

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI SUNDAY 24 JANUARY 2021



WORLD | 6

Brazil Prez invokes Lord Hanuman as he thanks PM Modi for Covid-19 vaccine

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SPORT | 8

Navdeep says he risked aggravating his injury by bowling in Australia

TABLOID | 16

Rani Mukherji wants to do her bit for changing society's attitude towards women



Vol. 27 No. 338 | 16 PAGES | ₹5.00



The tableau of Uttar Pradesh is displayed during the full dress rehearsal for the upcoming Republic Day Parade, in New Delhi on Saturday. — AFP

Impeachment trial of Trump to begin from February 8

Washington: Opening arguments in the Senate impeachment trial for Donald Trump over the Capitol riot will begin the week of Feb. 8, the first time a former President will face such charges after leaving office. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announced the schedule after reaching an agreement with Republicans, who had pushed for a delay to give him a chance to organise his legal team and prepare a defence on the sole charge of incitement of insurrection. ■ **More on Page 6**

Bangla team to lead Republic Day parade

New Delhi: A Bangladeshi tri-service contingent will lead the annual Republic Day parade in New Delhi, commemorating 50 years of the country's Liberation War. The team will be comprised soldiers of the Bangladesh Army, sailors of the Bangla Navy, and air warriors of the Bangladesh Air Force.

WHO chief thanks PM, India for Covid-19 help

New Delhi: The World Health Organisation has thanked India for "continued support" in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. India has been sending vaccines to countries in the South Asian neighbourhood and to others like Brazil and Morocco. ■ **More on Page 6**



This pop-up appears before we post anything!

WEATHER

Max: 19°C
Min: 10°C
RH: 79%
Rain: 10%
Forecast: Mostly sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Pushya Shuddha Ekadasi till 10.54 pm
Star: Rohini from 11.57 pm
Variyam: 3:08 pm to 4:54 pm; 6 am (Monday)
Durmuhurtam: 4:34 pm to 5:18 pm
Rahukalam: 4:30 pm to 6 pm

SUNSET TODAY 5.53 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.12 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 2.44 PM
MOONSET TODAY 3.15 AM

MODI VS MAMATA BJP, Trinamul fight to claim legacy of Netaji With PM on dais, Jai Shri Ram in air, Didi refuses to speak at event

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JAN. 23

Controversy cast a shadow on "Parakram Diwas", a solemn event organised in Kolkata to mark the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose on Saturday, with a very public and bitter tug of war between the BJP and ruling Trinamul Congress over the legacy of the iconic freedom fighter in poll-bound West Bengal.

Sharing the dais with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee Saturday refused to speak at the event after slogans of "Jai Shri Ram" were raised. Mr Modi was in Kolkata to inaugurate the event organised by the Centre.

All eyes were set on the event at the Victoria Memorial where Mr Modi and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee came face to face after a year. They shared the dais and Ms Banerjee greeted the PM with a welcome stole.

However, their joint public appearance, supposed to be the last before Assembly elections, reverberated with the rising political temperature in the state due to the neck and neck battle between two rival parties.

As the anchors announced Ms Banerjee's name to deliver her address, the CM was greeted with "Jai Shree Ram" slogans from the audience, leaving her furious. One of the anchors tried to pacify those shouting the slogan and urged them to give an opportunity to Ms Banerjee to speak.

But the chief minister erupted in anger and said,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and state chief minister Mamata Banerjee during 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose at Victoria Memorial in Kolkata on Saturday. — PTI

Netaji is the biggest source of inspiration for the dream of Atmanirbhar Bharat and 'Sonar Bangla'. He would have been proud that the government he dreamt of is fighting a pandemic with vaccines developed by it.

— **Narendra Modi,**
Prime Minister

"I think there should be dignity at a government programme. It is a government programme and not an event of any particular political party. It is rather a programme of all political parties and the public at large. I am obliged to the PM and Union ministry of culture for organising the event in Kolkata. But it does not suit you to insult someone after inviting her.

This is a government programme and not a political programme. There has to be dignity. It doesn't behove anybody to invite people and then insult them. I won't speak. Jai Bangla, Jai Hind.

