

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
COIMBATORE | MONDAY 25 | JANUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 31°C
Min: 16°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Thai 12
Tithi: Dwadashi
Star: Mrigashirsham
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
Yamagandam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.22 am
Zohar: 12.26 pm
Asar: 3.39 pm
Maghrib: 6.06 pm
Isha: 7.20 pm

Soldier succumbs to injuries caused in Pak firing

New Delhi: An Army soldier, who was critically injured in Pakistani firing along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district last week, succumbed to injuries in the command hospital in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district on Sunday, a defence spokesperson said.He is the third Army personnel to have died in the ceasefire violations by Pakistan this month.

Nepal PM Oli expelled from ruling party

Kathmandu: he ruling Nepal Communist Party's splinter faction led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Sunday expelled Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli from the party's general membership, according to media reports. The decision was taken at the Standing Committee meeting of the faction led by former prime ministers Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal after Oli failed to produce explanation to his recent moves as sought by party leadership.

COUNTER POINT



Not prison cells of freedom fighters... they want to see where current leaders are lodged!

STATE | 3

Modi's charm will work this time, says Tada Periyasamy



NATION | 4

Ram temple in 3 years; to cost ₹1,100cr: Trust

SPORT | 8

Ashwin says it's a start over, again & again



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Defeat lies, rumours on vaccine, PM tells youth

■ Step forward and assist in Covid vaccination: Modi

New Delhi, Jan. 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said Indian scientists have done their duty by developing Covid-19 vaccine and "now we have to fulfill ours" by defeating through the right information every network spreading lies and rumours.

Addressing NCC cadets, NSS volunteers and artists who would be participating in the Republic Day parade, the Prime Minister said such organisations have always played their role in dealing with challenging times.

Mr Modi said the youths should now step forward to assist in the Covid-19 vaccination programme by providing the right information to the people.



We have to defeat through right information every network spreading lies and rumours.

— NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

"You need to take it to the next level now. Your reach is in all parts of society. I request you to come forward to help the country with the Covid-19 vaccination programme. You have to provide the right information on vaccines to the poor and general public," he said. "India will not become 'aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant) just by somebody saying so, it will become so by actions of youths like you. You will be able to do this

better when you will have the necessary skill set."

Realising the importance of this, the ministry of skill development was formed when his government came in 2014 and more than 5.5 crore youths have been given training for different skills till now, Mr Modi said.

Under this skill development programme, not just training is being given, help is being provided for getting employment, the Mr Modi said.

— PTI

16 LAKH PEOPLE VACCINATED TILL NOW: CENTRE

New Delhi, Jan. 24: India took only 6 days to administer one million Covid-19 vaccine doses, a count which is higher than that of countries like the US and the UK, the Union health ministry said on Sunday as the number of beneficiaries who have received the anti-coronavirus shots inched close to 16 lakh. The UK took 18 days whereas the US took 10 days to reach the one million mark, it said.

As on January 24, till 8 am, 15,82,201 beneficiaries have received Covid-19 vaccination.

PTI

JUMBO DEATH:

Activist sends legal notice to Collector, SP

■ REPORT ON PAGE 3

Rahul vows not to allow BJP to disregard Tamil

Tirupur, Jan. 24: Continuing to target Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Tamil Nadu, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday alleged Chinese troops have occupied Indian territory and the man with '56 inch-chest' cannot even utter the name of the neighbouring country.

Addressing meetings here and in neighbouring Erode as part of three-day campaign tour of Tamil Nadu for the assembly elections, Mr Gandhi repeated his charge that Mr Modi governed the

● **"It is the nation's strength. It is our duty to protect every single language, culture and religion in this country," Rahul said.**

country for just five or six business people.

The Union government was not for the farmers, labourers or the micro small or medium enterprises, which are the nation's future and abound in this region of the state, Mr Gandhi, on a tour of western districts, said.

"For the first time, the Indian people can see that Chinese troops have occu-

pied Indian territory. As we speak today, thousands of Chinese troops are occupying our territory and the man with a 56-inch chest cannot even say the word China. That is the reality of our country," he said.

Taking forward his 'Tamil language and culture' pitch to connect with the people and attack the BJP, the Congress MP said he wanted to be the soldier of the Tamil people in Delhi and reiterated that he would not allow the saffron party to disregard Tamil culture.

■ P2

TRACTOR RALLY AFTER R-DAY PARADE: POLICE

New Delhi, Jan. 24: Delhi Police on Sunday claimed that over 300 Twitter handles have been generated from Pakistan to disrupt the tractor rally proposed by protesting farmers on Republic Day.

Detailing the plan for the tractor parade, Deependra Pathak, special commissioner of police (intelligence) said the rally on Tuesday will be conducted amid tight security after the Republic Day celebrations conclude.

"Over 300 Twitter handles have been generated from Pakistan during January 13 to 18 to disrupt the tractor rally by farmers only by misleading people. There are inputs about the same from different agencies too. It will be a challenging task for us but the rally will be conducted amid tight security after the Republic Day parade is over," Mr Pathak said.

"We have given them around 170 kilometres of distance in three routes," Mr Pathak said.

— PTI

INDIA, CHINA HOLD 9TH ROUND OF TALKS ON BORDER

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 24

India and China on Sunday held the ninth round of Corps commanders level talks to resolve the nine-month-long military stand-off in eastern Ladakh. The meeting started at around 11 am in Moldo on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control. The Indian delegation was led by 14 Corps Commander Lt-General P.G.K. Menon and included a joint secretary from the external affairs ministry.

Stalin found 'vel' before poll: EPS

Coimbatore, Jan. 24: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Sunday accused DMK president M.K. Stalin of deception for posing with 'vel', Lord Muruga's spear like weapon, and said the divine symbol has come to leader of opposition's notice since Assembly elections were round the corner.

On the second day of his campaign here, the AIADMK leader referred to a photograph of the DMK chief holding the 'vel' alleging it was an act of deceit. The AIADMK respected all religions equally, but it was not the case with the DMK which involved in 'deception' in such matters, he alleged.

The Chief Minister claimed Mr Stalin spoke one thing for the outside world but in his heart of hearts he knew it was not his conviction. "The god will not grant you boon if you only receive Lord Muruga's 'vel'. The boon will be only for the AIADMK."

The DMK has for a long time been accused of offending Hindu beliefs and sentiments by the BJP and Hindu Munnani, a noted Sangh Parivar outfit in Tamil Nadu. Recently, Mr Stalin had slammed the BJP and the



Since elections are round the corner, the 'vel' is visible to Mr Stalin's eyes only now.

— Edappadi K. Palaniswami
Chief Minister

Munnani for trying to build a perception that his party was against the Hindus. "It is not the truth," the DMK chief had said.

Mr Palaniswami alleged, "Since elections are round the corner, the 'vel' is visible to his (Mr Stalin's) eyes only now and till now it was not visible to him." "The god will give you (DMK) appropriate punishment through the elections," he said.

On Saturday, DMK workers had presented a glittering 'vel' made of silver to Mr Stalin at a party's rural outreach programme in Tiruvallur district.

■ P2

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OTHER STORIES

Ration rice seized

DC CORRESPONDENT,
CHENNAI, JAN. 24

The City police, on Saturday night, seized 2,375 kilograms of ration rice smuggled and stocked in Tondiarpet. A press release said that based on a tip-off that a huge quantity of ration rice stocked in T.H road in Tondiarpet, a police team raided the place and found 2,375 kilograms rice in 50 gunny bags. Four persons - E. Nandhagopal (42), N. Ajith (22), A. Linges (48) of Tondiarpet and M. Vijayakumar (34) of Kasimedu were arrested and remanded to judicial custody.

No need of vaccine hesitancy among diabetics: Experts

DC CORRESPONDENT,
CHENNAI, JAN. 24

A panel of diabetes experts from around the country asserted on Sunday that there had been no proven major impact of Covid19 vaccines among diabetes patients and that was an encouraging result to avert vaccine hesitancy.

They were answering questions raised by viewers on the Webinar on 'Living longer with Diabetes' organised by the South India Mice Association (SIMA) in collaboration with USV Pvt. Ltd., an Indian multinational pharmaceutical and biotechnology company.

Attending the conclave Dr. Mala Dharamalingam, Professor and HOD, department of endocrinology, diabetes and metabolism, Ramaiah Memorial Hospital, Bengaluru highlighted the role of oral medications, combination drugs, and insulin in maintaining target glucose levels. She also reiterated that regular walking and aerobic exercises are vital for fitness in patients with diabetes.

Dr Ambarish Mithal, chairman and head of endocrinology and diabetes at Max Healthcare, New Delhi emphasised the importance of patient awareness, affordability, and accessibility of medications. He also highlighted diet modification, addition of vitamin D to prevent bone loss and tips for diabetes patients during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The mantra is of blood pressure, lipids, and weight regulation along with sugar control to prevent the complication of diabetes. Common drugs like metformin, modern sulfonylureas, and gliptins are economical, but patient motivation is the key to taking medications, self-monitoring, and follow-up", said Dr. V Mohan, chairman and chief of diabetes at Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialties Centre, Chennai.

Currently, India has an estimated 77 million people with diabetes, which makes it the second most affected country in the world after China. As per the International Diabetes Federation, this number is projected to grow to 134 million by 2045.

Central funds could have lifted Pondy higher, says CM

Puducherry, Jan. 24: Chief Minister of Puducherry V Narayanasamy on Sunday said if the Centre earmarked sufficient funds and supported the territorial budget, the performance of the Congress government here could have been better.

Declaring open a Rs 22-crore flyover across the Sankarabaran river in Tirukanchi village in Villianoor commune panchayat limits, the Chief Minister said the Centre is not showing interest in the development of Puducherry.

While bigger states are getting 41 per cent of their budgetary estimates



through Central grant, Puducherry is getting only 20 per cent, he said. "In spite of lack of support from the Centre and the negative attitude of the Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi towards giving her nod to our proposals for infrastructure development and welfare schemes, our scale of per-

formance is appreciated by the people," he said.

He said the employees of major industrial undertakings like AFT, Swadeshi and Bharathi Mills were not getting wages though funds totalling Rs 24 crores were earmarked by the territorial government. "The Lieutenant Governor issues orders to divert the funds meant for wages to settle the PF and ESIC dues. This intervention by Bedi deprives workers of the textile units of their wages," he said.

He said, "Despite obstacles from the Lieutenant Governor, we provide infrastructural facilities through bank loans and

aid from NABARD in the implementation of the smart city project."

The territorial government had launched a new scheme to provide free education from kindergarten to PG and research studies to students belonging to Adi Dravidar community and the scheme involved an expenditure of Rs 54 crores every year, he said.

"Unlike the delay seen during the previous AINRC rule in disbursement of assistance to the aged people, widows and also differently-abled persons, our government is promptly disbursing the aid to these sections every month," he said. — PTI

'Modiji has brought growth in GDP - gas, petrol and diesel'

Chennai, Jan. 24:

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday attacked the Centre over rise in fuel prices, saying people are suffering due to inflation, while the Modi government is busy in tax collection.

The former Congress chief's attack came a day after petrol and diesel prices in the country touched new all-time highs after rates were increased for the fourth time in the week.

"Modi ji has brought about the tremendous growth in GDP — gas, diesel and petrol — prices," Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

"People are suffering due to inflation, while the Modi government is busy in tax collection," he alleged.

The increase in prices took the petrol price in Delhi to ₹85.70 per litre and in Mumbai to Rs 92.28.

Diesel rate climbed to ₹75.88 a litre in the national capital and to ₹82.66 per litre in Mumbai, the price data showed.

