


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | THURSDAY | 14 JANUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 33.0°C
Min: 19.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Clear.
 Max/Min temp.
 33/19 °C

COVID-19

COUNT

CASES

DEATHS

(+8,790*)

(+147*)

1,05,02,548

1,51,671

* Data not received from many states

Covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+331)

(+3)

TS: 2,90,640

1,571

(+203)

(+1)

AP: 8,85,437

7,134

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

9,23,12,892

DEATHS

19,77,850

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

218

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana

Tithi: Pushya Shuddha Padyami till 9.03 am

Star: Shravanam till 5.04 am (Friday)

Varjyam: 9.23 am to 10.57 am

Durmuhuram: 10.34 am to 11.19 am and 3 pm to 3.44 pm

Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

HJRI CALENDAR

Jumadi ul-Awwal 29,1442 AH

PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5.30 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 4.15 pm

Maghrib: 5.38 pm

Isha: 8.30 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.35 AM

SUNSET TODAY 5.48 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 7.32 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 7.57 PM

COUNTER POINT



Not drugs, he is smuggling vaccine to other countries!

SHORT TAKES

Tunnel detected near Pak border

Jammu: A 150-m tunnel constructed along the International Border (IB) to facilitate infiltration of terrorists into Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistan was detected by BSF personnel in Hiranagar sector of Kathua district on Wednesday. This is the third tunnel unearthed by alert border guards along the IB in the twin districts of Samba and Kathua in Jammu region over the past six months and ninth in the past decade. Last year, the BSF detected two such tunnels in Samba district on August 28 and November 22.

Saeed aides get 15 years jail

Lahore: An anti-terrorism court in Pakistan has handed down more than 15 years jail term each to two close aides of Mumbai terror attack mastermind and banned Jamat-ud Dawah (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed, including the outfit's media face Yahya Mujahid, in a terror financing case. "Judge Arshad Hussain Bhutta awarded 15-and-half-year imprisonment each to Yahya Mujahid and Zafar Iqbal, and six-month term to Prof Abdul Rehman Makki," a court official said.

NATION | 4

Bihar on boil over airline official's murder



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

DC wishes you Happy Sankranti



Residents of an apartment complex celebrate the Boghi festival by lighting a bonfire and with the decorated bull at Madhuranagar in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday. — P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

HOLIDAY NOTICE: *Deccan Chronicle* wishes all its readers a happy Sankranti. The offices of Deccan Chronicle will remain closed on Thursday and there will be no edition on Friday.

AP gets ready Covid-19 vaccination from today

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 13

All is set for administration of Covid-19 vaccine Covishield at the rate of 100 doses each, one per person, at 332 session sites per day beginning from January 16 to 20 in Andhra Pradesh.

As the state government received 4.99 lakh doses of vaccine including 4.77 lakh doses of Covishield and 20,000 doses of Covaxin from respective firms in the last two days, state health authorities distributed vaccine doses from the central vaccine store to districts and from there to select primary health centres by Wednesday afternoon.

As per the state government's plan, administration of Covid-19 vaccine will be officially launched at the government hospital in Vijayawada and at the government

According to state health authorities, they will be administering 100 doses of vaccine at each session site for five days from January 16 to 20; which meant the health authorities will administer 500 doses of vaccine at each session site.

hospital in China Waltair on January 16. At the same time, health authorities will begin administration of the vaccine in other identified session sites all over the state. In addition to the administration of vaccine in AP, the state government will also supply 320 doses of Covid-19 vaccine to be administered in Yanam. Armed personnel in Visakhapatnam are also to be given the Covid-19 vaccine. As the vaccine doses

have reached the session sites, state health authorities advised the energy department to avoid any disruption in power supply to session sites in order to continue the cold chain without disruption. The vaccine is supposed to be stored in the cold chain at a temperature between 2 C and 8 C. The authorities also directed the officials taking care of the session sites to keep power back-up that is supposed to start automatically in case of any disruption in power supply.

According to state health authorities, they will be administering 100 doses of vaccine at each session site for five days from January 16 to 20; which meant the health authorities will administer 500 doses of vaccine at each session site.

■ Page 3: State hasn't got Covaxin yet, says official

NTR varsity to start PG course in public health

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 13

After successfully conducting counselling for admissions to medical and dental courses for students qualified in UG NEET-2020 in colleges in AP, the NTR University of Health Sciences says it has several initiatives up its sleeves.

The plans include starting master's degree in public health and entering into an MoU for research collaboration with reputed institutes like National Institution of Nutrition, Indian Institute of Public Health



Dr P. Syama Prasad

and Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology shortly.

Dr NTR University of Health Sciences Vice-Chancellor Dr P. Syama Prasad explained to *Deccan Chronicle* his efforts for development of

the university, marking completion of one year of his tenure.

The VC said, "As I was involved in the state-level Covid-19 management programme in the early days of spread of the virus, I helped private medical colleges to set up Covid Care Centres and start RTPCR tests for the benefit of both infected and suspected cases. The move helped identify suspected cases and provide treatment, thus controlling the spread."

■ Page 2: V-C credits CM for reducing fee

LEGAL | SPACE

Plea seeks to make adultery a crime for army Centre moves SC on adultery

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 13

Moved the Centre on Wednesday the Supreme Court seeking to exclude armed forces personnel from the ambit of its 2018 judgment decriminalising adultery, who can be cashiered from service on the grounds of "unbecoming conduct" for committing adultery with a colleague's wife.

A five-judge constitution bench had on September 27, 2018, in a landmark judgment, decriminalised adultery after striking

down a British era law — Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code — terming it as unconstitutional, archaic and manifestly arbitrary, with Just-ice Rohinton Fali Nariman saying that women can't be treated as "chattel".

Issuing a notice on the Centre's application seeking clarification, Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman, heading a bench also comprising Justice Navin Sinha and Justice K.M. Joseph, said that since the clarification sought by the Centre is on a decision by a

constitution bench it would be better if goes before a five-judge bench. The three-judge bench directed the registry to place the matter before Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde for appropriate orders.

The Central government said that its judgment decriminalising adultery should not apply to armed forces where such acts amount to 'unbecoming conduct'. Under the Army, adultery is a ground for court-martial for unbecoming conduct. By its 2018 judgment, the

WORLD | 5
Pence refuses to use Article 25 on Trump



SPORTS | 8

Oz coach blames IPL for Indian injuries



Vol. 25 No. 255 Established 1940 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

Centre clears purchase of 83 Tejas Mk 1A for IAF

HAL gets its largest-ever order, to boost aerospace industry

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 13

In a big push to the government's Make-in-India campaign, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on Wednesday approved the procurement of 83 Tejas Mk-1A fighter jets for the Indian Air Force (IAF) from state-run defence firm Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). This is the largest ever indigenous military aviation deal worth around ₹48,000 crore. "The CCS today approved the largest indigenous defence procurement deal worth about ₹48,000 crores to strengthen the IAF's fleet of homegrown fighter jet 'LCA-Tejas'. This deal will be a game-changer for self-reliance in the Indian defence manufacturing," tweeted defence minister Rajnath Singh.

The defence minister said India's indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) — Tejas — will be the backbone of the IAF fighter fleet in years to come.

"LCA-Tejas incorporates a large number of new technologies, many of which were never attempted in India. The indigenous content of LCA-Tejas is 50 per

	INDIA'S TEJAS MK.1	US F-16C FIGHTING FALCON
Crew	1	1
Length	43.31 ft	49.21 ft
Width	26.9 ft	32.81 ft
Height	14.44 ft	15.75 ft
Payload	3,500 kg	4,315 kg
Installed power	20,200 lb	28,600 lb
Speed	1,975 kph	2,120 kph
Range	3,200 km	4,220 km
Ceiling	54,134 ft	50,000 ft

cent in Mk1A variant which will be enhanced to 60 per cent," said Mr Singh. Tejas Mk-1A deliveries are expected to begin in three years.

The CCS approved the procurement of 73 Tejas Mk-1A fighter aircraft and 10 Tejas Mk-1 trainer aircraft at the cost of ₹45,696 crore along with design and development of infrastructure sanctions worth ₹1,202 crore.

The IAF has already bought 40 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk-1 aircraft. Tejas Mk1A cleared by the CCS on Wednesday is more advanced than Mk-1 with around 40 improvements.

The Light Combat Aircraft Mk-1A variant is

an indigenously designed, developed and manufactured state-of-the-art modern four-plus generation fighter aircraft.

The aircraft is equipped with critical operational capabilities of Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) Radar, Beyond Visual Range (BVR) Missile, Electronic Warfare (EW) Suite and Air to Air Refuelling (AAR) which would be a potent platform to meet the operational requirements of IAF.

According to the minister, the manufacturing of the Light Combat Aircraft by HAL will give a further push to Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative and boost indigenisation of defence production and the defence

industry in the country.

"About 500 Indian companies, including MSMEs in the design and manufacturing sectors, will be working with HAL in this procurement. The programme would act as a catalyst for transforming the Indian aerospace manufacturing ecosystem into a vibrant Atma Nirbhar self-sustaining ecosystem," the minister said.

"The HAL has already set-up second line manufacturing facilities at its Nasik and Bengaluru divisions. Equipped with the augmented infrastructure, HAL will steer Light Combat Aircraft Mk1A production for timely deliveries to the Indian Air Force," said Mr Singh.

Frozen lake



A boatman stands on the frozen Dal Lake in Srinagar on Wednesday. Kashmir Valley reeled under severe cold after witnessing sub-zero temperatures.

— PTI

HEAVY FOG HITS FLIGHT ARRIVALS IN VIJAYAWADA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 13

Heavy fog in the early hours on Wednesday resulted in a flight arriving to the Vijayawada International Airport being diverted to Hyderabad. While the flight from Bengaluru arrived two hours late, another flight arriving from Delhi was late by about 25 minutes.

According to officials, the flight from Bengaluru was scheduled to arrive at 7.30 am. As there was heavy fog and visibility had come down to just 400 metres against the required 1,000 metres, the flight was diverted to the Hyderabad airport. Once the sky turned clear, the aircraft was flown to Vijayawada airport at about 10.30 am.

85 held for temple attacks, says DGP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 13

AP Director General of Police (DGP) Gautam Sawang on Wednesday announced that the department has solved 29 of the total 44 attacks on temples and has arrested 85 persons.

The DGP said there have

been attempts to undermine religious harmony in the state, but police checked it by taking all possible measures.

He said the AP police is first in the country to install CCTV cameras for round-the-clock surveillance at places of worship. Over 58,000 temples had

been geo-tagged and 43,824 CCTV cameras installed.

Addressing the media, Gautam Sawang disclosed that attacks on temples in the state are being widely publicised with social media distorting facts and spreading false information. He said it is not right to make accusations agai-

nst police for political reasons. He found fault with certain people for questioning police as to what they are doing while temples are being attacked. Allegations had been made on the basis of caste and religion.

■ Page 2: No action based on caste or religion: DGP

Students restless over loss of colleges' permit

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 13

Students of three engineering colleges in Anantapur are bewildered after the AP State Council of Higher Education (APSCHE) cancelled their permission following the violation of AICTE norms. College managements, however, are sitting tight financially by converting playgrounds into real estate ventures.

Permission was denied to the three colleges based

on a report submitted by the AICTE to the government on October 14 last. These colleges offered courses like MTech, BTech and Polytechnic.

According to sources, the AICTE claimed that the colleges had not obtained affiliation from the university and have been making less than 25 per cent of allotted admissions for the last three years.

In its show-cause notice, the Council had directed the management of these colleges to submit a writ-

ten explanation for failing to give admissions to the required number of students and running the colleges without maintenance of institutional and infrastructural standards.

The managements, however, have converted college buildings and playgrounds into real estate ventures. Students who joined the colleges in previous years have been kept in the dark.

■ Page 2: Students get no info on backlogs

He pointed out that Sankranti is a festival of harvest and MSS celebrates it every year in the traditional manner.

New Generation Association K. Vinay and leaders of various organisations participated in the Bhogi celebrations organised by MSS and conveyed their Sankranti wishes to all.

