

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 29 | JANUARY 2021

## WEATHER



Max: 32°C  
Min: 18°C  
Rainfall: Nil

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Thai 16  
**Tithi:** Prathamai  
**Star:** Aayilyam  
**Rahukalam:**  
10.30 am to 12 noon  
**Yamagandam:**  
3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.22 am  
**Zohar:** 12.26 pm  
**Asar:** 3.39 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.06 pm  
**Isha:** 7.20 pm

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+17,695)	(+409)
1,07,19,756	1,54,294

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+503)  
TN: 8,36,818 12,339

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

10,17,17,138

DEATHS  
21,91,747

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES  
219

worldometers.info

## Mamata calls on Sourav post-angioplasty

**Kolkata:** Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee visited BCCI president Sourav Ganguly at the hospital on Thursday evening after he underwent an angioplasty. Speaking to reporters after the visit, Banerjee said that she was sure that Ganguly will recover gradually. "Sourav is okay, he is doing well. I met him and his wife Dona after he was shifted to the bed following the procedure," she said. Banerjee also congratulated the doctors for the successful procedure.

## Ex Pondy Cong prez Namassivayam joins BJP

**New Delhi:** Former Puducherry Congress president A Namassivayam and another party leader E Theepappinathan, who recently resigned as MLA from the assembly, joined the BJP on Thursday, in a boost to the saffron party in the poll-bound union territory. The two leaders joined the BJP here in the presence of its national general secretary Arun Singh. Social activist A Jayakumar also joined the party. Namassivayam lauded the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

## COUNTER POINT



Can't we offer some sops to the people of Assam, Bengal and Tamil Nadu in the budget?

## NATION | 4

Congress, Left seal deal for West Bengal polls



## WORLD | 5

Pakistan gets GI tag for its Basmati rice

## SPORT | 8

TN meet Rajasthan in T20 semifinal



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle, google.com/+deccanchronicle

Vol. 11 No. 32 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES | ₹4.00

# Tension as states order farmers to leave protest sites on border

■ Unions reject fiat, say pressure shows government's nervousness

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WITH AGENCY INPUTS  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 28

The Uttar Pradesh government and the farmers who have been protesting against the three farm laws at Ghaziabad have entered into a face-off with the latter declaring that they will not obey the government's order to vacate the protest site by Thursday night.

The "verbal" communication comes after three farmers union withdrew their protest against the three central farm laws over the violence in Delhi on Republic Day.

"Ghaziabad district magistrate Ajay Shankar Pandey has communicated to the protestors camping at the UP Gate at Delhi border to vacate the spot by tonight or the administration will remove them," a district official said.

Reports said the police dug up roads on the sites using earthmovers while the district administration cut off power and water supply to the hundreds of farmers at Ghaziabad.

Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait told reporters at Ghaziabad that he was "ready to face bullets" but will not budge. "The Supreme Court has justified the peaceful sit-in. There has been no violence on the Ghazipur border. Despite this, the government is adopting a repressive policy. It is the face of the Uttar Pradesh government."

The police has threw in a thick security blanket over the other two sites Tikri and Singhu with Rapid Action Force being deployed.

Local residents have also reportedly asked the protestors to leave the place at the Delhi-Haryana border in Singhu. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) which is spearheading the agitation condemned the government action, saying it showed government's nervousness.



Farmers during the ongoing agitation against the new farm laws, at Singhu border, in New Delhi, Thursday. — PTI

# 16 parties to boycott Prez address; want riot probed

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 28

Leaders of 16 Opposition parties said Thursday they will boycott President Ram Nath Kovind's address to both Houses of Parliament on the opening day of the budget session on Friday over the controversial farm laws.

The 16 parties are the Congress, Trinamul Congress, NCP, Shiv Sena, DMK, Samajwadi Party, the National Conference, the CPI(M), the CPI, the RJD, the PDP, the Muslim League, the RSP, the MDMK, the Kerala Congress and the AIDUF. Announcing the decision, leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad said the 16 parties also sought an independent probe into the Centre's role in the violence that shook the nation's capital on Republic Day. They also condemned the violence and expressed regret

# Agencies to chase funding for protest

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 28

Intelligence agencies have started an investigation to trace hawala channels and operators through whom funds are allegedly coming from abroad to support the ongoing farmers' agitation. There is a growing view within the capital's security establishment that there is an urgent need for a detailed investi-

gation into the funding pattern of the ongoing agitation on the capital's borders, particularly at Singhu and Tikri.

"It is largely suspected that a number of NRIs belonging to Punjab have been illegally sending money to fund this agitation," a senior intelligence official said. The agencies have now put a number of hawala operators and networks under the scanner.

for the injuries sustained by Delhi police personnel during the violent clashes on January 26, when groups of protesters reached the Red Fort.

In a joint statement, the Opposition leaders said the farm laws were an assault on state govern-

ments and violated the spirit of the Constitution. It said: "If not repealed, these laws will effectively dismantle the edifice of national food security that rests upon MSP, government procurement and the public distribution system.

# GOVT MAY MOVE RESOLUTION IN PARLIAMENT AGAINST RIOT

YOJNA GUSAI | DC  
WITH AGENCY INPUTS  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 28

Narendra Modi government is likely to bring a motion condemning the Red Fort incident on the Republic Day, during the budget session of Parliament beginning from Friday.

The government, sources said, wants Parliament to pass a resolution condemning the incident after "considering the sense of the House."

For the government, which was otherwise bracing itself to face the Opposition's onslaught over the farmer unions protests against the three laws, among other issues, tables seem to have turned as the incident caused a national uproar, with even the Opposition parties, who were supporting the farmer unions protests, condemning the incident.

The motion in all likelihood will be supported by all political parties, including Opposition parties, some of which had blamed the government for its failure to prevent the incident.

The ruling BJP, which had called the incident "an attack on the democracy," had blamed the Congress, in particular its leader Rahul Gandhi and the Communists for instigating farmer unions against the three laws. A mob had flouted the routes as agreed between unions and the Delhi Police, and unfurled the Sikh religious flag at the rampart of the Red Fort.



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami along with Deputy CM O. Panneerselvam opens Veda Nilayam memorial, residence of the late TN chief minister Jayalalithaa, in Chennai on Thursday. — PTI

## VEDA NILAYAM MEMORIAL OPENED

# Jaya fought for women: EPS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JAN. 28

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami inaugurated the memorial for J. Jayalalitha set up at Veda Nilayam, the erstwhile residence of the former chief, and unveiled her statue on the Tamil Nadu State Council for Higher Education premises opposite to the Marina Beach on Thursday.

Both the events were presided over by Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam and attended by senior party functionaries.

The Veda Nilayam premises spread across 10 grounds and 322 square feet in Poes Garden was taken over by the government and converted into a memorial, conserving the articles used by Jayalalitha during her lifetime.

The façade of the building has been refurbished without tampering with the original structure

while several rooms in the bungalow have been renovated. It will be open for the public for viewing.

Speaking after unveiling the statue, Mr Palaniswami recalled the great services of Jayalalitha and said that February 24, her birth anniversary, will be observed as a government function and every year the statue would be garlanded by the government.

He gave a long list of the schemes launched by Jayalalitha for the benefit of women, particularly the raising of the women commando force, and said that she gave importance to women's education and security. Jayalalitha's heart was pure like a temple, the Chief Minister said. Thursday's events followed the inauguration of the mausoleum built at the resting place of Jayalalitha inside the MGR Samadhi on the Marina sands on Wednesday.

# TN govt takes over Rajah Muthiah MC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JAN. 28

The state government has issued an order taking over the medical college attached to the Annamalai University as announced by the Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam in his speech while presenting the budget for the year 2020-21.

The Rajah Muthiah Medical College will thus function as the government medical college in Cuddalore district.

Along with the medical college, other related institutions such as Rani Meyyammai College of Nursing and Rajah

Muthiah Dental College and Hospital would also be handed over to the health and family welfare department, the order said.

As per the detailed evaluation, the college situated on 113.21 acres is valued along with other facilities, furniture and movable properties at Rs 249.99 crore, while the liabilities stood at Rs 840.93 crore.

The college has 2,293 students on its rolls, 322 teaching staff, 1,426 non-teaching staff and 287 pensioners and family pensioners, the notification said, adding that the management would be compensated for the takeover.

## MORE POWER

# BOEING GETS US NOD TO SELL F-15EX TO INDIA

Boeing said on Thursday that it has received a licence from the US government to offer its F-15EX fighter jet to the Indian Air Force (IAF). It said it will manufacture 6 Apache attack helicopters for the Indian Army in India itself at Tata Boeing Aerospace Limited facility in Hyderabad.

■ REPORT ON PAGE 4

# Mutuality key to ties with China, asserts Jaishankar

New Delhi, Jan. 28: External affairs minister S. Jaishankar on Thursday outlined eight broad principles for repairing ties between India and China that included strict adherence to all agreements on management of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), mutual respect and sensitivity, and recognising each other's aspirations as rising Asian powers.

In an address at an online conference on India-China ties, Mr Jaishankar said the events in eastern Ladakh last year have profoundly disturbed the relationship and asserted that any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo

along the LAC is "completely unacceptable".

The external affairs minister said any expectation that the situation at the border "can be brushed aside and life can carry on undisturbed" is simply not realistic.

He said the India-China relationship is truly at the crossroads today and choices that are made will have profound repercussions not just for the two nations but for the entire world.

The Chinese actions in eastern Ladakh not only signalled a disregard for commitments about minimising troops level but also showed a willingness to breach peace and tranquility, he said at the All India Conference on

China Studies.

Elaborating on eight points for moving forward in bilateral ties, the external affairs minister said agreements already reached on management of the LAC must be adhered to in their entirety and in letter and spirit. "Whether handling of the border areas is concerned, the LAC must be strictly observed and respected. Any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo is completely unacceptable," he said.

While both nations are committed to a multi-polar world, Mr Jaishankar said, there should be a recognition that a multi-polar Asia is one of its essential consequences.

# HC DENIES BAIL TO COMEDIAN FOR REMARKS

Indore, Jan. 28: The Madhya Pradesh High Court on Thursday refused bail to comedian Munawar Faruqui who is accused of passing "indecent" remarks about Hindu deities during a show, and noted that "promoting harmony" is one of the constitutional duties. Liberty of a person has to be "balanced" with his duties towards other citizens, Justice Rohit Arya said.