The former Congress chief's attack came a day after petrol and diesel prices in the country touched new all-time highs after rates were increased for the fourth time in the week



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during his election campaign ahead of Tamil Nadu assembly polls, at Uthukuli in Erode district, Sunday. — DC

AIADMK declared holiday for Thai Poosam: Edappadi

From P1

Mr Palaniswami said it was his party which declared a public holiday for 'Thai Poosam' festival in deference to the long time request of devotees of Lord Muruga. After a fringe atheist group denigrated 'Kanda Sashti Kavacham,' a hymn in praise of Lord Muruga last year, BJP and Hindu outfits took up the matter and eventually those connected to the outfit were arrested.

The BJP had alleged 'Karuppar Kootam' that offended the sacred hymn had the backing of DMK and the saffron party's 'vel yatra' grabbed media space.

Pointing to Mr Stalin holding 'Makkal Grama Sabai Kootam,' a rural outreach initiative of DMK, the Chief Minister said the main opposition party won the 2019 Lok Sabha polls by merely 'confusing' people.

Similarly, they were attempting at it again and Palaniswami wondered if the promises made during the parliamentary elections were fulfilled by the DMK.

Lok Sabha poll promises were not honoured by the DMK as its assurances formed part of a 'drama' and for the Assembly elections now, Mr Stalin was attempting to derive political mileage by making false promises and confuse people, Mr Palaniswami alleged.

Seeking votes for the two-leaves symbol of AIADMK, he listed out his

Will not allow relegation of Tamils to second place: Rahul

From P1

Mr Gandhi, who also addressed people from his vehicle at some places during a roadshow, accused the BJP of trying to impose one culture one and language on people and relegate Tamil to a 'second class place'. "I understand, accept and respect the Tamil spirit and culture. I am not going to allow the Prime Minister and the BJP to disrespect the Tamil people no matter what," he said in his speeches in English, translated into Tamil.

India was home to many diverse cultures, religions and languages... "it is the nation's strength. It is our duty to protect every single language, culture and religion in this country," he said.

In a veiled attack on Mr Modi's monthly radio programme, the top Congress

leader said his Tamil Nadu visit was not to tell people his 'Mann Ki Baat,' or advise them on what they should do but to listen to them, understand their problems and help resolve them. He said the rest of the country could learn a lot from Tamil Nadu's history and language.

Waving at people from his car at key intersections, the Congress leader also got off the vehicle and shook hands with people waiting on the roadside at several junctions.

He was accorded a warm welcome by party workers. An elderly woman applied 'vibuthi' (sacred ash) on his forehead as a mark of blessings and several took selfies with him. He garlanded a statue of late chief minister and Congress stalwart K. Kamaraj. — PTI

government's welfare measures and development work and underlined a combined drinking water scheme here to ensure uninterrupted water supply.

A higher allocation for education, setting up of new colleges, simplification of post matric scholarship, and distribution of laptops, books, footwear and bicycles free of cost to students were among the initiatives in the educa-

tion sector, Mr Palaniswami mentioned.

Reservation of 7.5 per cent in medical courses for government school students who clear the National Eligibility cum Entrance Exam, setting up of 2,000 Amma Mini Clinics, payout of old age pension to 90 per cent out of about five lakh targeted elderly beneficiaries were also specified by the Chief Minister. — PTI



Police personnel practice for Republic Day rehearsal. — DC

Sasikala is stable, says hospital

Bengaluru, Jan. 24

Expelled AIADMK leader VK Sasikala, who is serving a jail term in a corruption case and has been hospitalised for COVID-19 is stable, according to the hospital where she is undergoing treatment. The symptoms have reduced and she is now stable, authorities at Victoria Hospital where Sasikala is being treated said on Sunday. Her sister-in-law J Ilavarasi, who is also serving a prison term in the corruption case, has tested positive for coronavirus and has been admitted to Victoria Hospital.

In a bulletin issued by Dr C R Jayanthi, the Dean and Director of the Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, which manages Victoria Hospital, said the



66-year old Sasikala's symptoms have reduced and her condition is stable.

"Conscious, alert and well oriented. Stable and comfortable, taking oral food normally and walking with support," the bulletin said. Sasikala is being continuously monitored in the ICU of the hospital, Jayanthi said. Ilavarasi, on the other hand, is asymptomatic

The symptoms have reduced and she is now stable, authorities at Victoria Hospital where Sasikala is being treated said on Sunday

and stable and is without oxygen support, hospital sources said.

Sasikala, the former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa's close aide, who is serving her jail term at the Parappana Agrahara Prison here, had complained of fever and breathlessness on Wednesday last, a week before her release. Sasikala was sentenced to four years imprisonment in February 2017 in the Rs 66 crore disproportionate assets case. — PTI

National holidays still a dream for city workmen

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 24

The country is all set to observe its Republic Day as a national holiday but workmen in many factories across the city may not get time off then as most workers are still being forced to work without adequate benefits like holidays over the years.

This practice has been going on at a time though the Tamil Nadu Industrial Establishments (National and Festival Holidays) Act

1958 provides for the grant of national festival holidays to persons employed in industrial establishments across the State.

V. Gopalakrishnan, an employee in a city factory, says his employer forced him to work on the last Republic day and the same is going to happen this year as well.

"Though workmen are forced to work on holidays, we don't get any additional benefit. In fact the company management provides us only basic

salary for working on a holiday instead of overtime wages. I think this is clear exploitation. I did take up the matter with the labour department last year. But they did not come up with any remedy to the issue," he said.

The Act says - "Every employee shall be allowed in each calendar year a holiday on January 26 (Republic Day), May 1 (May day), August 15 (Independence day) and October 2 (Gandhi Jayanthi) and five other holidays for such festivals".

Former judge calls for upholding reservation

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 24

Constitutional Courts are the vehicles to interpret the Constitution, and hence, should be more sensitive to uphold the principles of reservation, failing which social justice will be defeated, said former Judge, Madras HC, Justice Hariparanthaman.

Addressing a virtual panel discussion on 'Social Justice through Reservation/Affirmative Actions- Indian and Global Experience', Justice Hariparanthaman said, "Dravidian

parties starting from the 'Justice Party' are the fore-runners for reforms relating to social justice. The erstwhile 'Justice Party' had introduced caste-based reservation in 1919 itself, setting an example for other political and social movements in the country. Muthiah Mudaliar of the 'Justice Party' introduced reservation through a 'Communal GO' in 1921, and the Dravidian parties, particularly the 'Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam' (DMK), played a major role in upholding these principles."

"Manusmriti still rules the country indirectly in all the fields. In Tamil Nadu, though known for implementing the reservation policy, no advocates from the denotified communities (Idayar, Konar and Yadavar from MBC), have become judges of the Madras high court so far. Similarly, there is no adequate representation of SC, ST, BC and MBC in the Madras high court and the Supreme Court. The case is the same in all the government machineries and public sector undertakings," he added.

A model Governor recounts his experiences



Service Uninterrupted - Memoirs of M.M. Rajendran (Har Anand Publications)

R. MOHAN | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 24

It was every young student's dream to crack the civil services exam and join government service. It still is though things may be changing with youngsters imbibing the entrepreneurial streak or simply hoping to join the IT industry. In Mr M.M. Rajendran's time, public service was the ultimate and he chose it to serve the people deriving inspiration from his parents. As a student of Tamil medium, he went through the same rigours as many of his generation who were schooled in the rural parts of Tamil Nadu and came to Chennai for college education.

From attaining fluency in English to keep up with college mates in Christian College, Chennai to hold the highest administrative post in Tamil Nadu of being Chief Secretary, besides being Adviser to Governor during a spell of President's Rule and ultimately getting a Governor's post was Mr Rajendran's life journey and one in which he excelled with his integrity and his empathetic approach to people's problems. Being from the old school, he handled deftly Governorship of Odisha where his advice was especially sought and acted upon after a horrendous supercyclonic storm had ripped through the state.

A particularly significant

"Whatever I could do in Orissa would clearly show that the Governor need not be a figurehead but one who can contribute to the running of the State by good and timely advice and suggestions not depending only on his past experience but going out into the field and learning about the practical problems of the people"

aspect of the days Mr Rajendran was the Governor of a State and now is it did not matter then whether the State was ruled by a regional party or the national party in power at the Centre. "Whatever I could do in Orissa would clearly show that the Governor need not be a figurehead but one who can contribute to the running of the State by good and timely advice and suggestions not depending only on his past experience but going out into the field and learning about the practical problems of the people," he writes in the Preface. If only we could roll back time and go back to a friendlier and more harmonious era in which Governors contributed to solving problems!

Mr Rajendran has good words for the Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik during whose early regime he served as Governor for four had a half years. "His willingness to accept advice and keeping me informed of all important state matters were admirable," he writes. Of course, a Governor has to

act within Constitutional limits. His work with Universities as Pro Chancellor may have helped the State close the gap in education standards with the best institutions in the rest of the country.

A chapter on a Governor's authority to grant pardon makes useful reading when a controversy is still raging in Tamil Nadu over the release of the Rajiv Gandhi case convicts who have been incarcerated for close to 30 years and whose pardon has been recommended by a resolution passed in the State assembly.

It is still hanging fire with the Governor who is now expected to give his verdict soon going by the government's word in the top court. Mr Rajendran believes Tamil Nadu usually makes such recommendations without taking a categorical stand and leaves a measure of discretion to be exercised by the Governor. Of course, in the case of the convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination matter the government stand is known.

OTHER STORIES

Three fishermen die, five injured in mishap

DC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKKOTTAI, JAN. 24

Three fishermen were killed on the spot and five others injured when their car collided head on with a lorry at Odavimadam village near Kottapattinam in Pudukkottai district, late on Saturday night.

Police said the car occupants, all fishermen hailing from Thangachimadam in Ramanathapuram district, were on their way home on the ECR road from Vedaranyam, when the mishap occurred.

All the injured were admitted to the government hospital, Mannargudi, from where one of them was referred to the government medical college hospital, Pudukkottai, police added.

Fedn. urges Centre to preserve PSBs

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, JAN. 24

The All India Nationalised Bank Officers Federation (AINBOF) has urged the Centre to preserve the public sector banks by amalgamating such banks into public sector banks, to make available the best HR practices amongst the amalgamated banks to all employees in the respective amalgamated entities, and also not to go ahead with the formation of holding companies and not to reduce the stake of the government in PSBs, and also not to privatise any PSB further.

All India general secretary (AINBOF) G.V.Manimaran, said in a release here on Sunday that a resolution to this effect was adopted at the 5th Triennial Conference of AINBOF held at Kolkata recently. He also wanted the formation of payment banks and small finance banks to be summarily stopped forthwith, and the existing small finance banks to be regulated so that they charge interest not exceeding that of the public sector banks, for various credit products.

The resolution called upon the Centre to amend the Income Tax Act suitably so that the income tax payable by banks is calculated only on their net profit, after making provisions as per IRAC norms and other guidelines of the regulator and the government. It also sought 'five day week' for banks.

It also wanted officers of the PSBs to be provided with medical facilities on the model of the ESI scheme at least in all district headquarters across the country, and the IBA to implement the scheme of meeting out the hospitalization expenses of officers to be paid in full to them by the banks, which can later take a call on its reimbursement from insurance companies, as their internal arrangement.

The conference wanted uniformity in the salary and perquisites being paid to officers of all banks and such salary and perquisites should be pegged to the maximum prevailing amount among all the banks, subject to periodic revision.

The conference also appealed to the Centre to amend the Finance Act exempting taxation of the whole amount of gratuity and entire encashment received by officers at the time of retirement, and the government should come out with automatic updation of pension scheme with 100 per cent neutralization and sustainable family pension on par with the regulations available to retired employees of the Central government. They wanted the new pension scheme to be totally scrapped.



