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## WINDOWS



Buddhist monks offer special prayers on the occasion of 'Paush Purnima', at Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya, on Thursday

### India flattened its Covid graph

NEW DELHI: India has flattened its Covid-19 graph and 146 districts have reported no new case of the viral disease in the last seven days, 18 in 14 days, six in 21 days and 21 districts in the last 28 days, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Thursday. This has been achieved due to pro-active testing with more than 19.5 crore Covid-19 tests conducted in the country so far. Vardhan, who chaired the 23rd meeting of the high-level Group of Ministers (GoM) on COVID-19 through a video-conference, said, according to a statement issued by the health ministry. The current testing capacity is 12 lakh tests per day, the minister added. "With the 'Whole of Government' and 'Whole-of-society' approach envisaged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has successfully contained the pandemic. Less than 12,000 cases were reported in the last 24 hours and the active caseload has reduced to just 1.73 lakh," he said.

### Pakistan gets GI tag for Basmati rice

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has received the Geographical Indicator (GI) tag for its Basmati, paving the way for creating a local registry for the particular strain of rice and making a case in the international market, as the country fights a case in the EU against India's move to get Basmati rice registered as its product. A GI tag is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess origin-based qualities and reputation in the region. Pakistan is fighting a case in the 27-member European Union against India's move to get Basmati rice registered as its product.



# India to roll out many more vaccines to help world: PM

NEW DELHI

INDIA will soon make available many more Covid-19 vaccines to other countries after two Made-In-India jabs have already been introduced to the world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday while emphasising the country's global responsibility in fighting the pandemic.

In a special address at the World Economic Forum's online Davos Agenda Summit, Modi also said he wants to assure the global business community that situation will now change rapidly on the economic front also and invited businesses from all over to participate in the country's growth journey.

Modi said that some had said in February-March



India has ensured that it follows its global responsibility by sending Covid-19 vaccines to many countries

2020 that India would be the worst-affected country by Covid-19 and would face a "tsunami of corona infections". "Some had talked about 70-80 crore people expected to get infected in India, while some talked about over 20 lakh possible deaths, but India did not let the disappointment get better of it," he said.

"When Covid arrived, India had its share of problems. At the beginning of

last year, several experts and organisations had made several predictions that India would be most affected by the pandemic. Looking at the condition of countries with better health infrastructure, the world was right in worrying about us," he said.

The Prime Minister, however, said in the midst of numerous doubts, he was here with "a message of belief, positivity and hope

from over 1.3 billion Indians". Modi said, "We transformed the fight against coronavirus into a people's movement and today India is among the most successful countries in saving lives. We focussed on developing Covid-specific health infrastructure, we trained our human resources to fight against this pandemic and we made full use of tech for testing and tracking." Modi said India has started the

world's largest coronavirus vaccination programme and its speed can be imagined from the fact that over 23 lakh health workers have been vaccinated in just 12 days. In the next few months, we would complete our target of vaccinating 30 crore old people and people with co-morbidities, he said. He said India has ensured that it follows its global responsibility by sending essential medicines to over 150 countries while Covid-19 vaccines are also being sent to other countries.

"In this time of crisis, India has also fulfilled its global responsibility from the beginning, following thousands of years old prayer of our country -- 'Sarvey Santu Niramaya': May the whole world be healthy," he said.



## Crowd visibly thin at protest sites

NEW DELHI

THE crowd at the protest sites in Delhi's Singhu and Tikri borders was visibly thin on Thursday two days after the tractor parade turned violent, even though the farmer unions said it was because the protesters, who had come to the national capital to take part in January 26 march, have returned home.

Additional police personnel were deployed at the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders -- the three main sites where farmers have been protesting the Centre's new farm laws -- as a preventive measure in the view of the violence on Republic Day that left 394 policemen injured and one protestor dead.

The Singhu border, one of the major protest sites that has been home to thousands of farmers for over two months, was noticeably less populated on Thursday than what it used to be before the Republic day, or even before that. The num-

ber of tractors have reduced, and so have the protestors, while reaching from one end to the other end of the street, that were chock-a-block till last week, can be now done in no time. Farmers said it was because the protestors who had come to Delhi specifically to participate in the tractor parade on January 26 have returned home.

"There is no dearth in our spirits to continue our fight against the three farm laws. The fact that Singhu looks empty is a mere optical illusion. "Just because there were too many people in the run up to the parade, now that they have gone back, it looks like this," said Baldev Singh, general secretary, All India Kisan Sabha. The Sanyukta Kisan Morcha, however, on the eve of Republic Day had announced that all the farmers, who would join the tractor march, would stay back and living arrangements would be made for them.



Parliament building illuminated on the occasion of 72nd Republic Day, in New Delhi on Thursday

## Budget session set to be stormy

### 16 Opposition parties to boycott President's address

NEW DELHI

THE Budget session of Parliament beginning Friday is poised to be stormy with the Opposition set to attack the government over the three new farm legislations, amid an ongoing agitation by farmers.

The session will begin with the address of the President to the joint sitting of the two Houses on Friday morning followed by the presentation of the Union Budget on February 1. A total of 16 Opposition parties have announced a boycott of the President's address in solidarity with the farmers protesting the new farm laws, senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad said on Thursday.

The 16 Opposition parties have also de-

manded a probe into the violence on Republic Day in Delhi. Opposition parties include the Congress, the NCP, Shiv Sena, DMK, Trinamool Congress, CPI, CPI-M and RJD.

With a view to having a paperless Budget, all the documents and the Economic Survey would be made available online soon after the authenticated copies are laid on the Table of the House, the Lok Sabha Secretariat has said. Like the last time, in this session too Covid-19 protocols will be in place and Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha will meet in shifts of five hours each -- with the upper house meeting in the morning and the lower house in the evening. Due to the pandemic, the Winter session was not held.

## Farmers told to vacate protest sites

GHAZIABAD

THE Uttar Pradesh government has ordered the district administrations to get all the farmers protest site on the state's borders with Delhi vacated, officials said on Thursday. The orders came two days after violence during the 'Kisan Gantantra parade' on the occasion of the Republic Day at several locations in the national capital.

The farmers at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh Ghazipur border had been sitting on protest against the three farm laws since November 26 last year, demanding the repeal of the three farm laws and ensuring the minimum support price (MSP) for their produce. A senior police official wishing not to be named told IANS: "Yes, we have received orders from the government to get all the farmers protest site on the borders of the state vacated." Earlier in the day, there was heavy deployment of security personnel, comprising the Uttar Pradesh and Delhi Police, the Central Reserve Police Force and the Rapid Action Force at the Ghazipur protest site.



Heavy police deployment near the site of farmers' ongoing protest against the new farm laws, at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Thursday



Farmers load their material on a truck during their ongoing protest against the new farm laws at Delhi-Ghazipur border, near New Delhi on Thursday



### I'll commit suicide but won't quit: Tikait

Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) spokesperson Rakesh Tikait condemned the Uttar Pradesh government and police for the move. "I will commit suicide but won't end protest until the farm bills are repealed," Tikait said in a message to PTI, claiming threat to his life. He also alleged that armed goons were sent to the protest site. In a separate statement issued by BKU media in charge Dharmendra Malik, Tikait was quoted as saying that the Uttar Pradesh Police was trying to arrest protestors even when the Supreme Court has found peaceful protests legitimate.

## Centre's affidavit in Civil Services exam irks SC

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court Thursday questioned the Centre for filing an affidavit without specifying at whose level the decision was taken for not granting one more opportunity to UPSC Civil Services aspirants who could not appear in their last attempt in 2020 exam due to COVID-19. A bench headed by Justice A M Khanwilkar expressed displeasure over it and said that the affidavit filed before it was not clear about at whose level this decision was taken. The bench, also comprising Justices B R Gavai and Krishna Murari, observed that a "routine" affidavit has been filed before it by an under-secretary level officer. "It is a policy decision," the bench said, adding the affidavit does not say anything about at "whose level this decision has been taken". The top court has posted the matter for further hearing on Friday. The court is hearing a plea seeking grant of one more chance to appear in the UPSC's civil services examination to those aspirants who could not appear in their last attempt in 2020 due to the pandemic. On January 25, the Centre had told the SC that allowing extra attempt in UPSC Civil Services exam to those who could not appear in their last chance in 2020 due to COVID-19 would create a "cascading effect", detrimental to the overall functioning and level playing field necessary for a public examination system.

## Nominated MLC can't be Minister after disqualification from Assembly till remaining term: Top Court

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court Thursday said that if a Member of Legislative Assembly is disqualified under anti-defection law, he cannot be appointed as minister, till the remaining term of the House, even if he is nominated as Member of Legislative Council.

The top court upheld the verdict of Karnataka High Court which had said that disqualification of BJP MLC AH Vishwanath under the anti-defection law continues till May 2021 and had dashed his hopes of becoming minister in the BS Yediyurappa-led government in the state. The top court said if he was elected as

MLA or MLC then it could have been another matter but since he was nominated to legislative council, he cannot become a minister. A bench of Chief Justice SA Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian dismissed the appeal filed by Vishwanath against the November 30, last year order of the High Court.

"The special leave petitions are dismissed. As a sequel to the above, pending interlocutory applications, if any, stand disposed off", the bench said. At the outset, senior advocate Gopal Sankaranaryanan, appearing for Vishwanath said that the issue pertains to legal interpretation of the provisions of the Constitution which



BJP MLC AH Vishwanath

deals with the disqualification of member of the house. He said that his disqualification is restricted to the capacity of the office from

which he was disqualified. The bench said that as per the provision, the disqualification will remain effective, if the person is simply nominated to the legislative council and not elected to it.

"If you are elected as a MLA or MLC, you can become minister in the government but if you are nominated, you cannot become minister. The High Court is right. We are dismissing your SLP," the bench said. Sankaranaryanan said that the court will be setting a wrong precedent by upholding a verdict given on a PIL, which had sought restraining of a person from becoming a minister on the ground that he was disqualified as MLA. The bench said that he can-

not be granted relief on the technical ground and the fact of the matter is that, "You are not entitled to become a minister".

On November 30, last year, the High Court had held that Vishwanath's disqualification as MLA under the anti-defection law continues till May 2021 and hence he cannot be appointed as a minister on being nominated as member of legislative council. The high court has passed the order on a PIL filed by advocate AS Harish contending that Vishwanath has incurred disqualification under Article 164 (1) (b) and Article 361 (B) of the Constitution, till the expiry of the term of the Legislative Council-May 2021.



# Womenia

## TAKING CLASSICAL DANCE FORMS TO NEWER HEIGHTS

RANI DEVALLA

A passionate classical dancer, Ameya Lagudu aims at taking Indian art and culture on to global platforms through the medium of dance.

Not many are able to find their calling until late in their life. But Ameya Lagudu, a Visakhapatnam-based girl, is determined to take classical dance forms to newer heights, make their presence felt at global platforms and pass on to future generations.

Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam mean the world to the Class VIII girl of Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar.

Bagging the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar – 2021 under the art and culture category, she says that dance has become an integral part of her life as it gives her immense joy and makes her stay focussed. "I spend an hour a day practising dance. I feel more at peace when I dance," shares the 12-year-old with the Womenia.

Ameya says she is grateful to her parents for extending unconditional support to her endeavour. "They spotted my skills when I was just four-year old. While my father L.T. Murthulu left a plum job in a multinational company to become an engineering consultant, my mother L. Kamala bid adieu to her teaching profession to don the role of a homemaker and help me realise



Ameya Lagudu performing classical dance at a programme

my dreams," recalls Ameya.

Having left their jobs, Ameya's parents made sure that their only daughter received the best of training from gurus located in far-flung areas across South India. "Since I was exposed to different gurus, I could not only fine tune my skills in both Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam but also experiment with diverse styles," says Ameya, who bagged eight international, nine national and 18 state-level awards. She also entered into 10 world records, including Guinness World Records for the largest Kuchipudi presen-

tation with 6,117 participants and Asia Book of Records for performing Bharatanatyam on a clay pot and a brass plate, holding lamps.

