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VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | 23 JANUARY 2021

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### **Internet in all AP villages**

### CM issues instructions to officials for unlimited access

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

Max: 36 0°C

Min: 19.0°C RH: 81% Rainfall: Nil

COVID-19

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+11,354)

1,06,36,056

(+214)

TS: 2,92,835

(+137)

AP: 8,86,694

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

Forecast: Cloudy. Max/Min temp.

(+112)

1,53,140

(+2)

1,586

(+4)

7,146

9,83,53,744

**DEATHS** 

21,06,818

worldometers.info/

ASTROGUIDE

Star: Krittika till 9.29 pm

Varjyam: 8.04 am to 9.51 am

Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am

Jamadi- ul- Akhir 9.1442 AH

**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.39 AM** 

MOONSET TOMORROW 02.38 AM

COUNTER POIN

Don't worry, our vaccine

is not just 98% or 110%

but 200% effective!

SHORT TAKES

**Petrol crosses** 

mark in Mumbai, while diesel touched an all-time high after rates were raised for the third time

this week. Fuel prices

to a price notification

**Heroin worth** 

New Delhi: Two Sri

were hiked by 25 paise

per litre each, according

from oil marketing firms.

This took the petrol price in Delhi to ₹85.45 per litre and ₹92.04 in Mumbai.

₹1,000 cr seized

Lankan nationals have been arrested and about 100 kg of heroin worth an estimated ₹1,000 crore

seized as part of a probe

involving a trans-border drugs-trafficking racket,

the NCB said on Friday. MMM Nawas and

Mohamed Afnas were

nabbed from Chennai,

**Another Bengal** 

Kolkata: In yet another jolt for the TMC ahead of

the assembly polls, West

Bengal forest minister

Rajib Banerjee quit the

minister quits

where they were living by

hiding their real identities.

New Delhi: Petrol price on Friday crossed ₹92 a litre

₹92 per litre

**SUNSET TODAY 5.59 PM** 

**MOONRISE TODAY 13.26 AM** 

Tithi: Pushya Shuddha Dasami till

Durmuhurtam: 6.53 am to 8.22 am

Sarvari; Uttarayana

**HIJRI CALENDAR** 

**PRAYERS** 

Fajar: 6.10 am

**Zohar:** 1.30 pm

**Asar:** 4.30 pm

Isha: 8.15 pm

Maghrib: 5.54 pm

8.53 pm

The state government is making all efforts to provide unlimited and uninterrupted internet connectivity across all villages. Towards this, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy directed Jagan officials to prepare an action plan for establishing such a network in villages and an internet library at network point to facilitate work-fromhome.

During a review meeting on internet connections in villages and providing laptops under the Amma Vodi scheme, held

at providing uninterrupted internet services at desired connection plans for rural areas. He told them to focus on developing an internet system non-destructive cables, which can neither be cut nor disturbed. He said that from the village network points, they

must ensure house to

house internet even in

YSR Jagananna colonies. Reddy said that the idea was to lay an underground cable from HT line to the substation and from the substation to village panchayats. He directed the authorities to provide any capacity connection for the customers by establishing a proper system at the panchayat level.

The Chief Minister also reviewed the provision of laptops to the beneficiaries of Amma Vodi and Vasati Devena scheme that have been opted in lieu of financial assistance. He stated that those, who are studying in standard nine to 12 can opt for a laptop instead of financial assistance from next year. He directed the officials to think of giving laptops with more specifications to fully cater to the needs of students pursuing engineering and other technical courses. He said

it should be handed over to the ward and village secretariats. The pieces have to either be repaired within a week or replaced. For this, he directed the officials to keep the warranty for three years instead of one

Industries, commerce & IT minister Mekapati Gautham Reddy, special chief secretary R. Karikal Valaven, housing principal secretary Ajay Jain, AP Transco CMD Nagulapalli Srikanth, AP Fibernet chairman P. Reddy, Fibernet MD M. Madhusudhan Reddy and other senior officials

**CENTRE TO TALK** 

**ONLY IF FARMERS** 

**OKAY LAW FREEZE** 

The government's nego-

tiations with the prote-

sting farmers' unions

hit a roadblock on

Friday as the farmer leaders once again stuck

to their demands for

repeal of the three agri-

culture laws and a legal

guarantee for MSP, even as the Centre

asked them to reconsid-

er its proposal for freez-

ing the laws. The Centre

hardened its position

saying it will meet once

the unions agree to dis-

cuss the suspension pro-

Full report on Page 4

SANJAY KAW | DC

NEW DELHI, JAN. 22

### State appeals to SEC for rescheduling local polls

**DC CORRESPONDENT** VIJAYAWADA. JAN. 22

The state government on Friday made a fervent appeal to the State Election Commission (SEC) to reschedule panchayat polls at least till the first two phases of vaccination to health workers and police are

Conveying the government's commitment to cooperate with the SEC for the smooth conduct of the polls, a clear deviation from its earlier approach of confrontation, Chief Secretary Adityanath Das wrote a letter to State Election Commissioner

Ramesh Kumar to revise the election schedule in compliance with the Court order to enable both of them to make all efforts to ensure conduct of polls and the Covid-19 vaccination

Indirectly, though, the Chief Secretary reminded the SEC that both the government and SEC are responsible for the polls as well as the vaccination drive as per the HC's judgment and it would be prudent to schedule both activities in such a way that they are held successfully.

He expressed difficulty to vaccinate the polling personnel and to put them on the polling duty at the same time and added that as the Centre mandated vaccination for all frontline employees in the first round, conduct of polls would mean vaccination would

### SEC tells chief secy to remove 7 officials

Election

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

State

Commission has invoked its plenary powers under Article 243 (K) read with Article 324 to remove nine 'tainted' officers who had 'failed' to prevent aberrations in the form of election-related incidents or poll-related violence. State Election Commissioner Ramesh Kumar issued instructions here on Friday for removal of

these officers so as to conduct polls in a free and fair manner. SEC said he acted as the state government did not respond to his repeated requests to remove the tainted offi-The SEC said that con-

tinuance of such poll-tainted officers in the posts would send a wrong signal to the public. Their "partisan conduct" would be counterproductive for conduct of free and fair polls, he said, and the "affected public would be demoralised." He stated that these officers should handover

He said that such a move would violate the guidelines of the Centre and asserted that the government would ready to conduct polls 60 days completion of the first

their charge and exit

forthwith. He asked collectors from Chittoor and Guntur districts to hand over their charges to joint collectors and asked Tirupati Urban SP to hand over his charge to

SP, Chittoor. The SEC said the Chief Secretary should send a panel of three names of officers as suitable replacements for the collectors of Chittoor and Guntur districts and the SP of Tirupati Urban. The names thus proposed should have vigilance clearance.

In case of subordinate police officers, the director general of police should send a panel of names and proposal to the SEC for replacement of those who are now transferred out.

The officers to be removed included, apart from the two district collectors and the SP, the Dy SP, Palamaneru who, since promoted as additional SP shall be barred from poll related work; Deputy SP of Srikalahasti and circle inspectors of Macharla, Punganur, Rayadurgam and Tadiparti.

round of vaccination to frontline personnel who were to be involved in conduct of the local elec-

Page 2: Poll personnel must take vaccine: CS

### Cong to elect prez by June

Congress will have an elected president by June 2021, with the party's working committee on

Friday approving holding the internal election after Assembly polls in five states. The Congress Working Committee

incumbent party chief Sonia Gandhi to schedule the internal election. Report on Page 4

QUICK | ACTION | CM sends CS to affected area

### Mystery illness strikes again, 22 unconscious

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

The mystery illness continued to raise its ugly head in the state with nearly 22 fresh cases being reported from Kumarapalli village in Dendulur mandal of West Godavari on Friday. The affected persons

unconscious after turning giddy and had convulsions for a brief period. Among the affected, 13 were admitted to a government hospital for treatment while the remaining were discharged when they recov-

The mystery illness seemed to be spreading with more than 600 pernow and one death reported from Eluru. Recently, 29 persons were affected in Pulla village of Bhimadole mandal. Following the develop-

ment, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy directed chief secretary Aditya Nath Das, principal secretary for health Anil Kumar Singhal and commissioner for health and family welfare K. Bhaskar to rush to Kumarapalli village and take stock of the develop-

Accordingly, the senior government officials arrived in the village and interacted with the affected persons and enquired with the local authorities about steps being taken up to treat the patients.

Meanwhile, the authorities collected samples of blood from patients. They also took food items and water and sent them for analysis to IICT and NIN in Hyderabad and also to a lab in Vijayawada.

Later, the chief secretary told media that the CM had directed them to provide all requisite medical intervention to help the affected persons recover.

He said that though the illness was reported earlier from Eluru and its surrounding areas, as the state government acted promptly, the illness was

Page 3: Healthy secy for

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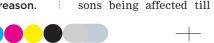
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Mamata Banerjee cabinet. Banerjee, in a letter to the chief minister, said he was tendering his resignation as a cabinet minister, but did not cite any reason.

















TAKES

#### **IAS RANK CONFERRED ON JC RAJAKUMARI**

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, JAN 22

IAS rank was conferred on Joint Collector G.Rajakumari (Welfare) by Government. She received conferring orders from the government on Ms.Rajakumari joined as DWMA project Director to East Godavari in the year 2017 and later, he was transferred to Revenue Divisional Officer in Kakinada. He was promoted as Joint Collector-2 (Welfare) in 2019. She succeeded in monitoring the officials to achieve the goals of their departments respectively. The East Godavari District Collector D.Muralidhar Reddy, Joint Collectors G.Lakshmisha and Keerthi Chekuri, the District Revenue Officer Ch.Sathibabu and other district officials

### **OC JAC DEMANDS EWS RESERVATIONS** IN AP TOO

DC CORRESPONDENT KURNOOL, JAN. 22

With the Telangana State implementing EWS reservation for forward communities, the Reddy Association has stepped up the demand for its implementation in Andhra Pradesh also. OC JAC held a dharna near the collectorate here on Friday and performed a Milk Abhishek for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekara Rao.

Joint action committee for OC (OCJAC) state president Birru Pratap Reddy sought immediate implementation of Weaker Section (EWS) reservation in AP. After the protest dharna, the activists organised Palabhisekham at the flex of Prime Minister Modi, thanking him for having introduced this quota system in central

### **TULASI REDDY ASKS CM TO IMPLEMENT EWS**

DC CORRESPONDENT KADAPA, JAN. 22

The Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee Working President Dr. N. Tulasi Reddy requested the state government to implement EWS reservation. He wrote a letter to Chief Minister, stating that the unemployed youth belonging to castes whose reservation does not apply is said to be in trouble for jobs. He said that the central government had given 10 percent reservation in central government schools and jobs to the upper caste poor with the 103rd amendment to the constitution.

He said several state governments were implementing it and the neighboring Telangana government was also prepared to implement it. He said the Andhra Pradesh state government was implementing EWS reservations in schools but not in job placements. Poor youth from the upper castes have recently lost 26,807 jobs in village or ward volunteers hired by the state government, 12,589 in secretariats, and 971 in the medical sector. He appealed to the state government to issue orders implementing the 10 percent EWS reservation.

### **YADAVAS DEMAND GOVT WITHDRAWAL** ON PHARMA UNIT

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, JAN. 22

The Yadava leaders demanded the state government should withdraw the permissions of the proposed pharma unit, set up by the Divis Labs in Thondangi mandal of East Godavari.

