

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | WEDNESDAY 27 | JANUARY 2021

## WEATHER



**Max:** 32°C  
**Min:** 16°C  
**Rainfall:** Nil

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Thai 14  
**Tithi:** Chaturtashi  
**Star:** Punarpusam  
**Rahukalam:**  
12 noon to 1.30 pm  
**Yamagandam:**  
7.30 am to 9 am  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.22 am  
**Zohar:** 12.26 pm  
**Asar:** 3.39 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.06 pm  
**Isha:** 7.20 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.08 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.36 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 4.52 PM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 6.08 AM**

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+11,526)	(+100)
1,06,89,268	1,53,724

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+523)  
TN: 8,35,803 12,325

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

10,05,48,432

### DEATHS

21,57,621

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES  
219

worldometers.info

**Covid-19 vaccination:**  
**Over 20 lakh**  
**beneficiaries inoculated**

**New Delhi:** Over 20 lakh health-care workers across the country have received COVID-19 vaccine jabs till Tuesday evening, as per provisional reports, the Union health ministry said on Tuesday. The ministry said that on the eleventh day of the nationwide immunisation drive, 5,615 beneficiaries were vaccinated till 7 pm in five states — Tamil Nadu (4926), Karnataka (429), Rajasthan (216), Telangana (35) and Andhra Pradesh (9) — through 194 sessions.

**‘Gender Park’ to come up in Kerala**

**Kozhikode:** The Kerala government’s ₹300 crore three tower ‘Gender Park’, claimed to be the first of its kind in the country and working towards gender equality in the state, will become functional here from February. The launch will coincide with the second edition of the International Conference on Gender Equality (ICGE-II), state Health, Social Justice and Women and Child Development Minister KK Shailaja said on Tuesday.

## COUNTER POINT



**Let's announce a hefty hike...no one will be able to afford fuel to run tractors!**

# AMU deposits a capsule of 100 yrs of history

**Aligarh (UP), Jan. 26:** The Aligarh Muslim University on Tuesday buried a time capsule containing documents that carry the history of the 100-year journey of the institution. During an online function on the 72nd Republic Day, AMU Vice Chancellor Professor Tariq Mansoor said this is a historic occasion since preservation of

historical documents are of critical importance for the benefit of future generations. Quoting noted Spanish philosopher George Santayana, Professor Mansoor said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” The steel capsule which weighs 1.5 tonne was buried at a depth of 30 feet in front

of Victoria Gate, the iconic structure. The time capsule contains the entire gamut of historical documents and chronicles covering the history of the past 100 years of the institution.

“The documents include a brief of all convocations, the original AMU Act of 1920 and the book Sir Syed Album by noted historian Professor Khaliq Ahmed Nizami. Also preserved for posterity were iconic books History of Mao College by SK Bhatnagar, Hayaate Javed by Altaf Hussain Hali

and The Glimpses of Muslim Education in India by Professor Shan Mohammad. AMU spokesman Rahat Abrar told PTI that the history of the institution in Arabic, which since the late 19th century adorns the inner wall of the Victoria Gate, has now been transcribed into English and will soon be put up on a plaque.

“The steel capsule which weighs 1.5 tonne was buried at a depth of 30 feet in front of Victoria Gate, the iconic structure. The time capsule contains the entire gamut of historical documents and chronicles covering the history of the past 100 years of the institution.”

— PTI



**STATE | 3**  
**Coordination between stakeholders needed for child missing cases: HC**



**NATION | 4**  
**Disgruntled TMC MLA quits party posts**



**SPORT | 8**  
**Shahrukh stars in TN's victory**

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# Farmers lay siege to Red Fort on R-Day

- Protesters hoist Nishan Sahib flag at historic site
- One youth killed while on tractor; firing blamed
- Police, farmers clash at several points in capital
- Delhi cops disconnect Internet for 12 hours

**SANJAY KAW, BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC**  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

The national capital witnessed violent scenes on Republic Day as a section of farmers participating in a massive tractor rally clashed with the police, broke barricades and stormed the historic Red Fort where they put up a saffron-coloured ‘Nishaan Sahib’ flag on the flagpole of the 17th century landmark. One farmer lost his life after his speeding tractor hit a barricade near ITO in central Delhi. The protesters, however, alleged that the 25-year-old victim was shot dead by the police. The police responded to the protestors at Red Fort with tear-gas shells and lathi charge, resulting in injuries to hundreds of protesters. Eighty-three police personnel also suffered injuries. Eight buses and 17 private vehicles were also damaged in the clashes. The large-scale violence forced the government to order temporary suspension of telecom services in border areas of Delhi — Singhu, Ghazipur, Tikri, Mukarba Chowk, Nangloi

— from 12:00 pm to 11:59 pm. About a dozen-odd metro stations were also shut. All the entry points leading to central Delhi were sealed. Even Connaught Place, a busy commercial street, was closed. A meeting chaired by Union home minister Amit Shah decided that additional paramilitary forces be deployed in Delhi and strict action be taken against the rioters. The Delhi police said the clashes had led to “extensive damage to public property” and injuries to “many policemen”. The police said the protesting farmers violated conditions agreed for the tractor rally. “Farmers began tractor parade before the scheduled time, resorted to violence and vandalism. Farmers’ protest led to extensive damage to public property. Many policemen injured.” Crowds swelled on Delhi borders at around 8 am with chants of ‘Kisan kanoon wapao lo’ (take back the farm laws) renting the air. Some tractors were playing the tune of patriotic songs such as ‘Aisa desh hai mera’ and ‘Sare jahan se achcha’.



Farmers hoist flags at the Red Fort during the ‘Kisan Gantantra Parade’ amid the 72nd Republic Day celebrations, in New Delhi, on Tuesday.

— PTI

## SKM distances itself from violence

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Tuesday dissociated itself from the “regrettable” acts indulged in by a section of farmers while taking out a protest rally in Delhi on Tuesday. “Despite all our efforts, some organisations and individuals have violated the route and indulged in

condemnable acts,” the SKM, the umbrella organisation of 40 farmers’ unions spearheading the agitation against the farm laws in Delhi, said in a statement. Anti-social elements had infiltrated the otherwise peaceful movement. We have always held that peace is our biggest strength, and that any violation would hurt the movement.” The organization said it

will take cognizance of all “regrettable events” and release a longer statement soon. “The SKM has been trying to get a full picture of all the events with regard to the several Kisan Parades that were planned today and will share a fuller statement soon. Our information is that apart from some regrettable violations, the parades are underway peacefully as per plan,” it said.

## Tension in Tamil Nadu districts as farmers take out rallies

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, JAN. 26

Farmers and trade unions on Tuesday held protests in several parts of Tamil Nadu against the Union government’s new farm laws and in support of the farmers holding protests against them in Delhi. Protesters, who took out motorcycle rallies, carried the tricolor and placards

meeting with senior officials of the Delhi Police and the home ministry to review the security situation in the national capital. Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla briefed Mr Shah about the situation. Delhi police commissioner S.N. Shrivastava and Intelligence Bureau chief Arvind Kumar also attended the meeting.

with slogans condemning the farm laws in Thanjavur, Tiruchy, Nagapattinam and Coimbatore districts although police had declined them permission. Tense moments prevailed when a group of farmers who took out a tractor rally had a scuffle with the police for stopping them. Over 300 people who attempted to protest on Thanjavur-Tiruchy highway were detained by police.

## INDIAN GDP TO GROW 11.5% NEXT YEAR: IMF

**Washington, Jan. 26:** The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Tuesday projected an impressive 11.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021, making the country the only major economy of the world to register a double-digit growth this year amidst the coronavirus pandemic. The IMF’s growth projections for India in its latest World Economic Outlook Update released on Tuesday reflected a strong rebound in the economy, which is estimated to have contracted by eight per cent in 2020 due to the pandemic. China is next with 8.1 per cent growth in 2021 followed by Spain (5.9 per cent) and France (5.5 per cent).

Revising its figures, the IMF said that in 2020, the Indian economy is estimated to have contracted by eight per cent. China is the only major country which registered a positive growth rate of 2.3 per cent in 2020. India’s economy, the IMF said, is projected to grow by 6.8 per cent in 2022 and that of China by 5.6 per cent. With the latest projections, India regains the tag of the fastest developing economies of the world. IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath, during a virtual press conference to release the WEO update, said India has somewhat a faster pace of recovery, but cumulatively by the end of 2022, it is nine per cent below its pre-pandemic projected level.

— PTI



Indian Air Force’s Rafale fighter jet flies past Rajpath, during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi, on Tuesday. The newly inducted Rafale fighter aircraft featured for the first time in India’s Republic Day flypast as it carried out the ‘Brahmastra’ formation alone and was part of the ‘Eklavya’ formation with four other fighter jets.

— PTI

# Rafale fighters make debut at R-Day flypast

● **A total of 38 IAF aircraft and four planes of the Indian Army participated in the fly-past on Tuesday**

New Delhi, Jan. 26: The newly inducted Rafale fighter aircraft featured for the first time in Republic Day flypast as it carried out the ‘Brahmastra’ formation alone and was part of the ‘Eklavya’ formation with four other fighter jets. The fighter jet conducted Eklavya formation by flying at a height of around 300 meter along with two Jagaur and two MIG-29 aircraft. The five jets resembled a V-shape with Rafale leading the pack. The 25,000 strong audience was able to see Rafale fighter jet again when it culminated the flypast by conducting the Brahmastra formation wherein it traversed at a low altitude for some distance, then pulled up vertically at 90 degrees and conducted rolls before stabilising at a higher altitude. In a major boost to India’s air power capability, five French-made multirole Rafale fighter jets were inducted into the IAF on September 10 last

Rajpath, she quipped, “Rafale’s aerial stunt”. “I attended it in 2015 for the first time, when US President Barack Obama was the chief guest. That time, I had seen the ‘Beast’ and this time I saw the fighter jet Rafale, so two amazing experiences,” she said. For Kuldeep Sharma, who works in the IT sector, and his wife, Rafale’s aerial manoeuvre at the end of the parade was the “most awe-inspiring experience”. As is traditionally the case on Republic Day, flypast was divided into two blocks: the first was along with the parade and the second was after the parade. In the first block, there were three formations. The first was the ‘Nishaan’ formation comprising of four Mi17V5 aircraft that carried the national flag and logos of all three services. It was followed by the ‘Dhruv’ formation by four helicopters of Army Aviation Corps.

— PTI



## OTHER STORIES

## R-Day celebrated at CPCL, Manali

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JAN. 26

The 72nd Republic Day was celebrated in a solemn function at Chennai. Petroleum Corporation Limited's (CPCL) Manali refinery complex on Tuesday. S.N. Pandey, managing director, CPCL, unfurled the national flag and took the salute at a parade by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) contingent stationed at CPCL and Territorial Army personnel of CPCL. Special awards were presented to the meritorious children of employees besides suggestion scheme awards to the employees. A demo was made by the CISF contingent in CPCL.

## Customs revenue up in 2020-21: Chief Commissioner

**Chennai, Jan. 26:** The Chief Commissioner of Customs M.V.S. Choudary spoke of various initiatives taken by his office towards ease of doing business with India and in India while also realising revenue of ₹47,560 crore by January 21, 2021. The department had also detected 481 smuggling cases involving Rs 64.14 crore of which those pertaining to gold were with Rs 55.58 cr. While import containers of 4.68 lakh TEUs were handled, the figures for export containers were 3.71 lakh TEUs. He was speaking at the function to celebrate the 72nd Republic Day when the tricolour was hoisted in Customs House on Tuesday morning.

## I-T dept head plants saplings

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JAN. 26

The 72nd Republic Day was celebrated by the income tax department, Chennai, on Tuesday. Mr M. L. Karmakar, Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, unfurled the national flag on the department's Chennai campus. Karmakar planted tree saplings on the occasion.

## Job rackets thrive under airports authority nose

T. SUDHEESH | DC  
CHENNAI, JAN. 26

At a time when Air India Airport Services Limited, also known as Air India Air Transport Services Limited (AIATSL), issued a notification inviting applications for various posts for ground duties at Chennai international airport in the southern region on a fixed term contract basis, job fraudsters offer employment at various airports, including Chennai, through OLG platforms.

When DC, in the guise of a jobseeker, contacted a person named Varun Sharma, designated as "HR manager", after seeing his advertisement on OLG, he wanted to send a resume with photographs and the preferred types of job to an email ID infohrgoindigopc@gmail.com. He texted from a mobile phone number +918581854729.

He offered various kinds of jobs including floor supervisor, manager, helper, loader, assistant, back office, computer operator, clerk, storekeeper, store-in-charge and field executive with salary ranging from ₹25,000 to ₹87,000

He offered various kinds of jobs including floor supervisor, manager, helper, loader, assistant, back office, computer operator, clerk, storekeeper, store-in-charge and field executive with salary ranging from ₹25,000 to ₹87,000.

Initially Sharma told DC that he will be able to arrange a job only at Indigo Airlines. However, as DC insisted on a job at Air India in line with the recruitment being conducted by AI Airport Services Limited at Chennai international air-

port for the last couple of weeks, he wanted a resume and photograph. When DC refused to send details through the email ID he provided, the person called DC and persuaded to send the details saying they were able to arrange a job at any airport in the country.

Earlier this month, the Air India Airport Services Limited had issued a walk-in-Interview notification offering various jobs including duty manager (terminal), duty officer (terminal), junior executive-pax and junior executive (technical) at Chennai international airport. Many candidates turned up to attend the interview held at the airport the other day.

When DC reached out to the Airports Authority of India to get data on how many posts mentioned in the notification had been filled up so far and how many candidates attended

the interview, they said those details were available only with Air India authorities.

When DC posed the same question to at least four officials including the deputy manager (PR), it got no reply.

V. Gopalakrishnan, an activist who had applied for a job at Indigo Airline via OLG and received the same reply, said this kind of fraud had been going on for a long time. He demanded more transparency in the recruitment process being conducted by the airlines. The mobile applications and websites should provide advisories along with such advertisements so that jobseekers should not fall into the trap. It continues to happen while the Airports Authority of India authorities last year warned the public not to be deceived by fake advertisements on recruitment by the organisation.

