang de basanti* and *jai jawan jai kisan* numerous farmers rode tractors, motorbikes, horses and even cranes to cross the national capital's borders into the city for their proposed parade against the three contentious farm laws.

Locals stood on both sides of the roads at various locations showering flower petals on the farmers amid drum beats.

Standing atop vehicles decked up with flags, the protesters danced to the tune of patriotic songs such as *Aisa desh hai mera* and *Sare jahan se achha*.

"People think farmers are only meant to plough their fields. But there is much more to a farmer's life. We also ride motorbikes and horses though we worship our tractors as it helps in earning our bread and butter.

"Today, everything is on display in this historical rally," said Gagan Singh, a protestor riding a horse to the parade.

Parmajeet Bibi, a woman in her late 40s, who was riding a tractor said, "Women are not just cooking at community kitchens. We help men in fields and we are riding tractors in this rally to send out a strong message".

Aditya Pajetta, a farmer from Haryana's Yamuna Nagar, carried a 15-kg plough on his shoulder while marching from Singhu border.

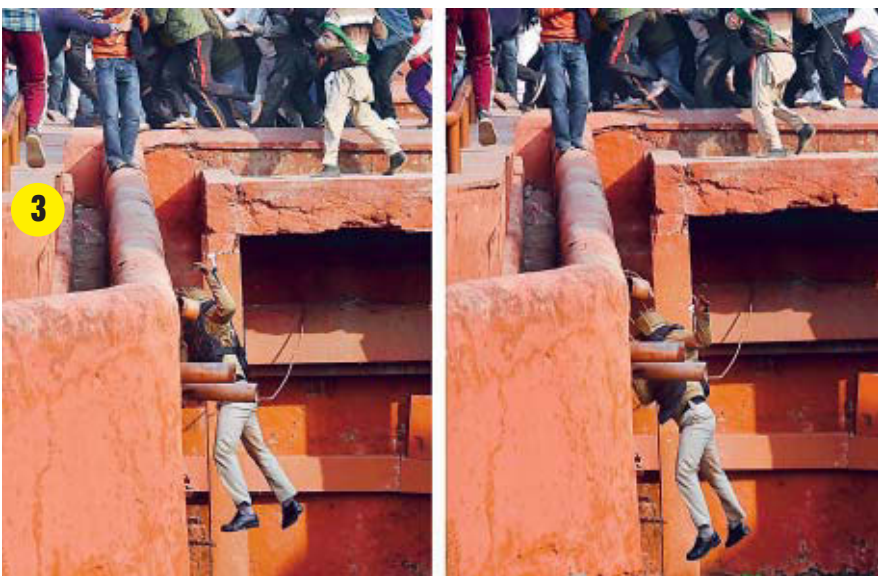
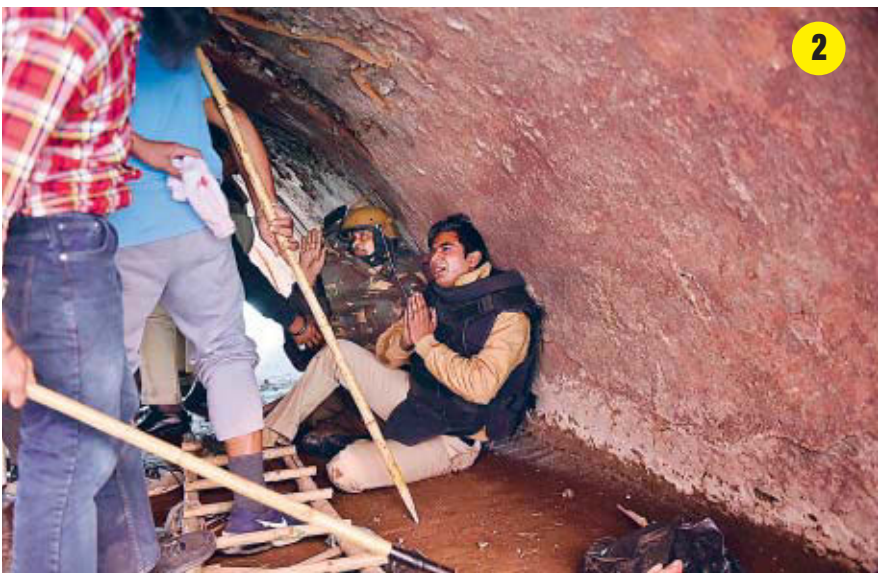
"Our fight is to save this plough. Generations have been involved in farming and it will be a pity if we cannot save their legacy. I have started marching from Singhu border and will carry it to the spot where the rally will conclude," he said.

The cranes which were part of the rally had a makeshift podium on the top with a mattress at the front for people to sit.

The Tricolour and flags of different farmer unions fluttered as marches began from Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur border points, much ahead of the time decided for the tractor parade. Security personnel tried to convince the protesters to stick to the designated route and time and maintain peace.

"We support the demands of farmers. We survive on what they produce and it is time we stand up for them. We salute their spirit," said Rani Devi, whose family was applying tilak to forehead of the participants.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at several Delhi border points since November 28, demanding



1. Security personnel baton charge a protester during clashes after the farmers tractor rally turned violent on Republic Day in New Delhi on Tuesday.

2. Protesting farmers corner two policemen during clashes at Red Fort.

3. Combo picture shows a policeman falling from a rampart of the Red Fort during clashes with protesting farmers who had gathered there after their tractor parade.

4. Farmers participate in a tractor rally after breaking police barricades at Singhu border near Bhalswa landfill site in New Delhi on Tuesday.

— PTI

a complete repeal of three support price for their farm laws and a legal guarantee on minimum It was a never seen

Sikh religious flag 'Nishan Sahib' hoisted by protesters at Red Fort

Chandigarh, Jan. 26: The saffron flag hoisted by protesters from a staff at the iconic Red Fort during their tractor parade against the farm laws on Tuesday was the 'Nishan Sahib', a symbol of Sikh religion seen at all Gurdwara complexes.

The 'Nishan Sahib' is a triangular flag that is sacred to Sikhs. The emblem on the flag com-

prises of 'Khanda', a two-edged sword, Chakra, a disc, and two Kirpans that cross each other at the handles. The other flag appeared to be of a farmer union.

Describing as "most unfortunate" the incident of a protesting farmer hoisting a flag at the Red Fort, senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said he supported the

farmers' protests from the start but cannot condone "lawlessness". He asserted that on Republic Day no flag but the sacred Tiranga should fly aloft the Red Fort. "Most unfortunate. I have supported the farmers' protests from the start but I cannot condone lawlessness. And on #RepublicDay no flag but the sacred tiranga should fly aloft the Red Fort," the

former Union minister said on Twitter, tagging a tweet which carried a video of the incident.

Wielding sticks and clubs and holding the Tricolour and union flags, tens of thousands of farmers atop tractors broke barriers, clashed with police and entered the city from various points to lay siege to the Red Fort and climb the flagpole on

Republic Day.

Actor Deep Sidhu, who was among those present during the incident, on Tuesday sought to defend their action, saying it was a symbolic protest and they did not remove the national flag.

He said that they should not be given any communal colour or dubbed as fundamentalists or hardliners.

— PTI

Samyukta Morcha condemns violence

New Delhi, Jan. 26: Farmers' union body Samyukta Kisan Morcha on Tuesday disassociated itself from those who indulged in violence during the tractor parade, and alleged some "antisocial elements" infiltrated their otherwise peaceful movement.

The union also condemned and regretted the "undesirable" and "unacceptable" events as the parade turned violent after several groups of farmers deviated from the pre-decided route for the march.

The Samkyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of 41 farmer unions, is leading the protest against the three central farm

laws at several border points of Delhi.

"We thank farmers for the unprecedented participation in Tuesday's farmers' Republic Day Parade. We also condemn and regret the undesirable and unacceptable events that have taken place today and dissociate ourselves from those indulging in such acts.

"Despite all our efforts, some organisations and individuals have violated the route and indulged in condemnable acts. Antisocial elements had infiltrated the otherwise peaceful movement. We have always held that peace is our biggest strength, and that any violation would hurt the

movement," the farmers' body said in a statement.