The All India Yadava Sangham President Mekala Ramulu Yadav, the State President Eesarapu Sekhar Yaday and others visited Pampadipeta and Tatipakalu area and expressed their resentment over the government stand on the

proposed pharma unit. Mr Ramulu Yadav said that though the people unanimously urged the government not to allow the proposed pharma unit by the Divis at Thondangi mandal, the government wants to go ahead for the project and it is totally wrong. He said that the All India Yadava Sangham will render its support to the agitators to cancel the permissions to the pharma unit permanently. He said that if the government withdraws the permissions to the Divis, the yadavas across the country would come to Thondangi to take up the agitations in favour of the village peo-

#### **Contentious farm bills**



Farmers along with Left activists and leaders take part in 'Chalo Guntur' tractor rally against the Centre's newly proposed agriculture bills in Guntur city on Friday

### **SEC** notification today on four-phase GP polls in AP

SEC maintains it will coordinate with state to hold GP elections

**DC CORRESPONDENT** VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

The State Election Commission (SEC) is all set to issue notification on Saturday at 10 a.m. for the first phase of gram pan-

chayat (GP) elections. The SEC's resolve on conduct of polls received a boost after a division bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court headed by Chief Justice Arup Kumar Goswami allowed holding of GP elections in its verdict delivered on Thursday. The notification is scheduled to be issued on Saturday morning even as the Supreme Court is slated to hear on Monday, January 25, the special leave petition (SLP) filed by the AP government seeking setting aside of the HC order. State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar has, however, decided to go ahead with the notification for organising the polls in four phases on February 5,

9, 13 and 17. The SEC maintained both the State Election Commission and

polling personnel

would be ensured only if

they took the two doses of

the vaccine and acquired

immunity so that they could be deputed on poll

duty. He made it clear that

if any activity is taken up

against the Covid-19

guidelines of the Centre, it

would imperil the health

On the other hand, the

state government filed a

special leave petition in

the Supreme Court seek-

ing to set aside the Andhra

Pradesh High Court order

allowing conduct of gram

panchayat polls on Friday.

It was admitted and the

hearing is to be held on Monday before a three-

judge division bench com-

prising Justice Lalu

Nageswara Rao, Justice S.

Abdul Naseer and Justice

of the polling personnel.

**GOVT EMPLOYEES SOUGHT POSTPONE OF LOCAL BODY ELECTIONS** 

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

The government employees sought postponing of local body election process till completion of vaccination Corona process for the safety of the employees' lives. The leaders of various employees associations led by AP JAC Amaravati chairman Bopparaju Venkateswarlu and secretary Y. V. Rao met Chief Secretary Das on Friday and submitted a memorandum seeking post-

coordinate with each other in holding the panchayat elections even as the vaccination programme is on. The state government will implement all safety protocols related to Covid-19, he observed. Authorities will also provide the requisite equipment and training to staff on safety aspects of holding the polls. Ramesh

from the High Court order

and issue directions to

defer conduct of polls by

The SEC also field a

caveat in the apex court

not to give an ex-parte order and hear it before

pronouncing any order on

the conduct of gram pan-

The state government's

top legal source said that though initially the SLP was not admitted by the

Supreme Court registry

following some technical

issues during filing of it

online, subsequently, the

issues were resolved and

Meanwhile, the AP is

witnessing an unprece-

dented development in the

last few days, with the state government unwill-

the SLP was admitted.

chayat polls in AP.

months under 136 of the

three Article

Constitution.

ponement of local body elections. Responding to the con-

employees, Secretary Das assured that their demands would be considered sympathetically. AP State Panchyat Engineers Association state president V.V. Muralikrishna Naidu, Teachers Association JAC G.V. Narayana Reddy, AP State Police Officers Association president Janukula Srinivas Rao and others were present in the meeting.

personnel of both public and private sectors for their dedication in ensuring that Coronavirus is on the retreat. The election commissioner maintained Commission has the same powers as Election Commission of India (ECI) when it comes to conduct of elections for local bodies. He asserted

The AP government ing to allow conduct of date of issue of notifica-

employees also filed an gram panchayat polls on tion for MPTCs/ZPTCs on

management and vaccina-

tion programme and any

move to hold elections

would keep the health of the people at stake. So is

the case with SEC which

is bent upon conduct of

gram panchayat polls as

per schedule claiming that

it was its constitutional

The SEC is busy prepar-

ing for the issue of elec-

tion notification and also

to make arrangements for

conduct of polls and even

moved the Supreme Court

to go ahead with the polls

while the state govern-

ment too was making efforts to stall the election

by moving the apex court. On the other hand, the

SEC has decided to adopt

electoral rolls already

published with reference

to 01-01-2019 as qualifying date and updated upto the

responsibility to do so.

The CS also said that SLP in the apex court with the reason that it was prehealth and well-being of a prayer to provide relief occupied with Covid-19 cal on the department of

cers, departments and district collectors are subordinate to the commission when it comes to pollrelated issues. State Election Commission has the final and decisive say when it comes to holding of elections, he under lined. Earlier, the commission-

er called on Governor iswabhusan Harichandan and apprised the latter about the measures being taken for conduct of gram panchayat polls in the Andhra Pradesh. The Governor, in turn, is learnt to have expressed support in holding the elections. Pointing out that the State Election Commission's decision on polls has been widely welcomed by various principal stakeholders, the eleccommissioner warned that any attempts to physically derail the election process by targeting contestants will be dealt with firmly. He directed the police department to keep a close watch

on potential troublemak-

cal on the department of

panchayat raj for failing to

obtain the electoral rolls

published by the Election

Commission of India on 16-

11-2020 or even the final

rolls published on 15-01-

2021 as it wanted to adopt

the latest final electoral

Chief Secretary in response to SEC's order to

remove nine officers, stat-

ed that the SEC failed to

follow any due procedure

on the issue and added

that the state government

was considering a follow

up action on the arbitrary

action taken by the SEC

He further said that the so-called tainted officers

were actively involved in

the pandemic situation of

engaged in implementa-

tion of vaccination pro-

gramme at present.

Covid-19

On the other hand, the

rolls for the polls.

MEDICAL COLLEGE FEE DC CORRESPONDENT Poll personnel must take vaccine: CS

VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

TWO GOS ON

The AP High Court has struck down the GOs issued during the Telugu Desam government allowing Private Unaided Medical and Dental Colleges to steeply increase annual fees. It said they are against the judgments pronounced by Supreme Court. The Court found fault with the government for fixing fees based on agreements with private medical colleges. The High court struck down two impugned GO Nos 72, and 77 issued by the TD government in 2017. It also Education Regulatory and Management Commission (APHERMC) to fix the fee based on the expenditures incurred by respective colleges. It directed the government to notify the fee fixed by the Commission. The comprising Bench Justices Chagari Praveen Kumar and Rao Raghunandan passed the judgment.

### Hindutva agenda: MLA Vamsi

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

Gannavaram Vallabhaneni Vamsi alleged that Chandrababu Naidu fearing the BJP has adopted Hindu agenda to safeguard Telugu Desam from disappearance. The MLA who was elected on TDP ticket later was distancing from the party and supporting Congress government. He alleged that despite having 40 years of experience, Naidu is engaging in immoral politics in the name of religions and creating divisions in society. He severely alleged that Chandrababu Naidu sus-

"Despite having 40 vears of experience. Naidu is engaging in immoral politics in the name of religions and creating divisions in society": Vamshi

Scared of BJP, Naidu adopted

strengthening of BJP in APz and hijacked Hindutva agenda of the saffron party. He severely alleged that Chandrababu who already an expert in creating differences in the name of castes now started a new conspiracy in the name of Hindutva to create communal disputes among various faiths in the society. He suggested Chandrababu Naidu to work honestly for the

dents in private colleges. Else, the TD would hold a

state-wide agitation. He

said the young generation

was hurt by the "adamant" attitude of the

Jagan government. "They would teach a les-

He also alleged that

there was no safety to women in the CM's own

district. Ruling party leaders were playing "dramas" in the name of

the Disha Act, but not a

single woman victim got

justice since Jagan took charge as Chief Minister

Lokesh also condemned

the knife attack on girl

Lavanya in Kadapa dis-

trict just because she rejected the accused's

The former minister

urged the government to

ensure the best medical

son to the YSRC.

of the State.

advances.

developing of all communities in society and further for keeping communal harmony in the State. MLA Vamsi felt that there is no need of conducting local body elections in a hurried manner and said that there would no loss in conducting local body elections with one or two months delay. He claimed that Chandrababu Naidu fears to the election in Telangana and did not field party candidate in the recent the Dubbaka byelection and further he did not dare to conduct campaign Hyderabad corporation elections in favour of TDP candidates which show his cowardness.

### AP playing with students: Lokesh

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

Telugu Desam national general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh has advised the Jagan Mohan Reddy's government to avoid "playing with the lives and hurting the future of students" by "denying them" the benefits of the fee reimbursement scheme.

Addressing the media here, Lokesh demanded the government immediately cancel GO 77, saying this order would hurt thousands of students doing PG courses in private colleges. The ruling YSRC was depriving the weaker sections and the backward classes of opportunities for higher studies, he alleged.

He demanded that the YSRC government extend fee reimbursement facility to all deserving PG stu-

**HC STRIKES DOWN** 

### care to the seriously-injured girl. CONTEMPT OF COURT **NOTICES SERVED ON**

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

**COURT OFFICIALS** 

In an unprecedented move, AP High Court served notices on its own officers for contempt of court as they failed to act on its directions and posted the next hearing to Feb. 5. Single judge bench headed by justice B. Devanand held hearing on Friday and took up the case on suo moto basis and served notices of contempt of court to (judicial) Alapati Giridhar, another registrar N. Muralidhar Rao, some section officers and their assistants, deputy section officer, examiner and assistants. A contempt of court petition was filed on commissioner of survey, settlements and land records as the official failed to implement the court order to promote an employee as the inspector of survey. The judge issued an order to serve notice to the respondent Siddarth Jain on Nov. 30,

### **LIQUOR POLICY U-TURN SIGN OF GRAFT: ASHOK**

**DC CORRESPONDENT** VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

Telugu Desam MLC, P. Ashok Babu, has accused the YSRC government of making a U-turn on its liquor policy by seeking increased revenue and indulging in massive corruption at multiple levels in the name of running government-owned retail liquor shops. He said the ruling party boasted about spending ₹41,000crore on wel fare programmes alone for the poorer sections but, at the same time, it was not talking about the ₹17,500 revenue it got from liquor sales during 2020-21. He lamented that it

was clear the government was taking back "all their benefits and much more" from the people in the form of increased VAT, excise duty, licence fee etc. Petrol, current, sand, drainage and water charges as also prop-erty tax were already hiked, he noted. The MLC said that out of the ₹17,500 liquor revenue, the people were paying ₹11,000 crore towards VAT and excise duty. The remaining ₹6,500 crore came in from the cost of liquor. Of this, ₹5,000 crore worth of liquor was sold by just three companies These included SPY Distilleries and some other brands, which were given patronage by the government.

were paying nearly ₹350 crore of J-tax to the chief minister every month, he said. Ashok Babu said that in order to cover up this corruption, the Chief Minister was allowing his party leaders to loot nearly ₹500 crore by way of collecting huge rents from the government retail liquor shops. He said the state-wide liquor transportation contract was given to a YSRC leader who gained from this by ₹25 crore."He is collecting ₹30 per carton

for transportation"

All these companies

### TTD CHIEF **DONATES ₹10 L TO RAM MANDIR**

Indu Malhotra.