## Velliangiri FPO gets TN award

**Chennai:** Velliangiri Uzhavan, a farmer producer company (FPO) promoted by Isha Outreach, has been honored with the 'Best Performing FPO award by the government of Tamil Nadu. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami presented the award to Velliangiri Uzhavan under the Governance' category during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations in Chennai.

The award was received by Kumar, chairman of the FPO and a farmer from Coimbatore's Thondamuthur. Velliangiri Uzhavan FPO was started in Coimbatore in 2013 under the guidance of Sadhguru, the founder of the Isha Foundation. With over 1,000 farmers, 38% of whom are women, Velliangiri Uzhavan comprises small and marginal farmers who account for 70% of its membership.

## Houses, temples, churches in suburbs burgled

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JAN. 26

Burglars have not even spared religious places in the suburbs. As many as five places of worship, including three temples and two churches, have been burgled on the night intervening Monday and Tuesday. In addition to this, two houses and a grocery store were also hit by the burglars.

According to the police, three temples located near Kattankulathur railway station, under the Maraimalai Nagar police limits were burgled. Temple hundi were broken and valuables were stolen, the police said. Similarly, offering boxes kept in a Roman Catholic church in Madha Kovil Street and a C.S.I church

According to the police, three temples located near Kattankulathur railway station, under the Maraimalai Nagar police limits were burgled. Temple hundi were broken and valuables were stolen, the police said

in Gnanambikai Nagar in Kattankulathur were broken and burglars made away with cash.

Police said thieves struck at a grocery store near Chengalpatt government hospital. The incident came to light, when the owner of the store Mohan, noticed the broken window in his store and rushed inside to find cash stolen from the cash box. The thieves

decamped with Rs 23,000 in cash, Mohan mentioned in a complaint he filed with Chengalpatt town police. Another incident of theft occurred at the house of a software engineer in Kattankulathur. The victim, Vinoth Kumar (30), had gone to Tindivanam to attend a wedding function on Monday. When he returned home on Tuesday, he found the door to his house broken. ₹8,000 and ₹5.5 sovereigns gold he had kept in the bureau were missing. In another incident, the house of a techie from the same neighbourhood was burgled. Separate complaints were lodged at Maraimalai Nagar police station.

Further investigations are on.



District Collector T. Anbalagan releases colourful balloons during the Republic Day celebrations organised at AR Ground in Madurai on Tuesday. — DC



Salem collector C.A. Raman honours a cop on the occasion of Republic Day at Salem on Tuesday. — DC



Ranipet district collector Gladstone Pushparaj releases doves on the occasion of Republic Day on Tuesday. — DC

## Driver in Nilgiris wins CM's medal for helping cop

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, JAN. 26

A driver hailing from rural Ooty, R Pugazhendiran, brought laurels to the Nilgiris this Republic day as he received the Chief Minister's 'Anna Award for Gallantry' for his act of bravery and selfless courage. His timely act saved the life of a police constable in an odd situation that required patience, care, determination and selfless service.

Pugazhendiran (35), hailing from Mullimalai Kandi hamlet at Kundah taluk near here, is a person whom one can trust anytime for any kind of help. That is the image he has for himself among residents in Kundah taluk.

Pugazhendiran, who did his schooling at the government high school at Mullimalai, owns a cab. He is also driver of an ambulance which is being operated by the drivers association in Kundah region. Pugazhendiran, known to be



R. Pugazhendiran, the Ooty driver, with the Anna Award for Gallantry. — DC

a caring, compassionate, tender hearted social worker, had been helping differently-abled students in Kundah area to reach their schools in his cab.

"During the heavy rains last

August, one Jeyaram, a police constable working in Manjoor limits was grievously injured when an uprooted tree fell on him while he was on duty at Bikkaty area near Manjoor. Amid the pouring rain, landslips, uprooted trees and all other odds, Pugazhendiran shifted the injured cop in his ambulance to a nearby public health centre, then to the government hospital in Ooty, and still later to a private hospital in Coonoor, and finally to a specialty hospital in Coimbatore, for treatment.

The policeman was subsequently diagnosed and treated for fractures and spinal cord injury on time that ultimately saved his life. For this act of courageous service against the odds, Pugazhendiran was conferred the 'Anna Award for Gallantry' which he received from Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, during the Republic day celebrations in Chennai.



## VIT-Vellore honours corona warriors at R-Day fete

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JAN. 26

Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), Vellore, honoured corona warriors, including doctors, nurses and paramedical staff for their selfless service during the Covid-19 pandemic period, as part of the Republic Day function held on the institute's Vellore campus on Tuesday. VIT vice-president G.V. Selvam unfurled the national flag and honoured 75 persons, including Corona warriors and security personnel from VIT who had helped the

police department during the Covid-19 pandemic. VIT vice-chancellor Dr. Rambabu Kodali, registrar K. Sathiyarayanan, director-students welfare Dr. Amit B. Mahindrakar, faculty and staff also took part.

**VIT-Chennai:** The 72nd Republic Day was celebrated at VIT-Chennai on Vandalur-Kelambakkam Road. VIT vice-president Sankar Viswanathan unfurled the tricolour flag in the presence of pro V-C Dr. V.S. Kanchana Bhaskaran and additional registrar Dr. P.K. Manoharan.

## Collector unfurls tricolour in Thanjai

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THANJAVUR, JAN. 26

The Republic Day was celebrated with gaiety and enthusiasm here on Tuesday. M. Govinda Rao, Thanjavur district collector, hoisted the national flag and took the salute at the police parade. He honoured representatives of organisations which did yeoman service during the pandemic period.

The collector distributed benefits to the tune of ₹3,13,558 to 77 persons. He honoured freedom fighters and distributed appreciation certificates to 314 government officials for their meritorious service.

Rupesh Kumar Meena, DIG of police, Thanjavur range, Deshmukh Sekar

## Tiruchy collector unfurls flag

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, JAN. 26

Tiruchy Collector S. Sivasarasu unfurled the Tricolour and released balloons in the air at the Armed Reserve Police ground in Tiruchy on Tuesday on the occasion of the 72nd Republic Day.

Mr Sivasarasu inspected the guard of honour given by the armed police personnel and others.

He distributed appreciation certificates to 534 gov-

ernment officials for their meritorious service during the Covid-19 pandemic period.

An official team went to the houses of 10 freedom fighters and honoured them with shawls and gifts.

Corporation commissioner S. Sivasubramanian hoisted the national flag at the corporation premises, while T. S. Murali, general manager, BHEL Tiruchirappalli complex, unfurled the tricolour.

Sanjay, SP, Thanjavur district, Aravindan, DRO, Thanjavur, and Palani,

project director, DRDA participated in the celebrations.

## Thick skin for sexual offences against children?



Sanjay Pinto

A 12-year-old girl is whisked away by a man more than thrice her age to his house promising to give her a guava. The paedophile is reported to have pressed her breasts. When the victim raised an alarm, he fled out of his residence after bolting the door from outside. Hearing her cries for help, the mother rescued her child.

One would imagine that the culprit would be convicted under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act, 2012.

It's a statute that views sexual exploitation and abuse of children as "heinous crimes." Because it is "imperative that the law operates in a manner that the best interest and well being of the child are of paramount importance at every stage." Brave words but in practice what happens?

I was shocked by the decision of the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay high court in Satish Vs State of Maharashtra (2021) which, in the case cited above, held that "the act of pressing of breast of the child aged 12 years, in the absence of any specific detail as to whether the top was removed or whether he inserted his hand inside the top and pressed her breast, would not fall in the definition of

JUSTICE  
FOR ALL

sexual assault" What has justifiably sparked outrage is the finding that there was no "skin to skin contact with sexual intent" to bring the offence under the rubric

of 'physical contact'. With all due respect, in my opinion, this negates the objective of the Pocso Act that is meant to ensure the "healthy physical, emotional, intellectual and social development of the child."

Analyse the provision. Section 7 defines sexual assault. The relevant extract is "whoever touches the vagina, penis, anus or breast of a child" or "does any other act with sexual intent which involves physical contact." Strangely, the term 'physical contact' is not defined in the Pocso Act. Under Section 2(2) the Act provides for the adoption of definitions of any term not specified here but covered under the IPC, Criminal Procedure Code, Juvenile Justice Act or the Information Technology

Act. The term does not figure in these enactments too.

A common sense approach is called for. Will a stranger press a child's breasts in the privacy of his room without sexual intent? Circumstantial evidence - taking the child away to his secluded home on a pretext points to his mens rea. Crime hinges on opportunity. Had the child not screamed, who knows what he may have done? What if he had proceeded to disrobe her and perhaps even commit rape? It is not known if the guava offered was eaten partially, or if it was sent for forensic analysis to check for sedatives. It would have shed more light on the perpetrator's real intent. The chain of events would have attracted the words "any other act" in the section.

Why was this not considered?

As a lawyer, I do find the no 'skin to skin contact' argument to let the accused off the Pocso hook quite perverse. As a father, it is revolting. Is the court sending out a message that if a pervert uses gloves and he gropes or fondles a child, no offence under Pocso is made out? By the same inexplicable logic, if a rapist uses a condom, will the same 'no skin to skin contact' apply to escape conviction under Section 376 IPC? The legal maxim that the 'punishment must fit the crime' was cited. What about the psychological scarring and trauma of the victim? Does the absence of skin to skin contact make the act any less abhorrent?

In the case in question, the

predator has only been convicted under Section 354 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for assault of a woman with the intention to outrage her modesty. Although the maximum penalty prescribed is a jail term of upto 2 years, he has been sentenced to a year's rigorous imprisonment, along with wrongful confinement under Section 342 IPC carrying the same punishment. Had the Pocso conviction not been overturned in this appeal, the accused would be facing minimum imprisonment or 3 years, extendable to 5 years and fine under Section 8.

The Supreme Court in Independent Thought Vs Union of India (2017) had observed that "of much greater importance and significance is Section 42-A of

the Pocso Act. This section provides that the provisions of the POCOA Act are in addition to and not in derogation of the provisions of any other law in force which includes the IPC. Moreover, the section provides that in the event of any inconsistency between the provisions of the Pocso Act and any other law, the provisions of the Pocso Act shall have overriding effect."

However, it is not the quantum of punishment that rankles. It is the message of a lack of deterrence that this verdict has sent out. Be you ever so perverse, a special law to protect children may not touch you, skin to skin or otherwise.

(The writer is an advocate at the Madras high court, columnist & author)



## OTHER STORIES

NLC disburses  
₹8.07cr as  
compensation to  
119 affectedDC CORRESPONDENT  
CUDDALORE, JAN. 26

The Neyveli Lignite Corporation India Limited has disbursed cheques worth Rs 8.07 crores as enhanced compensation to 119 project affected persons for handing over their land to the public sector company.

The cheques were disbursed in the lok adalat sessions held at Neyveli recently.

An agreement was reached between NLCIL and project affected persons in the presence of lok adalat forum after the affected persons sought higher compensation for lands surrendered to NLCIL after January 1, 2014.

The cheques were  
disbursed in the Lok  
Adalat sessions  
held at Neyveli  
recentlyRepeal contentious farm  
laws, urges TN Oppn

Chennai, Jan. 26: Opposition parties in Tamil Nadu on Tuesday expressed concern over the clash between farmers and police in Delhi and urged the Centre to hold talks with them and repeal the three contentious farm laws against which ryots have been protesting for two months.

Wielding sticks and clubs and holding the tri-colour and union flags, tens of thousands of farmers atop tractors broke barriers, clashed with police and entered Delhi from various points to lay siege to the Red Fort and climb the flagpole on Republic Day on Tuesday. DMK President M K Stalin flayed the Centre for "enacting a drama" in the name of talks with the agitating farmers and demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi hold discussions with them. He claimed that the

■ Wielding sticks and clubs and holding the tri-colour and union flags, tens of thousands of farmers atop tractors broke barriers, clashed with police and entered Delhi from various points to lay siege to the Red Fort and climb the flagpole on Republic Day on Tuesday. DMK President M K Stalin flayed the Centre for "enacting a drama" in the name of talks with the agitating farmers and demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi hold discussions with them

Centre's approach in this issue was the reason for violence breaking out today in the national capital. In a Facebook post, Stalin said "farmers should realise that violence will help the government's diversion politics." "Both sides should attempt to find a solution within democratic norms," he said. "Without further delay, the Prime Minister should invite the farmers and hold talks himself. The three farm laws which are being rejected by farmers should be repealed by the Centre," he added.

MDMK founder Vaiko, also a Rajya Sabha MP, flayed the Delhi police for lathicharging farmers and criticised the Centre for not repealing the laws despite opposition to them. The Centre should not be 'adamant' on the matter, he said in a statement. Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) founder and Lok Sabha MP Thol Thirumavalavan and Tamizhaga Vazhuvirimai Katchi leader T Velmurugan also condemned the teargassing and lathicharge of farmers in Delhi. —PTI

Ryots outwit cops, take  
out rallies in delta districtsG. SRINIVASAN/  
R. VALAYAPATHY | DC  
THANJAVUR, JAN. 26

Violating the ban on taking out a rally, farmers here on Tuesday (Republic day) took out a tractor rally expressing solidarity with the agitating farmers near Delhi border.

A few days ago, farmers here had announced a rally from Melavathath-chavadi to Tholkappiar Sadukkam, but police had not granted them permission. Instead, police had warned of stern action and seizure of tractors in case of violations.

Further, keeping vigil, police had also prevented tractors from moving out of villages. However, on Tuesday, farmers managed to converge at Melavasthathchavadi with four tractors, a bullock cart and hundreds of others came on two-wheelers, at Melavasthath-chavadi.

Police tried to stop them, but the farmers moved forward and the rally proceeded for a kilometre. A little ahead en route, police stopped them again by parking four-wheelers across the road, but the farmers tried to remove the police vehicles. After some time, police themselves removed the vehicles and the farmers' rally proceeded up to the new bus stand.