SHORT TAKES

JALLIKATTU AT ANUPALLI DRAWS HUGE CROWD

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JAN. 13

Pasuvula Panduga or Cattle festival, the Chittoor version of Tamil Nadu's Jallikattu held at Anupalli near Tirupati drew a huge turnout of locals especially youngsters from various parts of the district on Wednesday.

The Pasuvula Panduga, which is in vogue for the past 150 years in the district, is observed every year with great pomp on the occasion of Sankranti festival. The event draws huge crowds from villages across the district and nearby districts.

Despite police warnings, the event organisers at Anupalli had set up several enclosures for the cattle at Anupalli and released them in several phases during the event. Scores of youngsters had vied with each other to snatch the slate fastened between the horns of the bulls when it ran amok through the narrow path.

As the event began amidst traditional drum beats, few among the youngsters who tried to snatch the slates with the prize-money had sustained minor injuries. Other than this, the event had passed off smoothly without any major casualties.

AP RECORDS 203 COVID-19 CASES, ONE DEATH

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 13

Andhra Pradesh registered 203 new Covid-19 cases, scaling up tally to 8,85,437 and one death raising toll to 7,134.

The State health authorities issued Covid-19 bulletin here on Wednesday reporting that out of 44,679 samples tested, 203 persons were found infected with Coronavirus. Out of a total number of 1,24,41,272 samples tested so far in the state, 8,85,437 persons were found infected with Coronavirus and of them 8,75,921 were recovered during the course treatment while 2,382 persons are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of confirmed Coronavirus, Guntur topped the state with 41 followed by 30 in Krishna, 27 in East Godavari, 23 in Anantapur, 22 in Visakhapatnam, 18 in Chittoor, nine each in Kadapa and Vizianagaram, eight in Srikakulam, seven in West Godavari, five in Kurnool and two each in Nellore and Prakasam. Nellore continued to lead the state by registering the highest number of cumulative Covid active cases with 422 followed by 347 in Krishna, 308 in Guntur, 219 in East Godavari, 203 in West Godavari, 186 in Visakhapatnam.

FORMER DGP APPOINTED AS RTC MD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 13

In a new development, former DGP and senior IPS officer R.P. Thakur has been appointed as the Managing Director of APSRTC.

Thakur is currently Commissioner of Printing and Stationery. Madireddy Pratap Reddy who was the RTC MD was transferred in July. Further IAS officer Krishna Babu was then given additional responsibilities as the Corporation's VC and MD.

Thakur served as DGP during the Telugu Desam regime. Incumbent DGP Gautam Sawang had to be given the DGP post at that time but Thakur was handed over the responsibilities by the then TD government. Thakur took over as DGP in 2018 as Malakondaiah's successor.

However, after Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy took over, Thakur was replaced by Sawang. Thakur held those responsibilities for over 10 months.



R.P. Thakur

Bhogi special



Women pouring "Bhogi Pallu" on children on the occasion of Bhogi festival celebrations in Vijayawada on Wednesday. — DECCAN CHRONICLE

All set for mega Covid vaccination exercise

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JAN. 13

Arrangements are being made to shift the Covid-19 vaccine to 20 sub-centres in SPSR Nellore district under the supervision of higher officials.

Around 38,500 doses of the vaccine were received by the medical and health department here and the official machinery is geared up for the first phase of vaccination, scheduled to commence on Saturday.

Thanks to the two dry runs conducted in the district, the mega exercise is aimed at vaccinating nearly 32,000 health workers, including doctors, nurses and paramedical staff across the district.

District Collector KVN Chakradhar Babu, along with Superintendent of Police Bhaskar Bhushan, Joint Collector Dr N. Prabhakar Reddy and DMHO Dr Rajyalakshmi, inspected the vaccination cold chain point at the district medical and health office in Nellore on Wednesday.

Babu said that they are all set to launch the first phase of vaccination from January 26. The target is to administer the shots on 100 persons in each centre every day. A well-trained five-member team will function in each vaccination centre.

He said that they would issue a certificate to all those getting the first dose of vaccination and the second dose will be provided on the 28th day. According to Babu, the vaccine would start producing antibodies after 14 days.

The second phase of the vaccine would cover frontline warriors, including police, revenue, panchayat raj, municipal staff members while the general public will get the vaccine in the third phase.

STATE HASN'T GOT COVAXIN YET: OFFICIAL

FROM PAGE 1

The health authorities planned accordingly. Initially, only Covishield will be used as AP received 4.77 lakh doses. If a beneficiary is given the first dose of Covishield, he or she has to be given the same vaccine as the second dose with a gap of 28 days.

"Until we receive further doses of Covaxin, we will use only Covishield for jabs," officials said. Director of health Dr T. Geeta Prasadini said, "We have planned meticulously for administration of Covid-19 vaccine to all targeted beneficiaries from January 16 to 20, initially and we are holding consultations with all stakeholders to identify issues."

EG has highest no. of beneficiaries

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 13

East Godavari is having the highest number of healthcare workers with 38,128 registered as beneficiaries for taking Covid-19 vaccine out of an overall 3,87,983 in the State.

District-wise beneficiaries for the vaccination include: Anantapur-29,065, Chittoor-33,773, Guntur-35,389, Krishna-34,813, Kurnool-33,279, Prakasam-25,383, Nellore-31,346, Srikakulam-21,934, Visakhapatnam-36,694, Vizianagaram-17,465, West Godavari-27,323 and Kadapa-23,391.

Earlier, deputy chief minister and minister for health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas stated that the state was ready for taking up the vaccination programme from Saturday and added that the first phase was earmarked for healthcare workers, paramedical staff and police personnel.

40,500 doses ready in Kurnool district

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, JAN. 13

Kurnool district is all set to administer the Covishield vaccine on January 16 at 27 session sites, at least two of them located in each Assembly constituency and covering 2,700 people.

Covishield, developed by the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), was supplied to the district and all the 4,050 boxes, each containing 10 doses and totalling 40,500, were stored in

freezers, said district medical and health officer Dr Rama Giddaiah.

Explaining the logistics of the inoculation drive, he said at least 100 people will get the vaccine jab at each centre in a day. The district needs 6,50,000 doses to cover the people above 50 years of age and those in the younger group suffering from comorbidities like diabetes, hypertension, etc, he said. As per government guidelines 34,000 healthcare workers would be getting the Covid vaccine.

Farmers warn Modi on new farm laws

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JAN. 13

The AP Farmers Association district general secretary Gali Chandra has warned that the people would oust the Modi government if the new agricultural laws that "bind the agricultural sector to corporate companies" are not repealed.

Copies of these laws were set on fire in Palempalli in Kadapa city on Wednesday as part of a call by the All India Kisan conflict coordinating committee.

Gali Chandra said PM Modi's understanding with corporate giants Ambani and Adani had hidden political and economic agendas as "cultivation agreement and crop storage beyond limits were brought forward simultaneously."

He said the agriculture sector would be monopolised by corporate companies if the new laws are enforced. These entities' ownership of seeds, fertilisers, crops and land would increase and the farmers would be exploited to the hilt.

"The black market system would increase and the prices of essential commodities reach unaffordable levels." The farmer leader accused the Modi government of unleashing a vicious campaign against the farmers' movement in Delhi.

He said it was wrong to say that the movement was infiltrated by Khalistan militants. "Sadly, the traitors who killed Mahatma Gandhi are now talking ill of the peasant struggle. Despite the Supreme Court intervention and appointment of a committee to hold talks with farmers, the adamant on the part of the Central government meant the government was bent on harming the farmers."

He said, "The struggle would continue until the new agricultural laws are repealed, the recommendations of the Swaminathan committee are implemented, the MSP is legalised and the electricity privatisation bill is withdrawn."

Reopen schools: Forum convener

Narava asks minister to reopen primary schools

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JAN. 13

Andhra Pradesh state convener of Right to Education Forum Narava Prakasha Rao has appealed to education minister Adimulapu Suresh and School Education Monitoring Committee chairman Kantha Rao to reopen primary schools that have remained closed since the outbreak of Coronavirus in March last year.

In a letter to the minister, Prakasha Rao said the pandemic has created an unprecedented crisis in the country, especially in the education sector. As a result, children have been deprived of their fundamental entitlements like

● He observed that Covid-19 cases among students and teachers have been lower and fears in this regard are unfounded.

● Many experts have pointed out that continued closure of schools will affect well-being of kids

right to education, food and protection.

He observed that Covid-19 cases among students and teachers have been lower and fears in this regard are unfounded. Many experts have pointed out that continued closure of schools will affect well-being of children, especially in tribal and village areas, where poverty may drive them to

work. In case of girls, they could be forced into marriage.

Prakasha Rao said AP government has already permitted schools from 6th to 10th classes to run while adhering to Covid-19 protocols. Attendance in these schools has been increasing every day. Considering these facts, the government should restart primary schools in the state while enforcing health and safety guidelines.

He suggested that teachers and parents be briefed about taking care of children properly. Further, a separate grant could be made for purchase of masks, sanitisation of primary schools and cleaning of toilets.

28,000 Covishield vaccine doses reach Kadapa: JC

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, JAN. 13

Kadapa joint collector (Development) Saikant Verma on Wednesday announced that they have made all arrangements to vaccinate 24,000 healthcare workers in the district with Covishield vaccine from January 16 to January 20.

Addressing a press conference at the collectorate, Saikant said the district has already received 28,000 vaccine vials for being administered in Phase I. First to be vaccinated will be healthcare workers working in all public and private hospitals. 24,000 healthcare workers across the district have already registered their names for

vaccination through the Covin website. All of them will be vaccinated at the rate of 100 per day at 20 centres in the district. There will be two centres in each assembly constituency of the district.

Next to be given the vaccine will be frontline workers like staff of municipalities, police, revenue, panchayat raj, sanitation and other departments. In the third phase, vaccination will be injected to those above 50 years of age and others suffering from chronic diseases, though they may be aged below 50 years.

The joint collector said all those who receive the vaccine will again be administered the second dose 28 days later. Even after get-

ting vaccinated, he said, people must compulsorily follow all safety norms, such as wearing masks, using sanitisers, and ensuring social distancing. Pregnant women, those under 18 years, and people with allergy have been cautioned against taking the vaccine.

Saikant said vaccinations will be being given by specially trained staff at each vaccination centre. Those who show any side effects will be immediately taken to the nearest hospital.

Those present at the media meet included DMHO Dr. Anil Kumar, DCHS Dr. Sridhar, Timeline superintendent Dr. Nagesh, and NHM program officer Dr. Lakshmi Kar.

MURDER ACCUSED NABBED BY POLICE

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JAN. 13

Anantapur One town police nabbed a person who killed her lover at Ashok Nagar in Anantapur three days ago. One town inspector Prathap Reddy said Mallikarjuna, an auto driver of BK Samudram killed Yashoda.


COCKFIGHTS UNABATED IN PARTS OF AP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JAN. 13

Despite AP police playing tough to curb conduct of cockfight on the eve of Sankranti festival, several parts witnessed such fights unabated in the State on Wednesday.

The cockfights were held mainly in I.Bhimavaram, Vemp, D.

Muppavaram, Peravali, Nidadavole and I. Polavaram, Mummidiavaram and other places in East Godavari. As the police warned stern action against those who organise cockfights and seized knives, booked several cases and even bound over several people in the last few days, the organisers erected pandals.



Tributes to
Dr. G.V.B.K Gangadhara Reddy

26 June 1943 - 13 Jan 2021

Cremation in the evening at
Mahaprasthanam on 14th Jan 2021

For cremation information, contact Mr. Anand- +91 9848516585

DECCAN Chronicle

14 JANUARY 2021

Election fever grips TN as early hustings begin

It is a bit early for Tamil Nadu to go into election mode with at least four more months left for the All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) to relinquish power. But it has happened as the principal contender to the throne, the DMK, launched an all-out war to storm Fort St George quite early, forcing the ruling dispensation to quickly respond. Thus, the battle lines have been drawn between the two traditional rivals, who have been ruling the state alternately since 1967, after that indistinct threat that loomed for about a year in the form of actor Rajinikanth dissipated and the other actor, Kamal Haasan, with his Makkal Needhi Maiam, is not expected to play a big role.