When asked how she is able to strike a balance between dance and studies, she replies, "My school has been largely supportive in encouraging me to unravel my creative pursuits. Apparently, dance never stopped me from focussing on my studies in which I am equally good at," says a confident Ameya. Drawn towards performing arts ever since her childhood, Ameya says she aims at taking the Indian art and culture

on to a global platform through the medium of dance and pass the skill to future generations.

Ahead of the Republic Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with Ameya and her parents virtually through a video conference. The Government of India has been presenting Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar annually under various categories to children with exceptional abilities and outstanding accomplishments in the areas of innovation, scholastics, sports, arts, culture, social service and bravery.

TWEET PATROL



**KAJOL**  
**@ITSKAJOLD**

A little photoshoot never hurt anyone



## Is non-surgical cosmetology really needed in today's times?

PUJA GUPTA

Non-surgical cosmetic treatment which are the minimally invasive procedure aim to improve a person's appearance, self-esteem and self-confidence. Every individual wish to look good and have an improved version of themselves, to make the skin look flawless, having the perfect lips, getting rid of the facial fats and acne free skin.

Cosmetologist Dr Monica Jacob says: "These treatments support an individual in enhancing self-confidence as it is truly said, 'confidence is the best outfit'. In

**Non-surgical cosmetic treatments support an individual in enhancing self-confidence and also lead to psychological benefits for an individual**



a way it also leads to psychological benefits for an individual. We have noticed that many people who opt for non-surgical treatments like facial contouring, signature clean-ups, dermal vitamin infusion and radio frequency. Some people who are unsatisfied with their looks frequently struggle with anxiety and depression. Indulging in these treatments helps you align your natural appearance with your desired appearance boosting your self-esteem. You are more inclined to socialise due to your improved state of mind regarding how you feel towards yourself."

Dr Jacob is an anti-aging specialist and Aesthetic physician and was seen in the show 'Fabulous Life of Bollywood' wives performing anti-ageing treatment on the actress Neelam.

Talking about actresses opting about taking these services, Dr Jacob says that actors are more prone to camera lights, the day-night shoot schedules etc and for

them it becomes vital to opt for these services. Additionally, they are under heavy make-up most of the time which leads to causing skin hair damage. Hence, for them it becomes crucial.

It is observed that not just the glamour world, but today's office goers and the common public also pamper themselves with these services, right from teenage group to the senior citizens, she points out.

She adds, "However, one needs to guide them with the right products and right treatment with an affordable package which will be suitable to every member. Though, the percentage in India is lower as compared to the other countries. Nevertheless, in the coming year, cosmetologist is an ever-emerging field in science of medicine to deal with the beauty with rapid advancements and technology. With the affordable prices, people opting for non-surgical cosmetic transformation is looking very bright indeed."



## Home remedies for hair problems

**There are various causes for hair loss, ranging from medication, hormonal imbalance, the kind of diet you consume work stress. Going natural is the best solution for hair problems if you are suffering from Alopecia—a condition that leads to loss of hair in some parts of the head**

Can't deal with excessive hair fall? Dry hair? Dull hair? Dandruff? Is there no hair product that you haven't tried? Minor hair fall is a common phenomenon among men and women. An average adult has about 100,000 to 150,000 hair strands and losing between 50 to 100 strands a day is considered normal. Therefore, finding a few stray hairs on your hairbrush is not necessarily a cause for alarm.

However, excessive hair loss can be a troublesome problem, often causing worry and affecting self-esteem, especially for women. Your hair is said to be crowning glory, a direct expression

of an individual's personality and style.

There are various causes for hair loss, ranging from medication, hormonal imbalance, the kind of diet you consume work stress. Going natural is the best solution for hair problems if you are suffering from Alopecia—a condition that leads to loss of hair in some parts of the head.

Simple alterations in your diet, hair care routine and lifestyle choices can slow down hair fall.

Dryness, dullness, split ends, dandruff and most importantly hair fall are most common problems our hair faces during winters. Hair & skin mostly get dehydrated and lifeless during winters and dealing with these problems is not difficult if you know your hair texture and con-



Shahnaz Husain

ditioning. The best is to go the natural way, yes trying natural home remedies Dryness is the most common hair condition. Dryness is of two types, natural and post chemicals. Both need regular moisturising. Conditioners, hair spa or any other chemical-based products or treatments only give temporary effects. You need to do something better. Pre-conditioning is the answer. Apply oil for 5 minutes daily before wash. Use Mustard oil for this treatment Mustard oil is the best for hair and preconditioning with it controls dryness very well. It is also important to keep your body hydrated, drink plenty of fluids, especially water. Avoid direct heat with hot styling tools and sun.

The dullness of hair happens when it is not maintained well during winters especially if it is chemically treated. If your hair texture is oily or normal, you can apply henna mixed with water and a spoon of curd. This gives good control to oily scalp and adds a natural gloss to the colour of hair. It adds bounce also to flat hair. Henna should be applied only for 15 minutes before wash.

Almost all of us get split ends in hair. They make hair look rough and out of style. Sadly, split hair cannot be treated with any kind of products. Once you have it, you must cut it. Be regular with your haircuts during winter, be gentle while brushing and washing. If you are regular with Preconditioning, you will not get split ends. So regular haircut and preconditioning to control split hair.

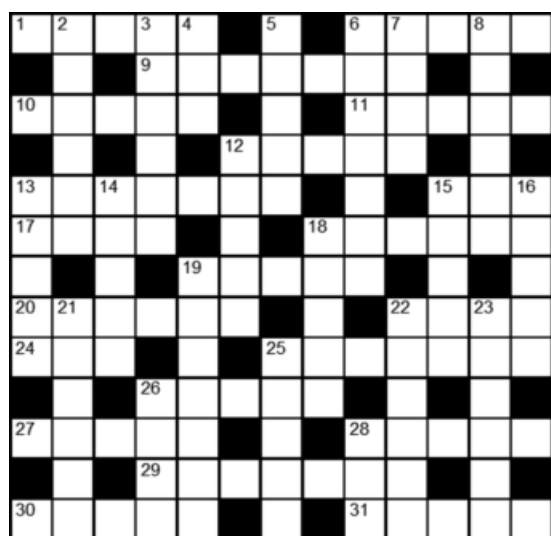
Dandruff is common and gets severe if not treated on time. To treat dandruff, it's important to keep hair clean all the time. Wash hair daily without fail. Mix turmeric (Haldi) with water and apply it on the scalp for 10 minutes before washing once in 15 days. Haldi is very good for treating dandruff but the daily wash is a must. In case you find oily dandruff in hair, wash hair frequently and do not apply any hair care pack on the scalp. Consulting a doctor in the case of oily dandruff is a must.

Hair fall is something you get in every season, but it increases majorly in winters and rains. It happens because of excessive dryness and dehydration during winters. You must work on a healthy diet having lots of fluids, be regu-



lar with haircut and cleaning. Preconditioning & daily wash is the most helpful in hair fall. Apply oil to hair for 5 minutes daily before wash and use normal hair shampoo. If your hair is clean, it will not fall. Haircut takes off the extra weight from the scalp also makes ends healthy which work for hair fall. No medicine or treatment works better than preconditioning, wash and cut for hair fall.

Complicated treatments are not always effective, hair care should be easy which you can regular maintain. Also do not follow others in hair care, everyone has different hair needs and require different treatments.



SOLUTION TO JANUARY 28

### CROSSWORD

Across

- 1 Texas shrine (5)
- 6 Twitter update (5)
- 9 Deductive (reasoning) (1,6)
- 10 Not plentiful (5)
- 11 Gold bar (5)
- 12 Slant (5)
- 13 Fiasco (7)
- 15 Besides (3)
- 17 Long fish (4)
- 18 Extol the virtues of (6)
- 19 Paganini's birthplace (5)
- 20 Filament (6)
- 22 Turn over (4)
- 24 Centre of a wheel (3)
- 25 August birthstone (7)
- 26 Wooden slats (5)
- 27 Book of the Bible (5)
- 28 Allege (5)
- 29 Masters of music (7)
- 30 Baked dough (5)
- 31 Capsize (5)

Down

- 2 Chinese fruit (6)
- 3 Crazes (6)
- 4 Choose (3)
- 5 Sacred book (5)
- 6 One of the smaller states of North East India (7)
- 7 Fermented grape juice (4)
- 8 Acts poorly (6)
- 12 Bent (5)
- 13 Demise (5)
- 14 Brief advertisement (5)
- 15 Give up (5)
- 16 Entice or lure (5)
- 18 Jabs (5)
- 19 Round Table knight (7)
- 21 Attempt to gratify (6)
- 22 Stimulus (6)
- 23 Halogen element (6)
- 25 A stage in development (5)
- 26 Tibetan monk (4)
- 28 French vineyard (3)

### SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO JANUARY 28

### NEWS ROUNDUP

## Shalmali on cyber bullies: The consistent judging needs to stop

Singer Shalmali recently coloured her hair silver for a new look. However, the constant trolling that followed has forced the artiste to speak up against cyber bullies.

She says, "What ticked me off was the consistent judging and that needs to stop not just for celebrities, for everyone. We are free to colour our hair in whatever colour want, at whatever length. And the same goes for every boy or girl out there who wants to experiment with their looks. We need to stop confining ourselves within stereotypical norms. It's about time that hair colour, length, skin colour, weight should not become parameter for people's judgement."

While the singer is not pleased with the pesty attitude of online trolls, she reveals that she was expecting some reaction.

"Well, I can definitely say that I was expecting a reaction because social media has given everyone the freedom to voice their opinion. The reactions have varied from beautiful to mean but you take them in your stride. 2020 has really taught me that as long as you are true to yourself, you shouldn't let the negativity deter you," says Shalmali.

She asserts that she doesn't let anyone drive her fashion choices. "I believe in myself, my music, my fashion. It works beautifully for me and it may not work for some people, but I don't seek external validation. I create music that makes me happy, I wear clothes that make me happy. I just do what make me happy. I can safely say that it's the best headspace I have been in since as long as I can remember," she shares.







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

# Javadekar tried to shift blame for Delhi violence: Punjab CM

'Violence instigated by supporters and members of the BJP in collusion with the Aam Aadmi Party'

CHANDIGARH

PUNJAB Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Thursday hit out at Union minister Prakash Javadekar over his "disgraceful and desperate" attempt to shift blame for the Red Fort violence, which Amarinder claimed had been instigated by supporters and members of the BJP in collusion with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), with the Congress nowhere in the picture.

"Workers and supporters of BJP and AAP, and not the Congress, have been caught on camera waving the Nishan Sahib at the Red Fort," pointed out the Chief Minister in a strong retaliation to Javadekar's unfounded allegations against the Congress, and his own government in Punjab.

Amarinder's comments came even as Delhi Police named Deep Sidhu, a key aide of BJP MP Sunny Deol, as one of the main instigators of the violence, and Am-

rik Micky, an AAP member, was also spotted at the site.

Not a single Congress leader or member was seen at the Red Fort indulging in any kind of lawlessness, Amarinder said, adding that even farmers were not responsible for the January 26 trouble, which was in fact the doing of anti-social elements who had infiltrated the tractor rally.

The Centre should also get a free and fair probe conducted into the possible role of any political

party, or even a third country as is being alleged by BJP's own leaders, to ensure that the guilty are punished and the genuine farmers are not unnecessarily maligned or harassed, Amarinder said.

The Chief Minister also lashed out at Javadekar for accusing Rahul Gandhi of inciting the violence, asking "Did the Congress leader ask anyone to climb Red Fort? He did not. It was BJP and AAP men who did that," he said,

adding that Rahul had, in fact, promptly condemned the violence, and made it clear that violence was no solution to the crisis.

"These allegations are nothing but a cover-up attempt by the BJP leader for his own party's role in the violence, and in fact for their utter failure to manage the situation, which they had created in the first place with the unilateral implementation of the black farm laws," said Amarinder, trashing Javadekar's charges.

## AAP to contest polls in 6 States in 2022: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI

DELHI Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Thursday that his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will contest elections in six states in 2022.

"In the next two years, AAP will contest elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Gujarat," the AAP national convener said while addressing party leaders and workers after a National Council meeting at Kapashera here.

He asserted that people supported the AAP because they had realised that both the BJP and the Congress had ruled for years but did nothing to change the lives of the common man.

