

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | WEDNESDAY | 13 JANUARY 2021



## NATION | 4

**Indian Army is ever ready: Naravane**



## WORLD | 5

**FBI warns of more protests in US**

## SPORTS | 6

**Shuttler Srikanth miffed with Covid test**



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### WEATHER



Max: 32.0°C  
Min: 18.0°C  
RH: 73%  
Rainfall: NIL  
Forecast: Clear.  
Max/Min temp.  
32/18 °C

### COVID-19 COUNTRIES

CASES	DEATHS
(+14,130)	(+162)
1,04,93,758	1,51,524
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+301)	(+2)
TS: 2,90,309	1,568
(+197)	(+2)
AP: 8,85,234	7,133

### CASES AROUND THE WORLD

9,16,21,114
DEATHS
19,60,776
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
218
worldometers.info/coronavirus

### ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
Tithi: Margasira Bahula Amavasya till 10.32 am  
**Star:** Uttarashada till 5.27 am  
**Varjyam:** 2.03 pm to 3.35 pm  
**Durmuhurtam:** 12.02 pm to 12.42 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 12 noon to 1.30 pm  
**HILARI CALENDAR**  
**Jumadi ul-Awwal 28,1442 AH**  
**PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)**  
**Fajar:** 5.30 am  
**Zohar:** 1.30 pm  
**Asar:** 4.15 pm  
**Maghrib:** 5.38 pm  
**Isha:** 8.30 pm  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.35 AM**  
**SUNSET TODAY 5.47 PM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 6.37 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 7.00 PM**

### COUNTER POINT



Season's rangoli!

### SHORT TAKES

#### Tesla set to enter India

**New Delhi:** American electric car maker Tesla has registered its Indian arm amid indications that the company is set to enter the country's automobile market. According to a regulatory filing, the firm has registered Tesla India Motors and Energy Pvt Ltd with RoC Bangalore. The company has been registered as an unlisted private entity with a paid up capital of ₹1 lakh.

#### WhatsApp clears air on privacy

**New Delhi:** WhatsApp on Tuesday said its latest policy update does not affect the privacy of messages as the Facebook-owned company sought to address concerns around security of user data on the platform. In a blog-post, WhatsApp emphasised that it does not share users' data for ads.

#### 11 Indian cos in top 500 valuable

**Mumbai:** Eleven private Indian firms have made it to the list of 500 most valuable companies across the world, and the country is ranked 10th on the chart, as per the *Hurun Global 500* report. Reliance Industries leads the pack which includes TCS, HDFC Bank, HDFC Ltd, ICICI Bank, ITC.



State officials shift Covid-19 vaccines into a truck at Vijayawada Airport near Gannavaram on Tuesday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

## AP gets 4.75L doses of vaccine for launch

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12**

Nearly 4.77 lakh doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine called Covishield arrived at the city out of a total allotment of 4.99 lakh doses, on Tuesday. The vaccine is being manufactured at the Serum Institute of India (SII), Pune. Krishna district collector Md. Imtiaz and Child Health and Immunisation joint director U. Sreehari received the consignment from SII. Pune. The doses were shifted to the State Vaccine Storage Facility located at Gannavaram amidst tight security provided by police. The vaccine will remain stored there at a temperature between 2 degrees and 8 degrees Celsius before being transported to various places in the

● The doses were shifted to the State Vaccine Storage Facility located at Gannavaram amidst tight security provided by police.

state. Collector Imtiaz said the Gannavaram storage facility can preserve up to 35 lakh doses of vaccine. Of the first consignment received, about 3,000 frontline healthcare workers of Krishna district will be administered the vaccine at 30 sites spread over the district on Saturday. Earlier, Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das held a video conference with district collectors, SPs and municipal commissioners and reviewed arrangements for administering of the 4.77 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine at 332 sites throughout Andhra Pradesh.

State health authorities disclosed that they are also expecting a consignment of about 20,000 doses of Covaxin developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, which has scheduled despatch of its first vaccine consignment to several places across the country on Tuesday itself. Officials said the Centre has sanctioned 4.99 lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses including 4.77 lakh doses of Covishield and 20,000 of doses of Covaxin, manufactured by Bharat Biotech, to AP. With the first consignment arriving on Tuesday, officials expect the remaining vials on Wednesday. Bharat Biotech will be dispatching its first consignment to several places from Hyderabad.

■ Page 2: State awaits Centre's guidelines

### SEC RELIEVES POLL PANEL'S SECRETARY

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12**

State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar on Tuesday issued orders relieving G. Vani Mohan as secretary of the commission. In his relieving order, the SEC said her services are no longer required by the state electoral body. The AP government had posted Vani Mohan, a 1996 batch IAS officer, as secretary to State Election Commission on May 31, 2020, while she was then serving as cooperative department commissioner and MD of AP Dairy Development Cooperative Federation.

■ Page 2: SEC informs CS about its decision

SEC's counsel N. Ashwani Kumar to explain the urgency to adjudicate the writ appeal, the latter replied saying that suspension of election notification would cause widespread confusion among aspirants and voters and would halt the electoral process like preparation of electoral rolls. He maintained that implementation of model code of conduct could not be suspended once the election notification issued.

Responding to the justification, Advocate-General S. Sriram assured the court that preparation of electoral rolls would continue unhindered.

■ Page 2: SEC claims single judge has erred

## HC to hear SEC appeal on Jan. 18

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12**

The AP High Court asked the State Election Commission to explain the urgency for taking up hearing on its writ appeal. Based on its justification and assurances from the State government, court posted the next hearing to January 18. A division bench comprising Justice U. Durga Prasad and Justice B. Krishna Mohan on Tuesday heard the appeal filed by the State Election Commission seeking to set aside the vacation bench judge's order suspending proceedings to conduct the gram panchayat polls in February. When the bench asked

### AIR LINK

## Indigo to begin flights to connect Kurnool with Bengaluru, Chennai, Vizag

# Kurnool's Orvakal to get air connectivity

**DC CORRESPONDENT KURNOOL, JAN. 12**

Kurnool airport near Orvakal is all set to launch commercial operations in a month from now in February. Indigo, which emerged as a successful bidder under UDAN-4 scheme, may have flights from here to Bengaluru, Chennai, and Vizag. Incidentally, finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy had during his recent trip to New Delhi met Indigo representatives seeking expediting of commercial operations.

Aviation sources said Kurnool airport may as well become a centre for running flight training operations. This is because air traffic at Bengaluru and Hyderabad airports has increased and running training operations from these centres is becoming increasingly difficult. Given the proximity of Kurnool airport from both these locations, the possibility of setting up training facilities at Kurnool will be advantageous for all angles. Logistically Kurnool is at the midpoint between

● Orvakal Airport is spread over 970 acres at a distance of 20 km from Kurnool city. The airport has a runway length of 2,000 metres x 30 metres. It will have four parking bays, which can be utilised for and up to ATR-72 / Q-400 aircraft.

● Logistically, Kurnool is at the midpoint between Bengaluru and Hyderabad and on the flight path to Chennai from RGIA, Shamshabad, said an Airports Authority of India (AAI) official.

Bengaluru and Hyderabad and on the flight path to Chennai from RGIA, Shamshabad, said an Airports Authority of India (AAI) official. M.K.V. Srinivasulu, nodal officer who is over-

seeing finishing works at the Orvakal airport, said Indigo Airlines staff had visited the airport and assessed its readiness last month. They are visiting again on January 20 or the last week of this month.

Once that is over, commercial flights will start taking off and landing at Kurnool, the gateway of Rayalseema. Originally, the airport was scheduled to start commercial operations by Deepavali but missed the deadline. Orvakal Airport is spread over 970 acres at a distance of 20 km from Kurnool city. The airport has a runway length of 2,000 metres x 30 metres. It will have four parking bays, which can be utilised for and up to ATR-72 / Q-400 category of aircraft. The airport has Advanced Air Traffic

Advisory (AATAS), along with fire-fighting and rescue capacity. The selected bidder will get the Kurnool airport on long-term lease for construction of hangar, buildings, facilities, and infrastructure for carrying out trainee flights and or aerospots activities. The airport is 350 km from Vijayawada, 200 km from Hyderabad, and 360 km from Bengaluru. The nearest major international airport is Hyderabad, about just 200 km from Kurnool.

The YSR Congress government is likely to achieve its plan of having three capitals — Executive, Legislative and Judiciary — in the next four to five months, advisor to government (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy stated on Tuesday. Addressing a press conference here, he said all necessary steps for decentralisation of administration have been taken. He

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12**

warned that the government will take firm action against those trying to create differences within the society in the name of religion and caste. In this regard, he went on to accuse TD leaders of trying to divert people's attention through such acts. Ramakrishna Reddy pointed out that the government has constituted an SIT to investigate demolition of temples and has already achieved some success. He alleged that the election schedule

## Surging sale of cocks hint at Sankranti cockfights

**DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, JAN. 12**

Contrary to perceptions, a last-minute surge is witnessed in sale of Prize Cocks as a prelude to the three-day Sankranti festival beginning Wednesday. In spite of the Covid-19 situation and less of money supply, punters are getting set for the traditional cockfight sport. Heavy betting is unlikely

because of non-arrival of well-heeled software engineers, cine actors etc this time due to travel restrictions. Growers of fighter cocks are worried that prize cocks might not fetch good money this time. "Yet, there is a sudden surge in sales in the past two days. Many have done the purchase at the rate of ₹10,000 to ₹50,000 per cock," a source said.

This year, there is more enthusiasm in East Godavari compared to West Godavari that was usually on top in organising cockfights. Youths in East Godavari are more enthused because of the much-trumpeted campaign for cockfights there; and they are already going in for betting.

■ Page 2: Govt may turn a blind-eye to cockfights

## SC stays farm laws, forms expert panel

**Farmers refuse to meet court-appointed panel**

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 12**

In a major breather to the Narendra Modi government that's caught in a cul-de-sac over the ongoing farmers' agitation, the Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the implementation of the three controversial farm laws for now, restored the Minimum Support Price System (MSP) that was prevalent before the enactment of farm laws and set up a committee of four agriculture experts to examine the laws and submit a report within two months. The three months, the court said, will start from the date of its first sitting and the first sitting has to take place within 10 days from Tuesday's order. The clarification of the three-member bench of the Supreme Court, that the suspension of the implementation of the three laws is not indefinite, and that the court will take a final call on the farm laws only after it examines the committee's report, seems to suit the government which is resisting the farmers' demand for repeal of the laws but is agreeable to making amendments.

There is no power which can prevent us from forming a committee. We want to solve the problem. We want to understand the ground situation. This is not politics.

**SHARAD A. BOBDE, Chief Justice of India**

The farmer unions, however, were not pleased and reiterated that they will not participate in the court-ordered committee process, charging that "all the members of this committee are pro-govt and had been justifying the laws of the government."

They added that they would not call off their protest until the newly enacted legislations are repealed. "It is clear that the court is being misguided by various forces even in its constitution of a committee. These are people who are known for their support to the three Acts and have actively advocated for the same," a statement issued by All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) said. Having stayed the imple-

It is clear that the court is being misguided by various forces even in its constitution of a committee. These are people who are known for their support to three laws

**ALL INDIA KISAN SANGHARSH PANEL**

mentation of farm laws "until further orders", the court also directed that the farmers' land holdings shall be "protected" and no farmer shall be "dispossessed or deprived" of his/her title of land as a result of any action taken under the farm laws. "While we may not stifle a peaceful protest, we think that this extraordinary order of stay of implementation of the farm laws will be perceived as an achievement of the purpose of such protest at least for the present and will encourage the farmers bodies to convince their members to get back to their livelihood, both in order to protect their own lives and health and in order to protect the lives and properties of others," the court said.

## 3 capital work to begin by June

### Govt. advisor accuses TD of creating differences in society

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12**

The YSR Congress government is likely to achieve its plan of having three capitals — Executive, Legislative and Judiciary — in the next four to five months, advisor to government (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy stated on Tuesday. Addressing a press conference here, he said all necessary steps for decentralisation of administration have been taken. He

warned that the government will take firm action against those trying to create differences within the society in the name of religion and caste. In this regard, he went on to accuse TD leaders of trying to divert people's attention through such acts. Ramakrishna Reddy pointed out that the government has constituted an SIT to investigate demolition of temples and has already achieved some success. He alleged that the election schedule

issued for local body polls by SEC is part of a plan to divert attention of people from the Amma Vodi initiative. He said, "Like never before in any state, 31 lakh house sites are being given to homeless poor, leading to a festive atmosphere in the state. Unable to digest this good deed, the opposition has resorted to creating differences between people through vandalising of temples. Religion is a personal matter, which should not be used for pol-

itics," he underlined. The advisor to government pointed out that even the High Court has prioritised the vaccination programme, while the opposition is still harping on local body polls "with the help of State Election Commissioner Nimma-gadda Ramesh Kumar, who had earlier postponed elections citing Covid-19 pandemic. "Now, the same SEC wants elections to be held, though the pandemic is continuing," he pointed out.

### SENSEX HITS NEW RECORD, NEARS 50,000 LEVEL

**Mumbai, Jan. 12:** Equity indices vaulted to fresh lifetime highs for the third session on the trot on Tuesday as investors remained in risk-on mode amid unabated foreign fund inflows.