Of course, Mr Haasan is around and has already started going around spouting rhetoric and another actor, Seeman, with his Naam Tamilar Katchi is, as usual, spewing chauvinistic vitriol. But there is no scope for a third front to take on the might of the DMK and AIADMK as a plethora of smaller parties in the state, which include the BJP and the Congress that are otherwise political giants at the national level, have started rallying around the Dravidian majors, in the run-up to the state Assembly elections. But the same small parties are now promising to provide scope for some political drama.

The rumblings of discontent in the two coalitions, forged during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, are signs of potential wrangling, triggered by the overt ambitions of the two lead parties that want to rule the state. Both the DMK and the AIADMK are keen on contesting in an extremely high number of seats, as both are averse to sharing power with allies. For them, alliances are for winning elections and not ruling the state and hence they expect at least a simple majority to form the government on their own. And the fallout is allies not getting the desired number of seats.

In the past, as it happened in 2016, disillusionment over seat allocation had united small parties to form alternative alliances. But this time there is no sign of such rebellions as the small parties seem to be prepared to accept whatever is given, though they have started asserting themselves in a different way. Almost all the parties want to retain their individual identity by contesting in their own symbols and names. Since that goes against the wishes of both the alliance leaders, who want smaller allies to opt for their popular election symbols, thus marking ally candidates, at least in Election Commission records, as their representative, there is bound to be friction and action.

Another thorn in the flesh of the AIADMK is the Pattal Makkal Katchi (PMK) of Dr S. Ramadoss bargaining for an assurance to provide 20 per cent exclusive reservation for the Vanniyar community that it represents to remain in the alliance. How the AIADMK deals with the belligerent PMK and how both the lead partners coax their allies to settle for a smaller numbers of seats would form the next act of the long-drawn electoral drama, whose climax is, as said earlier, four months away.

Policy not court's domain

The value of the committee of four experts appointed by the Supreme Court in arbitrary fashion in an effort to defuse the national political crisis caused by the prolonged agitation by tens of thousands farmers is questionable.

The farmers are knocking on Delhi's gates to protest three farm laws recently passed by the Narendra Modi government. In such haste was the regime that it first brought the legislations in the form of ordinance — or executive fiat — in mid-June and then rushed these through Parliament in three days flat by the end of September, short-circuiting and bypassing norms and procedures.

The top court waded into the delicate situation caused by the agitation, which has attracted world attention, when neither the government nor the farmers called for its help, although during negotiations the government's ministers did tell the farmers' representatives to try their luck in the Supreme Court if they weren't satisfied with what the government was offering. The farmers didn't take the bait. But the court stepped in anyway.

The Supreme Court has held the three laws in abeyance. Maybe, this is in order to appear even-handed. But this is not cutting ice outside government circles. The farmers' demand is the repeal of the laws, which they see as bad policy, adversely impacting their lives. Evidently, the top court does not understand this. Nor does the Supreme Court see that it has no role in determining policy, which is the exclusive domain of the executive.

As per the Supreme Court, the committee it has brought into being will hear all sides and help the apex court understand whether the farm laws are in the "public interest". This self-given assignment is outside the top court's remit. The job of the Supreme Court is to determine the constitutionality or otherwise of a legislation, not whether it is in the public interest. That is for the people to decide. When court-appointed experts seek to do so, it is the ayatollah syndrome that looms.

For the sake of record, all the four experts in the committee are strongly pro-government on the agri laws, and yet the Chief Justice of India expects farmers' representatives to appear before this committee. Instead of seeming the honest broker, the CJI may be courting disdain. What a pity!

DECCAN CHRONICLE

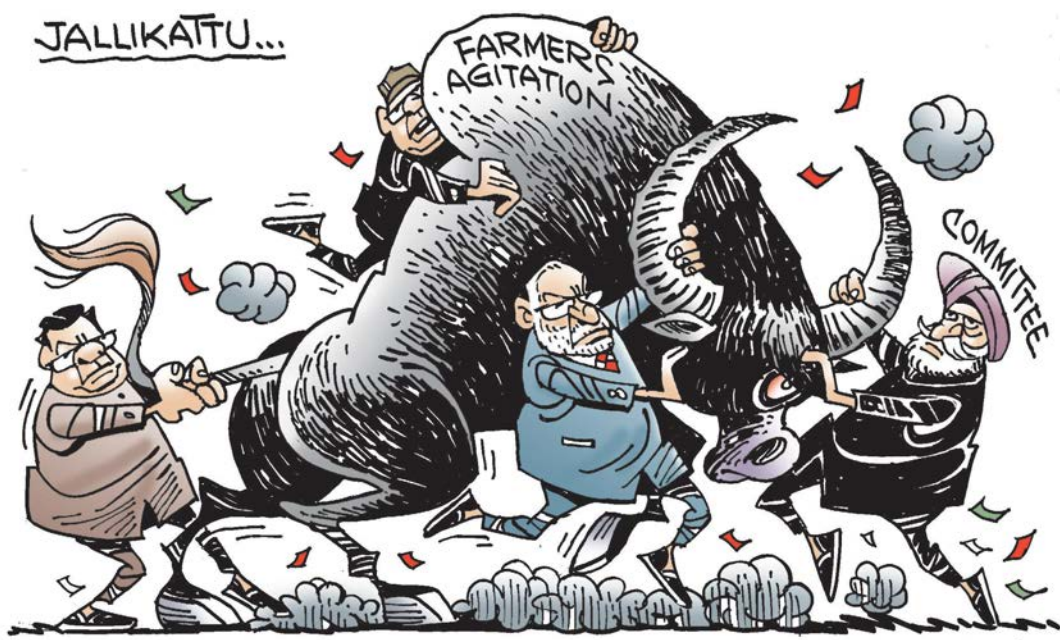
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Subhani



Is 'new normal' really a return to the old ways?



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

Poverty. Inequality. Precarity. Vulnerability. These are mere words, until they hit us directly or confront us in a way which makes it difficult to look away.

A flood of images of migrant workers walking down national highways burst into middle class India's living rooms following the nationwide lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March last year. The lockdown came into effect with barely four hours' notice. All economic activity came to a grinding halt; and there was no transport.

Those searing images of migrant workers — men and women reduced to collateral damage for the State in its battle against the coronavirus — jolted many people.

Suddenly, everyone was talking about the heart-breaking conditions in which all daily wage earners — the face of the country's vast informal sector — lived and worked.

For a fleeting while, optimists wondered if the Covid-19 pandemic had sledgehammered some fundamental lessons about the need for solidarity between the "formal" and "informal" sectors, if not for anything else but enlightened self-interest.

Almost a year down the line, as we get ready for the vaccine rollout and for the economy to recover fully, what really has changed?

Are we trying to do science and fix the economy in a way that factors in the needs and rights of our most vulnerable? Or is our "new normal" really going back to the old ways?

Last week, once again, images of precarity and poverty came together through the testimonies of desperately poor people who had volunteered to participate in the ongoing clinical trial of Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine candidate, Covaxin, in Bhopal.

According to sources, Ms Roopa wrote to the chief secretary after media reports that suggested she was under investigation by the chief secretary for allegedly "impersonating" the home secretary and interfering with the tendering process for the multi-crore project. It is unclear where the question of impersonation arises, as Ms Roopa was the home secretary of Karnataka! The content of the report is on the lines of a complaint written by Mr Nimbalkar to

Covaxin, as everyone knows by now, has been cleared by India's drugs controller for restricted emergency use. This means, along with Covishield, the Serum Institute of India's coronavirus vaccine, it is part of the vaccine rollout.

Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech has given safety and immunogenicity data. But there is no efficacy data yet. This data is expected in a couple of months.

Meanwhile, the ongoing trial has attracted a lot of public attention after the allegations of irregularities and violations of ethics. Many questions are being asked about the manner in which People's Hospital in Bhopal, one of the trial sites, enrolled participants for the Covaxin trial.

Once again, we are face to face with stark images of vulnerability.

The video testimonies arranged by a Bhopal-based human rights group in the wake of the death of a participant in the trial made it clear that those who had signed up to participate in the trial had little idea of what it entailed. Bharat Biotech says the post-mortem analysis has revealed that the death was not related to the vaccine. The family of the deceased feel differently.

Most of those who offered their testimonies on camera are victims of the horrific Bhopal gas tragedy, the world's largest industrial disaster in December 1984; and many said that they could not read or write.

What leaps out from among the many statements they made is the stark reality of "informed consent" when it comes to poor people with no education and little bargaining power.

As is widely known, there are four key parts of informed consent in a clinical trial — information, comprehension, voluntariness and documentation. "Giving information does not mean it

has been comprehended. According to the new clinical trial rules in India, there should be an 'impartial witness' while informed consent is being taken from an illiterate participant," says Dr Anant Bhan, a well-known researcher in global health and bioethics.

Additionally, for vulnerable participants, there is a requirement for audio-visual documentation of the process, Dr Bhan points out.

"The recent testimonies of volunteers, many of whom are illiterate and poor, for a Covaxin trial site in Bhopal, show big gaps in oversight in the regulatory process," he adds.

Doing science must not mean playing with the basic human rights of vulnerable people, says Dr Bhan emphatically. Clearly, this is in no one's interest and will also raise questions on the quality of data coming out of such trials.

"The seriousness of the allegations made by some volunteers in public in full view of the national media raises a question about whether audio-visual recordings of the informed consent process were done in line with the protocol laid down by the Central Drugs Standard Organisation (CDSCO)," says Amar Jesani, another leading expert on ethics, rights and health systems and editor, *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*.

"This is not filming a wedding party," says Jesani acerbically. "There is a specific protocol on how these situations need to be filmed. Many of the volunteers are from highly vulnerable groups who did not know their rights. But just because someone does not know his/her rights does not mean rights don't exist."

There are many legitimate questions. Do audio-

What leaps out from among the many statements in the Bhopal Covaxin trial is the stark reality of 'informed consent' when it comes to poor people with no education and little bargaining power

visual recordings of the informed consent process exist for all trial participants from vulnerable groups? Or was it done for only a few? Why?

"This also raises questions about the role of the local ethics committees. Have they investigated whether the audio-visual recordings were done and according to protocol? If such video recordings exist, they can be made public by blanking the face and identity of participants who have not on their own publicly identified as participants," Jesani adds.

The face of vulnerability is equally stark when it comes to the green shoots of economic recovery.

"There are reasons to fear that economic recovery from the pandemic, like the 'growth story', will be shouldered by precarious labour. An already deep employment crisis is worsening further," wrote SOAS academic Dr Subir Sinha in a recent essay in Open Democracy, a website covering international affairs.

So, is there any reason for hope?

Mukta Naik, an architect and urban planner working with the Centre for Policy Research, acknowledges that many informal workers face "worse terms" as the Indian economy seeks to recover. The images of the long march of migrant workers, she says, sensitised many among India's middle class, but sadly, the lockdown months made them retreat into their individual bubbles.

However, she points out, many states are now talking about social protection for the vulnerable. There is an appetite for discussion on the subject.

But pathways and mechanisms to operationalise this vision are still not clear, Ms Naik says.

That much-needed clarity could make all the difference.

India doesn't have to let millions lead a precarious existence. It could use its resources to build back better.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

LETTERS

BEATING THE FAT

During the eight-month lockdown, not just children but also grown-ups, confined to home, put on weight due to lack of exercise. (*More eating, no exercise in lockdown days*, DC, Jan. 13). We have to order a few uniforms for our children when schools reopen, as they grow quickly. To maintain fitness, I have been playing with a balloon instead of a ball while locked at home. It is good exercise and it is fun too.

K.L. Rao

Visakhapatnam

CATCH THE CULPRITS

The temples imbroglio in Andhra Pradesh should not be allowed to escalate into a communal weapon in the Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection where the BJP may play the card: choose between a 'Bible candidate' or a 'Bhagwad Gita candidate,' thus highlighting the Christian faith of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. The Chief Minister should run two extra miles to nab the culprits who have desecrated idols in many temples in the state.