**DC CORRESPONDENT** TIRUPATI, JAN. 22

man Y. V. Subba Reddy on Friday donated ₹10 lakh towards the construction of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya. The board chief handed over a cheque for the amount to VHP and RSS representatives at his camp office

TTD Trust Board chair-

Tadepalligudem. He said that he will discuss in the upcoming TTD board meeting about providing financial assistance towards the construction of Ram Mandir on behalf of TTD. VHP National President Kshetra Parande, Secretary Kesava Hegde, Vice-President PVS Naidu, RSS representatives were also

**POLITICS I TEMPLES Political interference in temples and their trust boards has been causing disturbances** 

### Sena 'shadows' to keep tab on 12 temples: PK

**DC CORRESPONDENT** TIRUPATI, JAN. 22

Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan said that his party would soon form shadow committees to keep an eye on the functioning of temple committees and boards of 12 major temples in the state, including Tirumala, and also check if there were any violations in the implementation of 'dharmas' in them.

"Despite the spate of attacks on places of worship in the state, the government's indifference in this matter would give impetus to those indulging in such unholy things", Pawan Kalyan felt while addressing the media here on Friday along with the party's political affairs chairman Nadendla Manohar, before winding up his two-day

"Would the YSRC government show the same attitude if the same kind of attacks happened in places of worship of other faiths?", Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan questioned the state government.

tour to Tirupati and Tirumala.

The government has arrested immediately those who posted about temples on social media. But why was it so late in arresting a man who admitted to vandalizing idols in temples? It raises many doubts as to why the government took all those days to arrest the man, he

said. He alleged that political interference in temples and their trust boards has been causing disturbances for the past several years. He said political interferences and appointing politicians as members on temple trust boards, including Tirumala including Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam,

should be stopped. Pawan Kalyan slammed the decision of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam trust board to keep open the 'Vaikunta Dwaram' at the sacred abode of Lord Venkateswara in Tirumala for 10 days from

Vaikunta Ekadasi. It was not fair to break centuriesold practices, he said, while recalling that the holy passage used to be kept open for devotees only on Vaikunta Ekadasi and Dwadasi days for several centuries.

Condemning the series

of incidents of vandalism at temples in the state, he accused the state government of inaction in identifying and nabbing the perpetrators.
"Would the YSRC gov-

ernment show the same attitude if the same kind of attacks happened in places of worship of other faiths?" he questioned.

He also alleged that the law and order situation in the state has been deteriorating with the ruling targeting and harassing common people and opposition parties when they post their views on various issues on social media platforms.

Replying to a question the Jana Sena chief said that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak (RSS) was a responsible and committed organisa-

### JANA SENA CHIEF DONATES ₹30 L TO AYODHYA'S RAM MANDIR TRUST

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, JAN. 22

Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan donated ₹30 lakh for the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. The Jana Sena Chief handed over the cheque to the RSS state chief Bharatiji. He also gave a cheque for ₹11,000 arranged by his personal staff.

He said "Lord Sri Ramachandra embodies dharma and tolerance,

sacrifice and bravery. They are an inspiration to all. It is everyone's responsibility to support construction of the temple in Ayodhya".

'Áfter knowing that I am donating, my personal staff members, including Muslims and Christians, have also raised ₹11,000 for the purpose," he added. Former minister and BJP leader Dr Kamineni Srinivas and RSS representatives participated in the programme.

"Is there still an organization anywhere in the world that is so committed to leave everything for the country even after all

these decades?, Pawan Kalyan asked, while saying that he had never seen in the world.























### SHORT TAKES **Special train to** Rayagada

Visakhapatnam: Railways has decided to run daily special express trains between Guntur-Ravagada from January 27. The train will leave Guntur daily at 11.20 pm, reach Visakhapatnam on the next day at 8.45 am and depart at 9.05 am.



#### NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER (through https://ireps.gov.in)

CORRIGENDUM CAO (Construction), S.C.Railway, Secunderabad issues Corrigendum to

S.No: 1 NIT No: 03-CAO-C-SC-2021

Dated 12/01/2021 Date of Opening: Intended bidders may please note the Corrigendum issued for addition of **06 (Six)** New Items under technical Compliance.

All other terms and conditions of the above tender notice remain unchanged and unaltered.

For bid document and other details, please login to website <a href="https://ireps.gov.in">https://ireps.gov.in</a>.

Chief Administrative Officer/ Const./Secunderabad

#### DRM/Works/BZA/02/2021 dt. 22.01.2021

For and on behalf of the President of India, the undersigned invites E-Tenders for the following works up to 15-00 hours and the date mentioned

SI. No: 1 Tender No: E-01-TM-BZA-2021 Details of Work: Name of work: Conversion of 40 Numbers ARTA General/Sleeper or any other type coaches in to Camping coaches for Track machine staff of South Central Railway. Period of completion: 24 (Twenty four) months Tender value: Rs. 10,38,02,035/- E.M.D.: Rs. Nil Date of closing: 19-02-2021

1) The prospective tenderers are advised to visit website "www.ireps.gov.in". before the date of tender closing to note any changes/corrigenda for any tender.

> Deputy Chief Engineer/TM/Lines, Vijayawada

#### Open e-Tender Notice No. DRM/Works/BZA/03/2021 dt. 22-01-2021

For and on behalf of the President of India, the undersigned invites E-Tenders for the following works up to 15-00 hours and the date mentioned against each

SI. No: 1 Tender No: E-02-South-2021 Details of Work: Name of work: Gudur-Vijayawada Section: Replacement of Bridge Nos.288,368,375,430 & 439 Dn line stone top culverts with R.C.C boxes in ADEN/Nellore Sub-Division, Period of completion: 6 (Six) months Tender value: Rs. 2,75,85,898/- E.M.D.: Rs. 2,87,900/- Date of closing:

SI. No: 2 Tender No: E-03-South-2021 Details of Work: Name of work: SW-I: Gudur - Vijayawada Section Replacement of Bridge Nos 550 DN 551 DN & 552 DN with R.C.C Boxes pen cut method to augmentation flow of water in SSE/W/Ongole section under ADEN/OGL Sub-Division. SW-II: Gudur - Vijavawada Section Replacement of Bridge Nos.553 DN. 554 DN & 555 DN with R.C.C Boxes by open cut method to augmentation flow of water in SSE/W/Ongole section under ADEN/OGL Sub-Division Period of completion: 6 (Six) months Tender value: Rs. 6,18,61,365/-E.M.D.: Rs. 4,59,300/- Date of closing: 05-02-2021

SI. No: 3 Tender No: E-03-East-2021 Details of Work: Name of work: SW-I: Through rail renewal (P) on up line for a length of 1.12km in GDB-BZA section. SW-II: Through Turnout rail renewal with new 60kg thick web switches/curved switches, lead rails and weldable /CMS crossings in ADEN/Lines/BZA sub-division, SW-III: Through renewal of Glued Joints for 143 sets in ADENs/Lines/ Vijayawada and Bhimavaram Subdivisions at various locations. SW-IV-Through renewal of SEJ for total 62 sets in ADENs/Lines/ Vijayawada and Bhimavaram Sub-divisions at various locations. SW-V: Vijavawada-Gudivada-Bhimavaram-Nidadavole section- Fixing of Joggled Fish plates at AT/SKV Welds in ADEN, Bhimavaram Sub-division. Period of completion: 12 (Twelve) months Tender value: Rs. 95.69.043/-E.M.D.: Rs. Nil Date of closing: 16-02-2021

1) The prospective tenderers are advised to visit website "www.ireps.gov.in". before the date of tender closing to note any

Viiavawada

1. NIT HEADER:

SI. No: 1 Existing: Validity of Offer (Days): 45 To be read as: Validity of

SI. No: 2 Existing: Are Joint Venture

Dy. Chief Signal & Telecommunication

A0065 Engineer, (Const.-I), Secunderabad For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents. Please visit website at https://www.ireps.gov.in or

### **AP RECORDS 137 COVID CASES**

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

Andhra Pradesh registered 137 fresh cases of Covid-19 and four deaths in the last 24 hours.

state authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin on Friday reporting that out of 48,313 samples tested for Covid-19, 137 persons were found infected with the virus. Out of a total number of 1,27,87,961 samples tested, 8,86,694 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 8,78,060 were recovered while 1,488 are still active with the virus.

Among the daily cases of confirmed Covid-19, East Godavari, Krishna and Visakhapatnam registered 17 each followed by 16 in Guntur, 15 in Anantapur, 12 in Chittoor, each each in Kurnool and West Godavari, seven Prakasam, six Nellore.



### DRM/W/GNT of 20.01.2021

The undersigned invites e-tenders for the works mentioned below upto 15:30

hrs of 15.02.2021.

S. No: 1 Tender Id: 2365 SrDEN/DEN Co **Description of work:** GNT Division: GNT-NDKD-MCLA section: Proposed replacement of steel girders with PSC slabs for 15 bridges. Br No. 40A (2x8.79m), Br No.26 (5x7.01), Br No.48 (6x7.1m), Br No.68 (3x7.01m), Br No.70 (3x7.01m), Br No.1.8 (7x7.Olm) in Guntur-Nadikudi section, Br No.97 (7x7.01m), Br No.117 (3x7.01m) and Br No.126 (3x7.01m) ir NDKD-MCLA section, Br No.28 (4x9.15m) in GNT-TEL section. Br No.54 (2x9.15m + 2x6.1m), Br No.47 (7x9.15m), Br No.84 (5x9.15m +1x6.1m) in TEL-RAL section, Br No.387 (1x8.2m), Br No.438a 1x9.14m) in Nallapadu-Nandval section. **Approx value**: Rs. 14,42,36,673/-

S. No: 2 Tender Id: 2366 SrDEN/DEN: Co Description of work: Reddipalem Improvements to Goods shed by provision of approach road from LC No.3 (Outer ring road) to Reddipalem Goods shed. Approx value:

S. No: 3 Tender Id: 2367 SrDEN/DEN: Co Description of work: Provision of Video Surveillance System (VSS) at stations (10 locations) in Guntur division. **Approx value:** Rs. 18,09,116/-

S. No: 4 Tender Id: 2368 SrDEN/DEN: Co Description of work: Raising of existing plate girder of Bridge No.126 (3x7.01 riveted) @ 123/5-6 between Rentachintala Macherla section. Approx value

S. No: 5 Tender Id: 2369 SrDEN/DEN: section: Supply of drinking water to station and staff quarters for a period of 12 months at Giddaluru, Cumbum arlupadu, Markapur Hoad, Chela Somidevipalli, Jaggambhotla Krishnapuram and Gajjelakonda stations Approx value: Rs. 49.21,300/-

S. No: 6 Tender Id: 2370 SrDEN/DEN: W Description of work: GNT-NDL section: Repairs to bridges in SSE/P,Way/DKD section under ADEN/West/GNT's jurisdiction Approx value: Rs. 2,01,25,996/-

S.No: 7 Tender Id: 2371 SrDEN/DEN Co Description of work: Painting of Girder bridges, FOBs and other Stee structures due for the year 2020-21 in Guntur division. Approx value Rs. 48,84,709/-

. Last date for online submission of E-bids is upto 15.30 hrs of 15.02.2021 or detailed information logon, to website www.ireps.gov.in

2. Any further Communication/ Corridendum shall be intimated through E-portal <u>www.ireps.gov.in</u> Divisional Railway Manager (Works)

### CRS/E.24/2020-21

DEE/CRS/TPTY acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Tender No mentioned hereunder closing date as mentioned below up to 15:00Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

SI. No: 1 Description of work: Tender No: CRS-E-24-2020-21 CRS/TPTY Comprehensive Maintenance Contract of RMPU's fitted in AC coaches Including POH activity at TPTY Shops for a period of 3 years. Approx. Cost: Rs. 3,02,52,090 EMD: Rs. NIL Period of completion: 36 Months Date of Closing: 19.02.2021 @ 15.00 Hrs

Website particulars www.ireps.gov.in Notice Board Location where complete details of tender can be seen: Office of the Asst. Divi. Elec.Engineer, Carriage

Repair Shop, Tirupati For further Tender Conditons/details and for downloading of Tender Documents, Corrigendum, please visit

our website https://www.ireps.gov.in Assistant Divisional Electrical Engineer

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, https://www.ireps.gov.in or

### Fire mishap



of them is critical. Fire broke out due to leakage of oil at Kakinada.