Overcoming a wobbly start, the 30-share BSE Sensex surged to its all-time peak of 49,569.14 during the day, propelled by robust buying in index heavyweights Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank. The index finally finished at its new closing record of 49,517.11, up by 247.79 points or 0.50 per cent. On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty advanced 78.70 points or 0.54 per cent to a fresh closing peak of 14,563.45. It scaled a record level of 14,590.65 during the session.

On the Sensex chart, SBI was the top gainer, rallying 3.65 per cent, followed by Bharti Airtel, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, ITC, Axis Bank and NTPC.

Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank accounted for the lion's share of the benchmark's gains. On the other hand, Asian Paints, Hindustan Unilever, Nestle India, Titan, Kotak Bank and Sun Pharma were among the laggards, dropping up to 3.93 per cent.



## SHORT TAKES

AP KIDNAP CASE:  
BROTHER OF  
EX-AP MIN NAMEDDC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, JAN. 12

Bhuma Jagath Vikhyat Reddy, brother of former AP minister Bhuma Akhila Priya, has been named as one of the accused in the kidnap case of Naveen Rao and his brothers.

Bowenpally police of Hyderabad, who took Akhila Priya into custody on Monday last week, have been questioning her on the alleged kidnap and the role of others who aided and abetted her.

The police has so far named 20 people. Vikhyat and his sister Naga Mounika have been vocal on the issue of Akhila Priya's arrest.

The police is in pursuit of Bhargav Ram Naidu, the husband of Akhila Priya, and Guntur Sreenu. They could be holed up in Pune or Bengaluru, police said.

CM TO TAKE PART  
IN KAMADHENU  
GOPUJA ON JAN. 15DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, JAN. 12

The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will take part in the prestigious Kamadhenu Gopuja mulled by TTD on the auspicious day of Kanuma on January 15 at 12 noon in Narasaraopeta of Guntur district.

After inspecting the venue, Sports Authority Stadium Grounds at Narasaraopeta, TTD JEO P. Basanth Kumar said, for decades TTD has been conducting Gopuja on Kanuma festival day. This year besides the 50 temples in TTD, Gopuja will be conducted in all 996 temples of State Endowments Department on January 15, he noted.

6 MONTHS JAIL  
FOR FATHER, SON  
OVER CASTE CRIMEDC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 12

The court dealing with cases under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act here on Tuesday sentenced a father-and-son duo to six months imprisonment.

The convicts, Tirumalakonda Venkata Ramana and his son Tirumala Konda Viswanath of Yerravonkallapalli in NP Kunta mandal had abused Avula Hari of the same village in the name of caste during a quarrel on July 14, 2016. The victim lodged a complaint against them with the NP Kunta police.

Then SC/ST (PoA) Cell DSP M. Venkata Ramana investigated the case and filed the chargesheet. SC/ST (PoA) Act Court judge Tirumala Devi pronounced verdict in the case on Tuesday. Apart from undergoing six months in jail, the duo has to pay a fine of ₹3,000.

Superintendent of police Satya Esubabu appreciated the efforts of DSP Venkata Ramana and additional public prosecutor Ram Naik for getting justice for the victim.

OFFICIALS FREE  
GRABBED LAND  
WORTH ₹80 CRDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 12

A team of revenue officials led by the tahsildar of Anandapuram mandal, accompanied by police personnel, seized back 16 acres of prime government land ₹80 crore during the last 24 hours.

Two parcels of land-four acres in survey no 42/1 and another four acres in survey no 74/1 are located in Gudilova, about 16 kilometres from National Highway. The revenue officials did not disclose the people who had occupied the government. The land cost increased manifold after a six-lane highway stretch was developed between Pendurthy and Anandapuram village.

A senior revenue official said each acre of land seized back now estimated to cost ₹5 crore. The two parcels of land are located about 30 km from Visakhapatnam city. The drive would continue till all the government land parcels grabbed by private people and agencies are taken back by the revenue department.

● **TWO PARCELS** of land-four acres in survey no 42/1 and another four acres in survey no 74/1 are located in Gudilova, about 16 kilometres from National Highway.

## Social breach



On the occasion of Sankranti holidays, people rush to board a bus to their native place, violating the Centre's Covid-19 regulations, in Vijayawada on Tuesday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

Vundavilli asks parties to  
keep off temple attacks

He says Modi wants to implement the 'Hindutva' agenda

DC CORRESPONDENT  
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM,  
JAN. 12

Former MP Vundavilli Arunkumar has urged political parties to avoid politicising the temple attacks. Instead, he said, the police should be given a free hand in the investigation of these incidents.

The ex-MP told the media here on Tuesday that the police would be able to catch the culprits if they are given a free hand and if there is no political-level interference. No political party including the BJP would resort to attacks on temples or damaging idols. Anti-social elements must be behind these attacks.

He quoted Swamy Vivekananda to say that Lord Rama or any other



Vundavilli Arunkumar

god or goddess knows very well how to protect themselves, irrespective of whether or not their idols are destroyed or damaged.

Arun Kumar said the YSRC and the Telugu Desam should explain their attitude to the BJP. The BJP's ideology, in particular the 'Hindutva' agenda, posed a threat to

● **THE FORMER-MP** also made sensational comments on religious conversions. He said nothing was wrong with religious conversions. Some upper caste Hindus adopted a "touch me not" attitude and kept the downtrodden sections away from the social mainstream. Now these poor people are turning to Christianity.

the country and this will damage the image of the country at the global level too. Due to the Hindu culture and its philosophy and principles and the preachings of Swamy Vivekananda, India has a good image in the world, though Muslims and Christians ruled the country for many years.

He said the BJP led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to implement the "Hindutva" agenda.

The ex-MP also made sensational comments on

religious conversions. He said nothing was wrong with religious conversions. Some upper caste Hindus adopted a "touch me not" attitude and kept the downtrodden sections away from the social mainstream. Now these poor people are turning to Christianity," he said.

Arunkumar also said, "Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy is a true Christian and there is nothing wrong if he went to Rishikesh or Haridwar to worship Hindu gods."

State Election Commission  
claims single judge has erred

From Page 1

The AG also informed the court that developmental schemes of the government would be taken up only after taking prior permission from the SEC. The AG informed the court that as the local body polls would be held on a non-political and non-partisan basis, the model code of conduct would not apply and affect it in any manner.

The AG informed the court that the state government would not take advantage of the loss of time due to the issue of the interim order, by seeking advancement of conduct of polls and also would not move earth and heaven in case of the single judge's earlier order being vacated.

He assured to cooperate with the State Election Commission to stick to the schedule and hold elections as indicated by the court.

It may be mentioned that



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy greets Hima-chal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya at a Star hotel in Vijayawada on Tuesday. — BY ARRANGEMENT

on Monday, soon after vacation bench of Justice M. Ganga Rao issued an interim order suspending the SEC's election proceedings to conduct gram panchayat polls, the SEC appealed against the order before the division bench.

It argued that the order of the vacation judge was

contrary to settled principles of law and facts of the case and maintained that the judge erred in suspending the election notification.

The SEC said that once the election process was set in motion, it could not be justified to interfere with the election process.

## Govt may turn a blind eye to cockfights

From Page 1

According to sources, a huge ground was being readied in Kesanakurru in Konaseema. Two prominent communities are participating in the cockfight on Wednesday and Thursday. A community from Konaseema area and another from Kakinada will reach the village to participate in the traditional sport.

They are reportedly planning 20 contests a day and the betting range may be between ₹10,000 and ₹3 lakh. Many communities will

go for co-betting with big-wig punters. Cockfight grounds are being prepared at Kandarakota, Vetlapalem, G. Medapadu, M a d h a v a p a t n a m, Achampet in limited numbers.

A general feeling is that the government may allow cockfights as freely this time as in the past. But, the government is still vigorously campaigning against the blood-letting sport. "The Telugu Desam and the YSRC are conducting cockfights separately. This is fine. The government is implementing welfare schemes without

political bias. Hence, why should we create any hindrance to the TD cadre vis-a-vis organising cockfights," a former MLA of the YSRC reasoned.

He said no government can stop the cockfight as it is a matter of prestige to local leaders. "Local body elections would be held this year. If the government does not support this traditional sport, the ruling party may face reverses in the elections," he said.

Some ruling party workers in Undi constituency met their party leader and asked about the govern-

JAGAN, GOV.  
WISH FOR  
SANKRANTI

**Vijayawada:** Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan wishes the very best to the Telugu people living worldwide on the auspicious Makara Sankranti festival. Jagan said that the festival of Sankranti was a symbol of our culture and traditions, of the love we have towards our villages, the respect we give to the farmers and of the arts unique to us.

SEC INFORMS  
CS ABOUT ITS  
DECISION

From Page 1

After removing Vani Mohan as commission secretary, Ramesh Kumar also wrote a letter to Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das informing that he has relieved her from her post and mentioned: "circumstances that warranted for such an action".

Incidentally, just on Monday, the SEC had dismissed G.V. Sai Prasad, a senior functionary of State Election Commission of the joint director rank on charges of indiscipline and breach of the poll body's Code of Conduct.

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12

State Election Commissioner (SEC) N. Ramesh Kumar called on Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan on Tuesday. The SEC briefed the latter about the latest developments pertaining to conduct of the gram panchayat polls in February.

Ramesh Kumar reportedly sought that the Governor direct the AP government that it enable the State Election Commission in going

TD accuses YSRC  
over diverting  
Endowment fundsDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, JAN. 12

TDP state spokesperson Anam Venkataramana Reddy came down heavily against the YSR Congress government for diverting the Endowment department funds meant for temples to various welfare schemes.

To justify his claim, he produced Government Orders 733, 108, 145, 441, and 593 related to the transfer of crores of rupees from endowment wing and minorities wing to different schemes including Amma Vodi.

Reminding that endowment revenue is from the lands and properties donated by devout to the temples, he said that the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has no right to divert funds of the department for any other purpose except temples and their development.

The TDP leader alleged that Jaganmohan Reddy has been targeting funds earmarked for Hindu temples to keep up promises he made during his Padayatra. He alleged that the CM is ignoring various strictures passed by the Supreme Court and the High Court against the use of funds of endowments depart-

CHRISTIAN  
LEADERS RESIGN  
FROM TD OVER  
NAIDU's REMARKSDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12

Representatives of Telugu Desam Christian cell on Tuesday submitted their resignations from membership of the party objecting to comments of former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu against their community.

"Chandrababu Naidu and TD leaders should prove their allegations about Christians organising religious conversions in AP," demanded community leaders belonging to TD after meeting at a private hotel in Vijayawada.

Speaking on their behalf to media, TD Christian cell president Y. Praveen Kumar underlined that the TD chief's comments have "shocked" the community's pastors and laity.

ment except for propagating Hindu dharma and the maintenance of Hindu shrines.

Burn anti-farm GOs  
in Bhogi fire: NaiduDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12

Telugu Desam Party chief N. Chandrababu Naidu has called upon people to burn in Bhogi fire all YSRC government's anti-farmer GOs, which have led to over 1,779 farmers committing suicides in Andhra Pradesh.

Addressing a video conference with party coordinators and in-charges of parliamentary and assembly segments, Naidu pointed out that the Jagan government had promised to pay ₹12,500 under Rythu Bharosa, but paid only half of it.

Further, the government is trying to wash its hands of free power by fixing meters for electric motors used by farmers. He alleged that the ruling party has cheated farmers to the tune of ₹21,000 crore.

As a mark of protest, the TD chief wanted people to make a Bhogi bonfire of all anti-farmer GOs including those

related to fixing motors on farm pump sets, Sunna Vaddi scheme, caste-based division of cultivators, and diversion of zero budget natural farming funds.

Naidu accused Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy of making tall promises before elections. "But after becoming the Chief Minister, he has turned into a betrayer of farmers," he stated.

The TD chief said the CM was being cruel towards Amaravati farmers and labourers who have been agitating on the streets since nearly 400 days.

He blamed Jagan Mohan Reddy of breaching the trust farmers who had parted with their valuable ancestral lands for establishing the capital city of AP at Amaravati. But now, over 30,000 Amaravati families have no choice but to continue their prolonged protests due to lack of crops, income and livelihood.

SEC Ramesh seeks Gov's  
help for holding GP pollsDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12

State Election Commissioner (SEC) N. Ramesh Kumar called on Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan on Tuesday. The SEC briefed the latter about the latest developments pertaining to conduct of the gram panchayat polls in February.

Ramesh Kumar reportedly sought that the Governor direct the AP government that it enable the State Election Commission in going

ahead with conduct of polls as per the schedule already announced.

The State Election Commissioner reportedly informed Biswabhusan Harichandan over the hurdles he has been facing in conducting the gram panchayat polls in four phases in February. He informed the Governor that the State government has challenged SEC's election proceedings in the High Court and got suspension of the commission's order. Ramesh Kumar pointed

out to Biswabhusan Harichandan that though a single judge had ordered suspension of the election proceedings, the same has been challenged before a division bench. The bench has posted the case for hearing by a regular bench on January 18.