K. Nehru Patnaik

Visakhapatnam

FARMER ROW

Forty-one farmer unions of Punjab and Haryana are not answerable to anyone in this democratic country, but are a law unto themselves (*Farmers say members of SC panel on agri laus pro-govt*, DC, Jan 13). They have no faith in the Centre, the Supreme Court and the panel to solve their one point programme of repeal of farm laws. The situation may be complicated if farmer unions in the rest of India come forward in support of three farm laws. The agitating farmers must be amenable to reason.

Parthasarathy Mandadi

Tirupati

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

5 Hyd players in India team

HYDERABAD, January. 13

It was a red-letter day in the sports circle here today. Never before in its history have five players been selected from Hyderabad to represent the country.

The sixteen-man India cricket team to tour West Indies next month, which was announced by the Board of Control for Cricket in India at the city, will have M.L. Jaisimha, Abid Ali, Krishnamurthy, Govindraj and Jayanthilal.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



K'taka home secy shunted out for calling Safe City 'scam'

IPS officer D. Roopa, who was the first woman home secretary of Karnataka has been transferred as the managing director of Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation amid her public spat with another IPS officer Hemant Nimbalkar, who, too, was transferred. Mr Nimbalkar was the additional commissioner (administration) in Bengaluru before being transferred to the internal security department.

Public spats are rarely pretty and the one between these two senior IPS officers of Karnataka over the tender process to procure CCTVs has brought out in the open the intense rivalries in the service. The two IPS officers locked horns after Ms Roopa accused Mr Nimbalkar of irregularities in the tender process of the ₹619 crore Bengaluru Safe City project under the Nirbhaya scheme. Mr Nimbalkar, on the other hand, accused Ms Roopa of interfering with the tender process without jurisdiction.

Ms Roopa had written to state chief secretary T.M. Vijaya Bhaskar alleging that Mr Nimbalkar was trying to favour a private company in the Bengaluru Safe City Project and demanded a probe against Mr Nimbalkar, alleging, in turn, that while the Home Department has started an enquiry against her, it has hesitated to do the same against Mr Nimbalkar, even after months since the CBI sought sanction for his prosecution.

According to sources, Ms Roopa wrote to the chief secretary after media reports that suggested she was under investigation by the chief secretary for allegedly "impersonating" the home secretary and interfering with the tendering process for the multi-crore project. It is unclear where the question of impersonation arises, as Ms Roopa was the home secretary of Karnataka! The content of the report is on the lines of a complaint written by Mr Nimbalkar to

the Karnataka chief secretary.

As the two trade charges, sources say that the government has started an inquiry in the matter. Expect more salvos in the days ahead!

KHEMKA DIGS IN HIS HEELS

Haryana IAS officer and whistleblower Ashok Khemka never gives up on his first principles.

Now principal secretary in the state's archaeological department, the indefatigable Mr Khemka continues to pursue the case which brought him into the national limelight. Last year, Mr Khemka had appealed to the Haryana State Information Commission under the Right to Information Act.

He had sought information relating to the inquiry commission that probed the grant of change of land use licences in Gurugram during the Congress government's tenure, including the alleged role of Robert Vadra, son-in-law of Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi. He informed the information com-

mission that the complete information sought had not been provided to him.

The commission has now issued notice to the office of chief secretary (political department) and the town and country planning department to give their response to the rejoinders filed by Mr Khemka. Sources say that the IAS officer has sought "penal action" under Section 20 of the RTI Act against those who failed to provide the information he had sought, claiming there is a "cover-up attempt". This, too, is the letter of the law.

J&K BABUS DEFY INSTRUCTIONS

The government has taken serious note of several IAS officers of the Jammu and Kashmir cadre openly flouting instructions on the online filing of immovable property returns (IPRs). Non-compliance can lead to disciplinary proceedings and denial of vigilance clearance.

According to sources, online fil-

ing of IPRs was introduced in 2017. In terms of the extant rules, the babus have to necessarily file IPRs electronically as there is no provision for manual submission.

But much to the disappointment of the department of personnel and training (DoPT) and the general administration department (GAD), several IAS officers have not acted on the instructions issued repeatedly since 2017. Now, sources say, the commissioner secretary of GAD, Manoj Kumar Dwivedi, has issued a circular stating that failure to comply would "constitute good and sufficient reason for the institution of disciplinary proceedings". The IAS officers have been advised to follow the instructions in letter and spirit or face the consequences. The government has clearly decided that it will not give further leeway to the defaulters.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

IN BRIEFS

MP hooch tragedy
toll mounts to 20

Bhopal: The death toll in Tuesday's hooch tragedy in Morena district has mounted to 20 with 8 more people, who had fallen ill after consuming spurious liquor, succumbing in the hospital on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday. All the 20 deceased hailed from the villages of Manpura under Baghchini police station and Pahawali under Sumaoli police station in the district, official reports reaching from Morena said on Wednesday. Preliminary police investigation has revealed that the victims had purchased liquor from an authorised person, who was also hospitalised after consuming the same liquor, at the rate of ₹50 per bottle. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan who took stock of the situation at a high level official meeting here in the morning, ordered transfer of Morena district collector Anurag Verma and local superintendent of police Anurag Sujatia.

Major blaze
in Kolkata

Kolkata: A major fire broke out at a slum in Kolkata's Bagbazar area on Wednesday evening. At least 24 fire tenders were pressed into service as the blaze engulfed several houses in the slum on Kshirode Vidyavinode Avenue beside the Bagbazar Women's College near the Chitapore Lock Gate Bridge. Blasts were heard in the slum which police suspect to be of gas cylinders at the houses on fire, officials said. There were no reports of any casualty as most of the people were evacuated on time, they said. The blaze also spread to the adjacent Sarada Mayer Bari as the firefighters escorted the saints out, an officer of the fire department said. "The reason for the fire is not yet known. The firemen are fighting it tooth and nail and hopefully, it will soon be under control," an officer of the Kolkata Police said.

BADAUN CASE:
PRIEST REMANDED
TO POLICE CUSTODY

Badaun (UP), Jan. 13: A temple priest and his accomplices accused of raping and killing a 50-year-old woman here have been remanded to one-day police custody by a local court. Circle officer of Bilsa, Anirudh Singh, said on Wednesday that, "The three accused persons in the Ughaiti incident have already been sent to jail. But there are some questions which need to be answered. For this, it is necessary to take the three accused on remand". A request through video conferencing was made to the court of the chief judicial magistrate for police remand on Tuesday and the request was granted. The family members of the woman had accused the temple priest and his accomplices of raping and killing the woman, an anganwadi worker. A case was registered against the accused and two of them identified as Vedram and Jaspal were arrested on January 5. Later the priest was also arrested.

150-m cross-border
tunnel found in J&K

This is the 3rd tunnel unearthed by alert BSF guards

Jammu, Jan. 13: A 150-metre tunnel constructed along the International Border (IB) to facilitate infiltration of terrorists into Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistan was detected by Border Security Force (BSF) personnel in Hiranagar sector of Kathua district on Wednesday, officials said.

This is the third tunnel unearthed by alert border guards along the IB in the twin districts of Samba and Kathua in Jammu region over the past six months and ninth in the past decade.

"A nearly 150-metre-long tunnel was detected by a BSF patrol party during an anti-tunnelling operation in Bobiyaan village of Hiranagar sector on Wednesday morning," Inspector General of BSF, Jammu frontier, N.S. Jamwal told reporters at the scene. He along with other senior officers rushed to Bobiyaan soon after the detection of the tunnel.

"The opposite of this side is Pakistan's Shakergarh which is notorious for having launch pads and bases of terrorists. We have inputs available with us as a result of that we are sensitive to whatever is happening here," the BSF officer said, assuring that all necessary measures are in place to counter Pakistani designs.

He said sand bags with Pakistani markings are evidence of the hand of Pakistani establishment in the construction of this tunnel, which is identical to the previously detected tunnels hav-



Security officers investigate near the mouth of a 150-metre underground tunnel, constructed allegedly by Pakistan beneath IB, at Hiranagar sector of Kathua district on Wednesday.

— PTI

ing a depth of 25 to 30 metre with two to three feet diameter.

Asked whether this tunnel was recently dug or it's an old one, the BSF officer said it is a matter of investigation.

However, he said some of the sand bags recovered from the tunnel have 2016-17 year of manufacture which suggest that it is an old tunnel.

"We were searching for this tunnel for a long time and its detection was the effort of the anti-tunnelling operation which is underway all along the IB. Whether any infiltration had taken place through this tunnel in the past can be said after completion of

our investigation," he said.

Jamwal, however, said the BSF is sure that no infiltration had taken place through this tunnel in the recent past.

"We are undertaking some development works here and have strengthened the security in view of the anti-tunnelling drive, he said.

Referring to the killing of two Pakistani infiltrators in Surankote area of Poonch district and an encounter in Srinagar last month, the IG said Pakistan is always looking for an opportunity to push terrorists into Jammu, Kashmir, whether it is through Line of Control (LoC) or

IB. "They are continuing with the attempts but we are fully alert to the situation. Our alertness resulted in detection of underground tunnels and shooting down of a Hexa-copter loaded with a huge cache of arms and ammunition," he said, adding the border protection grid comprising army, BSF and police are working jointly to scuttle Pakistan's attempts to push terrorists and weapons into this side.

Last year, the BSF detected two such tunnels in Samba district on August 28 and November 22 following successful infiltration by two groups of terrorists who were subsequently neutralised in separate encounters along Jammu-Srinagar national highway while they were enroute to Kashmir in trucks.

While three Pakistani terrorists affiliated with Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) were eliminated in a gunfight in Nagrota area near Jammu after they were intercepted aboard a Kashmir-bound truck in January last year, another group of Pakistani terrorists armed with weapons and a large quantity of grenades were killed at the same spot on November 19.

Investigations suggested both the groups infiltrated into this side through underground tunnels.

Meanwhile, Pakistani Rangers violated ceasefire by resorting to unprovoked firing on forward posts and villages in the Border Outpost area of Gurnam in Hiranagar sector, the officials said.

— PTI

HC: Mandate of 30 days notice
under Spl Marriage Act optional

Lucknow, Jan. 13: In a judgement that is likely to bring relief to inter faith couples, the Allahabad High Court on Wednesday declared as optional the mandatory publication of notice of intended marriages under the Special Marriage Act, saying it violated the right to privacy.

Making such publication mandatory would invade in the fundamental rights of liberty and privacy, the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court said.

It would also affect the couple's freedom to choose

marriage "without interference from state and non-state actors", Justice Vivek Chaudhary said.

He said it shall be optional for the parties to the intended marriage to make a request in writing to the marriage officer to publish or not to publish such a notice.

If the couple did not intend so, the marriage officer has to solemnise their marriage forthwith without publication of 30 days notice, the court said.

A section of the Special Marriage Act, 1954, requires

an inter-faith couple to give written notice of the marriage to the district marriage officer.

The court was considering a habeas corpus petition alleging that an adult girl is being detained against her wishes to marry her lover who belongs to a different religion.

The judgement comes against the backdrop of a recent controversial law enacted by the Uttar Pradesh government which prohibits forcible conversion for the sake of marriage.

— PTI

Mother of murdered
5-year-old moves SC

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 13

In a development in the case involving the brutal murder of a five-year-old girl from Jadupur village in Odisha's Nayagarh district, the mother of the victim on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court seeking Central Bureau of Investigation CBI investigation.

Admitting the petition, the apex Court sent notices to the Odisha government and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to put forth their views.

Soudamini Sahoo, the mother of the victim filed a writ petition under Article 32 of the Constitution of India in exercise of her right to Constitutional remedies.

Soudamini has been opposing the investigation into the case launched by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Odisha Crime Branch apprehending a shoddy probe on account of the alleged involvement of influential politicians belonging to the ruling party in the crime.

She had earlier raised doubts over the veracity of the probe, especially when the sleuths overlooked her complaint in bringing the "main accused" under the ambit of the investigation. She had identified Babuli Nayak, a close associate of

● **ADMITTING THE** petition, the apex Court sent notices to the Odisha government and the CBI to put forth their views.

