



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



PROJECT  
SINICIZATION

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. Moderate to dense fog in the morning. Strong surface winds during the day. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 20 and 07 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 100% Min: 70%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 18.6°C (-3) Min: 04.2°C (-3)

SUN RISES

07:13 hrs

MOON RISES

13:22 hrs

SUN SETS

17:53 hrs

MOON SETS

03:15 hrs

THUMBNAILS



The Bengal tableau during tableaux Press preview as part of the Republic Day rehearsals. In the Capital on Friday.

SUBRATA DUTTA

**'EC has no tolerance for money, muscle power':** With political parties apprehending unrest in poll-bound Bengal, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora said the commission has zero-tolerance to money and muscle power and misuse of the government machinery. The CEC added no civic police volunteers will be deployed for the upcoming Assembly elections in the state.

P4

**Bihar police circular against social media posts:** Offensive social media posts against the government, ministers, MPs, legislators and state officials will now be treated as cyber crime and invite penal action, a circular issued by a top Bihar police officer said.

**Trump impeachment:** Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, plans to send the article of impeachment against Donald Trump to the Senate on Monday, launching the start of the ex-president's trial on a charge of incitement of the 6 January insurrection. Trump is the first president to be twice impeached.

## Congress to elect party chief by June

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 22 JANUARY

The Congress party will have an elected president by June 2021, with the party's working committee on Friday approving holding the internal election after the conclusion of Assembly polls in five states.

The committee after a three and a half hour meeting authorised incumbent party chief Sonia Gandhi to schedule the internal election after the conclusion of Assembly polls in five states.

Addressing a joint Press conference, Congress leaders K Venugopal and Randeep Surjewala said elections to the CWC (Congress Working Committee) will also be held but it remains to be seen whether they can be scheduled before or after the election to the Congress chief's post.

### PARTY CONSENSUS

► The working committee of Congress after a three and a half hour meeting authorised incumbent party chief Sonia Gandhi to schedule the internal election after the conclusion of Assembly polls in five states

Sources said the Central Election Authority has proposed the holding of polls for electing the party president and AICC session on 29 May and the working committee discussed the dates, but authorised Sonia Gandhi to schedule them after the Assembly polls

The CWC decided that there will be an elected Congress president by June 2021 at any cost," AICC general secretary K Venugopal said.

The CWC passed three resolutions demanding a repeal of the three agriculture laws, a time-bound JPC probe

into the alleged violations of national security and Official Secrets Act and another to ensure that the government ensures free time-bound Covid-19 vaccination for the poor and oppressed sections.

"The CWC decided that there will be an elected Congress president by June 2021 at any cost," AICC general secretary K Venugopal said.

He said the little change of schedule depending on

the state elections will be decided soon.

"The CWC discussed the schedule of Congress president's elections in May-end, proposed by its election authority. All CWC members unanimously requested Congress president that the internal elections should not interfere with the Assembly elections."

Asked about any dissenting notes on holding of elections, Surjewala said, "There was no dissent at the meeting."

He added that leaders like Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma or P Chidambaram were not dissenters but senior members of the party and were all unanimous in deciding to extend the election schedule a little. "There was no argument over the poll schedule.

There is no dispute over conducting organizational election," Venugopal said.

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI, 22 JANUARY

The Congress on Friday demanded a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe into the purported WhatsApp chats of Arnab Goswami for breach of national security and violations of Official Secrets Act and book those involved.

Chaired by Sonia Gandhi, the Congress Working Committee, the highest decision making body of the grand old party, passed a resolution to this effect.

"The CWC demands a time-bound investigation by a Joint Parliamentary Committee to enquire into the breach of national security, violations of Official Secrets Act and the role of the persons involved. Ultimately, those who are guilty of treacherous behaviour must be brought

before the law and punished," the CWC resolution said.

The CWC expresses its grave concern at the revelations "exposing the sordid conversations that have undoubtedly compromised national security"

ernment structures, scandalous and extraneous influence over government policies, and a vicious attack on the independence of the judiciary," the resolution also said.

It alleged that the "shameful compromise" of the Modi government with non-government players has been exposed.

The CWC also expressed shock that even days after the revelations, the Prime Minister and Central government remained silent on the issue as though the storm will pass.

"Their silence undermines their collusion, complicity and guilt. The storm will not pass and we will hold the Central government accountable for compromising national security and aiding India's adversaries," the resolution said.

Rajib Banerjee resigns from Bengal Cabinet

KOLKATA, 22 JANUARY

In another major setback for the Trinamul Congress, forest minister Rajib Banerjee resigned from the Mamata Banerjee Cabinet today, saying he was deeply hurt by the lack of "courtesy" of the chief minister when she removed him from the post of irrigation minister two years back and was forced to take this decision after being publicly humiliated by a section of the party's leaders for airing his grievances over their style of functioning.

He submitted his resignation to the chief minister at her Kalighat residence and then went to Raj Bhawan to hand over his resignation letter personally to Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar.

DETAILS ON PAGE 4

## 'Existential uncertainty mere teacup storm'

PULAKESH MUKHOPADHYAY  
KOLKATA, 22 JANUARY

Are ATK-Mohun Bagan more ATK than Mohun Bagan? "obviously", could be most people's answer, given that he who pays the piper call the tune. But Mohun Bagan also include lots of those who apprehend a kind of existential uncertainty when ATK step forth in the lime-light, which leaves the traditionalists with a passionate attachment to the past.

The in-house schism surfaced again recently when Mohun Bagan, whose green-and-maroon shirts are deemed an iconic representation of the club, recently played an Indian Super League match in the pre-

dominantly black of ATK. Social media came to be taken by storm and hell's foundations seemed to be quivering like a dry leaf amid gale-force winds sweeping the road fringing the hallowed pavilion of the club in central Kolkata.

Posters, as seen in the accompanying picture, stuck to the gates fronting the entrance to the ground, demanded a break with ATK, though in a flawed way if you took a casual but clear look at the dubious adornment. It makes you wonder how the merger was pulled off without a fuss. Did anyone believe that Big Money, which Mohun Bagan needed to keep up with their trophy-winning dreams, would suffice itself? ATK might not be

unduly worried about the stray eruptions of protest but Mohun Bagan, anticipating the mid-February annual general meeting of the institution dating from 1889, could be confronting an attack of the collywobbles, what with a few members said to be drafting heart-of-the-matter questions like why the merger was presented as the only way going forward.

That the combo's pictorial identity caused a change

in the old Mohun Bagan logo was another sore point. Also, why must ATK precede Mohun Bagan? "It's quite likely that the AGM will be put back, Unquoters said a fan, adding: Quotes Members with nettlesome questions may be sought to be gagged or shouted down or subjected to rough treatment. It has happened before in unrelated but embarrassing situations."

So deep is the frustration among some members, it is said, that they want to ask why Mohun Bagan, like their neighbours East Bengal, did not find an investor instead of latching on to ATK. But then, East Bengal insiders allege being in a chokehold. They say they are in a worse state. "They don't talk to us

about anything. They take all decisions unilaterally and we get to know of these from the morning paper," said a very senior official, requesting anonymity.

But there are people in both the clubs who laugh off the purported conflicts. "If some of our friends sense an existential uncertainty in the way administrative and financial controls have passed on to those whom we called in, it's a storm in a teacup. Beggars can't be choosers. And there're those among these erstwhile czars who wouldn't mind siding with those wielding power now if that implied a healthier stash of cash," said an East Bengal high-up of yesteryear, insisting on being left out of controversies.

**FBdata theft: CBI files case against Cambridge Analytica, another firm**

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 22 JANUARY

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case against two UK-based firms for allegedly illegally harvesting Facebook data of 5.62 lakh friends of 335 Indians who had installed an app created by one of the two firms.

The two firms are Global Science Research Limited, UK represented by Dr Aleksandr Kogan and Cambridge Analytica, UK represented by Mr Alexander Nix. The CBI conducted a preliminary inquiry on a complaint from the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) and registered the case last Tuesday under Section 120 (B) of the IPC, and Sections 66B, 85, 43 (a) read with Section 66 of the Information Technology Act, 2000. The CBI inquiry revealed

that the founder and Director of Global Science Research Limited had created an app, "thisisyourdigitallife" which was authorised to collect specific data of its users on FB as per their platform policy. The app illegally harvested additional data of FB users and of their friends.

The inquiry found the company had entered into a conspiracy with Cambridge Analytica during 2014 and passed on the illegally harvested data to it for commercial purposes. According to the details released by the CBI today, the preliminary inquiry into the case was conducted following a complaint received from the MeitY on 25 July, 2018. Following media reports, the MeitY had contacted FB and Cambridge Analytica to find possible misuse for "profiling and influencing elections in India," the background note on the CBI case said.

# Capital reports 266 fresh corona cases, 7 fatalities

Delhi's active Covid cases tally dips to 2,060, which include 825 patients under home isolation

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 22 JANUARY

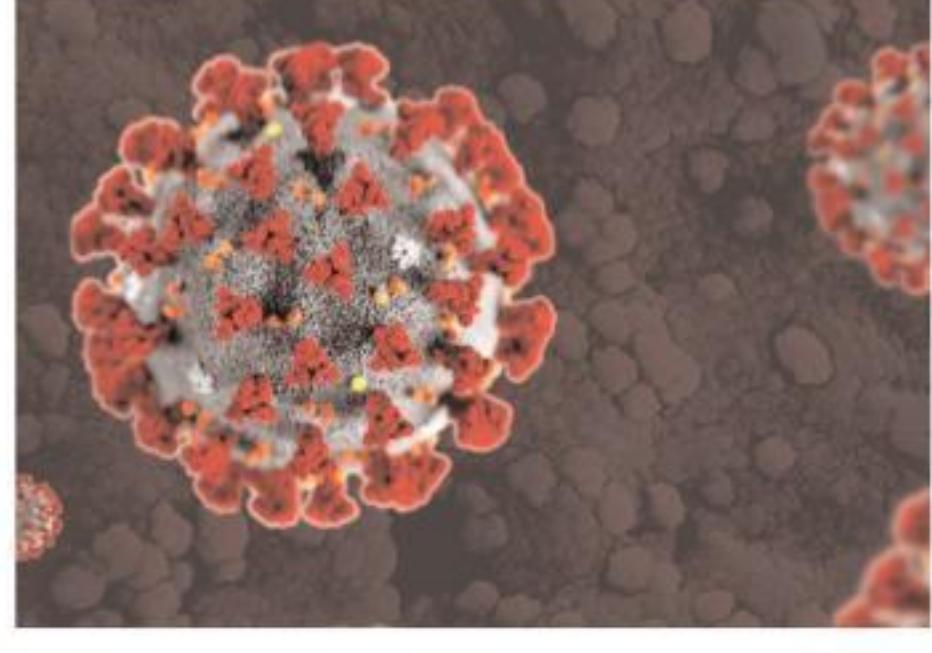
**D**elhi today reported 266 fresh cases of Covid-19 and 7 coronavirus-linked deaths, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

These new coronavirus cases came to light following 71,850 tests, with the positivity rate being 0.37 per cent.

The national capital's Covid caseload climbed to 6,33,542 while its coronavirus toll rose to 10,789, the health bulletin said.

In the last 24 hours 319 Covid patients recovered in the city, which took its cumulative coronavirus recoveries to 6,20,693, the health bulletin stated.

The active cases dropped



to 2,060, which included 825 patients under home isolation.

The total number of containment zones in Delhi stood at 1,836, the bulletin stated.

Of the 9,068 hospital beds reserved for Covid patients in Delhi, 8,125 remained vacant.

The dedicated Covid care centres had 7,246 of their 7,392 beds vacant.

Delhi had yesterday recorded 227 Covid cases and 8 deaths, even as its positivity rate had plunged to 0.28 percent. It tally of active coro-

navirus cases had then dipped to 2,120.

The city had on 20 January recorded 228 coronavirus infections and 10 deaths, even as

the total number of Covid tests conducted in the city had till then crossed the one-crore mark. These cases were detected out of 63,161 tests with the positivity rate standing at 0.36 per cent.

Delhi had on 19 January recorded 231 Covid cases and 10 deaths. These cases were detected out of 72,441 tests. The positivity rate was 0.32 per cent. The recovery rate was then 97.93 per cent.

For details logon to [https://highcourtchd.gov.in/?rs=district\\_notice&district=gurugram](https://highcourtchd.gov.in/?rs=district_notice&district=gurugram).

Dated, this day of 13-01-2021.

Additional District and Sessions Judge, Gurugram Seal of the Court

at the next hearing on April 15.

Justice Prathiba M Singh

noted that despite repeated

directions, the proprietor of

the circus Riazuddin Khan has

failed to take a stand on the

issue and has not disclosed the

location of the male hippo-

potamus.

Delhi SPCA to immediately take steps for seizure of

hippopotamus from the cir-

cus or any other person. Secu-

rity and assistance shall be pro-

vided by the police to the

officials of SPCA team going

for seizure of the animal, the

authorities shall take care of the

animal till further orders of the

court and listed the matter for

further hearing on April 15.

The high court was hear-

ing a petition filed by the ani-

mals rights organisation, Peo-

ple for the Ethical Treatment

of Animals (PETA) in 2018,

seeking immediate seizure of

the male hippopotamus.

It said the hippopotamus was

imported by the Asiad Cir-

cus company from Sanjay

Gandhi Biological Park in

Patna in February 2015 and

was being trained to give

"performance illegally" and

treated with cruelty.

Advocate Aman Hingo-

rani, representing PETA, sub-

mitted that the circus has

been closed and the man-

agement is not likely to appear

in the court.

The plea said the hip-

popotamus was forced to live

a solitary life by the man-

agement of the Asiad Cir-

cus for entertaining people, far

away from his parents who are

in a biological park in Patna.

The high court had earli-

er issued notices to the Asiad

Circus, Delhi government,

Ministry of Environment and

Forest (MoEF), Animals Wel-

fare Board and Central Zoo

Authority on the plea which

also sought that the animal

be transferred back to the bio-

logical park where its parents

are.

The average age of a hip-

popotamus is 40-50 years.

The petition has also

sought direction to extend the

role of the MoEF to frame rules

for protection of exotic wild

animals, including their

exchange, transfer, acquisition

and use, to reduce their

sufferings.

It has said the animal was

born in a zoo and was living

with his parents and it was

"cruel to separate" him from

his family and forced to live

a lonely life depriving the

basic social life.

On receiving complaints

that a hippopotamus was

confined, the organisation

conducted an investigation

of the circus in September

2017 at Moradabad in Uttar

Pradesh and in October, 2017

in Delhi.

It has mentioned in its

investigation report that the

large hippopotamus was con-

fined in an enclosure which

did not meet the minimum

space requirements and it was

inhabitable, containing

murky and filthy water in

the tank.

It has also said that hip-

pos are aggressive and keep-

ing such an animal at a place

like a circus could be a huge

risk and threat to human

lives.

"The Asiad Circus is appar-

ently in violation of the Preven-

tion of Cruelty to Ani-

mals Act since it continues to

exhibit, train and use animals

for performances despite

revocation of its registration

certificate..." it has claimed.