DMK MLAs Durai Chandrasekaran (Thiruvaiyaru), M. Ramachandran (Orathanadu) and T.K.G. Neelamegam (Thanjavur), participated in the rally, organised by the Akila Indiya Vivasayigal Poratta Orunfinaippu Kuzhu. Farmer leaders Dr. V. Duraimanickam, general secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, V. Kannan, co-ordinator of Orunginaippu Kuzhu, G.



Tractor rally by farmers at Thanjavur on Tuesday.

■ A few days ago, farmers here had announced a rally from Melavathath-chavadi to Tholkappiar Sadukkam, but police had not granted them permission. Instead, police had warned of stern action and seizure of tractors in case of violations

Neelamegam, CPI(M) district secretary, M.A. Bharathi, CPI district secretary, participated in the rally. Durai Chandrasekaran drove a tractor in the rally. Farmers have been agitating near Delhi border demanding repeal of the three farm legislations enacted by the Centre. Meanwhile in Tiruchy, traffic on the Tiruchy - Chennai national highway was paralysed for over an hour on Tuesday, following a tractor rally taken out by members of the

'Desiya Then India Nathigal Vivasayeegal Sangam' led by state president P Ayyakannu, at Kollidam tollgate area on the outskirts of the city in support of the farmers tractor rally at New Delhi. In addition, members of various political parties including the Congress, DMK, VCK, MDMK, CPI, CPI(M) and various trade unions like INTUC, AITUC, CITU and representatives of various farmers associations, took out a two-wheeler rally

waving national flags, outwitting police attempts in different parts of the city to stop the rally, resulting in severe traffic congestion across the city for hours together.

Members of the Tiruchy district unit of the Socialist Democratic Party of India (SDPI) led by their district president, Imam R. Hassan, also took out a rally here on Tuesday, in support of the all India farmers agitation.

Among others, party's district vice-president Pichai Kani, general secretary Niyamathullah, secretary Mubarak, spokesperson Adul Majid, farmers wing president Sahabdeen and others spoke at the end of the rally. The rallyists raised anti-Prime Minister and anti-Central government slogans.

Coordination between stakeholders  
needed for child missing cases: HCJ. STALIN | DC  
CHENNAI, JAN. 26

Dealing with the issue pertaining to missing of children and human trafficking, the Madras high court has said the need of the hour is the coordination between various stakeholders and they should not forget the fact that in child missing cases, parents/guardians suffer the maximum in the form of mental agony and anxiety and therefore, some sensitiveness should be shown.

A division bench comprising Justices M.Sathyanarayanan and

A.A.Nakkiran made the observations while passing further interim orders on a suo motu Public Interest Litigation, which was taken up pursuant to an order of the Supreme Court in Sampurna Behura Vs. Union of India and others case.

The bench said this court appreciates the efforts taken by the Additional Director General of Police, Crimes against Women and Children as well as the secretary to government, social welfare and nutritious meal programme department and the anxiety and concern of the court is that the efforts taken

should fructify into desired results.

"This court is of the view that there must be coordination between various stakeholders such as the National Commission for Women, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and various investigating agencies. In the considered opinion of this court, the juvenile justice committee functioning under the auspices of the High Court may be entrusted with the task of monitoring and overseeing the coordination between such stakeholders", the bench added.

The bench said amicus

curiae T.Mohan submitted that he may be permitted to visit the Homes maintained by the government of Tamil Nadu along with Jayashree Raghunandan, IAS, for giving inputs as to the infrastructure and other amenities available, for which additional advocate general P.H.Arvinth Pandian submitted that as and when the amicus curiae makes a request, necessary arrangements would be made in this regard and the said submission, on instructions, was placed on record.

The bench posted to March 25, 2021, further hearing of the case.

## COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



**Aries:** Students should put in more effort for important tests coming up. Be careful when you take on new commitments. Your skills and abilities have a positive impact on seniors.



**Taurus:** Business proposals need to be thoroughly checked. Don't waste time sorting out arguments. Your ideas and views will attract attention.



**Gemini:** You will find it relatively easier to convince people to go along with your plans. You will be drawn to tasks that give you creative freedom.



**Cancer:** Some of you might be required to undertake a short journey and this would be a comfortable one. Self-employed professionals will expand their clientele.



**Leo:** Positive attention is coming your way, you need to put a little effort. Your attachment to the past may motivate you now to express deep rooted fears.



**Virgo:** You are currently being pulled between your over-expressive imagination and your need to be practical. Common sense may dictate your final choice, but it will probably be a decision that's hard to reach.



**You share your b'day with**  
**Bobby Deol is an Indian film actor. He is known for his roles in the films like Solider, Apne, Yamla Pagla Deewana, Housefull 4, Thank You, Poster Boys, Yamla Pagla Deewana 2. Players amongst others.**



**Libra:** For those in business, good time has already started. You may be dealing with new partners or may be thinking to associate with someone in order to progress.



**Scorpio:** Be willing to eliminate your attachment to the present moment so you are free to create what's ahead. It's time to change tactics and try a new approach.



**Sagittarius:** A little compassion can provide much-needed balance. You have to be extremely careful while talking to others, especially at the work.



**Capricorn:** Eating habits should be regulated. Skin problems are likely if you neglect hygiene. It is important to get your views and ideas across, even if that creates a stir. Your spirits have been lifted by good news.

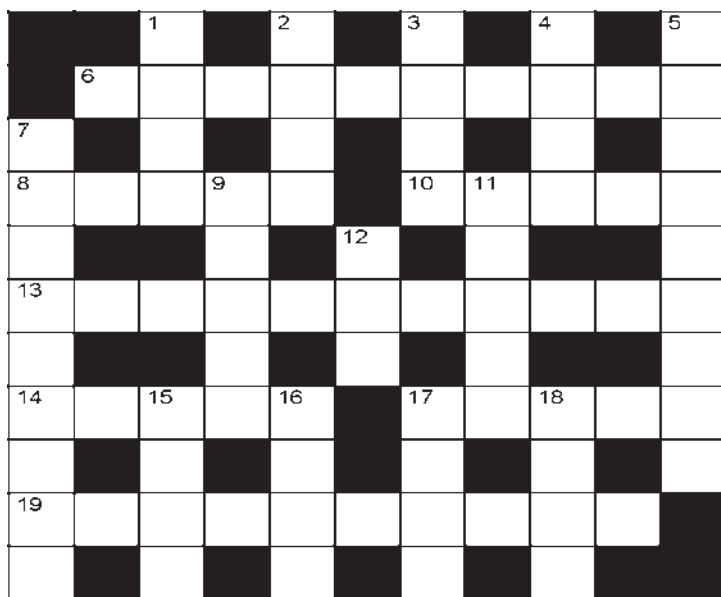


**Aquarius:** It may be wiser to open your horizons by opening your mind. Your creativity is high, but you must be willing to explore by doing things differently than before. You want to escape.



**Pisces:** You really don't need to leave home in order to satisfy your current bout of wanderlust. Flexibility is your greatest ally today. Working people may have to put in more efforts.

## QUICK CROSSWORD



## Across

- Presented for acceptance (8)
- Killer whale (4)
- Referee (6)
- Severe (5)
- Invited (5)
- Offspring (5)
- Direct the course of (5)
- Dog house (6)
- Potter's oven (4)
- One-way Japanese flier (8)

## Down

- Dental cleaner (9)
- More pleasant (5)
- Defeat utterly (4)
- Down-payment (7)
- In favour of (3)
- Lasting power (9)
- The first satellite (7)
- Heath shrub (5)
- Shut angrily (4)
- Recede (3)

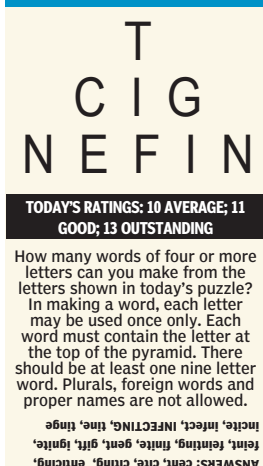
## YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

**Across:** 6. Celebrated, 8. Poker, 10. Scree, 13. Treacherous, 14. Earth, 17. Major, 19. Inaugurate.

## Down:

1. Peak, 2. Peer, 3. Iris, 4. Stir, 5. Adversary, 7. Apathetic, 9. Exact, 11. Circa, 12. Otm, 15. Room, 16. Hugs, 17. More, 18. Jute.

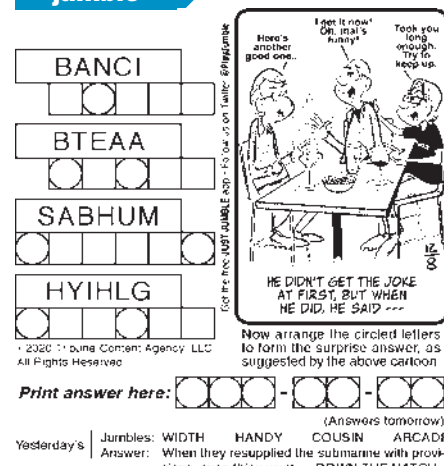
## Word Mine



TODAY'S RATINGS: 10 AVERAGE; 11 GOOD; 13 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

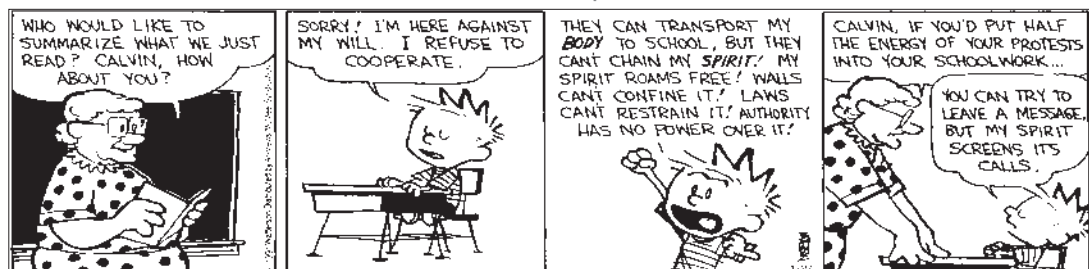
## Jumble



Print answer here: \_\_\_\_\_

Yesterday's Jumbles: WIDTH HANDY COUSIN ARCADE  
Answer: When they resupplied the submarine with provisions. Everything went — DOWN THE HATCH

## CALVIN AND HOBES | Bill Watterson



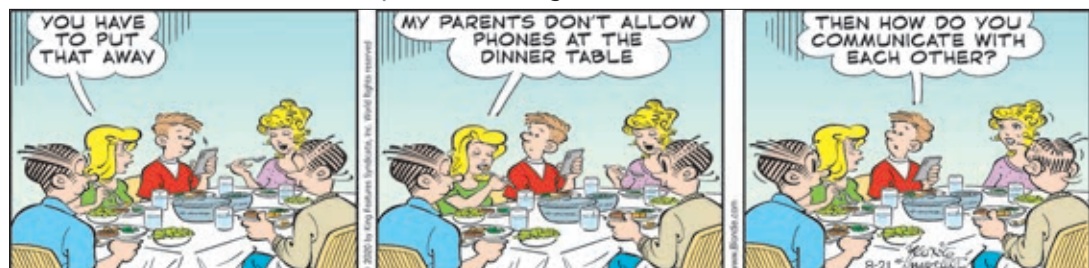
## THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



## ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli &amp; craig boldman



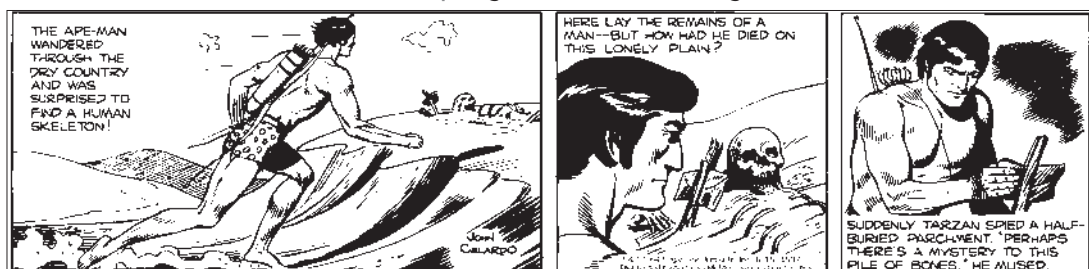
## BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



## ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



## TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



bridge  
**PHILLIP  
ALDER**  
**CAN  
YOU  
FEED FALSE  
INFORMATION?**

Charles Caleb Colton was an eccentric English cleric and author who died in 1832. He wrote, "Falseness is never so successful as when she baits her hook with truth, and no opinions so fatally mislead us, as those that are not wholly wrong; as no watches so effectively deceive the wearer as those that are sometimes right." It is particularly pleasing for a defender to find a play

that deceives declarer about the lie of the cards and persuades him to go down in a contract he could have made. If you wish to test yourself, look only at the North and South hands. West, after opening with a weak two-bid in diamonds, leads the heart six against four spades. East wins with his ace and returns the suit. West following with the two -- when? But how would you continue? South wondered if he was

going to miss a slam by jumping to game, but he knew that he could not find out if North held two of the three key cards: the spade king, heart ace and diamond ace. When an opponent pre-empt, then leads a side suit, that is typically a singleton. So South was surprised when West did not ruff at trick two. Now declarer drew the conclusion that West had at least two trumps. So declarer cashed the spade ace and

played another trump. Down one and a cold zero in an 11-table duplicate. To make the contract, South had to play a spade to the jack at trick three -- tough to find. One other West led the heart six, but East shifted to his diamond, and West pushed through a club. After ruffing, South played a spade to the jack.

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## SHORT TAKES

### TRACTOR MARCH HELD PEACEFULLY IN AURANGABAD

Aurangabad, Jan. 26: A tractor march organised here in Maharashtra on Tuesday to extend support to the protesting farmers in New Delhi passed off peacefully.

Around 150 to 200 people, five tractors, cars, and two-wheelers participated in the march, which started from Delhi Gate and culminated at Bhadkal gate, separated by a distance of about 2.2 kms.