### RS smuggling rampant in AP

### Smugglers open new routes into Seshachalam

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, JAN. 22

Pradesh Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF) tightened the vigil and claimed to have curbed the smuggling of red sanders to some extent, smuggling activities had once again become rampant with smugglers having opened new routes to venture into the Seshachalam forests, this time through areas under Yerpedu in Chittoor district. In Chittoor (west) and

some parts in Anantapur divisions, more than 165 entry/exit points and over 198 loading points were identified by the RSASTF in the past. These points are being monitored on a daily basis by the forest staffers and the taskforce personnel, who also take up combing operations inside the forest almost

every day. With forces blocking almost all the entry/exit and loading points along western side (Tirupati-Piler areas), the smugglers have changed their entry/exit points and passage of smuggled material through areas minimum crowd, making under Yerpedu mandal. They are reportedly getting away from the hawkish eye of the forces for some time now.

It is learnt that the smugglers and woodcut-

In Chittoor (west) and some parts in Anantapur divisions, more than 165 entry/exit points and over 198 loading points were identified by the RSASTF in the past. These points are being monitored on a daily basis by the forest staffers and the taskforce personnel, who also take up combing operations inside the forest almost every day.

The smugglers have changed their entry/exit points and passage of smuggled material through areas under Yerpedu mandal. They are reportedly getting away from the hawkish eye of the forces

smugglers until now are effectively assembling in abandoned places close to the forest areas under Yerpedu, where they set themselves up before entering the forests. The risk is minimal at these territories as they are closer to the forest area and stay away even with it simple for the red new sanders smugglers to trick the task force teams. However, it has now become difficult for the

ters to use these routes under the Yerpedu mandal because the forces have blocked the porous passages now. During a combing operation, kick-started on Thursday, the taskforce team have traced out the routes and sent out a strong message to the smugglers that the forces can find them the minute they achieve the forest periphery.

According to RSASTF
DSP Venkataiah, acting

on a specific information that smugglers are now using routes under the Yerpedu corridor more freely than before, the taskforce has put focus on these porous routes. On Friday early morning, a team sent out on a combing operation under the leadership of RSI Lingadhar have found the new passages in Yerpedu area and thwarted six smugglers attempting to venture into the woods.

A senior officer said that taskforce advanced its surveillance system and also improved the informer network at the roots of villages in Tamil Nadu, from where the smugglers and woodare coming. cutters Though smugglers found strategies applied tactics to smuggle red sanders logs, the taskforce is confident that their plans will be foiled,

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9182769358. (S/2021/C01976)

CHANGE OF NAME

I, VIDYA WATHI (Name as per DSC Records) spouse of Ex No. 1161054 Sep

(Late) Pinni Narasimha Rao resident at

D No. 8-106, Srinivasa Nagar, Tadigadapa P.O), Penamaluru Mandal, Krishna Dist,

A.P. - 521134 have changed my name from

VIDYA WATHI to VIJYATHY and date of

PASSPORT MISSING

21 JAN 2021 before Vijayawada court.

om (HYMM/2021/C05978)

Graduation

47-years

Experience.

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### **30 PER CENT FEE SOP SOUGHT IN PVT COLLEGES**

AP Parents Association cational institutions. The association mem

bers, on Friday, handed over a representation to the RIO, Nellore. President of the association, S. Narahari said that the APHERMC and the Board of

the Covid-19 pandemic.

"As per the directions of the Secretary of the BIE, colleges must display the details of students, groups and the fee they are collecting from the parents on the notice boards. But they are not implementing the rule,'

He also demanded the RIO to convene a meeting with all colleges and explain to them about the GO. No. 57 and make sure that they imple-

### MAN ATTACKS **MINOR GIRL** WITH KNIFE

KADAPA, JAN. 22

A man attacked a minor girl with a knife in

mation Nagaraju, the Inspector of Police, Proddutur One Town, Sunil the accused has been following the victim, 17-yearold, for the past one and half years.

Finally, she rejected his love proposal, he was completely disappointed and committed this crime. The young man, who was waiting for the time, was found the girld alone in her house on Friday. He stabbed her indiscriminately refusing his love. The accused fled after attacking the girl.

Kadapa additional SP

and churches on Friday at Kasetti Narasayya function hall.

They have warned that anyone who spreads false information about religious places of worship on social media will be

### **APPOINTED**

Janardhana, professor and APPSC member has been appointed as vice chancellor Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Anantapur (JNTUA). Mr Ranga Janardhana will assume charge

### VMC to evaluate designs for S4P

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN, 22

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation looking forward for implementable solutions in Streets For People (S4P) design evaluation. VMC commissioner V. Prasanna Venkatesh said that Vijayawada is moving ahead with "Streets for People" challenge design submission evaluation.

Addressing the joint meeting with the evaluation committee members, Commi-ssioner emphasised that the main objective from streets for people design submission evaluations is to focus on uniqueness, local context, practicality in implementation, inclusive to all users and include aspirations of the community.
Mr Venkatesh said that

city-specific jury that includes city officials,

urban planning and design experts, academi-cians and local representatives have been formulated and the evaluation of submitted design proposals will be initiated

Mr Imran Basha, Urban Planner from UN-Habitat and U. Sarada Devi, additional commissioner (Projects) through a PowerPoint presentation explained the progress of programme in Vijayawada, an overview of the S4P targets, design principles, evaluation criteria, and scoring templates.

They said that as per the programme mandate, the weightage for evaluation of design proposal sub-mission would be considered as 10 per cent, originality of idea, 20 per cent inclusivity of all users, 30 per cent ease of implementation and 40 per cent design technicalities.

### Health secy for testing water

FROM PAGE 1

He said that as the samples were sent for analysis, they would come to know about the reason for the illness once the reports were out and promised to take all necessary steps to avoid recurrence of such a health issue in future.

Health principal secretary Anil Kumar Singhal said that the cases related to mystery illness were reported from Pulla and Kumarapalli villages and added that they were making efforts to find out

the reason. He underlined the need to test water samples in and around the affected villages and assured to take the help of Central agencies if needed to find out the cause for such an illness. On Thursday, a farmer

identified as B. Bullabbai, 40, died while working in the field when he accidentally slipped into an irricanal Kummarikunta village in West Godavari. It caused tension among the villagers as they feared that he died due to the mys-

### Docs give new lease of life to patient

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 22

The doctors gave a new lease of life to a critically near-fatal woman through cystoscopy and DJ stent placement at Vijayawada.

28-year-old female, Divya (name changed) came to Manipal hospitals complaints of fever with chills, backache, nausea and vomiting for 3 days. Additionally, she was

experiencing decreased urine output, worsening breathlessness since the first day. She visited the hospital at the midnight with the above-mentioned complaints.

Speaking about the sur-gery Dr Sridhar A.V.S.S.N, consultant nephrology and kidney transplant physician said, "On arrival, she was in a state of shock. She was experiencing difficulty in breathing and anuric. On evaluation, we realised she had severe renal failure, acute respiratory distress syndrome (Ards), leucocytosis, right acute pyelonephritis with pelvic ureteric junction calculus, and negative RT renal calculus.

PCR for SARS COV-2. All these above complica-tions made this case very serious as the patient was in a very fatal situation. She was intubated and put on mechanical ventilation with vasopressors and SLED-F (sustained low-efficiency hemodiafiltration), for eight hours. After that, she underwent Viiavawada with a cystoscopy and DJ stent placement in the right ureter.'

Speaking about the sur-Kantipudi. Hospital Director said that when the patient visited us, she was on the verge of a lifeand-death situation. It was very vital for us to stabilize the situation before taking any further steps. The overall condition of the patient has been improved with her blood pressure coming back to normal, improvement in her urinary output (UOP) and subsequently taken out from ventilation support.

She recovered completely from her renal failure and after one month she successfully underwent percutaneous nephrolithotomy (PCNL) for right

### **MEETING HELD ON TEMPLE SECURITY**

DC CORRESPONDENT KADAPA, JAN. 22

Qasim Saheb and Mydukuru DSP Bangi Vijay Kumar held a meeting with committee members of temples, mosques,

prosecuted.

DR.N.T.R UHS

#### **Post Doctoral Fellowship Courses** ANDHRA HOSPITALS, VIJAYAWADA.

Academic Year : 2020 - 2021 Duration of the Course : 1 Year CRITICAL CARE - 2 Seats

(Medicine, Pulmonology, Anaesthesia) **NEONATOLOGY** - 2 Seats

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Qualification Required : MS / DNB (OBG)

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HYDERABAD @KOMPALLY/ Medchal Town Near KLR Ventures 18,000/- Per Sqyd, HMDA Plots Fully Developed, Gated Community Bank Loan available Contact: 8886785050 (HYMM/2021/C05719)

WARANGAL HIGHWAY facing near vangapally village DTCF approved venture in open plots avaliable& spot booking in special discounts, bank loan also availble. 4km from yadhagitutta temple, contact (HYMM/2021/C05980)

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www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

Divisional Railway Manager (Works)/

Dated: 22nd January, 2021 Corrigendum to e-TENDER NOTICE No. 05/Dy.CSTE/C/SC/2020-21, Dated 15.01.2021

Offer (Days): 60 be read as: Are Joint Venture (JV)

www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

# A fishing boat caught fire at the Fishing Harbour in Kakinada on Friday. Four fishermen suffered burn injuries, one

### **DC CORRESPONDENT** TIRUPATI, JAN. 22

members appealed to the Regional Inspection Officer (RIO) for Intermediate Education to implement the 30 per cent fee concession policy for the academic year 2020-21 in the private aided and unaided edu-

Intermediate Education (BIE) has directed the private, aided and unaided institutions in the state to follow the GO. No. 57, providing 30 per cent concession to the students this year due to

He demanded the state government initiate a stern action against those colleges collecting fees by violating the GO and the directions of the

DC CORRESPONDENT

Proddatur.

According to the infor-

### JNTUA V-C

CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, JAN. 22 Prof. Ginka Ranga

as vice-chancellor at his office on Saturday.