"People outside Delhi are fed up with both the BJP and the Congress' policy of divide and rule and have now started looking at the AAP as an alternative. People in other states too want



free water and free electricity and they know that only AAP can deliver this. As party workers or leaders, you have to reach out to the people," Kejriwal said.

"Earlier, the people used to say that AAP is a Delhi-centric party with no footprint outside the national capital. But, now people have changed their views to-

### R-Day violence unfortunate but will not end farmers' movement: CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

THE violence on Republic Day was "unfortunate" but it would not end the farmers' movement against the three agri laws, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Thursday.

He also said that "strictest punishment" must be given to those responsible for the violence. Addressing the ninth National Council meeting of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Kejriwal said the farmers' protest against the farm laws

is a battle of existence for them.

"The violence on Republic Day was unfortunate and whoever is responsible for it must be given strictest punishment," he said.

"But the violence will not lead to the end of the farmers movement against the agri laws, the issues still remain so the movement cannot end. We have to peacefully extend our support to the protesting farmers," the chief minister said. He said whoever is responsible for the violence on Tuesday should be acted against.

Chief Minister added.

Kejriwal reiterated that Delhi's health services had proved to be a success in handling the coronavirus pandemic.

wards AAP. We have worked hard and proved that the AAP has a vision for the country. In the last six years, our work in Delhi has been noticed by the people," the

## Have blocked links which showed deceased woman as Hathras rape victim: FB, Google

NEW DELHI

SOCIAL media platforms Facebook, Google and Twitter on Thursday told the Delhi High Court that they have blocked or taken down all the links which incorrectly showed a deceased woman's photo as that of the Hathras rape victim.

The submission was made before Justice Prathiba M



Singh by the three platforms in response to the court's November 23, 2020 direction to remove all those links which showed the deceased woman as the rape victim. The court had also said that "a victim cannot go on searching for links and making complaints. There has to be some other solution."

The November 23, 2020 order had been passed on a plea moved by a man who had contended that a photograph of his

deceased wife was being circulated on various social media platforms wrongly depicting her as the victim of the unfortunate incident of rape and murder of a young girl at Hathras, Uttar Pradesh.

On Thursday, during the hearing, the counsel for the husband told the court that all the links to the objectionable content have not been

removed by Facebook and sought time to place on record the existing links/urls. The court, thereafter, gave him time till April 12 to place on record the links/urls which are yet to be removed. The petitioner has also contended in his plea that even otherwise, revelation of the identity of the rape victim is an offence under the Indian Penal Code, though in the present matter image of a wrong person is in circulation.

## Amit Shah meets cops injured in R-Day violence

NEW DELHI

UNION home minister Amit Shah on Thursday visited a hospital in New Delhi to enquire about the health of policemen injured in the violence that broke out during the farmers' tractor parade in the national capital on Republic Day, officials said.

Nearly 400 policemen were injured during the tractor parade of the farmers who have been protesting against three central farm laws at Delhi's borders since November. "Meeting the injured Delhi Police personnel. We are proud of their courage and bravery," Shah tweeted.

Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla and Delhi Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava accompanied the home minister. During the visit, Shah interacted with policemen and also took stock of their health progress from doctors.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah visits a hospital to enquire about the health of a policeman injured in violence during farmers' tractor rally on Republic Day, in New Delhi on Thursday

## SP demands FIR against police, BJP leaders for R-Day violence

LUCKNOW

LEADER of Opposition in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Ram Govind Chaudhary on Thursday said instead of farmers, an FIR should be registered against the Delhi police commissioner and top BJP leaders for the violence in New Delhi on Republic Day.

"The chaos and the unfurling of a religious flag at the Red Fort on January 26 is a conspiracy of the Delhi police, which is under the home ministry and the top leadership of the BJP, to weaken the farmers' agitation. For this, the Delhi Police and the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party should be condemned.

Instead of farmers, an FIR should be registered against the Delhi police commissioner and the BJP leaders, whose names have surfaced in connection with Deep Sidhu..." the Samajwadi Party (SP) leader said in a statement here.

## HC seeks Centre's response over plea on policy for special needs kids' training

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Thursday sought a response from the central government on a petition filed by a schoolgirl seeking constitution of an expert committee to draft and implement a nationwide plan to impart a skill learning and vocational training to children with special needs.

"The cause appears to be a good one," a bench presided by Chief Justice D.N. Patel said while issuing a notice to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and Ministry of Human Resources and Development and sought their responses by March 12.

The petition, filed by a 12th class student named Kanika Gupta, sought the setting up of a committee for drafting a nationwide plan to impart skill learning and vocational training to children with special needs starting from the age group 7-17 years. The petitioner



said that even though numerous government, private, NGOs and charitable trusts are working for the welfare of the children with special needs, they are bereft of legal and fundamental rights of equal opportunity due to lack of a comprehensive policy dealing with a

proper educational curriculum. Kanika Gupta, through her counsel Anshumaan Sahni, submitted that on account of lack of proper synchronised syllabus and curriculum and the mandatory norms governing them, the education disseminated to them is nothing but a paper formality.

"There is no gainsaying that the CWSN with intellectual impairment and/or autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy etc, might eventually not be capable of pursuing academic pursuits. Therefore, the aspect of vocational and skill training becomes even more critical," the plea further stated.

GAURAV SAINI  
NEW DELHI

THE upgradation of sewage treatment plants (STPs) in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi to "substantially" reduce foaming in the Yamuna will take three to five years, the city government has said. The presence of phosphates and surfactants in untreated sewage from Delhi, Haryana and UP is a major reason behind frothing in the river.

"The upgradation of all STPs in UP, Haryana and Delhi to treat the wastewater as per the latest standards, which will substantially reduce the problem of foaming (in the Yamuna), will take about three to five years depending upon the availability of funds etc," the government said in an affidavit submitted to the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

It said the delay in tree cutting permission, COVID-19

### FROTHING IN RIVER YAMUNA

## 3-5 yrs needed to upgrade sewage treatment plants: Delhi govt



lockdown, financial hardships and migration of labour slowed down the construction and upgradation of four major sewage treatment plants (STPs) - Kondli, Rithala, Okhla and Coronation Pillar -- in Delhi. The Coronation Pillar STP is to be completed by March 31, while the deadline for Kondli, Rithala and Okhla STPs is December 2022, as per the contract agreement.

"The STPs at Rithala, Kondli,

## Schools, colleges need to revamp education: Akhil

Schools and colleges in India will need to revamp their education models to comply with the recently announced National Education Policy 2020, according to Dr Akhil Shahani, Managing Director, Thadomal Shahani Centre for Management, Shahani Group and Ask.Careers.

"This will require additional government funding to enable this to happen." India spends only 4.6 per cent of its total GDP on education, and ranks 62nd in total public expenditure on education per student, according to IMD. Budget 2021 should allocate at least 6% of Indian GDP to the education sector, which is in line with recommendations by Niti Ayog. Additionally, the changes envisaged by NEP 2020 cannot happen only with government funds. Private investment and FDI should be encouraged in mainstream education with an expectation of a reasonable return. The budget should also provide incentives for universities to conduct research & scholarships for student entrepreneurs who wish to create innovative prod-



ucts," Dr Akhil Shahani runs a range of colleges in areas like business, media, real estate, finance and others.

His colleges incorporate global industry oriented education systems that make their graduates truly employable. He is also a Venture Partner in Kaizen Private Equity, which is India's first private equity fund focused solely on the education sector.

In addition, Akhil serves as the Chairman of Global Discovery Schools, a franchised chain of 14 innovative schools. In 2020, HSNC University appointed Dr. Akhil as a governing board member.

2020, respectively," it said.

The construction of Coronation Pillar STP slowed down mainly due to the delay in handing over the site, appointment of project management consultant, construction ban imposed by Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority, COVID-19 lockdown and migration of labour etc, it said. An action plan has already been prepared for the upgradation of the remaining 16 STPs in Delhi, and submitted to NGT-appointed Yamuna Monitoring Committee.

The work will be completed in three to four years subject to availability of land and funds which are beyond the jurisdiction of the DJB, the affidavit read. The government said the "cash flow problem resulted from the exigencies of COVID-19 crisis and were totally unanticipated".



## Rescuing Tibet from Chinese aggression

A 19-year-old Tibetan monk has reportedly died of injuries sustained in Chinese prison on January 19 in Tibet after he was released in a comatose state by Chinese authorities recently. Tenzin Nyima (also known as Tamey) who was a monk from Dza Wonpo Monastery in Wonpo Township in Kardze, in eastern Tibet's so-called Sichuan Province held a peaceful demonstration outside the local police station calling for Tibet's independence. He was arrested on November 7, 2019.

Four other young Tibetan monks were also arrested for boldly expressing their steadfast solidarity in a social media post saying "the spirit and dignity of Tibetan people is in our blood and can never be extinguished". Tenzin Nyima was released in May 2020 but arrested again on 11 August 2020 for sharing the

news of his arrest and contacting Tibetans in exile in India, reports suggest. In October 2020, Nyima's family were told by the police that his health had deteriorated and he was then in a comatose condition. Subsequently he died.

In between, despite his comatose state, Nyima was summoned to appear before Sershul Intermediate People's Court on the afternoon of 10 November to face charges of "inciting separatism". Between November and December of last year, the other protesters in Dza Wonpo were tried behind closed doors by Sershul Intermediate People's Court. Kunsal, aged 20, Choegyal and Yonten were sentenced four years. Sotra was sentenced to three years in prison and Tsultrim, aged 16, was sentenced for one year in prison. All of them were found guilty of "inciting separatism".

Another Tibetan monk, Nymay, who leaked the information to social media sites was also found guilty of inciting separatism and received the longest sentence – five years in prison. These finer details would not be necessary to outsiders unless one wants to know what is happening in Tibet and to Tibetans. Tibet is just an occupied land. Its culture, civilisation and traditions have been trampled upon as never before and its people are being subjected to untold misery. Forced labour, concentration camps and disappearances just as in case of Uyghurs are now common themes of life.

Tibetans are being forced out of the Himalayas too as China increasingly looks at the water resources too apart from the rare earth metal resources. Referring to the latest death of the monk

Free Tibet's Campaigns and Advocacy Manager, John Jones said "Tenzin's killing is emblematic of the brutality of China's occupation of Tibet and the flagrant disregard for Tibetan life. The moment Tenzin Nyima was detained he was placed at the mercy of the police; it was effectively a death sentence. China's repression of free speech, religion, movement, association and assembly in Tibet and Xinjiang in 2019 was more severe than in other areas of the country.

China disrupted traditional Tibetan living patterns and customs and accelerated the forced assimilation of Tibetans into mainstream Chinese society through. Tibetans' faced significant hurdles in acquiring passports, and that it was virtually impossible for Buddhist monks and nuns to do so. How long does it take for the world to take up their cause? It is inhuman to turn a blind eye to Chinese atrocities in the occupied areas.



## Being an Indian farmer...

Five things you need to know about an Indian farmer's life and why they are on the streets

RICHARD MAHAPATRA

A republic is where a people doesn't have to give up its common interest for that of the ruling class; the ruling class is supposed to execute the will of the citizen. Understandably, it is impossible to make everyone happy. But expectations remain. Even after 71 years as a republic.

January 26, 2021 promises to be an exceptional R-Day. If 2020 was about the public owning up its day to make its point against the Narendra Modi government's citizenship issues, this year is about the millions of farmers who form the foundation of India's economy.

As their representatives ready to roll out their own caravan of tractors as a counterpoint to the official procession on Rajpath, the question remains: How does it feel being an Indian farmer? Here's how the quintessential agriculturist would probably have put it - Five points of my life you need to know as you celebrate republic day and why we are on the streets.

**I**  
We all celebrate when data shows that India is emerging as one of the fastest growing economies in the world. But this growth has not impacted us. Every second farmer in the country is indebted. An average Indian farmer earns Rs 6,426 per month while the expenditure is Rs 6,223. Also, only 15 per cent of farmers earn 91 per cent of the total agricultural income amid overwhelming inequality

land and constitute 83 per cent of total landholdings.

But I have two big and critical responsibilities that you might not have: I sustain myself and also feed the country, one of the world's largest consumers of food grains.