The march was organised by the Maharashtra Rajya Kisan Sabha and the Maharashtra Rajya Lal Bawta Shetmajur Union.

Some workers of the Congress also joined the procession.

Ram Baheti, one of the organisers of the march, told reporters that around 4,000 volunteers from Aurangabad had recently visited Delhi and participated in the agitations being held at borders of the national capital.

He said the three agri laws were anti-constitutional since the government didn't send the draft bills to a joint parliamentary committee.

On eruption of violence during the tractor parade in New Delhi earlier in the day, Baheti said the lathicharge by police on farmers is condemnable. "The clashes occurred because of the stubborn stand of the Central government," he added.

### PROTESTER UNFURLS TRICOLOUR

Mumbai, Jan. 26: Thousands of cultivators, who had arrived here from parts of Maharashtra to protest against the Centre's farm laws, left for their homes on Tuesday after an elderly woman agitator hoisted the national flag at the Azad Maidan in Mumbai.

To mark the Republic Day, the flag hoisting was held at the ground in south Mumbai at around 9.30 am following which the protesters headed towards their native places, the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) said.

The farmers held a rally at the Azad Maidan on Monday to express solidarity with peasants agitating near Delhi borders against the Centre's three new farm laws.

NCP president Sharad Pawar, Maharashtra Congress chief Balasaheb Thorat, Peasants and Workers Party leader Jayant Patil and various farmers' representatives had attended the rally on Monday.

Around 15,000 farmers had arrived in the state capital for the rally, the Maharashtra unit of the AIKS earlier said.

"The flag hoisting ceremony was held at the Azad Maidan on Tuesday morning. After that, farmers headed towards their homes. The movement is in line with what we had decided earlier," AIKS president Ashok Dhawale said.

### FARMERS LAY SIEGE TO RED FORT ON R-DAY

FROM PAGE 1

It was also a never seen before moment for thousands of people who had gathered at roadsides and perched on the rooftops and balconies to watch the tractor parade. One could watch locals showering flower petals, offering food and water and greeting farmers with slogans and cheers. Many bystanders termed the farmers their brothers and guests who were fighting for their rights.

The protesters were expected to start their procession of tractors at noon to avoid interfering with morning celebrations marking the Republic Day celebrations in central Delhi. The tricolour and flags of different farmer unions fluttered as marches began from Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur border points, much ahead of the time decided for the tractor parade. Security personnel tried to convince the protesters to stick to the designated route and time and maintain peace.

Things suddenly changed at about 8.35 am when a group of farmers broke the barricades to force their way into the capital. At Ghazipur border, tractors pushed aside a shipping container placed to block their route as police stood by helplessly. Elsewhere, thick clouds of tear gas rose over approved march routes as farmers on tractors, on horses and on foot forcefully began their rally hours ahead of schedule.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves to the public at Rajpath, during the 72nd Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI



Army tanks and other weapon systems being showcased during the 72nd Republic Day parade at Rajpath, in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

# Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan chants fill the air

## Shouting slogans farmers poured into Delhi on tractors, horses, cranes and motorbikes

New Delhi, Jan. 26: Chanting *rang de basanti* and *jai jawan jai kisan* numerous farmers rode tractors, motorbikes, horses and even cranes to cross the national capital's borders into the city for their proposed parade against the three contentious farm laws.

Locals stood on both sides of the roads at various locations showering flower petals on the farmers amid drum beats.

Standing atop vehicles decked up with flags, the protesters danced to the tune of patriotic songs such as *Aisa desh hai mera* and *Sare Jahan se achcha*.

"People think farmers are only meant to plough their fields. But there is much more to a farmer's life. We also ride motorbikes and horses though we worship our tractors as it helps in earning our bread and butter."

"Today, everything is on display in this historical rally," said Gagan Singh, a protestor riding a horse to the parade.

Parmajeet Bibi, a woman in her late 40s, who was riding a tractor said, "Women are not just cooking at community kitchens. We help men in fields and we are riding tractors in this rally to send out a strong message."

Aditya Pajetta, a farmer from Haryana's Yamuna Nagar, carried a 15-kg plough on his shoulder while marching from Singhu border.

"Our fight is to save this plough. Generations have been involved in farming and it will be a pity if we cannot save their legacy. I have started marching from Singhu border and will carry it to the spot where the rally will conclude," he said.

The cranes which were part of the rally had a makeshift podium on the top with a mattress at the front for people to sit.

The Tricolour and flags of different farmer unions fluttered as marches began from Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur border points, much ahead of the time decided for the tractor parade. Security personnel tried to convince the protesters to stick to the designated route and time and maintain peace.

"We support the demands of farmers. We survive on what they produce and it is time we stand up for them. We salute their spirit," said Rani Devi, whose family was applying tilak to forehead of the participants.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at several Delhi border points since November 28, demanding



1. Security personnel baton charge a protester during clashes after the farmers tractor rally turned violent on Republic Day in New Delhi on Tuesday.
2. Protesting farmers corner two policemen during clashes at Red Fort.
3. Combo picture shows a policeman falling from a rampart of the Red Fort during clashes with protesting farmers who had gathered there after their tractor parade.
4. Farmers participate in a tractor rally after breaking police barricades at Singhu border near Bhalswa landfill site in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

a complete repeal of three support price for their farm laws and a legal guarantee on minimum It was a never seen

before moment for thousands of people who gathered at roadsides and perched on the rooftops and balconies watching the tractor parade taken out by farmer unions on Tuesday.

The parade taken out from Tikri, Singhu, Ghazipur and other border points of the national capital received a warm welcome with locals showering flower petals, offering food and water and greeting them with slogans and cheers.

"I have never seen a tractor parade such as this. This is New India for me. I am recording this for my grandchildren who are too little to understand its importance now. I am sure they will thank me for this later," said Anita Batwal, 62, retired school teacher.

Many bystanders who witnessed the parade termed the farmers their brothers and guests who were fighting for their rights.

"My husband and I have come to welcome them. They are our guests. We lost our land in UP in a court battle, we know their pain," said Kamla from Boodhpur Delhi.

A large number of people near Anand Vihar railway station lined the roadsides and recorded the tractor parade as farmers from Ghazipur drove past. People cheered and waved at the farmers riding tractors and those walking on foot.

"It is bigger and better than what we expected. Local people cheering for us throughout the route has motivated us further. We will take what is our. *Ab Delhi door nahi*," said 23-year-old Jaspal Singh from Gurdaspur in Punjab, taking part in the parade.

Local people showered flower petals at the cavalcade of tractors and other vehicles passing through Mundka village and offered food and water to the farmers.

"They are our brothers. Will do whatever it takes to help them in their struggle. They are fighting for all of us. This is just a little contribution from our end to tell them we stand by them," said Chant Singh, 45, a local distributing food and water.

The whole nation, in fact people across the world should know about this farmers' revolution taking place here in Delhi, said 32-year-old Jaskaran Bajwa who was busy making Facebook Live while sitting atop a brand new tractor.

The people as well as the farmers recorded the parade using cellphones, with many saying history was being scripted. — PTI

## Violence is no solution: Rahul

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

As the unprecedented violent protests broke out in the national capital on the Republic Day, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said that violence is no solution to any problem. Taking to Twitter, Gandhi said, "Violence is not the solution to any problem. If anyone gets hurt, the damage will happen to our

country. Take back the anti-farmer law for the benefit of the country."

While he was against the violence he once again reiterated his party's stand that the Centre should take back the controversial farm laws.

The Congress has been supportive of the concerns of farmers. It was the first political outfit to take out a tractor rally in Punjab after the laws were

passed in parliament. The party has also given its full support to the protesting farmers. In the recently held meeting of the Congress working committee CWC the party passed a resolution demanding the farm laws be taken back.

In her remarks the Congress president Sonia Gandhi had said, "It is abundantly clear that the three laws were prepared

in haste and Parliament was consciously denied an opportunity for examining in any meaningful details their implications and impacts. Our position has been very clear from the very beginning, we reject them categorically because they will destroy the foundations of food security that are based on the three pillars of MSP, public procurement and PDS."

## Covid: India sees lowest number of cases in 8 mnths

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

India recorded its lowest number of daily new cases after eight months with 9,102 persons found positive to Coronavirus in the last 24 hours. The active cases have now come down to 1.66% of the cumulative positive cases

(1.77 lakh). The daily fatalities also dropped to 117 after more than eight months.

At the same time, the number of vaccinated healthcare workers was 20.29 lakhs on Tuesday. "India has crossed a crucial milestone in its fight against the global pandemic. The daily new

cases have touched a new low today, 9,102 daily new cases were added to the national tally in the last 24 hours after 237 days. The daily new cases were 9,304 on 4th June, 2020," Union health ministry officials said.

Kerala reported the maximum daily new cases 3,361 in the last 24 hours.



## SHORT TAKES

MYANMAR ARMY  
RAISES COUP  
PROSPECT

Naypyidaw, Jan. 26: Myanmar's powerful military on Tuesday raised the spectre of staging a coup as it ramped up demands for an investigation into alleged voter fraud during last year's election, swept by Aung San Suu Kyi's ruling party. The National League for Democracy (NLD) won November's poll in a landslide, but has been much criticised by rights groups for its disenfranchisement of voters in conflict-racked regions.

The military-aligned opposition disputed the results, while the army has for weeks alleged widespread voter irregularities, claiming to have found 8.6 million cases of fraud.

Military spokesman Major General Zaw Min Tun on Tuesday renewed calls for the country's embattled election commission to provide final voter lists for cross-checking — a demand that so far has not been met. "Not resolving this in line with the law means this is a political crisis," he told reporters in Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw.

Zaw Min Tun added that military chief Min Aung Hlaing has already pointed out "dishonesty and unfairness" during the election. When pressed on the possibility of a coup, the spokesman refused to be drawn, but did not rule it out.

ITALY PM QUILTS  
TO FORM NEW  
GOVERNMENT

Rome, Jan. 26: Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte resigned Tuesday in the hope of forming a new government after weeks of turmoil in his ruling coalition, leaving Italy rudderless as it battles the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

He tendered his resignation to President Sergio Mattarella, the ultimate arbiter of Italian political crises, who invited him to stay on in a caretaker capacity pending discussions on what happens next.

The uneasy coalition that has led Italy since September 2019 was fatally weakened earlier this month by the withdrawal of former premier Matteo Renzi's small but crucial Italia Viva party.

Ahead of a key vote in parliament this week that he looked set to lose, Conte informed his cabinet on Tuesday that he would quit in what supporters said was a move to form a new government.

After the meeting with Mattarella, a spokesman for the president said he "reserves the right to decide (what to do next) and invited the government to stay in office in a caretaker capacity".

Mattarella will open discussions with party leaders on Wednesday afternoon which are likely to lead into Thursday — leaving a vacuum at the top of the eurozone's third largest economy at a crucial time.

DISMISS CASE,  
SAYS EPSTEIN  
EX-GIRLFRIEND

New York, Jan. 26: A British socialite charged with recruiting teenage girls for financier Jeffrey Epstein to sexually abuse in the 1990s asked a judge Monday to dismiss the case on multiple grounds, including that a deal years ago not to prosecute Epstein and others should shield her from prosecution. Lawyers for Ghislaine Maxwell said the indictment against their client was obtained unjustly and doesn't allege crimes specific enough to bring before a jury.

But they listed first among 12 separate arguments attacking the indictment that a non-prosecution deal Epstein reached with the federal government a dozen years ago should shield Maxwell from prosecution too. The deal sought to protect Epstein and those around him, but Maxwell was not identified by name in the document that was signed as Epstein agreed to plead guilty to state charges in Florida that forced him to register as a sex offender afterward. Lawyers for Epstein had planned to argue that the deal with prosecutors in Florida in 2008 protected him against sex trafficking charges lodged against him in July 2019 in New York City.

Manhattan federal prosecutors maintained they could proceed against Epstein or those who worked for him regardless. Epstein killed himself at a Manhattan federal lockup a month after his arrest. Maxwell, 59, was arrested last July and has remained jailed on grounds she might flee. She has pleaded not guilty to charges that she recruited teen girls for Epstein to sexually abuse.

## Tornado hits Alabama hotel



A Hampton Inn hotel is severely damaged after a tornado tore through Fultondale, Alabama. One person has died and at least five people have been hospitalised with critical injuries. The storm caused "significant damage," the National Weather Service tweeted.

— AP

'Threat': Guard to stay  
in Washington till Mar.

Violence a concern ahead of Trump's impeachment trial

Washington, Jan. 26: Thousands of US National Guard troops mobilised in Washington for the presidential inauguration will remain in place through mid-March due to ongoing threats, Pentagon officials said Monday.

The officials did not offer specific information on the threats, saying the information came from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

But Washington remained concerned about more possible violence after the January 6 attack on Congress by supporters of president Donald Trump, and ahead of the impeachment trial of Trump beginning the week of February 8.

Acting Army Secretary John Whitley said they had been briefed on possible risks with "several" upcoming events in Washington over the coming several weeks.

Security officials are concerned that protests "could either be used by malicious actors or other problems that could emerge," he said.

"We are posturing our forces to be able to respond to those threats if they emerge," he said.

The attack on the US Capitol on January 6, which left five people dead and has been labelled an insurrection, led the army to increase the number of National Guard troops deployed in Washington from a few hundred to 25,000 for the January 20 inauguration of President Joe Biden.

Much of the centre of the city was locked down and the normal hundreds of thousands of attendees told to stay home due to the high level of security.

On Monday about 13,000 of the reservists remained.

About 7,000 would stay through the end of January, and then fall slowly to about 5,000 in mid-March, according to Whitley.

Asked about the specific threats, Whitley referred reporters to the FBI, which did not respond to requests for comment.

— AFP

Ahead of Putin call, Biden  
walks high wire with Russia

Washington, Jan. 26: President Joe Biden has been quickly thrown into a high-wire balancing act with Russia as he seeks to toughen his administration's stance against Vladimir Putin while preserving room for diplomacy in a post-Donald Trump era.