Mullaiperiyar in focus

Ageing dams in India, United States pose growing threat, says UN report

New York, Jan. 24: Over 1,000 large dams in India will be roughly 50 years old in 2025 and such aging structures across the world pose a growing threat, according to a UN report which notes that by 2050, most people on Earth will live downstream of tens of thousands of dams built in the 20th century.

The report, titled 'Ageing water infrastructure: An emerging global risk' and compiled by United Nations University's Canadian-based Institute for Water, Environment and Health, says most of the 58,700 large dams worldwide were constructed between 1930 and 1970 with a design life of 50 to 100 years.

It said at 50 years, a large concrete dam "would most probably begin to express signs of ageing." Ageing signs include increasing cases of dam failures, progressively increasing costs of dam repair and maintenance, increasing reservoir sedimentation, and loss of a dam's functionality and effectiveness, "strongly interconnected" manifestations, the report said.

"By 2050, most people on Earth will live downstream of tens of thousands of large dams built in the 20th century, many of them already operating at or beyond their design life," according to the UN University analysis. The analysis includes dam decommissioning or ageing case studies from the USA, France, Canada, India, Japan, and Zambia and Zimbabwe.

According to the report, the world is unlikely to witness another large dam-building revolution as in the mid-20th century, but dams constructed then will inevitably be showing their age. The report said that 32,716 large dams (55 per cent of the world's total) are found in just four Asian countries: China, India, Japan, and South Korea - a majority of which will reach the 50-year threshold relatively soon. The same is true of many large dams in Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe, it said.

In India, there are over 1,115 large dams that will be roughly 50 years old in

The report, titled 'Ageing water infrastructure: An emerging global risk' and compiled by United Nations University's Canadian-based Institute for Water, Environment and Health, says most of the 58,700 large dams worldwide were constructed between 1930 and 1970 with a design life of 50 to 100 years

2025, more than 4,250 large dams in the country will be over 50 years old in 2050 and 64 large dams will be more than 150 years old in 2050, it said.

The report said that approximately 3.5 million people are at risk if India's Mullaperiyar dam in Kerala, built over 100 years ago, "were to fail". "The dam, in a seismically active area, shows significant structural flaws and its management is a contentious issue between Kerala and Tamil Nadu States," it said.

The report added that dams that are well designed, constructed and maintained can "easily" reach 100 years of service but predicts an increase in "decommissioning" - a phenomenon gaining pace in the USA and Europe - as economic and practical limitations prevent ageing dams from being upgraded or if their original use is now obsolete.

In the US, the average age of 90,580 dams is 56 years. More than 85 per cent of US dams in 2020 were operating at or beyond their life expectancy and 75 per cent of US dam failures occurred after 50 years of age. The estimated cost to refurbish US dams is about \$64 billion. Nearly 1,275 dams were removed in 21 US states in the last 30 years; 80 removed in 2017 alone, it said. Worldwide, the huge volume of water stored behind large dams is estimated at 7,000 to 8,300 cubic kilometres - enough to cover about 80 per cent of Canada's landmass under a metre of water.

The report's co-author Vladimir Smakhtin, Director of UNU-INWEH, said the report aims to attract global attention to the creeping issue of ageing water storage infra-

structure and stimulate international efforts to deal with this emerging, rising water risk.

"Underlined is the fact that the rising frequency and severity of flooding and other extreme environmental events can overwhelm a dam's design limits and accelerate a dam's ageing process. Decisions about decommissioning, therefore, need to be taken in the context of a changing climate," Smakhtin said.

Lead author and UNU-INWEH Senior Researcher Duminda Perera said the problem of ageing large dams today confronts a relatively small number of countries - 93 per cent of all the world's large dams are located in just 25 nations.

"Large dam construction surged in the mid-20th century and peaked in the 1960s - 70s especially in Asia, Europe and North America, while in Africa the peak occurred in the 1980s. The number of newly-constructed large dams after that continuously and progressively declined," he said. The pace of large dam construction has dropped dramatically in the last four decades and continues to decline in part because "the best locations for such dams globally have been progressively diminishing as nearly 50 per cent of global river volume is already fragmented or regulated by dams," the report says.

There are also strong concerns regarding the environmental and social impacts of dams, and large dams in particular, as well as emerging ideas and practices on the alternative types of water storage, nature-based solutions, and types of energy production beyond hydropower, it said.

Public safety, escalating maintenance costs, reservoir sedimentation, and restoration of a natural river ecosystem are among the reasons driving dam decommissioning, the report said, adding that overall, dam decommissioning should be seen as equally important as dam building in the overall planning process on water storage infrastructure developments. —PTI

Jumbo death: Activist sends legal notice to Collector, SP

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, JAN. 24

Following the recent tragedy in which miscreants inflicted burn injuries on a wild tusker, eventually leading to its death, Chennai-based environmentalist 'Elephant Rajendran' sent a legal notice to the Nilgiris Collector and the SP, the Nilgiris, demanding sealing of all unauthorized tourist resorts / cottages in the Nilgiris, besides initiating action against the revenue, civic body and police officials, all of whom turned a blind eye to the existence of such unauthorized tourist cottages and resorts here.

In his legal notice, 'Elephant Rajendran', who is also the PIL petitioner on elephant corridor in the Nilgiris, had stated that inflicting fire injury on the wild tusker in a private tourist resort, proved that several such resorts are functioning without approval and license.

"Construction of resorts or a house is not completed in one night. It would take several months to complete the construction. Therefore, the VAO and executive officer or president of the respective local bodies, would defi-



Residents of Chrompet stage a candle light protest against the brutal murder of an elephant at Nilgiris. — DC

nately know about the progress of the illegal construction. Concerned officials would not take legal action, because bribes come into play. The running of 'Home Stay' is another fraud. The building may be approved or unapproved. Without the knowledge of the jurisdictional Inspector of Police, this illegal running of 'Home Stay' cannot

function. The VAOs, president or executive officer of the village, and the jurisdiction Inspector of

Police are all the real culprits," averred 'Elephant Rajendran'.

The Collector and the SP of Nilgiris should collect details of unauthorized tourist resorts/cottages in the Nilgiris and should take action to seal them immediately. The collec-

tor should take action to book the concerned VAOs, executive officers of local bodies and presidents of village panchayats and the concerned police inspector under the 'Goondas Act' for allowing illegal resorts in their respective jurisdictions.

"If action is not taken, I will approach the high court for necessary action," he warned.

Modi's charm will work this time: Tada Periyasamy

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 24

In 1987, he was awarded the death sentence in a bomb blast case in Ariyalur, but later acquitted from the charges. In due course, he was arrested under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) and detained in prison. A few years later, he was acquitted, but the acronym 'Tada' got prefixed to his name, and since then, has been known as 'Tada Periyasamy'

for Tamils in the country and Eelam for Tamils in Sri Lanka. After giving up violence, Periyasamy along with Thol Thirumavalavan joined the Dalit Panthers of India, which was later rechristened the 'Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi' (VCK). He joined the BJP in 2004.

In 1987, he was awarded the death sentence in a bomb blast case in Ariyalur, but later acquitted from the charges. In due course, he was arrested under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) and detained in prison. A few years later, he was acquitted, but the acronym 'Tada' got prefixed to his name, and since then, has been known as 'Tada Periyasamy'.

He contested the election for Perambalur parliamentary constituency in 1999, the Harur assembly constituency in 2001 as DPI candidate, the Chidambaram parliamentary constituency in 2004 and the Varagur assembly constituency in 2006 as BJP candidate. He has been running 'Nandhanar

Sevashrama Trust', which is working for the development of Dalit children and providing vocational training to women in the region. He is also involved in restoring the 'Panchami lands' from illegal occupants.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, he said, "Decades back, I have shunned violence to achieve my goals. By sheer hard work, I have developed a close relationship with the people from all communities in the region. I was once not even allowed inside a temple. Now, temple priests offer me their customary respects whenever a temple festival is held in my native village."

"On the campaign trail across the state, I have met various sections of people. They seem to like the principles and functioning of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home minister Amit Shah. After L. Murugan assumed office as state president of the BJP, the party has grown larger. The party will make history by entering the TN assembly this time in large numbers," he added.

TN has 569 fresh Covid cases; nearly 2,500 vaccinated

Chennai, Jan. 24: With 569 new COVID-19 cases and seven deaths, Tamil Nadu's infection tally edged up to 8,34,740 and the toll rose to 12,316, while nearly 2,500 people in the priority list were vaccinated for the disease on Sunday, the state government said.

Recoveries continued to eclipse fresh infections with 642 people recovering, the total number of those cured in the state so far to 8,17,520, a health department bulletin said. The number of active cases stood at 4,904.

Chennai's caseload increased to 2,30,195, the maximum among the districts, with 168 people testing positive. It also accounted for a little over one third of the COVID-19 fatalities at 4,085 deaths.

A 90-year old woman from neighbouring Chennalpet was among the seven who succumbed to the disease on Sunday and all had co-morbidities or chronic illness. As many as 19 of the 38 districts in the state reported cases in single digits, while 31 districts reported zero fatalities, the bulletin said. A total of 62,619 samples were tested on Sunday, taking the total specimens examined to 1,56,40,385.

Meanwhile, the government said it administered Covid-19 vaccines to 2,494 people, including healthcare workers, on Sunday, taking the cumulative figure to 61,720 since the launch of the immunisation drive on January 16. In 169 session sites, a total of 2,404 were given Covishield and 90 Covaxin, a release from the Public Health and Preventive Medicine department said.



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SHORT TAKES

RAM TEMPLE IN 3YRS; TO COST ₹1,100 CR; TRUST

Mumbai, Jan. 24: The Ram temple in Ayodhya will be built in around three years and the construction cost of the project will exceed ₹1,100 crore, a prominent functionary of the temple trust has said.

"The main temple will be built in three to three and a half years and will cost ₹300-400 crore. The expenditure on the development of the entire 70 acre land there will exceed ₹1,100 crore," said Swami Govind Dey Giri Maharaj, treasurer of Ram Janmabhoomi Tirath Kshetra Nyas.

He said he arrived at these figures after consulting experts involved in the Ram temple construction project. The Nyas (trust) has not come out with an official statement so far on the expenditure involved in the project, he said while talking to a TV channel.

"It was possible for us to raise funds (for the temple construction) from some corporate people. Some (corporate) families had approached us, requesting us to hand over the (temple) designs and assuring us they will complete the temple project, but I humbly declined that request," he said.

CENTRE OFFERS JABS TO ENVOYS POSTED IN INDIA

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 24

The Indian government on Sunday offered vaccination against Covid-19 to foreign diplomats posted in India. Embassies have been asked to give the names of diplomats and their family members who want to be vaccinated by Friday though no dates for their vaccination has been given so far.

Over 16.13 lakh healthcare and frontline workers have been vaccinated till date. On Sunday, the ninth day of the vaccination drive, 31,466 people were vaccinated in five states. Union health ministry officials said 10 cases of AEFI were reported on Sunday. India on Sunday reported 14,849 cases of Covid-19 and 155 deaths. In the coming week the government plans to intensify its immunisation coverage to complete its target of inoculating 3 crore healthcare and frontline workers well in time so that the vaccination drive for the rest of the population can be rolled out. It is expected that the diplomatic missions will be covered in the 2nd phase.

In a letter to all diplomatic missions, the MEA said that "as a gesture of goodwill and solidarity," the Government of India is considering to offer Covid-19 vaccination to "eligible foreign diplomats and their family members" accredited to all diplomatic missions, including consulates, United Nations and its specialised agencies, and other international organisations based in India.