### **Chronicle**

23 JANUARY 2021

### Put politics, profit aside; level with all on vaccine

India is at present in the midst of one of the largest public health campaigns the world has ever seen: Vaccination against Covid-19 pandemic. Its first phase, which started on January 16, seeks to inoculate three crore Covid warriors including medical professionals and frontline workers. Initial reports suggest that the response to the programme has not been all that encouraging and there exists some reluctance, if not resistance, in taking the jab.

Addressing a public health issue is as much the job of the public as that of the government, and the programme should have received a wholehearted welcome since the target group is very much part of the system that fights the pandemic. That has not happened, and the government needs to assess its reasons. While doing so, it must bear in mind two things: one; lack of transparency in the whole exercise, and two, technical glitches in the CoWIN app that monitors it.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi misses no opportunity to stress that the two vaccines that are being used for the programme are made in India. However, there have been doubts even among health professionals about the suitability of intro-

The government must win people's confidence by placing all the facts before them, to start with; piecemeal and ad hoc release of critical information is not the right way to do it

ducing Covaxin, the indigenously developed and manufactured vaccine, in the programme since it has been cleared only for phase III of the clinical trial. Now, days after the programme has started, and after lakhs of people have taken their vaccines, the two companies that manufacture the vaccines have come out with advisories to the people. They contain certain precautions those who go for them must take, including an advice that people with certain medical conditions should avoid taking them.

This late realisation, if one may call it so, is grossly unacceptable. The government and the companies should have been upfront about the products from the beginning, instead of resorting to chest-thumping about their being made-in-India. Nobody has a

doubt about the capabilities of Indian scientists or Indian manufacturers: the latest *Lancet* reports underscores the efficacy of the vaccine, and says all adverse events were mild and moderate and were more frequent after the first dose. But the fact remains that the scientific process should be allowed to be completed in its entirety; political and commercial considerations should wait for their turn. The government must at least now do a rethink on the campaign and be true and honest with the people on its components. It must win people's confidence by placing all the facts before them, to start with; piecemeal and ad hoc release of critical information is not the right way to do it.

Technical glitches hampering the vaccination programme equally defy logic. The government had ample time to develop a proper, fool-proof mechanism for it but its performance on this front has been dismal. Similar was the case with Aarogya Setu, the app that helps people follow Covid-appropriate protocol. The government must ensure that such mass programmes are designed with little technical interface, realising the fact that a great share of the Indian population has little access to technology products. And when used, they should come without glitches and in an easy-to-use form. The government must realise that this is a fight India can ill-afford to lose.

### Don't censor OTT content

n assault on creativity in cinema is being carried out by the political class. The grounds that the stereotypical Indian neta is being lampooned or projected in negative shades are not sufficient to allow censorship to stifle the medium of free cinema. Indian content on OTT platforms has also been seen to flourish during the pandemic when people have been forced to mostly stay indoors and their wide search for sources of entertainment has

seen them embrace Internet-based media.

The serial *Tandav*, of a distinctly political thriller genre with startling resemblance to recent events in the country, has been under attack from many States and its makers have been forced to issue apologies and pull scenes just to please those who have been beating the drum of protest on their taking offence at content. The denigration of gods is a smoke screen under which many of these objectors operate. This is deeply disappointing because India is not a

country that prosecutes people under blasphemy laws.

Censorship of OTT content is a grave offence against cinematic art.

International platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hotstar have explored uncharted territory in front of Indian audiences too because they are free of governmental controls like rigid censorship of content as in films for theatrical release. They serve a very mature audience who have been able to absorb art without boundaries from international sources. Playing spoilsport are the usual suspects from the illiberal spectrum of politics, spurred on by political leaders who think nothing of Orwellian state controls of thought processes and

It is risible that the objection to the serial *Mirzapur* comes on the ground that it besmirches the image of UP in projecting it as a lawless state ruled by mafias. The top court had only recently emphasised that viewers had a choice and they could switch off channels if they felt offended by particular content. The less official India intercedes in all this the better because State control of lives in India has proved inhibiting enough in various facets of life, including art.

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KAUSHIK MITTER

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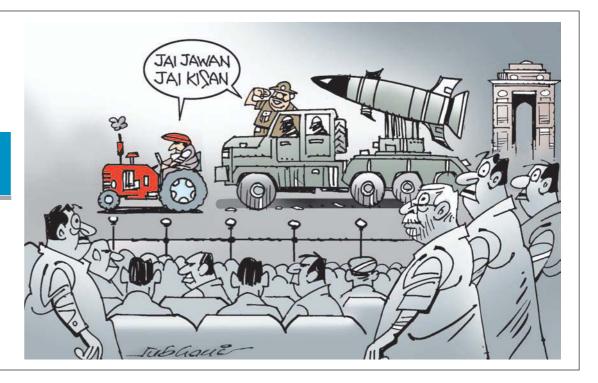
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Subhani



### Vaccine hai to hum hai: Get ready for the vaxxie!



**Shobhaa's Take** 

am all set for "the jab". Hoping I will Admission: I am severely needle phobic, to the extent that cannot watch someone else getting a prick even if it is on the screen Despite that and several other reservations, I am consoling myself on many levels. I am all set many levels. I am all set to shoot my "vaxxie"—for those asking, "wat dat"?—a "vaxxie" is a selfie shot with the arm that is not going under the vaccinator's needle. Right now, despite a slight tremor in my voice as I write these words, I am thanking my stars that I am not Norwegian. And that I am not yet 80. Chances are pretty high that I'll survive the jab and live to tell the tale.

Besides... and here's my biggest trump card — I am 100 per cent Indian! Fully-fully desi, inside out! This is my biggest shield. Not being a scientist, my wonky reasoning does not have to make sense to anybody but myself, and a few crazies like me. Never before has being born an Indian and having lived my entire life in India been such a

Poochho kyon? Go on, ask, na? Look at our comparitively low numbers with Covid-19 deaths (approximately 165K). There has to be some explanation for this phenomenon. I seriously believe it is India's dirt. I grew up in Mumbai, surrounded by germs and bacteria of every known description. I have happily eaten street food since my childhood. I played in and with mud, consuming some of it too. I did not wash my hands twenty times a day. But I bathe regularly, okay? My home was scrupulously clean (my

mother ensured that), but even she could not stop me from devouring roadside bhelpuri, paani puri, college canteen cutlets and greasy snacks peddled by favourite vendors outside local train sta-tions. This was true about all my friends back then — we ate the most unhygienic food ever, and none of us fell seriously sick. Our stomachs, we joked, were "zinc lined" and stomachs,

our systems bug-proof. Let's loosely call this a vital "immunity buildexercise, for want of a better medical term. We ate and drank rubbish 00 who knows? These bad habits may have spared us from picking up the deadly coronavirus today Nothing unique about our youthful experi-ences — most of India conforms to this pattern. We are called filthy by the Western world. Our "unsanitary" existence is widely mocked — but hey — please explain how come we have not dropped like flies, like people in other, more "developed" countries? Is it our unique DNA structure that's helping Indians combat the global scourge better than most nations still reeling under fresh cases and strange variants of

January 16, 2021 will

India is well and truly on its way to recovery from the deadly Covid-19 virus. As for me, I will time my blowdry with the jab. I can't afford to ruin my historic 'vaxxie'! Come on Bollywood... pull out a few cool 'vaxxie' looks.

January 16, 2021 will always remain a red letter in India's calendar. It was the one Saturday citizens had been impatiently waiting for ever since the world went into lockdown mode and life came to a standstill.

always remain a red letter in India's calendar. It was the one Saturday citizens had been impatiently waiting for ever since the world went into lockdown mode and everyday life came to a standstill. It's the day we kicked off the most challenging immunisation exercise in the history of the world. According to available data, over two lakh citizens were vaccinated on Day 1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was justifiably proud when he addressed the nation at 10.30 am and said: "We are launching the world's biggest vaccination drive and it shows the world our capability." All our chests suddenly grew to 56 inches! It is an ambitious plan, involving thousands, as 300 million people hope to receive their jab in this phase, by the end of summer. These include 30 million doctors, nurses, police personnel and firefighters. The next lot, of 270 million, will reach all those over the age of 50 (me!), and those with other vulnerabili-This impressive rollout is nothing short of a feat — and must be acknowledged as such.

For now, I am studiously ignoring the cynics and doomsday prophets who are pointing out all kinds of loopholes and deficiencies Sanjiv Agarwal of Good Governance India Foundation is asking tough questions like: "Does all of India need a vaccine?" He believes that India has already achieved a high level of immunity and perhaps only the truly vulnerable need the jab. We are

Narendra Modi pushing up his kurta sleeve and baring his upper arm for the shot. Yes, there are going to be hiccups and setbacks. Yes, we need more data, more time... but can we afford to wait? In Mumbai, the drive was suspended for two days. Frankly, I'm fine with the chief minister's decision to do so. There was talk of a server being down, and messages not going out on time. Apparently, the turnout was lower than expected, with genuine concerns about the vaccine getting "wasted". But given the rumour factories at work, this is hardly surprising. Each vial can vaccinate 10 people. Once a vial is opened, it cannot be preserved for more than eight hours. Despite these early roadblocks, citizens are filled with

waiting for the ultimate photo-op that shows Prime Minister

any mutant/variant as well. avirus — and hopefully, sentimental, Being superstitious and God-fearing, I loved the *aar*tis, pujas and pravers that were conducted when the vaccines left the Serum Institute of India in Pune. Or later, when hospital employees greeted the health workers carrying the precious boxes to the designated venues with mithai and flowers. This is so endearing and such an Indian thing to do Why not? I am prepared to pray to an icebox filled with life-saving vaccine vials without any self-consciousness! Vaccine hai, to hum hai! India is well and truly on its way to recovery from the deadly Covid-19 virus As for me, I will time my blowdry with the jab. can't afford to ruin my historic "vaxxie"! Come on Bollywood... pull out a few cool "vaxxie" looks. Airport looks are so 2020!

confidence and hope

that the timely delivery

of the shots is definitely

going to halt the coron-

Readers can send feedback to www.shobhaade.

#### **LOCAL POLLS**

The SEC of AP had the local polls postponed midway in March 2020 when Covid was not severe. At that time the SEC

opposed the election even though the State wanted to go ahead. And now under very serious pandemic, it is not an issue for the SEC. It is unfortunate that a single judge of AP HC found reason to postpone local polls but a two judge bench of the same HC allowed the local polls to be held. Hats off to our judiciary

> Govardhana Myneedu Vijayawada

#### **VACCINE FEARS**

Transparency and communication are vital and crucial when crores of people are to be inoculated (Transparency needed to remove all vaccine fears, DC, Jan. 22). The author is unequivocal and unreserved in his analysis about the vaccine fears. Further, the fear of being treated like guinea pigs is perhaps making people shy away from the vaccine.

Dr C. Ghanshyam

#### **FARM LAWS**

Now that the farmers have rejected the Centre's proposal to suspend Farm Laws for 1.5 years, the only recourse left is to make the implementation optional for States as agriculture is after all a state subject. The Catch-22 situation can only be solved by satisfying both the factions of farmers. Unless of course the PM, as is his wont, comes out with some sort of out of the box solution.