The relationship is sure to be different than the one Putin enjoyed with Trump, who was enamored of the Russian leader and sought his approval, casting doubt on Russian interference in the 2016 elections and involvement in a massive hack last year.

Despite this conciliatory approach, his administration toed a tough line against Moscow, imposing sanctions on the country, Russian companies and business leaders for issues ranging from Ukraine to

all transactions with the group will be authorized through February 26 at 12:01 am (0401 GMT).

The order signed by Bradley Smith, acting director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control, said the United States was not unblocking any funds that have already been targeted.

— AFP

energy supplies and attacks on dissidents. Unlike his immediate predecessors, Biden has not held out hope for a "reset" in relations with Russia but

has instead indicated he wants to manage differences with the former Cold War foe without necessarily resolving them or improving ties.

— AP

YELLEN CONFIRMED  
AS 1ST FEMALE  
TREASURY SECY

Washington, Jan. 26: The US Senate on Monday voted by a wide margin to confirm Janet Yellen as the first woman to lead the Treasury Department, giving her a key role in Congress negotiations over a huge Covid-19 economic relief package.

Yellen was the first woman to lead the Federal Reserve, from 2014 to 2018, and previously the White House Council of Economic Advisors. Her immediate job will be to help win Congress approval for President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion rescue package to secure US economic recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. That will entail convincing skeptical lawmakers that the benefit of more spending outweighs concerns about the country's soaring debt level.

— AFP

PETS ARE BACK:  
BIDEN'S 2 DOGS  
SETTLE IN AT WH

Washington, Jan. 26: The patter of paws is being heard in the White House again following the arrival of President Joe Biden's dogs Champ and Major. The two German shepherds are the first pets to live at the executive mansion since the Obama administration.

Major burst onto the national scene late last year after Biden, then president-elect, broke his right foot while playing with the dog at their home in Wilmington, Delaware.

The Bidens adopted Major in 2018 from the Delaware Humane Association. Champ joined the family after the 2008 presidential election that made Joe Biden vice president. The dogs moved into the White House on Sunday, following Biden's inauguration last week.

— AP

'MADE IN U.S':  
BIDEN PREFERS  
SWISS ROLEX

Washington, Jan. 26: Americans tend to notice everything about an incoming president at their inauguration, and thus Joe Biden's choice to wear a \$7,000 Rolex watch on the day he was sworn in.

Nor did the fact that the timepiece was made in Switzerland escape attention, as it marked one of the new president's first breaks with his predecessors, who chose watches a bit more quotidian and even manufactured domestically — the type of industry Biden says he wants to promote.

Biden's stainless steel Rolex Datejust "is a far cry from the Everyman timepieces that every president not named Trump has worn conspicuously in recent decades," *The New York Times* wrote.

— AFP

Moscow, Tehran call for  
'rescue' of Iran nuke deal

Moscow, Jan. 26: Moscow and Tehran called for the rescue of the Iran nuclear deal Tuesday, as their top diplomats held their first talks since Joe Biden's election raised hopes of Washington returning to the agreement.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said ahead of the talks in Moscow that "one of the most pressing topics is the task of rescuing the Joint Comprehensive Action Plan (JCPOA)".

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif thanked Moscow for its efforts to repair the JCPOA after the US exit in 2018 and for Russia's "constructive and principled" position on the deal.

Zarif urged unity between Moscow and Tehran "in order to save the JCPOA from the risks and fears that arose after the United States left this plan." The talks in Moscow come days after Zarif urged the United States to make the "fundamental choice" to lift sanctions and reverse the "failed policies" of the previous administration, which took a hard line on Tehran.

He cautioned that any efforts from Washington to extract additional concessions would ultimately end in failure.

"Iran wants the nuclear deal it made," Zarif wrote

● **THE AGREEMENT** was largely left in tatters after former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew and ordered officials to reimpose tough penalties against Tehran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" policy.

in an op-ed in the Foreign Affairs magazine.

The agreement was largely left in tatters after former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew and ordered officials to reimpose tough penalties against Tehran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" policy.

The deal was agreed in 2015 between Iran, the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany. It offered sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on Tehran's nuclear ambitions and guarantees it would not seek an atomic bomb. Iran maintains it has only pursued a civilian nuclear energy programme.

A new wave of US sanctions have hit hard Iran's vital oil sector and its international banking ties, plunging the economy into a recession.

But Tehran has signalled it could be willing to engage the new White House administration while rhetoric from officials in Moscow has suggested a change in tack in Washington from the Trump administration.

Joe Biden's pick for secretary of state, Anthony Blinken, said at a Senate confirmation hearing this month that Trump's policies had made Iran "more dangerous". While Blinken confirmed Biden's desire for Washington to return to the nuclear agreement, both sides have said the other must return to full compliance before the accord is implemented again.

Since the deal began unravelling with the US exit, Russia and European signatories have advocated efforts to salvage the accord and cautioned Iran against bolstering its nuclear enrichment.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov in December urged Iran to take "maximum responsibility" after Tehran announced plans to install advanced centrifuges in its main nuclear enrichment plant.

The ministry earlier this month blamed Iran's departure from norms of the nuclear deal on "systematic crude violations" by the United States. — AFP

Covid may take 4-5 yrs  
to end: S'pore ministerMinnesota case 1st  
Brazil variant in US

Minneapolis, Jan. 26: A new Brazilian variant of the Coronavirus has made its first known appearance in the United States in a person who recently returned to Minnesota after travelling to Brazil, state health officials announced Monday.

The Brazil P1 variant was found in a specimen from a patient who lives in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area who became ill in the first week of January, the Minnesota Department of Health said in a statement. Epidemiologists are interviewing the person to obtain more details about their illness, travel and contacts. There was no immediate indication

that the variant was spreading in Minnesota.

Viruses are constantly mutating, and new versions — called variants — often emerge. Health officials are also worried about variants that were first reported in the United Kingdom and South Africa. Researchers believe they may spread more easily than the virus that has already sickened millions in the United States and caused nearly 420,000 deaths. The Brazilian variant was first identified in four travellers who were tested at an airport outside Tokyo. It contains a set of mutations that may affect its ability to be recognised by antibodies. — AP

Denmark to pay for  
shut mink industry

Copenhagen, Jan. 26: Denmark has said it could pay out more than 19 billion Danish kroner (\$3.1 billion, 2.6 billion euros) to its mink farmers after it closed down the industry over Coronavirus fears.

Denmark was the world's largest exporter of mink fur but culled all 15 million of its mink population last year after some were found to be carrying a mutated virus variant, and later banned mink breeding until 1 January 2022.

The support scheme announced late on Monday includes reimbursements to the country's roughly 1,000 mink farmers for the cull, as well as support for them to change their busi-

nesses. Mink breeders and related businesses now have "a good opportunity to move on", said agriculture minister Rasmus Prehn after a cross-party deal was sealed.

"Mink breeders have made a great sacrifice for public health and the common good." In November last year, Denmark said the "Cluster 5" mutation carried by mink had been wiped out, and they were the only animal confirmed to be able to contract it and pass it to humans.

The process, however, was mired in scandal from the start.

— AFP

## SIGNIFICANTLY | DELAYED

## Project back after demonstrations denouncing racism, police violence against PoC

## US renews plans to put abolitionist Tubman on \$20 bill

Washington, Jan. 26: The White House said Monday it was expediting plans to put Harriet Tubman, a PoC woman who escaped slavery and became a leader of the pre-Civil War abolitionist movement, on the \$20 bill, a project that had been significantly delayed under Donald Trump.

The move means Tubman would become the first African American to feature on a US bill.

The project, launched by former president Barack Obama, has come back to

the forefront after historic demonstrations denouncing racism and police violence against people of colour. "The Treasury Department is taking steps to resume efforts to put Harriet Tubman on the front of the new \$20 notes," said presidential spokeswoman Jen Psaki.

"It's important that our notes, our money... reflect the history and diversity of our country and Harriet Tubman's image gracing the new \$20 note would certainly reflect that," she said. Tubman was born

into slavery in 1822 but escaped before going back to the slave-owning southern states to help dozens of others flee bondage, either to the northern US or in Canada, both before and

— JEN PSAKI

Presidential spokeswoman



Harriet Tubman

during the Civil War of 1861-65.

After the war, she became a champion of wom-

en's rights before her death in 1913.

Her life, and in particular her work helping enslaved people escape as a conductor on the "Underground Railroad," were featured in a 2019 Hollywood biopic. Her image was set to replace the portrait of Andrew Jackson, the US president behind the "Trail of Tears" that drove dispossessed Native American tribes from the southeast of the expanding country, and who was much admired by Trump.

Trump's treasury secre-

tary Steve Mnuchin announced in 2019 that the revamp of the \$20 bill was being put off until 2028, citing "security issues" around counterfeiting one of the most popular bills in circulation.

During his 2016 presidential campaign, Trump criticized the plans to replace Jackson with Tubman, calling the move "pure political correctness."

He suggested putting Tubman's picture on the two-dollar bill, which is no longer printed.

Jackson, who occupied

the White House from 1829 to 1837, was seen by Trump as the first "populist" president of the country, and hung his portrait in the Oval Office during his tenure.

The fiery general rose to fame for his historic victory against British forces in New Orleans in 1815. But he is also remembered for the mass deportation of tens of thousands of Native Americans from their ancestral lands in the southeast that left thousands dead.

— AFP



# DECCAN Chronicle

27 JANUARY 2021

## History made on R-Day, but disorder regrettable

For the first time since the birth of the Republic of India on January 26, 1950, Republic Day this year wasn't just the traditional military parade on New Delhi's Rajpath but also the tractors' parade by tens of thousands of farmers in the nation's capital, venting their demands that have caught the country's attention for many months.

History was thus made. But it didn't turn out to be entirely peaceful as the chief coordinating body of the dozens of farmers' unions may have desired. Providing dramatic television footage, in some parts of the city, hundreds of farmers clashed with the police, which resorted to lathicharges and teargas shelling, but on the whole conducted itself with reasonable restraint.

Had a volatile section of the farmers not veered off the route marked out for the tractor parade by the Delhi police, rushed inside the Red Fort — Delhi's iconic landmark which has symbolised India's grandeur in unity since the mid-nineteenth century — and raised their sectional banners from one of its flagpoles, although taking care to keep these at a lower level than the tricolour which flutters there, the chaos and disorder that marked the day might not have drawn the kind of attention it now has.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, the federating body of farmers' unions whose thousands of members have been camped at Delhi's borders for two months along with their families, braving intense cold weather, were quick to dissociate their wholly peaceful agitation from the sporadic violence, disorder and chaos of the day.

The farmers' organisations, from chiefly Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh in northern India, have been pressing for their demand for the repeal of three agricultural reform laws since about the middle of last year. Lately, there have been protests in sympathy by farmers in other parts of the country too. With the Narendra Modi government adopting an unbending stance in the negotiations, and right-wing social media groups seeking to malign the farmers as anti-national, the agriculturists decided to parade their determination by entering the capital city on Republic Day.

This was also an unspoken assertion that the historic day belonged as much to the people as to the State which commemorates it by staging a military show each year. However, the disorder unleashed by a section of farmers, although the main body of the parade stuck to orderly conduct, is apt to turn the spotlight on the agitation leaders. Their tactical skills will be tested. They will need to remain united — if they are serious about their demands — while ensuring the isolation of violent elements. It is to be hoped that the government will be dispassionate in investigating who the troublemakers were, especially focusing on whether fifth columnists had infiltrated to give the months-long peaceful agitation a bad name.

Republic Day in India is high on ceremony and is associated with form. It is this aspect that was breached by the events of the day. As the Covid-19 pandemic is still around, the official celebration was kept at a reduced scale. If this offered a flavour of the times — the parade of the "kisans", practically in tandem with the "jawans", who put up the traditional military display — offered a glimpse of the people's history through the staging of a democratic protest even if it went somewhat awry.

## Bihar cops overstep limits

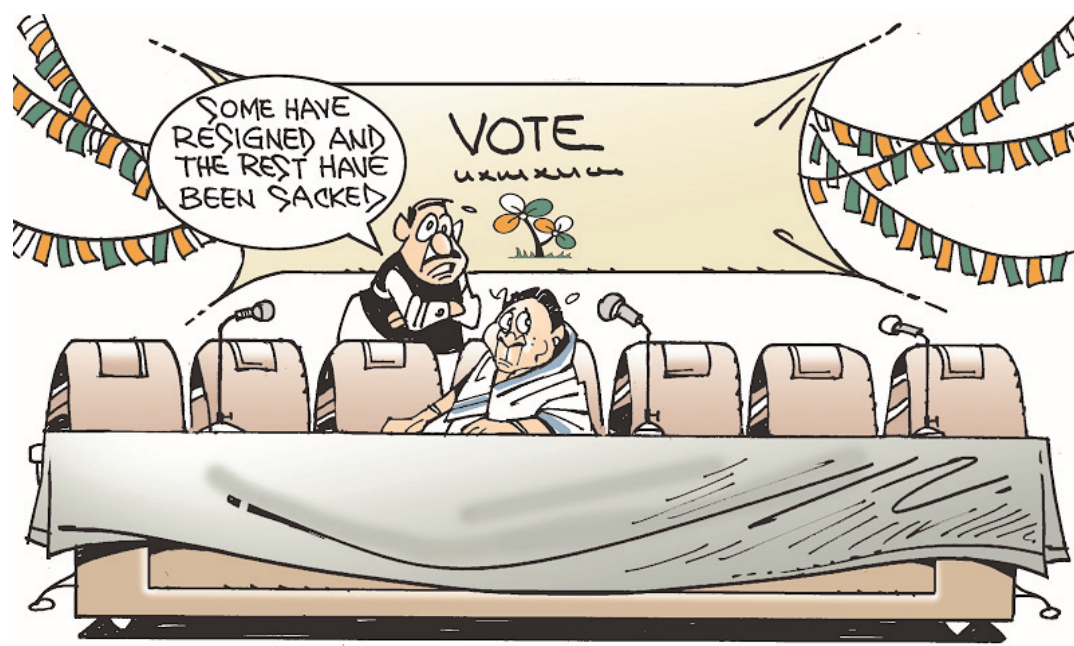
The Bihar police's warning of legal action against social media users who criticise the government, netas and babus stems from over-enthusiasm of the top cops. The threat appears to come from officers who appear to be so beholden to their political masters that they are prepared to step beyond boundaries in playing up to their hypersensitive bosses. The warning from the inspector general of Bihar Police has been served against "offensive" posts, but there are already ways to curb any overt misuse of social media by raising the issue with those who provide these platforms like Twitter, Facebook and others.