Its statement comes as farmers clashed with police at several places in the national capital.

A protesting farmer died at Delhi's ITO after his tractor overturned.

Police also had to use lathicharge and teargas shells to control unruly protesters at multiple locations in the city.

"We dissociate ourselves from all such elements that have violated our discipline. We appeal strongly to everyone to stick to the route and norms of the parade, and not indulge in any violent action or anything that taints national symbols and dignity. We appeal to everyone to desist from any such acts.

"We are trying to get a full picture of all the events with regard to the several parades that were planned on Tuesday and will share a full statement soon. Our information is that apart from some regrettable violations, the parades are underway peacefully as per plan," it said.

Wielding sticks and clubs and holding the tricolour and union flags, tens of thousands of farmers atop tractors broke barriers, clashed with police and entered the city from various points to lay siege to the Red Fort and climb the flagpole on Republic Day on Tuesday.

Farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at several Delhi border points, including Tikri, Singhu and Ghazipur, since November 28, demanding a complete repeal of three farm laws and a legal guarantee on minimum support price for their crops.

— PTI

Violence is no solution: Rahul

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

As the unprecedented violent protests broke out in the national capital on the Republic Day, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said that violence is no solution to any problem. Taking to Twitter, Gandhi said, "Violence is not the solution to any problem. If anyone gets hurt, the damage will happen to our country. Take back the anti-farmer law for the benefit of the country."

While he was against the violence he once again reiterated his party's stand that the Center should take back the controversial farm laws.

The Congress has been supportive of the concerns of farmers. It was the first political outfit to take out a tractor rally in Punjab after the laws were passed in parliament. The party has also given its full support to the protesting farmers. In the recently held meeting of the Congress working committee CWC the party passed a resolution demanding the farm laws be taken back.

In her remarks the Congress president Sonia Gandhi had said, "It is abundantly clear that the three laws were prepared in haste and Parliament

DIDI SLAMS CENTRE FOR FARMERS' STIR

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, JAN. 26

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee, who has been vehemently opposing the three farm laws, blamed the Centre for the farmers' siege at the Red Fort on Tuesday.

In the afternoon she tweeted, "Deeply disturbed by worrying & painful developments that have unfolded on the streets of Delhi. Centre's insensitive attitude and indifference towards our farmer brothers & sisters has to be blamed for this situation."

was consciously denied an opportunity for examining in any meaningful details their implications and impacts. Our position has been very clear from the very beginning, we reject them categorically because they will destroy the foundations of food security that are based on the three pillars of MSP, public procurement and PDS."

SHORT TAKES

MYANMAR ARMY
RAISES COUP
PROSPECT

Naypyidaw, Jan. 26: Myanmar's powerful military on Tuesday raised the spectre of staging a coup as it ramped up demands for an investigation into alleged voter fraud during last year's election, swept by Aung San Suu Kyi's ruling party. The National League for Democracy (NLD) won November's poll in a landslide, but has been much criticised by rights groups for its disenfranchisement of voters in conflict-racked regions.

The military-aligned opposition disputed the results, while the army has for weeks alleged widespread voter irregularities, claiming to have found 8.6 million cases of fraud.

Military spokesman Major General Zaw Min Tun on Tuesday renewed calls for the country's embattled election commission to provide final voter lists for cross-checking — a demand that so far has not been met. "Not resolving this in line with the law means this is a political crisis," he told reporters in Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw.

Zaw Min Tun added that military chief Min Aung Hlaing has already pointed out "dishonesty and unfairness" during the election. When pressed on the possibility of a coup, the spokesman refused to be drawn, but did not rule it out.

ITALY PM QUILTS
TO FORM NEW
GOVERNMENT

Rome, Jan. 26: Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigned Tuesday in the hope of forming a new government after weeks of turmoil in his ruling coalition, leaving Italy rudderless as it battles the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

He tendered his resignation to President Sergio Mattarella, the ultimate arbiter of Italian political crises, who invited him to stay on in a caretaker capacity pending discussions on what happens next.

The uneasy coalition that has led Italy since September 2019 was fatally weakened earlier this month by the withdrawal of former premier Matteo Renzi's small but crucial Italia Viva party.

Ahead of a key vote in parliament this week that he looked set to lose, Conte informed his cabinet on Tuesday that he would quit in what supporters said was a move to form a new government.

After the meeting with Mattarella, a spokesman for the president said he "reserves the right to decide (what to do next) and invited the government to stay in office in a caretaker capacity".

Mattarella will open discussions with party leaders on Wednesday afternoon which are likely to lead into Thursday — leaving a vacuum at the top of the eurozone's third largest economy at a crucial time.

DISMISS CASE,
SAYS EPSTEIN
EX-GIRLFRIEND

New York, Jan. 26: A British socialite charged with recruiting teenage girls for financier Jeffrey Epstein to sexually abuse in the 1990s asked a judge Monday to dismiss the case on multiple grounds, including that a deal years ago not to prosecute Epstein and others should shield her from prosecution. Lawyers for Ghislaine Maxwell said the indictment against their client was obtained unjustly and doesn't allege crimes specific enough to bring before a jury.

But they listed first among 12 separate arguments attacking the indictment that a non-prosecution deal Epstein reached with the federal government a dozen years ago should shield Maxwell from prosecution too. The deal sought to protect Epstein and those around him, but Maxwell was not identified by name in the document that was signed as Epstein agreed to plead guilty to state charges in Florida that forced him to register as a sex offender afterward. Lawyers for Epstein had planned to argue that the deal with prosecutors in Florida in 2008 protected him against sex trafficking charges lodged against him in July 2019 in New York City.

Manhattan federal prosecutors maintained they could proceed against Epstein or those who worked for him regardless. Epstein killed himself at a Manhattan federal lockup a month after his arrest. Maxwell, 59, was arrested last July and has remained jailed on grounds she might flee. She has pleaded not guilty to charges that she recruited teen girls for Epstein to sexually abuse.

Tornado hits Alabama hotel



A Hampton Inn hotel is severely damaged after a tornado tore through Fultondale, Alabama. One person has died and at least five people have been hospitalised with critical injuries. The storm caused "significant damage," the National Weather Service tweeted.

— AP

'Threat': Guard to stay
in Washington till Mar.

Violence a concern ahead of Trump's impeachment trial

Washington, Jan. 26: Thousands of US National Guard troops mobilised in Washington for the presidential inauguration will remain in place through mid-March due to ongoing threats, Pentagon officials said Monday.

The officials did not offer specific information on the threats, saying the information came from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

But Washington remained concerned about more possible violence after the January 6 attack on Congress by supporters of president Donald Trump, and ahead of the impeachment trial of Trump beginning the week of February 8.

Acting Army Secretary John Whitley said they had been briefed on possible risks with "several" upcoming events in Washington over the coming several weeks.

Security officials are concerned that protests "could either be used by malicious actors or other problems that could emerge," he said.

"We are posturing our forces to be able to respond to those threats if they emerge," he said.

The attack on the US Capitol on January 6, which left five people dead and has been labelled an insurrection, led the army to increase the number of National Guard troops deployed in Washington from a few hundred to 25,000 for the January 20 inauguration of President Joe Biden.

Much of the centre of the city was locked down and the normal hundreds of thousands of attendees told to stay home due to the high level of security.

On Monday about 13,000 of the reservists remained.

About 7,000 would stay through the end of January, and then fall slowly to about 5,000 in mid-March, according to Whitley.

Asked about the specific threats, Whitley referred reporters to the FBI, which did not respond to requests for comment.

— AFP

Ahead of Putin call, Biden
walks high wire with Russia

Washington, Jan. 26: President Joe Biden has been quickly thrown into a high-wire balancing act with Russia as he seeks to toughen his administration's stance against Vladimir Putin while preserving room for diplomacy in a post-Donald Trump era.

The relationship is sure to be different than the one Putin enjoyed with Trump, who was enamored of the Russian leader and sought his approval, casting doubt on Russian interference in the 2016 elections and involvement in a massive hack last year.