K. Nehru Patnaik Visakhapatnam

### YEARS AGO IN hronicle

### Cong-R to contest 32 Lok Sabha seats

HYDERABAD, JANUARY. 22 The Ruling Congress had set up its candidates in 32 constituencies out of 41 to contest the midterm elections for Lok Sabha scheduled to be held in the first week of March.

Making the announcement the Chief Minister, Mr. K. Brahmananda Reddi told newsmen that the party would support Independents in Hyderabad, Secunderabad Visakhapatnam constituencies.

#### Farrukh Dhondy **Cabbages** & Kings



Hoax on TV anchor is a wake-up call on fake offers

'If any young person with attitude Refuses to express their gratitude For the love they are shown Just leave them alone With no single degree of latitude"

> From Ghazals of Gulligoochi by Bachchoo

riends from India informed me that the talented and A-list presenter of the nation's most honest TV channel NDTV, Ms Nidhi Razdan, was approached through email to take up a post as a

visiting professor of journalism at Harvard University.

Ms Razdan, who in all fairness deserves invitations from universities with greater reputations and more rigorous standards than Harvard (Cambridge UK, for instance, comes to mind) fell for the hoax. Perhaps she, in an act of altruism, wanted to do some charitable service to herds of benight-

ed American students. She may have thought, in accepting the offer of a professorship, that she could bring the great Indian standards of fearlessness before government, religious authority or bigotry followed by Indian newspapers, TV, radio and even film and web series, to the Americans who have fallen for Donald Trump's tweets and the fake news of his media sycophants over these last few years.

Having made her plans to depart for New England, Ms Razdan, as a good journalist would, checked on the authenticity of the invitation and found that there was no such invitation and the correspondence she had got on the Internet was some purposeless, elaborate joke. The humour escapes me, though!

What it does confirm, gentle reader, is that the greatest instrument of public discourse, of the dissemination of information, of the connectivity of the human race, can be as malevolent as it is benevolent. Not only has it put tremendous power (we are not talking about wealth) in the hands of those who control these devices of the ether, it has also facilitated evil.

Twitter, Facebook, Amazon and the rest decided last week, after Donald Trump's urging his supporters through these platforms to overturn American democracy, to ban his "free speech". A decent gesture, but one that came years after they allowed any and all manner of hate speech, terrorist and even openly fascist propaganda to go uncensored on their platforms. Crooks and perverts seemed welcome.

Because, gentle reader, Ms Razdan is not the only one to have fallen for fake offers which arrive through the Internet. Must I now admit that I have been, on several occasions contacted through email to inform me that I am the lucky winner of millions of pounds on the Nigerian Lottery?

It seemed the first time like very welcome news. I wonder how many others in our world, this vale of tears, didn't stop to consider that they couldn't have won the Nigerian Lottery as they hadn't bought a ticket to enter it. Of course, the emails persuaded me that a fan and admirer, who insisted on remaining anonymous, had bought a hundred tickets in my name and one of them had proved the lucky one. All the paymaster of the lottery now wanted was my bank details, passwords, etc, and the money would be deposited, making me an instant millionaire, in the following twenty-four

How could I resist? I sent my details post haste to the designated email address, expecting a phone call any minute from my bank's branch asking me to attend and shift my millions into safer and more profitable investments.

And then, two hours later, when the banks opened, a call did come. The lady banker at the other end asked me to identify myself. Yes, the necessary checks and usual questions - my birth date, the name of my first dog, my best friend's favourite food, the bra size of my first girlfriend — I rattled all the details off. Then came the news. The lady banker at the other end said that since my account had been overdrawn for three months by several hundred pounds, they were

suspending all activity on it. I was of course aware that my account was in the red, but surely all that would change when my lottery win came in. Holding the phone some distance from my mouth, I let out a contemptuous laugh, saying words to the effect of "you just wait, young lady, your branch is going to be flooded with a bigger deposit than what elephants leave in the jungle". She politely asked what I meant. I told her about

my triumph at the Nigerian Lottery. There was a long pause and she said I was the hundredth customer to fall for what was a confidence trick and if I had had any money in my account it would have disappeared.

Disappointed and downcast, I buttoned the call off.

Hanh, merey yaaron, I knew that the Internet and the social media are the vehicles of fraud as never before. In imitation of a famous Indian scam, some crooks have taken to sending posts to the unwary to say that they are guilty of tax fraud and they ought to deposit X amount immediately or be arrested that very day. Those with a guilty conscience will be inclined to

Myself? Having been made a fool of once, I've resolved to train myself to be a cyber detective with the help of distant cousin, Hutoxic Feromonereplacementwalla (abbreviated mostly to Effpeewalla), the first Parsi woman to be appointed to the post of detective sergeant at the Bottomlea police station. Okay, not quite Kamala Harris, but still

### **BIHAR TO KEEP WATCH ON SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS**

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, JAN. 22

The Bihar government has decided to keep a close watch on social media and penalise all those who post offensive and derogatory comments against ministers, MLAs, MPs and officials.

The state's Economic Offences Unit (EOU), which is also responsible for cybercrime, has informed all state departments government about the decision and asked them to report any individuals or organisations who have been making such posts on social media.

"It has come to light that some individuals and organisations have been making derogatory and offensive posts on social media against the government, ministers, MLAs, MPs and officials. This is against the law and comes under cybercrime laws," inspector general of police, EOU, Nayyar Husnain Khan, wrote in a letter to principal secretaries and secretaries of state government departments.

'You are requested to report to the Economic Offences Unit regarding any such post so that matter is investigated and action could be taken against such individuals and organizations," Mr. Khan added in

The development has triggered sharp reactions from Opposition parties in Bihar. On Friday, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav criticised the move and asked the state government to arrest him under the same order.

"It seems that the chief minister has started following Hitler. Protesters cannot protest in Bihar. People will land up in jail for writing against the government. The common man cannot meet Opposition leaders. We know Mr Nitish Kumar that you are tired but at least have some shame," Mr Yadav tweeted.

### Third rebel TMC minister resigns; party expels MLA for backing him

He has become third TMC heavyweight minister in a row to leave Mamata' cabinet

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JAN, 22

before Prime day Minister Narendra Modi's brief Kolkata visit, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee received vet another blow as one more rebel Trinamul Congress minister Rajib Banerjee quit her government, fuelling speculations of his defection to the BJP.

Within hours of Rajib Banerjee's move, the TMC expelled his loyalist and the daughter of former ICC chief Jagmohan Dal-miya Baishali Dalmiya from the party, accusing her of "anti-party activities" after she supported him and slammed the leadership. Incidentally Rajib Ban-erjee and Dalmiya are MLAs from Howrah disBanerjee is a two-time legislator from Domjur with a clean image. He has heavyweight minister in a row to leave Mamata Banerjee's cabinet in less than two months after he visited the Trinamul Congress supremo's residence in Kalighat and Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar at Raj

Bhavan respectively on Friday and submitted his resignation letter which stated "I regret to inform you that I hereby tender my resignation from my Office as Cabinet Minister being in charge of Forest Department on today, ie. On 22nd of January, 2021. It has been a great honour and privilege to serve the people of West Bengal. I heartily convey my gratitude for getting this oppor-



TMC MLA Rajib Banerjee talks to the media outside Raj Bhawan in Kolkata on Friday.

Rajib Banerjee has nei-ther quit as an MLA nor deserted his party however. After meeting the Governor, he said in tears, "I never imagined I have to take such a tough decision. If I have hurt anyone. I apologise with folded hands. Please do not

misunderstand me. I was hurt within and staying like that for a long time. That is why I had to take this decision with a lot of pain and pent up anger.'

Lashing out at the CM, Rajib Banerjee added, "I had almost taken this decision two and half years ago when I was removed ister. Though portfolio allocation is the CM's prerogative, I had expected minimum courtsey from her as a cabinet colleague. But I did not get that even. I got to know about my removal as the irrigation minister from the breaking news on TV when I was sitting with party workers at an office in North Bengal. I had wished to resign then but was stopped by the CM.' Hit by his outburst, the

as the state irrigation min-

the Governor also, recommended Dhankhar to remove the state forest minister from the cabinet resignation.

rather than accepting his Raiib Banerjee was later excluded from the cabinet by

CM, who was already furi-

ous at him for submitting

his resignation letter to

Dhankhar while the CM took over his portfolio. The TMC mocked Rajib

Banerjee for his step. But Dalmiya, who is an MLA of Bally, however, stood by him like she did when Laxmi Ratan Shukla, another MLA in Howrah, resigned as a minister and quit the party recently. She said, "Rajib Banerj-

ee's resignation will affect the party and public. Anyone who loves a party have self respect. They can not accept insult. We are insulted in Howrah always. There are some who are silent killers and backstab us and common people. If leaves, like Rajib Banerjee, start coming off a tree one after another, it is harmful for the tree." Stung by her allegations, the TMC disclipinery committee ex-

#### **CHIEF TO BE ELECTED BY JUNE** ASHHAR KHAN | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 22

**NEW CONGRESS** 

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) further pushed the organisational Speaking to reporters, Secretary K.C. General Organisation Venugopal said, Working "Congress Committee has decided that there will be an elected Congress president by June 2021.

The Congress elections will be held now in May after the Assembly elections of five states West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Assam. Puducherry are over. Several party leaders were hoping to go to the Assembly elections under new leadership, however that failed to happen.

Senior leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Mukul Wasnik and P. Chidambaram reportedly asked for immediate organisational polls. While leaders like Ashok Gehlot, Amarinder Singh, A.K. Antony, Tariq Anwar and Oommen Chandy said the Congress president's election should be held after polls in five states including Bengal and Tamil Nadu. The dates for the election of a Congress president and the CWC will be announced soon after being ratified by the Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

In the last working committee meeting, the party high command faced an unprecedented attack and was under pressure to announce internal elections to the post of party chief.

Last month Congress president had met with some of the leaders who had written a letter to her in August last vear demanding sweeping changes in the

### **CENTRE NOT IN FAVOUR OF EXTRA CHANCE TO UPSC ASPIRANTS**

The Centre on Friday told the Supreme Court that it was not in favour of granting one extra opportunity to those civil services aspirants who could not appear in their last attempt in the exams conducted by the UPSC last year due to the Covid-19 pan-

A bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar took note of the submissions of ASG S.V. Raju, appearing on behalf of the DoPT.

### Govt, unions talks hit roadblock

SANJAY KAW | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 22

The government's negotiations with the protesting farmers' unions hit a roadblock on Friday as the farmer leaders once again stuck to their demands for repeal of the three agriculture laws and a legal guarantee for MSP, even as the Centre asked them to reconsider its proposal for putting the laws on hold for 12 to 18 months. Unlike the last 10 rounds

of talks, at Friday's meeting the two sides could not even reach a decision on the next date as the government also hardened its position saying it is ready

to meet once the unions agree to discuss the suspension proposal.

On Thursday, the government offered to put on hold the three laws and set up a joint committee to find solutions. After internal consultations, the farmers' unions decided to reject the offer and stick to their two major demands.

Even though the 11th round of talks lasted for nearly five hours, the two sides sat face to face for less than 25 minutes. The talks were held in two sessions — the morning session lasted for about 15 minutes, after which the Central ministers left the meeting room. After about again came and held dis-cussions for less than 10 minutes. "This is an insult to

farmers. When agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar came, he asked us to consider the government's government's proposal and said that he is ending the process of meetings, said S.S. Pandher of Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, adding that their agitation will continue peacefully. Tomar told kisan unions that the government is ready for another meeting if farmers want to discuss the proposal on suspending agriculture laws for a while. He told

four hours, the ministers again came and held disernment was grateful for their cooperation".