In threatening to make offensive use of social media a cyber-crime, the Bihar police are overstepping the bounds of law as there are no provisions in cyber-crime laws to deal with it since the Supreme Court struck down Section 66A of the IT Act. Police can find other provisions in "prescribed laws" to pressure activists who target netas and babus but they would be well advised not to as they would be setting a bad precedent in circumscribing freedom of expression and trampling upon the right to free speech. It is not for a branch of the executive like the police to creatively use existing laws to browbeat critics.

The Bihar chief minister, Nitish Kumar, has not helped matters either by talking up against criticism of the government on social media. Having chosen to be in public life, netas must face up to criticism. Dissent is legitimate in a democracy and it cannot be trampled upon nor can officials hide under ill-advised police action to muzzle those who criticise them or expose their corrupt ways. There are processes to deal with inflammatory social media posts stoking communal tensions or inciting violence and defamatory ones through civil and criminal action. The Bihar government would do well to junk police advice and respond to criticism with just good governance.

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:  
**Chennai:** SP 3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Phones: (044) 22254747, 22254748  
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Subhani



## Biden's real challenge is to fix America's finances



Mohan Guruswamy

Thomas L. Friedman is a *New York Times* columnist and three-time Pulitzer Prize winner and is possibly the world's foremost globalisation evangelist. A kind of Billy Graham of globalisation. His first book *The World is Flat* came at a time when globalisation was still in its early days and was seen by many as the wave of the future and a panacea to the world's economic ills. Globalisation is described as the process in which people, ideas and goods spread throughout the world, spurring more interaction and integration between the world's cultures, governments and economies.

But what it turned out to be in practice is a system where the low-cost producers ended up as providers to America's gargantuan appetite for manufactured goods. They got paid in US dollars, which they promptly invested in US banks or treasury notes. American banking institutions in turn lent most of it to US consumers and companies who then bought more from us with that money. In 2020, the US posted a trade deficit of \$880 billion. But for the Covid-19 pandemic-induced economic contraction this was headed for a trillion dollars. This is the money the rest of the world salivates for. The US dollar is the world's most trusted and preferred currency. That is directly related to the rest of the world's confidence in the US system and its credibility. Is it any surprise then that 66 per cent of the world's reserves are held in US dollars? Even China holds almost \$3 trillion in US notes. India has \$548 billion. This cycle of production, consumption, conversion, credit and

demand is what globalisation has in fact become. Without the annual US deficits, the rest of the world will stagnate.

Every thinking American knows that the good times will not last forever. Former President Barack Obama tried to set it right by promising to narrow America's trade deficit or possibly ending it in 10 years by seeking to make US businesses competitive. He planned to make the US the centrepiece of a new Indo-Pacific trading bloc (Trans-Pacific Partnership) to blunt China's export surge and burgeoning trade surpluses. He failed. He left the US with an annual trade deficit of \$568 billion in 2016. Then Donald Trump picked up the gauntlet. He threw out the TPP and sought to beat down China's growing economic power with a sledgehammer as policy. He raised tariffs and banned many companies and their products. It only ended up with US consumers having to pay more and the US having to subsidise its farmers more as China dropped shutters on US farm products. By the time he was through he left the US with a trade deficit of \$880 billion in 2020. Now he has gone, and Joseph R. Biden has to pick it up from there.

The problem with the Americans is that they have the problem defined wrong in the first place. The problem is not about the US sliding into oblivion because its education system is faltering, or its R&D is flagging, or because Americans have ceased to be innovative and finally that China and India are beating it at all this. Far from being America's competitors, China and India are still its under-economies, serving it with cheap labour working on repeti-

tive jobs and repetitive number crunching. The problem with the US is that it lives far beyond its means and its profligacy has left it as debtor unable to pay its bills by endeavour, but by printing new banknotes. The problem with the unlimited printing of banknotes is that the more you print the less they can do.

The American crisis began unfolding when Richard Nixon disengaged the US dollar from the gold standard. Remember how we in the ex-colony of the empire upon which the sun never set used to refer to the UK pound as sterling? That was because every British pound was linked to a gold equivalent in weight. That's how world currencies were valued then.

That was the basis of exchange rates. In one fell swoop, Richard Nixon, aka Tricky Dicky, unable to finance his twin wars in Vietnam and Cambodia, found a way out. Delink the US dollar from the gold standard and put the printing presses at its five Federal Reserves to full use. This had gone on over 40 long years and the birds have begun to come home to roost. Its two seaboards, the US' blue wings, keep it soaring. In the east the "masters of the universe" have invented an ideology — globalisation — that makes them the rest of the world's money managers. That money drives domestic consumption with easy credit. That money also drives the relentless innovation in America's west that drives global production and consumption. It's the geo-

**The American crisis began unfolding when Richard Nixon disengaged the US dollar from the gold standard. Remember how we in the ex-colony of the empire used to refer to the UK pound as sterling?**

graphical middle with its wheat, corn and soyabean fields, industrial scale production of poultry, pork, beef and dairy products and with its shuttered factories, that is blaming the rest of the world for its relative penury. They want to make America great again by making, if not all, but most of the world's manufactured goods. These need the giant steel mills and chemical plants gushing out industrial material to turn into industrial and consumer products. All those have also bolted. There is little President Biden can do to reverse it. The genie has left the American bottle and America's industries have mostly gone overseas.

The error in Friedman's analysis is that declining education standards, declining spending on R&D and productivity have led to the American crisis. President Obama never tired of stating this. Assuming the US sets right its high school education and the maths proficiency of its kids are on par with that of Indian or Chinese kids, would that stop US jobs from leaving for Bengaluru or Nanjing? As long as Indian and Chinese workers work for less than one dollar an hour when US workers will not work for less than \$15 an hour, jobs will flow across the deep oceans.

Despite what Friedman writes, the US will never cede the innovation crown to either China or India. If not the brilliant young techie entrepreneurs US universities churn out, young Indians and Chinese who flock to Silicon Valley and its clones in droves will see to that. The US will keep innovating. China and India will turn the innovation into goods and services. That is the future, till the house of cards falls down. Keeping it up is Mr Biden's biggest challenge.

*The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.*

## LETTERS

### SIKKIM SKIRMISH

There have been recent reports that the Chinese built a village in Arunachal Pradesh and the friction in the border is building. Mutual talks pave the way for peace for the time being but the de-escalation process should end once and for all. With peak winters and extremely low temperatures, the situation has been largely quiet as both sides have been locked in a holding pattern while diplomatic and military-level talks continue to try and work out an agreement for disengagement. The news of this incident is another reminder that despite the Corps Commander level talks having recently completed its ninth round, featuring a candid and in-depth exchange of views, no actual headway has been made in terms of a concrete timeline for disengagement.

**C.K. Subramaniam, Chennai**

### CHAOS AT TRACTOR RALLY

THE SHAMEFUL incidents of violence by the Punjab farmers and the counter violence on the part of the Delhi police could have been avoided had the farmers not violated the Delhi police's directive with regard to the schedule. The root cause of police reaction on the farmers squarely lies with the impatient farmers who with impudence started to take out the rally an hour earlier than the time stipulated. The ferocity and force exhibited by the organisers and participants of the tractor rally and watched by millions all over the country is something unbelievable. Police appeared to be their main target and the drivers of the tractors not only did not show any discipline in driving but also indulged in threatening the police as if they would mow them down. All these things could have been avoided had the SC tendered an advisory cum warning to the farmers that their proposed rally on Republic Day would be considered as unlawful.

**S. Nagarajan Iyer, Coimbatore**

### DON'T BE COMPLACENT

IT IS heartening to note that Washington Sunder, after his successful debut and heroics at Brisbane, deserves all accolades. But he seems to be too confident to do well against the England team during their Test series in India. While we could appreciate his confidence, neither he nor our team should be complacent while taking on Root & his army. To be frank, after Root's tons of runs against Sri Lanka, that too on their spinning tracks, to win the series two nil, should not be taken lightly. Unlike the Australian players, Root & Co. are a different kettle of fish, who cannot be easily netted.

**N. Mahadevan, Chennai**

V. Vijayasai Reddy



## No space for communal politics in AP under Jagan

Miscreants associated with Opposition parties in Andhra Pradesh are vandalising and desecrating temples to destabilise the democratically-elected YSRC government led by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy as they feel religious sentiments can be exploited to create a communal flareup.

Bizarrely, some of them, after instigating/condoning such attacks for political gain, accuse the YSRC of being responsible. Why would any government or ruling party attack temples or idols? How would it benefit to hurt the sentiments of a majority of people?

With the Jagan Mohan Reddy government's focus fixed on development and the state's welfare, there is no political space for the Opposition. The CM has likened such attacks on religious sites as "political guerrilla" warfare. The Opposition must understand that in the minds and hearts of Andhra's people, the CM doesn't belong to a particular religion but is a leader of all sections.

India is a religious society. Religion plays a key role in the lives of most Indians. It is an indispensable and foundational part of our society. Faith underlies our ceremonies, festivals, even harvest celebrations.

The Constitution explicitly recognises this, and provides for a country based on secularism, with tolerance and respect for all religions. Andhra Pradesh has seen a spate of temple desecrations of late. These cowardly attacks need to be tackled firmly by the State, creating a strong deterrent.

While the law will take its course and the CM has given assurances, it is important to gauge the action, attitude and role of the Opposition. While the state government has stuck to its constitutional obligation and is rolling out welfare schemes without discrimination, the Opposition led by former CM N. Chandrababu Naidu is politicising these unfortunate events to incite communal feelings.

Mr Naidu's desperate actions shows he realises the massive erosion of his political capital and support. He has resorted to such dirty communal politics as his development/welfare activities as CM don't compare with what young Jagan Mohan Reddy has achieved in less than two years.

The Opposition's role is to criticise and correct the government in areas that positively affect people. The Opposition's criticism should force a government to take more steps towards effective governance. But the TDP-led Opposition in Andhra aren't

playing this role and are instead damaging the state's social fabric by stoking religious sentiments. Mr Naidu's actions are a great disservice to the nation at large and setting a wrong precedent to other regional parties — to turn communal as their last option to remain politically relevant.

The Supreme Court, way back in 1994, warned of the perils of inciting religious feelings in the landmark nine-judge bench ruling in *S.R. Bommai* versus Union of India, where it said: "In a secular democracy like ours, mingling of religion with politics is unconstitutional". Its implication was clear — communal politics are a flagrant breach of our Constitution and of the secular democratic ethos. It is imperative that religion and caste aren't brought into politics by any party, association or individual.

Communal hatred is being used in Andhra to divert people's attention away from the unprecedented welfare schemes of the YSRC government. Recently, the CM flagged off the distribution of 30 lakh housing sites, an initiative to help every citizen fulfil their dream of owning a site and house. The Opposition couldn't digest such progress. This had led the Opposition parties to resort to communal politics to play spoilsport.

Note the factual irony of the Opposition protests on the issue. Data on attacks on temples in AP shows that in 2020, 228 cases of attacks on temples were registered, compared to 305 cases in 2019, 267 (2018), 318 (2017), 332 (2016) and 290 cases in 2015. The attacks on temples under the YSR Congress government has actually reduced. It also shows clearly that the issue had more potential to be communalised when Mr Naidu was in power. As the principal Opposition party then, we could have done the same thing, but didn't.

Ever since Jagan Mohan Reddy came to power in May 2019, communal politics have been used to target his government, despite his repeated assertion that "humanity is his faith". Mr Naidu is playing religious politics with an ulterior motive of undermining the YSRC government and polarising votes on religious lines. During the TDP government, Mr Naidu demolished many temples on Vijayawada's Krishna riverfront, razing them to the ground with bulldozers in the name of Pushkarams. He vandalised the famous thousand-pillar mandapam in Tirumala, even sold the lands of Sadhavarti, performed tantric rituals in the Kanaka Durga temple. A pink diamond went missing during his rule, which was later sold for ₹500 crores in

a Sothbey's auction in Geneva.

Andhra Pradesh DGP D. Gautam Sawang has issued an alert across the state, asking all police officials to increase vigilance at temple sites. CCTV surveillance at all places of worship are being ramped up to monitor all movement at shrines. Over 2,600 temples across Andhra have been mapped for installation of CCTV cameras.

Finally, it's pertinent to note most attacks have taken place in temples run by TDP leaders. For instance, the temple with the Ramatheertham idol was headed by former TDP MP Ashok Gajapathi Raju, who has now been removed from his post by the state government.

Despite the Opposition's communal politics, the state government's conscience is clear. We will strive for development, irrespective of caste, creed, race, religion or gender, keeping in mind the principles enshrined in our secular Constitution and strive to make Andhra Pradesh India's number one state.

*The writer is a Rajya Sabha MP and YSRC Parliamentary Party leader and YSRC's national general secretary. He can be reached at: venumbaka.vr@sansad.nic.in.*



quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	48347.59 -1.09
Nifty 50	14238.90 -0.93
S&P 500*	3,854.61 -0.02
Dollar (₹)	72.94 0.05
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.70 0.03
Euro (₹)	88.62 0.24
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,509▼141 0.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.83 -0.09
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.954 0.25
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.046 0.007

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

India Inc puts 42% less money in foreign arms

Overseas investment by domestic firms fell by over 42 per cent to \$1.45 billion in December 2020, according to Reserve Bank data. In the year-ago month, companies in India had invested \$2.51 billion in their foreign firms (joint ventures / wholly owned units). In November 2020, the total outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) was of \$1.06 billion, down by 27 per cent from a month ago.