— **Mamata Banerjee,**
Bengal CM

In protest of that I will not say anything." She then angrily returned to her seat.

The event, which would otherwise have gone down as a show of strength by the BJP in West Bengal, was somewhat claimed by the temperamental chief minister who is often referred

■ **Turn to Page 4**

PM distributes 1L land papers in Assam

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, JAN. 23

Prime Minister Narendra Modi who on Saturday gave away ownership certificates to over one lakh families asserted that both the central and state governments are committed to protect the land, integrity, culture and language of the people of Assam. Pointing out as to how Assam is moving forward on the path of peace and progress, Mr Modi while addressing a huge gathering of more than two lakh people at Sivasagar in Upper Assam said that in the last few years since the government has distributed land pattas to over two lakh families.

■ **More on Page 3**

AAP MLA Bharti gets 2-year jail for assaulting AIIMS staff

In Sept. 2016, Bharti had demolished hospital's fence

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 23

A Delhi court on Saturday sentenced AAP MLA Somnath Bharti to two years in jail for assaulting the AIIMS security staff in a case registered in 2016. Additional chief metropolitan magistrate Ravindra Kumar Pandey also imposed a fine of Rs one lakh on the Aam Aadmi Party leader. Bharti, however, was granted bail to enable him to file an appeal before the high court against his conviction in the case and jail term.

According to the prosecution, on September 9, 2016, Bharti, along with nearly 300 others, brought down the fence of a



Somnath Bharti

boundary wall at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) with a JCB operator. "The court is of the considered view that the prosecution has duly proved its case beyond all reasonable doubt against accused Somnath Bharti," the magistrate said.

The court convicted

HK: 10K in lockdown for urgent Covid tests

Hong Kong, Jan. 23: Thousands of Hong Kong residents were locked down in their homes Saturday in an unprecedented move to contain a worsening coronavirus outbreak in the city.

Authorities said in a statement that an area comprising 16 buildings in the city's Yau Tsim Mong district would be locked down until all residents were tested. Residents would not be allowed to leave their homes until they received their test results to prevent cross-infection. "Persons subject

to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained," the government statement said.

The restrictions, which were announced at 4 a.m. in Hong Kong, were expected to end within 48 hours, the government said. Hong Kong has been grappling to contain a fresh wave of the coronavirus since November.

— **AP**
■ **More on Page 6**

US talk show host died weeks after testing positive for Covid Iconic TV anchor Larry King dies at 87

Los Angeles, Jan. 23: Larry King, the suspender-sporting everyman whose broadcast interviews with world leaders, movie stars and ordinary Joe helped define American conversation for a half-century, died Saturday. He was 87.

King died at Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre in Los Angeles, his production company, Ora Media, tweeted. No cause of death was given, but a spokesperson said Jan. 4 that King had Covid-19, had received supplemental oxygen and had been moved out of intensive care. His son Chance



Armstrong also confirmed King's death, CNN reported.

A longtime nationally syndicated radio host, from 1985 through 2010 he was a nightly fixture on CNN, where he won many honours, including two

► **With his celebrity interviews, political debates and topical discussions, King wasn't just an enduring on-air personality. He also set himself apart with the curiosity he brought to every interview**

Peabody awards.

With his celebrity interviews, political debates and topical discussions, King wasn't just an enduring on-air personality. He also set himself apart with the curiosity he brought to every interview, whether

questioning the assault victim known as the Central Park jogger or billionaire industrialist Ross Perot, who in 1992 rocked the presidential contest by announcing his candidacy on King's show.

In its early years, "Larry King Live" was based in Washington, which gave the show an air of gravitas. Likewise King. He was the plainspoken go-between through whom Beltway bigwigs could reach their public, and they did, earning the show prestige as a place where things happened, where news was made. — **AP**

MP: Cong protests over farm laws, cops use tear gas, water cannons



Police use tear gas shells and water cannons on Congress party workers during their protest against the new farm laws in Bhopal on Saturday. — PTI
■ **Report on Page 3**

Farmers nab 'disruptor' at protest site

New Delhi: Protesting farmers camped at Singhu on the Delhi-Haryana border claimed to have captured a man who says he was part of a 10-member team trained to incite violence during the planned tractor rally on January 26 and kill farmer leaders ahead of that. The man, who said he was trained by a police official to disrupt the event on Republic Day, has been handed over to the Haryana police.