It has to be seen whether the Governor intervenes into the issue and resolves what appears to have become a prestige issue between the state government and SEC over whether or not the gram panchayat polls should be held.

State waits for  
Centre's advice

From Page 1

Meanwhile, health authorities are making arrangements to dispatch vaccine from the state storage facility at Gannavaram to regional centres at Kurnool, Kadapa, Guntur and Visakhapatnam. From there they will be sent to district vaccine centres and to 1,659 vaccine centres set up all over the state.

A senior health official

said, "We are awaiting guidelines from the Centre on dispatch of Covid-19 vaccine to various sites in Andhra Pradesh for administration to identified health-care workers."

These guidelines are expected by Tuesday night. Until their dispatch, the 4.77 lakh doses of Covishield will remain at the State Vaccine Storage Facility in Gannavaram," the official added.



## SHORT TAKES

## AP RECORDS 197 COVID CASES, TWO DEATHS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 12

Andhra Pradesh registered 197 new Covid-19 cases and two deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin on Tuesday reporting that out of 40,986 samples tested, 197 persons were found infected with Covid-19.

Out of a total number of 1,23,96,593 samples tested so far, 8,85,234 persons were found infected with Covid-19 and of them, 8,75,690 were recovered while 2,411 are active with the virus.

Among the new Covid-19 infections, Krishna registered the highest number of 49 followed by 32 in Chittoor, 31 in Guntur, 19 in East Godavari, 15 in Visakhapatnam, 14 in Kadapa, seven each in Srikakulam and West Godavari, six each in Anantapur and Nellore.

## 20-YEAR-OLD GIRL STABS HER LOVER TO DEATH

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KOVVURU, JAN. 12

A 20-year-old girl Darsikoti Pavani, studying second year degree course in a private college in Kovvuru of West Godavari was arrested by Kovvuru Rural police on Tuesday on the charge of stabbing her lover to death.

According to Kovvuru Rural police, Pavani of Malakapalli village in Tallapudi mandal of west Godavari and Ambati Tataji Naidu, 25, of Tadepalligudem were in relationship.

They reportedly married secretly. But recently, Tataji Naidu was looking for another alliance and was neglecting Pavani.

## DRAWING TEACHER MAKES SUICIDE BID

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, JAN. 12

A drawing teacher, Adabala Veera Naga Devi, working on a contract basis attempted to end life by consuming sleeping tablets on Tuesday.

According to the One Town police, Naga Devi was working on a part-time basis at Municipal High School in Mootha Nagar.

The school's headmaster allegedly was harassing her and told her that he would not sign the salary papers unless she worked a full day.

Expressing anxiety and worry over the headmaster and about her salary, she wrote a suicide note and consumed the sleeping tablets.

## Selfie belief



Students take a selfie with the Swami Vivekananda Statue at Ramakrishna Mission during the National Youth Day celebrations on the beach road in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. — K. MURALIKRISHNA

## NRIs' Ayyappa Deeksha in US

## Temples consecrated idols of Ayyappa

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, JAN. 12

Hundreds of Ayyappa devotees with roots in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana state, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka and living in the USA are observing the 41 days of arduous Deeksha withstanding the sub-zero freezing temperatures.

Clad in their black attire, the devotees performed Ayyappa bhajans at temples in the US, to the amazement of onlookers. Several Hindu temples have consecrated the idols of Ayyappa to facilitate the devotees of the Naishtika Brahmachari to worship him and offer Irumudi on completion of the Vratam.

Some of these temples at Maryland, Missouri, Tampa, and Houston have built replicas of the holy 18 steps as in Sabarimala, enabling devotees to carry the Irumudi and scale the steps with great fervour. Founder of Sri

Satyanarayana Swamy temple at Atlanta, Naga Ravikumar Medicherla, said that they had installed the Ayyappa idol in 2015 on devotees' request. "Ayyappa devotees in the US had an unhindered and satisfying Deeksha this year owing to the work from home and Covid restrictions.

As many as 200 devotees, most of whom are IT professionals, and 20 of their kids observed Deeksha this year as they were working from home and attending online classes, respectively," said Ravi-kumar hailing from Hyderabad. During Deeksha, the devotees performed Padi Puja (Puja to 18 steps) and, on the second Saturday of each month, at the Ayyappa shrine in Atlanta.

Speaking to this newspaper, Balaji Lokanathan said that he and 20 devotees had formed a core group of volunteers to help the temple administration perform special rituals at the

temple. Their team was instrumental in designing the sanctum sanctorum of Ayyappa shrine in Atlanta.

They also pay special attention to celebrate festivals such as Vishu, Sankranti (Makara), Vilakku puja and Irumudi ritual in December apart from Pushpabhishekam.

He said that nearly 15 devotees go to Sabarimala from Atlanta every year after observing 41 days Deeksha to see the lord in all his glory, but Covid foiled their plans this year.

Interestingly a core team member, Rama Iyyer, trekked to Sabarimala from Coimbatore, a distance of 200 km, inspiring Balaji, Saravanan Vadivelu, Raghu-pati and Subhramanyam to join him.

Balaji said that their ambition is to gather necessary funds and resources to build a standalone Ayyappa temple with 18 steps in Atlanta in the near future.

## TRADERS TOLD NOT TO RENT FURNITURE TO COCKFIGHTS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, JAN. 12

The East Godavari Superintendent of Police, Adnan Nayeem Asmi, suggested the tent house traders should not give on hire furniture like chairs, glasses, tents and others for cockfights and other gambling purposes.

Criminal cases would be booked against those renting them to cockfights, along with the punters and organisers. He said 568 cases were booked, 1,832 persons were taken bound-over.

## More eating, no exercise in lockdown days

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 12

Obesity among students during the year-long lockdown has emerged as a serious worry for parents, also as they need to buy new outfits for their children, including uniforms.

A Class X private school student in Anantapur had a waist size of 39 inches prior to the lockdown, but within a few months the size swelled to 43 inches. The parents say they purchased more than 10 pairs of outfits including two pairs of uniforms for the student. Similar situations arose for students and parents across the country.

Uniform-making and supplying agent Rajesh of Anantapur said a corporate school recently started classes for Class-IX and X. It ordered new sets of uniforms in bulk for all students. "I was shocked to collect measurements of children who have all become fatter or grown in size," he said and added at least four students were found having a waist size of 43.

Parents of a Class IX girl student from a private school in Anantapur purchased more than 15 new dresses for her, saying the old dresses did not fit anymore. "This is an inevitable situation and I had to spend more than ₹17,000 to get new clothes for my daughter excluding what I spent by way of ordering new school uniforms," a mother stated on condition of anonymity. She confided that the old clothes were donated to the granddaughter of her housemaid.

Private schools make uniforms for their students via dress supply

● The online classes also added to the problem of obesity.

agents. The agents are now getting new clothes stitched for these schools.

"Children and teens are seriously struggling with obesity due to lack of minimum physical exercise during the lockdown home-stay period, when they also ate more," Dr Ravi Srinivas, general physician and obesity specialist, observed.

Children also took a fancy to search for new types of food and cooking tips on Google during this period, and engaged in cooking experiments as time was hanging heavy on them. This resulted in obesity among many of them. Among many, noted writer Yendamuri Veerendranath had cautioned children against eating food while watching TV as the intake would be more and lead to obesity and other physical disorders.

The online classes also added to the problem of obesity. A study revealed the children ate extra food with rich fats and were sleeping an extra two hours per day. They spent nearly five hours a day with phone, computer and TV screens.

This dramatically increased their consumption of junk food in addition to routine traditional foods.

Jayachandra, correspondent of Radha School of Learning in Anantapur, said his institution was planning to provide physical exercise to students by following Covid lockdown regulations so as to help students overcome the problem of obesity.

## VIVEKANANDA INSPIRATION FOR ALL: SPEAKERS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, JAN. 12

Swami Vivekananda's birthday celebrations were held in East and West Godavari districts on Tuesday where the speakers appreciated Swami Vivekananda's character and wisdom.

Rajamahendravaram MP Margani Bharat said that everyone should take inspiration from Swamy Vivekananda and his preachings are very much needed nowadays.

Participating as a chief guest in Swami Vivekananda birthday celebrations at Anaparthi on Tuesday, Mr Bharat said that Swami Vivekananda toured the world at a very early age and stated that the essence of all religions is the same. He stressed the need for protecting communal harmony in the society. Earlier he garlanded the statue of Swami Vivekananda.

Seva Bharathi organisations celebrated Swami Vivekananda birthday celebrations grandly, presided by its president G.G. Kalyankumar. The Seva Bharathi volunteers went to Prathipadu where a huge statue of Swami Vivekananda was installed and garlanded the statue. Swami Vivekananda awoke the hidden talents of the youth and encouraged the people to build up character and protect the Dharma.

National Youth Day was organised at CETWELL office in Eluru in West Godavari on Tuesday. Joint collector Mr S. Bharat Teja said that the essays of Swami Vivekananda are ideal for all and Swamiji worked hard for strengthening the youth force in the world.

The MLC Ramu Surya Rao said that Swami Vivekananda is a role model for youth.



Women busy in preparing Rangoli during a competition organised as part of Pre-Sankranti celebrations at Seethammadhara in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. — P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

## MONEY | MATTERS Lack of funds has resulted in health hazards

## Several panchayats run into debts

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, JAN. 12

It is a case of so near yet so far for people in the interiors as although Central funds have been released by the 14th Finance Commission, the blanket ban by the State government has left many gram panchayats in debts.

Panchayats have no funds as the State government has suspended payment of bills related to these funds, which are essentially meant for creation of infrastructure in villages. As a result, they have not been paying

salaries to sanitation workers. Incidentally, while panchayats with general funds are placed better, the problems are increasing for panchayats that are solely dependent on government grants.

Lack of funds has resulted in health hazards as sewers are not being cleaned and there has been no chlorination of drinking water; not even to buy bleaching powder. Meanwhile, even if panchayat bills are passed through the treasury, funds are not credited from the CFMS. Many panchayat


secretaries lament that they have already incurred debts in lakhs and are unable to continue it any longer.

There are a total of 807 gram panchayats in Kadapa district, of which eight are major panchayats. An amount of ₹64.27 crore was sanctioned by the 14th Finance Commission in two tranches recently. Of this, ₹4.27 crore has been earmarked for the management of Integrated Protected Fresh Water Schemes (CPWSs). ₹40 lakh has been allotted for maintenance of drinking water hand pumps while ₹59.60

crore has been allotted to all panchayats proportionate to the population.

Of this, 50 per cent is to be spent on construction of cement concrete roads and drainages, while the remaining is for electricity repairs and chlorination and sanitation. Non-release of bills has been going on for seven to eight months now. An estimated ₹15 to ₹20 crore is pending for the district because of the ban on settlement of bills.

District treasury officials said that all the bills received by the treasury have been passed.






**MYADAM KISHAN RAO**  
DOB: 10-02-1936 DOD: 12-01-2021

**With deep sorrow, we inform the sudden demise of our beloved**

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**Founder**

**The light which used to show the right path of living, taught us the aim of life is sacrifice. After enlightening us, the light has suddenly disappeared. We pay homage to this noble soul.**

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**Inserted by:  
Family & Staff**

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**Final rites on 13-01-2021 Wednesday, 11:00am  
at Mahaprasthanam Swarg Vatika, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad.**



SHORT TAKES

EC DISCUSSES SECURITY FOR STATE POLLS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 12

The Election Commission of India on Tuesday held a meeting with the Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla to discuss requirement and availability of the Central Armed Paramilitary Forces (CAPF) during the upcoming Assembly polls in several states. Other related issues, including law and order situation, transfer posting of officers were also discussed.

Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and the Union Territory of Puducherry will be held this year. The term for Tamil Nadu Assembly ends on May 24; Kerala June 1; West Bengal May 30; Puducherry June 8; and Assam May 31.

The ECI had in December issued an advisory to states saying in order to ensure free and fair election, states should ensure that the officers directly connected with conduct of elections in an election going state/UT are not posted in their home districts or places where they have served for a considerably long period.

Besides, officials against whom the ECI had recommended disciplinary action in the past and which is pending or has resulted in a penalty or the officers who have been charged for any lapse in any election or election related work in the past, may not be assigned any election related duty.

CULLING OF BIRDS ORDERED IN LATUR

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC  
MUMBAI, JAN. 12

In a sign of bird flu spreading rapidly in Maharashtra, birds from one more district — Latur — have also found positive for the avian influenza. The Latur district authorities have ordered culling of birds in the villages of Kendrewadi and Sukni as precautionary measures.

Earlier, birds from five districts in Maharashtra — Mumbai, Thane, Ratnagiri, Parbhani and Beed were found to be infected by the bird flu. In Latur, at least 225 birds have died in Kendrewadi till Monday, while 12 hens have died in Sukni and four in Wanjarwadi of Udgir taluka. After Parbhani and Beed, Latur is the third district in Maharashtra to report cases of bird flu.

Latur district collector Pruthviraj B.P. has ordered culling of birds in 1 km radius from where birds infected with avian influenza were found in Kendrewadi and Sukni. There are nearly 15,000 birds in the 1 km radius of the place where the infected birds were found in Kendrewadi. “Samples of dead birds from Kendrawadi and Sukni were sent for testing and their results came out positive for the infection, while reports for Wanjarwadi are awaited. We have completed fitness tests of our work force and will leave for Kendrewadi for the culling operation,” an official from the animal husbandry department said.