The court also turned down the bail plea of Nalin Yadav, another accused. Mr Faruqui and four others were arrested on January 1 following a complaint by a BJP MLA's son that objectionable remarks about Hindu deities and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were passed during a comedy show. — PTI

# 'Instigating' TV programmes irk SC

New Delhi, Jan. 28: The Supreme Court on Thursday said control over TV programmes having "instigating effect" is as important as providing 'lathis' to policemen for law and order, and slammed the Centre for "doing nothing" to curb such shows.

Hearing a plea on the media reporting issue in the Tablighi Jamaat case, a bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde referred to the internet shutdown in some areas of Delhi on January 26 when the tractor parade by farmers protesting against three new farm

● The CJI then told Mr Mehta: "The fact of the matter is that there are programmes which have instigating effect and you being the government is doing nothing about it."

laws turned violent, leaving 300 policemen and scores of others injured.

"Fair and truthful reporting is normally not a problem. Problem is when it is used to agitate others. It is as important as providing 'lathis' to policemen. It is an important preventive part of the law and order situation," said the bench, also comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian.

Appearing for the Centre, solicitor-general Tushar Mehta submitted that there are effective mechanisms in place to prevent spread of hate news.

The CJI then told Mr Mehta: "The fact of the matter is that there are programmes which have instigating effect and you being the government is doing nothing about it."

"Control over some news is as important as some preventive measure and check

law and order situation. I don't know why you are blind to this. I don't mean anything offensive but you are doing nothing about it".

The top court was hearing a batch of pleas which have raised the issue of media reporting of Tablighi Jamaat congregation here last year during the onset of Covid-19 pandemic.

The congregation was cited as being responsible for accelerating the spread of coronavirus or Covid-19, with its attendees allegedly carrying the infection to different parts of the country. — PTI



## OTHER STORIES

## TVS Motors records highest ever revenue in Q3

**Chennai:** TVS Motor Company reported its highest ever revenue of ₹5,404 crore in Q3 of 2020-21. The revenue Oct. to Dec. 2020, grew by 31 per cent from ₹4,126 crore in Q3 of 2019-20.

The company also reported the highest ever EBITDA of ₹511 crore for Q3, recording a growth of 41 per cent against ₹363 crore in Q3 of 2019-20. During the current quarter, TVS reported the highest-ever quarterly PAT of ₹266 crore, while profit before tax also is the highest for a quarter, at ₹362 crore in Q3 as against ₹146 crore in corresponding Q3 of 2019-20.

## NEW CITROËN SUV ROLLS OUT FROM THIRUVALLUR PLANT

**Chennai:** CITROËN has started commercial production and rolled out the first Citroën C5 Aircross SUV, from its manufacturing facility in Thiruvallur, Tamil Nadu. The flagship SUV is the first product from the Citroën brand for Indian customers. Production of the new Citroën SUV in India started after rigorous testing of the vehicle for over 2.5 lakh kilometres in different terrains and varied weather conditions across India. Mr. Emmanuel Delay, Executive Vice President, Stellantis & Chairman, PCA Automobile India Pvt Ltd & PSA AVTEC Powertrain Pvt Ltd., said, "The Citroën SUV will be the first of many differentiating products for India from the brand."

## Brothel in garb of spa busted, 6 arrested

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
TIRUCHY, JAN. 28

The police arrested six persons including three women and are in search of the owner of spas for allegedly running a 'brothel' in the guise of spas at four different places at Raja Colony, Ponnagar, Sundar Nagar and Thillai Nagar in the city on Wednesday.

In a release at Tiruchy, city police commissioner Dr. J. Loganathan said acting upon a tip-off the special police teams made surprise raids in these four spas and rescued seven women who were compelled into flesh trade. They were handed over to the government protection home.

He said all the arrested were remanded to judicial custody and sealed the premises.

The police also filed cases against the owner of the premises who rented out the buildings for running spas.

## Auto driver returns bag with jewels to passenger



Auto driver Saravana Kumar returns the bag with jewels left behind by a passenger to cops on Thursday.

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, JAN. 28

A 25-year-old auto driver in the city played a good Samaritan, by returning a bag full of jewels to a passenger, who had mistakenly left it behind in his three-wheeler in Chromepet.

According to the police, Paul Bright, a businessman from Chromepet, had his daughter's wedding planned at a church in the neighbourhood on Thursday evening.

Ahead of the wedding, Bright travelled in an auto from Pallavaram church to his house and forgot to take the bag containing 50 sovereigns from the auto.

Auto driver Saravana Kumar(25), from Hastinapuram, also did not notice the bag until he reached his house. After seeing the jewels, he decided to hand it over to the police.

Meanwhile, realising he had mistakenly left the bag in the auto, Bright lodged a complaint with the Chromepet police. Just as the police started pulling up CCTV camera footage to identify the auto, Saravana Kumar drove up to the Chromepet police station and handed over the bag of jewels to Inspector Gomathi. Kumar's good-heartedness was appreciated by the police personnel and Bright's family.

## BABLOO PRITHVIRAJ, CO-PASSENGER FIGHT ON PLANE

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, JAN. 28

A dispute occurred on the plane and spilled over into a brawl between a Tamil actor and a co-passenger on an Air Asia airlines flight on Thursday morning.

According to the airport sources, Tamil actor Babloo Prithviraj was among 148 passengers travelling on the aircraft from Kolkata to Chennai. When the flight reached Chennai airport, an argument broke out between Babloo and a businessman, Abhay Kumar Singh from Kolkata, while picking up their hand luggage. It turned physical and the duo pushed each other down inside the aircraft. The cabin crew intervened and separated them.

Later, when they were near the conveyor belt picking up baggage, they fought again. But this time, the airport police were called in. After a stringent warning by the airport police, they were let off. Tension prevailed at the airport due to the incident, airport sources alleged.



"Tamil actor Babloo Prithviraj was among 148 passengers travelling on the plane from Kolkata to Chennai. When the flight reached Chennai airport, an argument broke out between Babloo and a businessman, Abhay Kumar Singh"



Thousands of devotees gather at Vadapalani Murugan temple on the occasion of Thai Pooam festival on Thursday.

— DC



Devotees witnessed the sacred 150th jothi darshan at Vallalar Sathyagnana Sabha at Vadalur in Cuddalore district on Thursday.

— DC

## CM unveils 'Namma Chennai' selfie spot at Marina beach

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
WITH AGENCY INPUTS  
CHENNAI, JAN. 27

The southern metropolis on Thursday added a new attraction, "Namma Chennai", a selfie spot off the famous Marina beach here under the Smart City Mission. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami unveiled the ₹24 lakh facility, set up to celebrate the pride of the city and its ethos and to express one's love for Chennai.

The Tamil word 'Namma' (our) in red colour is featured on the top and the word Chennai in white finds a place in English beneath it in the structure installed on the arterial Kamarajar Salai opposite the Queen Mary's College.

Palaniswami, along with his Cabinet colleagues, including Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam and Local Administration Minister S P Velumani, inaugurated the facility, an initia-

tive of the Greater Chennai Corporation. Soon after the inauguration, people flocked the premises and eagerly clicked selfies with 'Namma Chennai' logo in the background. Fisheries Minister D Jayakumar and Chennai Corporation Commissioner K Prakash took photographs in front of the new structure. Such selfie spots are already available in cities, including Hyderabad.



People taking photos at the selfie spot at Marina beach on Thursday.

— DC

## Theatres, OTT will have to co-exist

**B. Vijayalakshmi**

## Viewpoint

Even while the Central government on Wednesday allowed cinema halls and theatres to operate with more people in fresh Covid reopening guidelines, to be effective from February 1, Tamil action thriller *Master*, starring Vijay and Vijay Sethupathi, released in theatres on January 13, is set for its digital premiere on Friday (January 29).

Surya's *Soorarai Pottru*, which was the first big Tamil film to release on OTT platform, has also joined the Oscars race.

That the popularity of OTT platforms has disrupted the entertainment sector is undeniable. Rise in the standard of living, evolution of smartphones, changing preferences of audience and affordable Internet connectivity have led to the proliferation of OTT platforms during lockdown and now.

The original shows and films made by OTT players have begun winning the appreciation of the audience.

These platforms have made watching films convenient and affordable on TV, computers and smartphones anywhere and anytime. People watching the movie of their



A theatre being disinfected in Egmore.

— DC



choice relaxed at home are thrilled to fix the timing and interval.

Besides, the streaming platforms also offer content that is exciting, new, vibrant and engaging. For some, an OTT platform is like a library with an impressive line-up of movies from where they love

to choose, explore, pause and enjoy at their own pace.

They provide an opportunity for directors, writers and actors to embark on a novel journey to entertain the audience.

On the other hand, some say the excitement of going to a movie, munching pop-

corn, clapping, laughing, whistling, cheering and crying can never be duplicated. They insist that men love to socialize and majority still prefer enjoying movies on big screens. It is like a family outing and the magic of movies and big screen is irreplaceable.

With the pandemic far from over and only a few people venturing warily to theatres, film-makers want audiences from across the world to enjoy their movie on digital platforms. However, foot-falls and revenue matter for the success of a movie. With Covid changing the theatre experience altogether, theatres and OTT platforms will have to co-exist.

## Courts directs rlys to consider plea to resume catering services in mobile units

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, JAN. 28

The Madras high court has directed the Indian Railways to consider and pass orders on a representation from the Indian Railways Mobile Caterers Association (IRMC), seeking resumption of services of the members of the association, which were suspended by the Indian Railways due to the lockdown imposed by the government ever since March 2020.

Justice Abdul Quddus gave the directive while disposing of a petition filed by IRMCA, which sought to quash the tender floated by Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited and consequently restore the mobile unit catering licenses of the members of the petitioner with immediate effect on the same



terms and conditions as prior to Covid-19 situation and further permit the members of the petitioner-association to resume catering services in the mobile units.