India's food self-sufficiency is because of me. In the last six years, I have been ensuring a bumper harvest of food grains non-stop.

Of the eight industry types, agriculture is the only sector has grown in 2020-21 despite the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Farmers like me make up the economy of Rs 20.13 lakh crore. Over half of Indians are into farming; every fourth voter is a farmer. That is the reason, I feel, you all love raising the slogan: 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan'.

But you must have seen us more on the streets, either protesting or dumping our produce for not being able to get a fair price. In 2020, farmers from 22 states organised 71 protests. Did you ever raise the question: Why are farmers protesting?

**II**  
My contribution to India's gross domestic product (GDP) is on the decline. That is why economists say I am losing importance in the economy, and also for politicians.

But more and more households depend on agriculture for survival. My contribution to GDP has gone down from 51 per cent in the 1950s to around 16 per cent currently. But 70 million households depended on agriculture in 1951, which has now gone up to 120 million. In 1951, there were 22 million agricultural labourers; currently there are 144 million.

**III**  
We all celebrate when data shows that India is emerging as one of the fastest growing economies of the world. But this growth has not impacted us.

Every second farmer in the country is indebted. An average Indian farmer earns Rs 6,426 per month while the expenditure is Rs 6,223. Also, only 15 per cent of farmers earn 91 per cent of the total agricultural income amid overwhelming inequality.

An analysis shows that a farmer earns only Rs7,639 from a hectare of wheat against the production cost of Rs 32,644. This is a huge loss of Rs 25,005 per ha.

I don't have much to spend. But over 90 per cent of the country's GDP comes from my consumption. Close to 50 per cent of the consumers in the country are either farmers or from households that earn primarily from agriculture.

It means a sector already in crisis is holding the fort of the "fastest growing economy" of the world. Will it be able to sustain it? A big no and that is the severe warning for the overall economy.

**IV**  
In 2019, every hour nearly two persons involved in farming committed suicide in the country. This category accounts for 7.4 per cent of all suicides in India.

Climate change is impacting us the most. Government data shows that our income would come down by up to 25 per cent due to climate change impacts. The 100 poorest districts in the country, which are also dominated by agriculture, are the most vulnerable to climate change. We will suffer a loss of Rs 700 crore a year due to this.

Drought that hurts agriculture the most, particularly for rain-fed farming, is the second-most impactful type of disaster in terms of number of people affected in the world. It accounts for just five per cent of total disaster events.

But it affected 1.4 billion people in 2009-19. Over 50 per cent of Indian farmers depend on rain. Drought impacts nearly 30 crore farmers every year.

**V**  
My fellow farmers are growing restless. Our Census 2011 says every day 2,000 farmers give up farming. Income from farming has already lost the prime spot in our total household total earnings. In 1970, three-fourths of a rural household's income came from farm sources. After 45 years, in 2015, it is less than one-third. Most of the households now earn more out of non-farm sources. In fact a daily wage earns more than a farmer.

(Courtesy: Down To Earth)

### SURGICAL STRIKE



K KRISHNA SAAGAR RAO

ANY form of violence in a structured and functional democracy is a crime, but protest is not. In a parliamentary democracy protest and expression of dissent is fundamental to the functioning of a state. In India, the Constitution provides for right to free speech and expression. Article 19 (1) (a) provides for Right to Express subject to reasonable restriction. Peaceful protest is a constitutional right in India and it should be used with reasonable restraint.

Few farmer groups have initiated a dissent programme for the last two months at the Delhi borders, which were peaceful and democratic until the other day. The conduct of Modi government was exemplary, which did not consider those protesting as obstructionists. The government has exhibited unprecedented restraint in the last two months, even as protesters blocked the vital roads leading to the national capital. The long-drawn blockades have not just created massive financial losses due to clogged logistics and transportation for many businesses, but also caused serious inconvenience to the general public.

Modi Government has been proactive in engaging with the protesting farmer groups since the initial days of their protest. Over ten lengthy negotiation meetings were organised to thaw out differences and to discuss farmers concerns on the newly reformed farm laws. Senior Ministers like Narendra Singh Tomar and Piyush Goyal were engaging with farmer leaders in all these negotiations.

During multiple engagements with farmer union leaders, Modi government has agreed on many demands raised by farmer groups since November 2020. In fact, every time the government would agree and concede to the farmer unions demands, farmer

unions would come up with different demands than stated earlier and keep changing their goal posts. Modi government has been responsible and patient all along. It has even announced few days back, that it was ready to keep the new farm laws on hold for one and half years, till a Supreme Court directed committee presents their report. None of these concessions from government's end seem to satisfy farmer groups, who are persisting on complete roll-back of the newly implemented farm laws.

Negotiations don't work this way. Any legitimate negotiation should lead to a final resolution through concessions from both sides, for a fair outcome. An effective negotiation process should ensure a win-win for both parties in the negotiation, at least it should ensure all parties feel that way eventually.

However, the negotiations with farmer groups so far, were unusually one-sided, where government is extending all concessions and farmer unions are extending none. Negotiations like this rarely succeed and culminate in a win-win situation.

As I analyse, below are the three big mistakes made by farmer unions, which have led their protests into a wrong-track and a 'point-of-no-return':

#### Violence yields zero results

Mahatma Gandhi was a smart protester while he led the freedom fight for India. He had formulated a success formula for protests and coined it as 'Non-violent protests', which had found traction to fight a long battle with British for freedom, but also has become a successful model for protests across the world for individual and national rights. Mahatma Gandhi understood very early in time that violence defeats the very purpose of a protest and side-tracks the central objective, and allows the opponent to bismirch.

In a structured democracy, protest is the fundamental instrument of dissent. However, this instrument cannot be used to unleash civic disorder, violence, vandalism and desecration. In a constitutional democracy, where law and order have laws protecting its enforcement, violent protests yield 'zero results'.

Farmer unions have made a biggest mistake in allowing a peaceful dissent programme derail into violence, vandalism and



If protesters lose focus of their core objective, there is nothing credible to discuss for the other party, in this case the government. Nothing justifies the reason and purpose of the scale of violence and vandalism unleashed by the protestors on that infamous day. The deviant anti-social behaviour has no co-relation to the objective of farmers protest in the first place. The consequences of shunning responsibility are quite expensive for leadership, and farmer union leaders are no exception. Lack of control and accountability lowers the power of leadership

desecration of a national monument and its historic pride. They have actually lost the cause by losing out on their non-violent, peaceful-protest track. More importantly they have lost the massive rising support base, across India for their protest. Most of what they have lost, is irrevocable.

#### Leadership deficit exposed

Leadership is all about accountability. It's about owning up action and its consequences. The unruly episode of mayhem on the Republic Day in Delhi, has exposed lack of credible leadership for the protests.

If agreements are not respected, leadership has no meaning. Modi government has given permission to the farmers tractor-rally despite January 26

being a land mark national event. Farmers unions and its leaders [if they are any] should have respected it and carried out their rally peacefully. It would have strengthened their cause, if they actually had any real-cause.

The objective of protest has no correlation to the unprovoked vandalism and violence by the protesting farmer groups on the Republic Day.

One uncontrolled event is enough to highlight the lack of a sincere and common objective for a protesting group. The protest has visibly been hijacked by anti-social, anti-national, opportunist political and separatist elements. It was there on TV screens all day for every one across the nation to see. The shocking rampage and unpro-

voked physical attacks on police have exhibited the wrong-tracking of the farmers protest, without any credible leadership leading it in the right direction.

Leadership deficit is fatal for any protest.

#### Negotiations can't continue

Who should government engage in discussions with in future? Where is the credibility of farmer-union leaders? What is the guarantee of implantation of agreed resolution, when leaders have zero control over protesting groups? These are some questions government will ponder, before they invite anyone for further discussions, as I see.

If protesters lose focus of their core objective, there is nothing credible to discuss for the other party, in this case the government. Nothing justifies the reason and purpose of the scale of violence and vandalism unleashed by the protestors on that infamous day. The deviant anti-social behaviour has no correlation to the objective of farmers protest in the first place.

The consequences of shunning responsibility are quite expensive for leadership, and farmer union leaders are no exception. Lack of control and accountability lowers the power of leadership.

It is time for the protesting groups to accept the resolution offered in the last negotiation meeting with the central government and return home to re-engage with their occupation, instead of continuing with their protest which has lost its cause, objective, purpose and credibility.

(The author is the chief spokesperson of the BJP Telangana State, an organisational strategist & a leadership coach)

## Murder most foul

WHERE are we heading as the news that a highly educated mother who also happens to coach students for IIT examination in Chittoor in cold blooded manner killed two of her daughters in the name of superstitious belief that by the grace of Lord Shiva, they would come alive in a day has sent shivers among all of us. Also TV has been airing too many mythological serials and also occult practice shown in the so called saas bahu serials in all the languages. It's indeed true even in the pre TV era, mythological movies were produced, but they were on and off and after watching them, it would go out of the mind of viewers. But every day watching inside home can lead to such killing. It was more shocking to see the mother walking away shouting the name of Lord Shiva. I hope the parents would be punished for cold blooded murder so that it can be lesson for others who involve in such heinous act either on their own or on the advice of Tantriks.

N Nagarajan, Hyderabad

thehansreader@gmail.com

## LETTERS

### UN Global Compact Programme

THE top listed companies across the globe have voluntarily enrolled to the United Nations Global Compact Program that encourages them to adhere to its ten principles including human rights, labour, environmental and anti-corruption and report its status through annual Communication of Progress (COP) statement. The entities as otherwise are mandated to prepare annual reports along with details related to the commitment to sustainability, corporate governance and business environment report in order to uphold the business principles and values.

Further the governments should encourage all the listed companies to commit to United Nations Global Compact Program through robust voluntary nomination drives. As a best practice the enrolment to UN Global Compact Program will have a positive impact on the stakeholders including retail investors and the companies can ensure complete fairness and transparency. The organizations should

surge ahead to protect the interest of investors by sharing its Communication of Progress (COP) as mandated by UN Global Compact Program through its annual reports. Further the forum can be utilised to share best practices adopted while adhering to corporate governance and sustainability framework.

Varun Dambal, Bengaluru

### 'Make in India' push for air-conditioners

INDIA has FTA (Free Trade Agreements) with all the ASEAN countries with one exception China. China has been exploiting these FTAs for many years by acquiring defunct companies in countries like Laos, Vietnam and other ASEAN nations so then can export to world's second largest market, India. We must bear this in mind that FTAs are embedded with "inverted duty structure", it means that finished goods like ACs won't attract hefty duties but it local manufacturers import raw materials like compressor and then make products, it will meet with heavy duties. There was no ray of hope local manufactures competing with ASEAN goods.

In the vicinity of 35 per cent ACs sold in India were improved as fully built units but actually were Chinese products. Things took a sharp turn in Oct when government banned on importing ACs and refrigerators. Now, the local manufacturers are leaving no stone unturned to make best of this opportunity. As per reports, they have invested in the neighborhood of ₹1500 crore to cater \$5-6 billion industry. Adding white goods in in Production Linked Incentives (PLI) scheme was icing on the cake.

Rahul Chouhan, Ujjain

### What next, Sasikala?

EXPULSED AIADMK leader V K Sasikala release from judicial custody in a disproportionate assets case, brings the curtains down on a four-year prison sentence. Sasikala is being treated for Covid-19 at the Trauma Care Centre in Victoria Hospital. Her release must gladden the hearts of her supporters, many of whom arrived at the hospital to celebrate her release. It will be interesting to see how she charts her political career post-release.

N J Ravi Chander, Bengaluru



# UNEMPLOYMENT DOLE ANYTIME NOW: KTR

The sop has been one of the major poll planks of the TRS

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

AS per the indications given out by the TRS working president, KT Rama Rao on Thursday, the TRS government in Telangana would soon be making an announcement on the unemployment dole. KTR said that unemployment dole has been one of the poll planks of the TRS and that the Chief Minister, K Chandrashekar Rao would announce the allowance for jobless in a day or two.