Despite this conciliatory approach, his administration toed a tough line against Moscow, imposing sanctions on the country, Russian companies and business leaders for issues ranging from Ukraine to

YELLEN CONFIRMED
AS 1ST FEMALE
TREASURY SECY

Washington, Jan. 26: The US Senate on Monday voted by a wide margin to confirm Janet Yellen as the first woman to lead the Treasury Department, giving her a key role in Congress negotiations over a huge Covid-19 economic relief package.

Yellen was the first woman to lead the Federal Reserve, from 2014 to 2018, and previously the White House Council of Economic Advisors. Her immediate job will be to help win Congress approval for President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion rescue package to secure US economic recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. That will entail convincing skeptical lawmakers that the benefit of more spending outweighs concerns about the country's soaring debt level.

— AFP

PETS ARE BACK:
BIDEN'S 2 DOGS
SETTLE IN AT WH

Washington, Jan. 26: The patter of paws is being heard in the White House again following the arrival of President Joe Biden's dogs Champ and Major. The two German shepherds are the first pets to live at the executive mansion since the Obama administration.

Major burst onto the national scene late last year after Biden, then president-elect, broke his right foot while playing with the dog at their home in Wilmington, Delaware. The Bidens adopted Major in 2018 from the Delaware Humane Association. Champ joined the family after the 2008 presidential election that made Joe Biden vice president. The dogs moved into the White House on Sunday, following Biden's inauguration last week.

— AP

'MADE IN U.S.':
BIDEN PREFERS
SWISS ROLEX

Washington, Jan. 26: Americans tend to notice everything about an incoming president at their inauguration, and thus Joe Biden's choice to wear a \$7,000 Rolex watch on the day he was sworn in.

Nor did the fact that the timepiece was made in Switzerland escape attention, as it marked one of the new president's first breaks with his predecessors, who chose watches a bit more quotidian and even manufactured domestically — the type of industry Biden says he wants to promote.

Biden's stainless steel Rolex Datejust "is a far cry from the Everyman timepieces that every president not named Trump has worn conspicuously in recent decades," *The New York Times* wrote.

— AFP

Moscow, Tehran call for
'rescue' of Iran nuke deal

Moscow, Jan. 26: Moscow and Tehran called for the rescue of the Iran nuclear deal Tuesday, as their top diplomats held their first talks since Joe Biden's election raised hopes of Washington returning to the agreement.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said ahead of the talks in Moscow that "one of the most pressing topics is the task of rescuing the Joint Comprehensive Action Plan (JCPOA)".

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif thanked Moscow for its efforts to repair the JCPOA after the US exit in 2018 and for Russia's "constructive and principled" position on the deal.

Zarif urged unity between Moscow and Tehran "in order to save the JCPOA from the risks and fears that arose after the United States left this plan." The talks in Moscow come days after Zarif urged the United States to make the "fundamental choice" to lift sanctions and reverse the "failed policies" of the previous administration, which took a hard line on Tehran.

He cautioned that any efforts from Washington to extract additional concessions would ultimately end in failure.

"Iran wants the nuclear deal it made," Zarif wrote

● **THE AGREEMENT** was largely left in tatters after former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew and ordered officials to reimpose tough penalties against Tehran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" policy.

in an op-ed in the Foreign Affairs magazine.

The agreement was largely left in tatters after former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew and ordered officials to reimpose tough penalties against Tehran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" policy.

The deal was agreed in 2015 between Iran, the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany. It offered sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on Tehran's nuclear ambitions and guarantees it would not seek an atomic bomb. Iran maintains it has only pursued a civilian nuclear energy programme.

A new wave of US sanctions have hit hard Iran's vital oil sector and its international banking ties, plunging the economy into a recession.

But Tehran has signalled it could be willing to engage the new White House administration while rhetoric from officials in Moscow has suggested a change in tack in Washington from the Trump administration.

Joe Biden's pick for secretary of state, Anthony Blinken, said at a Senate confirmation hearing this month that Trump's policies had made Iran "more dangerous". While Blinken confirmed Biden's desire for Washington to return to the nuclear agreement, both sides have said the other must return to full compliance before the accord is implemented again.

Since the deal began unravelling with the US exit, Russia and European signatories have advocated efforts to salvage the accord and cautioned Iran against bolstering its nuclear enrichment.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov in December urged Iran to take "maximum responsibility" after Tehran announced plans to install advanced centrifuges in its main nuclear enrichment plant.

The ministry earlier this month blamed Iran's departure from norms of the nuclear deal on "systematic crude violations" by the United States. — AFP

Covid may take 4-5 yrs
to end: S'pore minister

Singapore, Jan. 26: It may take four to five years for the Covid-19 pandemic to end and the world to look to a post-Covid normal, a senior Singaporean minister has warned.

Speaking at the Singapore Perspectives 2021 conference hosted by Singapore's Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) on Monday, Singapore's Education Minister Lawrence Wong, who co-chairs the Covid-19 multi-ministry task force, said there are still many uncertainties to contend with in the next few years, while sharing his hopes about how the future can be "reset" once the pandemic is over, the *Channel News Asia* reported.

"At some point of time the pandemic will pass, but it may take four to five years before we finally see the end of the pandemic and the start of a post-Covid normal. What will this new post-Covid world look like? No one can tell," Wong said. He said there was still a great uncertainty about how the coronavirus will shape society in the coming years.

He said adhering to safe management measures like mask-wearing and avoiding crowds will continue for this year and "maybe a good part of next year". "Beyond that, the availability of Covid-19 vaccinations will progressively restart global travel, but getting the world vaccinated won't be quick or easy," he said during the conference.

The Government has planned for everyone in Singapore to be vaccinated by the third quarter of this year, but Wong conceded that there could still be "bumps along the way". He noted that the current vaccines may not be so effective against new mutant strains of the virus, and will have to be modified to counter them.

— PTI

Minneapolis, Jan. 26: A new Brazilian variant of the Coronavirus has made its first known appearance in the United States in a person who recently returned to Minnesota after travelling to Brazil, state health officials announced Monday.

The Brazil P1 variant was found in a specimen from a patient who lives in the Minneapolis-St Paul area who became ill in the first week of January, the Minnesota Department of Health said in a statement. Epidemiologists are interviewing the person to obtain more details about their illness, travel and contacts. There was no immediate indication

that the variant was spreading in Minnesota.

Viruses are constantly mutating, and new versions — called variants — often emerge. Health officials are also worried about variants that were first reported in the United Kingdom and South Africa. Researchers believe they may spread more easily than the virus that has already sickened millions in the United States and caused nearly 420,000 deaths. The Brazilian variant was first identified in four travellers who were tested at an airport outside Tokyo. It contains a set of mutations that may affect its ability to be recognised by antibodies.

— AP

Denmark to pay for
shut mink industry

Copenhagen, Jan. 26: Denmark has said it could pay out more than 19 billion Danish kroner (\$3.1 billion, 2.6 billion euros) to its mink farmers after it closed down the industry over Coronavirus fears.

Denmark was the world's largest exporter of mink fur but culled all 15 million of its mink population last year after some were found to be carrying a mutated virus variant, and later banned mink breeding until 1 January 2022.

The support scheme announced late on Monday includes reimbursements to the country's roughly 1,000 mink farmers for the cull, as well as support for them to change their busi-

nesses. Mink breeders and related businesses now have "a good opportunity to move on", said agriculture minister Rasmus Prehn after a cross-party deal was sealed.

"Mink breeders have made a great sacrifice for public health and the common good." In November last year, Denmark said the "Cluster 5" mutation carried by mink had been wiped out, and they were the only animal confirmed to be able to contract it and pass it to humans.

The process, however, was mired in scandal from the start.

— AFP

SIGNIFICANTLY | DELAYED

Project back after demonstrations denouncing racism, police violence against PoC

US renews plans to put abolitionist Tubman on \$20 bill

Washington, Jan. 26: The White House said Monday it was expediting plans to put Harriet Tubman, a PoC woman who escaped slavery and became a leader of the pre-Civil War abolitionist movement, on the \$20 bill, a project that had been significantly delayed under Donald Trump.