## HC directs SPCA to take custody of hippo confined with Asiad Circus management

PTI

NEW DELHI, 22 JANUARY

The Delhi High Court Friday directed the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animal (SPCA) to immediately take the 9-year-old hippopotamus who has been illegally kept by the Asiad Circus management and place it in the

zoos. The high court also issued non-bailable warrants against the proprietor of Asiad Circus, whose licence had been revoked by the authorities in

2017, to ensure his presence

at the next hearing on April 15.

Justice Prathiba M Singh noted that despite repeated directions, the proprietor of the circus Riazuddin Khan has failed to take a stand on the issue and has not disclosed the location of the male hippo-

potamus.

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On the recommendation @MamataOfficial resignation of West Bengal Forest Minister Rajib Banerjee is accepted with immediate effect in exercise of the powers vested in me under Constitution and charge of Forest Department would rest with Hon'ble Chief Minister

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR  
WEST BENGAL GOVERNOR

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 23 JANUARY 2021

03

# Sukhbir condemns Centre's bid to 'target' DSGMC chief

SAD president Badal accuses the BJP dispensation of launching a 'witch-hunt' against Akali leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa for his 'langar seva' and his support for farmers protesting against farm laws



MANJINDER SINGH SIRSA



SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 22 JANUARY

**S**hiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal today condemned the alleged "witch-hunt" allegedly launched by the BJP dispensation against Akali leader and Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) president Manjinder Singh Sirsa.

Badal charged that a false case has been registered against Sirsa because the latter was providing 'Langar Seva' (free food

service) and other humanitarian aid to the farmers agitating since late November against the Narendra Modi-led central government's controversial farm laws at Delhi's borders.

Following the direction by a Delhi court, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police has reportedly registered an FIR against DSGMC chief Sirsa on a complaint accusing him of causing wrongful loss of over Rs 65 lakh to the committee.

Asserting that Punjabis across the world were aghast

at the "strong arm tactics" being used by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre to "intimidate" all those who were supporting the farmers' movement, Badal said the Centre has now targeted the DSGMC because it was at the forefront in providing aid to the farmers' stir.

"The DSGMC has been providing 'langar' to farmers from the very first day they arrived at the Sirsa border and continues to do so even today," the SAD chief said.

He said this was the same body which had won universal praise during the current Covid-19 pandemic as well as during times of natural disasters for the services it rendered to humanity.

"Now the same body is being vilified," Badal said, adding that "the DSGMC will not be affected by such cowardly acts and will not step back from assisting peacefully agitating farmers".

Badal said it was strange that a case had been registered against Sirsa and others with regard to a complaint which

had been filed against then DSGMC president Manjinder Singh GK in 2018.

He said even though Sirsa was not named in the original complaint his name had been included now while that of GK had been excluded.

"This shows how the police and other investigating agencies are being misused by the BJP against its opponents. Earlier this has also been done against farm leaders and even song writers, singers and arhatiyas who espoused the farmers' agitation," the SAD leader alleged.

Badal also condemned the reported arrest of Sirsa at Uttar Pradesh's Bilaspur last night where he had gone to support farmers who had been booked by the local police who had sought to stop them from joining the farmers' tractor rally in Delhi on 26 January.

"Is supporting farmers a criminal offence? Even the Supreme Court espouses the right to peaceful protest. The Centre should not stifle the voice of democracy in this manner," Badal said while demanding immediate withdrawal of false case registered against Sirsa.

## Jai Ram asks officials to speed up work on Kullu devp projects

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 22 JANUARY

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Friday directed officials to complete all the ongoing developmental projects in Kullu district within the stipulated time.

While presiding over a meeting with the officers of the Kullu district administration to review progress on various schemes at Kullu, he said that the Bhutnath bridge of Kullu, which was closed for traffic for the last two years must be restored for traffic by March 2021 as it is one of the important bridge and people were facing problems.

He asked the Public Works department to fix the responsibility and take action against the erring contractor and engineers who were responsible for substandard construction of this bridge.

Thakur directed to start the work of Rs. 162 crore sewerage projects for Manali town and surrounding villages for which the pipes worth Rs. 21 crore had already been purchased. He asked the officers of the Jal Shakti Vibhag to ensure completion of this project in fixed time frame.

Expressing his dissatisfaction over the unnecessary delay in the construction of two blocks of civil hospital Banjar, the chief minister directed to complete this work by January, 2022 positively. He directed the Deputy Commissioner to monitor progress on all the ongoing projects so that unwanted delays due to small reasons could be avoided.

The chief minister said that the work on Banjar bypass should be started at the earliest as the state government had already approved a sum of Rs. 734.40 lakh for this project. He also directed to complete all the codal formalities to pave the way for construction of a modern auditorium at Rambagh in Manali where big events like winter carnival could be organised.

Thakur directed to complete the work on the multi-purpose block of the Deputy Commissioner's office within a year on which Rs. 549 lakh were to be spent. He said that the work on construction of Kullu bus stand was in its final stage and would be dedicated to the people in the month of March this year.

He appreciated the efforts of the district administration and health department for taking effective steps to combat Covid-19 pandemic in the district. He expressed happiness that the Covid cases had come down sharply in the district and presently there were only 10 active cases in the entire district.

Education minister Govind Singh Thakur said that construction of an auditorium in Manali town would facilitate in organising various activities in a better way.

MLA Banjar Surender Shourie urged the Chief Minister for early construction of Banjar by-pass and a bridge over it.

## PRICE OF RENEWAL



Flower petals strewn across a park at Sector 16 in Chandigarh on Friday.

PARDEEP SAINI

## Centre interfered with state subject by enacting farm laws: Capt

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 22 JANUARY

Even as he slammed the Akalis and the Aam Aadmi Party for allegedly spreading lies over the farm laws and dubbed the Centre's refusal to repeal them as "inhuman", Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Friday announced jobs for one member of each of the families of the state's farmers who had lost their lives in the agitation against the "black law".

Questioning "why the Centre is hesitating to repeal the laws?", the CM said they should repeal the laws, then sit with the farmers and frame new laws after taking all stakeholders in

confidence.

Pointing out that the Constitution of India had already been amended so many times, he asked why the Government of India was adamant about not taking back the farm laws.

Hitting out at the Central government for pushing the laws through Parliament with brute majority, without any discussion, the CM said the entire country was paying the price for this.

"Is there a Constitution in the country? Agriculture is a state subject under Schedule 7, so why has the Centre interfered with a state subject?" he asked, adding that "they went and enacted these laws without consulting anyone, because

of which we have all landed in this situation."

Barely were things coming back to normal after the lockdown, when the entire industry had shut down operations, when the farm laws were imposed, he said, adding that the legislations had been implemented by the Centre without any thought to the impact it would have on the farmers and agriculture.

Asserting that "we are with the farmers and will stand by them," the CM said during the 20th edition of his Facebook Live #AskCaptain session that the Punjab government and every person in Punjab stands with the farmers.

"All Punjabis are concerned

about our farmers sitting on Delhi borders, they are there to persuade Centre to repeal laws that were implemented without taking us into confidence," he said, adding that "lots of old people are sitting there at the borders not for themselves but for the future of their children and grandchildren."

"The sad part, said the CM was that "we are losing our farmers to the cold every day, with an estimated farmers 76 dying so far."

In addition to the Rs 5-lakh compensation being given to the families of the deceased farmers, his government would also give a job to a family member, he added.

Captain Amarinder agreed

with a Tarn Taran resident that the Centre was being arrogant and was not thinking about the impact of the Farm Laws on the farmers. "You should ask the Central government if India is not a democracy anymore?" he said, in response to the resident's question as to whether democracy no longer exists in this country. "It is against humanity," said the CM, agreeing that when the farmers for whom the laws are made don't want them, then why can't they be repealed.

Stressing that representatives of almost all farm unions from across the country were sitting at the Delhi borders, the CM said the agitation was of the entire nation's farmers and not just of Punjab's farmers.

## Himachal becomes 1st state to complete assessment of snow leopards & its prey

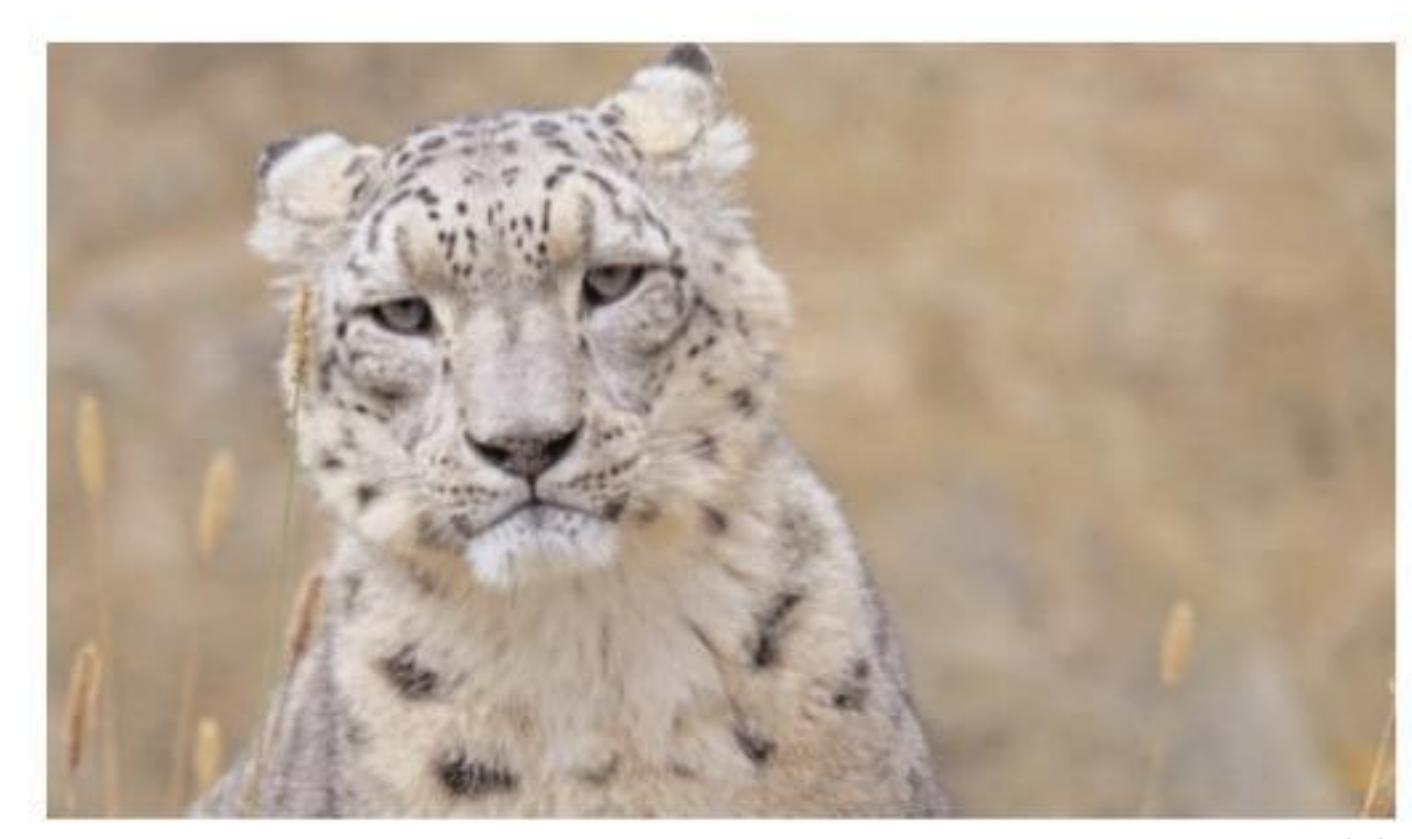
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 22 JANUARY

Himachal Pradesh has become the country's first state to complete the assessment of snow leopards and its prey.

The assessment of snow leopard population has been completed by the HP wildlife wing in collaboration with the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), Bangalore, following the protocol aligning with the SPAI (Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India) Protocols of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.

HP Forest Minister Rakesh Pathania said it is the first scientifically robust estimate of snow leopards and its prey for the state. Since snow leopard is the state animal, the study assumes great significance for Himachal Pradesh. The state has an estimated population of up to 73 snow leopards.

Pathania congratulated the wildlife wing for this achievement and said that such long-term studies could



FILE PHOTO

prove very useful in detecting the effects of conservation at the ground level and Himachal Pradesh could also be an example for other states.

He said that the exercise revealed that snow leopard density ranged from 0.08 to 0.37 individuals per 100 square kilometre, with the trans-Himalayan regions of

Kinnaur recording the highest densities, both the predator and its prey, mainly ibex and blue sheep. This study covered the entire potential snow leopard habitat of Himachal Pradesh: an area of 26,112 square kilometre, utilising a stratified sampling design. Camera trapping surveys were conducted

at 10 sites to representatively sample all the strata i.e. high, low and unknown. The camera trap deployment over the mountainous terrains was led by a team of eight local youth of Kibber village and more than 70 frontline staff of HPWF were trained in this technique as part of the project. Snow leopards were detected at all the 10 sites

and will also serve as a robust baseline for the Wildlife wing for long term monitoring of the snow leopard landscape.

The NCF and wildlife wing collaborated in the effort and it took three years to complete the assessment, which will also serve as a robust baseline for the Wildlife wing for long term monitoring of the snow leopard landscape.

The accused has been identified as Sheikh Shehzad, a resident of Delhi and native of Motihari district in Bihar, they said.

of his contacts named Raja.

"A trap was laid and the accused was nabbed. Police recovered high quality FICN in Rs 2,000 denomination with a face value of Rs 4 lakh from his possession," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said.

During interrogation, Shehzad said he received consignments from a man named Habibur Rehman, a resident

of Kaliachak in West Bengal.

Shehzad had already delivered about four to five consignments of FICN worth over Rs 20 lakh in Delhi and NCR areas, the DCP said.

He said all the new security features that government introduces are being quickly updated in the fake currency notes as well, police said.

He was earlier arrested by Delhi Police Special Cell along with his three associates in 2016 and FICN with a face value of Rs 10.25 lakh was recovered from them, they said.

After getting out from jail, Shehzad reorganised his gang and started supplying FICN in Delhi and NCR, police added.

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures

# SWEATSHIRT

## Jackets & Sweaters

# SALE

WINTER OFFER

• PUNCHKUAN ROAD, Garwal Bhawan, (Near Jhandewalan, Gole Chkr.)  
 • WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)  
 • JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543  
 • NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP  
 • LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

up to 60% off

By Economy Sales: 9212758425



I always knew such a situation was in the offing.  
People like him leaving the party hardly matters.

TMC LEADER AND MINISTER ARUP ROY  
AFTER RAJIB BANERJEE'S RESIGNATION

## THUMBNAILS



BJP's Ar Noy Annay rally at Shyambazar on Friday.