Spurious liquor kills 12 in MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, JAN. 12

At least 12 people, including 3 members of a family, have died and 10 others hospitalised after consuming spurious liquor in 2 villages in Morena district under Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh, police said on Tuesday.

The victims hailed from villages of Manpur Prithwi and Pahawali.

“Eleven people have died so far. We are waiting for autopsy reports to ascertain the cause of their deaths”, Chambal region inspector general of police Manoj Sharma said.

Another person succumbed in the district hospital in Morena on Tuesday evening, taking the toll to 12. According to the police, the victims started reporting at various government hospitals in Morena district on the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday.

Some of them were shifted to a government hospital in Gwalior when their condition worsened. The locals later staged a blockade on National Highway-552 by laying the bodies on the road demanding compensation of ₹20 lakh each to the next of kin of the deceased.

● THE LOCALS staged a blockade on NH-552 by laying the bodies on the road demanding compensation.

Morena district collector Anurag Verma rushed to the spot along with police force to bring the situation under control.

Police registered a case against seven people under relevant sections of Indian Penal Code and Excise Act in connection with the incident.

However, no one has been arrested so far, police said. “The accused will be arrested soon”, the police officer said.

Chief Minister Shivrang Singh Chouhan placed local district excise officer Javed Khan under suspension in connection with the incident.

The station house officer of the local police station and another policeman were suspended for dereliction of duty. “A team of officers has been sent to the area to probe the incident. Action will be taken against those responsible for the tragedy”, state home minister Narottam Mishra said.

This was the second such incident in the state in the past 3 months. On October 11 last year, 11 people died in Ujjain after consuming spurious liquor.

Farmers say members of SC panel on agri laws pro-govt

Unions: Never demanded SC form a committee to resolve impasse

New Delhi, Jan. 12: Agitating farmer unions on Tuesday disapproved of the committee appointed by the Supreme Court to break the deadlock over the acts and said they will continue their protest against the three legislations.

Addressing a press conference at Singhu Border here, Union leaders claimed the members of the committee are “pro-government”, and asserted they will not appear before it.

The Supreme Court earlier in the day stayed the implementation of the controversial farm laws till further orders and set up a four-member committee to resolve the impasse between the Centre and the farmer unions protesting at Delhi’s borders over the legislations.

“The members of the SC-appointed committee are not dependable as they have been writing on how agri laws are pro-farmer. We will continue our agitation,” farmer leader Balbeer Singh Rajawel told the presser.

The farmer leader said that unions never demanded the apex court form a committee to resolve the impasse over the laws, alleging the Central government is behind these developments.

“We are against the committee on principle. It is the government’s way to distract attention from the protest,” he said. The farmer leaders said the Supreme Court can repeal the farm laws suo motu.

Another farmer leader Darshan Singh said they will not appear before any committee, adding Parliament should discuss and resolve this issue. “We don’t want any external committee,” he said. However, the farmer leaders said they would attend the January 15 meeting with the government.

The four members of the committee are BKU president Bhopinder Singh Mann, Shetkeri Sangathana (Maharashtra) president Anil Ghanwat, South Asia Director for International Food Policy Research Institute Pramod Kumar Joshi, and agriculture economist Ashok Gulati.

During the hearing, the top court sought the cooperation of the protesting farmers and made it clear that no power can prevent it from setting up a committee to resolve the impasse.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Haryana and Punjab, have been protesting at several border points of Delhi since November 28 last year, demand-



Wrestling competition organised during farmers protest against the new farm laws at Tikri border in New Delhi on Tuesday.

● FARMER LEADER Darshan Singh said they will not appear before any panel, and Parliament should discuss and resolve this issue.

ing a repeal of the three laws and a legal guarantee to the minimum support price (MSP) system for their crops.

Farmer leaders welcomed the SC’s order to stay the implementation of three farm laws on Tuesday, but said they would not call off their protest until the legislations are repealed.

The Sankhyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of around 40 protesting farmer unions, has called a meeting later in the day to decide the next course of action.

The farmer leaders said they are not willing to participate in any proceedings before a committee appointed by the Supreme Court, but a formal decision on this will be taken by the Morcha.

“We welcome the court’s order to stay the implementation of the farm laws, but we want a complete repeal of these laws, which is our main demand,” said Abhimanyu Kohar, a senior leader of the Morcha.

Another farmer leader, Harinder Lokhwal, said the protest will continue until the contentious farm laws are repealed.

“We do not have faith in the idea of a committee and we have been saying this since the very beginning, when the government had suggested the formation of a committee. But this time, it is the Supreme Court and we will see the functioning of this committee,” All India Kisan Sabha (Punjab) vice-president Lakhbir Singh said. —PTI

Agri experts welcome SC decision; term it sensible

New Delhi, Jan. 12: Eminent agriculture economists on Tuesday welcomed the Supreme Court’s decision to stay the implementation of the new farm laws till further orders and set up a four-member committee to resolve the impasse over them between the Centre and farmers’ unions protesting at Delhi borders.

Former Union minister and eminent economist Y.K. Alagh said he thinks it (the SC’s decision) is very sensible. “Because they (the SC judges) have said that you (the Centre) must do adequate preparation because the new farm laws were passed in a big hurry,” Alagh said.

He pointed out that the bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian said the Centre can develop a framework for the new farm laws only after the Covid-19 year is over.

“Because you can’t talk about trade and transport when there are lockdowns,” Alagh said. Echoing similar views, eminent economist and former Planning Commission member Abhijit Sen said, “I think it is good. It (the SC) has stayed it (the Centre’s new farm laws).” Mahendra Dev S., professor of economics at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR) also said, “That’s a good suggestion (the staying of new farm laws by the

SC).” Noting that the protesting farmers are demanding the repeal of the new farm laws and the government is only ready to amend the new farm laws, he said the panel can suggest what are the alternatives.

Talking about the state of Indian agriculture, Alagh said agriculture did well last year; it was the only sector which did well in a horrible year. “But it could do better. And, if we implement the farm laws well, we will move over from three per cent growth rate to a higher growth rate which is what we need,” he said.

Alagh also noted that the MSP (minimum support price) has to be there in Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh where rice and wheat are grown using irrigation.

“We have to develop stocks because it is foolish to say that we have got extra stocks because politics of grain trade in the world treat countries badly which don’t store well,” he said.

Alagh also argued that private trade can be regulated in private markets in other parts of the country that produce pulses, oil seeds and horticulture crops.

The former union minister also said India needs a long-term plan for agriculture. “Agriculture does not move over to a higher growth path unless you have long-term plans for irrigation, for ground water use and technology,” he said.

Alagh added that since the Modi government has abolished the Planning Commission, it would be well advised to set up a special mechanism to develop long-term plan for the agriculture in consultations with the states.

On measures needed in the upcoming Union Budget to put the pandemic-battered economy back on the growth path, Alagh said the government must raise government expenditure on infrastructure and not just have policies which have to be implemented by the banking system.

“Because the public sector bankers don’t say no to the finance minister, but they really have to worry about their own balance sheets and parliamentary accountability. So, they really do not implement these things unless there is a financial back-up by the finance ministry,” he observed.

KS Legal and Associates Managing Partner Sonam Chandwani said the four-member committee set up by the Supreme Court is part of the judicial process in this case and farmers’ unions cannot refuse to be part of it. —PTI

India, China ties disturbed: EAM

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 12

The Sino-Indian relationship has been “profoundly disturbed” especially by the bloodshed at the Galwan valley in the Ladakh sector last June in which India lost 20 soldiers during the clash with Chinese soldiers, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told a conference organised by international news agency Reuters on Tuesday.

He added that friction points between the two armies had been created along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) due to the initial unilateral massive deployment by Chinese troops at one part of the border, the reasons for which were still unclear. Jaishankar also expressed optimism over the ties with the United States.

Reuters quoted Jaishankar as saying, “After 45 years, you’ve actually had bloodshed on the border. And that’s had a huge impact on public opinion and politically. Really the impact of trust and confidence in India where China and their relationship is concerned. That has been profoundly disturbed,”



S. Jaishankar

Jaishankar said.

The EAM was further quoted as saying, “Now last year, for reasons which are not clear to us, the Chinese really brought an enormous military force to one part of the border. And then at the Line of Actual Control, obviously we moved up when we saw them coming and that has sort of created, friction points along the Line of Actual Control.”

On ties with the United States, the EAM was quoted as saying, “When I look at many of the challenges we face, the U.S. is going to be much more open looking for partners and I’m confident about where we are going with the relationship.”

Gen. Naravane says Army is ever ready

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 12

Army chief General M.M. Naravane asserted on Tuesday that Indian army is “alert and ever-ready to meet any challenge” from China and there has been no reduction in Chinese deployment in friction areas in Eastern Ladakh.

“We are prepared to hold our ground as long it takes to achieve our national goals and objectives,” said Army chief.

“It is not only the Eastern Ladakh but we have maintained a high state of alertness all along the Northern borders as of now, keeping the threat perception in mind. We have gone in for a winter posture and deployment,” he said.

Gen Naravane said that not much should be read in Chinese withdrawing troops from depth areas in the Tibetan plateau that were there for training. “There has been no decrease in strength either on the Chinese side or our side as far as the friction points are concerned,” he said.

Army Chief said that all logistics aspects have been taken care of, whether it is clothing, ration or habitat and “as a result of all this, our operational preparedness is of a very high order and the morale of the troops is high.”

“We keep saying that we are prepared to meet all challenges. But last year we

had to walk the talk and actually rise up to the occasion and show that we are indeed prepared to meet all these challenges,” he said. However, Gen Naravane said that he was hopeful that India and China will be able to reach an agreement to resolve the eastern Ladakh standoff.

“We are now awaiting the date of 9th round of Corps Commanders talks. I am sure that through dialogue and discussion, we will be able to reach an amicable solution based on the principle of mutual and equal security,” he said.

On whether status quo has been changed in Eastern Ladakh, he replied, “as far as the situation in Eastern Ladakh is concerned, the situation is same as prevailing last year. There has been no change in the status quo.” Army chief said that Pakistan and China together form a “potent” threat, and the threat of collusion “cannot be wished away. He said that there is an increased cooperation between China and Pakistan in both military and non-military fields and “two front threat is really something we have to be prepared to deal with.”

Army chief informed that he had initiated a proposal last month that women officers can be recruited to Army aviation. “We are thinking that in the next course in July 2021, we will admit women officers for pilot training,” he added.

All states to receive Covid vaccine by Jan. 14

VINEETA PANDEY | DC  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 12

The central government has started procurement and transportation of the Covid-19 vaccines for the nationwide inoculation drive that begins from January 16. Union health secretary Ramesh Bhushan said on Tuesday that the entire doses of 1.10 crore of Oxford vaccine Covishield by the Serum Institute of India (SII) and 55 lakh of Covaxin from Bharat Biotech — will by January 14 reach all states and Union Territories.

Bhushan said already 54.72 lakh doses of the vaccines have reached designated national and state-level stores till Tuesday afternoon.

He clarified that apart from the ordered vaccines, Bharat Biotech is also giving 16.5 lakh doses of its Covaxin for free to the government as a goodwill gesture.

“55 lakh doses of Covaxin are being procured from Bharat Biotech. For 38.5 lakh doses the price is ₹295 each, excluding taxes. Bharat Biotech is providing 16.5 lakh doses for free as a goodwill gesture which ultimately brings

the cost of Covaxin down to ₹206 per dose,” Bhushan said.

The 1.1 crore doses of Covishield vaccine are being procured from SII at the cost of ₹200 per dose, excluding taxes. More vaccines will be ordered in the coming days.

Covaxin will also be supplied to Brazil and other countries.

NITI Aayog member (health) Dr. V.K. Paul said both Covishield and Covaxin have been tested on a large number of people and “are the safest with no risk of any significant side effect.”

The health secretary said that four other vaccine candidates by Zydus Cadila, Russia’s Sputnik V, Biological E and Gennova are also in advanced stage of clinical trials and once they are cleared by the Drugs Controller General of India, they will be available to people.

As the first shipment of the vaccines rolled out, SII CEO Adar Poonawala said it was a historic and emotional moment for his team and he hoped that the vaccine reached everyone this year. Covishield vaccines were initially brought to the four Central Government



Serum Institute of India chief Adar Poonawala sits on a truck loaded with Covishield vaccines during the dispatch of the first shipments of the vaccine doses. — PTI

Medical Stores Depots — at Chennai, Karnal, Kolkata and Mumbai — and then dispatched to different regional medical

stories in states. Bhushan said some big states have multiple stores.

For instance, Uttar Pradesh has nine, Madhya

● ALREADY 54.72 lakh doses of the vaccines have reached designated national and state-level stores till Tuesday afternoon.

● THE 1.1 CRORE doses of Covishield vaccine are being procured from SII at the cost of ₹200 per dose, excluding taxes. More vaccines will be ordered in the coming days.

Pradesh and Gujarat have four each, Kerala has three, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka and Rajasthan two each.