FIR FILED AGAINST TANDAV ACTORS IN MP, K'TAKA

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
with agency inputs
BHOPAL/BENGALURU JAN. 24

A case was registered against actors Saif Ali Khan and Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub in a police station in Datia in Madhya Pradesh late on Saturday evening for their roles in OTT web series *Tandav* which sparked a furor among Hindu bodies for "hurt religious sentiments".

A FIR was filed against the two actors in Kotwali police station in district headquarters of Datia following a complaint lodged by the local unit of Hindu Jagarn Manch, police said on Sunday.

Earlier on January 21, a delegation of the outfit led by Ravi Sharma filed a complaint with local sub-divisional officer of police Sumit Agrawal saying that the two actors slighted Hindu deities in the film.

Meanwhile, a case has also been registered by the Bengaluru police against the cast and crew of *Tandav*.

Based on a complaint by one Kiran Aradhya, the case was registered on Friday against *Tandav* director Ali Abbas Zafar, producer Farhan Akhtar, actors Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub and Saif Ali Khan and the head of India Originals of Amazon Prime Video, Aparna Purohit.

Cases have been registered under section 295A, 298, 153A and 34 of the IPC for insulting religious belief and promoting religious enmity between groups.

Tractors converge on Delhi for rally

25,000 tractors from UP, U'khand; 12,000 from Amritsar, 10,000 from Doaba to take part

Chandigarh/Ghaziabad, Jan. 24: More batches of farmers from Punjab on Sunday set out for Delhi to participate in the proposed tractor parade on January 26.

Farmer unions protesting the Centre's three farm laws had said they would go ahead with their tractor parade in Delhi on Republic Day. They had announced to take out the tractor parade on the Outer Ring Road in Delhi. A batch of 500 tractor-trolleys left Amritsar and several groups of growers from Phagwara, Hoshiarpur and other places of Punjab moved towards the national capital to take part of the tractor parade, farmer leaders said.

Kisan Sangharsh Union leader Baldev Singh Verka in Amritsar said, "Today as many as 500 more tractor trolleys left for Delhi to join the tractor parade. Each tractor-trolley will carry 20 persons along with bedding and eating arrangement for fourteen hour-long journey to Delhi".

He said on Saturday, around seven hundred tractor trolleys had left for Delhi. Gurbachan Singh Chhaba, spokesperson of the Kisan Sangharsh Committee said so far, around 12,000 tractor and trolleys had already left Amritsar and Tarn districts. While most of the tractor convoys from Doaba region had left for Delhi on Friday and Saturday, many left on Sunday also to take part in



Tractors arrive for farmers at Singhu border in New Delhi on Sunday, during an ongoing protest against the new farm laws. — PTI

the tractor parade, said Satnam Singh Sahni, General Secretary Bharti Kisan Union (Doaba). Sahni, who returned here from Delhi's Singhu border on Saturday night to further mobilise farmers for the parade. He said a total of around 10,000 tractors from Doaba region would join the parade to highlight agitating farmers' demands and the "stubborn" attitude of the central government towards them.

Around 25,000 tractors from Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand will participate in the 'kisan parade' on January 26, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait said on Saturday.

Farmers moving towards UP Gate from the two states on their tractor trol-

leys were intercepted by police in different districts but farmers will arrive here at every cost, he said.

"Around 25,000 tractors would arrive here and a tractor rally would be brought out on Republic Day. Apart from the districts of western Uttar Pradesh, farmers would take out rallies in every district," Tikait said in a statement. "No political person will be allowed to participate," the BKU national spokesperson said. District administrations are sending notices to farmers and mounting pressure on them not to participate in the rallies citing Covid-19 norms and section 144 of the CrPC, he claimed.

Meanwhile, authorities in some Haryana districts close to the national capital have issued advisories against unnecessary travel towards Delhi over the next couple of days in view of a January 26 tractor parade by protesting farmer unions.

On Sunday, thousands of tractors were seen plying on the highways in the state heading towards Delhi, resulting in traffic congestion at several points on the GT Road, a police officer in Karnal said.

The Haryana Police issued an advisory stating that in view of the security and traffic arrangements for Republic Day and the proposed tractor parade, there would be disruptions in vehicular movement on the national highway from Karnal and Rohtak towards Delhi during January 25-27. — PTI

Farmers tableaux to depict protest

New Delhi, Jan. 24: The Republic Day tractor parade by agitating farmers will feature a number of tableaux from across states depicting village life, the protest against the Centre's contentious farm laws, and hailing their courage, according to organisers.

A farmer leader said that directions were issued to all organisations participating in the protest to prepare tableaux for the parade. "Around one lakh

tractor-trolleys from across the country will participate in the parade. Around 30 per cent of these will have tableaux on different themes, including the history of the farmers' movement in India, the role of women farmers and farming practices followed in different states," he said.

A few children from Maharashtra's Vidarbha region have also planned a tableau on farmer suicides. — PTI

Maha farmers to march to Capital

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, JAN. 24

Protesting against the Centre's farm laws, thousands of farmers from various districts of Maharashtra reached Mumbai on Sunday via a vehicle march. They are expected to march towards Delhi to support the protesting farmers on Republic Day.

The Nashik to Mumbai rally is part of the call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM),

which is leading the protests in Delhi. The farmers have started their statewide vehicle march from Nashik to Mumbai on Saturday.

Arriving in cars, jeeps, vans and trucks flying red flags, the farmers reached the city's iconic Azad Maidan, where they will hold a massive rally on January 25 to protest the controversial agriculture laws. The rally will then march to the Raj Bhawan and submit a memorandum to the Governor.

J&K ENCOUNTER: ARMY CAPTAIN NAMED IN CHARGESHEET

Shopian, Jan. 24: The Army captain involved in the fake encounter in Kashmir's Shopian district last July and two other civilian accused haven't provided any information about the source of weapons planted on the three slain youths and had also attempted to destroy the evidence, a police charge sheet said.

Captain Bhoopendra Singh had also provided wrong information to his superiors and the police about the recovery made during the staged encounter, the charge sheet filed by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Jammu and Kashmir Police before the chief judicial magistrate here said.

The case relates to the July 18, 2020 encounter in Shopian's Amshipura in which three youths were killed and dubbed as terrorists. Later, the Army ordered a Court of Inquiry after reports appeared on social media that the three youths were innocent.

"No leads regarding the source of illegal weapons as illegally arranged by accused" for planting on the bodies were provided, the charge sheet said.

"By staging the encounter," the three accused "have purposefully destroyed evidence or real crime that they have committed and also have (been) purposefully projecting false information as part of a criminal conspiracy hatched between them with the motive to grab a prize money of ₹20 lakh," it said. — PTI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a group photograph with artists participating in the upcoming Republic Day parade, at an 'At Home' event, in New Delhi, Sunday. — PTI

HC says groping minor without skin contact is not sexual assault

Mumbai, Jan. 24: Groping a minor's breast without "skin to skin contact" cannot be termed as sexual assault as defined under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the Bombay High Court has said.

Justice Pushpa Ganediwala of the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court, in a judgement passed on January 19, the detailed copy of which was made available now, held that there must be "skin to skin contact with sexual intent" for an act to be considered sexual assault.

She said in her verdict that mere groping will not fall under the definition of sexual assault.

Justice Ganediwala mod-

ified the order of a sessions court, which had sentenced a 39-year-old man to three years of imprisonment for sexually assaulting a 12-year-old girl.

As per the prosecution and the minor victim's testimony in court, in December 2016, the accused, one Satish, had taken the girl to his house in Nagpur on the pretext of giving her something to eat.

Once there, he gripped her breast and attempted to remove her clothes, Justice Ganediwala recorded in her verdict.

However, since he groped her without removing her clothes, the offence cannot be termed as sexual assault and, instead, constitutes the offence of out-

raging a woman's modesty under IPC section 354, the high court held.

While section 354 entails a minimum sentence of imprisonment for one year, sexual assault under the POCSO Act entails a minimum imprisonment of three years.

The sessions court had sentenced him to three years of imprisonment for the offences under the POCSO Act and under IPC section 354.

"The act of pressing of breast of the child aged 12 years, in the absence of any specific detail as to whether the top was removed or whether he inserted his hand inside the top and pressed her breast, would not fall in the definition of sexual assault," it said.

Justice Ganediwala said "the act of pressing breast can be a criminal force to a woman/ girl with the intention to outrage her modesty".

The POCSO Act defines sexual assault as when someone "with sexual intent touches the vagina, penis, anus or breast of the child or makes the child touch the vagina, penis, anus or breast of such person or any other person, or does any other act with sexual intent which involves physical contact without penetration is said to commit sexual assault".

The court held that this "physical contact" mentioned in the definition of sexual assault must be "skin to skin" or direct physical contact. — PTI

WATER | WOES

Families say no household is connected to piped water supply

J&K: Villagers pool funds for pipelines

Bhaderwah (J&K), Jan. 24: Claiming neglect over the past seven decades, the villagers in remote Thanhala Panchayat in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district have set out on a mission this winter to bring potable water to their homes.

To fulfill their objective, the mostly below poverty line (BPL) families of the snow-bound village in the lap of mighty Ashapati Glacier got into a hurdle recently and decided to contribute ₹40,000 to pur-

chase the required water pipes to get connected to the nearest water source. "We are living by the example of the proverb 'God helps those who help themselves' as the government had miserably failed to ensure tap water in our homes over the years. In the absence of the facility, we have to fetch water round-the-year from a nearby source even during this harsh winter and the lurking threat of avalanches," a local resident Ajaz Ahmad said.

● BPL FAMILIES decided to contribute ₹40,000 to purchase required water pipes to get connected to the nearest water source.

About 30 families live in the village bordering Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh, just 1.5 km from the interstate Bhaderwah-Chamba road. The villagers depend on the labour work in Bhaderwah town for a living. Despite 'Har Ghar Nal Yojna' under 'Jal

Jeevan Mission', villagers claim that none of the households are connected with the piped water supply. When contacted, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Bhaderwah, Rakesh Kumar said that providing potable water to every household is the priority of the government.

"The area being rich in natural water resources, I will take up the issue with the concerned department of 'Jal Shakti Vibhag' Bhaderwah to make temporary arrangements to

provide piped water to the village in view of extreme cold wave conditions unless permanent gravity line is laid under Jal Jeevan Mission," he said. Talib Hussain, said they literally ran from pillar to post to get piped water supply but no one listened to their woes.

"Under these circumstances, we have no other option but to pool money from our daily wages to bring water to our homes," he said. — PTI

INDIA, CHINA HOLD NINTH ROUND OF TALKS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 24

India and China on Sunday held the ninth round of Corps Commanders level talks to resolve the nine-month-long military stand-off in eastern Ladakh.

The meeting started at around 11 am in Moldo on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control.

The Indian delegation was led by 14 Corps Commander Lt-General P.G.K. Menon and included a joint secretary from the external affairs ministry.

Sunday's meeting between top Commanders in the sector from India and China to discuss disengagement and de-escalation was held after a gap of around two-and-a-half months.

The meeting was held when China is consolidating its position all along the LAC. India is expecting a hot summer in 2021 all along the LAC and is keeping a tight vigil.

India has maintained that it will only accept complete disengagement by the Chinese troops and restoration of the status quo ante of April 2020 at the LAC.

India's position is that it was China which first moved its troops at the LAC and China will have to be the first to withdraw from these positions.

TMC vows to take revenge

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, JAN. 24

A day after "Jai Shree Ram" chants prompted West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to refuse to address the Centre's Parakram Diwas celebration as a mark of protest in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's presence at Victoria Memorial, her nephew and Diamond Harbour Trinamul Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee vowed to take "revenge" against the BJP "in every inch" as the ruling party demonstrated across the districts, crying of an "insult" to its supremacy at the official event, to swing the public mood in the poll-bound state.