**Magazine on train:** Eastern Railway's Sealdah division today distributed 'STEAMTRACK' lifestyle magazine among the passengers of Sealdah-New Delhi AC Special. The magazine portraying stories, culture and history of India, travel spots, sports, food, fashion, music and entertainment, creative games and puzzles, biographies, nature and various other segments, will be given to passengers of special train. SNS

**No alternative to Mamata:** TMC said BJP is being run by 'hired people' and there is no alternative to CM Mamata Banerjee in Bengal. Minister Partha Chatterjee said BJP has become a place for people who haven't been able to show loyalty to party. SNS

# 'Hurt' Rajib quits Cabinet

TMC says it won't impact the party; BJP lauded his decision and said TMC will disintegrate soon

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 22 JANUARY

**A** despondent Rajib Banerjee 'hurt' by the seeming 'lack of courtesy' from chief minister Mamata Banerjee resigned from her Cabinet as forest minister, giving another jolt to Trinamul Congress.

Banerjee aired his heartache today recalling when Miss Banerjee removed him from irrigation minister two years back and said he was compelled to make this move after being unremittingly 'publicly humiliated' by a section of the party's leaders for sharing his grievances over their style of functioning.

He submitted his resignation letter to the chief minister at her Kalighat residence and then went to Raj Bhawan to hand over his letter personally to Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar.

After meeting Dhankhar, Banerjee said, "I came to know about my removal from television news while I was holding a meeting at the party office in north Bengal. I had expected Miss Banerjee to have informed me of her decision directly. Next day I told the chief minister that I wanted to resign as minister. Then she dissuaded me."

However, he had to take this "tough decision" as for at least a month, comments of some party leaders had "hurt" him a lot. "I had grievances against some of the party's senior members and informed the leadership about it. I also had



Rajib Banerjee at Raj Bhavan in Kolkata after handing in his resignation to Governor.

a word with party supremo but nothing happened. Instead, I was personally attacked by a section of the leaders. I was deeply hurt by the personal attacks aimed at me. I was troubled and mentally hurt for a while and had to take this step. It pains me and breaks my heart but I had to do it. Hence I have to take this tough decision," he said.

Breaking down in tears Banerjee in front of the Raj Bhavan, he said, "I will always be grateful to the chief minister for the opportunities she has given me. I have taken this decision due to untold grievances. Please do not misunderstand

me. I reiterate my commitment towards working for the people of Bengal," adding, "I have always wanted to work for the people and will continue to do so. I don't know what platform I'll get for doing this".

His resignation letter read: "I regret to inform you that I hereby tender my resignation from my office as cabinet minister being in charge of Forest Department on today, ie on January 22, 2021." Remembering how it has been a 'great honour and privilege to serve the people of West Bengal', he added: "I heartily convey my gratitude for getting this opportunity. I have sent a copy of this to His Excellency, Governor of West Bengal for his necessary action. Kindly accept my resignation and obliged."

He indicated in a Face-

book post that he would remain politically active. "I hope that in the years to come I will be able to be at each of your services in the best way possible as that has been the sole reason I am in politics," he wrote.

The manner in which Banerjee himself went to submit his resignation to the Governor instead of waiting for the chief minister to forward his letter has miffed the state administration. Sources said Miss Banerjee has advised Mr Dhankhar to remove Mr Banerjee from the Council of Ministers which has been accepted."

The resignation of Domjur MLA, who had been airing his grievances against a section of ruling party leaders over the

past few weeks, has come ahead of Union home minister Amit Shah's slated visit to Bengal from 30 to 31 January. During Shah's last visit, former Trinamul heavyweight Suvendu Adhikari, who has a significant presence in the Nandigram area, joined BJP in his presence at a massive rally in East Midnapore.

Banerjee is the second minister from Howrah district and the fourth minister in the state after Sovan Chatterjee, Suvendu Adhikari and Laxmi Ratan Shukla to resign. He had skipped five consecutive state Cabinet meetings and more than a dozen party programmes since September last year, when he started voicing his dissent against a section of the leadership in Howrah.

Sources said there was schism between Banerjee and Trinamul's Howrah unit chairman and senior minister Arup Roy. Party general secretary Partha Chatterjee held several meetings to prevent him from taking any drastic step.

Reacting to the development, Chatterjee said the party won't be affected if some party leaders or ministers quit. He said two types of people leave the party before election: one who fears losing election or he would not get a ticket as a candidate.

Echoing him, minister Arup Roy said: "When the TMC was formed in 1998, neither Laxmi Ratan Shukla nor Rajib Banerjee was in the party. I always knew such a situation was in the offing. People like

Baishali Dalmiya expelled from Trinamul

KOLKATA, 22 JANUARY

The ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal on Friday expelled disgruntled MLA Baishali Dalmiya from the party for anti-party activities, sources said.

The Bally legislator has been publicly speaking against a section of the TMC leadership. In a statement, the TMC said that its disciplinary committee met on Friday and decided to expel Dalmiya from the party.

SNS him leaving the party hardly matters."

Reinforcing Banerjee, dissentient TMC MLA Baishali Dalmiya said, "honest and sincere people have no place in the party".

An elated BJP said the "beginning of the end of the TMC has already begun", and the party would disintegrate soon. "If he (Banerjee) wants to join us, we will look into it," said BJP president Dilip Ghosh said.

BJP national general secretary and the party's Bengal mender Kailash Vijayvargiya lauded Banerjee over his move.

"Rajib Banerjeeji is a good leader and a successful minister. Honest and good people have no place in a party like TMC," he said.

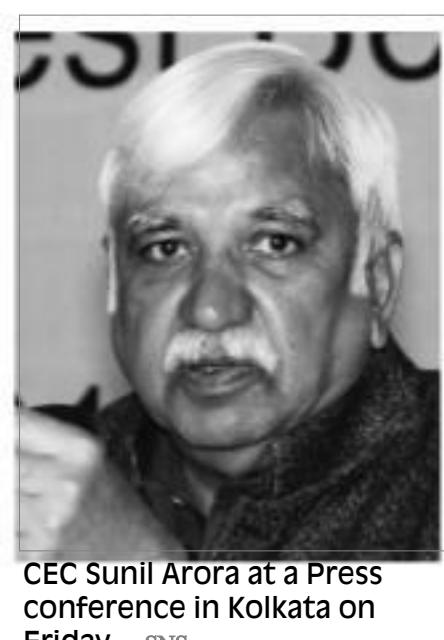
## EC has zero tolerance towards money and muscle power: Arora

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 22 JANUARY

With political parties apprehending violence and unrest in poll-bound West Bengal, chief election commissioner Sunil Arora today said the commission has zero-tolerance to money and muscle power and misuse of the government machinery and virtually gave a clean chit to BSF rejecting the charge of "terrorising" voters by one of the "finest" forces of the country in border areas by a political party.

"The law and order in the state will be under constant watch. The charge by a political party on BSF terrorising voters on the India-Bangladesh border is unfortunate. There is no such information on terrorising voters by BSF in the border areas to the commission at the moment. The parties furnish evidence or table instances of incidents of such magnitude before levelling such charges," said Arora.

The CEC also junked BJP's charges that names of three to four lakh Rohingya made it to the voters' list as "unfounded". He also dismissed the speculation of deploying central forces in the state two to three months ago before the polls. "The forces will be deployed in advance but not two to three months ago. The CAPF and other central



CEC Sunil Arora at a Press conference in Kolkata on Friday. ■ SNS

forces would be deployed taking into account all factors. Not only the central forces the state police would also be deployed as situation demands," he said.

The poll panel also issued a blanket ban on bike rallies, an instrument of canvassing during election, after the model code of conduct comes into force. Arora also informed the poll panel has nixed the idea of deploying "civic police" or Green police" as part of poll duties.

Asked about incidents of violence ahead of the Assembly elections, Arora said, "We would like to review events of serious crimes which have political overtones and examine them on a case-to-case basis." There will be 1,01,790 polling stations for the 2021 elections in the state and every booth should be made accessible to all persons with disabilities.

## PIL in Calcutta HC over bus operators strike

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 22 JANUARY

A Public Interest Litigation was filed in Calcutta High Court seeking court's order to declare

the ensuing private bus and minibus strike from 28 January illegal and unconstitutional. The matter is likely to be heard next week.

The PIL prays that an inter-

im order be given by which necessary arrangements are taken to ensure normal situation and the public does not face any problem as regards transportation from 28 January and the next two

days. A high-powered committee be set up its recommendations about revision of bus fare be placed before the court within a specified time frame, it was further prayed.

## Three govt agencies launch probe in SII fire

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PUNE, 22 JANUARY

Top officials from fire wings of three Maharashtra government agencies on Friday launched a probe to ascertain the cause of the blaze that killed five workers at Serum Institute of India's (SII) premises here. Heads of fire departments of the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority (PMRDA) and Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) are part of the joint probe team.

Five contractual labourers had died in the fire which broke out in a five-storeyed under-construction building in the Serum Institute of India's Manjari premises on Thursday. The fire damaged the top two floors of the building located in 'SEZ 3' area of the premises of the vaccine major.

Devendra Potphode, Chief Fire Officer, PMRDA, said officials from the planning and development authority, PMC, and MIDC have come together to ascertain the cause of the fire in the building. Meanwhile, police have registered an accidental death and burning incident case with the Hadapsar police station, said



Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone 5) Namrata Patil.

"As we are seeing today, the entire floor (4th and 5th) has been damaged. We are trying to ascertain the cause of the fire as well as how the fire spread," said Potphode.

Several types of equipment were damaged in the blaze, he said. "On the basis of findings from all the agencies, a conclusion will be reached on how the fire started," he added. The PMRDA officer declined to speculate on possible causes of the fire at this juncture.

Santosh Warrick, Chief Fire Officer, MIDC, also said

it is difficult to comment on the cause right now.

"We have started the probe. Our scope of investigation is to check how the fire broke out," said Prashant Ranipise, PMC's fire department head.

A team of forensic experts reached the spot and conducting their probe, said another official. The Manjhi facility is where Covishield, the SII vaccine against Covid, which is being used in the nationwide inoculation drive against the infection, is made. The building where the fire broke out is one km from the Covishield vaccine manufacturing unit. The fire at

the premises of SII was an "accident" and there is absolutely no doubt about the integrity of scientists working with the Pune-based vaccine major, NCP president Sharad Pawar said on Friday.

## Asansol stn goes green



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
ASANSOL, 22 JANUARY

Eastern Railway's Asansol station is going to be a complete eco-friendly station soon. Sumit Sarkar, DRM of Asansol, said that the division has taken a big endeavour towards making an environment friendly station.

The station area is becoming a green buffer zone where greenery

like vertical gardens will be seen at platforms and station surrounding areas, apart from landscape gardens. Massive plantation of trees has been made in and around Asansol station. Air pollution will be controlled to a large extent," he added.

The DRM further added that the effluent treatment, sewerage treatment arrangement, bio-gas plant, rain water harvesting, recycling of waste materials, solid waste management are underway. A plastic shredder machine has been installed while a waste converter, station kitchen waste will be converted to manure which will be used in the green buffer zone.

## West Bengal libraries to reopen from 23 Jan

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 22 JANUARY

State government has decided to reopen all government libraries from 23 January by maintaining the existing guidelines of Covid for providing library services.

A circular on reopening of the State Central Library, Uttarpara Jaikrishna Public Library, all district libraries and town/subdivisional libraries across the state has been issued.

According to a list of do's and don'ts issued in this regard, wearing of masks is mandatory for readers and staff. Fifty per cent readers will be allowed in the libraries at a time and people would be allowed entry after thermal screening. Prior to entering the library, one has to sanitise his/her hands. Physical distancing has to be maintained while distributing the books. The libraries have to be regularly sanitised.



Manoj Chakraborty, convenor of mentor group of the Trinamul-backed state government employees' federation said they had been demanding reopening of the libraries since long and was happy that students would be benefited from this move.

The libraries were closed after lockdown was imposed due to Covid in March 2020.

Aatmnirbhar Bharat nurtures youth spirit: PM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
GUWAHATI, 22 JANUARY

Aatmnirbhar Abhiyan is about the change in resources, physical infrastructure, technology, economic and strategic might, but the biggest transformation is in the realm of instinct, action and reaction which is in sync with the mood of India's young people, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing the 18th convocation of Tezpur University in Assam through video conferencing, PM also commented that today is a moment to remember and cherish for a lifetime for over 1200 students. He stated the sentiment contained in the University anthem, which was written by Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika.

The premier university is situated in a place where there is architecture like Agnigad, Kolia-Bhomora bridge over mighty Brahmaputra river, and more precisely eminent personalities like Bhupen-da, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Bishnu Prasad Rabha etc recognized Tezpur as their sacred workplace, he added.

No request from Pak for Indian vaccines

NEW DELHI, 21 JANUARY

India has not received any request from Pakistan for the supply of Indian-made vaccines on a government-to-government or commercial basis though many other countries have shown interest in accessing the Covid-19 shots to grapple with the pandemic, the government said today. Addressing a media briefing here, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said the supplies of Indian-made vaccines were underway both as gifts as well as on a commercial basis.

He recalled Modi's statement that India's vaccine production and delivery capacity would be used for the benefit of all humanity in fighting this crisis.

"As we announced on 19 January, our grant assistance of vaccines to the neighbouring countries commenced on 20 January. On the first day, 1.5 lakh doses of vaccines were supplied to Bhutan and 1 lakh doses to Maldives as grant assistance," the spokesperson added. SNS

## India lambasts Pakistan for paying lip service to protection of religious rites

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 22 JANUARY

Raising at the UN the demolition of a Hindu temple in Pakistan recently, India has ridiculed the co-sponsoring by Islamabad of a resolution on safeguarding religious sites at the 75th session of the General Assembly, saying the global community must stand united against the forces that supplant dialogue and peace with hatred and violence.

In its statement on the adoption of the resolution on "Promoting a culture of peace and tolerance to safeguard religious sites", India said, "It is a matter of great irony that the country where the most recent attack and demolition of a Hindu temple took place in a series of such attacks and where the rights of minorities are being emasculated is one of the co-sponsors of the resolution. The resolution cannot be a smokescreen for countries like Pakistan to hide behind."

A senior Indian diplomat drew the attention of the General Assembly towards the destruction of a temple with explicit support and connivance of the law enforcement agencies.

destruction of a temple with explicit support and connivance of the law enforcement agencies which stood as mute spectators while the historic religious place was being razed. "In this world of growing terrorism, violent extremism, radicalisation and intolerance, religious sites and cultural heritage sites remain vulnerable to terrorist acts, violence and destruction. The images of the shattering of the iconic Bamyan Buddha by fundamentalists are still vivid in our memories. The terrorist bombing of the Sikh gurdwara in Afghanistan where 25 Sikh worshippers were killed is yet another example of this vulnerability," he said.

**Himachal Pradesh Jal Shakti Vibhag Corrigendum**

The tender called vide this office N.I.T No. MND-ES-Tender/2020- 16189-238 Dated:- 15-01-2021 for the works:-

(i) A/R & M/O Sewerage Scheme Mandi (SH:- Operation, Repair & Maintenance of Sewerage Scheme e Mandi Town, Sanyardhi, Bhili and Nela, 13 Nos septic Tank at various locations distribution network and main trunk sewer line 74 Km long of having DICP pipes of various sizes for a period of One year).