The move means Tubman would become the first African American to feature on a US bill.

The project, launched by former president Barack Obama, has come back to

the forefront after historic demonstrations denouncing racism and police violence against people of colour. "The Treasury Department is taking steps to resume efforts to put Harriet Tubman on the front of the new \$20 notes," said presidential spokeswoman Jen Psaki.

"It's important that our notes, our money... reflect the history and diversity of our country and Harriet Tubman's image gracing the new \$20 note would certainly reflect that," she said. Tubman was born

It's important that our notes, our money... reflect the history and diversity of our country and Harriet Tubman's image gracing the new \$20 note would certainly reflect that.

— JEN PSAKI

Presidential spokeswoman

into slavery in 1822 but escaped before going back to the slave-owning southern states to help dozens of others flee bondage, either to the northern US or in Canada, both before and



Harriet Tubman

during the Civil War of 1861-65.

After the war, she became a champion of wom-

en's rights before her death in 1913.

Her life, and in particular her work helping enslaved people escape as a conductor on the "Underground Railroad," were featured in a 2019 Hollywood biopic. Her image was set to replace the portrait of Andrew Jackson, the US president behind the "Trail of Tears" that drove dispossessed Native American tribes from the southeast of the expanding country, and who was much admired by Trump.

Trump's treasury secre-

the White House from 1829 to 1837, was seen by Trump as the first "populist" president of the country, and hung his portrait in the Oval Office during his tenure.

The fiery general rose to fame for his historic victory against British forces in New Orleans in 1815. But he is also remembered for the mass deportation of tens of thousands of Native Americans from their ancestral lands in the southeast that left thousands dead.

— AFP

DECCAN
Chronicle

27 JANUARY 2021

History made on R-Day,
but disorder regrettable

For the first time since the birth of the Republic of India on January 26, 1950, Republic Day this year wasn't just the traditional military parade on New Delhi's Rajpath but also the tractors' parade by tens of thousands of farmers in the nation's capital, venting their demands that have caught the country's attention for many months.

History was thus made. But it didn't turn out to be entirely peaceful as the chief coordinating body of the dozens of farmers' unions may have desired. Providing dramatic television footage, in some parts of the city, hundreds of farmers clashed with the police, which resorted to lathicharges and teargas shelling, but on the whole conducted itself with reasonable restraint.

Had a volatile section of the farmers not veered off the route marked out for the tractor parade by the Delhi police, rushed inside the Red Fort — Delhi's iconic landmark which has symbolised India's grandeur in unity since the mid-nineteenth century — and raised their sectional banners from one of its flagpoles, although taking care to keep these at a lower level than the tricolour which flutters there, the chaos and disorder that marked the day might not have drawn the kind of attention it now has.

The disorder unleashed by a section of farmers, although the main body of the parade stuck to orderly conduct, is apt to turn the spotlight on the agitation leaders. Their tactical skills will be tested.

and right-wing social media groups seeking to malign the farmers as anti-national, the agriculturists decided to parade their determination by entering the capital city on Republic Day.

This was also an unspoken assertion that the historic day belonged as much to the people as to the State which commemorates it by staging a military show each year. However, the disorder unleashed by a section of farmers, although the main body of the parade stuck to orderly conduct, is apt to turn the spotlight on the agitation leaders. Their tactical skills will be tested. They will need to remain united — if they are serious about their demands — while ensuring the isolation of violent elements. It is to be hoped that the government will be dispassionate in investigating who the troublemakers were, especially focusing on whether fifth columnists had infiltrated to give the months-long peaceful agitation a bad name.

Republic Day in India is high on ceremony and is associated with form. It is this aspect that was breached by the events of the day. As the Covid-19 pandemic is still around, the official celebration was kept at a reduced scale. If this offered a flavour of the times — the parade of the "kisans", practically in tandem with the "jawans", who put up the traditional military display — offered a glimpse of the people's history through the staging of a democratic protest even if it went somewhat awry.

Bihar cops overstep limits

The Bihar police's warning of legal action against social media users who criticise the government, netas and babus stems from over-enthusiasm of the top cops. The threat appears to come from officers who appear to be so beholden to their political masters that they are prepared to step beyond boundaries in playing up to their hypersensitive bosses. The warning from the inspector general of Bihar Police has been served against "offensive" posts, but there are already ways to curb any overt misuse of social media by raising the issue with those who provide these platforms like Twitter, Facebook and others.

In threatening to make offensive use of social media a cyber-crime, the Bihar police are overstepping the bounds of law as there are no provisions in cyber-crime laws to deal with it since the Supreme Court struck down Section 66A of the IT Act. Police can find other provisions in "prescribed laws" to pressure activists who target netas and babus but they would be well advised not to as they would be setting a bad precedent in circumscribing freedom of expression and trampling upon the right to free speech. It is not for a branch of the executive like the police to creatively use existing laws to browbeat critics.

The Bihar chief minister, Nitish Kumar, has not helped matters either by talking up against criticism of the government on social media. Having chosen to be in public life, netas must face up to criticism. Dissent is legitimate in a democracy and it cannot be trampled upon nor can officials hide under ill-advised police action to muzzle those who criticise them or expose their corrupt ways. There are processes to deal with inflammatory social media posts stoking communal tensions or inciting violence and defamatory ones through civil and criminal action. The Bihar government would do well to junk police advice and respond to criticism with just good governance.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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No space for
communal
politics in AP
under Jagan

Miscreants associated with Opposition parties in Andhra Pradesh are vandalising and desecrating temples to destabilise the democratically-elected YSRC government led by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy as they feel religious sentiments can be exploited to create a communal flareup.

Bizarrely, some of them, after instigating/condoning such attacks for political gain, accuse the YSRC of being responsible. Why would any government or ruling party attack temples or idols? How would it benefit to hurt the sentiments of a majority of people?

With the Jagan Mohan Reddy government's focus fixed on development and the state's welfare, there is no political space for the Opposition. The CM has likened such attacks on religious sites as "political guerrilla" warfare. The Opposition must understand that in the minds and hearts of Andhra's people, the CM doesn't belong to a particular religion but is a leader of all sections.

India is a religious society. Religion plays a key role in the lives of most Indians. It is an indispensable and foundational part of our society. Faith underlies our ceremonies, festivals, even harvest celebrations.

The Constitution explicitly recognises this, and provides for a country based on secularism, with tolerance and respect for all religions. Andhra Pradesh has seen a spate of temple desecrations of late. These cowardly attacks need to be tackled firmly by the State, creating a strong deterrent.

While the law will take its course and the CM has given assurances, it is important to gauge the action, attitude and role of the Opposition. While the state government has stuck to its constitutional obligation and is rolling out welfare schemes without discrimination, the Opposition led by former CM N. Chandrababu Naidu is politicising these unfortunate events to incite communal feelings.

Mr Naidu's desperate actions shows he realises the massive erosion of his political capital and support. He has resorted to such dirty communal politics as his development/welfare activities as CM don't compare with what young Jagan Mohan Reddy has achieved in less than two years.

The Opposition's role is to criticise and correct the government in areas that positively affect people. The Opposition's criticism should force a government to take more steps towards effective governance. But the TDP-led Opposition in Andhra aren't

playing this role and are instead damaging the state's social fabric by stoking religious sentiments. Mr Naidu's actions are a great disservice to the nation at large and setting a wrong precedent to other regional parties — to turn communal as their last option to remain politically relevant.

The Supreme Court, way back in 1994, warned of the perils of inciting religious feelings in the landmark nine-judge bench ruling in S.R. Bommai versus Union of India, where it said: "In a secular democracy like ours, mingling of religion with politics is unconstitutional". Its implication was clear — communal politics are a flagrant breach of our Constitution and of the secular democratic ethos. It is imperative that religion and caste aren't brought into politics by any party, association or individual.

Communal hatred is being used in Andhra to divert people's attention away from the unprecedented welfare schemes of the YSRC government. Recently, the CM flagged off the distribution of 30 lakh housing sites, an initiative to help every citizen fulfil their dream of owning a site and house. The Opposition couldn't digest such progress. This had led the Opposition parties to resort to communal politics to play spoilsport.