The protesters said the young man, caught late on Friday, was part of a conspiracy to break up ongoing agitation which has seen thousands of farmers assembling in one place. ■ **More on Page 2**

India-China meet to solve LAC tiff today

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, JAN. 23

India and China will hold the ninth round of Corps Commanders meeting on Sunday at Moldo to try resolve the ongoing military standoff in the Eastern Ladakh.

The last round of the Corps Commanders meeting was held on November 6. However, due to lack of any tangible progress, no meeting was held between the Army Commanders in over two and a half months.

The military standoff in Eastern Ladakh is in the ninth month with both sides having deployed around 50,000 troops at each side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Eastern Ladakh. Despite temperatures dipping to minus 30 degrees Celsius in the region,

both India and China have maintained troops at forward posts this winter at the LAC in Ladakh.

India is reported to have asked Russia for early deliveries of S-400 air defence missile system to be mainly deployed at the LAC against China. India is expecting a hot summer at the LAC in 2021.

This will be the the first Corps Commanders meeting after China appointed a new military commander for its Western Theatre Command Gen. Zhang Xudong.

India and China during the 8th round of Corps Commander level talks had agreed to ensure that their frontline troops would exercise restraint and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation. China had been ■ **Turn to Page 4**

SHORT TAKES

ED to probe money laundering against railway official

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 23

Days after CBI arrested a 1985-batch officer of the Indian Railways for accepting a bribe of ₹1 crore, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is set to initiate its money laundering probe against the public servant and his associates. "Immediately after registering money laundering case, the ED will initiate the process to attach their moveable and immovable assets. The ED sleuths are in touch with CBI officials who are probing the case", sources said. This is the most significant bribe the CBI has ever apprehended a government officer with. The accused officer has been identified as Mahendra Singh Chauhan, a senior Indian Railways officer of the 1985 batch. "Chauhan was arrested by the CBI last week for demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹1 crore in exchange for favouring a private company with respect to contracts handed out by the North Eastern Frontier Railway. The CBI also arrested two others who were caught accepting the bribe on behalf of Mahendra Singh Chauhan.

Delhi records 197 Covid cases in 24 hrs

New Delhi: Delhi recorded 197 fresh Covid-19 cases and 10 deaths on Saturday, even as the positivity rate slipped to 0.26 per cent, authorities said. The city's infection tally is now over 6.33 lakh and the death toll 10,799, they said. On Monday, the city had recorded 161 cases, the lowest in nearly nine months, with a positivity rate of 0.32 per cent. The active cases tally on Saturday stood at 1,880, while the positivity rate dipped to 0.26 per cent, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department. These 197 new cases came out the 76,868 tests conducted on the previous day, including 47,467 RT-PCR tests and 29,401 rapid antigen tests. The bulletin said that the total number of cases has climbed to 6,33,739. — PTI

Delhi-Sikkim direct flight services start

Gangtok: Direct flight services between Delhi and Sikkim commenced on Saturday with a SpiceJet aircraft landing at Pakyong airport in the Himalayan state with 57 passengers, officials said. Commercial flight services to the tabletop airport recommenced after nearly one-and-half years after the private airliner halted its operations between Kolkata and Pakyong in June 2019 due to bad weather conditions and technical problems. Commercial flight operations to the airport started in October 2018. — PTI

72ND REPUBLIC DAY: PREPARATION IN FULL SWING



Indian Air Force aircrafts fly past Parliament House during the full dress rehearsal for the upcoming Republic Day Parade in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

Full dress rehearsal of parade held on Rajpath

Military contingent of Bangladesh excited to walk down Rajpath on 50th year of its Independence

New Delhi, Jan. 23: India's military might and some of the state-of-the-art assets of the armed forces, including three T-90 tanks, BrahMos missile system, will be showcased during the parade on Rajpath amid strict Covid-19 safety guidelines in place.

Chief of Staff, Delhi Area, Maj Gen Alok Kacker, told reporters that 18 marching contingents - 16 marching and two animal-mounted - will take part in the parade from the armed forces, paramilitary forces, Delhi Police, NCC and NSS, along with 36 bands.