● **SAUDAMINI SAHOO**, the mother of the victim, has been opposing the investigation into the case launched by a SIT of the Odisha Crime Branch apprehending a shoddy probe on account of the alleged involvement of influential politicians.

Minister Arun Sahoo as the "main accused" behind the crime who, she said, was not properly investigated by the SIT.

She had repeatedly punched holes in the findings of the SIT and alleged that the probe team had falsely implicated a juvenile in the case while the real culprits were moving scot-free.

The little girl, daughter of Ashok Sahoo and Soudamini Sahoo, was allegedly kidnapped on July 14 while playing in front of her house in the afternoon.

Her skeletal remains were recovered from the backyard of her house on July 23.

The parents of the girl alleged the girl was kidnapped and killed by one Babuli Nayak, a close aide of minister Arun Nayak.

Ashok alleged that Babuli ran an organ trade racket in the area.

NCB SUMMONS
MAHA MIN'S
SON-IN-LAW

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 13

In a major embarrassment for the senior NCP minister Nawab Malik, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) summoned his son-in-law Samir Khan on Wednesday in connection with an alleged drugs case. The NCB's action came after its arrest of one of the co-owners of the Mucchad Panwala shop in Mumbai.

Samir Khan is the husband of Nilofar, the daughter Malik, who is a minister of minority affairs and skill development in the MVA government in Maharashtra. He is also the chief spokesperson of the NCP.

According to the NCB sources, the agency summoned Khan for questioning in an alleged drug procurement case and recorded his statement. Khan's name came up during the interrogation of British national and drug peddler Karan Sajani.

There is an online transaction of ₹20,000 between Sajani and Khan. "Samir Khan has been called to verify the same. We want to verify credentials of this transaction and, hence, summoned him," an official said.

Airline official's murder in
Patna raises political heat

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, JAN. 13

Nitish Kumar led NDA government facing attack over rising crime graph in Bihar was in for another setback when a private airline official Rupesh Kumar Singh was gunned down in Patna Tuesday evening.

The incident occurred outside his residential complex in Patna's crowded Punaichak area under Shastri Nagar police station.

According to the police, he had returned from the airport after duty and was entering into his residential building when criminals started firing indiscriminately and pumped at least six bullets from the window of the car. He was rushed to a hospital for treatment where doctors declared him brought dead.

While investigating the case police found that CCTV of the building was not working and the security guard was not



Nitish Kumar

present when the incident occurred.

According to police officials, "A special investigation team has been formed to probe the case. We are also trying to find a motive behind the killing".

However, according to reports, the police on Wednesday found some vital clues in the murder of Rupesh Kumar Singh. Sources said that CCTV from the nearby building suggests that there were two motorcycle-borne assailants and they appeared to be following him from the airport.

The incident has triggered sharp reactions from across the political spectrum in Bihar. BJP leader and Rajya Sabha

MP Vivek Thakur raised questions on the law and order scenario of the state said that "the police should either reach some conclusion or hand over the case to the CBI without delay".

BJP is a part of Nitish Kumar government in Bihar. The harsh statement issued by the ruling alliance leader has aroused political temperance in the state.

On the other hand RJD leader, Tejashwi Yadav on Wednesday demanded Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's resignation over his failure in controlling rising crime graph in the state.

"Criminals protected by those in power in Bihar killed airport manager Rupesh Kumar Singh in Patna outside his residence. He was affable and friendly. I am deeply saddened by his untimely death. It seems that now criminals are running the government in Bihar", Tejashwi said in a tweet.

SC TAKES SUO MOTU
COGNIZANCE OF
RISING POLLUTION
IN YAMUNA RIVER

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 13

The Supreme Court on Wednesday took suo motu cognizance of the rising pollution level in river Yamuna in the national capital and appointed senior counsel Meenakshi Arora as amicus curiae to assist the court in the matter.

Chief Justice Sharas A. Bobde heading a bench also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian took suo motu cognizance of the pollution level in the river Yamuna in the course of the hearing of a plea by Delhi Jal Board complaining that Haryana was discharging untreated wastewater in the river which has resulted increase in the ammonia level in the river.

While taking suo motu cognizance of the pollution in river Yamuna, the top court also issued notice to Haryana on a plea by Delhi Jal Board.

Arora appearing for Delhi Jal Board told the court that the sewage treatment plants for treating waste water set up by Haryana government at different points on the river Yamuna were not working as a consequence untreated wastewater was flowing in the river contributing to an increase in the ammonia level.

Arora told the court that due to an increase in the ammonia level in river Yamuna, it was becoming unfit for consumption and ammonia mixing with other pollutants had the potential to cause cancer.

Coupled with this, she told the court that the rising ammonia level was impacting the working of the water treatment plants installed by the Delhi Jal Board for the treatment of waste water.

— *With inputs from Sonu Shrivastava, Gilvester Assary, Manoj Anand, Akshay Kumar Sahoo, Rabindra Nath Choudhary & Rajib Chowdhuri*

COVID | FIGHT

Maha says it has got fewer doses of the vaccine than it requires

States all set to start vaccination

DC CORRESPONDENTS HYDERABAD, JAN. 13

Ahead of the January 16 vaccination deadline, states have started receiving the vaccines from the Central government to be administered to the frontline health workers on priority basis among others.

MAHARASHTRA

Even before the inoculation of Covid Vaccine began, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope on Wednesday alleged that the state has received less doses of the vaccine than its requirement. Mr Tope said that the state has received only 9.63 lakh vials of Covishield vaccine from the SII (Serum Institute of India) and only 20,000 vials from the Bharat Biotech, while the require-

ment of the vaccines in Maharashtra is 17.5 lakh in first phase.

KERALA

With the first consignment of Covishield vaccine from Serum institute of India arriving in Kochi on Wednesday, the state is all set to launch its vaccine drive. Kerala will receive a total of 4,33,500 doses of Covishield.

ASSAM

Assam government has completed the preparation for rolling out the vaccine on January 16 as it received the first consignment of the vaccine at the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport. A SpiceJet freighter ferried over 730 kg of cargo in 20 boxes having doses to be

distributed for Assam and Meghalaya. A senior health official said that in the first lot the state got 2,01,500 doses.

ODISHA

A day after receiving 4.08 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccine Covishield from Serum Institute of India, Odisha on Wednesday got the first consignment of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin dispatched from Hyderabad. The consignment of 20,000 doses of Covaxin landed at Biju Patnaik International Airport.

MADHYA PRADESH

The first consignment of 94,000 doses of Covishield vaccine reached Bhopal airport from Mumbai on Wednesday. The vaccine vials were transported to

the state vaccine Centre in Bhopal from Raja Bhoj airport in an insulated van of state health department, an official of state public relations department said.

CHHATTISGARH

As many as 3.23 doses of Covishield reached Raipur in Chhattisgarh from Pune on Wednesday afternoon to kick off the first phase of vaccination in the state. "The vaccine vials were shifted in refrigerated vans to the state vaccine Centre in Raipur", Chhattisgarh's Mission Director for National Health Mission Priyanka Shukla said.

WEST BENGAL

A vehicle carrying Covid-19 vaccine was stuck in a traffic jam in Burdwan



US Covid toll hits new daily record of 4.5K

Washington, Jan. 13: The US death toll from Covid-19 hit a new daily record of nearly 4,500, Johns Hopkins University said Tuesday evening.

As the health crisis rages out of control in the US, this was the first time the toll in the country hardest hit by the pandemic surpassed 4,000 in 24 hours. The US recorded more than 235,000 new cases of Coronavirus infection and 4,470 deaths, according to the Johns Hopkins tally as of 8:30 pm (0130 GMT).

Around 131,000 people are now hospitalised in the US with Covid-19, said the Covid Tracking Project. The weekly average of fatalities is at its highest level since the pandemic started, it said.

Faced with these grim numbers and the presence of the new, more contagious Covid variant, authorities announced Tuesday that people wishing to fly to the US must show proof of a negative Covid test prior to departure.

The country, where health restrictions vary drastically between states and compliance can be spotty, is ultimately counting on a massive vaccination campaign begun in mid-December to bring the health crisis to an end.

But the effort is running behind, with just 9.3 million people having received the first of two injections of the two vaccines authorized in America. That is less than 10 percent of the population. — AFP

VIRUS TEST FOR PASSENGERS LANDING IN U.S.

New York, Jan. 13: Anyone flying to the US will soon need to show proof of a negative test for Covid-19, health officials have announced. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention requirement expands on a similar one announced late last month for passengers coming from the United Kingdom.

Covid is already widespread in the US, with more than 22 million cases reported to date, including more than 375,000 deaths. The new measures are designed to try to prevent travellers from bringing in newer forms of the virus that scientists say can spread more easily.

The CDC order is to take effect in about two weeks, on January 26. It requires air passengers to get a Covid-19 test within three days before their flight departs to the US, and to provide written proof of the test result to the airline. Travellers can also provide documentation that they had the infection in the past and recovered.

Airlines are ordered to stop passengers from boarding if they don't have proof of a negative test or a prior infection. "Testing does not eliminate all risk," CDC Director Robert R. Redfield said. — AFP

Pence refuses to invoke 25th Amendment

Washington, Jan. 13: US Vice President Mike Pence told House leaders Tuesday he does not support invoking the 25th Amendment process to remove Donald Trump, all but guaranteeing an impeachment vote against the besieged president. "With just eight days left in the President's term, you and the Democratic Caucus are demanding that the Cabinet and I invoke the 25th Amendment," Pence wrote to House Speaker Nancy

Pelosi, referring to the process that would declare Trump unable to fulfill his duties and install Pence as acting president for the remainder of the term. "I do not believe that such a course of action is in the best interest of our nation or consistent with our Constitution," he said.

Democrats mobilised rapidly to begin the process to have Trump removed after he encouraged his supporters last Wednesday to

"march" to the US Capitol and "fight." In a violent insurrection, the rioters stormed past outnumbered police, rampaged through and ransacked the building, and interrupted Congress as it was certifying Joe Biden's election victory.

The Democratic-controlled US House of Representatives, which is rushing ahead towards impeaching Trump over the unprecedented Capitol Hill attack, has passed a resolu-

tion urging Vice President Mike Pence to invoke 25th Amendment to remove him from office.

The resolution was voted by 223 to 205 votes on Tuesday night. The voting was mostly on party lines, with one Republican voting in favour of the resolution and five abstaining.

Earlier in the day Trump said the 25th Amendment was of "zero risk" to him.

— Agencies

CAPITOL HILL RIOTERS: 160 FBI PROBES

Washington, Jan. 13: The FBI has opened more than 160 investigations against the January 6 Capitol Hill rioters, officials said here, and asserted this is just the tip of the iceberg. The agency has worked hand-in-hand with the United States Attorney's Office and law enforcement partners in DC and across the country to arrest and charge multiple

individuals who took part in last week's breach of the US Capitol, FBI Washington Field Office Assistant Director In-Charge Steven M. D'Antuono said.

"In six days, we have opened over 160 case files, and that's just the tip of the iceberg," he said, adding the FBI has received more than 100,000 pieces of digital media. — PTI



Despite threats, Navalny to fly home

Moscow, Jan. 13: Top Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny said Wednesday he would go home to Russia over the weekend despite the Russian prison service's latest motion to put him behind bars for allegedly breaching the terms of his suspended sentence and probation. Navalny, who has been convalescing in

Germany from an August poisoning with a nerve agent that he has blamed on the Kremlin, charged that Russian President Vladimir Putin was now trying to deter him from coming home with new legal motions. The Kremlin has repeatedly denied a role in the opposition leader's poisoning. — AP

SEARCH ON FOR VOICE RECORDER

Jakarta, Jan. 13: Divers searching for a crashed jet's cockpit voice recorder were sifting through mud and plane debris on the seabed between Indonesian islands on Wednesday to retrieve information key to learning why the Sriwijaya Air jet nosedived into the Java Sea over the weekend. Indonesian navy divers on Tuesday recovered the flight data recorder from the jet that disappeared on Saturday, minutes after taking off from Jakarta with 62 people aboard. The information on both black boxes will be key to the crash investigation.