The American crisis began unfolding when Richard Nixon disengaged the US dollar from the gold standard. Remember how we in the ex-colony of the empire used to refer to the UK pound as sterling?



Mohan
Guruswamy

Thomas L. Friedman is a New York Times columnist and three-time Pulitzer Prize winner and is possibly the world's foremost globalisation evangelist. A kind of Billy Graham of globalisation. His first book *The World is Flat* came at a time when globalisation was still in its early days and was seen by many as the wave of the future and a panacea to the world's economic ills. Globalisation is described as the process in which people, ideas and goods spread throughout the world, spurring more interaction and integration between the world's cultures, governments and economies.

But what it turned out to be in practice is a system where the low-cost producers ended up as providers to America's gargantuan appetite for manufactured goods. They got paid in US dollars, which they promptly invested in US banks or treasury notes. American banking institutions in turn lent most of it to US consumers and companies who then bought more from us with that money. In 2020, the US posted a trade deficit of \$880 billion. But for the Covid-19 pandemic-induced economic contraction this was headed for a trillion dollars. This is the money the rest of the world salvages for. The US dollar is the world's most trusted and preferred currency. That is directly related to the rest of the world's confidence in the US system and its credibility. Is it any surprise then that 66 per cent of the world's reserves are held in US dollars? Even China holds almost \$3 trillion in US notes. India has \$548 billion. This cycle of production, consumption, conversion, credit and

demand is what globalisation has in fact become. Without the annual US deficits, the rest of the world will stagnate.

Every thinking American knows that the good times will not last forever. Former President Barack Obama tried to set it right by promising to narrow America's trade deficit or possibly ending it in 10 years by seeking to make US businesses competitive. He planned to make the US the centre-piece of a new Indo-Pacific trading bloc (Trans-Pacific Partnership) to blunt China's export surge and burgeoning trade surpluses. He failed. He left the US with an annual trade deficit of \$568 billion in 2016. Then Donald Trump picked up the gauntlet. He threw out the TPP and sought to beat down China's growing economic power with a sledgehammer as policy. He raised tariffs and banned many companies and their products. It only ended up with US consumers having to pay more and the US having to subsidise its farmers more as China dropped shutters on US farm products. By the time he was through he left the US with a trade deficit of \$880 billion in 2020. Now he has gone, and Joseph R. Biden has to pick it up from there.

The problem with the Americans is that they have the problem defined wrong in the first place. The problem is not about the US sliding into oblivion because its education system is faltering, or its R&D is flagging, or because Americans have ceased to be innovative and finally that China and India are beating it at all this. Far from being America's competitors, China and India are still its under-economies, serving it with cheap labour working on repeti-

tive jobs and repetitive number crunching. The problem with the US is that it lives far beyond its means and its profligacy has left it as debtor unable to pay its bills by endeavour, but by printing new banknotes. The problem with the unlimited printing of banknotes is that the more you print the less they can do.

The American crisis began unfolding when Richard Nixon disengaged the US dollar from the gold standard. Remember how we in the ex-colony of the empire upon which the sun never set used to refer to the UK pound as sterling? That was because every British pound was linked to a gold equivalent in weight. That's how world currencies were valued then.

That was the basis of exchange rates. In one fell swoop, Richard Nixon, aka Tricky Dicky, unable to finance his twin wars in Vietnam and Cambodia, found a way out. Delink the US dollar from the gold standard and put the printing presses at its five Federal Reserves to full use. This had gone on over 40 long years and the birds have begun to come home to roost. Its two seaboard, the US' blue wings, keep it soaring. In the east the "masters of the universe" have invented an ideology — globalisation — that makes them the rest of the world's money managers. That money drives domestic consumption with easy credit. That money also drives the relentless innovation in America's west that drives global production and consumption. It's the geo-

graphical middle with its wheat, corn and soyabean fields, industrial scale production of poultry, pork, beef and dairy products and with its shuttered factories, that is blaming the rest of the world for its relative penury. They want to make America great again by making, if not all, but most of the world's manufactured goods. These need the giant steel mills and chemical plants gushing out industrial material to turn into industrial and consumer products. All those have also bolted. There is little President Biden can do to reverse it. The genie has left the American bottle and America's industries have mostly gone overseas.

The error in Friedman's analysis is that declining education standards, declining spending on R&D and productivity have led to the American crisis. President Obama never tired of stating this. Assuming the US sets right its high school education and the maths proficiency of its kids are on par with that of Indian or Chinese kids, would that stop US jobs from leaving for Bengaluru or Nanjing? As long as Indian and Chinese workers work for less than one dollar an hour when US workers will not work for less than \$15 an hour, jobs will flow across the deep oceans.

Despite what Friedman writes, the US will never cede the innovation crown to either China or India. If not the brilliant young techie entrepreneurs US universities churn out, young Indians and Chinese who flock to Silicon Valley and its clones in droves will see to that. The US will keep innovating. China and India will turn the innovation into goods and services. That is the future, till the house of cards falls down. Keeping it up is Mr Biden's biggest challenge.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

SHOCKING VERDICT

It is shocking to read the verdict of the High Court (*HC's skin-to-skin verdict: Maha govt urged to file appeal, DC, Janaury, 26*).

The literal interpretation of the law is not in consonance with the spirit of the deterrence. It was indeed a sexual assault. Many such cases go unreported due to social stigma. The victim will be psychologically traumatised for life. Mild punishment will only embolden the predators.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

LOCAL POLLS

Our SEC had postponed the local body polls in March 2020 citing the pandemic. Wonder why the same argument for the same local body polls in the same state by the same SEC is rejected now. I also wonder why the courts favoured the SEC's decision who was at fault in the very first place since the local body polls became due way back in August 2018. The then undivided High Court had had directed SECs to hold local body polls within three months.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

VIOLENCE AT RALLY

It's unfortunate that the tractor rally lead by protesting farmers in Delhi has turned violent. The farmer leaders should have confined to their routes which were allotted by the Delhi police, given the sensitive situation prevailing there. The needless clashes in the end with police have taken the sheen out of the protracted struggle which gained people's support for the way it was being conducted all these days peacefully.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

50 YEARS AGO IN
DECCAN
Chronicle

Giri issues poll notices for 11 States

NEW DELHI, January. 27

By a notification issued today, the President, Mr. V.V. Giri, called upon all the Parliamentary constituencies in 11 States and three Union territories to elect members to the fifth Lok Sabha.

The notification is the first of a series to be issued by the President. It marks the commencement of the election process.

a Sothbey's auction in Geneva.

Andhra Pradesh DGP D. Gautam Sawang has issued an alert across the state, asking all police officials to increase vigilance at temple sites. CCTV surveillance at all places of worship are being ramped up to monitor all movement at shrines. Over 2,600 temples across Andhra have been mapped for installation of CCTV cameras.

Finally, it's pertinent to note most attacks have taken place in temples run by TDP leaders. For instance, the temple with the Ramatheertham idol was headed by former TDP MP Ashok Gajapathi Raju, who has now been removed from his post by the state government.

Despite the Opposition's communal politics, the state government's conscience is clear. We will strive for development, irrespective of caste, creed, race, religion or gender, keeping in mind the principles enshrined in our secular Constitution and strive to make Andhra Pradesh India's number one state.

The writer is a Rajya Sabha MP and YSRC Parliamentary Party leader and YSRC's national general secretary. He can be reached at: venumbaka.ur@sansad.nic.in.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48347.59	-1.09
Nifty 50	14238.90	-0.93
S&P 500*	3,854.61	-0.02
Dollar (₹)	72.94	0.05
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.70	0.03
Euro (₹)	88.62	0.24
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,509*141	0.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.83	-0.09
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.954	0.25
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.046	0.007

* As of 8:30 PM IST

India Inc puts 42% less money in foreign arms

Overseas investment by domestic firms fell by over 42 per cent to \$1.45 billion in December 2020, according to Reserve Bank data. In the year-ago month, companies in India had invested \$2.51 billion in their foreign firms (joint ventures / wholly owned units). In November 2020, the total outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) was of \$1.06 billion, down by 27 per cent from a month ago.