Gail plans to float pipeline InvIT before bifurcation



Gail (India) Ltd plans to launch an InvIT of its two gas pipelines between Dahej and Bengaluru ahead of a proposed splitting of the pipeline business from the gas marketing function, sources said. The nation's top gas marketing and transportation firm plans to monetise Dahej-Uran-Panvel-Dabhol pipeline and Dabhol-Bengaluru pipeline by setting up an Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT).

Grofers expects ₹10,000 cr in GMV by March

Grofers expects to achieve Rs 10,000 crore in gross merchandise value (GMV) by March supported by traction in its ongoing sale. The company claims to have witnessed around 3 to 4 times increase in sales during its ongoing Grand Orange Bag Days (GOBD) sale. "We are on road to double our GMV every year and are aiming to hit Rs 10,000 crore in GMV by financial year 2021," Grofers founder Saurabh Kumar said.

Mahanadi Coal Railway scouts for CEO

Mahanadi Coal Railway Ltd, a joint venture of MCL, Ircon and Idco, is scouting for a chief executive officer to implement coal evacuation infrastructure projects in Odisha, officials said. Initially, one corridor has been identified for implementation of the project, the estimated cost of which is Rs 1,700 crore. This project will help in creating railway evacuation infrastructure for Talcher mines.



■ Health tax may go up; 4-yr plan to up spend to 4% of GDP

Budget may double spending on health

AFTAB AHMED  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

India is likely to double health spending in the next fiscal year with the aim of raising expenditure in the sector to 4 per cent of gross domestic output in the coming four years, two officials said, as the country looks to fix its health system after the coronavirus pandemic.

India will likely raise its health spending to Rs 1.2-1.3 lakh crore (\$16.46-\$17.83 billion) in the fiscal year starting April 1, from the current year's projected spending of Rs 62,600 crore, the officials told Reuters.

The new healthcare plan is likely to be unveiled on February 1 when finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman presents the country's budget for 2020-21. The officials did not



want to be named as the plan is not yet public.

Even after decades of high growth, the country's spending on healthcare has been a meagre 1.3 per cent of GDP, way below Brics peers and developed countries.

The strain on India's underfunded healthcare system was put in stark focus during the pandemic, with states forced to set up makeshift Covid care centres and many hospitals struggling to meet the demand for beds and oxy-

gen cylinders.

India has recorded over 10.6 million coronavirus cases, the second-highest in the world after the United States.

Sitharaman is likely to unveil a four year health budget plan with the aim to move India's healthcare spend to 4 per cent of GDP, with the help of a dedicated health fund, the officials said.

The government could also increase a health tax from the current 1 per cent of income and corporate tax to fund the new programme, one of the above officials said.

Currently it raises about Rs 15,000 crore-Rs 16,000 crore annually from the health tax.

The finance ministry did not reply to an e-mail seeking comment on the story.

—Reuters

Sitharaman could unveil easier FDI routes for construction, animation

SHRUTI SRIVASTAVA  
JAN. 26

The government is considering easing foreign investment rules for sectors ranging from construction to animation to lure overseas capital needed to create jobs in an economy cratered by the pandemic, people with knowledge of the matter said.

A proposal to allow limited liability partnerships (LLPs) to invest in the construction of townships, roads, hotels and hospitals is under discussion, the people said, asking not to be identified, citing rules. A plan to allow 100 per cent foreign direct investment in animation, visual effects, gaming and comics sector may also find men-

tion in the government's budget, one person said.

Allowing LLPs will open a new investment avenue when the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is struggling to revive the economy.

The government estimates India will require investment worth \$777 billion across infrastructure for development by 2022.

The construction sector received FDI inflows worth \$25.7 billion between April and September 2020, government data show. The relaxation in rules may help the government get closer to its target of creating affordable housing for all in urban areas by 2022 and building 100 smart cities.

—Bloomberg

Cairn Energy cautions Indian assets abroad could be seized

AMMAR ZAIDI  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 26

Just like US oil firm ConocoPhillips grabbed Venezuelan assets overseas to enforce an arbitration award, Indian bank accounts, airplanes and other foreign properties can be seized to collect \$1.4 billion awarded to UK's Cairn Energy against Indian retro tax, according to a letter seen by PTI.

The British firm has begun identifying overseas Indian assets in case the Indian government fails to honour the arbitration award.

Cairn CEO Simon Thomson in the January 22 letter to the Indian High Commissioner in London—with copies marked to the Prime Minister's Office, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and external affairs minister S. Jaishankar—said the arbitration award is "final and binding" and "the Government of India has an obligation to comply with its terms."

"As India is a signatory



to the New York Convention, the award can be enforced against Indian assets in numerous jurisdictions around the world for which the necessary preparations have been put in place," he wrote.

In 2019, ConocoPhillips had moved US courts to seize Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA's assets to collect \$2 billion compensation it had won in an arbitration against Venezuela's 2007 takeover of its assets. PDVSA thereafter paid ConocoPhillips.

The three-member tribunal, which comprised a judge appointed by India, last month unanimously overturned a Rs 10,247 crore retrospective tax demand on Cairn and

asked the Indian government to return value of the shares it sold, dividend it seized and tax refunds it stopped to enforce the tax.

If India does not comply with the order of the tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, it would be a violation of international rules on arbitral awards, commonly called the New York Convention.

Sources with knowledge of the matter said the options before the Indian government were limited. An appeal against the award in a court in The Hague may not yield positive results as the tribunal had given a very detailed 582-page order to make it "as bullet-proof" as possible.

In contrast, the September 2020 arbitration award in UK's Vodafone Group challenge to retro tax demand of Rs 22,100 crore was only 100 pages. That order has been challenged by India in a court in Singapore—the seat of that arbitration. —PTI

GOOGLE WORKERS TO FORM GLOBAL UNION ALLIANCE

Jan. 26: Google employees from across the globe are forming a union alliance, weeks after workers at the search engine giant and other units of parent company Alphabet Inc formed a labour union for US and Canadian offices.

UNI Global Union, that represents about 20 million workers globally, said on Monday it helped form Alpha Global, Google's union alliance that includes multiple countries such as the United States, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and the UK.

Alpha Global will fight for the rights of full-time Alphabet employees as well as temporary, vendor

and contract workers, UNI Global said.

"The problems at Alphabet... are not limited to any one country, and must be addressed on a global level," UNI's General Secretary Christy Hoffman said.

Alphabet did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

After years of protests over working conditions and business practices, 200 Google workers formed Alphabet Workers Union, a so-called "minority union," in early January.

Under US labour law, Alphabet can ignore the union's demands until a majority of employees support it. —Reuters

WEF | PLEDGE

New Delhi/Davos, Jan. 26: Reliance Industries and Mahindra Group on Tuesday joined more than 50 global giants in committing to core Stakeholder Capitalism Metrics—a set of environmental, social and governance (ESG) parameters and disclosures prepared by the World Economic Forum. The global giants who have made this commitment include Accenture, Bank of America, Credit Suisse, Dell Technologies, Deloitte, EY, Heineken, HP, HSBC Holdings, IBM, JLL, KPMG, Mastercard, McKinsey, Nestle, PayPal, PwC, Royal Dutch Shell, Royal Philips, Salesforce, Schneider Electric, Siemens, Sony, Total, UBS,

Firms sign up for core Stakeholder Capitalism Metrics

Unilever, Yara International and Zurich Insurance Group.

Announcing the details during its online Davos Agenda Summit, the WEF said a total of 61 business leaders have so far committed to the core Stakeholder Capitalism Metrics, which offer a core set of 31 universal, comparable disclosures focused on people, planet, prosperity and governance that companies can report on, regardless of industry or region.

The move signals that private sector leaders view environmental, social and governance factors as critical to the success and long-term viability of all businesses and a unified

BUDGET MAY HIKE AGRI CREDIT TARGET TO ABOUT ₹19 LAKH CR

New Delhi, Jan. 26: With the aim of doubling farmers' income by 2022, the government is likely to raise farm credit target to about Rs 19 lakh crore in Budget 2021-22, to be presented on February 1, according to sources.

For the current fiscal, the government has set a farm credit target of Rs 15 lakh crore.

The government has been increasing the credit target for the farm sector every year and this time too, the target is likely to be increased to around Rs 19 lakh crore for the 2021-22, sources said.

"Non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and co-operatives are active in the agriculture credit space. The Nabard refinancing scheme will be further expanded. Agriculture credit target for the year 2020-21 has been set up at Rs 15 lakh crore," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said while announcing the Budget 2020-21.

The agricultural credit flow has increased consistently over the years, exceeding the target set for each fiscal. For instance, credit worth Rs 11.68 lakh crore was given to farmers in 2017-18, much higher than the Rs 10 lakh crore target set for that year, they added.

Similarly, crop loans worth Rs 10.66 lakh crore were disbursed in the 2016-17 fiscal, higher than the credit target of Rs 9 lakh crore.

—PTI

MSEs seek council help to get over ₹18,700-cr dues

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JAN. 26

Micro and small enterprises (MSEs) have filed over 66,500 applications seeking payment of Rs 18,700 crore pending dues from central PSUs, ministries and other entities. The Micro and Small Enterprise Facilitation Council (MSEFC) has disposed of cases involving 4.6 per cent of the payment dues. Only a miniscule of the MSME payment dues is reaching the council for settlement.

MSEFC, which facilitates settlement of pending dues of MSEs, has received a total of 66,503 applications seeking payment of Rs 18,728 crore, or over \$2.5 billion, from buyers, as per data from MSME Samadhaan. The buyers are central PSUs, ministries, departments, state PSUs and government departments, railways, proprietor owned entities, individuals and other MSMEs.

The council has disposed of 5,889 applications, accounting for Rs 871 crore, or 4.6 per cent, of the Rs 18,728-crore dues. Further, the council has rejected 11,616 applications, which amounted to payment of Rs 2,541 crore. As many as 5,930 cases involving Rs 895 crore were mutually settled with the buyers.

The council is currently considering 16,088 cases, involving total payments of Rs 6,804 crore. The MSEFC is yet to review 26,980 applications, seeking Rs 6,978 crore of payment dues.



According to Rajive Chawla, chairman of IamSMEofIndia, less than one per cent of the payment dues are reaching the council for settlement. "Many of the MSMEs do not want to drag their buyer to the council as it risks losing the buyer, especially if private companies are involved. In the case of government departments and PSUs that risk is not there. Further, they wait for the situation to improve and the buyer to settle the payments. Moreover, the awareness about the council is also limited among the MSMEs," he said.

However, of late, MSMEs are increasingly approaching the council after the government increased the threshold of payment dues to approach NCLT to Rs 1 crore. Further, government also has suspended fresh cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. "The MSMEs earlier had the option of approaching NCLT. But since the government has put fresh cases on hold and increased the threshold of dues, they are approaching the council more," said Chawla.

TECH SECTOR TOP PAYOUT CONTRIBUTOR OVER FY10-20



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, JAN. 26

Technology was the largest payout contributor to the overall payout pool at 20 per cent during the decade FY10-20, while the oil and gas sector was the largest contributor to the overall profit pool at 22 per cent.

Technology was the second highest contributor to the profit pool at 14 per cent, according to the 'Payouts' – The Eabler for Value Creation report from Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

The top six sectors that contributed high payout ratios are mining (75 per cent), consumer (70 per cent), technology (58 per cent), utilities (50 per cent), media (41 per cent) and capital goods (40 per cent).

"Divergence in the profit pool and payout pool of companies is primarily due to varying levels of capital intensity across different sectors. Consumer and technology sectors have the lowest capital intensity," the report said.

The top six sectors with high profit contribution during FY10-20 were oil & gas – 22 per cent, technology – 14 per cent, banks (private sector) – 9 per cent, mining – 9 per cent, automobiles – 8 per cent and consumer – 6 per cent.

Top six sectors with high payout contributions were technology – 20 per cent, oil & gas – 17 per cent, mining – 16 per cent, consumer – 10 per cent, utilities – 7 per cent and automobiles – 6 per cent.

—PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Paes eyes French Open comeback

**Kolkata:** Indian tennis icon Leander Paes on Monday said he is eyeing a French Open comeback this year in his quest to make a record eighth appearance at the Olympics in Tokyo.

Paes, 47, said he skipped the Australian Open as he is apprehensive of playing in a bio-bubble but is looking ahead to the French Open.

“Playing sport in a bio-bubble is very tough and may not be the best thing to do. I got a grand farewell at the Australian Open last year so I felt this year I would be sitting out and watching,” Paes said. “I hope that by the time of French Open, by the end of May, Europe will get to a better position than now.” — PTI

## Nadal takes veiled swipe at Djokovic

**Melbourne:** Rafael Nadal has taken an apparent swipe at Novak Djokovic over his requests for quarantined players preparing for the Australian Open, saying not everyone felt the need to “advertise” how they were trying to help. The Serbian world number one issued a list of suggestions to Tennis Australia last week on behalf of 72 players unable to leave their Melbourne hotel rooms after Covid-19 cases were detected on their planes to Australia. “We all try to help each other,” Spanish great Nadal told *ESPN* from Adelaide, where he and Djokovic are quarantining ahead of the Grand Slam. “Some need to make public everything they do to help others,” he added, in remarks widely seen as referring to Djokovic. — AFP

## Ex-India goalie Prasanta dies

**Kolkata:** Former India goalkeeper Prasanta Dora, who made a name for himself while playing for big three clubs of Kolkata Maidan, died on Tuesday. He was 44 and is survived by 12-year old son Adi and wife Soumi. According to his elder brother Hemanta, who also played as a goalkeeper for India and Mohun Bagan, Prasanta was diagnosed with Hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis in December after he developed unremitting fever. “His platelet count reduced drastically and doctors took a long time to diagnose the disease. We were giving him blood regularly but he could not survive and died at 1.40pm today,” the elder brother said. — PTI

## Govt decree saves Italy from Oly ban

**Rome:** The Italian government pushed through a last-minute decree Tuesday providing more autonomy for the country’s Olympic committee in an effort to prevent the team from being suspended for the Tokyo Games. It was one of the final acts of Giuseppe Conte’s government.