The 61 Cavalry, consisting of 43 horses, will be marching down the Rajpath as part of the mounted column. Due to Covid-19 safety norms, there will be no motorcycle display this time, a major attraction for the crowd at Republic Day celebrations on the Rajpath, and also the veterans marching contingent will also not be there, he said. The contingents in the parade will stop at National Stadium this year instead of following the regular route all the way to the Red Fort, as the routes in old Delhi have narrow streets, Kacker added. A full dress-rehearsal of the parade was held on Saturday morning.

A marching-cum-band contingent of the Bangladesh armed forces is all set to take part in 72nd Republic Day celebrations on Rajpath, with the leader of the visiting team on Saturday saying, the "enduring relationship" between the two countries is growing day by day.

The Bangladeshi contin-

Entry to R-Day parade only on invitation, tickets: Cops

New Delhi, Jan. 23: The Delhi police, on Saturday, issued an advisory and said that people will be allowed to attend the parade at Rajpath strictly based on production of invitation cards or tickets. The police also said that those below 15 years of age will not be allowed at the event.

Meanwhile, the police has also tightened its security arrangements at the border areas in view of a proposed tractor parade by the farmers agitating against the Centre's new farm laws on January 26.

Taking it to Twitter, the Delhi police wrote, "This

year, entry to RDC-2021 will be strictly through invitation card/ticket only! All those, who don't have a valid invitation card/ticket, are advised to watch the live programme at home. Children below 15 years of age are not allowed to the RDC-2021 at Rajpath."

In another tweet, the police instructed the invitees not to carry bags, briefcases, pins, eatables, cameras, binoculars, handycams, electronic gadgets such as iPads, iPods, palm-top computers, laptops, computers, tablet computers, powerbanks, digital diaries, etc. — PTI

gent, with members drawn from all the three wings of its armed forces, will be the first marching contingent to walk down the ceremonial boulevard on January 26.

This is the third time that a contingent from a foreign country will be taking part in the Republic Day celebrations here. The other two countries being France (2016) and the UAE (2017).

Col Md Mohtashim Chowdhury, the leader of the contingent from the neighbouring country said, "We feel very fortunate that India has given our country this opportunity. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh and also we are in the midst of birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman. So, we are very happy to be here."

The 122 members of the contingent are drawn mostly from units raised during the 1971 war, and several other units which were raised before it, he said. Seven military officers are also accompanying them.

So, the marching contingent members will be wearing a special "red collar" in honour of the heroes who made sacrifice in the 1971 war, Chowdhury told reporters during the interaction held on the premises of a Territorial Army unit at the India Gate complex.

Asked about the Covid-19 safety measures taken, Col Chowdhury said a 122-member were picked from a pool of 177 personnel originally. — PTI

Over 2 lakh tractors expected to take part in the parade
Police nod to hold tractor rally Jan. 26, claim farmers

New Delhi, Jan. 23: Thousands of farmers opposing the Centre's new agri laws will enter the national capital with tractors on Republic Day as the Delhi Police has given its nod to the "kisan tractor parade", farmer leaders claimed on Saturday.

However, Delhi Police Additional Public Relation Officer Anil Mittal said, "We are in the final stages of talks with farmers."

Since November 28 last year, farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, have been protesting against the laws at several Delhi border points, including Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur, and demanding the legislations be repealed.

Over two lakh tractors

♦ **FARMER LEADERS** said that five routes have been decided in-principle and farmers will cover 100-km with tractors on every route, and added that 70 to 78 per cent of the routes will be inside Delhi while the remaining will be outside the national capital

are expected to take part in the parade and there will be around five routes. The tractor parades will be taken out only after 12 pm, after the Republic Day parade on Delhi's Rajpath concludes, according to protesting farmer unions.

The Delhi Police has given permission to the farmers' tractor parade on January 26, farmer leader Abhimanyu Kohar claimed after attending a meeting between the unions and senior police officers.

The tractor parade will start from the Ghazipur, Singhu and Tikri border

points of Delhi, but the final details of routes are yet to be finalised, said Kohar, who is a senior member of the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of the agitating unions.