Gail plans to float pipeline InvIT before bifurcation



Gail (India) Ltd plans to launch an InvIT of its two gas pipelines between Dahej and Bengaluru ahead of a proposed splitting of the pipeline business from the gas marketing function, sources said. The nation's top gas marketing and transportation firm plans to monetise Dahej-Uran-Panvel-Dabhol pipeline and Dabhol-Bengaluru pipeline by setting up an Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT).

Grofers expects ₹10,000 cr in GMV by March

Grofers expects to achieve Rs 10,000 crore in gross merchandise value (GMV) by March supported by traction in its ongoing sale. The company claims to have witnessed around 3 to 4 times increase in sales during its ongoing Grand Orange Bag Days (GOBD) sale. "We are on road to double our GMV every year and are aiming to hit Rs 10,000 crore in GMV by financial year 2021," Grofers founder Saurabh Kumar said.

Mahanadi Coal Railway scouts for CEO

Mahanadi Coal Railway Ltd, a joint venture of MCL, Ircon and Idco, is scouting for a chief executive officer to implement coal evacuation infrastructure projects in Odisha, officials said. Initially, one corridor has been identified for implementation of the project, the estimated cost of which is Rs 1,700 crore. This project will help in creating railway evacuation infrastructure for Talcher mines.



■ Health tax may go up; 4-yr plan to up spend to 4% of GDP

Budget may double spending on health

AFTAB AHMED
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

India is likely to double health spending in the next fiscal year with the aim of raising expenditure in the sector to 4 per cent of gross domestic output in the coming four years, two officials said, as the country looks to fix its health system after the coronavirus pandemic. India will likely raise its health spending to Rs 1.2-1.3 lakh crore (\$16.46-\$17.83 billion) in the fiscal year starting April 1, from the current year's projected spending of Rs 62,600 crore, the officials told Reuters.

The new healthcare plan is likely to be unveiled on February 1 when finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman presents the country's budget for 2020-21. The officials did not



want to be named as the plan is not yet public.

Even after decades of high growth, the country's spending on healthcare has been a meagre 1.3 per cent of GDP, way below Brics peers and developed countries.

The strain on India's underfunded healthcare system was put in stark focus during the pandemic, with states forced to set up makeshift Covid care centres and many hospitals struggling to meet the demand for beds and oxy-

gen cylinders.

India has recorded over 10.6 million coronavirus cases, the second-highest in the world after the United States.

Sitharaman is likely to unveil a four year health budget plan with the aim to move India's healthcare spend to 4 per cent of GDP, with the help of a dedicated health fund, the officials said.

The government could also increase a health tax from the current 1 per cent of income and corporate tax to fund the new programme, one of the above officials said.

Currently it raises about Rs 15,000 crore-Rs 16,000 crore annually from the health tax.

The finance ministry did not reply to an e-mail seeking comment on the story.

—Reuters

Sitharaman could unveil easier FDI routes for construction, animation

SHRUTI SRIVASTAVA
JAN. 26

The government is considering easing foreign investment rules for sectors ranging from construction to animation to lure overseas capital needed to create jobs in an economy cratered by the pandemic, people with knowledge of the matter said.

A proposal to allow limited liability partnerships (LLPs) to invest in the construction of townships, roads, hotels and hospitals is under discussion, the people said, asking not to be identified, citing rules. A plan to allow 100 per cent foreign direct investment in animation, visual effects, gaming and comics sector may also find men-

tion in the government's budget, one person said.

Allowing LLPs will open a new investment avenue when the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is struggling to revive the economy.

The government estimates India will require investment worth \$777 billion across infrastructure for development by 2022.

The construction sector received FDI inflows worth \$25.7 billion between April and September 2020, government data show. The relaxation in rules may help the government get closer to its target of creating affordable housing for all in urban areas by 2022 and building 100 smart cities.

—Bloomberg

Cairn Energy cautions Indian assets abroad could be seized

AMMAR ZAIDI
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

Just like US oil firm ConocoPhillips grabbed Venezuelan assets overseas to enforce an arbitration award, Indian bank accounts, airplanes and other foreign properties can be seized to collect \$1.4 billion awarded to UK's Cairn Energy against Indian retro tax, according to a letter seen by PTL.

The British firm has begun identifying overseas Indian assets in case the Indian government fails to honour the arbitration award.

Cairn CEO Simon Thomson in the January 22 letter to the Indian High Commissioner in London—with copies marked to the Prime Minister's Office, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and external affairs minister S. Jaishankar—said the arbitration award is "final and binding" and "the Government of India has an obligation to comply with its terms." "As India is a signatory



to the New York Convention, the award can be enforced against Indian assets in numerous jurisdictions around the world for which the necessary preparations have been put in place," he wrote.

In 2019, ConocoPhillips had moved US courts to seize Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA's assets to collect \$2 billion compensation it had won in an arbitration against Venezuela's 2007 takeover of its assets. PDVSA thereafter paid ConocoPhillips.

The three-member tribunal, which comprised a judge appointed by India, last month unanimously overturned a Rs 10,247 crore retrospective tax demand on Cairn and

asked the Indian government to return value of the shares it sold, dividend it seized and tax refunds it stopped to enforce the tax.

If India does not comply with the order of the tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, it would be a violation of international rules on arbitral awards, commonly called the New York Convention.

Sources with knowledge of the matter said the options before the Indian government were limited. An appeal against the award in a court in The Hague may not yield positive results as the tribunal had given a very detailed 582-page order to make it "as bullet-proof" as possible.

In contrast, the September 2020 arbitration award in UK's Vodafone Group challenge to retro tax demand of Rs 22,100 crore was only 100 pages. That order has been challenged by India in a court in Singapore—the seat of that arbitration. —PTI

BUDGET MAY HIKE AGRI CREDIT TARGET TO ABOUT ₹19 LAKH CR

New Delhi, Jan. 26: With the aim of doubling farmers' income by 2022, the government is likely to raise farm credit target to about Rs 19 lakh crore in Budget 2021-22, to be presented on February 1, according to sources.

For the current fiscal, the government has set a farm credit target of Rs 15 lakh crore.

The government has been increasing the credit target for the farm sector every year and this time too, the target is likely to be increased to around Rs 19 lakh crore for the 2021-22, sources said.

"Non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and co-operatives are active in the agriculture credit space. The Nabard refinance scheme will be further expanded. Agriculture credit target for the year 2020-21 has been set up at Rs 15 lakh crore," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said while announcing the Budget 2020-21.

The agricultural credit flow has increased consistently over the years, exceeding the target set for each fiscal. For instance, credit worth Rs 11.68 lakh crore was given to farmers in 2017-18, much higher than the Rs 10 lakh crore target set for that year, they added.

Similarly, crop loans worth Rs 10.66 lakh crore were disbursed in the 2016-17 fiscal, higher than the credit target of Rs 9 lakh crore.

—PTI

MSEs seek council help to get over ₹18,700-cr dues

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 26

Micro and small enterprises (MSEs) have filed over 66,500 applications seeking payment of Rs 18,700 crore pending dues from central PSUs, ministries and other entities. The Micro and Small Enterprise Facilitation Council (MSEFC) has disposed of cases involving 4.6 per cent of the payment dues. Only a minuscule of the MSME payment dues is reaching the council for settlement.

MSEFC, which facilitates settlement of pending dues of MSEs, has received a total of 66,503 applications seeking payment of Rs 18,728 crore, or over \$2.5 billion, from buyers, as per data from MSME Samadhaan. The buyers are central PSUs, ministries, departments, state PSUs and government departments, railways, proprietor owned entities, individuals and other MSMEs.

The council has disposed of 5,889 applications, accounting for Rs 871 crore, or 4.6 per cent, of the Rs 18,728 crore dues. Further, the council has rejected 11,616 applications, which amounted to payment of Rs 2,541 crore. As many as 5,930 cases involving Rs 895 crore were mutually settled with the buyers.

The council is currently considering 16,088 cases, involving total payments of Rs 6,804 crore. The MSEFC is yet to review 26,980 applications, seeking Rs 6,978 crore of payment dues.