According to the petitioner, its members were mobile caterers for the railways and they have been in business for the past several years. Their services were suspended by the railways due to the

lock down imposed by the government ever since March 2020. Till date, their services have not been restored, despite the fact that the other services of the Railways have been resumed. Without resuming their services, under the impugned tender, Railways have called for bids for catering services, which was arbitrary and illegal, the petitioner added.

The judge said senior counsel R.Thyagarajan, appearing for IRCTC submitted that the impugned tender pertains to special trains only and does not relate to regular trains, for whom, the petitioner-association represents. For this submission, senior counsel A.R.L.Sundaresan, appearing for the petitioner submitted that, if that be so, there was no necessity to stop the tender, as it was not affecting the peti-

tioner's interest. However, when other services of the Railways have been resumed, the railways have adopted a discriminatory attitude by not allowing the petitioner's services also to be resumed.

The judge said no prejudice will be caused to the railways, if the representation of the petitioner seeking for resumption of the services of their members, was considered by it on par with other services, after giving due consideration to the financial difficulties faced by the members of the petitioner during the period of lock down. Senior counsel R.Thyagarajan, on instructions, submitted that the railways were willing to consider the petitioner's representation, once the regular train services were resumed.







## SHORT TAKES

INDIA FLAYS  
OMAR SHEIKH'S  
RELEASE IN PAKDC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 28

India on Thursday termed the freeing of dreaded terrorist Omar Saeed Sheikh by the Pakistani Supreme Court as a "travesty of justice", adding that "this case truly demonstrates Pakistan's intent on taking action on the terror front". Sheikh was earlier convicted in Pakistan for the beheading of *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Daniel Pearl in 2002.

MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "I had mentioned earlier about the very low conviction rate in Pakistan when it comes to sentencing of terror accused. This case truly demonstrates Pakistan's intent on taking action on terror front. It is a travesty of justice not to find Omar Saeed guilty of any charges in this heinous act of terror. Our position on Pakistan taking sustained, verifiable, credible and irreversible action against terrorism and terrorist funding emanating from all territory under its control remain unchanged."

Sheikh was among the terrorists freed by India in December 1999, to secure the release of passengers on board the aircraft of erstwhile Indian Airlines that was hijacked by Pakistan-backed terrorists from the Kathmandu and finally taken to Kandahar.

INDIA RECORDS  
11,666 NEW  
COVID CASES

New Delhi, Jan. 28: India's Covid-19 tally of cases crossed 1.07 crore with 11,666 new Coronavirus infections being reported in a day, while the national recovery rate climbed to 96.94 per cent, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Thursday. The total infections have mounted to 1,07,01,193. The death toll increased to 1,53,847 with 123 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,03,73,606 pushing the national Covid-19 recovery rate to 96.94 percent. The Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.44 per cent. Active cases remained below 2 lakh for the ninth consecutive day.

There are 1,73,740 active Coronavirus infections in the country which comprises 1.62 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated.

India's tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

According to the ICMR, 19,43,38,773 samples have been tested up to January 27 with 7,25,653 samples being tested on Wednesday.

The 123 new fatalities include 32 from Maharashtra, 20 from Kerala, 10 from Punjab and 9 from Delhi.

UTTAR PRADESH  
WINS BEST R-DAY  
TABLEAU AWARD

New Delhi, Jan. 28: Uttar Pradesh's tableau at this year's Republic Day parade was adjudged the best and awarded by Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday, said the Defence Ministry.

In total 32 tableaux - 17 from state and union territories, nine from Union ministries, departments and paramilitary forces, and six from the Defence ministry - were part of this year's parade on Rajpath.

The theme of Uttar Pradesh's tableau was 'Ayodhya: Cultural Heritage of Uttar Pradesh'. The cultural heritage of Ayodhya, replica of a Ram temple, glimpse of 'Deepotsav' and various stories from Ramayana epic were depicted in the tableau.

"The tableau of Tripura was adjudged the second best. It depicted promotion of eco-friendly tradition for achieving self-reliance (*aatmanirbhar*) in socio-economic parameters," the Defence ministry's statement noted.

Uttarakhand's tableau on the theme 'Dev Bhoomi - The Land of the Gods' was adjudged third among the states and union territories. The tableau of CPWD bagged a special prize for paying tribute to the fallen heroes of the armed forces.

## Farmers agitation on UP NH ends

Protesters allege cops entered their tents, used force on sleeping farmers and chased them away

Baghpat (UP), Jan. 28: A farmers' protest against three farm laws of the Centre, which was continuing on a national highway in this Uttar Pradesh district since December 19 last year, has come to an end with the protesters alleging use of force by police.

The police, however, claimed that the matter was resolved through deliberations and the protesting farmers were sent home on Wednesday night.

The protesters have alleged that police personnel entered their tents late on Wednesday night, used force on the sleeping farmers and chased them away.

Thamba Chaudhary, Brijpal Singh, Baljaur Singh Arya, Vikram Singh and other farmers who took part in the protest on Thursday said their agitation against the farm laws was going on on one side of the national highway.

Late on Wednesday night, a large number of police personnel entered their tents, resorted to lathicharge on the sleeping farmers and chased them away, they told reporters.

Charging the police with adopting repressive measures, they claimed that their tents were uprooted. About 40 farmers were present at the spot at that time, they said.

Refuting the charges, Circle Officer Alok Singh said the protest ended after deliberations with the farmers and the police did not resort to lathicharge on the protesters.

Whatever happened was in agreement with those present there, he said, adding that the protesting farmers returned home peacefully.

Meanwhile, ADM Amit Kumar Singh said the Project Director of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), Sanjay Misra, had written a letter complaining that work on the Delhi-Saharanpur highway was being hampered because of some anarchic elements.

Acting on the letter, the protesters were removed from the national highway and sent home, the ADM said. The protest was launched on the national highway at Badaut on December 19 last year.

- PTI



Security personnel conduct a flag march at Ghazipur border during the ongoing farmers' agitation against Centre's farm reform laws in New Delhi on Thursday.

- PTI

## Left, Congress reach pact on 193 seats in WB polls

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, JAN. 28

The Congress and Left Front, which are fighting the coming West Bengal Assembly election in a alliance, have amicably finalised their seat-sharing formula in 193 out of 294 constituencies with a plan to resolve their part-

nership equation in the remaining 101 seats soon.

The two allies also decided to organise a joint mega rally on February 28 at the Brigade Parade Ground to put up a united face. They are in the process of inviting their central leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and Sitaram Yechury as key speakers at the

event, according to sources. Out of the 193 Assembly seats, the Congress will contest in 92, the Left will field its candidates from 101, said state Congress president and Berhampore MP Adhir Chowdhury at the state party headquarters after the talks between the two sides there on Thursday.

"Based on each other's co-ordination, we reached this level unanimously. It is a successful and fair step towards a poll alliance," he added. The list of 193 seats includes 77 seats which were sorted out by the two sides in their last round of meeting on January 25.

Going by the name and

number of the seats they had won in the 2016 Assembly election, the Congress and the Left decided to field their candidates in 44 and 33 constituencies respectively this time also.

In Thursday's meeting, the two partners shared 116 seats - 68 for the Left and 48 for the Congress-

among themselves, said Left Front chairman Biman Bose. "To unseat the ruling Trinamul Congress from power and beat the BJP, all are welcome to get accommodated to the alliance of Congress and Left," he added. A tight bargain is however expected between them in the next round of talks.

Boeing gets nod to  
sell F-15EX to IAFPAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 28:

Boeing said on Thursday that it has received a licence from the US government to offer its F-15EX fighter jet to the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Boeing also said that it will manufacture 6 Apache attack helicopters for the Indian Army in India itself at Tata Boeing Aerospace Limited facility in Hyderabad. The production will start this year.

The company expects more orders for Apache attack helicopters from the Indian Army given the situation in the neighbourhood and deterrent

values provided by these helicopter. Boeing completed the deliveries of all 22 AH-64E Apache helicopters to the Indian Air Force in 2020. IAF has deployed them in Ladakh and can be seen hovering in the sector.

Ankur Kanaglekar, director, India Fighters Lead, Boeing Defense, Space & Security said that earlier discussions on the F-15EX had taken place earlier between the two governments, including US Air Force and Indian Air Force.

"Now that we have the marketing licence it allows us to talk to the Indian Air Force directly," he said.

## Parliament Budget session starts today

New Delhi, Jan. 28: The crucial Budget session of Parliament is set for a stormy start with as many as 18 opposition parties announcing their decision to boycott the President's address to a joint sitting of both houses on Friday, in solidarity with the farmers agitating against the three contentious farm laws.

The session is also likely to witness acrimonious scenes, with the opposition all set to corner the government on issues like recession, job losses, handling of Covid crisis, LAC stand-off with China and the WhatsApp chat leaks of Arnab Goswami.

Alleging that the farm laws have been pushed by the BJP government without a national consensus,

the opposition parties announced their decision on Thursday to boycott the President's address, a move termed as "most unfortunate" by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi.

To seek the cooperation of various parties for the smooth functioning of the Budget session, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has convened a meeting of all political parties on Friday which is expected to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The session will begin with the President's address followed by the presentation of the Economic Survey.

The Union Budget will be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February

1. Both the houses will also debate on the Motion of thanks to the President's address after the budget presentation.

The session will be held in two parts - January 29 to February 15 and March 8 to April 8 and will have a total of 33 sittings.

With the session starting barely days after the national capital witnessed unprecedented violence on Republic Day during the farmers tractor parade, the issue is expected to echo in Parliament.

It is after almost six months that the Parliament will be convened, as the Winter session could not be held due to the Covid pandemic.

With a view to have a paperless Budget, all the documents and the

Economic Survey would be made available online soon after the authenticated copies are laid on the Table of the House.

This session will be held as per Covid-19 protocols, with Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha meeting in shifts of five hours each - with the upper house meeting from 9 am to 2 pm and the lower house from 3 PM to 8 PM.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha Adhir Chowdhury said in Kolkata that intelligence failure on the part of the Delhi Police was to blame for the chaos and violence at Red Fort on January 26.

He also cast doubt on the Centre's intention, stating that the Union government probably did not do much to avert violence as it "might have wanted to

take advantage of the situation".

Chowdhury said that the Delhi Police had given designated routes to the farmers to take out the tractor parade. "But the farmers took different routes and a section of them breached the Red Fort. Surely, it was due to intelligence failure on the part of Delhi Police and other agencies," he said.