The TRS working president made these comments in a meeting of the merger of TDP trade union Telugu Nadu Trade Union Council (TNTUC) with Telangana Rashtra Vidyut Karmika Sangham (TRKVS) at Telangana Bhavan on Thursday. KTR said that as per the promise, the government would soon fill up 50,000 vacancies. The unemployment dole will also be announced by the chief minister in a day or two, said the TRS leader. The announcement has come at a time when elections were slated to be held for council under Graduates quota and also civic polls in Khammam and Warangal.

The TRS leader said that the Chief Minister was doing justice



TRS working president K T Rama Rao addressing the Telangana Rashtra Samithi Karmika Vibhagam meeting at TRS Bhavan on Thursday

to all the sectors without any scope for drawbacks. He said that the government was giving financial support to the students to pursue higher education in foreign countries.

On the state of power in the State, KTR said, "The State was reeling under power problems initially, but I can say with confidence that there will be no power cut in future. The state increased

power production from 7,000 MWs to 16,000 MWs and became second in the country in the solar power. He assured to solve the issues of employees of the power sector."



TPCC president N Uttam Kumar Reddy, MLC T Jeevan Reddy and TPCC working president Ponnamp Prabhakar, addressing the media at Gandhi Bhavan in Hyderabad on Thursday

## TPCC slams 'measly' 7.5% fitment award

HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President and Nalgonda MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy strongly condemned the Pay Revision Commission (PRC) for recommending a fitment of mere 7.5 per cent and alleged that the PRC's recommendations appear to be dictated by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao. He demanded that the State government provide fitment of not less than 43 per cent to the employees.

Uttam Kumar along with MLC T Jeevan Reddy, TPCC working president Ponnamp Prabhakar and other leaders, was addressing a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan on Thursday. He said that the fitment of 7.5 per cent was unrealistic and too below the expectations of government employees. He announced that the

- ▶ Demands fitment for employees not less than 43%
- ▶ Accuses PRC of working at the behest of CM KCR
- ▶ Congress to back employee stir for 43% fitment

Congress party would support the agitation by the government seeking at least 43 per cent fitment.

He said that the government employees played a major role in Telangana Statehood agitation. They risked their jobs and careers by launching 'Sakala Janula Samme.' They expected a better future for themselves and their children after the formation of Telangana. However, Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao shattered their dreams and continu-

ously subjected them to injustices.

The TPCC Chief also condemned the PRC's recommendation for reducing the House Rent Allowance by up to six per cent. He said that the PRC has failed to consider the inflation factor while recommending cuts in HRA. It appears, he said, that the PRC has drafted its entire report under the influence of CM KCR. He demanded that there should not be any cut in the HRA and instead it should be increased substantially.

Uttam Kumar also pointed out that the PRC has identified nearly 1.91 lakh vacancies in various departments of the State government. But KCR recently issued announced the government would fill 50,000 vacancies in different departments, which is about one-fourth of actual vacancies.

## Hospitality professionals seek govt aid

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

THE Telangana Hotels and Resorts Sales Professionals Welfare Association has requested the State government to provide immediate relief to the kin of hospitality professionals who died due to various reasons associated with Covid-19 pandemic and related developments including lockdown, loss of job and pay.

One more woman employee, Jacqueline, died on January 26 due to financial crisis triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, said S Ravi Kumar, State general secretary of the association, in a press release issued here on Thursday.

"We have been repeatedly requesting the government to help the hapless staff in the hospital-

ity sector who are badly affected by Covid-19," he said. The association lost five of its colleagues - Devarshi Raj, Sisir Kumar, Roja Rani, Siva Ramakrishna and now Jacqueline - due to financial crunch, he said adding that one Vinay Kumar Panduchary got paralysed during Covid-19.

Sisir's children were left behind as orphans, Ravi Kumar said. They had not been getting salaries since April '20 and not even the 50 per cent which was advised by the government was also not paid.

"We have met Ministers Srinivas Yadav and Srinivas Goud, MP Revanth Reddy and Tourism Secretary Srinivasa Raju, but to no avail. At least now we request the government to consider our case and grant some aid to recover from the pandemic woes," he said.

## TRS leader denies move to join BJP

HANS NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD: Amidst the rumours of his joining BJP, a TRS leader from Nalgonda Tera Chinappa Reddy on Thursday said on Thursday that he was not going to change the party and termed the reports as misleading.

Responding to the news reports that he came in touch with BJP leader Mantri Srinivas, Chinappa Reddy said that there was no truth in the rumours of his joining BJP. "I am an MLC. No BJP leader has talked to me. I am loyal to my leader K Chandrashekar Rao and TRS. I still have one-year term as MLC. I strongly condemn the rumours," he said.

Chinappa Reddy said that he had not gone anywhere and no one had met him. He asked reporters to visit his residence in Film Nagar and check for themselves. There were reports that BJP leader Mantri Srinivas had met Chinappa Reddy and invited him to join the party. It was said that the BJP leader met Chinappa Reddy at 4 pm on Thursday.

## 186 new Covid cases, 1 death in Telangana

Active cases drop to 2,698 including 1,213 in home or institutional isolation

HYDERABAD

TELANGANA reported 186 new Covid cases and one death during the last 24 hours, health officials said on Thursday. The cumulative tally of cases mounted to 2,93,923 while the death toll increased to 1,594.

During the last 24 hours, 309 people recovered from the virus taking the cumulative recoveries to 2,89,631. The recovery rate improved further to 98.53 per cent against the national average of 96.9 per cent. The active cases dropped to 2,698 including 1,213 who are in home or institutional isolation.

The daily count of cases in Greater Hyderabad continued to be below 50. The state capital reported 35 new cases during the last 24 hours. Rangareddy



district logged 12 cases followed by Medchal Malkajgiri (12), Karimnagar (11) and Warangal Urban (11). The daily count in the remaining districts was in single digit.

During the last 24 hours, 31,119 tests were conducted -- 28,369 in government labs and

2,750 in private labs. With this the cumulative number of tests conducted in the state rose to 77,59,415. Tests per million population climbed to 2,08,474.

According to officials, 70 per cent of the positive cases reported in the state so far were asymptomatic.

The data shows that 63.90 per cent of those tested positive so far were aged between 21-50 years. As many as 22.91 per cent were aged above 51 years. The positive cases include 13.18 per cent who were below 20 years. Of the total cases, 60.44 per cent were male and 39.37 per cent female.

The fatality rate remained 0.54 per cent against the national average of 1.4 per cent. While 44.96 per cent of the deaths occurred due to Covid, 55.04 per cent had comorbidities. A majority of the beds in hospitals treating Covid cases remained vacant. As many as 8,026 beds out of 8,577 beds in 62 government hospitals were vacant. Similarly, in 217 private hospitals 6,754 out of 7,688 beds were vacant.

### NAADU-NEDU (HEALTH)

## Finalise tenders by April 15: CM

- In a review, Chief Minister directs officials to expedite land acquisition for new medical colleges and start works
- The State govt has taken up works worth Rs 16,270 cr related to YSR village clinics, PHCs, area hospitals, development of existing medical colleges and construction of new ones
- Tells officials to thoroughly train PHC staff so that they can guide patients to avail benefits under Aarogyasri

AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy instructed the officials to finalise the tenders for developmental works in existing medical colleges and construction of new medical colleges by April 15. He held a review on Nadu-Nedu (health) at his camp office at Tadepalli on Thursday.

Under Nadu-Nedu (health), works related to YSR village clinics, YSR urban clinics, primary health centres (PHCs), area hospitals, developmental works in existing medical colleges and construction of new medical colleges are being taken up at an estimated budget of Rs 16,270 crore.

During the review, the Chief Minister said land acquisition for hospitals should be completed soon and works should begin and asked the officials to focus on the maintenance



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy reviewing progress in Nadu-Nedu works in health and medical sector at his camp office in Tadepalli on Thursday

and hygiene of buildings being constructed.

The officials said works were being done with a deadline to complete construction of 10,011 village clinics by April and added that construction of 151 new PHCs and restoration of 982 existing PHCs will be completed by October and the works of Nadu-Nedu in area hospitals will be completed by December.

They said 3.1 crore square feet of works are being done for construction of super specialty hospitals, new medical colleges and restoration of existing colleges and added that this work would be equal to four times the work of Beijing Airport and six times the work of Burj Khalifa tower in Dubai.

On Covid-19 situation, the officials said the recovery rate is 99.04 per cent and the mortality rate is 0.81 per cent and also briefed on the progress in vaccination which going on in the state.

The Chief Minister sought details of training being given to staff in PHCs and those in village and urban health clinics. The officials said tests

are being conducted for staff for awareness and knowledge on referral system. The Chief Minister said awareness should be created among Asha workers on referral system. When officials explained the workflow of ANMs and Arogyamitras regarding the referral system, he said the staff should have complete understanding on empanelled hospitals and be prepared to give proper guidance to the patients.

He said staff should be provided with complete information for effective implementation of government policy of providing free treatment if medical expenditure exceeds Rs 1,000. Feedback should be taken from Aarogyasri beneficiaries and implementation of Arogya Asara should be verified. He directed the officials to ensure a mobile phone with every Arogyamitra. He said the real-time data on any problem in empanelled hospitals should reach top officials. The officials said an app has been designed for this purpose. The Chief Minister said 104 and 108 vehicles should be well maintained and they should be

in good condition.

Reviewing the system of doctors visiting villages, the Chief Minister said guidelines should be prepared on the basis of practices in other states and their ideas.

The Chief Minister also discussed the mystery illness in Pulla and Komaravolu villages of West Godavari district. He enquired about the tests conducted by various reputed institutes and their results. The officials said drinking water is safe, food samples in Pulla village were tested safe and the results of food samples of Komaravolu are awaited.

Deputy Chief Minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas (Nani), Chief Minister's chief advisor Nilam Sawhney, transport principal secretary M T Krishnababu, health principal secretary Anil Kumar Singhal, health commissioner Katamaneni Bhaskar, AP Medical Services and Infrastructure Development Corporation managing director V Vijayarama Raju, Aarogyasri trust CEO A Mallikarjuna and other senior officials were present.

### PANCHAYAT POLLS

## BJP-Jana Sena leaders urge Guv to intervene

- Veerajuu and Manohar submit a memorandum to the Governor expressing apprehensions over poll process in view of the bad blood between the State govt and the SEC
- Point out to 'forcible' unanimous elections engineered by YSRCP during MPTC, ZPTC polls in last year March, appeal to him to prevent their repetition

AMARAVATI

THE BJP state president and MLC Somu Veerajuu and Jana Sena Party political affairs committee chairman Nadendla Manohar met Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan on Thursday and submitted a memorandum requesting intervention of Governor for peaceful conduct of panchayat elections.

In the letter, the alliance partners stated that they doubt the elections would be free and fair given the differences between the state government and State Election Commission. Referring to the previous MPTC and ZPTC election experience, Veerajuu and Manohar said that the opposition candidates were being prevented by force from filing their nominations, resulting in unprecedented spike in "unanimous elections". Both the BJP and Jana Sena



Jana Sena Party leader Nadendla Manohar addressing a press conference along with BJP State president Somu Veerajuu at Raj Bhavan in Vijayawada on Thursday

leaders said that they suspect that the state government may deliberately delay issue of caste and no-due certificates for the contestants of opposition parties to facilitate unanimous elections of YSRCP candidates. They also expressed suspicions that nomination papers would be tampered with during scrutiny.

Later, speaking to media, BJP state president Veerajuu said that they brought to the notice of the Governor the irregularities that took place during last year's MPTC and ZPTC elections. He said they had also explained about the increasing attacks on temples and arrest of opposition party people and urged the Governor to see that nominations are received online to prevent threats and intimidation of candidates.

Jana Sena leader Nadendla Manohar said that they

informed the Governor the experiences of the previous elections in which the ruling party leaders threatened the candidates to prevent them from filing nominations. He said that they asked him to see that the state government does not lure the candidates to make elections unanimous in its favour. He said that they had appealed to the Governor to ensure that the government doesn't misuse power through the village volunteers.

He said it was common to dole out financial incentives to panchayat for unanimous elections but demanded that they should be held without conspiracies. "Incentives for unanimous elections are common anywhere. We also welcome them. But this state government is conspiring to bring forced unanimity. We can understand this very clearly," said Manohar.