(ii) A/R &



## Russia & the West

Tensions that could sour relations between Russia and the West, pre-eminently Europe and the United States, have intensified ever since Alexei Navalny returned to Moscow after his discharge from a hospital in Germany. There is an element of bitter irony that clouds his return following treatment for nerve agent poisoning – allegedly at the behest of Vladimir Putin. The Kremlin has claimed that Navalny's return and the resultant tension with the Western powers represent "an absolutely internal matter". Perhaps on the face of it, it is. But it shall not be easy for Joe Biden's United States and Europe, across the Atlantic to accept the global condemnation of his arrest at the Moscow airport and spirited calls for his early release. Not the least because Navalny has blamed the Putin government for his poisoning. Tensions between Russia and the West have distinctly exacerbated over the past three days; some countries of the European Union have even called for an additional cache of sanctions against Russia. The Kremlin remains ever so adamant, going by the statement of its spokesman, Dmitry Peskov. "We are talking about a fact of non-compliance with the Russian law by a citizen of Russia. This is an absolutely internal matter and we will not allow anyone to interfere in it and do not intend to listen to such statements." For the record, Navalny was detained at passport control at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport after flying in on Sunday evening from Berlin, where he was treated for the poisoning in August.

Russia's most prominent opposition figure and anti-corruption campaigner, Navalny allegedly violated the probation terms of his suspended sentence in a 2014 money-laundering conviction, which was deemed arbitrary by the European Court of Human Rights. Officials are seeking that he serves the three-and-a-half-year suspended sentence in prison. Navalny has interpreted the crackdown against him as a sign of Putin's fear. But the Kremlin has insisted that Navalny had violated the law. The Kremlin claims that questions the law-enforcement entity had for Navalny have "nothing whatsoever to do with the Russian President". Attitudes have, therefore, stiffened on either side of the fence that divides the Kremlin from the anti-establishment segment. Even the UN Human Rights office has raised alarm over Navalny's arrest, indeed a response that has been clothed with the demand for his immediate release. The office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights has let it be known that it was "deeply troubled" by Navalny's arrest. It has appealed to the Russian government to respect his right to the due process of the law. The government in Moscow is incidentally headed by the prime suspect, named Mr Putin. The Russian President's defiance of Western democracies cannot be readily agreeable. And thereby hangs a tale. Alexei Navalny deserves humane treatment. And not behind bars.

## Complex cocktail

It has often been remarked, arguably with mild satisfaction, that there are no permanent enemies in politics. This was reinforced on Wednesday with the "breaking news" on an election-year turnabout from Jerusalem – Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu is now openly courting the support of the country's Arab minority segment prior to the fourth election in less than two years. Quite a change for a head of government who has often condemned the Arabs as a "potential fifth column", helmed by terrorist sympathisers. Unmistakable is the element of desperation in what has been called "Netanyahu's political somersault". It is pretty obvious too that electoral exigence has influenced his preference. The conflict between the Arabs and the Jews has defined the Middle East narrative, indeed the ferment, for as long as it has. The feelers have now been advanced by the Israeli Prime Minister and no less. As the head of a traditionally antagonistic government, he has distinctly deviated from the historically core irritant of the region. There is speculation in Jerusalem that the relative absence of incitement against the community and the potential break-up of an Arab party alliance could impinge on the turnout to Netanyahu's advantage. He may even garner just enough votes to effect a swing of the electoral pendulum. Should that happen, it will signify a watershed development in the Middle East. Indeed, Netanyahu's overtures to Arab voters has astonished the community. The Joint List, an alliance of Arab parties that secured a record 15 seats in the 120-member Knesset last March, is wallowing in a dispute over whether or not it should work with Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party. And not the least because when the less objectionable centre-left parties are in disarray.

If Netanyahu's overture is reduced to a fizzle, the Arabs might have to make do with a truncated representation in the Knesset. The challenge for the next government could be forbidding given the crime wave, persistent inequality, and ballooning unemployment that is embedded in the coronavirus pandemic. But considering the complexities of Israel's coalition system, a breakaway Arab party could gain influence if it is willing to work with Netanyahu and/or other traditionally hostile politicians. The geopolitical trend was apparent last week when Netanyahu visited Nazareth, the largest city in Israel with a predominantly Arab majority. In point of fact, it was his third visit to an Arab district in less than two weeks. Arabs constitute 20 per cent of Israel's population. They face widespread discrimination and even blame the seemingly lax law-enforcement in Israel for the rising crime graph and violence within their community. They have close familial ties with Palestinians and largely identify with their cause. Further, they are said to be sympathetic towards Israel's enemies. Netanyahu is arguably brewing a complex cocktail.

# Project Sinicization

India now must frame its arguments on the vileness of such 'resettlements' in the context of Chinese 'expansionism' and 'demographic changes' that are both well understood globally, and definitely so, by almost all its neighbours



President Xi Jinping is the most absolute Chinese ruler since Chairman Mao Zedong. His superficially posited economic reforms notwithstanding, he presides over a totalitarian state that is going through unprecedented re-centralisation of authority and 'clean-up'. Such Stalinist-Maoist impulses lead to regime insecurities that explain the tools from the 1950s and 60s like propaganda, censorship, extreme controls, purges, suppression, mass mobilisation etc. being deployed, all conflated towards imposing a powerful brand of nationalism that underpins the much-vaunted, 'Chinese Century'.

The relative diminishment of the West and the parallel rise of 'Sinosphere' is doubly leveraged to legitimise, galvanise and paint a favourable narrative, one that justifies the radical steps and essentially allays the dictator's natural insecurities.

Given China's largely (not completely) monolithic status with a predominant Han majority accounting for over 91 per cent of the population, the forced acculturation or cultural-imperialism of the uneasy minorities within, like the Tibetans, Uyghurs, Zhuang, Hui, Miao etc., living typically on the borders of the country, is subject to the historical project of Sinicization. The primary driver for Sinicization is the perennial fear of territorial disintegration, even as it harbours further ambitions of expansionism.

To retain its iron grip over restive areas, the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) regime is answerable to none except its own leadership, and can go to any extent, including 'demographic genocide'. Xinjiang Province has a well-documented infamy for draconian measures such as concentration camps (officially called Vocational Education and Training Centres), forced birth control, religious persecution etc., all masked under what Xi Jinping calls, "struggle against terrorism, infiltration and terrorism".

Similarly, planned demographic changes in Tibet with the resettlement of the majority Han populace in Tibetan enclaves has led to much disquiet and disillusionment – but the officialdom in Beijing remains beyond any reproach or questioning. The forced indoctrination of minorities and the selective propping and 'pushing-up' of those who agree to sink personal identities towards Sinicization objectives, are primarily used as propaganda trophies. The appointment of a loyal Tibetan as the 11th incarnation of the Panchen Lama, whilst compromising on religious preconditions or local considerations towards the same, is one such example.

The Chinese are adept at giving hollow nomenclatures to hide their malicious intent, like calling forward regions like Xinjiang and Tibet 'autonomous regions' and appointing pliant members from local communities to fill positions and roles framed by the actual string-pullers in Beijing. This results in dubious 'affirmative action' schemes, construction projects, infrastructural development initiatives etc., that essentially aim to strengthen the vice-like grip of the CCP through its PLA (People's Liberation Army).

One such initiative out of the Chinese playbook of devious control is the development of 'Border Defence Villages' that aim to enhance strategic connectivity for potential militaristic deployment, secure preferential demographic changes, quash local disaffection and posture 'civic normalcy' to falsely claim sovereignty over 'disputed areas'.

Of specific concern to India is the 'Plan for the Construction of Well-Off Villages in the Border

Areas of the Tibet Autonomous Region (2017-2020)' that had envisaged over 600 such Border Defence Villages. Besides hosting strategic reserves and security encampments, these surreal villages are expected to house the CCP overseers and successfully indoctrinated local populace who could also be a part of the larger Sinicization project, by resettling the Han majority.

Systematically mapped and layered into 'first line' and 'second line' along the contentious borders or even in 'disputed areas', these projects aim to develop into 'party building positions and indestructible battle fortresses' – seamlessly coalescing the various military-political-civil imperatives into a singular infrastructure. These 'resettled' villages are an unmistakable and frequent component of creeping land-grab and encroachment that was seen earlier in the Yadong county of Tibet that was worryingly close to the tense Doklam plateau, which had flared up in 2017. In typical Chinese style the authorities then dismissed reports of provocative territorial assertion, by suggesting that it was only to, "relocate 3,222 people of 960 families to the weakly controlled areas on the border on a voluntary basis!"

Recently the reports of a similar 101 hutment 'village'/military base in Tsari Chu valley in the 'disputed area' with India, are reflective of the continuing Chinese machinations. From virtually no substantial construction on site as per satellite images from 26 August 2019, to a decidedly more robust 'village' as per pictures from 1 November 2020, is a typical Chinese story. While New Delhi acknowledged, recent reports on China undertaking

construction work along the border areas with India, the essential narrative in India soon regressed into partisan debate about 'previous government' etc., a wasted consideration of political one-upmanship that a CCP does not need to account for in its unitary dictatorship.

The Chinese government's unofficial mouthpiece, Global Times, completely overturned Indian concerns in its counter article, 'Indian media hype of village construction in South Tibet shows intent to covet LAC area', incredulously implying hostile intent by India, instead.

India now must frame its arguments on the vileness of such 'resettlements' in the context of Chinese 'expansionism' and 'demographic changes' that are both well understood globally, and definitely so, by almost all its neighbours.

In his opening remarks on Monday at the 148th session of the global public health watchdog's executive board, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged governments to guarantee the world's poor have equal, timely access to Covid-19 vaccines. The efficient development and approval of multiple vaccines has offered the world a chance to contain the Covid-19 pandemic. But "the wall of inequality between the world's haves and have-nots" may provide an opportunity for the novel coronavirus to advance and generate new mutants, the WHO chief warned. "More than 39 million doses of vaccine have now been administered in at least 49 higher-income countries," he said. "Just 25 doses have been given in one lowest-income country. Not 25 million; not 25 thousand; just 25."

He challenged member countries to ensure that by the time World Health Day arrives on the 7th of April, Covid-19 vaccines are being administered in every country. For that to happen, though, the WHO sponsored Access to Covid-19 Tools Accelerator and its COVAX vaccine pillar must work together, so that poorer nations have equitable access to Covid-19 tests, treatments and vaccines. Offering their support, Chinese Covid-19 vaccine developers Sinovac, Sinopharm and Cansinobio have submitted applications to join COVAX. The traditional approach to vaccine development Chinese scientists have adopted

## CHINADAILY

is well-tested and has proven safe and cost-effective. It also means Chinese vaccines are suitable for countries that lack the cold storage facilities as required for some of the vaccines developed elsewhere. Just as the Mexican president pointed out, the Chinese vaccine his country received does not require storage at ultra-low temperatures, and it is thus very friendly to those living in remote areas. No wonder Chinese vaccine developers have signed contracts with 16 countries and regions on the procurement of over 500 million doses. And that inoculation programs using Chinese vaccines have begun in a number of countries.

No matter what the developed countries say about Chinese vaccines, the products are being warmly received. Beijing's promises to make its vaccines a global public good and to prioritize African countries in the distribution of its vaccines are in stark contrast to the hoarding of vaccines by rich countries and their me-first approach, which have rendered already vulnerable populations even more vulnerable. So far, it looks like China is the only supplier country now distributing its vaccines following the WHO road map. Not to mention its provision to African countries will in part be in the form of donations and free aid.

## IN MEMORIAM

**KARNANI KISHAN LALL** — Who left for his Heavenly Abode this day in 1976. Fondly remembered by family members.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

## Mighty challenges ahead of Biden



SIR, President Joe Biden has taken office when US is looking totally different than it was on his predecessor's Inauguration Day. Covid-19 has taken lives of more than 4,00,000 Americans, with a big portion of the socio-economic toll attributable to federal mismanagement. The US has also abdicated its role as leader of the free world, squabbled with democratic allies while keeping authoritarian populists everywhere chuckling at its post-truth misadventures. This month's attack on the Capitol highlighted how much domestic polarisation has poisoned the polity. In short, the new administration really has a mighty challenge lying ahead.

But democracy is premised on elections making a difference. The promise of a new dawn is both powerful and credible. The diversity, sobriety and experience of the incoming cabinet strongly suggest that they have a good measure of the problems at hand, and the ambition to attempt necessary solutions. One clear aspirational target is 100 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine in the first 100 days. The new administration has articulated as priorities both addressing the economic damage of the pandemic at home and repairing relationships with various allies abroad to take on China's "illegal, unfair and abusive practices" collectively.

Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra,

Mohali, 22 January.

### LANDLINE TRAVAIL

SIR, The experience of Mr Nargis Sattar (*The Statesman* 21st January

2021 with regard to his landline parallels mine, in regard to my number, viz. 2461 5750 except that in my case,

I received an SMS message on my mobile phone on 3rd November 2020 asking me to contact BSNL Person Chandra Kanta Das, mobile number 08902001346 for any information about my complaint.

Upon contacting him, Mr Das informed me that he had been superannuated two years ago. I associate myself with the comments of Mr Sattar in this regard. Surrendering the line requires the personal presence of the subscriber at the appropriate BSNL office is at present risky for an octogenarian.

Yours, etc., Arijit Chaudhuri,

21 January.

## WHATSAPP AND PRIVACY

SIR, This refers to the front page report, 'Govt asks WhatsApp to withdraw changes to privacy policy' (20 January). Notwithstanding the Supreme Court having upheld privacy to be a fundamental right in 2017, the domain of privacy remains besieged, and this macabre theatre of the dearth of privacy and the alleged whitewashing down of consumer choice is unfolding, most noticeably, in the digital domain. WhatsApp, for example, announced and then deferred new service rules pertaining to data harvesting and users' privacy. The growing concerns with the proposed changes are manifest in two institutional responses. According to the Delhi High Court the use of the app is "voluntary". The Court asked citizens to exit the platform in the event of their worry about the new terms and conditions. The central government, meanwhile, has asked WhatsApp to withdraw its privacy update in deference to data security. It has also asked why the platform has a lenient policy update for European countries, raising, once again, suspicions of differential treatment.

The Delhi High Court points out to citizens that they have the option to use other apps. However, certain conditions make this 'switch' difficult for consumers. For one, WhatsApp has a dedicated subscriber base – more than 400 million people use its services in India. The popularity of this particular platform combined with enhanced reliance on digital communication owing to a raging pandemic implies that WhatsApp is unlikely to witness a loss in public patronage. The Centre's concern with data privacy is welcome. But the onus of protecting the privacy or data of users can not be put on social media companies alone. In an age of data speaking, India is yet to design a comprehensive data privacy law. Worse, there are worries about the efficacy of the personal data protection bill with its critics raising concerns over such provisions as the exemptions given to the State to access personal data, segmentation of data into specific categories, the need for consent for age-specific users to use internet-enabled services that may lead to disenfranchisement as well as the questionable skills of India's Data Protection Authority personnel. The Centre's advocacy on citizens' data privacy will ring hollow unless it takes steps to iron out these creases in India's yet-to-be-rolled-out data protection framework.

Yours, etc., NC Ghosh, Madampur 21 January.

## 'Calling us outsiders is hilarious'

The stakes have never been higher in poll-bound Bengal. The BJP stands in the way of TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee's bid for a hat-trick of wins.