Accusing the BJP of branding any and every issue raised against the saffron party as "anti-national", Pakistani or Khalistani", Chowdhury, further said, "At times I feel that the central government deliberately allowed this (January 26 incident) to happen to take advantage of the situation."

- PTI

## LEGAL | MATTERS

The trial court's punishment of six years was reduced to one year by HC

## Holding kid, fly open, not sexual assault: HC

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, JAN. 28

The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court, whose judgment on 'no offence under POCSO is made out if there was no skin-to-skin touch', in an another judgment passed earlier this month acquitted a man from provision of POCSO observing that holding a child's hand and unzipping pants do not fall under the POCSO Act.

The prosecution case is that on February 12, 2018 the mother of five-year-old lodged a complaint at Gadchiroli police station that when she returned from her duty, she noticed the accused was in her house and was holding

hands of her daughter. The complainant also noticed that the zip of the pant of the accused was open. She started shouting at the accused and soon her neighbours also gathered, but the accused ran away. Later, the victim told her that the accused had unzipped his pant and asked her to come to the bed to sleep.

The trial court convicted the accused under two different counts and sentenced him to suffer rigorous imprisonment for one year and five years, concurrently.

The accused challenged this judgement before the high court and Justice Pushpa Ganediwala decided the appeal on January

15, in which she held that, "The acts of 'holding the hands of the prosecutrix', or 'opened zip of the pant' as has been allegedly witnessed by PW-1 (the girl's mother), in the opinion of this court, does not fit in the definition of 'sexual assault'."

In a detailed judgement the judge said that the

accused is prosecuted for the charge of 'aggravated sexual assault'. As per the definition of 'sexual assault', a 'physical contact with sexual intent without penetration' is essential ingredient for the offence. The definition starts with the words - "Whoever 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....."

According to the judgment the words 'any other act' encompasses within itself, the nature of the acts which are similar to the acts which have been specifically mentioned in the definition on the premise of the principle of 'ejusdem generis (of the same kind)'. The act should be of the same nature or closure to that. Hence the judge said, "The acts of 'holding the hands of the prosecutrix', or 'opened zip of the pant' as has been allegedly wit-

nessed by PW-1, in the opinion of this Court, does not fit in the definition of 'sexual assault'."

"The minimum sentence for this offence is five years imprisonment. Considering the nature of the offence and the sentence prescribed, the aforesaid acts are not sufficient for fixing the criminal liability on the appellant/accused for the alleged offence of 'aggravated sexual assault'. At the most the minor offence punishable under Section 354-A(1)(i) of the IPC r/w Section 12 of the POCSO Act is proved against the appellant," the court held.

With the above observations, the court reduced his sentence to one year.

MODI TO VISIT  
BANGLADESHDC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 28

With Bangladesh celebrating 50 years of its existence this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will soon visit Bangladesh.

Both countries are also celebrating 50 years of establishment of diplomatic relations with each other this year.

The Indian armed forces' victory over Pakistan in the war in December 1971, had led to the liberation of the erstwhile East Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh.

"India and Bangladesh will be holding the next round of Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi on January 29," the MEA said.







DECCAN  
Chronicle  
29 JANUARY 2021

Budget: A challenge and an opportunity

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman would present her third Union Budget on Monday. In normal circumstances, it would have been an annual, monotonous and predictable affair that would have consisted mainly of a statement of the government's intent and allocation of money for different purposes. With consumption tax going out of the Central government's jurisdiction after the rollout of the Good and Services Tax, the Budget speech had lost even the power to influence prices — a fear factor that had made the Union Budget so special and frightening.

This year's Budget, however, could be special, especially in the wake of Covid-induced economic catastrophe in the country. There is a hope among people and businesspersons that the government — the country's biggest consumer — would come out in support of the economy. The country needs a path-breaking Budget to bring back the tottering economy on the growth track and revive investor confidence in the country.

While the Covid pandemic offers a great opportunity for the finance minister to reset the economy and administer bitter medicine for its health, it also increases expectations that could be difficult to fulfil. For example, people belonging to the middle class want lower income-tax outgo, companies want tax concessions, and farmers want freebies. In a nutshell, everybody wants to pay less or nothing. Therefore, instead of opting for a welfare budget, the finance minister should support sectors such as infrastructure and construction that could have a greater and faster positive effect on reviving the economy. She could also try to put more money in the hands of the people who could use it for consumption. A few thousands of rupees more in the pockets of a middle-class family would invariably boost retail sales.

The next issue is how does the minister raise money for boosting the economy. As tax collection could be a tad lower than normal, the government appears to be ready to go easy on borrowing more money. The minister, however, should exhaust all options before going on a borrowing spree. The Central government owns hundreds of companies, which have been undervalued because of their poor performance and bureaucratic interference. Navratna companies like Coal India, NMDC, Sail and Bhel among others could see a great appreciation in value if the government followed the model of the joint venture between Maruti Udyog Limited and Suzuki Motors by letting private partners run the company. The government could also consider exiting all public sector banks, which will unburden taxpayers and bring in new capital and employment. The State Bank of India and Postal Bank with a vast pan-India network could be used for government schemes and welfare purposes.

In history, very few people get an opportunity to prove their mettle. This Budget could become a Manmohan Singh moment for Ms Sitharaman to script the second turnaround story for India. If the opportunity is lost, it would be a tragedy for her as well as the country.

Inconsequential homecoming?

There will be hype and hoopla, possibly a grand reception evoking a wide range of sentiments like excitement, anticipation and fear. Yes, it is V.K. Sasikala, who has been released from the Parappana Agrahara prison on completion of her four year prison term, who will be evoking all these and even more when she comes home to Chennai on her discharge from hospital. However, the common man wants to know if she can turn the politics of Tamil Nadu upside down. Indeed many find it intriguing as to how someone who has never ever run for any office, not even a panchayat ward councillor post, could invoke such extraordinary fear in the minds of the top honchos of the ruling AIADMK. Even in the party she had held the post of general secretary for a very brief insignificant period before being unceremoniously thrown out.

But when the party leaders crack down on an ordinary cadre in a district for putting out a wall poster welcoming Ms Sasikala, it only points to the fear that has gripped them. The inauguration of the mausoleum and the memorial for former chief minister J. Jayalalithaa in a jiffy is another pointer to the pervading fear. Even when Edappadi K. Palaniswami avers that he was made chief minister not by Sasikala, the fear is palpable.

It's an open secret that as the reigning confidant of the former party head and chief minister, Ms Sasikala was calling the shots in the party and the government and obviously there had been too many beneficiaries of her largesse and kind heartedness, who would have enjoyed power or made pelf. And not all of them would be as amnesiac as Mr Palaniswami. But even if hordes of avid loyalists and grateful souls rush in to welcome her, Ms Sasikala's say and stay in politics would depend solely on the will of the people, who would decide with their valuable votes.

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:  
**Chennai:** SP 3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Phones: (044) 22254747, 22254748  
**Coimbatore:** 77 Vivekananda Road, Rannagar, Coimbatore 641009. Phone: (0422) 2231255, 2231256  
**Hyderabad:** 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad 500 003. Phone: (040) 27803930-4. Fax: (040) 27805256.  
**Bengaluru:** 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Ft. Road, Koramangala, Bangalore-560095. Ph: 08043460500; Fax: 080-22960551/52/55  
**Visakhapatnam:** Survey No. 1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017. Phones: (0891) 2552333/2552334, Fax (0891) 2755285  
**Vijayawada:** No. C 3 & 4, Patnamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.). Phones: (0866) 2555284/ 2555287, Fax (0866) 2555234  
**Rajahmundry:** Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618  
**Anantapur:** Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904  
**Nellore:** Survey No. 527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/ 82, Telefax (0861) 2348580  
**Karimnagar:** Survey No. 1341, Vavilalaipally Colony, Jagitayala Road, Karimnagar 505 001. Phone: (0878) 2228908; Telefax (0878) 2220433  
**Kochi:** No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408  
**Kozhikode:** No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001 Fax : 0495 4019018  
**Thiruvananthapuram:** St Joseph Press Thycad post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/67, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. HSD-348/2006-088s

Subhani



Vaccine diplomacy is India's finest hour



Sreeram Chaulia

Foreign Pulse

Operation "Vaccine Maitri", which was launched earlier this month, is a milestone in the history of India's assistance to fellow developing countries. As millions of India-made Covid-19 vaccines, packed in boxes labelled with the uplifting Sanskrit verse *Save Santu Niramaya* (may all be free from disease), reach countries across South and Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America, India's stature as a Good Samaritan and a responsible power in the world is rising.

The most remarkable feature of India's mission to supply the much-sought-after doses to a pandemic-plagued world is its timing. Within days of approval from India's regulatory authorities and their foreign counterparts, the export of vaccines began in earnest. India's domestic vaccine rollout, which is a humungous task in itself due to the vast size of its territory and population, did not in any way delay its health rescue diplomacy towards countries near and far such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, the Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius, South Africa, Bahrain, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Brazil.

A friend acting speedily in a time of need is the best. Bhutan's Prime Minister Lotay Tshering articulated how important India's support at the present critical juncture was by saying: "It is of unimaginable value when precious commodities are shared even before meeting your own needs." Unlike some countries that imposed export bans on essential medicines, protective equipment and vaccines in order to attend solely to their own citizens' pressing needs, India has threaded the needle right since the coronavirus pan-

demic broke out to share whatever it could with less endowed nations.

The ethos driving "Vaccine Maitri" and the earlier export of Covid-19 treatment drugs and medical gear is summed up by external affairs minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar's formulation that "we are more nationalistic, but at the same time we don't see a tension between being nationalistic and being international".

Guided by the holistic philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family), India is extending a helping hand to others with the conviction that if sickness prevails in any corner of the world, then Indians themselves remain vulnerable. In today's interconnected world, the well-being of 1.3 billion Indians cannot be isolated from that of the remaining 6.3 billion inhabitants of the planet.

With many recipient countries getting Indian vaccines either free of cost or minimally priced at actual production cost, and India also training medical personnel in some nations to administer the vaccines, the global public goods India is supplying are truly invaluable. "Vaccine Maitri" is India's reputation-enhancing initiative, not a money-making enterprise or a bargaining chip to extract concessions and impose conditions. Unlike China, which has explicitly demanded diplomatic, geopolitical and economic quid pro quos for its masks, gowns and vaccines, India is not expecting anything material in return.