Meanwhile, the Health Secretary said the Covid-19 situation is still worrisome across the world and even though daily cases are declining in India.

The official said the effectiveness of the vaccines can be observed only after 14 days, till then people must maintain Covid-appropriate behavior and follow protocols like masks, distancing etc.

The country on Tuesday reported 12,584 fresh cases and 167 new deaths in the last 24 hours. This was the lowest in the last seven months.

ODISHA GETS 1ST CONSIGNMENT OF 4.08L DOSES

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC  
BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 12

The Odisha government on Tuesday received over 4 lakh doses of the much-awaited Covid-19 vaccine for the roll-out of the mass immunisation drive against Coronavirus in the first phase on January 16, said additional chief secretary (health) P.K. Mohapatra on Tuesday.

“On Tuesday Odisha received around 4.08 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine prepared by the Serum Institute. Apart from this, the state has also received a letter from the Centre regarding despatch of another 20,000 doses of Covaxin,” said Dr C.B.K. Mohanty, state Director of Medical Education and Research (DMET).

“Everybody across the state was desperately waiting for this moment. We are happy that the Covid-19 vaccine consignment has arrived in the state,” said Dr Mohanty.



## SHORT TAKES

MINE BLAST:  
EFFORTS ON TO  
FREE 22 CHINESE

Beijing, Jan. 12: Rescuers are seeking to free 22 Chinese workers trapped underground for more than two days following an explosion at a partially built gold mine in the country's east, state media reported on Tuesday.

Some 300 rescuers were seeking to clear obstructions to reach the workers, whose condition remains unknown, the reports said. The mine in the eastern province of Shandong was under construction at the time of the explosion. The cause of the blast has not been announced.

Mine managers did not report the explosion to authorities in the city of Yantai until Monday evening.

China's mining industry focused on coal used to be the world's deadliest, suffering more than 5,000 fatalities a year from explosions, floods and gas leaks.

2 CAPITOL COPS  
SUSPENDED  
AFTER ATTACK

Washington, Jan. 12: Democratic Representative Tim Ryan of Ohio says two US Capitol Police officers have been suspended as a result of their actions during last week's attack on the Capitol.

Ryan told reporters on Monday that one of the officers took a selfie with someone and the second officer put on a "Make America Great Again" hat. He says of the latter that the "interim chief determined that to be qualifying for immediate suspension." Thousands of pro-Donald Trump insurrectionists stormed the Capitol, forcing lawmakers to flee and hide. Five people died, including a Capitol Police officer.

The congressman says Capitol Police are looking at everybody involved that could have potentially facilitated the incursion "at a big level or small level in any way". Capitol Police did not immediately reply to a request for more details.

1ST EXECUTION  
OF U.S. FEMALE  
IN 67 YEARS

Mission (US), Jan. 12: The US government on Tuesday prepared to carry out its first execution of a female inmate in nearly seven decades — a Kansas woman who killed an expectant mother in Missouri, cut the baby from her womb and passed off the newborn as her own.

Lisa Montgomery faces execution at the Federal Correctional Complex in Terre Haute, Indiana, just eight days before President-elect Joe Biden, an opponent of the federal death penalty, takes office.

Montgomery drove about 170 miles (273.59 kilometres) from her Melvern, Kansas, farmhouse to the northwest Missouri town of Skidmore under the guise of adopting a rat terrier puppy from Bobbie Jo Stinnett, a 23-year-old dog breeder. She strangled Stinnett with a rope before performing a crude cesarean and fleeing with the baby. She was arrested the next day after showing off the premature infant, Victoria Jo, who is now 16 years old and hasn't spoken publicly.

HOLOCAUST  
SURVIVOR  
TUCARMAN DIES

Bucharest, Jan. 12: Iancu Tucarmán, one of the last remaining Holocaust survivors in Romania, was buried after dying from Covid-19 last week. He was 98.

Dozens gathered at Tucarmán's funeral in Bucharest on Monday to pay respects and mark a horrific legacy of World War II. The funeral was held in line with anti-virus measures. Tucarmán died on January 8 after battling the Coronavirus. Romania has been hit hard in the outbreak, recording more than 16,000 deaths in the country of 19 million people.

Tucarmán was 18 years old in June 1941 when German and pro-Nazi Romanian troops rounded up thousands of other Jews in the northwest city of Iasi during the events that became known as the "Iasi Pogrom". Iasi Jews were crammed into trains and driven around Romania until most of them suffocated inside or died of dehydration. About 13,000 people died. Upon capture in Iasi, Tucarmán was first brought to the police station along with around 5,000 Jews, nearly half of whom were shot or beaten to death.

## US Acting Homeland Security chief quits

Wolf resigns over the storming of the US Capitol by outgoing President Donald Trump's supporters

‘Armed protests’ planned at  
all capitols, Washington: FBI

Washington, Jan. 12: Chad Wolf, the acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, has resigned over the storming of the US Capitol by outgoing President Donald Trump's supporters. His resignation comes amidst Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) warning of a nationwide "armed protests" being planned in the run-up to President-elect Joe Biden's January 20 inauguration.

Wolf — whose department oversees numerous federal law enforcement bodies and also is in charge of security for Biden's inauguration ceremony — said last week that he was staying in his position until the end of Trump's administration on January 20.

"I am saddened to take this step, as it was my intention to serve the department until the end of this administration," Wolf wrote in an email to the staff of the Department of Homeland Security on Monday. "Unfortunately, this action is warranted by recent events, including the ongoing and merit-less court rulings regarding the validity of my authority as Acting Secretary."

These events and concerns increasingly serve to divert attention and resources away from the important work of the department in this critical time of a transition of power," he said. His resignation comes into effect from Monday midnight.

Peter Gaynor, Administrator of Federal Emergency

Management Agency, replaces Wolf as DHS acting secretary for the remaining duration of the Trump administration.

He is the third Cabinet member of the Trump administration to resign after the January 6 incident that resulted in the death of five people, including a police officer. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and the Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao resigned last week.

Congressman Bennie Thompson, Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, in a statement said for months Wolf has been serving illegally in his position. "So the

timing of his resignation from the Department today is questionable. He has chosen to resign during a time of national crisis and when domestic terrorists may be planning additional attacks on our government. Unlike others, he is apparently not leaving the Trump administration on principle," he said.

"If it is true he is resigning because of recent Federal court decisions, then it is an admission that his policy decisions are indeed invalid. Under this scenario, Ken Cuccinelli must also resign," Thompson said.

Wolf joins a growing exodus of officials in the final

days of the Trump administration.

US Deputy National Security Advisor Matt Pottinger, first lady Melania Trump's chief of staff Stephanie Grisham, White House Deputy Press Secretary Sarah Matthews, White House social secretary Rickie Niceta, US special envoy for Northern Ireland Mick Mulvane, acting chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisors Tyler Goodspeed and deputy assistant secretary for intelligence and security at the Commerce Department John Costello are among the officials who have resigned over the Capitol violence.

— AP

one other bulletin — they go out to law enforcement nationwide on the topic — before the riots last week.

On December 29, it warned of the potential for armed demonstrators targeting legislatures, the second official said. Army General Daniel Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau, told reporters Monday that the Guard is also looking at any issues across the country. The riots followed weeks of online calls for violence in Washington in the waning days of Donald Trump's presidency.

— AP

days of the Trump administration. US Deputy National Security Advisor Matt Pottinger, first lady Melania Trump's chief of staff Stephanie Grisham, White House Deputy Press Secretary Sarah Matthews, White House social secretary Rickie Niceta, US special envoy for Northern Ireland Mick Mulvane, acting chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisors Tyler Goodspeed and deputy assistant secretary for intelligence and security at the Commerce Department John Costello are among the officials who have resigned over the Capitol violence.

— PTI

Washington, Jan. 12: US President-elect Joe Biden on Monday named two Indian Americans — Reema Shah and Neha Gupta — to the Office of the White House Counsel.

Shah, who had served on the debate preparation team for Biden on the Biden-Harris Campaign, has been named as Deputy Associate Counsel while Gupta, currently an attorney in the Office of the General Counsel for the Biden-Harris Transition, has been named as Associate Counsel in the Office of the White House Counsel. Shah was an associate at Latham & Watkins and a Bristow Fellow in the Office of the Solicitor General at the Department of Justice. She served as a law clerk to Justice Elena Kagan on the US Supreme Court and Judge Sri Srinivasan on the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit.

Originally from New Jersey, Shah is a graduate of Harvard College, Cambridge University and Yale Law School. On the other hand, Gupta served as a Deputy City Attorney in the San Francisco City Attorney's Office, where she was general counsel to several city agencies, litigated constitutional and statutory challenges to city laws and administra-

## INDIAN-AMERICANS IN BIDEN ADMIN

1. Neera Tanden, Director of the Office of Management and Budget
2. Dr Vivek Murthy, Surgeon General
3. Vanita Gupta, Associate Attorney General
4. Ali Zaidi, Deputy National Climate Advisor
5. Gautam Raghavan, Deputy Director of the Office of Presidential Personnel
6. Bharat Ramamurti, Deputy Director for the National Economic Council for Financial Reform and Consumer Protection
7. Vinay Reddy, Director of Speechwriting
8. Rohini Kosoglu,

- Domestic Policy Advisor to the Vice President
9. Shanthi Kalathil, Coordinator for Democracy and Human Rights
10. Mala Adiga, Policy Director to Dr Jill Biden
11. Tarun Chhabra, Senior Director for Technology and National Security
12. Sumona Guha, Senior Director for South Asia
13. Aisha Shah, Partnerships Manager, Office of Digital Strategy
14. Sabrina Singh, Deputy Press Secretary, Office of the Vice President
15. Vedant Patel, Assistant Press Secretary

tive decisions, and participated in the office's affirmative public protection advocacy. Previously, Gupta clerked for Judge Michael Daly Hawkins of the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and Judge Richard Seeborg of the US District Court for the Northern District of California. A New York native born to Indian immigrants, Gupta is a graduate of Harvard College and Stanford Law School. Biden also named Samiyyah Ali as Deputy Associate Counsel, Funmi Olorunnipa

Badejo as Associate Counsel, Tona Boyd as Special Counsel, Megan Ceronisky as Associate Counsel, Martine Cicconi as Associate Counsel, Sean Crotty as Associate Counsel and Ashley Deeks as Associate Counsel and Deputy Legal Advisor to the National Security Council. These individuals will, under the direction of White House Counsel Dana Remus, help restore faith in the rule of law and the accountability of government institutions, the transition said.

— PTI

China expands lockdowns,  
local conference delayed

Beijing, Jan. 12: Lockdowns have been expanded and a major political conference postponed in a province next to Beijing that is the scene of China's most serious recent Covid-19 outbreak.

Residents of the city of Gu'an just south of Beijing have been ordered to stay home for seven days starting from Tuesday. Similar measures have been ordered around the country, particularly in the central city of Wuhan where 11 million people were placed under lockdown for 76 days last winter as the pandemic was just beginning.

Hebei has also delayed the meetings of the provincial People's Congress and its advisory body that are usually held in February. It wasn't clear when the meetings would be held. China last year postponed the holding of the National People's Congress and its advisory body in Beijing from March until May, shortening the sessions and limiting media access in a sign of the seriousness with which the ruling Communist Party was treating the outbreak.

Hebei's provincial health commission on Tuesday reported 40 new confirmed cases, all but one in the provincial capital of Shijiazhuang just south of Beijing where transport links have been cut and residents told to stay home. Local authorities say several dozen of the more than 300 confirmed cases reported this year in the city appear to be linked to wedding gatherings. One new case was reported in Beijing, where more than a dozen communities and villages have been put under lockdown.

— AP

WHO experts to  
visit Wuhan: China

Beijing, Jan. 12: World Health Organisation experts will visit the city of Wuhan, where the Coronavirus was first detected in late 2019, at the start of their investigation into the origins of the pandemic, China said on Tuesday.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said the experts will arrive in Wuhan on Thursday. Other details of their schedule haven't been announced and the central government's National Health Commission offered no

further information. The visit has been expected for months. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus expressed frustration last week that arrangements were taking so long to finalise. After China announced the visit Monday, Tedros said the scientists, who come from several nations, will focus on how the Coronavirus first jumped to people.

"Studies will begin in Wuhan to identify the potential source of infection of the early cases," Tedros said.

— AP

EMERGENCY  
IMPOSED IN  
MALAYSIA

Kuala Lumpur, Jan. 12: Malaysia's king on Tuesday approved a Coronavirus emergency that will suspend parliament at least until August and halt any bids to seek a general election in a political reprieve for embattled Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin.

Muhyiddin assured citizens in a televised speech that the emergency was "not a military coup and curfew will not be enforced."

He said his civilian government will remain in charge during the emergency, that will last until August 1 or earlier depending on the situation.

— AP

EU REGULATOR  
GETS OXFORD VAX  
NOD REQUEST

London, Jan. 12: The European Medicines Agency said AstraZeneca and Oxford University have submitted an application for their Covid-19 vaccine to be licensed across the European Union.