Farmer leaders said that five routes have been decided in-principle and farmers will cover 100-km with tractors on every route, and added that 70 to 78 per cent of the routes will be inside Delhi while the remaining will be outside the national capital.

Sources said that one possible route for the tractor parade from Singhu

border will be to Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar and it will pass through the Kanjhawala and Bawana areas and then return to the protest site.

Farmers camping at the Tikri border point will start their tractor parade from the protest site and cover areas like Nangloi, Najafgarh, Badli, and Kundli Manesar Palwal (KMP) Expressway, they said. For farmers camping at the Ghazipur border point, their tractor parade will cover areas like Apsara border-Ghaziabad-Duhai and return to Ghazipur, the sources said.

However, tractor parade routes for farmers camping at Shahjahanpur and Palwal have not been decided yet, they said. — PTI

Farmers allege conspiracy hatched to kill 4 protestors

Youth nabbed at Singhu says he was beaten by farmers

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI/SONEPAT,
JAN. 23

The 21-year-old youth, caught by farmers at Singhu border, one of the major protest sites, on Friday took a u-turn and said that he was first beaten and then forced to read a script by the protestors. However, after nabbing him, the farmers had alleged that a conspiracy was hatched to kill four of them and create disturbance during their proposed tractor parade in Delhi on January 26.

The Haryana Police said that the boy, Yogesh, who is native of Uttarakhand but living in Haryana's Sonapat for last 20 years, used to work in a private factory before lockdown. Police said that Yogesh's parents claimed that he had gone missing since December 20.

At the Singhu border press conference late on Friday night, the farmer leaders presented the man who claimed that his accomplices were asked to pose as policemen and baton-charge the crowd during the proposed tractor parade in the national capital on Republic Day. Addressing the press conference, Jashandeep Singh Randhawa, superintendent of police (SP), Sonapat said that after police team questioned Yogesh it was revealed that he had arguments with farmer volunteers over allegations of eve-teasing.

"He was taken to a camp where he was beaten up. He has said he made state-



Swaraj Abhiyan leader Yogendra Yadav arrives to address media on the planned tractor rally on Republic Day during Kisan Sansad at Guru Tegh Bahadur Memorial in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

ments under fear and claimed that he was kept there in the camp for two days," said the SP.

"During inquiry, the police team also found that on December 20 he had left his home after lying to his parents that he was going for work. A medical examination of Yogesh was conducted at the hospital and there are injury marks on his body," said the SP.

"On Friday, Yogesh alleged that he was tasked by one inspector Pradeep, station house officer (SHO) of Rai police station. Police team's preliminary investigation shows that there is no inspector named Pradeep in the district or at Rai police station. He was also not present at Haryana chief minister's rally in Karnal on January 10 as alleged

by the farmers," said the SP. "Police has written a letter to deputy commissioner, Sonapat to conduct fair inquiry through Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) level officer," said the SP.

The farmer leaders claimed that they caught the man from the protest site at the Singhu border. He was subsequently handed over to the Haryana police.

Farmer leader Kulwant Singh Sandhu alleged that attempts are being made to disrupt the ongoing agitation against three farm laws. The man, who had his face covered with a scarf, claimed at the press conference that a plan was hatched to shoot four farmer leaders, who are known faces in the media, at the stage on Saturday.

Netaji's birthday will be observed as 'Parakram Diwas': PM

Tributes paid to Netaji on his 125th birth anniversary

New Delhi, Jan. 23: President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and a host of political leaders including Union home minister Amit Shah and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee paid rich tributes to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his 125th birth anniversary on Saturday.

PM Modi said Netaji's birthday will be observed as 'Parakram Diwas' every year.

Programmes were held in many states to commemorate the freedom fighter with the main event held at the Victoria Memorial Hall in Kolkata where PM Modi said Netaji would have been proud to see that the country has become strong and is following his footsteps from the Line of Control (LoC) to the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

"Netaji had dreamt of a strong India; from LAC to LOC we are following his footsteps. Whenever our sovereignty was challenged, we have given a befitting reply," he said.

The LoC divides Jammu and Kashmir between India and Pakistan while the LAC separates India and China.