That is why the gushing gratitude from the recipients towards India is so genuine and quoteworthy. Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro tweeted an image captioned "*Dhanyavaad Bharat*" and "*Obrigado India*", depicting the epic hero Hanuman carrying

vaccines by air, all the way from India. The analogy was to Hanuman bringing the lifesaving Sanjeevani medicinal herb by lifting an entire mountain with his superhuman power and flying from the Himalayas to the battlefield in what is considered to be present-day Sri Lanka.

For Brazil, one of the worst sufferers from Covid-19, the Indian vaccines mean a lot because of its tortuous experience with Chinese vaccines. Mr Bolsonaro's political rival, João Doria, governor of São Paulo state, had bypassed the federal government and banked heavily on Chinese vaccines. In the end, for all the propaganda and hype whipped up by China about its Covid-19 vaccines, clinical trials in Brazil found their efficacy to be barely 50 per cent. India-made vaccines, both indigenously researched ones as well as foreign-contracted ones, are more reliable.

India has a huge comparative advantage in terms of credibility and capability of development and manufacturing of vaccines. Like space exploration, commercial satellite launches and information technology-enabled services, this is a niche scientific area where India is way ahead of many countries, even richer ones. Extensive manufacturing contracts and partnerships with Western pharmaceutical companies, such as Britain's AstraZeneca, give Indian firms a distinct edge over their Chinese and Russian competitors.

India's vaccine diplomacy rests on this qualitative and quantitative leverage. It does not take a lot of persuasion or salesmanship by New Delhi for countries to ask for Indian vaccines because their track record is proven, given the multi-

To argue that India rose to the occasion and is winning the hearts and minds of the world is not a public relations claim but an internationally recognised reality

ple dozens of Indian vaccines which have previously been pre-approved by the WHO. While China beats India overall in manufacturing, in this particular sector, one must place on record that China's top vaccine maker Shenzhen Kangtai can't hold a candle to India's Serum Institute in Pune in churning out billions of doses per annum.

With China ending 2020 as the only major economy eking out a positive economic growth rate, some have adjudged it as the big winner riding out the storm of a global pandemic that China itself had spawned. But given its plummeting soft power resulting from hegemonic overreach, as evident from public opinion surveys, and the cloud hanging over Chinese vaccines owing to their safety and debt trap risks, it is obvious that others have to step up and show leadership in a world reeling from the pandemic.

To argue that India rose to the occasion and is winning the hearts and minds of the world is not a public relations claim but an internationally recognised reality. It bears reiteration here that India's altruism does have concrete goals and objectives. The goodwill being accumulated from India's vaccine diplomacy is expected to yield longer-term benefits of increased bilateral and regional trust and faith, which is why New Delhi prioritised neighbouring nations to be the initial beneficiaries.

Vaccine Maitri's scale, speed and positive reception in country after country mark India's finest hour as a net provider of international security. Playing to one's strengths and maximising potential gains from them in the global arena have been cardinal principles of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy. Critics who instinctively pounce on him for all acts of omission and commission should tip their hats for a job well done and well planned.

The writer is a professor and dean at the Jindal School of International Affairs

LETTERS

DON'T BLAME GOVT

Though many attempts are made to cover up the treachery and conspiracy of the pro-Khalistan elements to vitiate and subvert the happy and solemn atmosphere of the Republic Day, many English TV channels have come out with concrete documentary evidence against them for planning to create chaos and confusion. The unbridled ferocity and uncontrolled anger found on the faces of the participants of the tractor rally both against bystanders and the Delhi police on TV are a clear proof of the evil design and objective of the participants of the tractor rally. There is no point in blaming the Government if the law takes its own course to deal with persons devoid of loyalty to the nation and its integrity. Truth of the intention of the "farmers" of Punjab have now been exposed.

V. Girijalakshmi, Coimbatore

VACCINE DRIVE

It is with reference to the news, 580 persons report adverse effects after vaccination. When the BCG, cholera and smallpox vaccines are administered, they cause fever, headache and fatigue to many infants and adults even today. We trust the government and the doctors who administer the vaccine. The same seems to be happening with the Covid vaccine as well. This can be taken as a sign that immunity is being developed in the body. The individual should be just fine in a couple of days. Moreover people across the globe now use penicillin to treat infections and diseases though less than one percent people are dangerously allergic to penicillin.

P. Victor Selvaraj, Palayamkottai

Anand K. Sahay  
Far & Near



Can Rahul or anyone salvage Congress, or will it break?

Sonia Gandhi is in frail health. She had to leave New Delhi for a while on medical advice in order to escape the winter pollution. Is there a vacancy at the top that can be filled in orderly fashion and even routine party functioning restored, or will the old firm break? India's founding party may just be at that sort of moment.

Should the Congress break, it is unlikely to become two as in 1969, and then again become one under a decisive leader. There is no such leader on the horizon. It will therefore likely become several regional entities, and then probably scatter like the Janata Party, which had some big names in it but no stalwart with mass, nationwide, appeal.

Mrs Gandhi had pulled a rabbit out of the hat when she produced two UPA governments at the Centre on the trot through sheer political sagacity, coalition-building prowess, and light-touch political management. This reprieve for the Congress was gained in 2004 in the face of sheer adversity and was the more remarkable for that.

The circumstances then were not propitious. The BJP had come into its own and formed governments at

the Centre under a well-liked figure. In contrast, the Congress had haemorrhaged. Key party leaders — Sharad Pawar and Mamata Banerjee — had split away in the late 1990s, with Ms Banerjee even joining the BJP-led NDA alliance for a while and Mr Pawar doing tactical manoeuvres with the BJP as per his convenience, although he would later join the UPA government.

While Mrs Gandhi's shepherding of her party in such circumstances is the stuff of folklore, it is now equally plain that in those years of wielding power (2004-14) the Congress leadership did little to ground the party organisation and nurture it, although it was clear that a cadre and ideology-based national party — so far on the fringes — had already emerged as an alternative.

The Congress had little to offer to counter the ideological propaganda of the RSS-BJP. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government had delivered a sustained average rate of economic growth of nearly eight per cent per annum over a 10-year period. The Congress gullibly thought this would be enough to see it through in the elections.

This was a gross underestimation

of the power of industrial-scale communal propaganda, aided by a hostile media which, effectively, acted as a force-multiplier. The media's stance was an indication that India's big business was far from pleased with the Manmohan-Sonia government. The reason was that the government had gone well outside the prism of a hundred-per-cent-market focus to extend benefits to poorer communities. This was too much for the corrupt, self-serving, elite.

At the same time, the small and medium companies and the urban middle classes and the rural communities — the very sections for whom Congress rule had been benign — became hostage to the continuous stream of a vicious, communal, mind-bending, propaganda onslaught. These in fact participated, happily, in preparing the ground for the mythical hero to arrive — one who will slay every demon.

The Congress comprehensively failed to meet the challenge of majoritarian right-wing elements because it had frittered away the thought-and-action system nurtured by Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhash Chandra Bose, Maulana

Azad and countless fearless men and women who gave their lives for an ideal that would necessarily unify India, rather than divide it, or cater only to particular sections of it.

Rajiv Gandhi downwards, the Congress projected itself merely as a party of governance — and not one that united the people on the basis of effective policies, effectively communicated.

This is fundamentally why it permitted itself, in slow stages, to overlook the importance of having a worthwhile party organisation. Even when a party has an active ideological ingredient, it is of no use when there is no organisation to back it, and to disseminate it. And the Congress, for long, has become a party which, in the main, has left its ideology on a museum shelf. It also lacks an organisation.

Ideology and organisation are indeed inextricably bound. There is some irony in the fact that prominent Congress dissidents — who go under the rubric of G-23 — rightly underline a democratically elected organisation but do not even mention ideology. That is a fool's errand.

Once the Congress' demise is guaranteed, how long many of the so-

called secular regional parties, or those on the Left, survive is also a matter of conjecture. Historically, these are — in the main — a derivative of the wider "Congress system" that Rajni Kothari spoke of, although each emphasised specific concerns (some caste, some class) and arose in opposition to the Congress.

This question needs to be considered in the face of entrenchment in power of a far-right, chauvinist, cadre-based, party whose priority is to mobilise the resources, agencies, departments and all institutions of the State — including the uniformed forces and the judiciary — to obliterate other political parties, big or small. The Constitution of India can then simply be dispatched to a dusty corner of the archives.

Rahul Gandhi, an honourable and intelligent man, had resigned as party president on a point of principle. He supports democratic elections from top to bottom. He must be permitted to have his way. Among the contemporary generation, he alone displays an ideological will. Let him provide that ballast to his party and not be distracted by the burden of dynasty.



## quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	46874.36 -1.13
Nifty 50	13817.50 -1.07
S&P 500*	3,817.04 1.77
Dollar (₹)	73.04 -0.16
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.82 0.32
Euro (₹)	88.42 -0.03
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,183▼109 0.22
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.70 -0.20
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.933 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.048 0.034

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## US economy shrinks 3.5% in 2020

The US economy grew at a 4 per cent annual rate in the final three months of 2020 and shrank last year by the largest amount in 74 years. For 2020 as a whole, the economy contracted 3.5 per cent and clouded the outlook for the coming year. The Commerce Department estimated that the US GDP slowed sharply in the October-December quarter from a record 33.4 per cent surge in the July-September quarter.

## Swaminathan, Tewari take over as SBI MDs



State Bank of India said Swaminathan J. and Ashwini Kumar Tewari have taken charge as managing directors. They would be holding this position for up to three years, the lender said in a release. Before this, Swaminathan was the deputy managing director (finance) at the bank. Tewari served SBI Card as MD&CEO before he was appointed as an MD of the bank. SBI chairman Dinesh Khara is assisted by four MDs.

## IDBI Bank posts Q3 net of ₹378 cr as NII grows

LIC-owned IDBI Bank reported a standalone net profit of Rs 378 crore for December quarter 2020-21 on the back of healthy growth in interest income. The lender, which is under the RBI's prompt corrective action (PCA) since May 2017, had reported a standalone net loss of Rs 5,763 crore in the year-ago quarter. On a consolidated basis, its PAT stood at Rs 393.15 crore versus a loss of Rs 5,728.70 crore last year.