## Tablighi congregation during Covid peak, farmers' protests on Republic day

# SC slams Centre for doing nothing about instigating news

**Fair and truthful reporting is normally not a problem. Problem is when it is used to agitate others. It is as important as providing 'lathis' to policemen. It is an important preventive part of the law and order situation: CJI**

NEW DELHI

REFERRING to the internet shutdown on January 26 amid unrest in the national capital, the Supreme Court on Thursday took the Centre to task for "not doing anything" to curb television programmes which "instigate or impact a community". The top court noted the need for fair and factual reporting is imperative to check law and order situation.

"The fact of the matter is that there are programmes which are instigating effect and you being the government is doing nothing about it," a bench headed by

Chief Justice S A Bobde told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who was appearing for the Centre.

Control over inciteful news programmes can act as a preventative measure because they are often used to agitate others, the bench noted.

The bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, made this observation while hearing a batch of pleas which have raised the issue of media reporting of Tablighi Jamaat congregation here last year during the onset of Covid-19 pandemic.

The congregation at Nizamuddin Markaz in the national capital in March last year, attended by thousands



of Indian and foreign nationals, was cited as being responsible for accelerating the spread of coronavirus or Covid-19, with its attendees allegedly carrying the infection to different parts of the country. "There are programmes which instigate or impact a community. But as a government, you do nothing," the bench observed.

"Yesterday, you shut down the internet and mobile because of the farmers' visit to Delhi. I am using the non-controversial term. You have shut down internet mobile," the CJI said, adding, "These are problems that can arise anywhere. I don't know what happened in the TV yesterday. "Fair and truthful reporting is normally

not a problem. Problem is when it is used to agitate others. It is as important as providing 'lathis' to policemen. It is an important preventive part of the law and order situation," the bench said.

The apex court said it is not interested in people saying anything on TV but it is concerned about those programmes which have instigation effect.

"Control over some news is as important as some preventive measure and check law and order situation. I don't know why you are blind to this. I don't mean anything offensive but you are doing nothing about it," the CJI said.

## Red Fort Breach

# SEDITION CASE LODGED

**Police used force to end agitation in UP's Baghpat, allege farmers**

**TMC tables resolution against Farm Laws in Bengal Assembly**

NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

A sedition case has been lodged by the Delhi Police in connection with the unrest at Red Fort on Republic Day during the farmers' tractor parade, officials said on Thursday.

A case under section 124A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) has been registered and the incident is being investigated, a senior police official said. Earlier on Thursday, the Delhi Police had named actor Deep Sidhu and gangster-turned-activist Lakha Sidhana in an FIR linked with the Red Fort incident.

Thousands of protesting farmers, who reached ITO from the Ghazipur border, clashed with the police. Many of them, driving tractors, reached the Red Fort and entered the monument. They hoisted Nishank's flag on the domes.

A farmers' protest against three farm laws of the Centre, which was continuing on a national highway in Uttar Pradesh Baghpat district since December 19 last year, has come to an end with the protesters alleging



A farmer at Singhu border in New Delhi on Thursday

use of force by police.

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

Deep Sidhu, who has been accused by farm bodies of trying to defame their agitation and termed a "traitor", has hit out at farm leaders

for allegedly spreading false propaganda and hatred against him.

The 36-year-old Sidhu, who is in the eye of a storm for being among the protesters who put up a religious flag atop the Red Fort on Republic Day, claimed that youth did not agree to follow the route which was decided by farmer leaders and the Delhi Police. He claimed people "on

their own" marched towards the Red Fort from all the Delhi borders on January 26 and that not many people took the route as decided by farmer leaders.

Slamming the farm leadership for accusing him of being a "BJP and RSS man", he said, "Will RSS or BJP's man put up the 'Nishank Sahib' and a farmer flag at Red Fort? At least think over it".

We will not accept farmers being branded as traitors, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said in the Bengal assembly after a resolution was moved for repealing the new farm laws.

The central government must repeal the farm laws or step down, she said while addressing the assembly.

"We oppose the anti-farmer laws. We demand their immediate withdrawal. Either the Centre should withdraw the laws or step down," the chief minister said.

Banerjee said the Union government, which has in the past, waived corporate loans, should also extend the same benefit to farmers.

## Anna to fast from tomorrow

AHMEDNAGAR

SOCIAL Crusader Kisan Baburao alias Anna Hazare on Thursday lamented that the Centre is ignoring all his pleas on the farmers' demands, compelling him to go on another hunger strike from January 30.

The 83-year-old anti-graft activist said that he had been agitating for the farmers since four years and in past three months only, he had written on this five times to the Prime Minister and Union Agriculture Minister.

"But it seems that the government is not taking appropriate de-

cisions on the issue of farmers. The government is not sensitive to the plight of farmers. So I will start a fast from the Yadavbaba Temple in Ralegan-Siddhi on January 30, the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination," Hazare announced.

Detailing his struggles, Hazare said he had launched a hunger strike in Delhi on March 23, 2018 after which the PMO gave a written assurance on March 29 on the MSP demand and other issues.

The government did not comply with the same forcing him to go on another strike in Ralegan-Siddhi from January 30, 2019.



A police constable place a notice for a farmer leader after an FIR registered against him in connection with Republic Day violence

## Emotional Tikait refuses to surrender

NEW DELHI

BHARATIYA Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait on Thursday broke down at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh Ghazipur farmers protest site, alleging that the administration was trying to crush their movement.

Tikait, who has been named in the Delhi Police FIR in connection with the violence at several parts of the city during the 'Kisan Gantantra parade' on Republic Day, made his appearance at the protest site two days later, saying, "We were ready to surrender peacefully but the BJP's local MLAs have been called to beat the protesting farmers."

"There is a conspiracy against us. Now, I will not surrender even if the police fires bullets at us," he announced from the dais of the farmers' protest site.

Tikait also said that he will hang himself but he will not surrender now and urged the farmers to save their tents that have been in place since November 26 last year.

Speaking to media, an emotional Tikait said that the administration was trying to conspire against the farmers to end their peaceful movement. "We had come here to protest against the three farm laws demanding their repealing," he said.

## HC: Opening pants zip not sexual assault

NAGPUR

THE Nagpur bench of the Bombay high court has ruled that holding the hands of a minor girl and opening of the zip of pants does not fall under the purview of 'sexual assault' or 'aggravated sexual assault' of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The observation was made by a single bench of Justice Pushpa Ganediwalla on January 15 while passing an order on an appeal filed by a 50-year-old man challenging a sessions court's order convicting him for sexually assaulting and molesting a five-year-old girl.

Judge Ganediwalla has come under the scanner in the past few days for a series of judgement which has been deemed as 'controversial.'

The Bombay HC verdict regarding a case of groping of a minor girl sent shockwaves for its controversial statement. The case involved a 12-year-old girl who had reportedly been groped by a 39-year-old man in December 2016.

After four years, the Nagpur bench headed by Justice Ganediwalla found that the accused did grope the child but it did not constitute sexual assault punishable with POCSO but instead constituted the offence of outraging a woman's modesty under IPC section 354. The reason? The girl reportedly had her top on and since



Justice Pushpa Ganediwalla

there was no "skin to skin contact", the groping could not be ruled as an assault. In 2018, Ganediwalla was one of several judges who were considered for appointment to the Bombay High Court, but was not appointed after the Bombay High Court recommended against it. The Supreme Court of India accepted the Bombay High Court's adverse recommendations and decided to defer consideration of her appointment. In 2019, Ganediwalla's appointment was reconsidered, and she was appointed as an additional judge in the Bombay High Court. Ganediwalla has, along with two other judges, commuted death penalty sentences to life imprisonment in two cases while sitting on the Bombay High Court, in 2019. Both cases concerned the offence of murder.

## Republic TV files defamation suit against Times Now anchor

NEW DELHI

THE parent company of the Republic TV has filed a defamation complaint at a Delhi court against Times Now anchor Navika Kumar for allegedly making defamatory remarks against Republic TV and its founder in connection with the alleged WhatsApp chats mentioned in the chargesheet filed by the Mumbai Police in the TRP scam case.

The complaint filed by ARG Outlier Media Private Limited alludes to the statements made by Navika Kumar relating to the chats of Republic TV Editor-in-Chief and founder Arnab Goswami on her show on January 18.

"Navika Kumar made rabid and unfounded claims accusing Republic Media Network's founder of endangering national security and leaking state secrets, thereby jeopardising the goodwill of the network and endangering the entire organisation," the 49-page complaint stated. The company submitted that the defamatory show had over 85,000 views in addition to the live telecast at prime time in the satellite television, and "the scale of defamation faced by the complainant company is irreparable".

## 'Tractor terror' on Republic Day

# Family members of injured cops ask them to quit Delhi Police

ASHISH SRIVASTAVA  
NEW DELHI

ON Republic Day, the tractor rally by protesting farmers demanding repealing of the three contentious farm laws witnessed clashes at several points in the national capital. Clashes broke out in multiple places, leading to violence at well-known landmarks of Delhi and its suburbs, amid waves of violence that ebbed and flowed through the day, resulting in a huge number of casualties on both sides.

As per an estimate by Delhi Police, nearly 400 police personnel received injuries and around 100 had to be hospitalised for a day or two. A protester also died after his tractor overturned near ITO in central Delhi.

The patiente Delhi Police showed while dealing with the agitating group of farmers controlled the number of

injuries. IANS spoke to a few of those severely injured who said that if the police force had retaliated, the number of casualties would have been far greater on both sides. "We were instructed by our seniors to be patient and pacify them (agitated farmers) since they outnumbered us. Had we not kept our calm in that situation and retaliated with force, the casualties would have been greater and grave on both sides," said Delhi Police constable Sandeep Kumar.

Kumar was deployed at the Red Fort on that day. Recalling the incident, he said that thousands of farmers riding tractors suddenly emerged and thronged the fort and charged against him. "I was isolated from my teammates and was surrounded by a large group of angry farmers that attacked me with sticks and rods. One person attacked me with a sword but I dodged and it passed over my head," he recalled.



Kumar has sustained multiple injuries on his body and fractured his left hand in the assault. He along with four other officials are receiving treatment at Tirath Ram Shah Hospital in Civil Lines.

"Six police personnel had arrived in poly-traumatic condition. One was discharged and five are still under-recovery. Their condition is stable and they would be discharged in two-three days," Dr J.P. Singh, Medical Superintendent of the hospital, told IANS.

Akin to Kumar, 80 more people, who were injured in the clashes including farmers and policemen, were admitted to different hospitals. 74 people were admitted to Lok Nayak Hospital and Sushruta Trauma Centre. While many were discharged the next day, the situation of one police official remains critical.

"Five policemen are currently under our treatment while the condition of one policeman who has suffered

severe head injuries is still critical," informed Dr Suresh Kumar, medical director, Lok Nayak Hospital.

Meanwhile, families of the injured policemen are distraught after the incident. Many have asked the officials to quit the force.

"My family is in distress after they got to know about my condition. I'm under pressure to leave the job and go back to my hometown. However, I'm trying to pacify them," said an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) from Sarai Rohilla police station. He has received visible injuries on his hands and sustained multiple internal injuries as well, doctors said. The ASI was also deployed at the Red Fort. His younger brother, who is caring for him, said that the whole family wants him to quit. "We don't want him to face another life-threatening assault. His well being is of paramount importance," his brother added.



TODAY'S QUOTE

We will make India global tech garage

We are committed to work with young entrepreneurs of the private sector to establish India as a global tech garage. The private sector in India develops innovative solutions and the government's strength has been its reach. Both need to be leveraged together.

— Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Aayog



ECONOMY

Global debt likely to touch 98% of GDP

Global public debt is estimated to touch 98% of GDP at the end of 2020, International Monetary Fund said on Thursday in its latest fiscal monitor update, according to which India's government debt is expected to remain elevated at 83 per cent of GDP. The Covid-19 pandemic has posed a severe challenge to public finances.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	77.42	South	
Euro	92.84	African Rand	5.52
UAE Dirham	21.87	Hong Kong Dollar	10.83
Thai Baht	2.8	Japanese Yen	0.81
British Pound	103.82	New Zealand Dollar	54.67
Australian Dollar	58.39	Saudi Riyal	21.41
Canadian Dollar	59.67	Swedish Krona	10.05
Swiss Franc	85.34	Singapore Dollar	57.59

DELHI FRIDAY 29 JANUARY 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

MobiKwik, Home Credit in pact

MOBIKWIK, on Thursday announced a partnership with Home Credit India, to launch 'Home Credit Money'. A mobile application-based wallet provides integrated end-to-end digital experience to its customers for their daily life payments and borrowing needs. The app is developed for all payment use cases like eCommerce payments, QR payments, bill payments and money transfer. Home Credit money enables users to avail instant interest-free loan ranging from Rs 1,500 to Rs 10,000. The app has received almost 100,000 downloads on Google Play Store in three months. Marko Carevic, CEO, Home Credit India, said: "Our goal is to empower our customers by offering credit facilities that are seamlessly integrated with their purchase journeys. Our partnership with MobiKwik is a significant step towards taking customer engagement to a new level."

Koo ties up with Republic TV

MICRO-BLOGGING platform 'Koo' announced its tie up with Republic TV to further reach and encourage Indian audiences to express their thoughts and opinions on everyday trending news. As part of the partnership, Republic Bharat will use the Koo platform to trend daily hashtags and encourage their followers on Koo to express their thoughts and opinions on these topics. The best koos will get featured on Republic TV. Aprameya Radhakrishna, Co-Founder and CEO of Koo, said: "We firmly believe that Freedom of Speech digitally should be irrespective of language preferences. Today the internet has a majority of thoughts and opinions from the English audience. The tie-up with Republic Bharat will help bring awareness about expressing oneself on social media among the Hindi speaking audiences as well."

SBI gets new MDs

THE country's largest lender State Bank of India, on Thursday said Swaminathan J and Ashwini Kumar Tewari have taken charge as managing directors (MDs). They would be holding this position for up to three years, the lender said in a release. Before this, Swaminathan was the Deputy Managing Director (Finance) at the bank, where he was overseeing budgeting, capital planning, financial reporting, taxation, audit, economic research, investor relations, and secretarial compliance. Tewari served SBI Card as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer before he was appointed as MD of the bank. In October last year, the Banks Board Bureau (BBB) had recommended both the names for the two posts of managing directors at the bank. It had interviewed 16 candidates from various nationalised banks.

IndiGo posts net loss

BUDGET carrier IndiGo on Thursday reported a net loss of Rs 620 crore for the third quarter ended December 2020. It had posted a net profit of Rs 496 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal. In the June and September quarter this fiscal, the airline incurred a net loss of Rs 2,884 crore and Rs 1,194 crore, respectively. The airline's total income declined 50 per cent year-on-year to Rs 5,142 crore in the third quarter. Its total expenses in the December quarter slipped 41 per cent to Rs 5,765 crore. "The high level of consumer confidence in our product has indeed been heartening and we are glad to be making graduated and measured steps to a full recovery," IndiGo Chief Executive Officer Ronojoy Dutta said.

India's gold demand down 35% in 2020

MUMBAI

INDIA's gold demand dropped by over a third in 2020 settling at 446.4 tonne on the back of pandemic-induced lockdowns and lifetime high prices, but a rebound this year is most likely, as normalcy returns and steady course of reforms strengthen the industry, according to the World Gold Council (WGC).

India's gold demand fell by 35.34 per cent to 446.4 tonne in 2020. In 2019, the total gold demand was 690.4 tonne, according to the WGC's 2020 Gold Demand Trends report. Gold demand in value terms in 2020, witnessed a decline of 14 per cent and stood at Rs 1,88,280 crore, compared to Rs 2,17,770 crore in 2019, according to the WGC data.

Meanwhile, the total jewellery demand in volume terms in 2020 was down by 42 per cent at 315.9 tonne, compared to 544.6 tonne in 2019, while in terms of value it dipped by 22.42 per cent to Rs 1,33,260 crore, from Rs 1,71,790 crore largely on account of Covid-related restrictions. The country's net gold imports dipped by 47 per cent during 2020 to 344.2 tonne compared to 646.8 tonne in 2019, it added. However, as lockdown eased and normalisation efforts were phased in, imports during the last quarter rose 19 per cent year-on-year, pointing to the positive impact of pent-up demand, according to WGC Managing Director, India, Somasundaram PR.

In the fourth quarter of 2020, the festive period and the ensuing wedding season revived hopes and drew in jewellery demand worth 137.3 tonnes, the strongest quarter in the year



The fourth quarter (October-December) of 2020, saw improved consumer sentiments as gold demand was down by only 4 per cent at 186.2 tonne, compared to overall demand in the same quarter of 2019 at 194.3 tonne. "In the fourth quarter of 2020, the festive period and the ensuing wedding season revived hopes and drew in jewellery demand worth 137.3 tonnes, the strongest quarter in the year. Investment demand also showed significant resilience, growing 8 per cent to 48.9 tonnes," Somasundaram PR said.

He pointed out that this can be expected to continue into 2021 as further normalcy returns and steady course of reforms strengthen the industry. "With the implementation of mandatory

hallmarking in June 2021, establishment of the international bullion exchange in GIFT city and Retail Code of

conduct under the aegis of the industry steering committee, industry growth will be qualitatively superior underpinned by global ambitions and strong awareness of trust and transparency," he said. From the consumers' perspective, there is acceptance of the current high price level as the new normal, he stated. In addition, current high stock indices and low interest rates will add significant weightage to gold amidst inevitable return of celebrations and festivities, he said. "We could see a strong spurt in gold demand for the next few years, a repeat of what happened after a sharp drop in 2009. In such a scenario, the current high tax on gold increases the lure of smuggling, so duty cut to reasonable levels is absolutely necessary, along with tax concessions for recycling gold, innovations and digital interventions," he said.



FM to present Economic Survey today

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

UNION Minister for Finance Nirmala Sitharaman will table the Economic Survey for 2020-21 in Parliament on Friday. This annual account of India's economic landscape is keenly watched and dissected as it comes amid an unprecedented economic crisis triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic in India and around the world. As India's economy is projected to register a steep contraction in the current financial year, the Survey authored by Chief Economic Advisor

Krishnamurthy Subramanian is expected to come out with an economic growth forecast for the next financial year i.e. 2021-22. It's a general practice that the Economic Survey is tabled in the Parliament a day before the Union Budget is presented. This time, the Survey is coming out three days before the Budget as a weekend separates both the events.

As always, the latest Economic Survey, described as the central government's report card on the economy, also discusses the State of economy in threadbare, dwells on the policy challenges and the changes that are required and dishes out sectoral overviews.

SBI asset quality remains healthy: Chairman Khara

MUMBAI

THE asset quality situation at State Bank of India (SBI) remains healthy and the faster-than-expected economic recovery may limit the impact to lenders' balance sheets, the bank's Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara said on Thursday. He, however, did not share details on the Covid-related loan restructuring for SBI citing the silent period ahead of the results. It can be noted that in the bi-annual Financial Stability Report (FSR) released last month, the RBI had expected banks' non-performing assets to deteriorate further because of the pandemic and asked them to be cautious.

"I would also mention that the asset quality book of the bank remains healthy," Khara told reporters on the sidelines of an event here. The macro-



economic situation is not the same as it was in April, and with the ease in restrictions post lockdown, we have seen a recovery process which led to growth in different pockets, he said. He acknowledged that the macro-economy had seen difficulties at a point of time and the cash flows for the corporates had also been impacted.

Better treatment for Covid-19 patients and the arrival of vaccines have also improved confidence which is pushing economic recovery, he said. Hinting that the cash flows for the corporates have improved because of interventions like the ones the government has taken, Khara answered a specific question on asset quality saying, "These are the positives which we have seen. This gives the confidence that perhaps situation may not turn out to be as bad."

ED begins probe against e-com major Amazon

NEW DELHI

THE Enforcement Directorate (ED) has initiated a probe against e-commerce giant Amazon for alleged violation of the foreign exchange law and rules of the country, official sources said on Thursday.

The probe is being conducted under various sections of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) after the central probe agency recently received a communication from the Commerce Ministry seeking 'necessary action' against e-commerce players like Amazon and Flipkart pertaining to certain multi-brand retail businesses and an observation made by the Delhi High Court in relation to Amazon. The HC had said that said the attempt made by the US-based firm to control Future Retail through a



conflation of agreements it has with an unlisted unit of the Indian company will be considered as violation of the FEMA and foreign direct investment (FDI) rules. When contacted, an Amazon spokesperson said it was "not aware of any new case by the ED against Amazon India".

Sources said the agency is looking to "investigate into the entire issue and will seek details from Amazon and other stakeholders". In the first instance under the ED scanner is a recent communication sent to it by the Department for Promotion of Industry and In-

ternal Trade (DPIIT) that functions under the Commerce Ministry. It had forwarded a representation made by the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) alleging that major e-commerce players like Flipkart and Amazon violated FEMA and FDI rules.

CAIT had alleged that these e-commerce companies were in violation of FEMA and FDI rules by adopting illegal structuring/investments and practices. Flipkart, at that time, had said it was "fully compliant with all applicable laws and FDI regulations in the country". In the second instance being investigated by the ED that involves Amazon, the Delhi High Court had made observations on the US e-commerce firm objecting to the Rs 24,713 crore Future Group-Reliance deal that was signed in August last year.

Markets recoil amid global sell-off

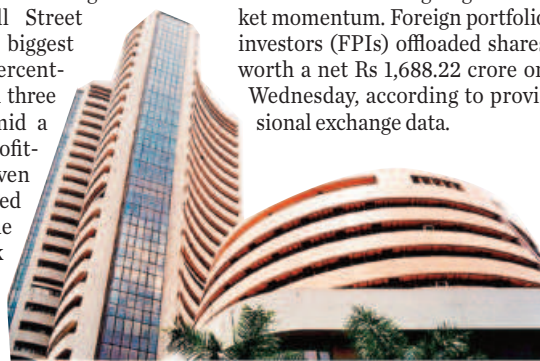
SENSEX SLUMPS 536 PTS, NIFTY TUMBLES 149.95 POINTS

MUMBAI

EQUITY indices nosedived for the fifth straight session on Thursday as investors took money off the table amid foreign fund outflows and heavy selling in global markets.

Participants also preferred to remain in a risk-averse mode ahead of the Union Budget next week, traders said. The 30-share BSE SENSEX skidded 535.57 points or 1.13 per cent to finish at 46,874.36. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty tumbled 149.95 points or 1.07 per cent to 13,817.55. The Sensex has now lost 2,917.76 points in five days, while the Nifty has retreated 827.15 points.

HUL was the top loser in the Sensex pack on Thursday, shedding 3.65 per cent, followed by Maruti, HDFC Bank, PowerGrid, Kotak Bank, IndusInd Bank, HCL Tech and Bajaj Finserv. On the other hand, Axis Bank, SBI, ONGC, ICICI Bank and UltraTech Cement were among the gainers, jumping up to 6.16 per cent. On the global front, Wall Street posted its biggest one-day percentage drop in three months amid a wave of profit-taking, even as the US Fed left the benchmark interest rate unchanged



near zero and vowed to maintain its bond buying program. Asian and European bourses too wilted under selling pressure amid unabated rise in Covid-19 cases.

"Market turned cautious after the unidirectional upside of the last 10 months due to ambiguity ahead the Budget and profit booking in the global market due to over-enthusiasm. "Global risk parameters increased despite the US Fed maintaining its supportive policy, due to high speculation in the equity market and likely drop in fiscal and monetary liquidity in the future," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. BSE Realty, IT, FMCG, tech, auto and healthcare indices lost up to 2.07 per cent, while oil and gas, telecom, bankex and consumer durables managed to close in the green. The broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices slipped up to 0.46 per cent. According to traders, recent foreign fund outflows from the domestic capital markets are also weighing on market momentum. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) offloaded shares worth a net Rs 1,688.22 crore on Wednesday, according to provisional exchange data.

Jio ranked world's 5th strongest brand

NEW DELHI

BILLIONAIRE Mukesh Ambani's four-year-old telecom venture Reliance Jio has been ranked the fifth strongest brand globally behind the likes of Ferrari and Coca-Cola.