♦ **PROGRAMMES WERE** held in many states to commemorate the freedom fighter with the main event held at the Victoria

Memorial Hall in Kolkata where Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Netaji would have been proud to see that the country has become strong and is following his footsteps from the Line of Control (LoC) to the Line of Actual Control (LAC)

President Kovind unveiled a portrait of Netaji at the Rashtrapati Bhavan to mark the beginning of year-long celebrations to commemorate the freedom fighter's 125th birth anniversary, according to an official statement.

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu urged the youth to derive inspiration from the life of Netaji and lead from the front in building a 'New India,' a happy and prosperous nation where every citizen gets equal opportunities and where there is no discrimination. The West Bengal chief min-



ister paid homage to the revolutionary on his birth anniversary and urged the Centre to declare January 23 as a national holiday.

She also said a monument, named after the Azad Hind Fauj, will be built in Rajarhat area and a state-funded university, which is also being set up, will be dedicated to Netaji.

During his visit to Kolkata, PM Modi visited Netaji's ancestral house and also inaugurated a commemorative stamp and coin to mark his birth anniversary. The PM also paid floral tribute at Netaji's statue at the city's National Library.

The Prime Minister greeted participants in an international conference on "Revisiting the legacy of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose" at Belvedere House to mark his 125th birth anniversary.

The home minister, who is on a two-day visit to Assam and Meghalaya, also paid tribute to Bose in front of his portrait in Guwahati.

West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar unveiled a portrait of Netaji at the Raj Bhavan in Kolkata on his birth anniversary. — PTI

Jeweller among 3 held for staging theft, filing false complaint

New Delhi, Jan. 23: A 47-year-old jeweller was arrested along with his employee and a ragpicker for allegedly staging a theft and lodging a fake case, police said on Saturday.

The case was reported on January 16 by jeweller Mukesh Verma, a resident of Sector-3 in Rohini, they said.

Verma staged the theft along with his employee Sunny (31) and Suraj (20) to buy time to return borrowed money and gain the sympathy of his lenders, police said.

He also wanted to prove his wife, who had given him a ring to wear to turn around his fortunes, wrong, a senior officer said.

On January 16 at 9:35 pm, police received information regarding a theft of bags containing 650 grams of gold jewellery, Rs 8 lakh and some keys from a car.

Verma had told police that around 9:10 pm, he had parked his car after reaching home and as he was in a hurry, he forgot to lock it, the officer said.

After sometime, when he came back to his car he found that the bags

along with some keys had been stolen, he said.

During investigation, police checked CCTV camera footage and found Sunny's activities to be suspicious, police said.

"Sunny was questioned and he admitted that Verma, along with him and the ragpicker, had staged the theft. Sunny said that Verma wanted to gain the sympathy of persons from whom he had borrowed money and seek more time to return it."

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Rohini, P K Mishra said.

Sunny had kept empty bags in the car and as per Verma's plan, Suraj opened the front door of the car and fled away with the bags. Suraj had been promised Rs 700 for the job, he said.

Verma told police that he was under stress as he had borrowed money from people and was constantly being asked to pay it back, the DCP said.

In order to delay payments, he hatched the plan, executed it and lodged a complaint, Mishra said. — PTI

11 women Army officers move SC again for permanent commission

New Delhi, Jan. 23: Eleven women Army officers have moved the Supreme Court seeking compliance of its February last year directions to the Centre for grant of permanent commission, promotions and consequential benefits to them "in an inclusive, fair, just and reasonable manner".

In a plea, Lieutenant Colonel Ashu Yadav and 10 other women Army officers alleged that the directions were not being complied with in "letter and spirit".

The procedures for grant of permanent commission is "vitiated with arbitrariness, unfairness and unreasonableness", they alleged in the petition, which is scheduled to be taken up for hearing by a bench headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud on January 27.

"The respondent institution is not leaving any possibility of thrusting their stand of unequal treatment to the women officers indirectly by trapping them into technical and procedural formalities and consequential denial of their rights," it said.

The conduct of the Centre suggests that it is "playing a psychological

♦ **IN A** plea, Lieutenant Colonel Ashu Yadav and 10 other women Army officers alleged that the directions were not being complied with in "letter and spirit". The procedures for grant of permanent commission is "vitiated with arbitrariness, unfairness and unreasonableness", they alleged in the petition.

warfare with these women officers" to avoid every possibility of granting them the benefits of permanent commission, promotion and consequential benefits, which is in clear violation of the order dated February 17, 2020, the plea said.