## Laurus Labs Q3 net jumps nearly 4-fold to ₹273 cr

Drug firm Laurus Labs reported a nearly 4-fold jump in its consolidated net profit to Rs 272.85 crore for the December quarter against Rs 73.47 crore in the year-ago quarter. Consolidated revenue from operations stood at Rs 1,288.42 crore against Rs 729.59 crore. "Our consolidated revenue for the quarter increased by 76 per cent driven by growth in all the divisions," founder and CEO Satyanarayana Chava said.



## Demand contracts 35 per cent in 2020 Gold demand dips to lowest in 25 yrs

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JAN. 28

Despite the recovery made in the December quarter, gold demand contracted 35 per cent in 2020 to the lowest level in 25 years.

The gold demand for the full-year 2020 was 446.4 tonnes compared to 690.4 tonnes in 2019—a decline of 35 per cent, according to data from the World Gold Council. This was the lowest demand since 1995.

The year 1995 had seen one of the lowest yearly demand of 462 tonnes since the World Gold Council has been recording annual gold demand.

"India's gold demand dropped by over a third in 2020, settling at 446.4 tonnes, on the back of Covid-induced lockdowns and lifetime high prices. However, the drop was significantly lower when viewed in value terms, 14 per cent lower than 2019 as prices were up 34 per cent, hovering around Rs 50,000 per 10 gm for most part of the year," said Somasundaram P.R., managing director, India, World Gold Council.

Jewellery demand fell 42 per cent to 315.9 tonnes and investment demand fell by 11 per cent to 130.4 tonnes in 2020.

In the first three quarters of 2020, gold demand stood at 252 tonnes, which was 49 per cent down from 496 tonnes in the same period last year. In the fourth quarter of festivals, however, demand



**India's gold demand dropped by over a third in 2020, settling at 446.4 tonnes, on the back of Covid-induced lockdowns and lifetime high prices. However, the drop was significantly lower when viewed in value terms, 14 per cent lower than 2019 as prices were up 34 per cent, hovering around Rs 50,000 per 10 gm for most part of the year"**

—Somasundaram P.R.  
MD, India, World Gold Council

was just 4 per cent down at 186.2 tonnes compared to 194.3 tonnes in the same quarter of 2019.

While jewellery demand was down by just 8 per cent at 137.3 tonnes, investment demand was up by 8 per cent at 48.9 tonnes against 45.3 tonnes in Q4 of 2019.

"The demand for bars and coins had gone up not just during the auspicious occasions but even otherwise," said Somasundaram.

Import of official gold was down 46 per cent in 2020 and the restrictions on international travel due to the pandemic also saw the grey market sup-

ply shrinking by one-fourth of last year's 115 tonnes.

Closure of stores and retail establishments also saw the quantum of recycled gold coming down to 95.5 tonnes compared to 119.5 tonnes in 2019.

Globally, annual demand was 14 per cent down to 3,759.6 tonnes and 2020 saw the demand falling below 4000 tonnes for the first time since 2009.

The largest gold consumer, China, saw the demand shrinking by 28 per cent. However, Germany's investment demand grew in 2020, replacing India from the second slot.

## Indias small investors rush to join GameStop frenzy

ABHIRUP ROY  
MUMBAI, JAN. 28

India's small investors are snapping up shares of US retail investor favourite GameStop Corp, making the video game retailer the most traded stock on some Indian brokerages after anonymous social media posts fuelled a frenzied rally.

Shares of GameStop have surged 1,700 per cent since January 12 as amateur US investors, monitoring social media comments, have piled in and forced professional short-sellers to abandon their positions with heavy losses.

This week, GameStop accounted for 19% of the trades on Vested Finance, an Indian investment firm that helps Indians buy or sell U.S. stocks, and 15% of the trades on its rival Stockal, making it the most traded stock on both platforms.

"It's quite surprising to see Indian investors jumping on the GameStop bandwagon," Stockal co-founder Sitashwa Srivastava told Reuters.

"This shows a marked shift in investor behaviour from just using U.S.



stocks to diversify their portfolios to rushing after a rally based on social media discussions. It could be reckless but it works for some."

Despite India's highly restrictive cross-border investment rules, Indians have been placing big bets on U.S. equities this year as American stocks recovered quicker than markets in India from a crash sparked by the coronavirus pandemic.

Indian investors venturing into U.S. stocks usually prefer top global companies such as Apple, Amazon, Facebook and Tesla as they look to diversify their holdings in India. —Reuters

## TIM COOK: INDIA BIZ DOUBLED, FEEL GOOD ABOUT TRAJECTORY

YOSHITA SINGH  
NEW YORK/NEW DELHI, JAN. 28

Apple has doubled its business in India in the December quarter on the back of strong performance of its online store, and the tech giant sees a good growth trajectory going ahead, its CEO Tim Cook said.

The Cupertino-based tech giant posted an all-time record revenue of \$111.4 billion globally for the first quarter ended December 26, 2020, up 21 per cent year-on-year.

International sales accounted for 64 per cent of the quarter's revenue.

"... If you take India as an example, we doubled our business last quarter compared to the year-ago quarter. But our absolute level of business there is still quite low relative to the size of the opportunity," Cook said during an analyst call.

The company, which competes with players like Samsung and OnePlus in the premium smartphone segment, has been aggressively ramping up its presence in the Indian market. —PTI

## Walmart Connect eyes top 10 ranking in 5 years

## Walmart aims to be advertising titan

THOMAS BUCKLEY  
JAN. 28

Walmart Inc plans to ramp up growth in its digital media business as the world's largest retailer seeks to become a top-ten advertising platform in the US within five years.

The media group, which will be renamed Walmart Connect, will offer targeted ads on e-commerce platforms such as Walmart.com and the Walmart app to shoppers as they're purchasing in real time, the company said on Thursday in a statement. Walmart will also allow brands to advertise on almost 170,000 digital screens at



self-checkout kiosks and on TV walls in more than 4,500 stores.

With a major brick-and-mortar footprint tied to a growing e-commerce business, Walmart is trying to position itself as a premier destination for companies to advertise

wherever—and however—a customer chooses to shop. "We've built a substantial business that can serve clients in a way no one else can," chief customer officer Janey Whiteside said in the statement.

Walmart Connect is

## Sundaram AMC buys Principal AMC

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, JAN. 28

Sundaram Asset Management Company, a 100 per cent subsidiary of Sundaram Finance, announced the purchase of the asset management businesses of Principal Asset Management.

Sundaram will acquire the schemes managed by Principal Asset Management, besides buying 100 per cent share capital of Principal Asset Management, Principal Trustee Company, and Principal Retirement Advisors, said a release issued by Sundaram AMC.

"The transaction is subject to the receipt of necessary regulatory approvals and Sebi prescribed processes, and Principal will continue to operate the businesses until the deal is closed," the release added.

Sundaram is a significant player in the fund management space with a 25-year track record.

Principal Asset Management has assets under management of Rs 7,447 crores as on December 31, 2020, with about 90 per cent of this in equity-oriented schemes.

Commenting on the acquisition, Sunil Subramaniam, managing director, Sundaram AMC said, "This transaction will strengthen our presence in the marketplace with the addition of a range of schemes with a good long-term performance track record."

## Maruti Suzuki net rises 24% on higher sales

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, JAN. 28

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest car maker, on Thursday posted a 24.1 per cent year-on-year rise in the December quarter standalone net profit at Rs 1,941.4 crore, thanks to higher festive sales and preference for personal mobility amid the pandemic that raised the demand for its small cars.

In the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year, Maruti Suzuki's net profit stood at Rs 1,564.8 crore.

The maker of popular models like Swift and Vitara Brezza reported a 13.3 per cent YoY rise in revenue at Rs 23,457.8 crore against Rs 20,706.8 crore in Q3FY20.

The revenue numbers



were slightly below the market expectations. A CNBC-TV18 poll had estimated the revenue numbers to the tune of Rs 23,655 crore.

The company's earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation, or Ebitda, grew 5.9 per cent YoY to Rs 2,226 crore against Rs 2,102 crore in the correspon-

ding quarter last year.

The Ebitda margin for the quarter stood at 9.5 per cent against 10.1 per cent a year ago.

Maruti Suzuki said its operating income rose on higher sales volume, cost cuts and lower sales promotion. But the increase was partially offset by an increase in commodity prices and adverse foreign exchange movement.

The company sold a total of 4.95 lakh vehicles during the December quarter, higher by 13.4 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year.

Sales in the domestic market stood at 4.67 lakh units, growing by 13 per cent. Exports stood at 28,528 units, higher by 20.6 per cent.

## Airtel says it has 5G ready network

FC BUREAU  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

Bharti Airtel on Thursday said its telecom network is now 5G ready after it has demonstrated live fifth-generation (5G) service over an existing commercial network in Hyderabad.

"Today, we have conclusively demonstrated that as far as Airtel is concerned, we are 5G ready," Bharti Airtel MD and CEO Gopal Vittal said at a virtual conference.

He said the company had seamlessly operated 5G and 4G concurrently within 1800 MHz spectrum



using dynamic spectrum sharing in Hyderabad.

"Every single part of our network is now fully 5G ready...and can use any spectrum band to click on 5G experience in a matter of months," Vittal said.

The 5G service offers ultra high-speed internet, which allowed users during a demo run in

Hyderabad to download a movie in a few seconds.

The latest demonstration underscores the company's technology capabilities for the 5G roll-out whenever adequate spectrum is made available.

"Even on existing bands of spectrum, 5G can be turned on but the full power of the experience will be felt only when the adequate spectrum is available from the government... The moment we receive government approvals and we have the right spectrum bands in adequate quantities, we will be able to roll this out, immediately," he said.

## Realtors seek tax sops, industry & infra status

New Delhi, Jan. 28: Real estate developers expect the government to provide infrastructure status for the sector, increase the corpus of Rs 25,000-crore stress fund, and more tax sops for both homebuyers and builders in the upcoming Budget to boost property demand.