According to Rajive Chawla, chairman of IamSMEofIndia, less than one per cent of the payment dues are reaching the council for settlement. "Many of the MSMEs do not want to drag their buyer to the council as it risks losing the buyer, especially if private companies are involved. In the case of government departments and PSUs that risk is not there. Further, they wait for the situation to improve and the buyer to settle the payments. Moreover, the awareness about the council is also limited among the MSMEs," he said.

However, of late, MSMEs are increasingly approaching the council after the government increased the threshold of payment dues to approach NCLT to Rs 1 crore. Further, government also has suspended fresh cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. "The MSMEs earlier had the option of approaching NCLT. But since the government has put fresh cases on hold and increased the threshold of dues, they are approaching the council more," said Chawla.

TECH SECTOR TOP PAYOUT CONTRIBUTOR OVER FY10-20



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 26

Technology was the largest payout contributor to the overall payout pool at 20 per cent during the decade FY10-20, while the oil and gas sector was the largest contributor to the overall profit pool at 22 per cent.

Technology was the second highest contributor to the profit pool at 14 per cent, according to the 'Payouts' – The Eabler for Value Creation report from Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

The top six sectors that contributed high payout ratios are mining (75 per cent), consumer (70 per cent), technology (58 per cent), utilities (50 per cent), media (41 per cent) and capital goods (40 per cent).

"Divergence in the profit pool and payout pool of companies is primarily due to varying levels of capital intensity across different sectors. Consumer and technology sectors have the lowest capital intensity," the report said.

The top six sectors with high profit contribution during FY10-20 were oil & gas– 22 per cent, technology– 14 per cent, banks (private sector) – 9 per cent, mining–9 per cent, automobiles–8 per cent and consumer – 6 per cent.

Top six sectors with high payout contributions were technology – 20 per cent, oil & gas – 17 per cent, mining – 16 per cent, consumer – 10 per cent, utilities – 7 per cent and automobiles – 6 per cent.

WEF | PLEDGE

Firms sign up for core Stakeholder Capitalism Metrics

RIL, M&M commit to sustainability metrics

New Delhi/Davos, Jan. 26: Reliance Industries and Mahindra Group on Tuesday joined more than 50 global giants in committing to core Stakeholder Capitalism Metrics—a set of environmental, social and governance (ESG) parameters and disclosures prepared by the World Economic Forum.

The global giants who have made this commitment include Accenture, Bank of America, Credit Suisse, Dell Technologies, Deloitte, EY, Heineken, HP, HSBC Holdings, IBM, JLL, KPMG, Mastercard, McKinsey, Nestle, PayPal, PwC, Royal Dutch Shell, Royal Phillips, Salesforce, Schneider Electric, Siemens, Sony, Total, UBS,

Unilever, Yara International and Zurich Insurance Group.

Announcing the details during its online Davos Agenda Summit, the WEF said a total of 61 business leaders have so far committed to the core Stakeholder Capitalism Metrics, which offer a core set of 31 universal, comparable disclosures focused on people, planet, prosperity and governance that companies can report on, regardless of industry or region.

The move signals that private sector leaders view environmental, social and governance factors as critical to the success and long-term viability of all businesses and a unified

voice is gathering pace on a global solution for non-financial reporting, the WEF said.

The metrics are aimed at strengthening the ability of companies and investors to benchmark progress on sustainability matters, thereby improving decision-making and enhancing transparency and accountability on the shared and sustainable value companies create.

The business leaders and their organisations have committed to "reflect the core metrics in their reporting to investors and other stakeholders (such as annual report, sustainability report, proxy statements, or other materials) by reporting on the met-

rics most relevant to their business or briefly explaining why a different approach is more appropriate".

They will also publicly support this work and encourage their business partners to do so and promote the further convergence of existing ESG standards, frameworks and principles to support progress towards a globally accepted solution for non-financial reporting on common ESG metrics.

In making these commitments, business leaders are signalling that ESG factors are increasingly critical to the success and long-term viability of all businesses, the WEF said.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

Two UAE players banned for fixing

Dubai: United Arab Emirates players Mohammad Naveed and Shaiman Anwar Butt were on Tuesday suspended by the ICC after they were found guilty of trying to fix matches during the T20 World Cup qualifier in 2019.

Former UAE captain Naveed and top-order batsman Shaiman were found guilty of two offences each under the ICC Anti-Corruption Code after they exercised their right to a hearing before a tribunal. The two players were “party to an agreement or effort to fix or contrive or otherwise influence improperly the result, progress, conduct or other aspect(s) of a match or matches at the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup Qualifier 2019,” the ICC said in a statement. — PTI

Nadal takes veiled swipe at Djokovic

Melbourne: Rafael Nadal has taken an apparent swipe at Novak Djokovic over his requests for quarantined players preparing for the Australian Open, saying not everyone felt the need to “advertise” how they were trying to help.

The Serbian world number one issued a list of suggestions to Tennis Australia last week on behalf of 72 players unable to leave their Melbourne hotel rooms after Covid-19 cases were detected on their planes to Australia. “We all try to help each other,” Spanish great Nadal told *ESPN* from Adelaide, where he and Djokovic are quarantining ahead of the Grand Slam.

“Some need to make public everything they do to help others,” he added, in remarks widely seen as referring to Djokovic. — AFP

Ex-India goalie Prasanta dies

Kolkata: Former India goalkeeper Prasanta Dora, who made a name for himself while playing for big three clubs of Kolkata Maidan, died on Tuesday. He was 44 and is survived by 12-year old son Adi and wife Soumi.

According to his elder brother Hemanta, who also played as a goalkeeper for India and Mohun Bagan, Prasanta was diagnosed with Hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis in December after he developed unremitting fever.

“His platelet count reduced drastically and doctors took a long time to diagnose the disease. We were giving him blood regularly but he could not survive and died at 1.40pm today,” the elder brother said. — PTI

Govt decree saves Italy from Oly ban

Rome: The Italian government pushed through a last-minute decree Tuesday providing more autonomy for the country’s Olympic committee in an effort to prevent the team from being suspended for the Tokyo Games. It was one of the final acts of Giuseppe Conte’s government before the premier headed to the presidential palace to offer his resignation. The IOC’s executive board had on its agenda Wednesday whether to impose a humiliating probation on Italy because of a two-year domestic dispute that it said amounted to government interference.

After the decree was approved, Italian Olympic Committee president Giovanni Malag immediately called IOC president Thomas Bach and both parties expressed their “satisfaction” over the development. — AP

Live on TV

BADMINTON

BWF World Tour Finals: Group matches from 9.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

CRICKET

Pakistan vs South Africa: First Test, Day 2 from 10.30 am on Sony Ten 2

FOOTBALL

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament: Quarterfinals — Haryana vs Baroda from 11.55 am; Rajasthan vs Bihar from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Chelsea vs Wolverhampton Wanderers from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1; Manchester United vs Sheffield United from 1.45 am (Thursday) on Star Sports Select 1

WWE

NXT: Bout: from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

Printed and Published from Nellore by K.Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at PlotNo.527,Chemudugunta (Village), Venkatachalasatram (Mandal), Nellore. RNI Registration No.APENG/2003/11048 Phones: 2348581, 82 & 83, Fax:2348580, Grams: CHRONICLE, Editor: Kaushik Mitter

STATUS KOHLI

Nothing changes between me and Virat, he is my captain and I am his deputy: Rahane

New Delhi, Jan. 26: Ajinkya Rahane has won many a fans with his astute captaincy during the Indian team’s epic triumph in Australia but he would like to make it very clear that the undisputed leader of this side is Virat Kohli and he is happy filling in when required.

Come February 5, Rahane will again be the vice-captain of the Test team against England with Kohli back in the saddle. So will things be different now when he once again dons the vice captain’s hat?

“Nothing changes. Virat was and will always be the captain of the Test team and I am his deputy. When he was absent it was my duty to lead the side and my responsibility to give my best for Team India’s success,” Rahane, who was on his way to Chennai, said.

For the vice-captain, it was not about being on the hot seat but having the ability to perform the role to perfection that mattered the most.