The 26-year-old Boeing 737-500 had resumed commercial flights last month after almost nine months out of service because of flight cutbacks caused by the Covid pandemic. The US Federal Aviation Administration sent an airworthiness directive requiring operators of various Boeing 737 aircraft models, including the 737-500, to carry out engine checks before they can be flown again after being out of service.

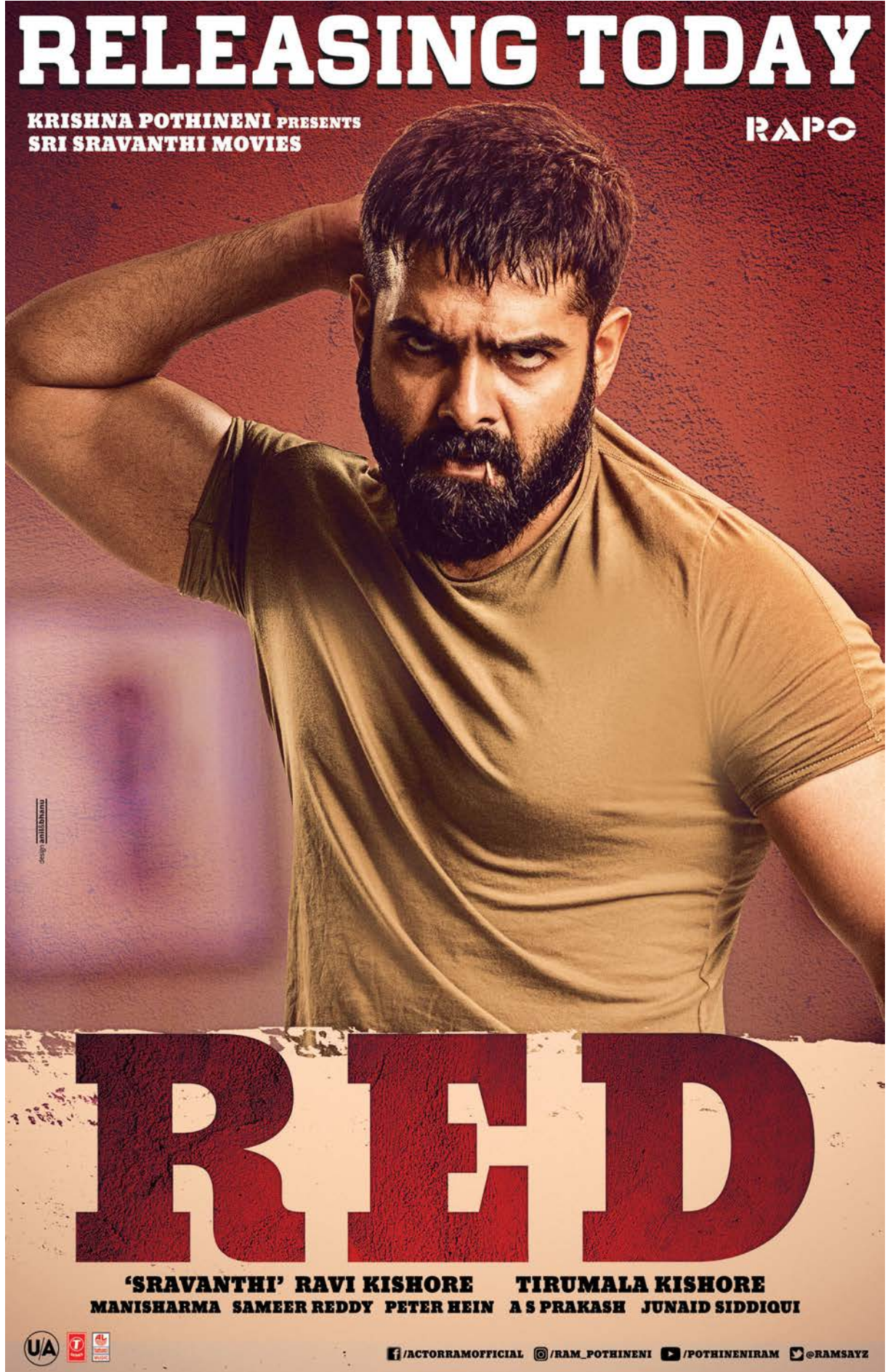
The order followed reports of engines shutting down in mid-flight because of corrosion in a key valve. Director General of Air Transportation Novie Riyanto said the plane was inspected on December 2, including checks for engine corrosion, and was declared airworthy by Indonesia's Transportation Ministry on December 14. It resumed commercial flights on December 22, according to ministry data.

After returning to service, the plane made 132 flights, including the last one, according to aviation-data firm Flightradar24. Aviation experts said planes that are parked for long stretches can be returned to flight safely. — AP



LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?
We have it for you

DECCAN CHRONICLE



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49,492.32	-0.05
Nifty 50	14,564.90	0.01
S&P 500*	3,809.67	0.22
Dollar (₹)	73.14	0.15
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.13	-0.49
Euro (₹)	89.16	-0.10
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,877*108	0.22
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	56.24	-0.60
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.947	0.27
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.107	-2.72

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Foxconn sets up auto arm as Apple car looms

Apple Inc's Taiwanese partner Foxconn Technology Group is setting up a car venture, strengthening its automotive capabilities amid reports that Apple is considering making its own electric vehicles. Many technology companies are looking to expand in vehicles. Foxconn is joining forces with Chinese car-maker Zhejiang Geely Holding Group Co to provide production and consulting services to global automotive enterprises.

Adani Green's promoter sells ₹1,840-cr shares



Adani Trading Services LLP, a promoter entity of Adani Green, sold 2 crore shares of Adani Green Energy Ltd worth over Rs 1,840 through open market transactions. Block deal data with the BSE shows Adani Trading Services had divested 2,00,96,000 scrips in the price range of Rs 906 to 916.15, amounting to Rs 1,840.20 crore. The shares were purchased by Acme Trade and Investment Ltd.

Registration fee for investment advisors reduced

The Sebi has cut down application and registration fees for individuals and corporates seeking a registered investment advisor status. Now, individuals and firms (partnership) will have to pay Rs 2,000 while applying for an investment advisor certificate instead of Rs 5,000 so far. The application fee for corporates, including LLPs, has been brought down to Rs 10,000 from Rs 25,000.

CESC net profit increases 25% to ₹328 crore in Q3

CESC Ltd posted a 25 per cent jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 328 crore for December quarter against Rs 263 crore in the year-ago quarter. Total income rose to Rs 2,581 crore from Rs 2,377 crore. The board declared an interim dividend of Rs 45 per equity share, or 450 per cent. The board has also decided to reorient and reorganise the distribution business under Eminent Electricity Distribution Ltd, a subsidiary.



Q3 net profit rises 17% to ₹5,200 cr Infy raises FY21 revenue outlook

New Delhi, Jan. 13: Infosys on Wednesday posted a 16.6 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 5,197 crore for the December 2020 quarter, and increased its revenue growth guidance for FY21 to 4.5-5 per cent on the back of large project wins and strong deal pipeline.

The Bengaluru-based company, whose large deal total contract value rose to an all-time high of \$7.13 billion in the quarter under review, had registered a net profit (after minority interest) of Rs 4,457 crore in the year-ago period.

Infosys's revenue grew 12.3 per cent to Rs 25,927 crore in the quarter ended December 2020 from Rs 23,092 crore in the year-ago period.

Buoyed by the strong performance, Infosys increased its FY21 revenue growth forecast to 4.5-5 per cent in constant currency terms from its previous guidance of 2-3 per cent growth.

"We have had an exceptionally strong quarter across multiple dimensions...We achieved the highest large deals win in our history with the deal value of \$7.1 billion. This includes the largest deal in our history and what we believe is the largest deal in the history of the Indian IT services industry," Infosys CEO and MD Salil Parekh told reporters in a virtual conference.

He added that overall large deal value for the nine-month period of this financial year was at more



WIPRO Q3 NET PROFIT UP 20.8%

New Delhi, Jan. 13: IT services major Wipro on Wednesday posted an about 21 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,968 crore for the December 2020 quarter. The net profit attributable to shareholders in the year-ago period was at Rs 2,455.9 crore.

Its revenue from operations grew nearly 1.3 per cent to Rs 15,670 crore from Rs 15,470.5 crore.

Wipro, which gets a bulk of its topline from IT services, said it expects revenues from that business to be in the range of \$2,102 million to \$2,143 million in the March 2021 quarter. This translates into a sequential growth of 1.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent for the March quarter.

For the December quarter, IT services revenue grew 3.9 per cent sequentially to \$2,071 million, exceeding the forecast of 1.5-3.5 per cent that had been given by the company in October.

Wipro has delivered a second consecutive quarter of strong performance on order booking, revenue and margins. Five of our sectors grew over 4 per cent sequentially. We closed our largest ever deal win in Continental Europe," Wipro CEO & MD Thierry Delaporte said in a statement.

—PTI

than \$12 billion, and the net new large deal value for the same period was over \$8 billion which positioned the company "very strongly" for the quarters ahead.

"Looking ahead, we continue to see momentum in our business, strong mar-

ket share gain and increased speed of digital transformation for our clients...for next year, we remain extremely confident, we clearly see that we will have double-digit growth in the next financial year," he added.

—PTI

Amazon starts ₹89/month mobile video plan with Airtel

SARITHA RAI
JAN. 13

Amazon.com Inc. is starting its first mobile-only Prime Video plan, targeting the hundreds of millions of entertainment-hungry smartphone users in India as the country's streaming market surges. The single-user plan is available to wireless carrier Bharti Airtel's prepaid customers for as low as Rs 89 (\$1.20) a month after a 30-day free trial. The streaming plan comes with 6 gigabytes of data, which can also be used on other services.

Amazon and rivals Netflix Inc., Google's YouTube and Walt Disney Co are ramping up streaming services in the world's second-biggest smartphone market, where mobile internet prices are among the lowest on the planet. The companies are plowing hundreds of millions of dollars into creating original shows in multiple lan-

AMAZON ACADEMY TO COACH FOR JEE

Chennai, Jan. 13: Amazon has entered into edu-tech space with the launch of Amazon Academy to help students preparing for the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) for entrance to engineering colleges. In addition to the JEE, those preparing for BITSAT, VITEEE, SRMJEE, and MET exams will also benefit from the free content resources.

—FC Bureau

guages and buying rights to Bollywood film premieres and cricket games.

"We want to democratise the access to content and through this unique offering reach hundreds of millions of users," Gaurav Gandhi, director and India head for Amazon

Prime Video, said in a phone interview. About 85 per cent of internet access in India is via mobile devices and nearly 90 per cent of all mobile users that access data are on prepaid plans, he said.

Prime Video already has customers in more than 4,300 cities and towns in India and the new plans will help Amazon push deeper into the hinterland. In the next few years, India will have as many streaming-service users as TV viewers and that calls for innovation on the product and distribution fronts, Gandhi said. The Seattle-based e-commerce giant's streaming service is available in about 240 countries and territories while its Prime membership is available in 19 countries including India. The nation of 1.3 billion is the first where a Prime Video standalone plan is available aside from the Prime membership.

—Bloomberg

TEXTILE SALES RECOVERING EVEN AFTER FESTIVE SEASON

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

The domestic textile sector, which started recovering during the festive season, is keeping up the momentum even in Q4.

"People are buying on e-commerce platforms and they have started going out also. Vaccine is acting as a feel-good factor. The recovery momentum would continue till the end of the fiscal," said Sidharth Rajagopal, executive director of Texprocil.

Rating firm Icria too finds that the recovery will be supported by the opening up of economies and markets, improved consumer confidence levels and continued pick up in discretionary spending. This builds on the growth seen in the recent months due to pent-up demand and festive buying.

However, the growth in some segments involving discretionary spends or aspirational buying such as formal, party wear and mid to high-value casual wear, is likely to remain lower compared to other essential product categories such as active/lounge wear and affordable-to-medium value casual apparels, given the shift witnessed in consumer usage and preferences. Within fabrics, the cotton knitted fabric segment as well as blended fabrics are likely to perform better, given their higher usage in casual or lounge wear.