They also hope for single-window clearance for projects, measures to boost liquidity, reduction in the GST rates and availability of input tax credit on the GST paid in the Budget 2021-22, which will be presented on February 1.

"We sincerely hope that Budget 2021 brings some much-needed relief to homebuyers as well as developers," Tata Realty and Infrastructure MD & CEO Sanjay Dutt said.

As the sector's growth relies heavily on the upcoming financial amendments, he said the government should grant industry status to the real estate sector and a single-window clearance mechanism for faster completion of projects.

"One GST, one or no



stamp duty regime and reduction in registration charges across states are some of the other recommendations which will make a significant difference to the cost of a project and will definitely encourage home buyers to invest," Dutt said.

Anshuman Magazine, chairman and CEO (India, South East Asia, Middle East and Africa) of CBRE, said, "Budget 2021 could go a long way towards meeting this goal by way of introducing tax reforms such as enhancing the principal deduction limit on home loans under Section 80C of the IT Act, 1961; lowering the long-term gains tax for sale of house property;

and rationalising the GST for under-construction properties."

The government could also consider increasing the corpus of Rs 25,000-crore Swahim fund, Magazine said.

M u m b a i - b a s e d Kalpataru Ltd MD Parag Munot said the measures such as raising the income tax deduction ceiling on home loan interest, input tax credit on GST, and expanding the ambit of affordable housing to properties up to Rs 1 crore in Super Tier 1 cities such as Mumbai and Delhi, will significantly incentivise buying. "It would give the sector a much-needed boost and accelerate the mission to provide housing for all by 2022."

Salarpuria Sattva MD Bijay Agarwal demanded the industry status to the real estate sector and a single-window clearance system.

PropTiger and Housing.com CEO Dhruv Agarwala said the liquidity crunch being faced by the sector needs to be resolved and the subvention scheme reintroduced in the Budget. —PTI

## INDIGO REPORTS FOURTH STRAIGHT QUARTERLY LOSS, REVENUE HALVES



Bengaluru, Jan. 28: Interglobe Aviation Ltd, which runs India's biggest airline IndiGo, reported its fourth straight quarterly loss on Thursday as the Covid-19 pandemic kept air travel well below normal levels.

Its loss in the December quarter was smaller than in the previous two quarters, when the health crisis had brought global air travel to a halt, but the company's revenue halved from a year earlier, signalling that a full recovery was still far away.

The festive season in October and November saw more air travel, and domestic traffic has now recovered to about 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, mitigating some of Interglobe's losses during the quarter.

IndiGo also benefited from lower fuel costs, which plunged nearly 66 per cent year-over-year.

"The low level of international capacity continues to remain a major concern for us and continues to hurt our financials," CEO Ronjoy Dutta said on a conference call with analysts.

IndiGo expects to reach 50 per cent of its pre-pandemic international capacity only by mid-2022, and 100 per cent by end-2022, Dutta said.

"We'd like to hit the seasonally strong first quarter next year with all cylinders running, and at full capacity, at least domestically," he added.

IndiGo said it expects current-quarter average seat kilometers—a measure of passenger-carrying capacity—to be 75-80 per cent of the capacity of the same period last year.

The New Delhi-based airline's daily average cash burn had halved to Rs 15 crore in the quarter from June-quarter levels.

—Reuters



## RENAULT UNVEILS KIGER SUV, LAUNCH IN Q1

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, JAN. 28

French car giant Renault on Thursday made a global unveil of its much-awaited Renault Kiger, a subcompact SUV, in India in the production form, ahead of its launch in the Q1 this year when its price would be revealed.

Auto experts said it could be aggressively priced at Rs 5.5 lakh to Rs 9.5 lakh to take on competition.

The sporty Renault Kiger will be first sold in India followed by other global markets.

The car maker, which sells Duster and Kwid models, revealed its SUV's specifications, the features available in top-spec form, the design, its interiors and the engine and gearbox options on offer.

The Kiger is powered by the 72HP, naturally aspirated petrol and 100HP, 1.0-litre turbo-petrol engine.



## SHORT TAKES

## Ronaldo breaks Covid rules?

**Rome:** Cristiano Ronaldo broke coronavirus travel restrictions with a trip to a mountain resort, according to media reports Thursday. Juventus striker Ronaldo allegedly travelled to Courmayeur, 150 kilometres north-west of the Serie A club's Turin headquarters, for his girlfriend Georgina Rodriguez' birthday.

Rodriguez, who turned 27 on Wednesday, apparently posted a video of the couple on a snowmobile on Instagram. She later removed it, but it was picked up by several Italian news sites.

The *Gazzetta dello Sport* newspaper said Ronaldo and Rodriguez spent Tuesday night in a hotel and took a ride in the snow the next morning, before returning to Turin. Under current Italian coronavirus rules, the couple should not have left the town of Turin. They each risk a fine of \$485. — *AFP*

## Virus hits Olympic test competition

**Tokyo:** The first Tokyo Olympics test event of 2021 has been postponed because of travel restrictions under Japan's coronavirus state of emergency, organisers confirmed on Thursday. The artistic swimming event will double as the sport's final qualifier for the virus-postponed Games. It was due to be held on March 4-7 in Tokyo but will now take place two months later.

Tokyo 2020 organisers said a decision to delay it had been taken for reasons including "ensuring the fairest possible conditions for athletes to participate" and ongoing entry restrictions in Japan. The qualifier has now been rescheduled for May 1-4 at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre. — *AFP*

## Oly uncertainty hurting athletes

**Geneva:** IOC president Thomas Bach hit back at the continuing speculation about whether the Tokyo Olympics may be cancelled or postponed again, saying that such talk is damaging for the thousands of athletes preparing to take part this year.

The International Olympic Committee and organisers in Japan have repeatedly insisted there is no Plan B for the Tokyo Games, which were already postponed by one year during the coronavirus pandemic. Last week, Japan's government quickly and firmly dismissed a report that it had concluded the games would have been canceled. However, talk about whether the games can go ahead refuses to go away. "All these speculations are hurting the athletes in their preparations," Bach said after a monthly meeting of the IOC executive board. — *AP*

## 76ers hand Lakers first road defeat

**Los Angeles:** Tobias Harris drove in the final dagger as the Philadelphia 76ers thwarted a late Los Angeles Lakers rally to hand the reigning NBA champions their first road defeat of the season — 107-106. Sixers made a statement against the league-leading Lakers.

## Live on TV

## BADMINTON

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

## CRICKET

**Pakistan vs South Africa:** First Test, Day 4 from 10.30 am on Sony Ten 2

**Big Bash League:** Eliminator from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

**Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament:** Semifinal — Tamil Nadu vs Rajasthan from 11.55 am; Punjab vs Baroda from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

## FOOTBALL

**Italian League:** Torino vs Fiorentina from 1.15 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

## WWE

**SmackDown:** Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

Regd. No.  
TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by  
**K. Sudhakar** on behalf of  
Deccan Chronicle Holdings  
Limited and Printed at  
Deccan Chronicle Press situated at  
No 2/22, Sengalpallayam Road,  
N.G.G.O Colony Post,  
Kurudampalayam Village,  
Coimbatore - 641 022. RNI  
Registration No: TNENG/2010/35692  
Ph No : 2231252, 253, 255, 257 & 358  
Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**

Burns eyes Rory return  
England opener joins team after paternity break

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR  
CHENNAI, JAN. 28

When England's Test cricketers were preparing for their subcontinental tour by training on worn surfaces at ECB's high performance centre in Loughborough, opener Rory Burns had other thoughts. Burns, who had spoken candidly about the effect of the bio-bubble environment in the summer, knew his most important preparation would be for the mental side of the game.

Burns, who has returned to the England Test squad after skipping the Sri Lanka tour for the birth of his first child, admitted that it was tough leaving his newborn daughter and wife back at home. "But, I'm ready to get back to work," said Burns who has scored 1,233 runs in 21 Tests.

The 30-year-old Epsom-born is also taking a short course in Psychology to fill the long hours in the bio-bubble.

"It's going to take quite a bit of my off-time. If I maintain a healthy head-space, I can focus well on my cricket. The break (paternity) helped me freshen up.

"The time that my child was giving me, I saw more of the India-Australia series than our series against Sri Lanka. Because I was getting up and doing my own training back home," he said.

On his maiden India tour, Burns is hoping to train with his teammates Jofra Archer and Ben Stokes for the first time in Chennai on Sunday. The rest of the squad who arrived on Wednesday from Colombo will commence their training only on Tuesday.

"It is obviously a challenge, we can't do much about the schedule. If you waste time thinking about that, it won't be any good to you. We have three days to put in the



Rory Burns. — *Instagram*

work and try to get used to the conditions here. Then it's a mental switch. I guess that's the challenge and I have been around for a while now so I have some experience to draw from," said Burns.

The Surrey cricketer, however, doesn't expect the wickets in India to turn straight away.

"I think we will get good cricket wickets that will spin as the game goes on. I have drawn on various people's experience who I have worked with, they tend to suggest about India as opposed to Sri

Lanka which is slightly fast forward from the start with regards to spin. We are preparing in that respect," he said.

Burns said India's Jasprit Bumrah is a hard bowler to prepare for.

"He is obviously unique in terms of how he comes and bowls. It would just be about working those angles. I saw the recent series between India and Australia and they are in a pretty handy form, not necessarily their first playing XI at different points, but still, they managed to get over the

line, it is just going to be a big challenge in their own conditions, looking forward to it," added Burns.

India would be fielding their full-strength side with Virat Kohli back to bolster the batting line-up. Burns knows India are in pretty handy form. "India could not necessarily play their first eleven, but they still managed to get past Australia, which is testament to the side. They will be a big challenge in their conditions and they are No. 1 in the world," added the 30-year-old.

## Ganguly undergoes a second angioplasty

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, JAN. 28

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, admitted at Apollo Gleneagles Hospital, underwent another angioplasty, on Thursday afternoon, in which two more stents were implanted for the removal of blockages in the two other arteries of his heart.

The 48-year-old former Indian cricket team captain had received the first one in one of his three affected arteries at Woodlands Hospital after suffering a 'mild' heart attack on January 2.