Union Jal Shakti minister and senior BJP leader **GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT** in a recent visit to the state talks about the party's chances of upsetting TMC's applecart with Soumyadip Mullick

**Q. With the state slated to go for Assembly polls soon, do you feel it is lagging behind in some parameters?**

A. It is appalling that Bengal due to inefficiency of the incumbent state government has still not been able to provide drinking water to the taps of a large number of its citizens. Bengal has around 1.62 crore rural households and the state has been able to provide only 4,860 connections till date despite the Narendra Modi government providing the state with Rs.1,000 crore under Jal Jeevan Mission in 2019-20 for providing more water connections. The state was promised a second instalment of funds on utilizing the first one.

However, the state government quite apparently failed to utilize the initial funds thus missing out on the second instalment. The state government couldn't even submit the utilization certificate for the first instalment. Around Rs. 572 crore remains unutilized thus depriving the people of Bengal of their right to access drinking water in their household taps.

**Q. Do you think the state government as you said "did not utilize the Central funds" due to a Centre-state ideological conflict?**

A. I don't understand what chief minister Mamata Banerjee's problem is. Tripura, comparatively a smaller state, had only 0.24 per cent water connections and today, that has risen to 38 per cent utilizing the Jal Jeevan Mission funds. In the next three months, it will provide one lakh more water connections. Mamata Didi also did not allow the people of Bengal to be part of the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme which would have immensely benefited the people of this state who are quite apparently losing faith in her government.

**Q. Could the ongoing farmers' agitation against Centre, demanding repeal of three new farm laws, give TMC an edge by hollowing out BJP's political ambitions in the state**

**before the Assembly polls?**

A. Firstly, I have not heard yet that any farmer from Bengal is agitating against the farm laws. It is only two states where a section of farmers are agitating due to certain political motivations. In fact, the Mamata Banerjee government has been constantly depriving the farmers of Bengal. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that every farmer would receive Rs 6,000 per annum under the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi but till date West Bengal government has not even sent the list of the poor farmer families who can avail the scheme. Why does Didi want to deprive the poor while she and her nephew Abhishek Banerjee are growing richer every day?

**Q. You have earlier served as the Central minister of state for agriculture. Do you feel the three laws actually help the farmers when Bengal government is raising its voice against what it terms as 'corporatisation of farmers'?**

A. As I mentioned, it is not that farmers from all states are protesting but just from two states where the agitation is politically driven by Opposition political parties. These three laws were not devised at random and cannot be viewed or considered separately. They are based on the recommendations of the Swaminathan Committee Report of 2006 which covered several areas such as farmer insurance, land reforms, food security etc. There were about 102 recommendations aimed at alleviating the woes of farmers. It is only under the leadership of Narendra Modi that these are being implemented now. The laws will only benefit the farmers.

**Q. Prior to Assembly polls, Trinamul Congress was witnessing a flood of defections by its leaders and workers to the BJP. The TMC and its supremo claimed that the ones defecting to the saffron brigade are doing this to throw the central investigating agencies off their back. How do you respond to that?**

A. In saying that, Mamata Didi admits that there is enough reason for the central investigating agencies to probe the persons concerned. Why is her government not following Calcutta High Court's order to allow CAG to audit the Cyclone Amphan utilization funds? What is it she is hiding and has to challenge the order in Supreme Court? This Amphan scam must be probed. People of Bengal who once



believed in Mamata Banerjee to end the tyranny of the Left-Front rule have now understood that her government has only one objective which is corruption. The TMC government is now just living its constitutional life till the polls. It has otherwise become hollow from inside and can collapse any moment. None can save a government which institutionalized corruption. The Bengal government would have fallen long back had our leaders Narendra Modi and Amit Shah shut the doors of assistance and negotiation on Didi.

**Q. Do you feel that some Trinamul leaders who joined BJP and whose names had earlier surfaced in connection with the Saradha and Narada scams could tarnish the image of the saffron brigade in the eye of the voters before polls?**

A. Under the leadership of Narendra Modi, we believe in hard work and expect everyone who joins our party to do the same. It doesn't affect our image in any way. The River

Ganges flows through various places where it gets polluted but that doesn't make the river unholy for us. We have the Ganga Rejuvenation Plan for cleaning the stretches of river which have become polluted.

**Q. How would you respond to the TMC's political campaign that terms the BJP as outsiders wanting to capture Bengal?**

A. This is hilarious. Are we not Indians? Have we come from Pakistan? Our heart bleeds for people of Bengal who are being cheated by the TMC government. We cry for the people of Bengal. We are shaken each time our party workers in West Bengal are murdered, slaughtered or locked up and tortured by police without any valid reason but at the instructions of the ruling party. The criminalisation of government institutions will ultimately result in the ouster of the Mamata government.

**Q. Vaccination against coronavirus has begun amidst criticism directed**

**at the Centre's decision to approve Bharat Biotech's Covaxin without the efficacy report of the third phase of the trial which is presently ongoing. Do you find these criticisms legitimate?**

A. I must highlight the pace and efficiency with which India, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, has handled the coronavirus outbreak - a situation of which the country had no past experience. I feel confident in saying that India will soon become the largest exporter of vaccines. The claim that it shouldn't have been approved without the efficacy report of the third phase of human trials doesn't cut much ice. Long term impacts of vaccines can also be assessed under laboratory conditions otherwise countries such as the UK, USA, China would have also failed in giving approvals to their vaccines. Opposition political parties should not try to politicize a thing such as this since the vaccine will save the lives of millions of people from a deadly pandemic.

## The long arm of Big Tech

RAFIA ZAKARIA

Donald J. Trump spent the last days of his presidency sulking in the residential part of the White House. According to the White House press corps, he had isolated himself from nearly everyone and buried himself in making a list of his enemies, which included his own vice president. One of the few people seen visiting him was a man who has made a small fortune selling pillows on television and is a consumer of the most bizarre conspiracy theories possible.

Outside, Washington, D.C. was a ghost town peopled only by National Guardsmen called up for duty to defend the Capitol against the angry mobs unleashed by the president's caustic vitriol. Even these men were not quite trustworthy; experts appeared on television to discuss how these troops were being vetted yet again to make sure they were not secret supporters of Trump who would compromise the new president's security. For the first time in 152 years, a sitting US president would not attend the inauguration of his successor, a tradition that marks the peaceful transfer of power.

Of all the humiliations that Don-

ald Trump has been subjected to, however, the worst has come not from his political opponents. It came not on the day of the Capitol insurrection or even the impeachment that was to follow, but on the day Twitter suspended his account. In a seeming instant, the president who had whetted his supporters to fight hard, feeding them a steady diet of lies, conspiracy theories and deceit for years, had no means to get in touch with them.

Trump himself was likely stunned when this finally happened. For years, his detractors had been hounding social media giants Twitter and Facebook to boot him out from their platforms. None of their entreaties had worked; Trump kept lying, riling up supporters, destroying careers, firing high-level cabinet members, threatening other politicians, instigating his supporters to deliver death threats, and his accounts remained untouched. Even when he was actively spreading lies before and after the election, lies about mail-in voting, then lies about who had won, and lies about rigging, Twitter and Facebook did nothing.

That changed after the Capitol Hill insurrection. Facebook and Twitter finally jettisoned Trump. When an

irate president tried to access the official POTUS account and started to tweet from there, that account was also suspended. In a belated purge, the two platforms also began to delete pages and other accounts that had been pushing for initial or further attacks on the Capitol.

Extreme right-wing Trump supporters, members of militia groups like the Boogaloo Boys or neo-Nazi groups like The Proud Boys and many more supporters immediately cried foul. Twitter and Facebook were engaging in censorship, they claimed, trying to quash speech on the right even as they let left-oriented groups operate without any restrictions. The argument reflected just how far Trump supporters are from the one-time conservatives that used to make up the Republican Party. The latter group, with many members who have long turned away from Trump, would know, for instance, that freedom of speech and censorship rights do not apply to private companies but to governments. Free enterprise, a cherished conservative principle, stands for the freedom of Twitter and Facebook, both private companies, to kick out whomsoever they wish.

Annoyed at being booted out,

Trump's MAGA supporters turned to a different quasi-Twitter service called Parler that was geared towards just those conservatives who were against Twitter's rules of content and moderation. Parler does not moderate any of its content, allowing anything and everything to be said and shared on the site. In the minds of Trump's staunchest supporters, this was the ideal free-speech zone, where the harm words can cause was simply no consideration at all. Trump's faithful, many of whom already had Parler accounts, trooped off. If the liberals in charge of Twitter and Facebook would kick them out, Parler was there to welcome them.

The tentacles of Big Tech, however, could reach longer and deeper than they had imagined. Parler may have been a separate service that did not moderate its content, but it used Amazon Web Servers to host its content, and it was sold as an app on the Apple App Store and on Google Play. Both these factors made it subject to the rules of service applied by Apple, Amazon, Googleplay, etc. Now these other tech giants stepped in. If Parler would not moderate its content, they would refuse to host the site on their servers or allow the application to be sold on its stores. Ultimatums were handed down; they could not be met, and so the week after the Capitol

insurrection Parler too went dark. The conservatives who had funded it vowed that the site would be back, but without web server hosting it appeared this would be a tall order.

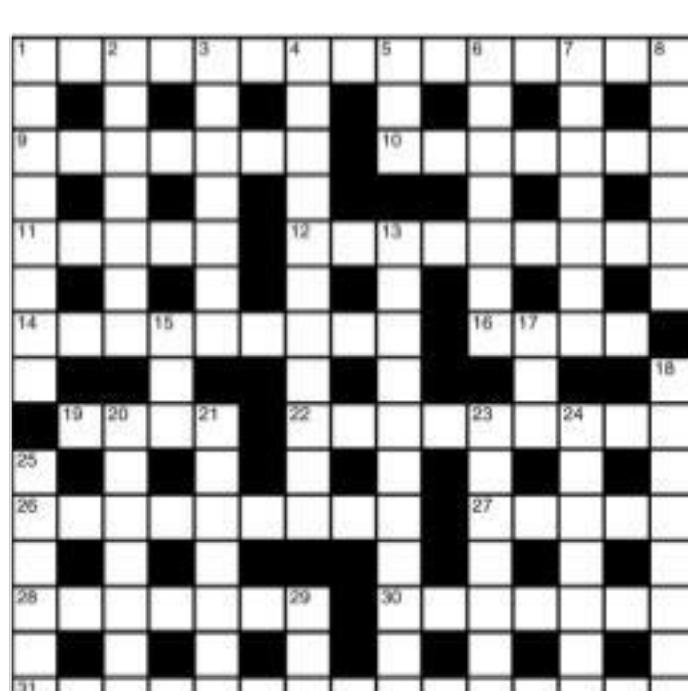
The role of Big Tech in first pushing up and then ultimately (and belatedly) removing Trump is likely to be debated for decades to come. It is difficult not to wonder about how many people would still be alive if Twitter and Facebook had done what they did this January one year ago; they would have denied Trump a platform to spread lies about Covid-19 and the election. A study completed by The Washington Post found that in the two weeks since Trump has been suspended from Twitter, misinformation on the issues of the election and the events following have been reduced by a whopping 72 per cent.

Donald Trump, who tweeted hundreds of times a day on some days and whose tweets are now a part of history, will never have access to a Twitter account again. His is a lifetime ban applied not to a particular account but to him as a person regardless of which account he uses. The story of Trump's end is in this sense as much a tale of how giant tech companies now have the power to make or break governments, even in the most powerful country in the world.

Dawn/Ann

NO 28804

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

SOLUTION FOR  
16 JANUARY

HYMN TO THE FALLEN  
OUAOAGINA  
ULTUNDERARREST  
RTRAWI  
GROCERY IMPASTO  
LNA GPTN  
ASCENDING AORTA  
SHVEIL  
SWORD AND SANDAL  
FPUN PUO  
INSMALL ROOTLET  
GILLE EGAT  
UNALIENABLE TOE  
RYTDUAER  
EARLY CLOSING DAY

ACROSS

- 1 Actress Natalie toured with a complex dramedy perhaps (11,4)
- 9 Substitute magistrate's covering Long Island (7)
- 10 Blunder in film describing special record (7)
- 11 Group books about reversing and so on (5)
- 12 Tear bottle from legless actor's clammy hand, initially - rye and malt, both unfinished (9)
- 14 After one term of maximum power, old Trump explodes spontaneously (9)
- 16 Comfortable spring (4)
- 19 To ratify parliament (4)
- 22 Cut off in one end of Trump Tower without retiring (9)
- 23 British state - after gossip's
- 24 spread in the Himalayas (3,6)
- 25 Francois led group into Middle East compound (5)
- 28 Smartest independent investigator, inspired by trial (7)
- 30 Fashionable Fraudster first to go after invoice (2,5)
- 31/25 Strangely messy cult snubbed Elon Musk and Tesla's mechanical support? (15,6)
- 2 Occasional class I caught (8)
- 3 Go to start of policy for flexible cover (4-3)
- 4 Expert in revolutionary Short Seamew take off components? (7)
- 5 Miss disrupted polite introduction to Norman tapestry (11)
- 6 Loosen uninitiated sisters before party? (7)
- 7 Best, essentially, for chief with time for Republican (7)
- 8 Spot odd skinned fruit (6)
- 13 Resists tattoo drill (11)
- 15 Regret extremely deficient gruel (3)
- 17 Hospital drama involving one organ (3)
- 18 Heavenly Merman netting unlimited bream (8)
- 20 Emperors brush up outside a party? (7)
- 21 New oven made incorporating uranium and gold (7)
- 23 Elbow - rock band - with nothing against metal (7)
- 24 Just in profit over repair (7)
- 25 See 31 Across
- 29 Unreasonably short utensil (3)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

### OCCASIONAL NOTE

The Daily Mail's discovery of the invasion of the British motor-market seems to be curiously belated. In India, and in the newspapers both of England and America, the invasion has long since been noted and commented upon. In the official year April 1919 to March 1920 India imported 9,925 cars of which 9,353, valued at pound 2,306,000 came from America. The United Kingdom's contribution was the beggarly total of 448 cars valued at pound 270,000. From April 1920 to October 1920 inclusive (seven months) India took 8,845 cars (nearly as many as in the whole preceding twelve months). The Americans were still monopolising three-fourths of the trade, for their contribution was 6,678 cars valued at over 2 and half crores as compared with England's 1,202 cars valued at 88 lakhs. The English trade was improving, however, and the Americans seem to have touched high water mark as long ago as May last when, in a single month, they exported to India 1,671 cars to England's 209. The Daily Mail has commenced its wail, indeed, at a time when the Indian quays and jetties are blocked with American cars which the markets cannot absorb. The next three or four months will probably see a startling reduction in the number of American cars arriving in India, at least. Probably the situation is not dissimilar in other over-sea markets which the American motor-car manufacturers have wood "not wisely but too well."

### NEWS ITEMS

### ALARMIST REPORTS OF INDIAN UNREST

London, Jan 22 Sir Claude Hill, presiding at a lecture on "Indian Troubles" given by Professor Troup of Oxford at the Indian section of the Society of Arts, said that although, owing to alarmist reports, no-one in Great Britain cared to invest money in business enterprise in India, in his opinion the unrest in India had been greatly magnified. Sir Claude declared that information from a reliable source showed that the situation in India was now definitely better than it had been last April. Sir Charles Armstrong corroborated the view that unrest in India was exaggerated. He believed that the industrial unrest of the last two or three years was mainly due to the greatly increased cost of living brought about by the war.