The minister reiterated that there was nothing wrong in the three laws. 'We gave the best proposal but you could not arrive at any decision. If you arrive at any conclusion please let us know, we will discuss again," he said.

After the meeting, Tomar said: "We should remain hopeful. Let's wait till tomorrow to hear farmer unions' final decision." Asked whether he expects the farmers to agree to the government offer, he said, "I don't want to speculate, but we are unions will consider positively our proposal."

The minister also said

some external forces were definitely trying to ensure that the agitation continues and that was obviously against the interests of farmers. "No resolution is possible when the sanctity of an agitation is lost," he added.

Bhartiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait said that the farm-Rakesh ers have decided to once again deliberate upon the government's proposal to postpone the implementation of the farm laws. However, he said, they are firm on their demand of

SHORT TAKES

#### **RUSSIA VOWS CRACKDOWN ON NAVALNY RALLY**

Moscow, Jan. 22: Aides of jailed Russian opposition faced possible fines and prison time on Friday as police vowed to crack down on opposition protests this weekend.

His allies are planning to hold demonstrations on Saturday in dozens of cities in support of the Kremlin critic, who was arrested and jailed on his return to Russia following a near-fatal poisoning with a nerve agent.

"Attempts to hold unsanctioned public events, as well as any provocative actions on the part of their participants, will be regarded as a threat to public order and immediately suppressed," Moscow police said on Friday.

Navalny's associates urged Russians to take to the streets despite official pressure and promised financial help to protesters given fines on Saturday.

#### **LANKA TO PROBE INTO WAR CRIME ALLEGATIONS**

Colombo, Jan. 22: Sri Lanka will conduct an investigation into allegations its troops committed war crimes during a conflict with Tamil separatists, it said on Friday, a month before the UN Human Rights Council is due to discuss the

island's rights record. At least 1,00,000 people were killed in the decades-long civil war, and there were allegations that 40,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the final onslaught.

The government denies the toll. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was defence when the rebels were crushed in 2009, named a commission of enquiry Friday to look into investigations held by previous governments.

The panel was given six months to look into allegations of "human rights violations, serious violations of international humanitarian law," his office said.

It would also be tasked with investigating previous "inconclusive investigations" instigated by Colombo following international pressure.

### **Biden admin believes** in WHO: says Kamala

The Biden administration believes that the ling the spread of Covid-19 and building back better global health and pandemic preparedness, Vice President Kamala Harris has told WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, a day after the US rejoined the UN health

agency.
The US rejoined the World Health Organisation (WHO) on ation (WHO) on Wednesday in one of the first official orders of the Joe Biden presidency, reversing a key foreign policy decision his predecessor Donald Trump took last year after accusing the UN health agency of incompetence and bowing to Chinese presover

Coronavirus pandemic.
In April last year, as the Coronavirus pandemic was spreading across the globe, Trump cut off US funding to the WHO, saying it was "virtually controlled by China." He then went further, triggering the process to pull the US completely out of the organisation.

The withdrawal was due to go into effect in July this year, but Biden's order will cancel it. During her phone call on Thursday, Harris discussed the decision by the Biden administration to rejoin the WHO with the health agency's Director-General Dr. Ghebreyesus. Harris emphasised that

she and Biden believe that the WHO is vital to controlling the spread of Covid-19 and building back better global health and pandemic preparedness, according to a readout of the call issued by the White House.

"The vice president and the director-general also discussed the resumption of the United States' role in the global public health and humanitarian response to the Covid-19 pandemic," it said.

Harris also stressed on the Biden-Harris admin-





Snow-covered the ski lifts of the shut-down slopes of the Faraya-Mzaar ski resort, during a lockdown aimed at curbing the spread of the Coronavirus, in Faraya, northeast of Beirut, Lebanon, on Friday. Lebanese authorities have extended a nationwide lockdown to Feb. 8 amid a steep rise in Covid-19 death and infection rates. - AFP

### Beijing launches drive for testing 2 million in 48 hrs

- thev are keen to avoid a

fully fledged outbreak in

Locals have complained

about long wait times in

freezing temperatures,

with social media users

drive to test two million people in 48 hours as the city rushed to snuff out a new local cluster of cases believed to be linked to a more contagious virus variant.

Long queues snaked through the Chinese capital — which reported 19 Coronavirus cases in the past week — as the mass testing campaign got under way in Dongcheng and Xicheng districts.

The two downtown districts include Tiananmen Square and several government ministry offices, and are home to around two million residents.

plete the testing by Saturday, and with the Lunar New Year holiday looming — typically a time when hundreds of millions travel across the

Beijing.

AFP saw one testing line stretch over 400

istration's strong support

for efforts to strengthen

the global Covid-19 resp-

onse, mitigate its second-

ary impacts, including on

**Beijing, Jan. 22:** Beijing metres (1,300 feet), with on Friday kicked off a around a thousand people on Friday saying queues for tests were "unending" as residents braved the waiting to be tested. "I received the notificawinter chill to get swabbed. tion this morning and

"I queued for three thought I'd come during hours and finally got test-ed," one user said on lunch hour; but there are so many people here in line," one Dongcheng res-Twitter-like China's Weibo platform. ident said. Officials plan to com-

The Xicheng district government said in a social media notice Friday that some of the confirmed cases had been into the area and there was an "increased risk' country to visit families of infections.

Dongcheng district also put out a notice to say tests would be organised in batches over Friday and Saturday for both residents and workers. -AFF

women and girls, and advance global health security to prevent the next outbreak from becoming an epidemic or pandemic. House said.

She emphasised the importance of making the US safer through global cooperation, the White

### Math honour for Indian

Washington, Jan. 22: Nikhil Srivastava, a young Indian mathematician, has been named winner of the prestigious 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize along with two others for solving long-standing questions on the Kadison-Singer problem and on Ramanujan

Srivastava from the Berkeley, Adam Marcus, the Ecole polytechnique federale de Lausanne (EPFL) and Daniel Alan Spielman from University will receive the 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize, the National Academy of Sciences said

in the statement. The prize consists of a medal and \$1,00,000. Srivastava, Marcus and Spielman solved longstanding questions on the Kadison-Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs, and in the process uncovered a deep new connection between linear algebra, geometry of polynomials,



Nikhil Srivastava

and graph theory that has inspired the next generation of theoretical computer scientists, it said.

They published new constructions of Ramanujan graphs, that describe sparse, but highly-connected networks, and a solution what is known as the Kadison-Singer problem, a decades-old problem that asks whether unique information can be gleaned from a system in which only some of the features can be observed or measured, according to the *Yale* news. Srivastava is currently Associate Professor of Mathematics at the

AT LEAST 32 people

100 people wounded in

the blasts on Thursday.

activities and is gradually

drawing down its troop

presence in Iraq, sparking

fears of an IS resurgence.

The group has rarely been

able to penetrate the capi-

tal since being dislodged

by Iraqi forces and the US

led coalition in 2017.

Some were in severe

condition.

were killed and over

University of California groundbreaking papers on the questions, both published in 2015, solved problems that mathematicians had been working on for several decades. the National Academy of Sciences said. Their proofs provided

new tools to address numerous other problems, whother computer scientists seeking to apply the geometry of polynomials to solve discrete optimisation prob-

lems," the academy said. The Michael and Sheila Held Prize is presented annually and honours outstanding, innovative, creative, and influential research in the areas of combinatorial and discrete optimisation, or related parts of computer science, such as the design and analysis of algorithms and complexity theory. The prize was established in 2017 by the bequest of Michael And Sheila Held.

### IS claims hand in Baghdad blasts

Mathematics

Islamic State has claimed responsibility for a rare and deadly twin suicide bombing that rocked cen-tral Baghdad killing over 30 and wounding dozens. The group said the bomb-

'targeted apostate Shiites," on a statement circulating in an IS-affiliwebsite Thursday. The statement said the first bombing was carried out by Abu Youssef al-Ansari and the second by Mohammed Arif al-Muhajir.

The attack was the first At least 32 people were killed and over 100 people in nearly three years to hit wounded in the blasts on the capital. Elsewhere, in Thursday. Some were in northern Iraq and the western desert, attacks severe condition. According to officials, the continue and almost exclufirst suicide bomber cried sively target Iraqi security out loudly that he was ill An increase in attacks in the middle of the bustling market, promptwas seen last summer as ing a crowd to gather around him — and that's

detonated shortly after.

militants took advantage of the government's focus when he detonated his on tackling the coronpandemic and explosive belt. The second exploited security gaps The US-led coalition recently ceased combat across disputed territory in northern Iraq. — *PTI* in northern Iraq.

### **MUSK OFFERS TO BUILD TUNNELS** IN FLOOD-PRONE MIAMI

Miami, Jan. 22: As the world waited with baited breath for the US presidential inauguration, Tesla CEO Elon Musk had more pressing exchanging tweets with Miami's mayor about building a tunnel system under the Florida city.

Other mayors seemed enthusiastic about the potential project by Musk's Boring Company, but many Floridians were quick to point out how shallow the water table is in the state's

swampy south. "Cars & trucks stuck in traffic generate mega-tons of toxic gases & particulate, but @boringcompany road tunnels under Miami would solve traffic & be an example to the world," the tech tycoon tweeted, adding he had discussed the project with Florida Governor Ron DeSantis last week.

-AFP

#### SHORT TAKES

### **Vaccination may** jeopardise Oly

**Tokyo:** Japan is publicly adamant that it will stage its postponed Olympics this summer. But to pull it off, many believe the vaccination of its 127 million citizens for the coronavirus is key. It's an immense undertaking in the best of circumstances and complicated now by an overly cautious decision-making process, bureaucratic roadblocks and a public that has long been deeply wary of vaccines. Japan hopes to start Covid-19 vaccinations in late February, but uncertainty is growing that a nation ranked among the world's lowest in vaccine confidence can pull off the massive, \$14 billion project in time for the games in July, casting doubt on whether the Tokyo Olympics can happen. Japan has secured vaccines for all its citizens, and then some, after striking deals with three foreign pharmaceutical makers Pfizer Inc., AstraZeneca and Moderna Inc. — AP

#### **Spanish player** tests +ve in Oz

Melbourne: A Spanish tennis player ranked in the top 70 who was forced to quarantine in her hotel room after potentially being exposed to the coronavirus on an Australian Open charter flight says she tested positive for Covid-19. Paula Badosa, a 23-year-old who reached the fourth round at last year's French Open wrote on Thursday on Twitter that she received her test result for the illness caused by the coronavirus on the seventh day of her hard quarantine. "I have some bad news," Badosa said in a post written in Spanish and English. " Today I received a positive Covid-19 test result. I'm feeling unwell and have some symptoms, but I'll try to recover as soon as possible listening to the doctors. I've been taken to a health hotel to self isolate and be monitored." - AF

#### **Hockey girls hold Chile senior side**

Santiago: A resilient Indian junior women's hockey team came from behind twice to hold Chile senior side to a 2-2 draw in their fourth match of the tour here. Deepika (40th minute) and Gagandeep Kaur (55th) led India's fight back after Chile had taken the lead twice through goals from Mariana del Jesus Lagos (21st) and Fernanda Villagran (51st). With three wins from as many games in the tour, the Indian team started the match brightly as they tried to penetrate Chile's defence, but could not find a clear opportunity inside the first 15 minutes Chile, on the other hand, relied on counter attacks with their tactic paying off in the second quarter. The Indian juniors will

### **Lakers win eighth** game on the road

again play Chile senior side in back-to-back matches on Saturday and Sunday. - PTI

Los Angeles: LeBron James scored a season-high 34 points as the Los Angeles Lakers won their eighth straight road game with a 113-106 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks on Thursday. The victory opened a seven-game road trip for the NBA champion Lakers, who are hoping this is the beginning of another run of victories. They had a five-game winning streak snapped in their most recent outing, a 115-113 loss to Golden State.