## Live on TV

## BADMINTON

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

## CRICKET

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

**Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament:** Quarterfinals — Haryana vs Baroda from 11.55 am; Rajasthan vs Bihar from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

## FOOTBALL

**Indian Super League:** Kerala Blasters vs Jamshedpur FC from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

**English Premier League:** Chelsea vs Wolverhampton Wanderers from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1; Burnley vs Aston Villa from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 2; Manchester United vs Sheffield United from 1.45 am (Thursday) on Star Sports Select 1; Everton vs Leicester from 1.45 am (Thursday) on Star Sports Select 2, HD

## WWE

**NXT:** Bouts from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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## STATUS KOHLI

Nothing changes between me and Virat, he is my captain and I am his deputy: Rahane

**New Delhi, Jan. 26:** Ajinkya Rahane has won many a fans with his astute captaincy during the Indian team’s epic triumph in Australia but he would like to make it very clear that the undisputed leader of this side is Virat Kohli and he is happy filling in when required.

Come February 5, Rahane will again be the vice-captain of the Test team against England with Kohli back in the saddle. So will things be different now when he once again dons the vice captain’s hat? “Nothing changes. Virat was and will always be the captain of the Test team and I am his deputy. When he was absent it was my duty to lead the side and my responsibility to give my best for Team India’s success,” Rahane, who was on his way to Chennai, said.

For the vice-captain, it was not about being on the hot seat but having the ability to perform the role to perfection that mattered the most.

“Its not the matter of merely being a captain. How you perform the captain’s role is what’s more important. So far I have been successful. Hopefully, in future also, I will try to give these kind of results for my team,” said the man, who has led his country to four wins in five Tests.

Reflecting on his relationship with Kohli, Rahane said it has always been smooth.

“Me and Virat have always shared a good bonding with each other. He has time and again praised my batting. Both of us played memorable knocks for our team in India and overseas conditions. It only helped that Virat comes at No.4 and myself at No.5. We have had a lot of partnerships,” the 32-year-old said.

Theirs is a relationship that has been based on transparency and mutual respect. “We have always backed each other’s game. When we are at the crease, we discuss threadbare about opposition’s bowling. We caution each other whenever one of us plays a rash shot.” — PTI



Ajinkya Rahane

And how does he find Kohli as a captain?

“Virat is a sharp captain. He takes good on-field decisions. Whenever the spinners are in operation, he is banking on me and he believes that taking those catches at slips off (Ravichandran) Ashwin and (Ravindra) Jadeja is one of my core competence areas.

“Virat expects a lot from me and I try and ensure not to let him down,” said Rahane.

Rahane’s classy hundred in the Melbourne Test, according to head coach Ravi Shastri, was a catalyst for change.

— PTI

## JAYA WARNS ENG SPINNER OF ‘BIGGER CHALLENGE’

**London, Jan. 26:** England spinners Dom Bess and Jack Leach must have gained a lot by bowling in Sri Lanka in a just-concluded series but a bigger challenge awaits them against India in the four-Test rubber starting February 5, feels former Lankan skipper Mahela Jayawardene.

Left-arm spinner Leach claimed 10 wickets in the two-match series while off-spinner Bess took 12 in England’s 2-0 victory.

“I think that’s going to be a very exciting series

and a very good challenge for this group of players. That’s what cricket is all about. You need to go away and win the Test series,” Jayawardene told *Sky Sports*.

“The two spinners (Bess and Leach) will have learned a lot here but it will be a bigger challenge in India.”

Jayawardene though believes that England are “well prepared” for the India series, especially when they will have services of star all-rounder Ben Stokes and impres-

## HUSSAIN FEELS INDIA CAN’T BE BULLIED NOW

**London, Jan. 26:** Former England captain Nasser Hussain feels Virat Kohli has instilled a fighting attitude in the current Indian team, which does not get bullied by adversities, whether on or off the field. Despite missing some key players to injuries and Kohli, who was on paternity leave, an inexperienced Indian team, led by Ajinkya Rahane, displayed grit and determination to register a historic come-from-behind 2-1 series win over Australia.

Hussain warned England to be ready for a tough one in the four-Test series against India, starting February 5.

“Any side that can go to Australia, go 1-0 down after being bowled out for 36, lose Kohli because he’s going home on paternity leave, lose your bowling attack and still come back and win after some of the stuff that went on off the field in Australia, they won’t be bullied,” he told *Sky Sports*.

“They (India) are a tough side. I think Kohli has instilled that. Make no mistake, at home, they are a formidable outfit.”

Insisting that England will head into the assignment with plenty of confidence after the series sweep in Sri Lanka.

— PTI



Tamil Nadu’s Shahrukh Khan who scored a brilliant 40 not out off 19 balls against Himachal Pradesh.

## MUSHTAQ ALI | QUARTERS

## Shahrukh stars in TN’s victory

**Ahmedabad, Jan. 26:** Punjab knocked defending champions Karnataka out from the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 cricket tournament as their bowlers set up a comfortable nine-wicket win in the first quarterfinal on Tuesday.

In the other quarterfinal, Tamil Nadu defeated Himachal Pradesh comfortably by five wickets.

After restricting Himachal to a lowly 135 for 9, thanks to Sonu Yadav’s 3 for 14, Tamil Nadu rode on fine knocks from Baba Aparajith (52 not out) and Shahrukh Khan (40 not out) to romp home with 2.1 overs to spare.

Tamil Nadu kept on taking wickets at regular intervals as they did not allow opposition batsmen to settle down. HP skipper Rishi Dhawan top-scored with an unbeaten 35 off 26 balls. Opener Abhimanyu Rana (28) and one-down Nitin Sharma (26) failed to convert their starts.

For TN, right-arm pacer Sonu Yadav (3/14) did bulk of the damage and was ably supported by Sandeep Warrior (2/32), R Sai Kishore (1/27) and M Mohammed (1/18). While chasing, Tamil Nadu lost openers Narayan Jagadeesan (7), C Hari Nishanth (17) and Arun Karthik (0) early and were 25 for 3 at one stage.

Tamil Nadu were in a spot of bother when they slipped to 66 for 5 but Aparajith, who struck three fours and two sixes, and Shahrukh Khan (40 not out off 19 balls; 5x4,

2x6) conjured an unbeaten 75-run match-winning sixth wicket stand to take the side home.

Allrounder Shreyas Gopal (13), who has often come to Karnataka’s rescue too could not convert his start as he edged to wicket-keeper Prabhsimran Singh off pacer Ramandeep Singh (2/22) as Karnataka lost half their side for 51. Ramandeep got his second wicket when he sent back J. Suchith (8) to leave Karnataka at 72 for 6.

Leggie Mayank Markande (1/12) then got into the act as he cleaned up a well-set Anirudh Joshi (27). Punjab continued their dominance over their opposition and ran through their lower order. Punjab lost opener Abhishek Sharma (4) early but Prabhsimran Singh (49 not out off 37 balls) and Mandeep Singh (35 not out) ensured that the chase was walk in the park with their 85-run unbeaten stand for the second wicket.

## BRIEF SCORES

■ Karnataka 87 in 17.2 overs (Aniruddha Joshi 27, Siddharth Kaul 3/15, Arshdeep Singh 2/16) lost to Punjab 89/1 in 12.4 overs (Prabhsimran Singh 49 n.o., Mandeep Singh 35 n.o.). ■ Himachal Pradesh 135 for 9 in 20 overs (Abhimanyu Rana 28, Nitin Sharma 26, Rishi Dhawan 35 n.o., Sandeep Warrior 2/32, Sonu Yadav 3/14) lost to Tamil Nadu 141/5 in 17.5 overs (Baba Aparajith 52 n.o., Shahrukh Khan 40 n.o., Vaibhav Arora 3/30).

## TN | DIGEST

## Satish, Jeswin emerge champions

Tamil Nadu’s M. Satish Kumar and Jeswin Aldrin emerged winners in the 1000mts and long jump events respectively at the 18th Federation Cup national junior athletic championship at Bhopal. Sree Kiran and Kevina Aswin bagged silver medals in the 1500mts and high jump event respectively. 15 boys and 10 girls from Tamil Nadu participated in the event.

## St. Joseph’s win overall title

St. Joseph’s Sports Academy beat TN Police to clinch the overall championship trophy in the 34th Tamil Nadu state junior and 93rd athletic championship. St. Joseph also claimed victories in the men and women’s senior and junior categories.

**Results: Senior: Women:** St. Joseph’s Sports Academy (81) bt SDAT (25); **Men:** St. Joseph’s Sports Academy (81) bt SDAT (24). **Overall Championship:** St. Joseph’s Sports Academy (162) bt TN Police (56).

**Junior: Girls:** St. Joseph’s Sports Academy (177) bt Cuddalore District (23); **Boys:** St. Joseph’s Sports Academy (155) bt Cuddalore District (50). **Overall Championship:** St. Joseph’s Sports Academy (332) bt Cuddalore District (73).

## Rishabh, Mukesh shine

Unbeaten centuries by Rishabh Sudhir (111\*) and M. Mukesh (112\*) helped SCP beat Kedar CA by 119 runs in the under 16 category of the Swastik Cricket Promoters ‘Belief & Trust’ tournament. SCP’s Kasi Vignesh took five wickets.

**Brief scores: U-16:** SCP 255/3 in 28 overs (Rishabh Sudhir 111 (not out), M. Mukesh 112 (not out)) bt Kedar CA 136 in 25 ovs (Ambarish 37, Dev Arjun 40; K. Jaswanth 3/16, Kasi Vignesh 5/15). Open age T20: PSCA 232/5 in 19.3 overs (R. Naveen 104, Pradeep Vishal 47, Javed Mohammad 50) bt Star Boys CC 228/3 in 20 overs (Sandeep 35, Sachin 63, Rangasamy 76 (not out)).

## RAHANE, ROHIT ARRIVE IN CHENNAI

**Chennai, Jan. 26:** Indian team vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane, senior batsman Rohit Sharma and pacer Shardul Thakur arrived here on Tuesday for the first two Tests against England.

Rahane, Rohit and Thakur flew in from Mumbai and headed to the hotel where members of the two teams will be put up as part of the bio-bubble, the Indian squad’s local liaison officer said. The other Indian players, including skipper Virat Kohli, are expected to reach Chennai in batches on Wednesday. While some England players like Ben Stokes, Jofra Archer and Moeen Ali are already in the city, the others will be arriving on Wednesday.

## Spurs spring into round 5



Tottenham’s Gareth Bale celebrates after scoring against Wycombe in their FA Cup fourth round match in High Wycombe, England, on Monday.

— AP

back on loan from Real Madrid. He wasted a chance after five minutes by heading wide and dragged an effort wide from another good position on the edge of the area. Those misses proved costly as Wycombe took the lead in the 25th minute. Uche Ikepeazu got the better of Tottenham

defender Toby Alderweireld down the right and his cross was not cleared by Davinson Sanchez, who could only divert it into the path of Onyedinnma to fire home.

**BILBAO ROUT GETAFE**

Raul Garcia scored twice as Athletic Bilbao maintained their recent impressive run by routing Getafe 5-1 in the Spanish league.

Yeray Alvarez, Alex Berenguer and Oscar de Marcos also scored for Athletic, which a week ago celebrated the Spanish Super Cup title after beating Barcelona in the final and Real Madrid in the semifinals.

The home win against Getafe on Monday left Athletic in ninth place in the Spanish league, closer to the qualification spots for European competitions.

— AP

## Nambiar cherishes ‘late’ Padma award

**New Delhi, Jan. 26:** It was a long time coming, over three decades to be precise.

For 88-year-old O. M. Nambiar, the man who nurtured one of India’s greatest athletes in P T Usha, the announcement of his name in the list of this year’s Padma Shri awardees is a case of “better late than never”.

“I feel very happy for this award though it could have been many years back. Still I am happy. Better late than never,” Nambiar, who is battling the Parkinson’s disease, said in an interaction from his home in Kozhikode.

Usha was conferred the Padma Shri in 1985 while

Nambiar, presented the Dronacharya that year, had to wait for another 36 years before the nation’s fourth highest civilian honour came his way.

His affliction will, however, not allow him to receive the honour in person when the President gives it away at the Rashtrapati Bhawan later. But that’s not lessened his joy.

“Every medal won by my trainees gives me immense satisfaction. I consider my Dronacharya Award, Best Asian Coach award and now Padma Shri as recognition of my hard work and dedication,” said the legendary hailing from Kerala.

Looking back in time, an

**I feel very happy for this award though it could have been many years back. Still I am happy. Better late than never.**

— O.M. NAMBIAR  
P. T. Usha’s coach

Olympic medal for his most famous ward — Usha — was Nambiar’s “lifetime dream” and he recalled being devastated when she missed the bronze in the 1984 Los Angeles Games by a whisker.

The man, who moulded Usha into one of India’s finest athletes during his mentorship from 1977 to 1990, said he couldn’t stop weeping once Usha was

done with that race.

“It is absolutely true that I wept when we knew that Usha missed the bronze by one-hundredth of a second in 400m hurdles in 1984 Olympics. I was inconsolable,” Nambiar said.

“I cannot forget that moment. An Olympic medal for Usha was my biggest lifetime dream,” he added.

Usha was beaten by Romanian Cristiana Cojocaru for the bronze medal in a photo-finish, denying India what could have been its first Olympic medal in athletics. The Romanian clocked 55.41 seconds while Usha recorded 55.42 seconds.

Nambiar’s son Suresh said that someone from the family will collect the award for him when the ceremony is officially held.

“My father will not be able to collect the Padma Shri. His movement is restricted. Somebody from the family will receive the award,” he said.

Nambiar was with Indian Air Force for 15 years and retired as a Sergeant in 1970.

He got a coaching diploma from the NIS-Patiala in 1968 and joined the Kerala Sports Council in 1971.

He was tasked with finding talented athletes in the state.

— PTI