The Brand Finance's Global 500 ranking of the strongest brands globally, which determined the relative strength of brands, is topped by WeChat, according to its annual report on most valuable and strongest global brands. "Despite only being founded in 2016, Jio has quickly become the largest mobile network operator in India and the third-largest mobile network operator in the world, with almost 400 million subscribers," it said. Jio was Mukesh Ambani's re-entry into the telecom business, offering free voice calling and dirt cheap data for mobile phones. "Renowned for its incredibly affordable plans, Jio took India by storm through offering 4G to millions of users for free" said Brand Finance.

Maruti Suzuki's Q3 profit rises over 24%

NEW DELHI

AUTOMOBILE major Maruti Suzuki India on Thursday reported a rise of 24.1 per cent in its net profit for the quarter ended December 31, 2020, owing to higher sales and non-operating income.

According to the automobile manufacturer, the net profit during the quarter under review rose to Rs 1,941.4 crore from Rs 1,564.8 crore during the corresponding period of previous fiscal. "During the quarter, the company registered net sales of Rs 222,367 million, an increase of 13.2 per cent compared to the same period previous year," the company said in a statement.



Anantapur: Holds promise for steel, cement units

Skill development, however, is a major challenge that universities like JNTU, Central University and SKU can focus on

RAVI P. BENJAMIN ANANTAPUR

ANANTAPUR has a great potential for the development of industries due to its strategic location between Bengaluru-Chennai and Bengaluru-Hyderabad routes, and the availability of vast tracts of land. In 2006, the Centre named Anantapur as one of the country's 250 most backward districts (out of a total of 640). It is one of the 13 districts in the State currently receiving funds from the Backward Regions Grant Fund Programme (BRGF).

The only manufacturing unit in Anantapur district is Kia Motors established at Penukonda with Rs13,000-crore investment with a target to produce 3 lakh cars per year. On an average, it is supposed to produce 25,000 cars per month. Within six months of launching commercial production, the coronavirus pandemic hit its operations, forcing the company to be closed for several months. Currently,



the production has slowed down and plant is running only in two shifts. There are no agri-processing units, IT or aqua-related industries in the district. There is a huge potential for horticulture and agri-processing units in view of the district emerging as a horticulture hub. District Collector Gandham Chandrudu is taking interest in promoting fruit processing units but a lot remains to be done to translate the idea into reality.

Abundant mineral wealth

Dolomite, iron ore, limestone, prophylite, quartz and steatite are some of the important minerals that are available in the district in abundance. Gold is found to occur in Ramagiri village in Ramagiri mandal. The place extends over a distance of 14 kilometre. Exploratory mining in the area has pruned about 467 metres of ore shoots with an average width of 100



cms/tonne. Mining operations are expected to be conducted by Bharat Gold Mines Limited. Diamonds are said to be available near Vijrakur. They mainly occur in pipe rocks.

The district has iron ore, dolomite and limestone mines, which are essential raw materials for the manufacture of steel. Hence, steel plants can be set up in the district but as a deterrent, the Gali Janardhan Reddy mining fiasco forced the government to stop the mining activity.

Already, the district has four ce-



World Tour Finals

# Srikanth, Sindhu suffer second defeat in row

BANGKOK

STAR Indian shuttlers Kidambi Srikanth and PV Sindhu suffered contrasting defeats in their respective second group 'B' matches at the BWF World Tour Finals here on Thursday.

While Kidambi lost 21-19, 9-21, 19-21 to Wang Tzu Wei of Chinese Taipei, Sindhu suffered a 18-21, 13-21 loss to Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon.

Srikanth, who is making his fourth appearance at the season finale, will next face Thailand's Angus Ng Ka Long while Sindhu will lock horns with another local Pornpawee Chochuwong in their last group stage encounters on Friday.

In the men's singles event, Srikanth showed great skills in the opening game

and dominated the proceedings till the end against his fourth-seed opponent to seal it 21-19 in 23 minutes.

However, Tzu Wei came back strongly in the second game and registered a 11-5 lead at the interval. He extended the lead to 16-7 before Srikanth came back to score two points to reduce the deficit to 16-9. But the fourth seed then won five straight points to seal the game 21-19 in 19 minutes to force the match into the decider.

In the third game again, Srikanth started off brilliantly but wasn't able to hold on as he conceded a 11-10 lead at the mid-game break. Tzu Wei, however, kept his composure and despite losing three consecutive points towards the end, he won the game 21-19.

In the women's singles event, Sindhu

was never in the match as she lost in straight games against Intanon.

Sindhu, showed some fight in the opening game but wasn't able to control as she lost the opening game 18-21 to Intanon, who had defeated her last week in a lopsided Thailand Open quarter-final clash. Intanon then came out with a even better performance in the second game to seal it 21-13 and registered a comfortable win in the match which lasted just 43 minutes.

Both Srikanth and Sindhu had lost their tournament openers on Wednesday. While Srikanth had lost 21-15, 15-21, 18-21 to Denmark's Anders Antonsen, Sindhu - the reigning world champion - had suffered a 21-19, 12-21, 17-21 loss to world number one Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei. (IANS)



# IOC chief rules out cancellation of Tokyo 2020 Olympics

PARIS

INTERNATIONAL Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach reiterated the IOC's commitment to delivering the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympic Games this summer, adding that preparation work for Beijing 2022 is also progressing steadily. "We are fully concentrated on and committed to the successful and safe delivery of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020, starting on 23 July (2021) with the Olympic Games and 24 August with the Paralympic Games," Bach said at a media conference after an IOC executive board meeting on Wednesday, Xinhua news reports.

Speaking about Beijing 2022, the IOC chief said: "We can say, even one year before, that all the (competition) venues are ready, the technical preparations are excellent."

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, all 12 Beijing 2022 competition venues have been completed, a high-speed railway linking Beijing and co-host Zhangjiakou is now operational, and nearly one million volunteer applications have been received.

The Tokyo Games were originally to have taken place last summer, but were postponed to this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, becoming the first Olympics in peacetime to suffer

that fate. With Japan hit by a resurgence of the virus in recent months, media reports claimed that the Games would once again be postponed and may even be cancelled.

"There is speculation about cancellation, about a Plan B. Some even make the proposal to postpone the Olympic Games to the year 2032," Bach said. "But all these speculations are hurting the athletes who have already overcome challenges in their daily training and competition."

"We are not losing our time and energy on the speculations. We are working on how the Games will take place, we are fully concentrating on the opening ceremony on the 23rd of July this year."

Bach said that the IOC's confidence is based upon the fact that many sporting events have been held successfully in the past year and many COVID-19 countermeasures had proved effective.

"We have seen during this winter season, more than 7,000 events have been organised by the international federations with 175,000 COVID-19 tests having been taken, and only 0.18 percent were positive. The competitions could be run, could be organised."

At the meeting, it was also decided that the 137th IOC session, set to take place from March 10 to 12 in Athens, Greece, will now be held virtually. (IANS)

## Restart date for test events postponed by a month

**TOKYO:** The restart date for the Tokyo Olympic test events has been postponed by one month from March 4 to April 3, organisers announced here on Thursday.

The final artistic swimming qualifier for the Tokyo Olympics, originally due to take place from March 4 to 7, has been rescheduled to May 1-4 because of travel restrictions under the current state of emergency in Tokyo and other 10 prefectures across Japan, writes Xinhua news agency.

The Tokyo 2020 organising committee announced that the first of 18 test events for the Olympic and Paralympic Games will involve wheelchair rugby, which will be held in Yoyogi National Stadium from April 3 to 4.

The FINA Diving World Cup will follow from April 18 to 23 at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, which will also serve as an Olympic qualifying event. The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic has slowed down in Tokyo three weeks after the Japanese capital entered a state of emergency on January 8. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government confirmed 973 new cases on Wednesday.

The latest figure, as of Sunday and Monday, dipped below the 1,000-mark, before rising above the threshold on Tuesday where new daily infections in the city of 14 million rose to 1,026. But a growing number of people in the Japanese government believe it will be necessary to extend the state of emergency for parts of the country continuing to see a high number of Covid-19 cases. (IANS)

## REPUBLIC DAY REGATTA CONCLUDES



Winners of the 17th Republic Day Regatta 2021 pose with their trophies along with officials after the prize distribution function at the Hussain Sagar Lake here on Thursday. The three-day regatta at Yacht Club of Hyderabad, which was extended to 5 days due to inclement weather conditions, witnessed a colourful conclusion on the fourth day. It was the first regatta in the Sailing calendar of India and the largest ever in the junior and sub-junior categories

## India to play India A in 2 warm-up games ahead of England tour

LONDON

INDIA will play two warm-up matches against India A in July ahead of their Test series in England. The five-Test series starts on August 4 at Trent Bridge.

Northamptonshire and Leicestershire play hosts for the four-day matches and both County cricket clubs released statements announcing the two matches. The first match will be held at The County Ground in Northamptonshire from July 21 to 24 while the second will be played at Grace Road in Leicestershire from July 28 to 31.

"It will be a unique opportunity for cricket fans from across the region to see these global stars in action over four days in their final warm-up game before the Test series with England," said Leicestershire chairman Mehmooda Duke.

"We expect demand for tickets to be huge. Sales information will be released shortly, and we encourage fans to look out on social media and on the Leicestershire CCC website for further details."

Tickets for both matches will be on sale in March. While Northamptonshire is yet to reveal the exact dates for the start of the sale of tickets, Leicestershire said that tickets for the second match go on sale from March 15.

The first Test between India and England will be played from August 4 at Trent Bridge, Nottingham after which the two teams move to London for the second Test at Lord's on August 12. The third Test will start on August 25 at Headingley, Leeds after which the tour returns to London for the fourth Test at The Oval from September 2. The final Test will be played at Old Trafford, Manchester from September 10. (IANS)

## Depleted Goa eye to preserve 6-game unbeaten run, face East Bengal

MARGAO (GOA)



A depleted FC Goa will be looking to continue their six-match unbeaten run in the Indian Super League (ISL) when they face East Bengal at the Fatorda Stadium on Friday.

Goa will be without their two first-choice centre backs during the match. While Ivan Gonzalez was sent off in the 1-1 draw against Kerala Blasters, James Donachie sustained an injury during the match and has been ruled out.

Additionally, Goa will also be without their coach Juan Ferrando on the touchline after the Spaniard was suspended against Kerala. However, the absentees are not a concern for assistant coach Clifford Miranda who feels Goa are heading in the right direction.

"The most important thing about this team during this period (unbeaten run) is the adaptation to the new coach," he said. "From ones (that were there) to the players that he got, it's never easy. Step by step, we are moving towards our objective and the way the coach wants the team to play."

**TODAY'S MATCH**  
**FC Goa vs SC East Bengal**  
**at Fatorda Stadium 7.30pm**



Robbie Fowler-managed SCEB hoping to climb up the table in clash against weakened Goa

**RESULT**  
**Hyderabad FC draw with Bengaluru FC 2-2**

jective and the way the coach wants the team to play."

The last time these two sides met, 10-man SCEB held Goa to a 1-1 draw and the highlight of the game was Bright Enobakhare's stunning solo goal.

The Nigerian has since then made a major impact in all games, despite Robbie Fowler's side netting the least goals this season (11). But that doesn't mean Goa will be focusing on Bright alone.

"He is a good player, there's no doubt about it and has improved SC East Bengal since his arrival but there's no such plan to stop one player because if we start concentrating on him, there are 9 other outfield players who can hurt us," said Miranda. "We will play the way we play."

East Bengal will be keen to bounce back after seeing their seven-match unbeaten streak ended by leaders Mumbai City FC.

## Umpire Oxenford announces retirement

DUBAI

UMPIRE Bruce Oxenford has decided to retire from international cricket after officiating across all three formats of the game for over 15 years.

A regular member of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Umpires since 2012, Oxenford has

officiated in 62 Test matches, the last of which was the final match of the Border-Gavaskar Series in Brisbane which India won to retain the trophy.

"I look back with pride at my international career as an umpire. It is still hard to believe that I officiated in close to 200 international matches. Such a long career was not really something that I had hoped for before commencing on this journey," Oxenford said in an ICC statement.

Oxenford, who officially stands down in April, made his international debut at the Gabba in a T20I between Australia and South Africa in January 2006.







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