In a statement on Tuesday, the EU regulator said it has received a request for the vaccine to be green-lighted under an expedited process and that it could be approved by January 29 during an EMA meeting, "provided that the data submitted on the quality, safety and efficacy of the vaccine are sufficiently robust and complete". The drugs agency for EU has already okayed two other vaccines.

— AP



Military Chief Hadi Tjahjono (C) along with head of National Transportation Safety Committee Soerjanto Tjahjono (back-R), head of National Search and Rescue Bagus Puruhito (L), and Transport Minister Budi Karya Sumadi, (1st-L with red vest) examine debris of Sriwijaya Air flight SJ182 Boeing 737-500 which crashed on January 9, at Tanjung Priok port in Jakarta on Tuesday.

— AP

## Divers recover plane ‘black box’

Jakarta, Jan. 12: Indonesian navy divers searching the ocean floor on Tuesday recovered the flight data recorder from a Sriwijaya Air jet that crashed into the Java Sea with 62 people on board.

The device is expected to help investigators determine what caused the Boeing 737-500 plane to nose-dive into the ocean in heavy rain shortly after taking off from Jakarta on Saturday. TV stations showed divers on an inflatable vessel with a large white container containing the device heading to a Jakarta port.

Military chief Air Chief Marshal Hadi Tjahjono said the plane's other "black box," the cockpit

voice recorder, was likely to be found soon because its beacon was being emitted in the same area. The devices were buried in seabed mud under tons of sharp objects in the plane's wreckage, navy Chief Adm. Yudo Margono said.

He said at least 160 divers were deployed Tuesday in the search. More than 3,600 rescue personnel, 13 helicopters, 54 large ships and 20 small boats are searching the area just north of Jakarta where Flight 182 crashed and have found parts of the plane and human remains in the water at a depth of 23 metres (75 feet).

So far, the searchers have sent 74 body bags containing human remains to

police identification experts who on Monday said they had identified their first victim, 29-year-old flight attendant Okky Bisma. His wife, Aldha Refa, who is also a flight attendant for Sriwijaya Air, shared her grief in a series of posts on social media.

"My husband is a loving, devoted and super kind man," she wrote on Instagram. "Heaven is your place, dear ... be peaceful there."

Anguished family members have been providing samples for DNA tests and police say results are expected in 4-8 days. National Police spokesman Rusdi Hartono said about 53 samples for DNA testing have been collected but more are still needed, especially from parents and children of victims.

— AP

Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Committee said the US National Transportation Safety Board will join in investigating the crash.

The NTSC chairman, Soerjanto Tjahjono, ruled out a possible midair breakup after seeing the condition of the wreckage found by searchers. He said the jet was intact until it struck the water, concentrating the debris field, rather than spreading it out over a large area as would be seen with a midair event. The disaster has reignited concerns about safety in Indonesia's aviation industry.

— AP

## HUNTING | EXCURSION

The meat of the bird houbara bustard is considered by Arabs to be an aphrodisiac

## Imran permits Dubai royals to hunt protected bird

COURT SENTENCES THREE FOR VANDALISING GURDWARA NANKANA SAHIB

Islamabad, Jan. 12: The Pakistan government has issued at least seven special permits to Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum and six other members of the ruling family to hunt the internationally protected bird houbara bustard during the 2020-21 hunting season. Prime Minister Imran Khan, who has earlier opposed such permits for Arab royals, this time personally approved the special pass, reported the Dawn newspaper.

The foreign ministry's

deputy chief of protocol issued the documents after approval by the prime minister, the daily reported quoting sources. The permits were delivered to the UAE Embassy in Islamabad. Apart from Dubai Ruler Rashid Al-Maktoum, the others given permits are the crown prince, deputy ruler and finance and industries minister, deputy police chief, an army official, two other members of the royal family and a businessman.

Khan, when in Opposition, had campaigned against

such hunting excursions by the rich Arab families, who annually visit Pakistan to hunt the endangered bird. A Saudi prince, Fahd bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, is said to have gunned down 1,977 birds on reserved and protected areas over 21 days in January 2014, while other members of his party killed another 123 birds.

The killing resulted in a lot of criticism but the practice has been going on. The bird's meat is considered by Arabs to be an aphrodisiac.

— PTI

Lahore, Jan. 12: Pakistan's Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Tuesday awarded up to two years imprisonment to three accused involved in vandalising Gurdwara Nankana Sahib in the country's Punjab province.

Gurdwara Nankana Sahib, also known as Gurdwara Janam Asthan, is a site near Lahore where the first Guru of Sikhs, Guru Nanak, was born. In January 2020, a violent mob had attacked

the Gurdwara and pelted stones in the name of religion and threatened to destroy the minorities worship place (Gurdwara Janamasthan) to build "Ghulam-e-Mustafa" shrine there. However, police had controlled the situation.

"On Tuesday a Lahore's ATC handed down two years jail term to prime accused Imran Chishti and imposed a fine of 10,000 Pakistani Rupees. Two other accused — Mu-

hammad Salman and Muhammad Ahmed — were convicted for six months. However, four other accused were acquitted for want of evidence," a court official said.

All the suspects were present in the court when the sentence was announced. Strict security measures were taken to handle any protest by the religious elements in the wake of their conviction. Imran Chishti, a government em-

ployee working in the Fisheries Department, and other suspects were arrested under terrorism and blasphemy charges following the attack on the Gurdwara last year.

They faced charges under sections 295A, 290, 291, 341, 506, 148 and 149 of Pakistan Penal Code and 7-ATA (anti-terrorism act). According to the FIR, Chishti had incited the Muslim mob in the name of religion.

— PTI



# DECCAN Chronicle

13 JANUARY 2021

## Not court's call to have panel review farm laws

The order of the Supreme Court on Tuesday staying the implementation of the three recently passed laws to regulate farming in India and the formation of a four-member committee to study them is perplexing, to say the least. The court issued the order while hearing petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the laws.

While the court is very well within its rights to stay the operation of a law suspecting it to be ultra vires on the Constitution, it defies logic when it appoints a committee to study an aspect of the law other than legal. It must be reiterated that the highest court of the land has not been called upon to adjudicate on the impact of a government action borne out of a government policy; it has been asked strictly to subject that action to judicial review and see if it meets the constitutional and legal requirements.

The court's move is worrisome on many counts even when one does not count the selective activism it demonstrates. One, by appointing a committee on a government action, and saying it will issue an order based on the report of that committee, the court is seeking to have a say on government policy. It was only recently that another bench of the same court, in its judgment on petitions against the Central Vista project, made it clear that the court does not have the wherewithal to sit in judgment on a government policy and that the Parliament is the right forum to debate it. Now, the court has, instead of performing its job as the interpreter of the Constitution, chosen to be a mediator and influencer on government policy. This is a dangerous proposition, as it goes against the spirit of the Constitution, which is clear on the separation of powers.

The same logic applies to the farmers, too. They have no compulsion to go by the court even if it finds the laws are beneficial to them. They can continue with their agitation and the Chief Justice of India, who heads the bench, has repeatedly clarified that the farmers have every right to hold peaceful protests. On the other hand, the court can hardly order scrapping of the laws even if it finds them to be detrimental to the interests of farmers. That people who are sympathetic to the farmers' cause have already come out arguing that all the members in the panel have supported the three laws in varying degrees poses another question mark on its legitimacy.

The farmer's grouse is simple — the government is trying to withdraw from supporting the farming sector and is handing it over to the private corporates. They see a policy in it and oppose it. The government can either convince them that they are indeed in their interest or convince itself that they are not so, and repeal them. Either way, it should be a political decision. The farmers know it well, and hence they insist that they were not raising a legal question. The apex court must see their logic, instead of ordering them to cooperate with the committee it has appointed.

## Test of character

A battered and bruised Team India would not surrender. In a display of courage perhaps unequalled in 74 years of Test matches against Australians who are considered the cricket world's toughest opponents, Team India drew the third Test in Sydney and go to Brisbane with the scores 1-1. A series-winning chance is intact though the squad has sustained a huge number of injuries, besides losing its skipper to paternal leave who coincidentally was blessed with a daughter on the famous day his team did their "Dunkirk Act" at SCG under able replacement Ajinkya Rahane.

Courage can too readily be equated with sporting achievement but in this case bravery was the foremost quality that saw Ravichandran Ashwin, barely able to get up from bed with a sore back and Hanuma Vihari, who had strained a hamstring, fight a lengthy rearguard action right up to the draw of stumps. Such resolute resistance in the face of "sledding" (as derived from sledgehammer blows aimed at mental disintegration of batsmen) brought out the worst in the Australians, especially in captain Tim Paine, who was the white knight riding in to rescue his country's cricket from an "Ugly Aussie" image.

A draw is also a result in Test cricket and a hard fought one often exemplifies an indomitable spirit unwilling to accept defeat. Such a position would not have been possible if not for Rishabh Pant playing like the fearless modern white ball cricketer and a stoic Cheteswar Pujara joining him in attack mode as if his younger colleague had inspired him. A glimpse of victory may have faded when Pant threw it away because he does not quite possess the temperament of specialist batsmen who treasure a milestone century.

The Aussies aimed at breaking the resistance with a new ball at red hot pace directed at the bodies of Ashwin and Vihari who have bruises to show as valorous badges. To rally from the depths of despair of 36 all out to win the second Test and then draw the third is an epic achievement and BCCI's tweet in salute was apt — "Bruised. Broken. But never short of character".

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Subhani



## Educational activism of a different kind is needed



Devi Kar

I have been an "examination warrior" of sorts for years. But in a different sense to the title of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's book of the same name. Mr Modi has written a useful book to help students "slay" exams. There is a contradiction here, though, because while he urges students to treat exams like festivals (I rather liked this approach), he also advises students to be "warriors" implying that examinations are something to be conquered. My fight has been with the school examination system which requires students in their last year of school to write papers for hours at a stretch and their entry into college depends to a degree on the results of this single examination. Educators have observed to their satisfaction that many examination reforms were necessitated by the current Covid-19 pandemic. However, the same pandemic has given birth to a horrific practice, which must be nipped in the bud. This is the testing of pre-primary children for admission into school.

Even in pre-Covid times I used to be horrified to hear that little children were interviewed and assessed by the school authorities for admission into the nursery classes. Most of these children were already attending playschools, some of which would "prepare" these tiny mites, all of 18 months of age, for "The Interview in The Big School". Mock interviews would be held so that the tots would get used to interacting with unfamiliar persons. Parents too would be given practice in

responding "intelligently" to expected questions. It is believed that parents too are subtly assessed by schools to see whether they matched their preferred "client profile". On questioning parents, I learned that some of them were even advised to dress in a particular manner. No wonder that some parents were so formally dressed that they looked as if they were attending a convocation ceremony. The fathers were suited and booted and were sporting ties, the mothers were in elegant attire while the toddlers were fitted out in their best partywear. All this for a virtual interaction from the comfort of their homes.

It is unkind to put parents through this kind of ordeal. They are already tense because even having dutifully rehearsed for the "test" with their little toddlers, there was no guarantee that the little things would perform at the right time "on command". At this age children should indulge in free play, they should learn from the environment, dance, sing and run around. Why should they be subjected to virtual lessons, be made to sit in front of the screen and learn the letters of the alphabet and names of colours and fruits? Even if children of this age get accustomed to learning from "the screen ma'am", this sort of regimentation is quite premature. When I asked some of the parents why they subject themselves and their children to this kind of "torture", one parent gave a telling reply. He said that they were so eager to admit their children into certain favoured schools that they were afraid of

objecting to the admission procedure and risk their application being rejected.

It was bad enough in the past, but in this pandemic year it was disturbing to be told that children who had not even turned two were being made to attend virtual lessons. Some parents went for customised activity packages which I learnt were delivered at intervals so that the curriculum could be tackled in a methodical way. Other parents said that they were lucky to find a Montessori teacher in the neighbourhood who came to their housing complex and taught a group of toddlers on a regular basis. This arrangement gave their children the much-needed opportunity to socialise with other children of the same age.

On deeper questioning, it became evident that this whole exercise of attempting to "educate" toddlers was largely to prepare them for entry into the primary department of one of the reputed schools.

In this context I have some questions to ask the authorities and teachers of the schools that assess such small children before admitting them. The first and most important question is: "Can you really identify the brighter children on the basis of naming a few colours, fruits and vegetables?" Children develop at their own individual pace and at this age you cannot make out anything about their

**I am calling out all schools that test pre-primary children for admission into their nursery or kindergarten classes. You are adopting a practice that goes against the principles of pre-primary education, besides adding stress to the already stressful lives of parents.**

potential. Over the decades that I have been in school education, I have seen enough to know that there are late bloomers, there are moody children and quiet ones who have eventually turned out to be outstanding students. Conversely, I have seen little children mastering formal schoolwork at the basic stages but falling behind when there was need for more complex work involving problem-solving or independent thinking. My next question is: "Will you reject a child who refuses to answer your questions or suddenly tires of the whole thing and starts bawling?" I remember the case of one little girl who stubbornly refused to tell the head teacher her name. On the way home, when her mother asked why she hadn't opened her mouth, she said: "My name was written on the card that you pinned to my dress, why was she asking me?"