### MR. BONAR LAW & POST-WAR PROBLEMS

London, Jan 22 Mr. Bonar Law, speaking at the Edinburgh Merchant Company's dinner, admitted that the Government was unpopular, which was natural in view of post-war reaction. With regard to Ireland there was avowedly a conspiracy to break the connection with Britain, which could not be done without endangering the security of the United Kingdom. In such circumstances, there were bound to be excesses, but the Government would fail unless they were determined not to allow coercion. With regard to the difficulties of the Peace Treaty Mr. Bonar Law ascribed the delay in the Turkish treaty to the American position. Indeed, it was the absence of America from any part of the burdens of distracted Europe that made the position so bad.

### INDIAN EDITOR AND THE REFORMS

New York, Jan 22 At a Banquet at the Canadian Club Mr. Rustomji of Bombay, Editor of the Oriental Review, spoke at length on the Indian Reform Act. He said never before had any of the ancient countries of Asia been so freely and spontaneously dowered with the gift of free and responsible Government. Indians to the number of 340 millions had been freely and willingly, though cautiously, placed in the path of democracy by the freedom-loving people of Great Britain. It was an achievement which ought to fill every British subject with pride. A democratised and well governed India would be a wonderful power for good.

### WAGES & PRICES OF NECESSARIES

The possibility of profiting by the reduction of prices to secure a permanent reduction of wages is being extensively exploited. The Government is still concentrating on the economic situation on the lines of rectification of exchanges, development of the system of barter, speeding up of public schemes, and extension of short-time. The draft proposals of the Labour Committee include an universal forty-four hour week, State unemployment benefit of pound 2 a week for married people, twenty-five shillings for single ones, and additional allowances for children, total rejection of short-time proposals, increase of school age to sixteen, extensive scheme for public works, system of international credits, and resumption of commerce with Russia and Central Europe.



# Odisha BJP suspends farm agitation for 72 hours

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SAMBALPUR, 22 JANUARY:

**A**t a time when the central government's latest offer to put on hold the contentious farm laws for eighteen months was rejected by the farmers union, the Odisha unit of the BJP that held a Chasi Adhikar Rally to nail the ruling BJD government yesterday and laid siege to the police station here suspended its protests for 72 hours.

Top leaders of the state BJP including state president Samir Mohanty, MP Suresh Pujari, Sangeeta Singh Deo, MLA Jayanarayan Mishra, KVS Singh Deo, Radharani Panda, Pradeep Purohit, Rabi Nayak had all spent the night at the police station refusing the vacant unless and until their demands relating to pro-

curement of paddy were met.

Outside, angry BJP workers jostled with the police in their effort to storm the police station today.

It may be noted that the BJP had held a Chasi Adhikar Rally here yesterday and addressed a gathering of farmers mobilized from western Odisha districts. After the public meeting the leaders marched to gherao the Revenue Divisional Commissioner's office and were prevented by the police.

Sixteen frontline BJP leaders were taken in to preventive custody and 'released' after a few hours.

But the BJP leaders refused to vacate the police station saying the RDC must discuss with them and fulfill the demand of farmers.

The deadlock continued overnight.

The BJP demanded that all the unsold paddy stacked by farmers at over 500 market yards across western Odisha districts should be purchased by the government, there should be no deduction ranging from 4 to 10 kg per quintal of paddy and proper infrastructure provided at the market yards.

Today, afternoon, the RDC Niranjan Sahu and other offices including district collector of Sambalpur, the IG police held a meeting with the BJP delegation following which the party suspended its agitation for 72 hours hoping that the demands would be fulfilled.

Sambalpur MLA, Jayanarayan Mishra said, the RDC assured us that the token, which had lapsed, will be renewed and steps will be taken to check the deduction

of paddy per quintal in the name of FAQ. The RDC assured us that he would take all the steps to resolve the issues which could be resolved in his level.

He also assured us that he would convey the state government about those problems which require intervention of the state government.

Mishra said, we have given a 72 hours ultimatum to the government. If these issues are not resolved and paddy is not procured from the market yards within 72 hours, we will convene a meeting on January 25 to discuss the further course of action and intensify our agitation.

Incidentally, the BJP's move in western Odisha is viewed as a bid to counter the ruling BJD's show of strength at a meeting addressed by CM Naveen Patnaik on 14 January.

## BJP in cahoots with middlemen: BJD

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 22 JANUARY:

The BJP is enacting a drama in Odisha to divert attention from its failure to tackle the farmers agitation at the centre, chided the ruling BJD today.

Reacting to the dharna and rally of the BJP at Sambalpur, the BJD alleged that the saffron party leaders here are acting at the behest of middlemen and are advocating their cause.

BJD has stood by the farmers who have benefited. The BJD MP's met Union Minister Piyush Goyal to resolve issues relating to farmers' rice procurement and subsidy. But BJD MP's did nothing for the farmers of Odisha, charged the BJD.

There has been a record bumper crop in Odisha and

lakhs of farmers have benefited in the State with high levels of paddy procurement. In 2018-19, the total Paddy procurement was 65.5 Lakh Metric Tonnes and Rs. 11,400 crores of MSP was transferred to the farmers in Odisha. In 2019-20, the paddy procurement rose to 70.56 Lakh Metric Tonnes and MSP transfers to farmers rose to Rs 12,808 Crores which goes to show how farmers in Odisha have immensely benefited.

The BJD government stands guarantee that every single bag of paddy of genuine farmers will be procured, said the ruling party spokesperson.

Not a single grain of paddy of genuine farmers will be left behind in procurement and the BJD Government guarantees this, said the party.

## Odisha among first three states to cross 1 lakh vaccination mark

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 22 JANUARY:

Odisha has reported three cases of Adverse Event Following Immunisation (AEFI) after vaccination in the past 24 hours even as the state turned out to be among three others to have crossed the one lakh vaccination mark.

A total of 1,13,623 beneficiaries have received the first dose of the vaccine. The target is to inoculate 1.91 lakh health workers by 25 January in the first phase.

The state government on Friday announced a three days per week vaccination programme at Community Health Centres (CHCs) across the State.

"We had raised this issue during a video conference with the Centre recently and as per the decision taken, the

COVID vaccination in Odisha will be conducted in the CHCs and PHCs three days – Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. However, barring the government holidays, the vaccination will continue in all government and private medical colleges and hospitals every day," stated Health and family welfare director Bijay Panigrahi.

"Two health workers from Barghara and one in Khordha had mild AEFI after receiving the vaccine shots. However their health condition is stable and there is no major cause for worry", he said.

As the health service network in rural areas is being affected due to the engagement of doctors in the vaccination drive, the number of days earmarked for vaccination has been reduced to three-day a week.

## NHRC orders compensation to erroneous blood transfusion victims

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BALASORE, 22 JANUARY:

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed Chief Secretary of Odisha to pay rupees one lakh each as compensation to two victims of erroneous blood transfusion in 2016 at the VIMSAR Burla.

Human rights activist and lawyer Radhakanta Tripathy who was the petitioner in the case said the NHRC had passed the order recently and sought compliance report.

Tripathy said the state government had responded to the earlier order of the rights body stating that payment of compensation was not done due to non availability of address of the victims.

The NHRC asked the Collectors of Sambalpur and Jharsuguda districts to publish a public notice in local newspapers to facilitate

location of the victims and payment of compensation.

Tripathy alleged that a 70-year-old person hailing from Rairakhol was admitted to the surgery ward of VIMSAR on June 9, 2016. He had undergone operation on June 13, 2016. Similarly, a 60-year-old person of Brajagangar was admitted to the hospital on June 12, 2016 for a surgery.

It was found that infected blood with HIV in this first case and hepatitis in the second case was transfused, due to negligence of the doctors and staff of VIMSAR, Burla, Sambalpur, Odisha.

On the basis of the enquiry the contractual Data Entry Operator and the Lab Technician involved in transfusion of infected blood they were disengaged from their services by the Odisha State AIDS Control Society and State Blood Transfusion Council Odisha respectively.

## Exports from state have risen: Odisha CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 22 JANUARY:

Despite the pandemic Odisha has registered a 55 per cent increase during the current financial year up to November over the export value corresponding period of the last fiscal said CM Naveen Patnaik today.

Inaugurating the State Export Award Ceremony-2021, the CM said it is a laudable achievement

given the global recession and the pandemic.

He expressed his happiness over constitution of district level export promotion committees in the state.

There are many local MSME products which have the potential to compete in the global market. Time is not far off when the Departmental stores in Europe and America will be studded with products made by our Women Self Help Groups from

Kalahandi, Kandhamal and Malkangiri districts, he remarked. He urged upon entrepreneurs to focus on quality of products to attain global acceptance.

Minister Industry & MSME, Dibya Shankar Mishra said that Odisha has excellent potential to become a major exporting state in the country.

A total of 26 exporters of Odisha were awarded in different categories.

## Special package in the offing for Lower Suktel oustees

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BALANGIR, 22 JANUARY:

The Western Odisha Development Council (WODC) chairman, Asit Tripathy said the government will formulate a very attractive special package for those affected by the Lower Suktel project which has been hanging fire for several decades.

Mr Tripathy who reviewed the progress of several projects

in the district said interest of the villagers affected by the Lower Suktel project is paramount and it will be protected. The package will be such that the people will willingly vacate the land required for the project, he said.

District collector Chanchal Rana, SP Nitin Kushalkar and other officers were present at the review meeting.

He informed that the package will include compensation for land, home, house

building assistance, rehabilitation of the landless etc.

The Lower Suktel project was designed initially to irrigate 25,000 hectares of land but it has been redrawn and will not irrigate more than 50,000 hectares.

Apart from the Lower Suktel project, Mr Tripathy also reviewed projects under the livelihood mission, agriculture and horticulture department related activity. The MSME sector was also discussed.

## Kendrapara lawyer preserves Netaji memory in miniature museum

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KENDRAPARA, 22 JANUARY:

his house into a miniature museum.

The mini-museum has rare photos, documents, newspaper clippings, books, voice recordings and other historical sources relating to Bose.

"It was quite a task to collect photos. I had to part with the hard-earned money. A very glimpse at the frozen frames in black and white stirs me with patriotic fervour. I feel my labour was worth it", he narrated.

"Since childhood, I was an ardent fan of Netaji. His magnetic personality drew me to know more and more about Netaji. The children of my age loved and adored bollywood heroes, but for me, he remained my idol", Mustaque recalled.

As the nation pays tribute to the legendary freedom fighter Subhas Chandra Bose on his 125th Birth Anniversary tomorrow, the initiative of a lawyer in Odisha's Kendrapara district in preserving the memory of the legendary revolutionary leader merits appreciation.

Inspired by Netaji, the legal practitioner here has preserved some of the rare photographs related to the life of the great revolutionary freedom fighter.

Mohammad Mustaque (58), a lawyer living along the dusty lanes of Badhaahtola locality of this district headquarters townships, has turned a portion of



Besides the photographs, his collections include letters, manuscripts, magazines, journals and coins related to the great leader.

It was three decades of perseverance and hard work that

is now paying dividends. I take pride in the fact my personal collection is drawing people from various parts.

For the collections, a lot has been spent from my own purse. Right from the street corner book shops at College streets in Kolkata to various individuals in the state, my search for Netaji articles still goes on. I am now planning to turn the private museum into a trust as organizations are showing interest to conserve the collected articles.

The 1913 gazette notification of Bihar and Orissa, where it was mentioned that Subash Chandra Bose passed out the high school entrance examination in 1913, is treasured by the young lawyer.

A handwritten letter of Captain Laxmi Saigal of Indian National Army (INA), an original copy of the magazine 'Forward' published by Netaji, a special issue of INA Basumat'i, a Bengali magazine,

'Meaning of Leftism', an article written by Netaji in Socialist Republican magazine, are among the collections of Mustaque.

A postal stamp issued by INA to commemorate the liberation of Manipur is among the treasure troves collected by Mustaque.

Two rare coins, which the government minted to observe the centenary of Netaji in 1997, can also be found at Mustaque's house.

Though the centenary of Netaji was observed in 1997, inadvertently in some coins the centenary year was wrongly mentioned as 1996. Mustaque also possesses three of these errored coins in his museum.

## No fresh Covid fatality in Odisha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 22 JANUARY:

Odisha in comparison to national average of 1.44% CFR. The State's recovery rate has shot up to 98.95% with as many as 3,30,545 patients cured of the disease.

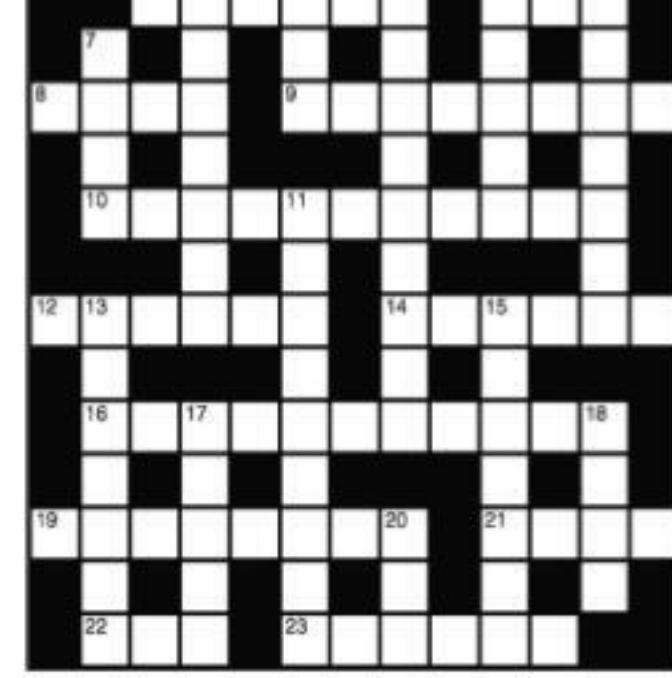
Odisha currently has 1,519 active cases.

A total of 75,01,691 sample tests have been conducted in the state so far, including 23,934 on Thursday.

The case fatality rate currently stands at 0.56% in

### LEISURE

#### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS  
1 Dire, 13 Added, 15 Antonym, 18 Tilia, 19 Major-general, 20 Ages, 21 Stay, 22 Still, 23 Last (6)  
DOWN  
2 Pipal, 3 19th, 4 Tutor, 5 Disappear, 6 Deify, 8 Gradually, 12 Sinuous, 14 Liberty, 15 Inter., 17 Twang, 18 Tenet.  
Solutions to yesterday's crossword

By arrangement with The Independent. Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

#### BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



#### NEED TO KNOW

##### HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

##### RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

##### ROADWAYS INQUIRY

Toll Free Nos. 1800125151

##### FLIGHT INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):

##### SCRABBLE BRAND

23868836, 23865181

##### REDIGE

Haryana Roadways 23861262

##### REDI

Him

## WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	24 H
HONG KONG	24	18 CL
TOKYO	9	6 H
LONDON	8	2 S
DUBAI	24	17 CL
SAN FRANCISCO	12	9 H
NEW YORK	6	1 S
MOSCOW	1	-10 H

S=sunny, CL= clear, H=hazy, R=rainy...