Advising the BJP workers to chant 'Jai Shree Ram' at their homes and on religious occasions Banerjee on Sunday told a party rally at Kultali in South 24 Parganas, "They polluted the environment when our elected CM was about to address the official event on the solemn occasion. When they did not allow her to speak,

she protested and did not deliver her address to make the PM feel that no insult to iconic freedom fighter Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose is tolerated here. They did not learn a lesson even after demolishing the bust of another legend: Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar in 2019."

In a threatening mood he added, "It was Mamata Banerjee's magnanimity that she gave the slogan: *Bodla Noy, Bodol Chai* (We want change, not revenge). That is why they are now making tall talks. After coming to power again, revenge will be meted out to them in every inch. Be ready for that. You will be paid back in full. I will see then how much power you have."

The TMC MP also declared to quit politics if he can not wipe out the saffron party in the coming Assembly election. Apart from him, TMC ministers like Firhad Hakim and Bratya Basu also tore into the BJP for raising religious slogans in political overtones at a government event to "insult" the CM.

States to look for malnourished kids

● GOVT'S NEW guidelines aim to improve nutritional status of children and women.

The ministry said. The ministry shared the guidelines and stressed on the need to ensure that entitlements of Supplementary Nutrition Programme reach the intended beneficiaries in a time-bound manner as per quantity and nutritional standards.

The ministry said it has streamlined guidelines on quality assurance, roles and responsibilities of duty holders, procedure for procurement, integrating AYUSH concepts and data management and monitoring through 'Poshan Tracker' for transparency, efficiency and accountability in delivery of supplementary nutrition.

The ministry has asked all states to mandatorily implement Poshan Tracker that uses centralised data architecture to align with digital technology systems of other ministries and programmes. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

11 IRAQI
FIGHTERS DIE IN
IS AMBUSH

Samarra, Iraq, Jan. 24: At least 11 fighters from Iraq's state-sponsored Hashed al-Shaabi force were killed in an ambush by the Islamic State group north of the capital on Saturday, Hashed security sources said.

The jihadists used light weapons and the cover of darkness to target the Hashed east of Tikrit, the capital of Iraq's Salahaddin province, two days after a twin suicide attack claimed by the group killed 32 people in Baghdad.

"IS launched an attack on the Hashed's Brigade 22," said one of the unit's officers Abu Ali al-Maliki.

Maliki said the brigade commander was among those killed before reinforcements from the federal police came to the unit's aid.

Hashed security sources said the total toll was 11 dead and 10 wounded.

'STEALING' FILES:
TESLA SUES
EX-EMPLOYEE

San Francisco, Jan. 24: Tesla has sued a former employee for allegedly stealing about 26,000 confidential files in his first week of working at the company, according to a court filing seen by AFP.

The company said on Friday that within three days of being hired, software engineer Alex Khatilov "brazenly stole thousands of trade computer scripts that took Tesla years to develop" and transferred them to his personal Dropbox, a cloud storage service.

Tesla said that when confronted by Tesla's security team, Khatilov claimed he had only transferred "a couple of personal administrative documents", whilst trying to delete the evidence.

Khatilov told the New York Post the software files ended up in his Dropbox by mistake when he had been trying to make a backup copy of a folder on his computer.

SCOTLAND WILL
HOLD VOTE
REFERENDUM

London, Jan. 24: Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon on Sunday said she planned to hold a legal referendum on independence from Britain despite Westminster's opposition, as an opinion poll showed a majority would vote yes.

If her Scottish National Party (SNP) wins a strong showing in regional elections in May, Sturgeon said she would seek a fresh referendum even though Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said such a vote should only be held once in a generation.

"I want to have a legal referendum, that is what I am going to seek the authority of the Scottish people for in May and if they give me that authority, that's what I intend to do," she told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show.

Johnson "will flatly refuse the demand," The Sunday Times quoted senior government sources as saying.

PM OLI EXPELLED
FROM NCP'S
MEMBERSHIP

Kathmandu, Jan. 24: The ruling Nepal Communist Party's splinter faction led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda' on Sunday expelled Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli from the party's general membership.

The decision to remove Oli from the party's general membership was taken at the Standing Committee meeting of the faction led by former prime ministers Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal after Oli failed to produce explanation to his recent moves as sought by party leadership, sources said.

Earlier in December, the splinter group had removed Oli, one of the two chairmen of the ruling party, as the party chair. Madhav Nepal was named as the party's second chairman. Prachanda is the first chairman of the party.

The Prachanda-led faction on January 15 sought clarification from Oli alleging that he was carrying out activities that go against the party's policies. The faction decided to strip Oli off even from the ordinary membership of the party after he chose not to furnish any clarification, party sources said.

Oli had been accused of violating party statute by the splinter group.

Russian cops go
on the rampage

3,500 protesters arrested at rally in support of jailed Putin critic Navalny, says monitor

Moscow, Jan. 24: Nearly 3,500 protesters were arrested at demonstrations in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, a monitor reported on Sunday, as authorities probed violence on the part of both protesters and police.

Police clashed with demonstrators in Moscow as tens of thousands took to the streets across the country on Saturday following Navalny's call to demonstrate against President Vladimir Putin's 20-year rule.

A number of protesters were injured, including a woman in Saint Petersburg who was hospitalised with a head injury and was in intensive care Sunday.

The West condemned the arrests and "harsh tactics" used against demonstrators, with EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell saying the bloc would discuss "next steps" on Monday.

Late Saturday the Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said it launched criminal inquiries in Moscow over the use of violence against law enforcement, hooliganism and property damage.

"Investigators are continuing to study and analyse a large amount of photo and video materials," the Committee said.

In a separate statement, investigators said Sunday a 36-year-old man hit two policemen at the Saint Petersburg protest and was detained.

But Saint Petersburg prosecutors also said they were probing violations "on the part of law enforcement" and the use of force against a woman.

The statement was released after local media published a video showing a middle-aged woman falling to the ground after being kicked by riot police.

In the video, a woman — identified as Margarita Yudina — is seen asking three policemen in full riot gear why they are detaining a young protester. One of the policeman then kicks her in the

Washington, Jan. 24: Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, in his first directive since taking office, has given his senior leaders two weeks to send him reports on sexual assault prevention programmes in the military, and an assessment of what has worked and what hasn't.

Austin's memo, which went out Saturday, fulfills a commitment he made to senators last week during confirmation hearings. He had vowed to immediately address the problems of sexual assault and harassment in the ranks.

This is a leadership issue, Austin said in his two-page memo. We will lead. Senator after senator demanded to know what Austin planned to do about the problem, which defense and military leaders have grappled with for years. Reports of sexual assaults have steadily gone up since 2006. — *PTI*

11 TRAPPED
MINERS SAVED

Beijing, Jan. 24: Eleven miners, trapped underground for two weeks following a blast in a gold mine in east China's Shandong Province, have been rescued, the state media reported on Sunday. Authorities have been racing to dig out 22 miners trapped underground in the partially built gold mine in the city of Qixia in Shandong Province, since the explosion blocked their exit on January 10. The rescuers set free two workers on Sunday, bringing the number of rescued miners to 11. — *PTI*

US condemns
'harsh tactics'

Washington, Jan. 24: Washington on Saturday rebuked Moscow over its use of "harsh tactics" against protesters demanding the release of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

"The United States strongly condemns the use of harsh tactics against protesters and journalists this weekend in cities throughout Russia," State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement.

Navalny being taken into custody and the arrests of his supporters were "troubling indications of further restrictions on civil society and fundamental freedoms," he added.

"We call on Russian authorities to release all

those detained for exercising their universal rights and for the immediate and unconditional release of Aleksey Navalny," Price said, using an alternative spelling.

"We urge Russia to fully cooperate with the international community's investigation into the poisoning of Aleksey Navalny and credibly explain the use of a chemical weapon on its soil."

In Russia tens of thousands nationwide answered Navalny's call to rally, which he issued after he was detained at a Moscow airport on arrival from Germany, where he had been recovering from a near-fatal poisoning with a nerve agent.

— *AFP*

US INTERFERING
IN 'DOMESTIC
AFFAIRS': KREMLIN

Moscow, Jan. 24: The Kremlin on Sunday accused the US embassy of interfering in Russia's domestic affairs after the mission distributed a "demonstration alert" to US citizens in Russia recommending they avoid protests.

Ahead of the demonstrations, the US embassy issued a safety warning to Americans based in Russia.

"Of course, these publications are inappropriate," President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a state TV channel.

"And of course indirectly, they are absolutely an interference in our domestic affairs," he added. He accused the US embassy of "indirectly" supporting the violation of Russian legislation and backing "unauthorised protests". — *AFP*

Review military sex assault
programmes: Defence secyAUSTIN CALLS COUNTERPARTS FROM
JAPAN, S. KOREA, UNITED KINGDOM

Washington, Jan. 24: US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke to his counterparts from Japan, Britain, and South Korea, the Pentagon has said. During his interaction with Japanese Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi, Austin reiterated America's commitment to the US-Japan alliance and emphasised on the importance of maintaining peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region.

Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said.

"Austin and Kishi discussed a range of security issues in the Indo-Pacific and exchanged views on ensuring the readiness of the alliance despite the challenges posed by Covid-19," Kirby said. They also discussed the need to continue implementing

US force realignment initiatives including continued efforts regarding the construction of the Futenma Replacement Facility in Henoko, he said. Austin affirmed that the Senkaku islands are covered by Article V of the US-Japan Security Treaty, and that the US remains opposed to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea.

"Austin thanked Kishi for Japan's continued leadership in implementing UNSC Resolutions regarding North Korea and encouraged minister Kishi to strengthen Japan's contribution to the role that the alliance continues to play in providing security in the Indo-Pacific region," Kirby said.

— *PTI*

We are ready to work with Biden administration, says Pak

Islamabad, Jan. 24: Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on Sunday that his country was ready to work with the new US administration and asserted that the world has changed a lot in the last four years and any engagement and relations should be developed on the basis of new ground realities.

Under the Trump administration, the relations between Pakistan and the US were chaotic as well as complex.

"In (these) four years the world has changed, the region has changed and Pakistan has changed and

you have to engage with this new Pakistan," Qureshi said while addressing a press conference in Multan.

He said that the Pakistan government was ready to work with the new US government and hoped that the Biden administration would be guided by a "new approach and new policy guidelines."

"I understand that there is a lot of similarity between the current thinking in the United States and our policies," he said.

Qureshi said that he in a letter addressed to the incoming Secretary of State Anthony Blinken

Snowing in London



Snow settles on one of the Trafalgar Square lions in central London on Sunday.

— *AFP*

Vaccine immunity will take
3 weeks: UK medical officer

London, Jan. 24: One of England's leading medical officers on Sunday urged the public to continue to follow the strict lockdown rules because any vaccine-related immunity from Covid-19 takes at least three weeks to kick in.

Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, England's Deputy Chief Medical Officer, also warned that there is no clear evidence yet to show that vaccinated people cannot transmit the deadly virus on to others.

"Regardless of whether someone has had their vaccination or not, it is vital that everyone follows the restrictions and public health advice, as protection takes up to three weeks to kick in and we don't yet know the impact of vaccines on transmission," said Van-Tam. His warning comes as the UK registered another high daily death toll from the virus of 1,348 this weekend.