PAYTM MONEY TO OFFER F&O TRADING

New Delhi, Jan. 13: Paytm Money, a subsidiary of fintech major Paytm, on Wednesday said it will provide futures & options (F&O) trading on its platform, as it eyes facilitating daily turnover of Rs 1.5 lakh crore in next 18-24 months.

The platform—which also offers services around stocks, direct mutual funds, ETF, IPO, NPS, and digital gold—is focussed on bringing "wealth services to 100 million Indians," Paytm founder and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma said during the online launch of the F&O trading service.

"We are on a mission to bring wealth services to 100 million Indians and this launch will provide further acceleration. This product has been made keeping in mind the mobile-first experience," he said.

Paytm Money will charge brokerage at Rs 10 for all F&O trades, which is in line with its intraday charges of Rs 10 and free for delivery.

Sebi bans CNBC Awaaz show host from market

New Delhi, Jan. 13: Regulator Sebi on Wednesday barred CNBC Awaaz show host Hemant Ghai, his wife and mother from the capital markets for indulging in fraudulent trading practices.

Hemant Ghai had the advance information about the recommendation to be made on the "stock 20-20" show, co-hosted by him, and that he directly or indirectly used it to his advantage, Sebi said in an interim order.

The show features recommendations on certain stocks to be bought and sold during the day.

In addition, he has been directed to cease and desist from undertaking any activity related to giving investment advice, publishing of research reports related to the securities market, till further directions.

Further, the Sebi has also directed to impound the proceeds of Rs 2.95 crore generated by fraudulent trades.

Sebi, prima facie, found that Hemant along with his wife Jaya Hemant Ghai and mother Shyam Mohini Ghai employed a scheme to conduct fraudulent or unfair trading based on the advance information pertaining to recommendations to be



Hemant Ghai

ther directions.

The regulator found that shares were consistently purchased in the trading accounts of Hemant Ghai's wife and mother, one day prior to the day of recommendation on the show.

Hemant was prima facie using the trading accounts of his wife and mother.

made in the show "stock-20-20".

On analysis of the trading pattern in the trading account of Jaya Hemant Ghai and Shyam Mohini Ghai for the period between January 1, 2019, and May 31, 2020, high correlation of their trades was observed with the stocks recommended in the show. It thereby generated the proceeds of Rs 2.95 crore by carrying out fraudulent trading in respect of recommended stocks.

The regulator found that shares were consistently purchased in the trading accounts of Hemant Ghai's wife and mother, one day prior to the day of recommendation on the show.

—PTI

Global export growth seen at -5.6%

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

The United Nation's trade body has upwardly revised its projection of global merchandise trade for 2020 from a double-digit decline to a single-digit drop. However, it would still be the lowest growth for merchandise export volumes since the 2008 financial crisis.

In June, Unctad had predicted that merchandise trade would see an annual decline of 20 per cent in 2020. In the second quarter, trade had dropped by 27

per cent. However, there has been a recovery in the third quarter and the fourth quarter over the previous quarters. Taking this recovery into account, Unctad now predicts that global merchandise export values and volumes for 2020 are expected to be -5.6 and -8.7 per cent lower than levels seen in 2019.

The third quarter saw a robust recovery in values, which grew by 20.1 per cent from the bleak second quarter. Third quarter official statistics have not yet been released for merchandise export volumes, for

which growth is nowcast by Unctad at 8.1 per cent quarter-over-quarter.

The recovery in merchandise export values and volumes is likely to continue in the fourth quarter, though not at quite the same pace. Values and volumes are nowcast to grow in the fourth quarter by 11.6 and 3.3 per cent quarter-over-quarter, respectively. This growth comes despite the continuing spread of Covid-19, especially in the US and Europe, which has necessitated the reinstatement of lockdown measures.

—PTI

RBI sets up panel on digital lending

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, JAN. 13

After warning borrowers on availing loans from unregulated digital lending websites and mobile apps last month, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday announced that it is forming a working group (WG) to study all aspects of digital lending activities in the regulated financial sector as well as by unregulated players so that an appropriate regulatory approach could be put in place.

The group has to evaluate digital lending activities and assess the penetration and standards of outsourced digital lending activities in RBI regulated entities, identify risks posed by unregulated digital lending to financial stability, regulated entities and consumers, suggest regulatory changes to promote orderly growth of digital lending, recommend measures for expansion of specific regulatory or statutory perimeter and suggest the role of various

regulatory and government agencies, recommend a robust fair practices code for digital lending players, insured or outsourced, suggest measures for enhanced consumer protection; and recommend measures for robust data governance, data privacy and data security standards for deployment of digital lending services.

The group has to submit its report within three months. Recently there were several incidents where borrowers committed suicides due to harassment from the recovery agents of these digital lending platforms.

The working group will consist of both internal and external members and will be chaired by Jayant Kumar Dash, executive director, RBI.

The external members of the panel are Vikram Mehta, co-founder, Monexo Fintech and Rahul Sasi, cyber security expert and founder of CloudSEK.

IRFC's mega IPO opens on Jan. 18

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 13

The Indian Railway Finance Corporation's Rs 4,600-crore initial public offering will open for bidding on January 18. The issue, in the price band of Rs 25 to Rs 26 per equity share of Rs 10 face value, will close on January 20.

IRFC is the dedicated market borrowing arm of the Indian Railways. It raises financial resources for the expansion and running of Indian Railways through capital markets and other borrowings.

The IPO of over 178.20 crore equity shares comprises a fresh issue of over 118.80 crore shares and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 59.40 equity shares.

The public issue will constitute up to 13.64 per cent of the post-issue paid-up capital. The net proceeds from the fresh issue will be utilised for augmenting the firm's equity capital base.

DOOMSDAY | GOSPEL

Book that forecast US's decline due to domestic conflicts 30 years ago now sells for \$2,500

America against America is most sought after book in China

Jan. 13: After chaos engulfed the US Capitol last week, some Chinese intellectuals found themselves searching for copies of an out-of-print book to make sense of events. "America Against America" forecast the US's decline due to domestic conflicts more than 30 years ago.

Among the things driving demand was the author: Wang Huning, the Communist Party's No. 5 leader and top political theorist to three Chinese presidents. Some copies have surged to more than 16,600 yuan (\$2,500) on Kungfuzi, an online marketplace for antiques. That's more than 3,000 times its original asking price in 1991, when Japan was more widely seen as America's big economic rival.

"The interest in the book is the result of a renewed desire to understand a US that is in the midst of a civil cold war," said Wang Wen, executive dean

of Renmin University's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies. "China's doubts about the US will certainly increase in light of recent events."

The Capitol Hill turmoil is being read in Beijing as the most powerful sign yet that societal fissures in the US are behind increasingly erratic foreign policy shifts. That's feeding Chinese apprehension about reaching agreements on trade or other politically charged disputes with president-elect Joe Biden.

"The instability of a negotiation partner means that its public credibility is on the decline and the risk of breaking contracts or promises is greater," Wang Wen said on Tuesday.

Such skepticism illustrates how Washington's political strife is compounding Biden's challenge of stabilising US relationships around the world after four years of shocks and



surprises under President Donald Trump. Among his most difficult tasks will be convincing China's Xi Jinping to make concessions that go beyond the "phase one" trade deal announced by Trump a year ago.

Not only did that agreement fail to address most of the Trump administration's biggest trade grievances, including government support for strategic industries and stronger action on state-run enterprises, but China has purchased little more than half of

the \$172 billion worth of US goods it agreed to buy last year under the deal. Disputes between the two countries have since spiralled into everything from microchips to Taiwan, as Trump increasingly sought to blame China for his election year difficulties.

Meanwhile, Xi appears to have moved on, buoyed by early success against the coronavirus and a resilient economy. Xi has lately emphasised "self-sufficiency" and girded for a prolonged struggle, urging local officials earlier this week to "not only dare to fight, but also be good at fighting," according to the official Xinhua News Agency. State media accuses the US of abandoning four decades of engagement in favour of containment.

As Washington was gripped by one of the most divisive presidential transitions ever, Xi finalised a long-sought investment deal with the European

Union that touches on many of the issues left out of the US pact. The agreement had been championed by German chancellor Angela Merkel, a key American ally who early in the Trump presidency declared that Europe could no longer rely on others.

"While both sides have paid a price for the trade war, the US will suffer more in the long run because it damaged its position and reputation as the central pillar of global trade and commerce," said Mei Xinyu, who is with a research group under the Ministry of Commerce in Beijing.

Wang Huning's book, which was written during an academic visit to the US in 1988, predicted that America's emphasis on "individualism, hedonism and democracy" would eventually cause rifts that sapped its competitive drive. Countries like Japan—built on "collectivism, selflessness and author-

itarianism"—had the upper hand, said Wang Huning, who's now one of seven people on the politburo's supreme Standing Committee.

That thesis hasn't stood up so well over the past three decades: of the US's two main rivals of that era—Japan and the Soviet Union—one collapsed and the other saw its economy stagnate. That left the US as the world's undisputed superpower, and today it still boasts the world's most powerful military and biggest economy, powered by waves of successive innovation-driven technology booms.

But confidence is growing in China that the balance may be shifting. Besides the transition chaos, the US's struggles against the coronavirus, racial justice protests and gun violence—subjects featured prominently in China's state-run media—have fed the narrative of American decline.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Ankita out of Oz Open qualifiers

Melbourne: Ankita Raina's bid to qualify for a Grand Slam singles main draw failed yet again when she lost the final round of the Australian Open qualifying event to Serbian Olga Danilovic on Wednesday.

In the women's singles qualifiers being held in Dubai, Ankita lost the third and final round 2-6, 6-3, 1-6 to her Serbian opponent in almost two hours. Not being able to win points on her first serve hurt Ankita. It was the Indian's sixth attempt to qualify for a competition at the grand stage.

Her defeat means that Sumit Nagal will be the only Indian to compete in the singles event of the first Grand Slam of the season. Nagal has been awarded a wild card entry into the men's singles. Ramkumar Ramanathan had lost in the first round of the men's singles event while Prajnesh Gunneswaran lost in the second round. — PTI

Boxers ready for European tour

New Delhi: Their Olympic preparations back on track after the disruption caused by Covid-19, Indian boxers will be travelling extensively to compete in various European tournaments in the next couple of months starting with the prestigious Strandja Memorial in Bulgaria. Indian boxing's High Performance Director Santiago Nievea revealed that apart from an international schedule, he would also like to see the national championships take place some time before the Olympic Games. "This year, we are starting with the Strandja Memorial in Bulgaria, then hopefully a tournament in Hungary and one more after that. Apart from this, we will be staying put at Bengaluru for the national camp," Nievea said giving a low-down of the plans for the next six months. — PTI

Leverkusen keep Frankfurt at bay

Leverkusen, Germany: Bayer Leverkusen shrugged off Jonathan Tah's sending off to beat Eintracht Frankfurt 4-1 in their rescheduled German Cup game. Leverkusen was leading 3-1 when Tah was sent off in the 73rd minute. The Germany defender hauled down Andr Silva, who would have been through on goal with a chance to pull one back for Frankfurt. Leverkusen's 10 men managed to keep the visitors at bay and Moussa Diaby sealed the home side's win with his second goal in the 87th. Amin Younes had put Frankfurt ahead in the sixth, but Lucas Alario equalized with a penalty in the 27th and Edmond Tapsoba scored Leverkusen's second in 40th with a goal that looked offside. — AP

Durant propels Nets past Nuggets

Los Angeles: Kevin Durant poured in 34 points and handed out 13 assists as the Brooklyn Nets rallied from an 18-point deficit to beat the Denver Nuggets 122-116 in the NBA on Tuesday. Durant added nine rebounds and Bruce Brown chipped in 16 points in a clutch performance in place of absent Nets star Kyrie Irving. Brown's jump shot, off a feed from Durant, knotted the score at 113-113 with 2:16 to play. He followed with a floater that put the Nets ahead for good. Durant scored the Nets' next six points as Brooklyn put it away, denying the Nuggets a sweep on their three-game road trip. Nikola Jokic had 23 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds for Denver, but they were outscored by the Nets 68-46 in the second half. — AFP

Live on TV

BADMINTON

Thailand Open: Pre-quarterfinal matches from 7.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

CRICKET

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament: Odisha vs Tamil Nadu from 11.55 am; Hyderabad vs Bengal from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

Australia vs India: Fourth Test Day 1 from 5.30 am (Friday) on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

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BLAME IT ON IPL

Oz coach says 2020 edition cause for growing injury list

Brisbane, Jan. 13: He loves the IPL but Australia coach Justin Langer on Wednesday questioned the timing of the last year's edition, which he believes could have been a contributing factor in the injury setbacks that both his and the Indian team have endured in the ongoing series.