## THUMBNAILS



Visitors look at the collection of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow, Russia on Friday,

AGENCIES

**Facebook's to decide on Trump's ban:** Facebook has asked its independent experts to take a decision on continuation of its ban on former US President Donald Trump. Facebook and its photo and video sharing social networking service, Instagram, suspended Trump after his supporters stormed the US Capitol.

PTI

**Lanka appoints panel:** Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has appointed a 3-member panel to probe the findings of the previous commissions appointed by the state to investigate human rights abuses committed during the last phase of the armed conflict with the LTTE in 2009.

AGENCIES

**Indian mathematician wins award:** Nikhil Srivastava, a young Indian mathematician, has been named winner of the prestigious 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize along with two others for solving long-standing questions on the Kadison-Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs.

PTI

**Lawyers want Giuliani probe, license suspension**

NEW YORK, 22 JANUARY

A lawyers' group filed an ethics complaint against Rudy Giuliani with New York's courts, calling for him to be investigated and his law license suspended over his work promoting former President Donald Trump's false allegations over the 2020 election.

Lawyers Defending American Democracy, which includes former judges and federal attorneys among its members, sent the complaint on Wednesday to the Attorney Grievance Committee of the state's court system saying Giuliani had violated the rules of professional conduct.

Giuliani has spearheaded a nationwide public campaign to convince the public and the courts of a meaningful voter fraud and a stolen presidential election," the complaint said.

The complaint called for the committee to investigate Giuliani's conduct, including his comments at a rally before rioters stormed into the U.S. Capitol, and to suspend his law license immediately while any investigation is being done.

A message was left with the committee seeking comment. An investigation would be the first step in a process that could lead to a disbarment. Another complaint against Giuliani was filed earlier in January by New York state Sen. Brad Hoylman, a Democrat who asked that disbarring Giuliani be taken up for consideration.

The New York State Bar Association separately has opened an inquiry into whether he should be expelled from that organisation, which is a voluntary membership organisation. AP

WHO is vital to controlling the spread of Covid-19 and building back better global health and pandemic preparedness

US VICE-PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS

A DAY AFTER THE USA REJOINED THE UN HEALTH AGENCY

World

# Biden to order stopgap financial help

The two orders that Biden is to sign would increase food aid, protect job seekers, provide workers \$15 hourly minimum wage

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BALTIMORE, 22 JANUARY



President Joe Biden plans to take executive action Friday to provide a stopgap measure of financial relief to millions of Americans while Congress begins to consider his much larger \$1.9 trillion package to help those affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The two executive orders that Biden is to sign would increase food aid, protect job seekers on unemployment and clear a path for federal workers and contractors to get a \$15 hourly minimum wage.

"The American people cannot afford to wait," said Brian Deese, director of the White House National Economic Council. "So many are hanging by a thread. They need help, and we're committed to doing everything we can to provide that help as quickly as possible."

Deese emphasised that the orders are not substitutes for the additional stimulus that Biden says is needed beyond the \$4 trillion in aid that has already been approved, including \$900 billion this past December. Several Republican lawmakers have voiced opposition to provisions in

children who are unable to get school meals because of remote learning could receive a 15% increase in food aid,

according to a fact sheet provided by the White House.

The lowest-income households could qualify for the emergency benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assis-

tance Program. And the formula for calculating meal costs could become more generous.

The order also tries to make it easier for people to claim

direct payments from prior aid packages and other benefits.

In addition to wearing masks, everyone flying to the United States from another country will need to test before they get on that plane, before they depart, and quarantine when they arrive in America, Biden said at a

news conference.

The moves come a day after Biden was sworn in as the 46th president.

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*This effort will strengthen American communities and the pathways to opportunity this country has long fostered*

APPLE CEO TIM COOK

APPLAUDING BIDEN'S IMMIGRATION REFORMS

## THUMBNAILS

**Brazil vaccine cargo:** Brazil's health ministry announced Thursday that a shipment of 2 million doses of coronavirus vaccine is coming from India, a report coming as public health experts sound the alarm over insufficient supply in South America's biggest nation. The vaccine, developed by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford, will clear customs in São Paulo on Friday before being flown to Rio de Janeiro. PTI

**Mongolian PM quits:** Mongolia's prime minister has resigned following a protest over a hospital's treatment of a new mother who tested positive for the coronavirus. Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh, whose Mongolian People's Party holds a majority in the parliament, stepped down Thursday night after accusing President Khaulaagin Battulga of the Democratic Party of orchestrating a political crisis. AP

**Singapore restricts gatherings in Chinese New Year:** Each household in Singapore will be allowed to receive up to eight visitors a day as part of new measures introduced by the government to control Covid-19 infections during the upcoming Chinese New Year. The week-long Chinese New Year festival will begin on 12 February. PTI

**Wuhan mayor quits:** The mayor of China's Wuhan city, epicentre of the Covid-19 pandemic, has abruptly resigned from his post, official media reported. Mayor Zhou Xianwang had warned the world that over 5 million Wuhan residents had left for long holidays, sparking fears of the spread of the coronavirus.

**Islamic State claims deadly and rare twin blasts in Baghdad**



BAGHDAD, 22 JANUARY

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for a rare suicide attack that rocked central Baghdad, killing 32 people and wounding dozens. The bombing targeted "apostate Shiites," the group said in a statement on an IS-affiliated website late Tuesday.

At least 32 people were killed and over 100 people wounded in the blasts on Thursday. Some were in severe condition.

According to officials, the first suicide bomber cried out loudly that he was ill in the middle of the bustling market, prompting a crowd to gather around him and that's when he detonated his explosive belt. The second detonated shortly after.

The US-led coalition recently ceased combat activities and is gradually drawing down its troop presence in Iraq, sparking fears of an IS resurgence.

The group has rarely been able to penetrate the capital since being dislodged by Iraqi forces and the U.S.-led coalition in 2017.

The attack was the first in nearly three years to hit the capital. Elsewhere, in northern Iraq and the western desert, attacks continue and almost exclusively target Iraqi security forces.

An increase in attacks was seen last summer as militants took advantage of the government's focus on tackling the coronavirus pandemic and exploited security gaps across disputed territory in northern Iraq. AP

# Treaty to ban nuclear weapons enters into force

Countries believed to possess nuclear weapons ~ US, Russia, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel ~ opposed the Treaty

ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS, 22 JANUARY

**T**he first-ever treaty to ban nuclear weapons entered into force on Friday, hailed as a historic step to rid the world of its deadliest weapons but strongly opposed by the world's nuclear-armed nations.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is now part of international law, culminating a decades-long campaign aimed at preventing a repetition of the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II.

But getting all nations to ratify the treaty requiring them to never own such weapons seems daunting, if not impossible, in the current global climate.

When the treaty was approved by the UN general assembly in July 2017, more



than 120 approved it.

But none of the nine countries known or believed to possess nuclear weapons—the United States, Russia, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel—supported it and neither did the 30-nation NATO alliance.

Japan, the world's only country to suffer nuclear attacks, also does not support

the treaty, even though the aged survivors of the bombings in 1945 strongly push for it to do so.

Japan on its own renounces use and possession of nuclear weapons, but the government has said pursuing a treaty ban is not realistic with nuclear and non-nuclear states so sharply divided over it.

**The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is now part of international law, culminating a decades-long campaign to prevent a repetition of the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki**

**The treaty requires that all ratifying countries never under any circumstances ... develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices**

**It also bans any transfer or use of nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices**

**As of Thursday, 61 countries had ratified the treaty, with another ratification possible on Friday, and from Friday, nuclear weapons will be banned by international law in all those countries.**

Nonetheless, Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize-winning coalition whose work helped spearhead the treaty, called it a really big day for international law, for the United Nations and for survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The treaty received its 50th ratification on 24 October, triggering a 90-day period before its entry into force on 22 January.

As of Thursday, Fihn told The Associated Press that 61 countries had ratified the treaty, with another ratification possible on Friday, and from Friday, nuclear weapons will be banned by international

law in all those countries.

The treaty requires that all ratifying countries never under any circumstances ... develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It also bans any transfer or use of nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices and the threat to use such weapons and requires parties to promote the treaty to other countries.

Fihn said the treaty is really significant because it will now be a key legal instrument, along with the Geneva Conventions on conduct toward civilians and soldiers during war and the conventions banning chemical and biological weapons and land mines.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the treaty demonstrated support for multilateral approaches to nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear weapons pose growing dangers and the world needs urgent action to ensure their elimination and prevent the catastrophic human and environmental consequences any use would cause, he said in a video message.

The elimination of nuclear weapons remains the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations. But not for the nuclear powers.

As the treaty was approaching the 50 ratifications needed to trigger its entry into force, the Trump administration wrote a letter to countries that signed it saying they made a strategic error and urging them to rescind their ratification.

The letter said the treaty turns back the clock on verification and disarmament" and would endanger the half-century-old Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, considered the cornerstone of non-proliferation efforts.

## NCP's Prachanda-led faction holds massive anti-govt protest in Nepal to put pressure on PM Oli

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, 22 JANUARY

The unconstitutional dissolution of Nepal's Parliament by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has posed serious threats to the country's hard-earned federal democratic republic system, chairman of the NCP's splinter faction Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda said on Friday as he led a massive anti-government rally here.

Addressing supporters of his faction of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP), former prime minister Prachanda said that Oli not only violated the party's statute and procedures, but also undermined Nepal's Constitution and stood against the democratic republic system which compelled people to protest

against his move. We had tried to correct him and bring him back on track but we failed on that, he said. Prachanda alleged that Oli also tried to dissolve the months-long peace process that brought the Maoists to mainstream politics. Today, the entire country and the public opinion is against the dissolution of the House of Representatives, he said.

Former PM Madhav Kumar Nepal, who is also the chairman of the NCP-Prachanda faction, said that the Constitution has given rights to the PM to dissolve Parliament.

Therefore, it is Oli's constitutional coup and we have to strongly oppose it, he said, adding that the Prachanda-Nepal faction will not have any alliance with Oli in the future.

Prachanda last week said that by dissolving the House, Oli has given a blow to the Constitution as well as the democratic republic system which has been established in the country through seven decades of struggle by the people.

More than 25,000 people attended the massive show of strength by the NCP-Prachan-

da faction. Prior to holding the public meeting at Bhrikuti-mandap in Kathmandu, the party organised a grand rally at different parts of Kathmandu shouting anti-government slogans.

Nepal plunged into a political crisis on 20 December after Oli, known for his pro-Beijing leanings, in a surprise move recommended dissolving the 275-member House, amidst a tussle for power with Prachanda.

Acting on the prime minister's recommendation, President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the House the same day and announced fresh elections on 30 April and 10 May, sparking protests from a large section of the NCP led by Prachanda, also a co-chair of the ruling party.

## COVID-19 LIMITATIONS



People wearing face masks walk along the River Thames in London, Britain, on Friday. IANS

## Israeli warplanes strike targets in central Syria

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIRUT, 22 JANUARY



commander Qassem Soleimani last year in Baghdad.

On January 13, Israeli warplanes carried out intense airstrikes in eastern Syria apparently targeting positions and arms depots of Iran-backed forces.

At least 57 fighters were killed and dozens were wounded, according to a Syrian opposition war monitoring group.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor that tracks Syria's war, said it recorded

39 Israeli strikes inside Syria in 2020 that hit 135 targets, including military posts, warehouses or vehicles.

Israel views Iranian entrenchment on its northern frontier as a red line, and it has repeatedly struck Iranian-linked facilities and weapons convoys destined for Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group.

The strikes also come amid intensifying low-altitude Israeli warplane missions in Lebanese skies that have caused jitters among residents.

## In Russia, effort underway to curb upcoming Navalny protests

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MOSCOW, 22 JANUARY

BRUSSELS, 22 JANUARY

The European Union used a video summit of its 27 leaders to call on Russia to immediately release Opposition leader Alexei Navalny and make sure that his rights are fully respected.

Navalny was arrested last Sunday at a Moscow airport as he tried to enter the country from Germany, where he had spent five months recovering from nerve agent poisoning he blames on the Kremlin.

EU summit host Charles Michel said the leaders expect Russia to urgently proceed with the independent and transparent investigation into the attack on his life. Michel also insisted that Moscow cooperate with the organisation for the prohibition of chemical weapons to ensure an impartial investigation is carried out into the attack.

AP

fiercest critic, was arrested Sunday when he returned to Russia from Germany, where he had spent nearly five months recovering from nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin. On Monday, a judge ordered Navalny jailed for 30 days.

He faces a years-long prison term authorities accused him of violating the terms of a suspended sentence in 2014 conviction for financial misdeeds, including when he was convalescing in Germany. Navalny's supporters have called for nationwide demonstrations on Saturday to pressure the government into releasing the politician, but have come under pressure against protesting.

Universities and colleges in different Russian regions have urged students not to attend rallies, with some saying students may be subject to disciplinary action, including expulsion.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that it is only natural that there are warnings ... about the possible consequences related to non-compliance with the law" since there are calls for unauthorized, unlawful events.

Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner and Kremlin's

Russian regions have been detained as well.

Russia's Prosecutor General's office and police have issued public warnings against attending or calling for unauthorized rallies. The prosecutors have also demanded Roskomnadzor, Russia's media and internet watchdog, to restrict access to websites containing calls to protest on Saturday.

On Friday, Russia's largest social network VKontakte has blocked all the pages dedicated to the rallies. Roskomnadzor also announced that it would fine social media companies for encouraging minors to participate in the protests. The move came amid media reports of calls for demonstrations and videos of school students replacing portraits of President Vladimir Putin in their classrooms with that of Navalny going viral on social network TikTok.

Russia's Education Ministry has issued a statement urging parents to shield their children from the events on Saturday, stating that no one has the right to drag young people into various political actions and provocations.

## Iran, pressured by blackouts and pollution, targets Bitcoin

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
TEHRAN, 22 JANUARY



countries with the most Bitcoin mining capacity in the world - 450 megawatts a day.

The US network has a daily capacity of more than 1,100 megawatts. On Tehran's outskirts and across Iran's south and northwest, windowless warehouses hum with heavy industrial machinery and rows of computers that crunch highly complex algorithms to verify transactions.

The transactions, called

blocks, are then added to a public record, known as the blockchain. Miners adding a new block to the blockchain collect fees in bitcoins, a key advantage amid the country's currency collapse.

Iran's rial, which had been trading at 32,000 to the dollar at the time of the 2015 nuclear deal, has tumbled to around 240,000 to the dollar these days. Iran's government has sent mixed messages about Bitcoin.

On one hand, it wants to capitalise on the soaring popularity of digital currency and see value in legitimising transactions that fly under Washington's radar. It authorised 24 Bitcoin processing centres that consume an estimated 300 megawatts of energy a day, attracted tech-savvy Chinese entrepreneurs to tax-free zones in the country's

south and permitted imports of computers for mining.

Amir Nazemi, deputy minister of telecommunications and information, declared last week that cryptocurrency "can be helpful as Iran struggles to cope with sanctions on its oil sector."