He pointed to an additional 32 vaccination sites coming on stream to add to the thousands of venues where the National Health Service (NHS) has been delivering 140 jobs a minute, taking the vaccinated total to over 5.8 million. "The vaccine is rightly something to celebrate — let's stay patient, stay at home and support the NHS as it continues to roll out the vaccine," he said. A Living Museum where the BBC filmed a hit drama series 'Peaky Blinders' based on the notorious Birmingham gang in the 1920s is among the new vaccine sites. — *AFP*

Hindu priests charge
more for SA funerals

Johannesburg, Jan. 24: Cashing in on the fearful atmosphere prevailing in South Africa amidst a second wave and a new variant of the Covid-19 virus, some Hindu priests in the country are allegedly charging exorbitant rates for conducting funerals of coronavirus victims.

The priests are under fire for charging between 1,200 rand (\$79) and 2,000 rand (\$131) to conduct a funeral, according to Pradeep Ramlall, a member of the Hindu Dharma Association of South Africa and Manager of the Clare Estate Crematorium in Durban.

This is not right. As per our scriptures, this is our seva (service) to the community. If a family wants to give a priest a donation, then that is acceptable but priests should not be charging people, he told the Weekly Post newspaper as he slammed the priests who are overcharging. Ramlall said the organisation has received a number of complaints from people whose relatives succumbed.

In view of a second wave and a new variant of the virus, the crematorium has had to introduce double shifts amid daily deaths. — *PTI*

A NASAL SPRAY
THAT BLOCKS
OUT COVID-19

London, Jan. 24: A nasal spray which can prevent a Coronavirus infection for up to two days is being prepped for mass production by scientists at the University of Birmingham with the hope of having them available over-the-counter in pharmacies in a few months, a UK newspaper report said on Sunday. Dr Richard Moakes, the study's lead researcher, told 'The Sunday Telegraph' that he is confident in the spray's formula to help unlock society from social distancing restrictions. — *PTI*

Oman limits jobs for expats

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

Gulf nation Oman's reported move on Sunday to bar certain jobs for foreigners such as finance, commercial and administrative positions in insurance companies, shops and car dealerships as well as nationalise some jobs in the private sector is set to impact Indian workers there. Although there was no official reaction from New Delhi till late on Sunday evening, it

is expected that India will examine the matter to ascertain what impact the move will have on Indian workers in the Gulf nation. A huge number of Indian workers stay and work in the entire Gulf region spanning several countries.

According to media reports, the Omani Labour Ministry was quoted as saying, "A number of jobs in the private sector will be nationalised," adding that certain jobs in insurance

companies, shops and car dealerships, including finance, commercial and administrative positions, will be "limited to Omanis only". Oman also reportedly announced that work permits of foreigners in those professions will not be renewed after their expiry date.

According to media reports, Oman has undertaken the move in an effort to create more employment opportunities for its citizens amid an economic downturn.

Biden talks to Boris, Obrador

Washington, Jan. 24: US President Joe Biden spoke to British Prime Minister Boris Johnson over phone and conveyed his intention to strengthen the "special relationship" between the two countries and revitalise transatlantic ties, the White House said.

During the call on Saturday, Biden noted his readiness to work closely with Johnson as the United Kingdom hosts the G-7 and United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) this year.

"The president conveyed his intention to strengthen the special relationship between our countries and revitalise transatlantic ties, underscoring the crit-

● **BIDEN AND** Obrador agreed to work closely to stem the flow of irregular migration to Mexico and the United States, as well as to promote development in the Northern Triangle of Central America.

ical role of NATO to our collective defense and shared values," the White House said in a readout of the call.

Biden also noted the importance of cooperation, including through multilateral organisations, on shared challenges such as combatting climate change, containing deadly Covid-19, and

ensuring global health security, it said.

The leaders also discussed the need for coordination on shared foreign policy priorities, including China, Iran, and Russia, the White House said.

Biden also spoke to Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on Friday to review bilateral cooperation on a range of issues, particularly regional migration, according to a readout of the call issued on Saturday. "The president outlined his plan to reduce migration by addressing its root causes, increasing resettlement capacity and lawful alternative immigration pathways, improving processing at the bor-

der to adjudicate requests for asylum, and reversing the previous administration's draconian immigration policies," it said.

Biden and Obrador agreed to work closely to stem the flow of irregular migration to Mexico and the United States, as well as to promote development in the Northern Triangle of Central America.

They also recognised the importance of coordination to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, the White House said. After his swearing in on January 20, Biden has so far spoken with three world leaders. His first call was to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

— *PTI*



"I understand that there is a lot of similarity between the current thinking in the United States and our policies"

Shah Mahmood Qureshi, FM, Pakistan

ried to update him about the positive trajectory of Pakistan's policies with the idea of more talks on the issue of interests with him.

"We have made a very big shift, from a geo-strategic position to a geo-eco-

nomics position," he said, highlighting the focus of the current government to fix the ailing economy of the country.

The statement came as Pakistan looked forward to build on the improvement in ties with

Washington in the wake of peace agreement with the Taliban, which Islamabad claims it facilitated.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has already expressed his desire to work with the new American administration to deepen bilateral ties.

"Look forward to working with @POTUS in building a stronger Pak-US partnership through trade and economic engagement, countering climate change, improving public health, combating corruption and promoting peace in the region and beyond," Khan tweeted while congratulating the

new US President. Qureshi, whose government is accused of vote rigging by the opposition parties, said that India has also changed, alleging that "it is no more a democratic country."

The India-Pakistan ties nose-dived in recent years with no bilateral talks taking place.

India has not been engaging with Pakistan since an attack on the Air Force base at Pathankot in January of 2016 by a Pakistan-based terror group, maintaining that talks and terror cannot go together.

— *PTI*

DECCAN Chronicle

25 JANUARY 2021

Is power only language in which to talk farm laws?

Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar's statement to the farmers' unions during the 11th round of talks that there are no problems with the farm laws and that the government offered to suspend them for up to 18 months as a sign of respect for farmers is unhelpful, to say the least, in ending the stalemate. Instead, it casts a shadow over the sincerity the government displays in the talks.

It has been almost three months now that the farmers are in Delhi, agitating, demanding the repeal of the three laws that seek to rework the way agriculture in this country is conducted. They also want a legal assurance that the minimum support price (MSP) regime is retained. The government has been non-committal on all these demands.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the umbrella union of the 40 agitating farmers unions, cannot be faulted for rejecting the government's offer to suspend the laws and discuss them "clause by clause" for many reasons. First, such an offer has no legal backing. A bill, passed by Parliament and signed into law by the President, cannot be kept in abeyance by the government. There has been no legal mechanism to ensure the laws are not acted upon, except that the government may delay the framing of the rules, but that cannot be a legitimate route a government can take while negotiating on critical laws that have serious ramifications for the future.

The government, as Mr Tomar has stated, has been insisting that the laws are for the good of the farmers and the agriculture sector. The farmers, on the other hand, fear that it's a bogey the government advances and that it would, ultimately, want to withdraw from the sector and throw them at the mercy of the corporates. The government can either say the laws are good or they are bad; and it has said they are good. It is up to the government to explain what it seeks to gain by sticking to its stand and then offering negotiation, at a juncture when the Supreme Court has stayed the operation of the laws. Second, the farmers cannot be faulted for not taking the bait of clause-by-clause discussions as the government had failed to follow the regular, democratic law-making process in this case. It was in an unholy haste to rush them through the legislature.

The government agreed to the discussion only after the farmers showed their grit at the gates of the national capital. If the government understands only the language of power, then the farmers need to continue to talk that. The government may be concerned about the elderly farmers suffering in the extremely cold weather of Delhi; but for them, it's a do-or-die struggle, and they may be willing to pay the price for it.

The government has of late allowed the proposed tractor rally by the farmers' unions on Republic Day. The government must show the same spirit of accommodation and seriousness of purpose while sitting with the farmers next time. It's unlikely to reach a conclusion if the government goes into the talks with the stand that all is well with the laws.

Heed general on arms buys

Last week, Army chief Gen. M.M. Naravane did well to highlight in the public sphere the hidebound, time-consuming, procedures for defence acquisitions that impact our military capabilities and preparedness, especially in relation to potential adversaries who are able to absorb innovations in military technologies more speedily.

If our armed forces are working for a revolution in military affairs (RMA), it is inescapable that we also bring about a revolution in bureaucratic affairs (RBA). General Naravane aptly pointed out. It seems plain common sense to us that RMA — which the major powers have already brought about, and is an area in which India lags behind — cannot be achieved without RBA taking place. It is a rude awakening to hear from the country's military leader that while the Defence Procurement Procedure 2016 was 450 pages, the Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 is 681 pages. It's got worse, rather than better. This is surely a travesty.

The Army chief quotes the late defence minister Manohar Parrikar as saying that the system and procedures of military procurement is built on "distrust" — or, should we say, mistrust. The premium is on the detailed crafting of bureaucratic rules that attempt to take in every future infraction of procedure, and not on the quick availability of a much-needed equipment or defence system. In a word, the idea is to catch the thief, as it were. This is pathetic.

The whole system still appears to be paying the price for the then Opposition crying foul over the procurement of Bofors artillery guns with the purpose of bringing down the Rajiv Gandhi government. As we know since then the successive governments have not been able to establish corruption on the part of the then PM.

We must move on if we are to grow as a credible regional power, leave alone international power. The way things are, any mid-way course-correction in acquisition or introducing of a newly available useful technology requires the whole Quality Requirement procedures to start all over again. Sometimes more than a decade passes. By then what has been got at great cost is already antiquated.

Gen. Naravane is right. There must be built-in flexibility clauses for the end user (our armed forces) as well as the manufacturer. Similarly, overhaul of procurement procedures are needed in the civilian domain to gain efficiency and cut delays.

Subhani



Trump to Biden: Modi's US ties in need of reset



Sanjaya Baru

Sanjayovacha

Ending his much-acclaimed address to a joint session of both Houses of the American Congress in July 2005, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said, to rapturous applause: "Partnerships can be of two kinds. There are partnerships based on principle and there are partnerships based on pragmatism. I believe we are at a juncture where we can embark on a partnership that can draw both on principle as well as pragmatism. We must build on this opportunity."

The India-US relationship has waxed and waned depending on how this mix between values, defined by principles, and interests, based on pragmatism, has worked out. As a new administration with a very different and well-defined ideological orientation takes charge in Washington D.C., diplomats and observers in both countries will wait to see what kind of a balance would be struck between the two considerations in taking the India-US relationship forward.

For a long time, when leaders of both countries met, they could only speak about their shared democratic values because their interests were so wide apart. The simultaneous occurrence in 1991 of India's economic opening up and the end of the Cold War added the ballast of shared interests to the relationship. India's desire to secure new markets, new technologies and foreign investment as well as its need to diversify the country's sourcing of defence equipment and bolster its national security, at a time when China was rising and jihadi terrorism had come closer home, created a powerful and potent mix of values and interests.

Long-term and durable bilateral relations between

nations do require a balance between values and interests. The principles by which nations define themselves constitute their values, but a purely values-defined relationship cannot endure unless it also addresses the individual needs of both partners. While political and intellectual leaders define values, it is left to diplomats to identify and secure the pragmatic foundations of a relationship.

Several developments at home and around the world over the three decades, from 1990 to 2020, ensured that the bilateral relationship grew from strength to strength. However, even as global developments continued to favour closer India-US relations, domestic political and economic developments during the tenures of President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi did emerge as potential problems for the durability of the relationship.

Mr Trump's "America First" policies created new uncertainties for India's "interests", in areas such as trade and immigration policy, while Prime Minister Modi's "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" trade and industrial policies and India's desire to maintain its good equations with Russia and Iran, raised concerns in Washington. However, the weakening of the "interests" side of the equation was balanced by greater emphasis on the "values" side, with Mr Trump hailing India's democracy while turning a blind eye to Mr Modi's majoritarian communal politics, in his campaign against non-democratic China. If Mr Trump had been re-elected it remains to be seen how this equation would have worked out. President Trump may well have continued to ignore the BJP's politics, but would perhaps have demanded his pound of

flesh on the trade and market access side.