Some children are precocious, but precociousness is not equivalent to giftedness. In fact, it is accepted that IQ tests are not reliable in the case of very young children as the intelligence quotient of a child takes some years to stabilise. As for assessing parents, I suppose schools, like clubs, may feel entitled to have their own criteria for parents.

But this article is more about unfairness to children. I am calling out all schools that test pre-primary children for admission into their nursery or kindergarten classes. You are adopting a practice that goes against the principles of pre-primary education, besides adding stress to the already stressful lives of parents. Finally, you are guilty of giving some of these little children their first taste of failure. Activists need to urge the schools to stop this insensitive practice at once.

*The writer is a veteran school educator based in Kolkata*

### LETTERS

#### BUDGET PLANS

This has reference to 'Sitharaman's Third Act: What'll be her Big Idea?' by Sanjaya Baru (DC, Jan. 11). The author has expressed his views clearly. The article is apt and pertinent ahead of the annual Budget. The main takeaway is that sustained high economic growth is a function of domestic political stability and moderation.

**Dr C. Ghanshyam**  
*Visakhapatnam*

#### SEC MUST CLARIFY

State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar has to explain his position very clearly for postponing the local body polls way back in March last year when the process was midway through. SEC should accept the situation and defer the panchayat polls.

**Govardhana Myneedu**  
*Vijayawada*

#### FARM LAWS

The apex court has pressed the pause button on the farmers issue. The expert committee can help the apex court understand the nuances of the laws and their implications. The apex court's decision has given space for both parties to start afresh.

**Dr D.V.G. Sankararao**  
*Vizianagaram*

The Supreme Court decision helps the agitating farmers morally as the apex court has expressed displeasure over the Modi government's handling of the agitation over the three farm laws. It is better for Centre to repeal the laws.

**Panchakarla Govardhana Rao**  
*Kankipadu*

### 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

#### No more talks with TPS: CM

HYDERABAD, January 12.

The Chief Minister, Mr. K. Brahmananda Reddi today ruled out any further talks "either by me or the Central leaders" with the Telangana Praja Samithi.

Talking to reporters soon after his return from Delhi the Chief Minister said that the final list of the ruling Congress contestants to Lok Sabha from the State would be released the Parliamentary Board on January 15.

Jawed Naqvi



## Trump bid for a 'coup' in DC follows a long US tradition!

It's still a week to go before Donald Trump demits control of the nuclear codes, and US whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg is seeing mischief afoot in the Gulf. With Iran as a potential target of the defeated President's sublimated rage, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has shared the larger concern with the US military, but there's little news about what the Pentagon's response was. Ms Pelosi discussed with the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff the "available precautions for preventing an unstable President from initiating military hostilities or accessing the launch codes and ordering a nuclear strike".

The world is waiting out the fraught days before Joe Biden can put the doomsday trigger out of reach of the "unstable" Mr Trump. True to form, Mr Trump plans to fly away to Scotland a day before Mr Biden's January 20 inauguration. The white supremacist hero is adulated by the global right, and there's no dearth of those who see in him their role model.

It's quite likely that other than dodging inevitable criminal cases he will be slapped with and the barrage of legal probes expected to be

ordered into his dodgy tenure, Mr Trump hopes to use the overseas stay to keep the racist pot boiling. His American fans and other right-wing groups will hang on to every word he utters to pliable or conniving TV anchors.

The delusional right-wing assault on Capitol Hill by men and women smitten to death by Mr Trump's fantasy world may seem ordinary by America's own standards. As the wag said: "Given travel restrictions in view of the pandemic, the US had to stage this year's coup in Washington DC." Another gleefully had a rejoinder. "The coup failed because there were no US embassies in America."

It was America that applauded Boris Yeltsin in a similar but more successful endeavour at murdering democracy. It was only 30 years ago that Mr Yeltsin was guided by US intelligence to bombard the Russian Parliament in a fatal assault on his rivals, the Communist deputies in the Duma. Mr Yeltsin deployed tanks and heavy weapons to blow up his own Parliament. US intelligence helped him break into the Russian military communications channels, according to Seymour Hersh's 1994

revelations of the US-aided coup.

As soon as deputies staged their resistance to Mr Yeltsin's pro-market reforms on August 18, 1991, and moved to impeach him, America's NSA, according to Hersh, was able to decrypt conversations between the two leaders, Vladimir Kryuchkov, KGB chairman, and Dmitri Yazov, defence minister, taking place over a supposedly secure hotline. President George H.W. Bush, himself a former CIA chief, ordered the information to be given to Mr Yeltsin. However, according to Hersh, fearing Russian reaction if word of American interference leaked out, Mr Bush broke the law by not telling Congress. In a parallel move, he also set into motion the dismantling of the secular, pro-Moscow Arab structures, inflicting the first military defeat on Saddam Hussein.

Why should it surprise that Mike Pompeo, author of Mr Trump's anti-Iran military buildup, also has his roots in US intelligence? He became secretary of state after a stint as head of the CIA. Consider it a curious irony in the end that Donald Trump, who seemed to loathe US agencies and had nothing nice to say

about the CIA or any other outfit, became so dependent on the machinations of the Deep State. How would that change for Mr Biden?

Daniel Ellsberg described in *The Guardian* recently the increased danger of a US military assault on Iran under Mr Trump's supervision. If that comes about, it would also have the fingerprints of Benjamin Netanyahu and Mike Pompeo.

"President Trump's incitement of criminal mob violence and occupation of the Capitol makes clear there is no limit on the abuse of power he may commit in the next two weeks. Outrageous as his incendiary (action) was on Wednesday, I fear he may incite something far more dangerous in the next few days: his long-desired war with Iran," Ellsberg wrote.

Ellsberg reports the dispatch a fortnight ago of B-52s nonstop round-trip from North Dakota to the Iranian coast. He says it was the fourth such flight in seven weeks, one at year's end — along with his buildup of US forces in the area. It is a "warning not only to Iran but to us".

According to Ellsberg, by mid-November, as the B-52 flights began, Mr Trump had to be dissuaded at the

highest levels from directing an unprovoked attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. But an attack "provoked" by Iran (or by militias in Iraq aligned with Iran) was not ruled out.

US military and intelligence agencies have frequently provided presidents with false information that offered pretexts to attack America's perceived adversaries, says the author of the Pentagon Papers. It is not unusual for US militaries to suggest covert actions that could provoke the adversaries to some response that justifies US "retaliation".

Ellsberg refers to the assassination of Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, Iran's top nuclear scientist, in November, and the killing exactly a year ago of Gen. Soleimani. Iran didn't rise to the bait.

Mr Trump is running out of time to generate a ruse to block resumption of the Iran nuclear deal by the incoming Biden administration. "US military and covert planning staffs are up to the task of attempting to meet that challenge, on schedule." Powerful interests rather than the constellations may want the teacup not to reach the lip.

*By arrangement with Dawn*



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49517.11	0.50
Nifty 50	14563.50	0.54
S&P 500*	3,803.94	0.11
Dollar (₹)	73.25	0.27
Pound Sterling (₹)	86.01	-0.05
Euro (₹)	81.51	-0.05
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,946.297	0.60
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	56.43	1.38
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.931	0.12
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.168	0.034

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

5% more income tax returns filed this year

I-T returns filed this year have risen by about 5 per cent to nearly 6 crore as more businesses and entities filed annual income statements. Over 5.95 crore income-tax returns for the fiscal year 2019-20 were filed by Jan. 10, the Income Tax Department said. The ITR filing deadline for individuals ended on Jan. 10 while for companies it is till Feb. 15. The department in a tweet said 5.95 crore ITRs for AY 2020-21 were filed.

Karnataka Bank Q3 profit rises 10% to ₹135 cr



Private sector lender Karnataka Bank reported a 10 per cent increase in net profit at Rs 135.38 crore for the December quarter on account of a decline in bad loans. The Mangalore-headquartered bank had reported a net profit of Rs 123.14 crore in the year-ago period. Total income declined to Rs 1,868.62 crore from Rs 1,993.68 crore. The gross NPAs eased to 3.16 per cent of assets from 4.99 per cent.

NMDC adopts most advanced SAP ERP system

NMDC announced implementation of SAP Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution. This solution will help India's largest ore miner to integrate and consolidate all the business process end-to-end and improvement operational efficiency. Flagg off the go-live event, Sumit Deb, CMD, said NMDC is the first CPSE to implement ERP solutions on the most advanced platform SAP-S/4 HANA, on a large scale, with over 2,000 users.

BMW 220i Gran Coupe M Sport at ₹40.90 lakh

BMW, India's second biggest luxury car maker, expanded its 2 Series Gran Coupe range in India by launching the 220i M Sport variant at an introductory price of Rs 40.90 lakh at pan India showroom. The new petrol-powered version of the sedan joins the two diesel variants, the 220d Sport Line and the 220d M Sport, that were launched in October last year. The sedan is locally produced at BMW factory near Chennai.



Only 40-57% of claim amounts reimbursed Insurers go stingy with Covid claims

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JAN. 12

Though the number of Covid-19 claims settled by non-life insurance companies has risen sequentially during the December quarter, the claim amount settled by them against the amounts claimed, has not increased in the same proportion. This indicates that policyholders are now paying a significant portion of the claim amount from their pockets owing to disagreements between hospitals and insurers on charges.

Sample this, during October to December 27, the total number of claims reported were 4.23 lakh, of these 83 per cent, or 3.51 lakh, claims were settled. However, in value terms, claims worth Rs 6,235.8 crore were reported, of which only 57 per cent, or Rs 3,578.50 crore were settled.

Similarly, during July to September 2020, there were 2.94 lakh Covid-19 related claims reported to insurers. Of these, 62 per cent, or 1.82 lakh, claims were settled. However, in terms of value, the reported claim amount was Rs Rs 4,629.30 crore, of which insurers settled claims worth Rs 1,842.3 crore, or a mere 40 per cent of the reported claim amount.

A senior official of an insurance company said, "The pendency appears big (claims pending) because the Covid treatment is long drawn. Patients after discharge continue to remain in



Cadila aims to supply 150 mn doses

CHRIS KAY JAN. 12

Cadila Healthcare Ltd, a drugmaker working to develop an indigenous coronavirus vaccine, said it expects to supply between 100 million to 150 million doses of its candidate this year.

The Ahmedabad-based firm's ZyCoV-D vaccine was approved to com-

mence with final stage human trials in December, and it is recruiting 30,000 volunteers for its phase 3 tests, according to a presentation filed with the stock exchanges on Tuesday. Cadila's plasmid DNA candidate doesn't use an infectious agent, like other vaccines, and instead introduces the DNA sequence encoding the antigen. —Bloomberg

quarantine and use medicines for nearly two months after discharge and they submit the final bills only after that."

On policyholders bearing a part of the cost of treatment, the official said, "We have come across a few hospitals where the cost of the PPE kits worn by the medical staff is not equally distrib-

uted between all the patients in a ward but only to the insured patients in the ward. There are several items which are not payable by us and have been communicated to the hospitals."

Take the case of N. Akhter, a 76-year old female who suffered from breathlessness due to Covid-19 infection. Her

Philippines may tap meat, fish freezers for vaccine

ANDREO CALONZO JAN. 12

The Philippines is preparing cold storage for Covid-19 vaccines, with government telling industry groups with facilities for storing meat and fish to be ready to help in keeping and distributing the shots.

The Philippine cold chain industry expects revenues to hit 20 billion pesos (\$416 million) by end-2023.

Local cold-chain logistics operators can help distribute the vaccines throughout the archipelago, as low-temperature storage facilities are mostly in cities, said Anthony Dizon, president of the Cold Chain Association of the Philippines. The group is waiting for the government's final decision on which shots to buy, he added. —Bloomberg

one-day bill in the intensive care unit of a top South Mumbai hospital was around Rs 33,000. Out of which, the insurer, however, did not pay Rs 5,318 charged for disposable gown, PPE kits, shoe cover and face mask and Rs 600 charged for resident doctor visits. So, the patient has to pay nearly Rs 6,000 per day from her pocket.

TATA CHEMICALS IN TALKS FOR ARCHEAN'S IND. SALT UNIT

BAIJU KALESH & P R SANJAI JAN. 12

Tata Chemicals Ltd is in advanced talks to acquire the industrial salt unit of Chennai-based Archeon Group that could value the business at Rs 450 crore (\$61 million) at a minimum, according to people familiar with the matter.

The board of Tata Chemicals is set to discuss the potential offer as soon as this month, said the people, who asked not to be identified as the information is private.

A representative for Archeon declined to comment, while a representative for Tata Chemicals didn't provide any immediate comment.

The Archeon unit, with a production capacity of 3 million tonnes, makes industrial salt used as an intermediary in the manufacturing of products from detergents, textile dyes to plastics and glass.

A potential deal could offer a reprieve to Archeon, which has been struggling to service its debt obligations for the past two years. The company, founded in 1982, has businesses spanning from industrial salt, fertilisers to mining. In 2018, India Resurgence Fund, a JV between Bain Capital and Piramal Enterprises invested \$156 million in Archeon's marine chemical business. —Bloomberg

Amazon tells Sebi to suspend Future-RIL deal



SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JAN. 12

After receiving a validation for Singapore tribunal's interim award from Delhi High Court, Amazon has once again asked markets regulator Sebi to suspend the Future-Reliance deal. It has also asked the Sebi to instruct stock exchanges not to issue any approval letter to Future Retail.