On the other hand, the government worries about limiting how much money is sent abroad and controlling money laundering, drug sales and internet criminal groups. Iranian cryptocurrency miners have been known to use ransomware in sophisticated cyber attacks, such as in 2018 when two Iranian men were indicted in connection with a vast cyber assault on the city of Atlanta.

On Thursday, British cyber-security firm Sophos reported it found evidence tying crypto-miners in Iran's south-ern city of Shiraz to malware that was secretly seizing control of thousands of Microsoft servers.

Iran is now going after unauthorised Bitcoin farms with frequent police raids. Those who gain authorisation to process cryptocurrency are subject to electricity tariffs, which miners complain discourage investment.

Activities in the field are not feasible because of electricity tariffs, said Mohammad Reza Sharafi, head of the country's Cryptocurrency Farms Association.

Despite the government giving permits to 1,000 investors, only a couple dozen server farms are active, he added, because tariffs mean Bitcoin farms pay five times as much for electricity as steel mills and other industries that consume far more power.



## 'I CAN BAT'

It was a debut over two years after his actual debut and Shardul Thakur (*in photo, left*) says he took a quantum leap from being just a fast bowler to a bowling all-rounder with his impactful show in India's epoch-making Brisbane Test triumph over Australia. "Yes, I can be called a bowling all-rounder, I have that ability to bat and even in future, whenever I get my opportunity to bat, I am going to contribute useful runs to the team's total," said Thakur.

For more updates [www.thestatesman.com](http://www.thestatesman.com)

## THUMBNAILS

**IPL auction:** The IPL players auction ahead of the 2021 season is likely to be held on February 18, a BCCI official told PTI on Friday. "The auction will be held on February 18. The venue is yet to be decided," the official said. The player retention deadline ended on January 20 and the trading window closes on 4 February.

**Junior hockey team hold Chile:** A resilient Indian junior women's hockey team came from behind twice to hold Chile senior side to a 2-2 draw in its fourth match of the tour in Santiago. Deepika (40th minute) and Gagandeep Kaur (55th) led India's fight back after Chile had taken the lead twice through goals from Mariana del Jesus Lagos (21st) and Fernanda Villagrán (51st) at the Prince of Wales Country Club.

**ITBP win national ice hockey championship:** The ITBP on Friday won the 10th national ice hockey championship held in Jammu and Kashmir's tourist town of Gulmarg, a force official said. The team of the border-guarding force defeated Ladakh 5-1 at the Gulmarg ice rink located at a height of 8,694 feet.

**Liverpool's unbeaten run ends:** Liverpool's 68-match unbeaten streak at Anfield in the Premier League ended with a 1-0 loss to Burnley in the latest setback of a fading title defense. Ashley Barnes scored from the penalty spot in the 83rd minute on Thursday after the forward was brought down by goalkeeper Alison Becker as Burnley became the first team to win in the league at Anfield since April 2017.

**ATP Cup draw:** Novak Djokovic and his defending champion Serbia squad will play Germany and Canada in group play at the ATP Cup from February 1-5 at Melbourne Park. The draw held on Friday also has Australia playing in a tough group with Rafael Nadal's Spain as well as Greece in Group B. Serbia beat Spain in the final of the inaugural 2020 ATP Cup.

**Zidane tests Covid positive:** Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane has tested positive for the coronavirus, the Spanish club said Friday. The announcement came two days after Zidane coached the team in a 2-1 loss at third-tier Alcoyano in the Copa del Rey. Assistant coach David Bettoni will coach Madrid at Alavs on Saturday.

**Bangladesh clinch series:** Off-spinner Mehidy Hasan claimed a career-best 4-25 as Bangladesh clinched the three-match series against the West Indies on Friday with a seven-wicket victory in the second game. Bangladesh won the first match by six wickets. Skipper Tamim Iqbal hit 50 to help the side chase the target in 33.2 overs after the West Indies was bowled out for 148 in 43.4 overs.

**Baroda suspends Deepak Hooda:** The Baroda Cricket Association (BCA) has suspended senior player Deepak Hooda, who had stormed out of the camp before the start of Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, for this domestic season for "indiscipline" and "bringing disrepute to the game." Hooda had walked out of the team on the eve of domestic T20 tournament after a spat with captain Krunal Pandya. He had alleged "misbehaviour" on the part of Pandya.

**Aguero tests positive for Covid:** Manchester City striker Sergio Aguero has tested positive for the coronavirus, saying he has experienced some symptoms. The Argentine had already been self-isolated after being identified as a close contact of someone infected. "I had some symptoms and I'm following doctor's orders for recovery. Take care, everyone," Aguero wrote on Twitter.

# Siraj is find of Australia Test series, says Shastri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA,  
22 JANUARY



India head coach Ravi Shastri on Friday described rookie pacer Mohammed Siraj as the find of the Australia tour, hailing him for playing a key role in the historic Test series win despite personal loss and racial abuse from spectators Down Under.

Siraj could not return to India after his father, who was an auto driver, died barely a week after he landed in Australia with the Indian team in November last year. He also faced racial abuse from a section of the crowd in Sydney during the third Test.

Despite all this, Siraj finished the series with 13 wickets -- the most by any Indian bowler -- as the team came from behind to script a memorable 2-1 win.

"Find of the tour for shoring up the bowling attack the way he did - Mohd Siraj. He fought through personal loss, racial remarks and channelised them to find home in the team huddle," Shastri tweeted in appreciation of the 26-year-old pacer.

Siraj turned out to be one of the architects of India's success and successfully stepped into the shoes of his senior pace colleagues after making his debut in the series-turning-second Test in Melbourne.

In the fourth Test in Brisbane, Siraj led a young Indian bowl-

ing attack, picking up his maiden five-wicket haul in the longest format of the game.

He returned with match figures of seven for 150 as India beat Australia by three wickets in the series-deciding Test at the Gabba.

On Thursday, Siraj revealed that on-field umpires had offered his team the option of leaving the third Test against Australia midway after he was subjected to racial abuse by the crowd in Sydney, a proposal that was turned down by skipper Ajinkya Rahane. After his arrival

in the country, the youngster had driven straight to his father's grave in Hyderabad to pay his respects. He had dedicated each of his wickets in Australia to the departed soul.

## 'Plan was hatched in July'

Australian batsmen fell nicely into the leg-side trap set by the Indian bowlers during the fiercely-contested series that ended earlier this week but its planning spearheaded by head coach Ravi Shastri, started way

back in July, bowling coach Bharat Arun revealed on Friday.

Not just the pacers, even the spinners attacked the stumps of Australia's batting pillars, Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne, with fielders at catching positions on the legside. India won the series 2-1 after pulling off a stunning chase on day five in the fourth and final Test at the Gabba. Speaking to media in an online press conference, Arun said the ploy to

script the Australians was Shastri's brainchild.

"Ravi called me sometime in July and we were discussing the Australia tour, that we needed to take the off-side out of the Australians. So, we had our own analysis and we felt most of the runs Smith and Labuschagne scored and most of Aussie batsmen, they had got lots of runs out of the cut, pull and on the off-side," the 58-year-old said.

Arun said they also learnt from how the New Zealand bowlers, especially Neil Wagner, troubled Smith during the series between the trans-tasmanian rivals in the previous season.

We took a cue out of the NZ attack. When they bowled to Steve Smith, they had bowled bodyline to him and he felt very uncomfortable.

"So, Ravi called up and said 'Want you to make a plan where you eliminate the off side out of the Australians.'

Pant will improve gradually as wicketkeeper: Saha

Rishabh Pant the batsman redeemed himself spectacularly in Australia and his much-criticised wicket-keeping skills are also on the mend, feels senior India stumper Wriddhiman Saha who thinks the youngster to be given some breathing space as "no one learns algebra in class". Saha, who is considered India's number one Test wicketkeeper, told PTI in an interview that he does not believe that Pant's heroic show in Australia would close the door for him in the Indian team.

"You can ask him (Pant), we have a friendly relationship and help each other whenever gets into the XI. Personally, there's no conflict with him," Saha said after returning home following the historic Test series win in Australia.

"I don't see who is No.1 or 2... Team will give a chance to those who do better. I will continue to do my job. Selection is not in my hands, it's up to the management."

Saha was all praise for the 23-year-old Pant, whose 89 not out on the fifth day sealed the match for India at the Gabba for a 2-1 series win.

"No one learns algebra in class I. You always go step by step. He is giving his best and will definitely improve. He has matured and proved himself. In the long run, it augurs well for the Indian team," he said.

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Sindhu and Sameer out; Satwik-Ashwini enter semis



## Mathews hundred lifts Sri Lanka to 229-4 against England

AGENCIES  
GALLE, 22 JANUARY



An unbeaten hundred by Angelo Mathews (*in photo*) helped Sri Lanka to 229-4 at stumps Friday on the first day of the second test against England.

Mathews came in to bat at 7-2 after James Anderson had dismissed both Kusal Perera (6) and Oshada Fernando (0) in the morning session.

The former Sri Lanka captain was then tested by a probing spell of fast bowling by Mark Wood, who had him in trouble with a couple of short deliveries. Wood was constantly bowling to Mathews on middle and leg-stump with a leg-gully in place expecting the batsman to flick one.

Mathews did not take the bait but a bouncer struck his glove and landed where there was no fielder before crossing the boundary rope. That brought up Mathews' half-century.

"We lost the openers early unfortunately and we just had to see through a few overs and get the ball slightly older and look for runs," Mathews said.

"Scoring runs was tough although the wicket was flat. England were on the money not giving away too many loose balls."

Lahiru Thirimanne gave

solid support to Mathews. Sri Lanka added 69 runs for the third wicket before Anderson struck in the second ball after lunch as Thirimanne nicked one to the wicketkeeper.

Stand-in captain Dinesh Chandimal then joined Mathews and the duo produced a 117-run stand for the fourth wicket. Wood was persisting with some high-quality fast bowling on a flat wicket where there was hardly any assistance for the seam bowlers. He had Chandimal in trouble with a bouncer that hit the batsman on the head. His perseverance paid off when he trapped Chandimal to point region. It was his first test hundred in Galle, a venue where he had made his test debut 12 years ago.

England took the new ball soon after it was available but weren't able to make the breakthrough as Niroshan Dickwella and Mathews were involved in an unfinished 36-run stand for the fifth wicket.

Anderson finished with 3-24. Ten of his 19 overs were maidens. Brief scores: Sri Lanka 229/4 (Angelo Mathews 107 not out, Dinesh Chandimal 52; James Anderson 3/24).

"It was hard work bowling

out there," Wood said.

Mathews, who missed Sri Lanka's recent tour of South Africa with a hamstring injury, reached his 11th test hundred and the third against England with a single off Jack Leach to point region. It was his first test hundred in Galle, a venue where he had made his test debut 12 years ago.

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"It was hard work bowling

## Amid cancellation talk, Tokyo Olympics 'focused on hosting'

AGENCIES  
TOKYO, 22 JANUARY

IOC President Thomas Bach and local organizers are pushing back against reports that the postponed Tokyo Olympics will be canceled.

Now set to open July 23, the Tokyo Games were postponed 10 months ago at the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, and now the event appears threatened again.

The Times of London, citing unidentified government sources, reported that the games will have to be canceled.

It quoted an unidentified senior member of the ruling government coalition. "No one wants to be the first to say so but the consensus is that it's too difficult," the source said. "Personally, I don't think it's going to happen." In a statement Friday, the local organizing committee did not address directly the Times story, but said the Olympics were going forward and had the support of Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.

"All our delivery partners including the national government, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee, the IOC and the IPC (International Paralympic Committee) are fully focused on hosting the games this summer,"

the statement said. "We hope that daily life can return to normal as soon as possible, and we will continue to make every effort to prepare for a safe and secure games."

Managu Sakai, the deputy chief cabinet secretary and an ally of the prime minister, also shot down the story. "There is no such fact and I clearly deny (the report)," he said.

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike told regular news conference on Friday that, "I've never heard such a thing."

She even suggested action against the British newspaper. "Perhaps we should file a protest," she said.

The Times of London said Japan hoped to land the 2032 Olympics. The IOC has already awarded the 2024 Olympics to Paris and the 2028 version to Los Angeles.

The idea of Tokyo waiting a decade seems unlikely, given the cost of maintaining venues, negotiating new leases, and so forth. Tokyo has already spent about \$25 billion to organize these Olympics, most of which is public money.

Several reports of a cancellation began to surface this month when the Japanese government put Tokyo and other prefectures under state of emergency to counter a surge of rising COVID-19 cases.

The Times of London said

Japan hoped to land the 2032 Olympics. The IOC has already awarded the 2024 Olympics to Paris and the 2028 version to Los Angeles.

In men's singles, Sameer Verma's giant-killing run also came to an end after he squandered a match point to go down 13-21 21-19 20-22 to world no. 3 Anders Antonsen of Denmark in a quarterfinal contest.

With the defeat of Sindhu and Sameer, Indian challenge in singles competition ended in the tournament. The only bright spot was the duo of Satwik and Ashwini as they shocked the fifth seeded Malaysian pair 18-21 24-22 22-20 after toiling hard for

one hour and 15 minutes. The world no. 22 Indian pair will be up against top seeds Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai of Thailand. Ratchanok, who had lost to Sindhu in their last three meetings, came out with a positive intent and eked out a three-point lead early on even as Sindhu failed to control the length. The Thai soon grabbed a four-point advantage at the first-game interval.

Sindhu looked to force the pace after the break and caught up at 13-13. However, it was a one-way traffic after that as Ratchanok blew the Indian away with eight straight points to pocket the opening game without much ado.

In the others singles match, Antonsen was up 5-0 with Sameer looking tentative and struggling with his length, hitting long and wide. The Danish shuttler continued his good run, managing to keep a six-point advantage at the break.

Sameer couldn't engage his rival in long rallies or put any kind of pressure and also struggled with his shots as Antonsen cantered to eight game points and took the opening game when the Indian went wide again.

After the change of sides, Antonsen opened up a 5-1 lead but Sameer managed to claw back with four straight points. A brilliant cross court net shot helped the Indian to keep it 7-7 before he took the lead as his opponent erred.

Fall had the chance to get his second soon after the restart but failed to make the most of it. A chip from Ahmed Jahouh saw him with a clear shot on goal, but his attempt was straight into Majumder's hands. SCEB coach Robbie Fowler threw in Bright Enobakhare around the hourmark and his presence immediately invigorated their attack. SCEB were beginning to fashion chances of their own — Jacques Maghoma had an attempt go just wide—but their enthusiasm was dampened when Fall finally broke through in the 27th minute.

Goddard, again, put in a good delivery into the box which was well defended by SCEB. However, Boumous once again put the ball into the box and this time, he was able to find an unmarked Fall, who made no mistake. Mumbai found another chance to score as the first half drew to a close. A cross found Le Fondre unmarked inside the box. The Englishman had a free header but was unable to get it on target.

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## Barca miss 2 penalties but advances past Cornell in Copa

AGENCIES  
MADRID, 22 JANUARY



Ousmane Dembele scored early in extra time after missing a penalty late in regulation as Barcelona defeated third-division Cornell 2-0 in the round of 32 of the Copa del Rey.

Martin Braithwaite also scored on Thursday