What now with the Joe Biden-Kamala Harris duo? Clearly, their values are very different from Mr Trump's, and in a world where domestic politics increasingly influences foreign policy no country can ignore the influence of these "new values" at home on US foreign policy. At the same time, given the domestic economic pressures and promises made, Mr Biden may well not be able to ease up on the demands being made on India on the trade and economic side.

Consider then the emerging balance between principles and pragmatism — the "principles" dear to the new Democratic administration in the US may favour Mr Modi's India less than the principles that defined Mr Trump's attitude; and domestic policy pragmatism may require Mr Biden to stay the course on the economic demands the United States has been making on India.

On the Indian side, Mr Modi has weakened India's global standing as a multicultural, pluralistic, liberal and secular democracy, especially in his second term in office, while at the same time pursuing insular trade policies that raise hackles in Washington D.C. How Mr Modi intends to redefine and rework his approach to the new America of Mr Biden and Ms Harris remains to be seen.

The fact that vice-president Kamala Devi Harris is partly of Indian origin and that several Indian Americans have been nominated to serve the

Mr Modi has weakened India's global standing as a multicultural, pluralistic, liberal and secular democracy, especially in his second term in office, while at the same time pursuing insular trade policies that raise hackles in Washington D.C

Biden administration is no guarantee of a smooth ride for India in the US capital. While the interest groups that lobby for good relations between India and the US may have better access to the Biden-Harris team, the team itself may have many whose values clash with the BJP's majoritarianism. Listen carefully to Mr Biden's speech.

In the past it used to be assumed all too easily that Indian Americans are India's diplomatic asset. Indeed, they were. Their role in ensuring congressional support for the India-US civil nuclear agreement cannot be underestimated. Prime Minister Modi's rallies in New York and Houston, attended by enthusiastic Indian Americans, also helped Indian diplomats build bridges with Mr Trump's people. However, those Indian Americans lost out in this election. The Indian Americans now in office are the ones who may well have disliked external affairs minister S. Jaishankar refusing to meet US Congresswoman Premila Jayapal and her delegation, or his quoting Donald Trump approvingly in his book.

Among senior Biden administration officials there are many from the Obama administration who know India and Indians well, including the new CIA director William Burns and the pointman for Asia, Kurt Campbell. They may well wish to strengthen relations with India. It remains to be seen if their diplomatic "pragmatism" in the pursuit of "interests", is able to score over the assertion of "principle" by those who seek to defend the liberal, democratic "values" of the Democratic Party. Clearly, Prime Minister Modi will have to undertake some reset in his domestic politics and policies to ensure that he gets as warm a reception in Joe Biden's America as he did in Donald Trump's.

The writer is an economist, a former newspaper editor, a best-selling author and former adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

LETTERS

STRANGE LOGIC

In a bid to prevent transmission of Covid-19 authorities have requested members of the public to avoid crowding the R-day events. At the same time, these very leaders expect a huge turnout at the meetings which they have been organising with increased frequency due to the upcoming Assembly election. The speakers, who are interested only in large gatherings, do not bother whether people maintain the pandemic protocols or not. Are we to believe only at the time of R-day events, not during election meetings?

P.G. Menon, Chennai

SUSPICIOUS FIRE

The death of five workmen in the fire in the Serum Institute Pune is really shocking. The incident, described as just an 'accident', happened when India is fighting the pandemic tooth and nail. It is also significant that the serum being made by the strenuous efforts of Indians is now under mass production and we are in the forefront in the export of the serum to other countries too to help them fight the pandemic. At this stage the 'accident' in the Serum Institute cannot simply be brushed aside and there is room and reason to suspect sabotage by invisible internal forces inimical to India. A thorough and impartial probe is a must to unravel the truth.

Kooduthuraiyan, Chennai

POLICE INACTION

It is really painful to know that a bizarre incident around a border dispute between revenue and police officials of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh has caused much grief to a suicide victim's kin. It is foolish of the police to refuse to accept a complaint citing that the place doesn't fall under their jurisdiction. Like 'One Nation, One Ration Card' why can't there be 'One Nation, One Police Station'? Complaints can be lodged in any police station in India. It is their duty to forward the same to the concerned station, who should acknowledge the complaint to the complainant. The present situation of making the complainant to run from pillar to post should be arrested without any further delay.

N. Hariharan, Chennai

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Chandrajit Banerjee



Reviving growth: Govt needs to do a fine balance in Budget on Feb. 1

With economic activity resuming and the vaccine becoming a reality, the challenge of lives versus livelihoods is largely addressed. The next big challenge facing the government is getting growth back.

The government has been fiscally prudent in its Covid interventions, with support to industry coming in the form of loan guarantees and reform measures. However, as private consumption, investments and exports remain sluggish, the burden to nurture the unexpected but buoyant recovery falls primarily on public expenditure, at least in the immediate term.

Government spending in areas with high multipliers is important for demand creation, employment generation and catalysing private investments. The RBI estimates the Central government capex has a multiplier effect of 2.45 in the year the expenditure is incurred and 3.14 next year. This shows a hike in capital expenditure by the government crowds in higher private investments benefiting the economy in the next few years. Private investments have been slow even before the pandemic, and this boost can get them back on track. Higher investments, public and private, will lead to

employment generation, boosting consumer demand and savings.

The virtuous cycle of public expenditure, demand generation, private investment and employment generation can put the economy back onto a high growth trajectory.

However, the fiscal situation is now under stress driven by a shortfall in revenue collections due to a fall in GDP induced by the Covid-19 crisis, constraining higher public spending.

Supporting economic recovery and growth via greater public expenditure as well as ensuring prudent fiscal management to safeguard macro-economic stability is an immediate concern the Budget must address.

CII suggests a seven-point agenda.

One, prioritise public investment in infrastructure and health. Infrastructure has one of the highest multiplier effects on the economy and boosts long-term competitiveness. Therefore, the government must hike its infrastructure spend by one per cent of GDP, including higher allocations for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.

The pandemic highlighted the importance and need for a robust public health infrastructure. India should look at increasing its public health

expenditure to three per cent of GDP by 2025.

Two, the government should look at fiscal deficit management from a three-year perspective. The deficit target for next year should be realistic.

Three, the government should ensure greater transparency in the deficit numbers, inspiring confidence in markets, rating agencies and investors. This implies realistic revenue projections, avoiding off-Budget borrowings, realistic estimation of costs of schemes and accounting fully for borrowing for food subsidy. Last year's Budget listed off-Budget expenditures and their financing as an annexure. This year it should build on this positive step.

Four, given the uncertainties set a range-bound deficit target, instead of pursuing a single number, as was recommended by the economic advisory panel of the 15th Finance Commission.

Five, adopt a suitable Fiscal Performance Index framework to capture both the quantum and quality of the deficit. Higher expenditure on areas like infrastructure, healthcare, education and sustainability boosts the economy's productivity and efficiency, leading to higher growth, which helps pay for itself in the long run.

CII wants a composite Fiscal Perfor-

mance Index with six components: (i) Quality of revenue expenditure: measured by the share of revenue expenditure other than interest payments, subsidies, pensions and defence in GDP; (ii) Quality of capital expenditure: measured by share of capital expenditure (other than defence) in GDP; (iii) Quality of revenue: ratio of net tax revenue to GDP (own tax revenue in case of states); (iv) Degree of fiscal prudence I: ratio of fiscal deficit to GDP; (v) Degree of fiscal prudence II: ratio of revenue deficit to GDP; and (vi) Debt index: Change in debt and guarantees to GDP.

Six, the government should look at raising revenues through non-tax measures. It should look at aggressive disinvestment, taking advantage of booming capital markets. The disinvestment plan should include both loss-making and profit-making PSUs. To get better valuations, that is often a concern, the government could announce a list of PSUs where it plans to bring down its holdings below 51 per cent. The positive market sentiment this creates may lead to higher interest and valuations.

Monetisation of assets of the government and public sector enterprises, like surplus land and buildings, profitable brownfield assets like roads, transmission lines, airports, power

plants, etc, could be another source of significant revenue. State governments should also be encouraged to do so.

The proceeds should be ring-fenced for creating health infrastructure and other physical infrastructure in both urban and rural areas.

Seven, further rationalise subsidies and non-productive expenditure. Some of the measures that can help achieve this objective include: pursue Aadhaar-enabled direct benefit transfer (DBT) for food and agri-input subsidy. A policy of giving subsidised kerosene and LPG through DBT only to BPL families should also be explored.

The term for extension of the urea subsidy, given by the CCEA, will come to an end in 2020. The government should use this opportunity to carry out urea price decontrol and rationalise the fertiliser subsidy based on soil health card scheme data.

Savings can accrue from rationalisation of power subsidies. For the deserving, the subsidy could be provided through direct benefit transfer. This will also reduce the cost of power for industrial users, helping Indian manufacturing become more competitive.

The writer is the director-general of the Confederation of Indian Industry

SHORT TAKES

Nets hold on to beat Miami Heat

Los Angeles: Kevin Durant scored a team-high 31 points as the new-look Brooklyn Nets solved some of their defensive woes on Saturday to hold on and beat the shorthanded Miami Heat 128-124.

Since putting together the dynamic trio of Durant, Kyrie Irving and James Harden, the Nets have had no trouble showcasing their offence but have struggled at the other end of the court. Irving finished with 28 points, and Harden was held to just 12 but dished out 11 assists, as Brooklyn halted a modest two-game losing streak. "It's not every day you see this collection of guys playing together in NBA history, so we want to take full advantage of that," Irving said. Brooklyn has now allowed 396 points in their last three games including back-to-back losses to the Cavaliers, including an 147-135 double overtime defeat on Wednesday. — *AFP*

Hockey jr girls pip Chile seniors

Santiago, Chile: The Indian women's junior hockey team extended their unbeaten run by notching up a 2-0 victory over the Chile senior side here. Playing their fifth match of the tour of Chile, goals from Sangita Kumari (48th minute) and Sushma Kumari (56th minute) in the last quarter gave India the win.

It was India who drew first blood as they orchestrated a beautiful team move to open the scoring through Sangita. The young forward took her chance confidently, and maintained her goal-scoring form. Minutes later, Chile had a glorious chance to equalise through a penalty corner, but India's rushers performed their task decently enough.

In the 56th minute, it was the visiting team's turn to get a penalty corner, which proved to be the decisive moment in the match. — *PTI*

Hyderabad split points with JFC

Vasco: Jamshedpur FC and Hyderabad FC earned a point each after playing a goal-less draw in an Indian Super League match here on Sunday. While Hyderabad ended up drawing their third game on the trot, Jamshedpur grabbed their first point, after a treble of losses.

New signings Farukh Choudhary and Seimin Doungeel were among the four changes made by Jamshedpur while Roland Alberg was handed his first start as Hyderabad rang in two changes.

The opening half was an intriguing, open-ended contest with both sides hitting the post but failing to find the net. Hyderabad had better chances but Jamshedpur keeper T.P. Rehenesh produced two fine saves to keep the scoreline goal-less heading into the break. — *PTI*

Poirier knocks out McGregor

Abu Dhabi: American underdog Dustin Poirier shook up the world of mixed martial arts on Sunday, beating up the legs of Irish superstar Conor McGregor before knocking him out at UFC 257 in Abu Dhabi.