The IPL was held in the September-November window in 2020 in the United Arab Emirates due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The lucrative tournament is usually held in India during the April-May window. India have had a spate of injuries since the IPL and also in the current Australia series. Australia too had its share of injuries.

"It is really interesting how many injuries (it) has been throughout this summer. I can't help and think that the IPL this year (2020) was in really, probably wasn't ideal timing for anyone, certainly for such a big series like this," Langer said.

The latest addition to the Indian injury list is Ravindra Jadeja and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah. For Australia, David Warner was a big blow but he recovered in time for the last two Tests.

Langer was all praise for the IPL saying it helps in development of young players but was critical of the previous edition's timing. "I love the IPL, I look at IPL now like I used to look at county cricket for our young players. They go and play county cricket and it helps them (in) their cricket development enormously, I think it is the same with the IPL, helps their white-ball develop-

SMITH GETS BACKING OF HIS COACH

Brisbane, Jan 13: Australia coach Justin Langer cannot believe the "absolute load of rubbish" that Steve Smith was trying to scuff up Rishabh Pant's guard in the drawn Sydney Test, and has called the criticism of his "quirks" way out of line and ludicrous.

Smith was accused of scuffing up the batsman's guard during the drinks break in the first session on Monday in the drawn Test. But Langer backed Smith to the hilt, coming down heavily on the criticism, mostly driven by fans online and some former players like Michael Vaughan.

"...I literally cannot believe some of the rubbish I read about Steve Smith. Absolute load of rubbish. I mean, if anyone knows Steve Smith, he is a bit quirky and he does some weird (stuff) and we have laughed about it for the last couple of years," Langer said. — PTI

ment. But the timing of it... because of what happened with Covid... probably wasn't ideal, and I just wonder whether that is having an impact on the injuries that we are seeing for both teams throughout the summer, so I'm sure they'll review that." — PTI



Australia's David Warner (left) and coach Justin Langer attend a training session at the Sydney Cricket Ground in this file photo. — AFP

Limping India train at Gabba

Brisbane, Jan. 13: The injury-ravaged Indian team on Wednesday underwent their first training session at the Gabba here, hoping to field 11 fit players in the series-deciding fourth Test against Australia.

Ruled out of the last Test with an abdominal strain, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah still accompanied the visiting team for their training session.

The likes of Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, skipper Ajinkya Rahane

and others were seen in their training kits.

Bumrah, though, was not in his training outfit as he got involved in a discussion with bowling coach Bharat Arun.

"After an epic fightback in Sydney, it is time to regroup. We have begun our preparations for the final Test at the Gabba!" the BCCI posted on its twitter handle.

Chinaman bowler Kuldeep Yadav was seen bowling at the nets and there is a chance that he could be picked for the

match with influential all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja ruled out due to a fractured thumb.

Also part of the session were seamer Shardul Thakur and all-rounder Washington Sundar. Either T. Natarajan or Shardul is likely to replace Bumrah in the playing XI at Gabba, forming a new-look pace attack alongside Mohammed Siraj and Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

Bumrah picked up the abdominal strain during the third Test in Sydney.

Head coach Ravi Shastri, who was keeping a tab on the proceedings, addressed the team huddle. He was also seen having a discussion with the rest of the support staff, which includes batting coach Vikram Rahtour and fielding coach R. Sridhar, apart from Arun. India have been plagued by a series of injuries on their tour of Australia with Ishant Sharma and Bhuvneshwar Kumar ruled out even before the start of the Test series. — PTI



Members of the Indian team are all ears as coach Ravi Shastri speaks during a practice session at the Gabba Stadium in Brisbane on Wednesday. — BCCI

Manchester United on English table top

London, Jan. 13: Paul Pogba took Manchester United top of the Premier League for the first time in three years as his deflected winner saw off a dogged Burnley 1-0 at Turf Moor on Tuesday.

United now lead defending champions Liverpool by three points ahead of a top-of-the-table clash between the two most successful sides in English football history at Anfield on Sunday. Despite continued speculation over his future, Pogba has played an increasingly important role in United's first serious title challenge since legendary former manager Alex Ferguson retired in 2013.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's

men have now taken 29 from the last possible 33 points to recover from just two wins in their opening six games of the season.

EVERTON WIN AT WOLVERHAMPTON

Everton moved back into the top four and within four points of United as they overcame an injury crisis to beat Wolves 2-1 at Molineux.

The Toffees took an early lead when Alex Iwobi converted Lucas Digne's cross but were pegged back when Ruben Neves levelled for Wolves.

Michael Keane's towering header won the game 13 minutes from time to bolster the Blues' European ambitions.

THE RESULTS			
PREMIER LEAGUE		ITALIAN CUP LAST 16	
Burnley	0	AC Milan	0
Manchester United (Pogba 77)	1	Torino	0
		(Milan win 5-4 on penalties)	
Sheffield United	1	SPANISH LEAGUE	
(Sharp 73-pen)		Granada	2
Newcastle	0	(Suarez 22, Herrera 46-og)	
		Osasuna	0
Wolverhampton	1	Atletico Madrid	2
(Neves 14)		(Correa 17, Saul Niguez 76)	
Everton	2	Sevilla	0
(Iwobi 6, Keane 77)			

Later, Sheffield United ended a 20-game winless league run as Billy Sharp's penalty earned a 1-0 win over Newcastle.

AC MILAN REACH ITALIAN CUP LEAST 8

In Milan, Zlatan

Ibrahimovic got his first start in over seven weeks but AC Milan had to battle into the Italian Cup quarter-finals with a 5-4 win on penalties over Torino after Tuesday's match ended 0-0 after extra time. Hakan Calhanoglu slot-

LYON BELIEVES NO ADVANTAGE FOR AUSTRALIA

Brisbane, Jan. 13: It's still not advantage Australia, believes the country's leading spinner Nathan Lyon, despite playing the series-deciding fourth Test against an injury-ravaged Indian team at a venue where the home team's record is second to none.

The seasoned campaigner refused to overlook the grit and gumption showed by the Indians in the drawn third Test in Sydney.

"I wouldn't say that (Australia) have the advantage. You look at the class throughout the Indian squad, yes they will be missing a couple of big players but they have got a talented squad they can pick from," Lyon said during a virtual press conference on Wednesday.

India will be forced to field a second-string bowling attack with all their premier pacers, including Jasprit Bumrah and spin-bowling all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja ruled out with injuries.

"To be honest, we have to worry about our preparation. We can't look too far at what they are doing. As bowlers, we are very well suited for the Gabba and hopefully we can put them into play nice and early when we have the ball in hand." — PTI

THAILAND | OPEN

Saina, Srikanth off to fine starts

Bangkok, Jan. 13: Star shuttler Saina Nehwal and former world number one Kidambi Srikanth entered the second rounds of their respective events but Parupalli Kashyap made an early exit from the Thailand Open Super 1000 tournament, here on Wednesday.

Saina got the better of Selvaduray Kisona of Malaysia 21-15, 21-15 in the women's singles opening round to set up a clash with Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrungphan.

Saina, who was first forced to withdraw from the event for positive Covid-19 results on Tuesday but later returned a negative test, thanked the Badminton World Federation officials and doctors for allowing her to participate.

"Yesterday, I was given a positive Covid-19 result after my PCR test but I already told them that I had Covid last November, so I have antibodies. I tried to explain this to the doctor and after my blood tests and chest X-rays the doctor said I was OK and I don't have Covid-19," Saina said after her win.

"I am thankful to the doctors, the BWF and everyone who made the decision for me to play. It was a tiring day but I am happy I could comeback and play my match."

Earlier in the day, Srikanth took just 31 minutes to prevail over compatriot Sourabh Verma 21-12, 21-11 in the men's singles, but Kashyap was forced to retire midway in his opening-round match against Jason Anthony Ho-Shue of Canada.

Kashyap was trailing 8-14 in the third game when he chose to retire after pulling his calf muscle.

He had lost the first game 9-21 before making a come-

● **Parupalli Kashyap was trailing 8-14 in the third game when he chose to retire after pulling his calf muscle.**

back to take the second 21-13.

Srikanth will next play eight seed Zii Jia Lee of Malaysia, who defeated another Indian H.S. Prannoy 13-21, 21-14, 21-8.

Sameer Verma too made a first round exit after losing 15-21, 17-21 to Shesar Hiren Rhustavito of Indonesia.

BWF ADDRESSES SRIKANTH COMPLAINT

World Badminton on Wednesday said it is working with Thailand Open organisers to ensure "comfortable" Covid-19 testing conditions during the tournament after Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth was left with a bloodied nose following a test.

The BWF said the Badminton Association of Thailand explained the reasons behind the bleeding.

"Kidambi Srikanth got a bloodied nose after undergoing multiple Covid-19 tests. The athlete had been swabbed three times earlier with the most recent one possibly causing irritation and fragility of the capillaries," the BWF said in a statement.

"Therefore, when the swab was repeated on Tuesday, and factoring in the athlete's tense nature, the position of the stick in the nasal passage was misaligned, which caused the slight bleeding noticed from the tip of the swab."

The world body said Srikanth had no complaints at the time of testing. — PTI



SYED MUSHTAQ | ALI TROPHY

Delhi post 2nd successive win

Mumbai, Jan. 13: Delhi recorded their second straight win in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy after beating Andhra Pradesh by six wickets in an Elite Group E game, here on Wednesday.

Put into bat at the Wankhede Stadium, Andhra were restricted to 124/9 in their 20 overs, as Delhi bowlers led by left-arm pacer Pradeep Sangwan (3/33), put up an impressive show.

Delhi chased the target with three overs to spare even as skipper and India opener Shikhar Dhawan (5) fell cheaply.

For Andhra, Ashwin Hebbur, who walked in at number five (32) was the top scorer as their entire top-order including skipper Ambati Rayudu (1), stumper K.S. Bharat (8) and Ricky Bhuvi (0) struggled.

Andhra were reeling at 36 for four at one stage. Their innings never got going as Delhi made regular inroads. India speedster Ishant Sharma (2/17), right-arm pacer Simarjeet Singh (2/21) and off-spinner Lalit Yadav (2/22) played their roles to perfection.

Delhi had defeated Mumbai in their opening game.

Elewhere, opener Avi Barot and Prerak Mankad struck half centuries before Chetan Sakariya claimed a five-wicket haul as Saurashtra recorded a comfortable 79-run win over Vidarbha in a Group 'D' match in Indore.

Opting to bat, Saurashtra rode on Barot (93 off 44) and Mankad's (59 off 26 balls) innings to post a mammoth 233 for seven.

The pace duo of Chetan Sakariya (5/11) and Mankad (4/48) then wreaked havoc with the ball as Vidarbha were bundled out for 154 in 17.2 overs.

BIST STARS WITH UNBEATEN 146

A blistering 51-ball 146 by captain Punit Bist, which included six fours and 17 sixes, powered Meghalaya to a massive 130-run win over Mizoram in a Plate group match in Chennai.

In other matches, Bihar beat thrashed Sikkim by eight wicket for its second straight win while Chandigarh and Nagaland recorded victories. — PTI

BRIEF SCORES

■ Andhra Pradesh 124/9 (Ashwin Hebbur 32, Pradeep Sangwan 3/33, Ishant Sharma 2/17, Simarjeet Singh 2/21) lost to Delhi 128/4 (Anuj Rawat 33, M. Harishankar Reddy 2/40).