In the letter dated January 5, Amazon informed the regulator about the constitution of the arbitral tribunal by Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) in the arbitration proceedings initiated by Amazon against inter alia FRL, Kishore Biyani and Rakesh Biyani. A three-member tribunal consisting of Singaporean barrister Michael Hwang Albert van den Berg and Jan Paulsson have been formed at the SIAC.

"We wish to highlight that in view of the constitution of the Arbitral Tribunal, the interim award passed by the Emergency Arbitrator stands automatically

extended for the duration of the Arbitration Proceedings unless it is reconsidered/ modified/ vacated by the Arbitral Tribunal," Amazon said in the letter seen by Financial Chronicle.

Hence, Future Retail continues to be expressly enjoined and restrained by the interim award from taking in any steps in furtherance. In October, Amazon had received an interim order from SIAC barring Future Retail from taking any step to dispose of or encumber its assets or issuing any securities to secure any funding from a restricted party.

Amazon wants the Sebi to take action by suspending review of the impugned transaction (Future's transaction with Reliance), and not granting any no-objection in relation to the same. It also wants the regulator to direct Indian stock exchanges not to issue any no-objection/ approval letter to FRL.

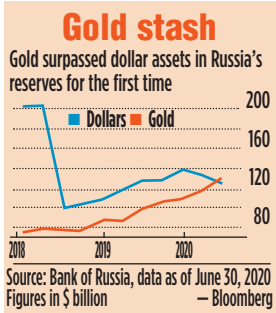
Amazon has been writing letters to regulators and stock exchanges from October 3 on this matter.

Russia for first time holds more gold than US dollars

NATASHA DOFF & ANYA ANDRIANOVA JAN. 12

A multi-year drive to reduce exposure to US assets has pushed the share of gold in Russia's \$583 billion international reserves above dollars for the first time on record.

Gold made up 23 per cent of the central bank's stockpile as of the end of June 2020, the latest date for which data on the breakdown is available, according to a report published late on Monday. The share of dollar assets dropped to 22 per cent,



down from more than 40 per cent in 2018.

The shift is part of a broader strategy outlined by President Vladimir Putin to "de-dollarise" the

Russian economy and lower its vulnerability to US sanctions amid deteriorating relations with Washington. Gold is now the second-biggest component of the central bank's reserves after the euro, which makes up about a third of total assets. About 12 per cent of the stash is in yuan.

The increase in Russia's gold reserves was aided by a 26 per cent surge in prices between June 2019 and June 2020. Russia spent more than \$40 billion building a war chest of gold over the past five years. —Bloomberg

MORGAN STANLEY NAMES NEW COUNTRY HEAD

BAIJU KALESH JAN. 12

Morgan Stanley made several senior appointments from country head to chiefs of investment banking in India after the US bank cemented multi-billion dollar deals in the Asian country in the past year. Sanjay Shah will be the bank's country head for India, effective immediately, according to a



memo. Kamal Yadav and Sachin

Wagle will become co-heads of the country's investment banking, while Samarth Jagnani is the new chief for global capital markets in India, the memo shows.

The appointments also came after Aisha de Sequeira, Morgan Stanley's co-chief executive officer and head of investment banking in India, died late last year. —Bloomberg

Toyota withdraws lockout, starts second shift at Bidadi

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, JAN. 12

Toyota Kirloskar Motor on Tuesday withdrew the second lockout and enhanced its operations by resuming a second shift in both its factories in Bidadi, near Bengaluru.

The announcement came two months after the company declared the first lockout on November 9 in the facility following TKML Workers' Union members resorting to a sit-in at the factory premises to protest against the suspension of a union member. Subsequently, the automaker declared a second lockout on November 23.

The Japanese car maker's Bidadi facility has two production plants with a total installed capacity of 3.10 lakh units per annum.

The 432-acre facility in Bidadi, about 30 km from Bengaluru, employs about 3,000 permanent staff.

"In view of a recent meeting held between Karnataka deputy chief minister Ashwathnarayan with the TKM management and having observed a gradual improvement in safety situation, both inside and outside the company premises, TKM Management have decided to withdraw the lockout," the company said in a statement.

Woman vanishes with \$13 mn from South Korean casino



YOUKYUNG LEE JAN. 12

South Korean police are on the hunt for a female casino executive who disappeared after her employer discovered 14.6 billion won (\$13 million) in cash missing from the resort's coffers.

Hong Kong-based Landing International Development Ltd, which operates Jeju Shinhwa World, disclosed in a statement on its website that it was unable to reach the employee who was in charge of the casino funds.

The employee in charge of the funds was a Malaysian national who did not return to work after going on vacation at the end of December, Yonhap News Agency reported. The missing

funds—all in cash—would be too heavy and bulky at about 280 kilograms for one person to carry out of the casino, let alone transport off the island. Police secured surveillance camera footage from the casino but the video around the time the funds may have disappeared was erased, according to Yonhap.

Jeju Provincial Police Agency confirmed that the probe is underway at its anti-corruption team, but declined to elaborate. Jeju, an island off the southern coast of South Korea, is a popular tourist destination dotted with foreigners-only casinos.

Landing's shares in Hong Kong plunged 7.6 per cent to a record low on Monday before rebounding 6.4 per cent on Tuesday. —Bloomberg

BROKERS SEEK REBATE ON STT & CTT, TAX RELIEF ON DIVIDEND

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 12

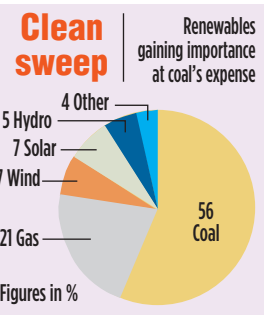
Practical problems faced by the stock market intermediaries are among several budget proposals presented to the finance minister by the Association of National Exchanges Members of India (Anmi) on behalf of around 900 stock brokers.

These include reduction in classification of income from stock market operations, reintroduction of rebate under erstwhile Section 88E for securities transaction tax (STT) and commodities transaction tax (CTT) paid, exemption of dividend of Rs 10,000 per company to the recipient, rationalisation of GST rate, credit for tax deducted at source for the purpose of Sec. 199 and placing limitation act under the Sebi Act and

"The concept of speculative income should be done away with and there should be limited categories of classification of incomes viz, business income, long-term capital gain and short-term capital gain," Anmi said.

It will ease income classification from the point of view of the taxpayer. For example, intraday cash market trading is classified as speculative income but intraday derivative trade is classified as business income.

Due to revenue considerations the association has not suggested complete abolition of STT/CTT on all non-delivery trades but sought reintroduction of rebates as a mitigating factor to align the Indian market more with every other global market, it said.



wind and solar generation, with the current 300-megawatt record holder starting in California last month.

Massive batteries are becoming a staple of power grids as a larger share of generation capacity tilts to

intermittent sources such as solar and wind. Battery operators can purchase that clean energy during excess periods and re-sell it when the sun isn't shining or wind isn't blowing.

Other companies also have big plans for energy storage, with France's Neoen SA submitting a scoping study for a 500-megawatt battery in New South Wales to regulators in December, after in November saying it would partner with Tesla Inc to install a 300-megawatt facility in Victoria. Even larger systems than Origin's have been announced for California, China and Australia. —Bloomberg



# Bad start for shuttlers

## Sindhu, Praneeth lose on return to action

**Bangkok, Jan. 12:** World champion P.V. Sindhu suffered a shock defeat on her return to international badminton, losing in three games to Denmark's Mia Blichfeldt in the opening round of YONEX Thailand Open Super 1000 event here on Tuesday.

Months after the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the international calendar, Sindhu, seeded sixth, returned to action with a 21-16, 24-26, 13-21 defeat to world no 18 Blichfeldt in a 74-minute battle.

In the men's singles, world No. 13 B. Sai Praneeth too suffered a straight game loss to Thailand's Kantaphon Wangcharoen on his return to competition.

Frontrunner to represent India at the Olympics, Praneeth went down 16-21, 10-21 to the world No. 15 Wangcharoen for only his second loss to the Thailand player.

Earlier in the day, the Indian mixed doubles pair of Ashwini Ponnappa and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy claimed a 21-11, 27-29, 21-16 win over the Indonesian pair of Hafiz Faizal and Gloria Widjaja.



P. V. Sindhu

However, the women's doubles pair of Ashwini and N. Sikki Reddy couldn't cross the opening hurdle, going down 16-21, 7-21 to fourth seeded Korean pair of Kim So Yeong and Kong Hee Yong.

Sindhu made a good start, opening up a 6-3 lead and never allowing her oppo-

nent to grab the advantage to take the opening game.

In the second game, the Indian once again moved ahead to an 11-8 advantage but the Danish girl came back strongly and turned the tables at 15-14. After a neck-and-neck battle, it was Blichfeldt, who showed better nerves.

— PTI

## SAINA, PRANNOY CLEARED AFTER COVID DRAMA

**Bangkok, Jan. 12:** Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and H.S. Prannoy were cleared to compete in the Thailand Open after they tested negative for Covid-19, invalidating their previous positive results that forced them out of the tournament hours earlier on a chaotic Tuesday.

Both the Badminton World Federation and Badminton Association of India confirmed the development. "Both Saina Nehwal and HS Prannoy have been cleared to participate in the Thailand Open after the fourth-round tests reports confirmed that both shuttlers have been tested negative for Covid-19," BAI said in a statement.

"BAI have taken up the matter with topmost BWF officials to ensure if tests were negative, matches for respective players should be rescheduled and no walkover is given," BAI added.

— PTI

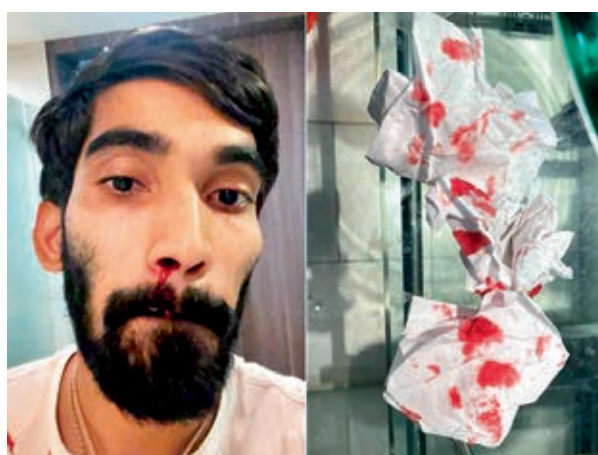
# Srikanth hurt with treatment

**Bangkok, Jan. 12:** Former world number one shuttler Kidambi Srikanth got a bloodied nose after undergoing multiple Covid-19 tests and miffed at the poor treatment of health officials at Thailand Open, the Indian on Tuesday called it "unacceptable".

"We take care of ourselves for the match not to come and shed blood for THIS. However, I gave 4 tests after I have arrived and I can't say any of them have been pleasant. Unacceptable," an upset Srikanth wrote on his twitter handle.

The 27-year-old, who is scheduled to open his campaign on Wednesday against fellow Indian Verma, shared photographs of his nose bleeding after he was tested for the fourth time.

The Badminton World



Kidambi Srikanth shared images after his Covid Test in Thailand which left him bleeding from the nose.

Federation said Srikanth is being attended to by a doctor and it is awaiting a medical explanation.

"A doctor from the Covid-19 testing team is attending

to Srikanth Kidambi. The Badminton World Federation is still awaiting a medical explanation from Badminton Association of Thailand and the

Department of Disease Control as to the reasoning for the occurrence," a BWF official said.

The Badminton World Federation allowed the rest of India players to come to the venue and play but made it clear that "no coaches, managers or other personnel from Team India" will be allowed.

The BWF said "the entire Indian team has been categorised high risk by Thai health authorities and all players and team entourage are currently self-quarantining in their rooms at the hotel and will be subject to a PCR test today."

"Each individual is subject to daily testing until further notice from the Department of Disease Control, but players can continue to play upon producing a negative result," it added.

— PTI

## Warner says sorry to Siraj, Indian team

**Sydney, Jan. 12:** Australian batting star David Warner on Tuesday condemned the racist slurs hurled at Indian players, particularly pacer Mohammed Siraj, during the third Test here and said such behaviour by the spectators was not acceptable.

Siraj, on his maiden tour of Australia, and senior pacer Jasprit Bumrah were abused for two consecutive days by the crowd.

Play was, in fact, halted on the fourth day for a few minutes after the Indian team complained to the umpires, which led to the expulsion of six spectators from the stands and an unreserved apology from Cricket Australia.

"I'd also like to say sorry to @mohammedsirajofficial and the Indian team as racism, and abuse is not in any way acceptable or tolerated anywhere at any time, and I would expect better from our home crowd," Warner said in an instagram post.

About the match, Warner said it was great to be back after an injury kept him out of the first two games.

"It was great to be back out on the park again this week. Was not the ideal result for us but this is what Test cricket is all about. 5 days of tough cricket and well done to our guys for working as hard as we could... congrats to India in the way they fought hard for the draw," he said.

— PTI



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