"I'm happy but I'm not surprised. I put in the work," Poirier after the referee stepped in after 2min 32sec of the second round to save McGregor from further damage after he was dropped by a fierce combination of punches. Poirier was ranked second in the flyweight division going into the fight, but still rated a heavy underdog by bookmakers to beat his fourth-ranked opponent, arguably the most famous fighter the sport has seen. The controversial McGregor, known as "Notorious", was returning to the octagon for the first time in a year and hoping for a repeat of the pair's first contest in 2014 which he won by TKO after just 109 seconds. — *AFP*

Rising from Ash-es

Constantly put under microscope, Ashwin says it's a start over, again & again

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, JAN. 24

R. Ashwin would not have featured in the first Test against Australia at Adelaide if Ravindra Jadeja had been available. Ashwin himself knew that. And that's why it felt like starting all over again for the off-spinner who has been constantly put under the microscope despite proving his worth time and again.

Apart from taking 12 wickets — he dismissed big fish Steve Smith thrice — in three Tests, Ashwin scored a gritty unbeaten 39 to save the Sydney Test. In a chat on Sunday, Ashwin spoke about the importance of his Sydney knock and how he has been subjected to unfair comparisons with other spinners. **Excerpts:**

Is this the best that you have bowled in Australia? Looking back, you can say that but I think this is just another dimension of cricket that I'm seeing myself in. It didn't look like I was going to start the series in all honesty but Jadeja damaged his hamstring and that is how I got an opportunity in the first Test. Yes, 2018-19 was good, but I think 2020-21 was one of the best if you compare the last three years.

Before each Test, I sat and watched match videos for eight hours on the bounce. I made my own plans about where the fielders should be. For example, how Tim Paine got out in Melbourne came from what happened in Adelaide with the short-leg fielder and where the ball might go. So these are orchestrated moves and thanks to the freedom the team management gave me in how I should be working it.

On his back injury: It (back injury) was looking good for the fourth Test and looked like I would play. But there was some unfortunate turn of events. Even the swimming pool access was cut. The pool is an important activity in the recovery process. Then we had to do a plunge pool activity but it is not the same. The physio also felt if the recovery process was in place, there was a good chance I could play. It was a freakish injury. By day three or four, I was alright to bowl. After that 1-1 draw, things took a U-turn. The way things happened in Sydney and Brisbane, we had to quarantine. Sometimes it was questionable. There was insen-



Ravichandran Ashwin

sitivity around people commenting on why we were complaining. The rules were not such. It was off the beat. But, we buckled down and put on a good show.

On the importance of his Sydney knock: There have been questions raised over my batting since that West Indies tour. But another thing that needs to go into consideration is I was an all-format player and sometimes the roles of people playing Test cricket alone don't really sit down well or people don't quite make an effort to understand how it works. I feel ever since that particular thing where I've just been playing Test cricket, it's pretty much a one game here or there and I'm constantly fighting with someone else for the lone spinner spot. And if I have to be judged purely on my batting skills and batting averages, then I think a decision based on an innings or two alone to drop me out of a particular series wasn't quite justified. I am looking to fight for my place and when I'm doing that I need to emphasise on my primary skill which is to pick up wickets, which I think over the last two years in South Africa, England or Australia, I have done justice to.

Despite being on the international stage for more than a decade, why do you feel that you have to prove yourself in every game? I have had some wonderful interactions with batting coach Vikram Rathour (a former selector) throughout this series. He told me that they were looking to leave me out after the England series in 2011-12. He said, 'We didn't quite think that you were bowling well'. But I made close to 400 runs in that series and picked up 14-15 wickets. It's a battle that I have always fought. It's not new territory for me.

Whenever I was pitted against another off-spinner, the series has turned out well for me. From 2013 to 2015, I was competing with Harbhajan who had made a comeback. In 2015-16, it was Jayant Yadav. For me, competition has always got the best out of me. I feel whatever I have left ahead of me will also be along these lines. So I have decided to play every Test like it's my first. If I can't be excellent, I should just move on.

On comparisons with Nathan Lyon and the duel with Smith: There has been a lot of noise about how I am bowling, and constant references to someone like Nathan

Lyon. During the previous tour in Adelaide, I picked up six wickets and kept on bowling despite a tear in the abdomen. After the match, there were comparisons between us. I felt it was extremely insensitive after a good performance. That was the lowest I ever felt in my life. I feel I have been constantly put under the microscope. I did take it personally. So rather than me competing against Lyon, I thought I must be competing against Smith. Lyon is a lovely bowler and I have respect for him. But my focus was on something else. There were records that Smith had never got out to spinners in Australia. I wanted to turn that around. I am entitled to think I am, probably, the best in the world. I wanted to think along those lines. I thought 'who is the best in the series?' I can't compete with Virat Kohli so I decided to compete against Smith. A lot of people were talking about who will dismiss Smith. But, nobody even gave me a chance. Then, I made sure that people spoke about me at the end of the series.

Now, there will be comparisons with Washington Sundar... Honestly, I have always

said it is irrelevant who walks alongside me into the ground. When I walk into the next Test, I will be looking at Burns, Sibley, Crawley, Root. Why would I worry about someone who is going to stand beside me because for all you know I'm walking with a guy who is going to help me over the next five days and he has to do his job and I have to do mine. These are insignificant things and sometimes people tend to talk about it to such an extent because of their mindset.

Did the Aussies underestimate India's bench strength? I am not too sure. They were bowled out for 190 in Adelaide. With another hundred runs on the board, even that pink ball Test could have gone either way. I think they knew our bowling was going to challenge them throughout the series. I think it is just that the team found ways to bounce back from 36 all out. I think people rallied around really well, they realised how tough the tour could get. One piece of good fortune is that there were new people and fresh legs especially in the bowling department. Sometimes when you're playing a long series, fresh legs and mind can do the trick.

Is there a tinge of disappointment that you were not considered for the vice-captaincy role when Rahane took over from Kohli? I am not disappointed and it's irrelevant to me. I go out there and make my own plans and get the fields that I want. The captains and vice-captains that I have played with have been very supportive of whatever I have wanted. Leadership is just leading yourself and keeping your space upbeat for any situation that arises. If you can help another teammate, that's also leadership, so it really doesn't matter.

On the impending 400-wicket milestone and the England series: I am not thinking about milestones! Once I crossed 200 wickets, I stopped looking at milestones. It just happened over a course of time. The England series is going to be good. They are coming with an amazing preparation in Sri Lanka where the wicket has spun over the last two Tests. Joe Root has been batting beautifully. England are one of the teams who come well-prepared. A hard-fought Test series is on the cards.

ROOT HELPS ENG CLOSE IN ON LANKA

Galle (Sri Lanka), Jan. 24: Skipper Joe Root was run out shy of a second successive double century Sunday as England scored 339 for nine in reply to Sri Lanka's 381 on Day Three of the second Test in Galle.

Root was out to a direct throw from Oshada Fernando on 186 in the final over of the day as stumps were called with England trailing by 42 runs.

Sri Lanka's Lasith Embuldeniya claimed seven wickets and broke a

key seventh-wicket stand of 81 between Root and Dom Bess, who fell to the left-arm spinner for 32.

Root, who completed his 19th Test ton in 99 matches before lunch, kept pushing in the marathon knock of 309 balls.

The captain, who hit a match-winning 228 in his team's opening win, was helped along by wicket-keeper-batsman Jos Buttler in a partnership of 97 runs.

Embuldeniya, who registered his third five-wicket haul, struck twice early in

the day with his left-arm spin, including the key wicket of Jonny Bairstow, to break a 111-run third-wicket stand with Root.

Bairstow, who added just four more to his overnight 24, was given not out by the umpire but Sri Lanka successfully reviewed the call as replays suggested the ball had grazed the bat before hitting the pad and being caught second slip.

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 381 vs England 339/9 (Root 186, Buttler 55, Embuldeniya 7/132).

Natarajan owes it to his teammates

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 24

It was a dream international debut for T. Natarajan who had travelled to Australia only as a net bowler. He grabbed his opportunities in all three formats and emerged as one of the unlikely heroes of India's historic triumph. Natarajan, who is enjoying a new found cult status in Tamil Nadu, credited Team India's support staff, skipper Virat Kohli and stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane for backing him.

"They supported and motivated me a lot. I was able to perform well only because of their backing. I enjoyed playing under the captaincy of Kohli as well as Rahane. They had a lot of positive things to say and encouraged me a lot," said the 29-year-old who took three wickets on debut at the Gabba.

"I didn't expect to get an opportunity in the ODIs, but I was keen to do my job. When I was told that I would be playing, I could feel the pressure. But, I wanted to make use of the opportunity," he added.

Natarajan feels being a left-arm pacer and the new angle he brings in add to his advantage. "The main reason for me playing all the formats has to go towards my training and all my coaches. They would have known about my strength in the formats so they gave me a chance to play in all formats. I am a left-armed so that works as an advantage for me," said Natarajan.

Natarajan who runs a cricket academy for players in his village said he would strive hard to help more people achieve their



T. Natarajan

Natarajan grabbed his opportunities in all three formats and emerged as one of the unlikely heroes of India's historic triumph.

dreams. "I will try to support the Salem Cricket Association as much as I can. It is because of people's support that I am here. People know how I came here, if one does hard work he can achieve anything," he added.

Sundar now wants to open batting in Tests

New Delhi, Jan. 24: Coach Ravi Shastri's dressing room stories of grit and determination work as a tonic for young Washington Sundar, who is ready for any challenge even if it means opening the batting for India in Test matches.

The 21-year-old Washington was a specialist top-order batsman during his India U-19 days but then honed his off-spin to such an extent that he is now an automatic choice in India's T20 team.

One of the heroes of India's epic triumph in Brisbane, which gave them the four-match Test series against Australia, Washington spoke about the head coach's influence on him.

"I think it will be a blessing for me if I ever get an opportunity to open the batting for India in Tests. I think I will accept the challenge just like our coach Ravi sir did during his

playing days," Washington said during an interaction from his Chennai residence.

He scored 62 in the first innings at Gabba to keep India in the match and then a quick 22, including a hooked six off Pat Cummins, to play a part in the finishing act, apart from a match-haul of four wickets.

"Ravi sir tells us very inspiring stories from his playing days. Like how he made his debut as a specialist spinner, got four wickets and batted at number 10 against New Zealand on debut.

"And how from there, he became a Test opener and played all those great fast bowlers. I would love to open batting in Tests like him," said Washington, who enjoys a decent first-class batting average of 32 plus, which can only improve from hereon as he gets to play more games for India. — *PTI*

CHENNAIYIN LOOK TO KEEP THEIR PLAYOFF HOPES ALIVE

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 24

Chennaiyin FC will look to keep their playoff hopes alive when they take on juggernauts Mumbai City FC on Monday. Mumbai are a dangerous team, according to CFC coach Csaba Laszlo. Rightly so, as they have suffered defeat just once this season.

Laszlo wants his team to have a stronger mentality when they face the table-toppers. "The spirit at this moment is very low but we have to fight back against

Mumbai City which will also be a difficult game. We will try to win three points because we need it," he said. "It is not easy to go into every game with the same energy because the games come up rather quickly. But I am still asking my team to give extra energy especially against a team who is dominating the league," said Laszlo.

Laszlo believes that his team has been out of luck this season with the goal scoring. "I hope in the last few games it will change," he said.

Chennai's Sandeep is national racing champ

Coimbatore, Jan. 24: Chennai's Sandeep Kumar and Amir Sayed from Kottayam emerged champions in the Formula LGB 4 and Novice Cup category respectively in the 23rd JK Tyre-FMSCI National Racing Championship here on Sunday.

At the Kari Motor Speedway, the final day provided plenty of sparks

as the Formula LGB 4 championship went down to the wire till the last lap of the last race.

It was heartbreak for Ashwin Datta, who led overnight in the Formula LGB 4 category with 63 points.

Sandeep's experience and ice cool nerves stood him in good stead as he finished fifth in the last race.

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