"Our motivation was not losing two in a row tonight. We were able to get that accomplished, said forward Anthony Davis. James made a key three pointer and capped his night with an emphatic double clutch slam dunk as the Lakers improved to a NBA best 12-4 on the season after Thursday's gritty performance at the Fiserv Forum in Milwaukee. - AFP

### Live on TV

**BADMINTON** 

Thailand Open: Semifinal matches from 9.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD,

**CRICKET** 

Big Bash League: Melbourne 10.35 am: Melbourne Stars vs Perth Scorchers from 1.45 pm on Sony

**FOOTBALL** 

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

Six. HD

Italian League: Roma vs Spezia from 7.30 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

English Premier League: Aston Villa vs Newcastle from 1.30 am (Sunday) on Star Sports Select 1

### MIXED FEELING Deepak storms out, suspended

### Big gun Sindhu exits but mixed pair Satwik-Ashwin enters semis

Bangkok, Jan. 22: Errorprone P. V. Sindhu suffered a demoralising defeat in the quarterfinals while Sameer Verma's gallant fight too ended in agony at the Thailand Open here on Friday.

However, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy claimed twin wins in mixed and men's doubles quarterfinals along with Ashwini Ponnappa and Chirag Shetty to keep India's flag fluttering at the bad-minton World Tour Super 1000 tournament here.

Sindhu looked a pale shadow of the player who had won the world championship gold in 2019 as she committed too many unforced errors to go down 13-21, 9-21 against home favourite Ratchanok

"I made a lot of unforced errors and I think that I gave away easy points. I didn't play my best today. It wasn't my day," a crestfallen Sindhu said.

In men's singles, Sameer's giant-killing run also came to an end after he squandered a match point to go down 13-21, 21-19, 20-22 to world no. 3 Anders Antonsen of Denmark in a quarterfinal contest.

With the defeat of Sindhu and Sameer, Indian challenge in singles competition ended in

the tournament.
The doubles players, however, gave fans something to cheer as Satwik and Ashwini upstaged world no. 6 pair of Peng Soon Chan and Liu Ying Goh of Malaysia 18-21, 24-22, 22-20 after toiling hard for one hour and 15 min-

"We have played them three times. We have won twice and lost once. We were confident. We knew our main strength would be our attack. They were under pressure. We kept



India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (right) goes for a shot next to teammate Ashwini Ponnappa during their mixed doubles quarterfinal match against Indonesia's Chan Peng Soon and Goh Liu Ying at the Thailand Open badminton tournament in Bangkok on Friday. Badminton Association of Thailand / AFP

The Indian men's doubles and

mixed doubles pairs are in the

mixed doubles pair has gone

semifinal of a Super Series. The

into the last 4 for the first time.

The men's pair are on course to

defend their win from last year.

Olympic silver medallist P. V. Sindhu was a pale shadow of herself and was outclassed by Malaysia's World No. 92 Kisona Selva-duray 21-10, 21-12 in the women's singles second round of the Thailand Open.

fighting. We had our chances and never messed up," Satwik said.

Later in the day, Satwik and Chirag saw off anoth-er Malaysian pair of Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi 21-18, 24-22 in 37 minutes.

The Indian men's doubles and mixed doubles pairs are in the semifinal of a Super Series. The mixed doubles pair has gone into the last 4 for the very first time and the men's doubles are

course to defend their sensational win from last

Earlier, Sindhu looked awfully out of form as she was all at sea against Ratchanok, a former world champion.

"Some of my lifts were going out and going out of control. I was hitting with so much power sometimes. I should have controlled things a lot more. If I had won the first game, I think things would have been comparatively differ-

#### **MARIN BREEZES**

Spanish fifth seed and former world number one Carolina Marin sailed through to the semi-finals, beating Turkey's Neslihan

Yigit 21-6, 21-15. Marin is aiming for back-to-back titles in this week's tournament — the that culminate in next week's World Tour Finals She came out on top last week against top-seeded Tai Tzu-ying, and continued her winning streak on Friday — despite Yigit holding a brief lead in the

second set.
"I wanted to keep going, keep fighting and keep the focus on what I needed to do, even when Yigit was leading," said Marin.

World no. 6 Marin will be facing off in the semiagainst Korean An Se-young, a formidable teenager who was awarded "Most

was awarded "Most Promising Player" in 2019. They already duelled in last week's tournament, with the more experienced Marin winning 21-18, 21-16. – Agencies

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**Vadodara, Jan. 22:** The Baroda Cricket

Association (BCA) has sussenior player Deepak Hooda, who had stormed out of the camp before the start of Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, for this domestic season for "indiscipline" and "bringing disrespect to the

Hooda had walked out of the team on the eve of domestic T20 tournament after a spat with captain Krunal Pandya. He had alleged "misbehaviour" on the part of Pandya. "He (Hooda) has been suspended for this season for

indiscipline and bringing disrespect to the BCA and the game. Without informing the team and the BCA he left the team and the (bio) bubble," BCA secre-tary Ajit Lele told PTI on The decision to suspend

Hooda was taken during the Apex Council meeting of the BCA which was held on Thursday evening.

Hooda, who was initially appointed as Baroda's vicecaptain for Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, had stormed out of the bio-bubble on January 9. He had alleged "misbehaviour" on the part of Pandya in an e-mail sent to BCA.

"At this moment, I am demoralised, depressed and under pressure, Hooda, who has played 46 first-class matches, wrote



From last some days, my team captain Mr Krunal Pandya is using abusing language to me (sic) in front of my teammates and also other State teams.

**DEEPAK HOODA** iustifies leaving Baroda camp at the T20 tourney

in the e-mail.

"As from last some days my team captain Mr Krunal Pandya is using abusing language to me in front of my teammates and also other state teams who have come for participation at Reliance Stadium Vadodara."

Following Hooda's letter, the BCA had sought the manager's report.

### **ROYALS TRADE BATSMAN UTHAPPA TO SUPER KINGS**

New Delhi, Jan. 22: Veteran India batsman Robin Uthappa has been traded to Chennai Super Kings in an all-cash deal, IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals said on The 35-year-old right-hander from Karnataka had scored just 196 runs in 12 matches in the last IPL in UAE after being picked up by Rajasthan Royals at the last IPL auctions.
"I really enjoyed my year at the Royals and had a

great time being part of this franchise. I am now excited for the next part of my cricketing journey joining CSK for IPL 2021," Uthappa said in a release.

### CAREY, COULTER-NILE NOT SURPRISED AT

Australian players Alex Carey and Nathan Coulter-Nile said they were not surprised at their IPL franchises releasing them and they are hoping to find a team in next month's Players Auction for the upcoming edition of the cash-rich league. While wicket-keeper batsman Carey was released by last edition's runners-up side Delhi Capitals on Thursday, Coulter-Nile was de-listed by champions Mumbai Indians.

"It wasn't a surprise. I didn't play a lot of cricket, just sat on the sidelines, so it probably makes sense to open that spot up for someone else," Carey was quoted as saying by *cricket.com.au*.

# Presents AK ENTERTAINMENTS Rama Brahmam Sunkara Giri Palika Kishore Garikipati Ajay Sunkara

Sai Kartheek Satish Mutyala MR Varma Velugonda srinivas

Gandhi Nadikudikar Naga Prasad Dasam Vamsi - Sekhar

### Siraj is find of Oz series: Shastri

New Delhi, Jan. 22: India head coach Ravi Shastri on Friday described rookie pacer Mohammed Siraj as the find of the Australia tour, hailing him for playing a key role in the historic Test series win despite personal loss and racial abuse from spectators Down Under.

Siraj could not return to India after his father died barely a week after he landed in Australia with the Indian team in November last year. He also faced racial abuse from a section of the crowd in Sydney during the third Test.

Despite all this, Siraj finished the series with 13 wickets — the most by any Indian bowler — as team came from behind to script a memorable 2-1 win.
"Find of the tour for

shoring up the bowling attack the way he did -Mohd Siraj. He fought through personal loss, racial remarks and channelised them to find home in the team huddle,' Shastri tweeted in appre ciation of the 26-year-old

Siraj turned out to be one of the architects of India's success and successfully stepped into the shoes of his senior pace colleagues after making his debut in the seriesturning second Test.

In the fourth Test in Brisbane, Siraj led a young Indian bowling attack, picking up his maiden five-wicket haul in the longest format of the game. He returned with match figures of 7/150 as India beat Australia by three wick-

ets at the Gabba. Siraj revealed that on-field umpires had offered his team the option of leaving the third Test against Australia midway after he was subjected to racial abuse by the crowd in Sydney, a proposal that was turned down by skipper Ajinkya Rahane.

After his arrival in the country, the youngster had driven straight to his father's grave in Hyderabad to pay his respects. He had dedicated each of his wickets in Australia to the departed



Pacer Mohammed Siraj gestures during a press conference at his residence in Hyderabad on Thursday.

### Saha bats for Pant

THAKUR HAPPY TO BE CALLED

Mumbai, Jan. 22: It was a debut over two years

after his actual debut and Shardul Thakur says he

took a quantum leap from being just a fast bowler

to a bowling all-rounder with his impactful show

in India's epoch-making Brisbane Test win over

Australia. Thakur snared seven wickets and was India's top scorer in the first innings, striking 67

while batting at No.8. He, along with Washington

Sundar, pulled the team out of trouble by conjur-

ing a crucial 123-run stand. The partnership even-

tually played a key role in the team's three-wicket

His Test debut was back in 2018 which last just 10

balls thanks to injury.
"Yes, I can be called a bowling allrounder, I have

that ability to bat and even in future, whenever I

get my opportunity to bat, I am going to con-

tribute useful runs to the team's total," Thakur

**BOWLING ALLROUNDER NOW** 

Kolkata, Jan. 22: Rishabh Pant the batsman redeemed himself spectacularly in Australia and his muchcriticised wicket-keeping skills are also on the mend, feels senior India stumper Wriddhiman Saha who wants the youngster to be given some breathing space as "no one learns algebra

Saha, who is considered India's number one Test wicketkeeper, said in an interview that he does not believe that Pant's heroic show in Australia would close the door for him in the Indian team.

in class I".

"You can ask him (Pant), we have a friendly relationship and help each other whoever gets into the XI. Personally, there's no conflict with him," Saha said. "I dont' see who is No.1 or 2... Team will give a

do my job. Selection is

to the management." "No one learns algebra in class I. You always go step by step. He is giving his best and will definitely improve. He has matured and proved chance to those who do better. I will continue to

Indian team."

"The way he has shown his intent after being sidelined from his favourite T20 and ODI really Wriddformats was exceptional," himself. In the long run, himan further added. not in my hands, it's up it augurs well for the