The second angioplasty, which was then deferred by the doctors by two-three weeks, was planned after Sourav was examined by eminent cardiac surgeons — Dr Devi Shetty and Dr Ashwin Mehta — during

the day. The private hospital stated, "Dr Aftab Khan and the team comprising Dr Ashwin Mehta, Dr Devi Shetty, Dr Ajit Desai, Dr Saroj Mondal and Dr Saptarshi Basu successfully performed angioplasty on Mr Sourav Ganguly."

It added, "Two stents were placed. The procedure was uneventful. Mr Ganguly is stable and

under close observation."

One of the doctors said the angioplasty took an hour. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee visited Sourav in the evening.

"Sourav received two stent implantation. The operation was successful. He is stable and doing well. He also spoke to me. I wish him all the best and congratulate the doctors also," she said later.

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar tweeted, "Got an update on health of @SGanguly99 Sourav Ganguly, President Board of Control for Cricket in India @BCCI under treatment in Kolkata. As per doctors and family members his condition is fine."

Sourav is likely to be released from the hospital after some days.

## TEST SERIES TV RIGHTS STILL UNDECIDED

**London, Jan. 28:** The television rights in the UK for England's tour of India remain undecided with just a week left for the series-opener in Chennai from February 5.

*Telegraph Sport* reported that *Star India*, the host broadcaster of the series, was considering showing the tour via its streaming app Hotstar instead of selling it to a conventional broadcaster like *Sky*.

"But India's win in Australia and good audience figures on *Sky* for England's recent series in Sri Lanka, has increased the market for the rights with even *Channel 4* showing an interest," claimed the report.

The rights, worth around £20 million, are expected to be awarded soon for the four-Test series, which is part of the World Test Championship.

*Sky* remains the front-runner to secure them, having shown most of England's tours over the past three decades, the report stated.

The England squad flew into Chennai on Wednesday from Sri Lanka, where they trounced the hosts 2-0. Both England and India players are in the middle of a six-day quarantine.

The first two Tests will be played in Chennai and the final two, including a day-nighter, in Ahmedabad, followed by five T20s at the same venue and three ODIs in Pune.

With most of the people working from home in the UK due to Covid-19 induced lockdown, the Tests are expected to attract record viewership. — *PTI*

## YASIR STRIKES LATE TO PUT PAK IN CHARGE

**Karachi, Jan. 28:** Pakistan's spinners Yasir Shah and Nauman Ali grabbed three wickets in the space of ten runs to halt South Africa's fight-back on the third day of the first Test here.

When it looked like South Africa would end the day at parity after wiping out Pakistan's big 158-run first innings lead, Yasir struck twice and Nauman once to leave the tourists on 187-4 at close.

Nightwatchman Keshav Maharaj was unbeaten on two and skipper Quinton de Kock was yet to score, as South Africa now lead by 29 runs with six second innings wickets in hand.

Earlier, hosts scored 378 to take a crucial lead over South Africa's first innings total of 220.

— *AFP*  
**Brief scores: South Africa 220 & 187/4** (Markram 74, van der Dussen 64, Yasir 3/53) vs **Pakistan 378** (Fawad 109, Rabada 3/70, Maharaj 3/90).

## WORLD TOUR | FINALS

## Sindhu, Srikanth out of reckoning

**Bangkok, Jan. 28:** Indian shuttlers P. V. Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth were virtually out of contention for the knockout stage after losing their respective second round matches in the BWF World Tour Finals here on Thursday.

A week ago Sindhu had suffered a demoralising defeat to Ratchanok Intanon and there was no change of fate for the World Champion this time too as she went down 18-21, 13-21 to the third seeded Thai.

"It wasn't my day. Losing the first game made the difference. My timing was a bit off, so a bit disappointed," Sindhu said.

Srikanth enjoyed a 3-0 head-to-head count against Wang Tzu Wei ahead of his match but it mattered little as the Taiwanese world no 12 claimed a come-from-behind 19-21, 21-9, 21-19 win over the Indian.

"I have to figure out a way to pull out these close matches. I was dominating him for most part of third game," Srikanth said after losing yet another three-game contest.

"I think it's about match

practice, playing against top players continuously. We haven't played for a year, and before that I wasn't playing against top eight players continuously. I feel I'm almost there."

With only the top two players from each group making it to the semifinals, the twin defeat almost sealed the fate of the Indian duo in the tournament.

Earlier, Srikanth and Wang fought tooth and nail right from the start, moving together 5-5 to 9-9 before Srikanth managed to grab a slender 11-10 lead with a smash.

Srikanth opened up a significant 15-11 lead with Wang sending the shuttle wide twice.

Srikanth continued to dominate the rallies with his angled returns to reach 17-12.

Wang, however, narrowed it down to 18-19 with Srikanth committing few errors but the Indian managed to grab two game points with a smash. He lost one before converting the next with Wang making a poor judgement at the baseline. — *PTI*



Sheffield United's Oliver Burke (left) is congratulated by teammate Chris Basham after scoring against Manchester United in their English Premier League match at Old Trafford in Manchester on Wednesday. — *AP*

## Man United's title hopes suffer blow

**London, Jan. 28:** Manchester United's Premier League title hopes suffered a huge blow on Wednesday with a 2-1 defeat by bottom side Sheffield United as Chelsea started the Thomas Tuchel era with a goalless draw against Wolves.

The shock result at Old Trafford leaves Pep Guardiola's Manchester City a point clear at the top with a game in hand and looking increasingly hot favourites to win a third title in four years.

Elsewhere on a busy night of midweek action, Leicester drew 1-1 with Everton, Burnley beat Aston Villa 3-2 and Brighton drew 0-0 with Fulham.

## TUCHEL ERA

Earlier, former Paris Saint-Germain boss Tuchel took charge at Stamford Bridge against misfiring Wolves less than 24 hours after replacing the sacked Frank Lampard.

Chelsea struggled to

make an impression against Nuno Espirito Santo's men, whose form has nose-dived after forward Raul Jimenez fractured his skull in late November.

The home side dominated territory and possession, but created few clear-cut chances.

## MESSI BANG ON TARGET FOR BARCA

Lionel Messi marked his return from suspension with a goal in the Copa del Rey on Wednesday as Barcelona survived a scare against Rayo Vallecano to reach the quarter-finals.

With Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid already out, another upset looked on the cards when Fran Garcia gave Rayo a surprise lead at Vallecas early in the second half.

But Messi tapped in Antoine Griezmann's pass to equalise before turning creator, sending Jordi Alba through, with Frenkie de Jong at the back post to seal a 2-1 victory. — *AFP*

## Allrounder Kapil now drives on golf courses

MOSES KONDETY  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

India's greatest fast-bowling all-rounder Kapil Dev has a word of caution for new speed sensation Mohammed Siraj: Slow and steady wins the long race.

India's 1983 World Cup winning captain, who has never missed a match because of injury in his 131-Test career spanning 16 years between 1978 and 1994, is impressed by the exploits of the Hyderabad quick in the recent Test series in Australia but says the onus is now on the pacer to keep performing. "Siraj is a good bowler who has done extremely well but he has to go a long way," Kapil told this newspaper during his visit to Hyderabad on Thursday.

"He needs to carry on for at least five seasons. I get scared about the fast bowlers because they get injured very fast," Kapil quipped.

"So many of them have come

up in the last 10 years but have got injured — Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Ishant Sharma, Ashish Nehra are examples. It's tough yes, but you can overcome the difficulties if you are passionate about playing for the country," he added.

The 62-year-old lauded Team India that emerged on top Down Under. "They have done wonderfully well. I never ever expected a performance like that when more than half the side was injured... hats off!"

"Your captain, the most important player, is not there, and there are so many on the injury list and then you come back and play so well... I haven't seen better cricket than that in the 40 years that I have played and watched the game. The series win in Australia was definitively the cherry on the cake," Kapil continued to heap praise.

"After such a high in Australia, I hope and pray that they maintain the momentum in the upcoming home series



against England," Kapil added.

Asked if it was time for India to have separate captains for Tests, ODIs and T20s, Kapil was non-committal. "Let's leave that to the selectors and their collective wisdom. If one captain is overburdened, try and lessen his workload so that he is more relaxed. It's nice to see Ajinkya Rahane doing so unbelievably well in the absence of Virat

**It's the beautiful, serene surroundings that draw me to golf. Just imagine strolling and playing your strokes in a 150-acre garden. It's green all around. You feel the breeze, smell the grass and simply love nature. I wish my house was in the middle of a golf course. As long as the sun is up I can be out there.**

## — KAPIL DEV

India's World Cup winning cricket captain says he can play golf all day

Kohli. Then there were Rohit and Ashwin too as a back-up. So I would say we have enough players and experience to lead the side, thanks to IPL and domestic cricket," he said.

Who are his favourite cricketers? "They keep changing. When I was playing it was G. R. Vishwanath, then Sunil Gavaskar. Sachin (Tendulkar) was everyone's hero... mine was

Rahul Dravid. When the youngsters play so well, I like to look up to them. I never expected Washington Sundar to do so well in Australia. You feel proud about your next generation and you look for your heroes in them. There is no shortage of talent in the country but the focus on future is the key," Kapil said.

Speaking about the sporting culture in India, Kapil said: "I can say that we are getting better but have still have a very long way to go in order to catch up with other sporting nations. Parents in our country first give their children cricket bats and balls but those are snatched away when the kids are 12 or 13, when the focus shifts to academics. However, I have been a sportsman all through my life... God has been kind to me."

The sporting icon then switched to golf. After retiring from cricket, his playing field only got bigger. What draws him to the expansive courses,

moreso after suffering a heart attack that required an emergency angioplasty only two months ago? "It's the beautiful, serene surroundings," he says. "Just imagine strolling and playing your strokes in a 150-acre garden. It's green all around. You feel the breeze, smell the grass and simply love nature. I wish my house was in the middle of a golf course."

Kapil says he can play golf all day. "It depends on the sun — as long as it stays up, I can be out there on the course, just wanting to play and enjoy myself."

He's very proud of the progress India has made in golf. "The Vooty Golf County near Hyderabad, the ones in Bangalore, Ahmedabad, DLF are the new courses that have come up in our country. About 30 years ago we used to wonder 'can we ever have a course like the ones we see in Europe or America?' Today we have better courses than those," he tees off triumphantly.