“It’s not the matter of merely being a captain. How you perform the captain’s role is what’s more important. So far I have been successful. Hopefully, in future also, I will try to give these kind of results for my team,” said the man, who has led his country to four wins in five Tests.

Reflecting on his relationship with Kohli, Rahane said it has always been smooth.

“Me and Virat have always shared a good bonding with each other. He has time and again praised my batting. Both of us played memorable knocks for our team in India and overseas conditions. It only helped that Virat comes at No.4 and myself at No.5. We have had a lot of partnerships,” the 32-year-old said.

Theirs is a relationship based on mutual respect. “We have always backed each other’s game. When we are at the crease, we discuss threadbare about opposition’s bowling. We caution each other whenever one of us plays a rash shot,” he said.

— PTI



PUNJAB KNOCK CHAMPS KARNATAKA OUT

Ahmedabad, Jan. 26: Punjab knocked defending champions Karnataka out from the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 cricket tournament as their bowlers set up a comfortable nine-wicket win in the first quarterfinal on Tuesday.

In the other quarterfinal, Tamil Nadu defeated Himachal Pradesh comfortably by five wickets.

After restricting Himachal to a lowly 135 for 9, thanks to Sonu Yadav’s 3 for 14, Tamil

Nadu rode on fine knocks from Baba Aparajith (52 not out) and Shahrulkhan (40 not out) to romp home with 2.1 overs to spare.

Punjab first dismissed Karnataka for meagre 87 and then overhauled the target in 12.4 overs in what turned out to be a lopsided contest at the Sardar Patel stadium.

Pacers Siddharth Kaul (3/15) and Sandeep Sharma (2/17) ran through the Karnataka top-order after they were

sent in to bat. Karnataka were reeling at 26 for three, after openers Karun Nair (12) and Devdutt Padikkal (11) fell cheaply.

Pavan Deshpande (0) was dismissed off his second ball, as Mayank Markande took a diving catch.

Kaul dismissed both Padikkal and Deshpande in the fourth over.

It soon became 26 for 4 as young left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh (2/16) dismissed B. R. Sharath (2), who was caught in the slip cordon.

BRIEF SCORES

■ Karnataka 87 in 17.2 overs (Aniruddha Joshi 27, Siddharth Kaul 3/15, Arshdeep Singh 2/16) lost to Punjab 89/1 in 12.4 overs (Prabhsimran Singh 49 n.o., Mandeep Singh 35 n.o.).

■ Himachal Pradesh 135 for 9 in 20 overs (Abhimanyu Rana 28, Nitin Sharma 26, Rishi Dhawan 35 n.o., Sandeep Warrier 2/32, Sonu Yadav 3/14) lost to Tamil Nadu 141/5 in 17.5 overs (Baba Aparajith 52 n.o., Shahrulkhan 40 n.o., Vaibhav Arora 3/30).

PAK IN TROUBLE AS RABADA LEADS SA FIGHTBACK

Karachi, Jan. 26: Fast bowler Kagiso Rabada took two wickets for just eight runs as he led a South African fightback against Pakistan in their first Test here Tuesday.

Pakistan were in trouble at 33/4 at the close of play, having bowled out the visitors for 220 — their second-lowest total in the country.

Fourteen wickets fell on the National Stadium pitch, which had been expected to take spin from day one. But then Rabada paid back the hosts with interest, bowling Abid Ali (four) in his third over and then getting debutant Imran Butt (nine) caught at leg-slip off a rising delivery. — AFP

Brief scores: South Africa 220 (Elgar 58, Lindie 35, Yasir 3/54, Nauman 2/38) vs Pakistan 33/4 (Rabada 2/8).

Khaleel, Krishna belt double tons

Tanuj, Naman, Abid, Kranthi, Shiva, Varun, Avik too shine



Naman Agarwal



Varun Vinod



Shiva Srikanth

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 26

Shaik Khaleel and N. Jyothi Sai Krishna slammed a double century each to hog the limelight on Tuesday at the Hyderabad Cricket Association’s A-2 Division two-day league matches.

Khaleel hit 212 with the help of 34 fours and six sixes to help Sri Shyam to 385 against Vijay Hanuman on the first day.

In another match, N. Jyothi Sai Krishna’s 207 that was decorated with 18 fours and eight sixes propelled Postal to 452 against Medak District.

Abid Hussain (106) of Mahbubnagar District, S. M. Tanuj (115) of Young Master, Naman Agarwal (113) of Oxford Blues, Shiva Srikanth Naidu (5/38) of Deccan Blues, Varun Vinod (112) of Hyderabad Wanderers, Galaxy’s Kranthi Kiran (5/22) and Avik (5/55) of Hyderabad Titans were the other performers.

Brief scores:
A-2 DIVISION (TWO-DAY)

Day-1:

- Sri Shyam 385 in 89.4 overs (Shaik Khaleel 212 — 187b, 34x4, 6x6, Syed 54, Bharath 3/73) vs Vijay Hanuman 13 for no loss in 3 overs.
- Postal 452 in 88.5 overs (Md Shaker Ahmed 77, N. Jyothi Sai Krishna 207 — 225b, 18x4, 8x6, V. Bhargav Anand Goud 50, M. Suresh 32, Md Azam Raza 2/88, B. H. Prem Charan 3/68) vs Medak District.

Day-2:

- Sri Shyam 385 in 89.4 overs (Shaik Khaleel 212 — 187b, 34x4, 6x6, Syed 54, Bharath 3/73) vs Vijay Hanuman 13 for no loss in 3 overs.
- Postal 452 in 88.5 overs (Md Shaker Ahmed 77, N. Jyothi Sai Krishna 207 — 225b, 18x4, 8x6, V. Bhargav Anand Goud 50, M. Suresh 32, Md Azam Raza 2/88, B. H. Prem Charan 3/68) vs Medak District.

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Brief scores: South Africa 220 (Elgar 58, Lindie 35, Yasir 3/54, Nauman 2/38) vs Pakistan 33/4 (Rabada 2/8).



A trainee at the high performance Republic Day tennis camp conducted by Academia Sports Village at their courts at Hyderabad Polo and Riding Club in Aziz Nagar, receives her certificate from Ms Khursheed Begum (centre), chief patron of RR Foundation, on Tuesday.

RITHIKA, MIHIR IN THIRD ROUND OF U-16 TENNIS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 26

Rithika Kakarlamudi and Mihir Parcha were the best players on show as they sailed into the third round of the girls and boys categories respectively at the AITA C7 Under-16 tournament being held at Sania Mirza Tennis Academy in Murtuzaguda, Hyderabad.

Rithika blanked G. Hansika Reddy 6-0, 6-0 while Mihir thumped Thakur Arman Singh 6-2, 6-0.

THE RESULTS

Boys singles: Mihir Parcha bt Thakur Arman Singh 6-2, 6-0; Tarun Korwar bt Arnab Bishoiy 6-1, 6-2; Parth Mandal bt Rohan Siram 6-4, 4-6, 6-4; P. Sandilya bt Yeswanth G. 6-3, 6-1; Nikhil D’Souza bt Satyajit Sunil Nair 6-4, 7-6 (9-7); Vishal Vasudev bt S. V. Pranav Kumar Reddy 4-6, 6-2, 6-2; Venkat Rishi Batanki bt Dandu Trishant Reddy 6-2, 6-2; Dreek Saha bt Murali Koushik 7-6 (7-5), 7-5.

Girls singles: Rithika Kakarlamudi bt G. Hansika Reddy 6-0, 6-0; Sama Chevikia Reddy bt P. V. Yesvathi 6-4, 6-3; S. Kaavya bt G. Harshmeetha 6-3, 6-1; Puushi Ladda bt Dandu Laxmi Siri 7-6 (7-4), 6-2; T. Sai Janvi bt Gagana Moana Kumar 6-3, 6-0; Monisha Devarakonda bt M. Sri Vidya 6-2, 6-2; Divija Manenti bt G. Sowkha 6-4, 6-4; Rishitha Basi Reddy bt Sameeksha Anem 6-3, 6-2.