"Hence, it is most humbly prayed before this court to direct the respondent institution to determine a fair, rational road map and a well-reasoned policy for women officers on all the aspects, including grant of Col (Colonel) TS (time scale) rank and long outstanding financial dues, so as to promote inclusiveness rather than elimination techniques," it said.

The plea challenged the general instructions, dated August 1, 2020, regarding the requisites of Special Board-5 (SB-5) for grant of permanent commission to short service commissioned (SSC) women officers.

It has also challenged the absence of any policy

for organising the SB-3 board which is the promotion board for women officers who will be approved by the permanent commission board.

The plea also questioned the terms regarding substantive promotion by time scale on the rank of Colonel to women officers after completing 26 years of reckonable service in light of the terms of a notification dated December 21, 2004.

Pointing out the shortcomings of the SB-5 board criterion, the women officers said that the general instructions of August 1 last year, "are a set of arbitrary norms/criterion and pre-requisites, for the consideration of women officers is the board for granting permanent commission". It said that the medical criterion laid down in the general instructions is inconsistent with the basic tenets of equality as laid down in Article 14 of the Constitution of India. — PTI

IN BRIEF

MAHA TO START
JAIL TOURISM
FROM JAN. 26SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, JAN. 23

In a bid to promote tourism, in a first, the Maharashtra government has announced the jail tourism. In the first leg, the government will allow students, researchers and NGOs (Non-Government Originations) to visit the prisons. Maharashtra has 60 prisons, which housed around 27 thousand inmates.

Addressing a press conference in Nagpur on Saturday, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said that the jail tourism in Maharashtra will be the beginning on January 26, 2021.

He said that Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray will inaugurate through online and deputy CM Ajit Pawar will inaugurate a jail tourism facility in Pune's Yerwada Jail on January 26, 2021. He would join the inauguration from Gondia district.

"In the first phase, jail tourism will be started in Yerwada prison whereas it will begin in Nashik, Thane and Nagpur Central Jail in the second and third phase respectively," he said. The school students will be charged of Rs 5, while college students will be charged of ₹10. The researchers will be charged ₹50.

Sources said that a proposal pertaining to charges have been sent to the finance department. Once it is approved, only the charges will be imposed on a tourist.

MAHA: 6 DEAD, 18
HURT AS VEHICLE
FALLS INTO GORGE

Mumbai, Jan. 23: At least six persons, including five women, were killed and 18 others injured when their vehicle fell into a 400-feet deep gorge in Nandurbar district of Maharashtra on Saturday, a police official said.

The accident took place around 10.30 am on the hilly stretch of Khadki ghat, located approximately 10 kms from Toranmal hill station, he said.

Around 24 persons, most of them labourers, were going to Danduka in Ahmedabad from Khadki and neighbouring villages in Nandurbar in the ill-fated Mahindra Max vehicle, he said.

"While passing through the ghat section (winding hill route), the driver lost control of the vehicle, following which it went backwards and fell into the gorge," Nandurbar Superintendent of Police Mahendra Pandit told PTI.

He said six people were killed, and 18 injured, of which the condition of seven is serious.

Nine of the injured have been discharged after first aid, the SP added. The injured are being treated in the civil hospital in Nandurbar and Toranmal rural hospital, police said.

Seer murdered
in UP's Pilibhit

Pilibhit (UP), Jan. 23: A 60-year-old seer was allegedly beaten to death by unidentified people in Sindhaura village in Pilibhit district.

According to the police, the 'naga sadhu', identified as Sompal, was living in a hut near a temple in the village. On Saturday morning, when the niece of the seer visited him, she found him dead, following which cops were informed. Sompal had become a 'naga sadhu' almost 25 years ago, they said.

Lalu's health deteriorates



Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad Yadav being shifted to AIIMS in New Delhi from Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences hospital in Ranchi after his health deteriorated on Saturday. On Friday, Prasad's wife Rabri Devi, daughter Misa Bharti, sons Tej Pratap and Tejashwi reached Ranchi in a special plane after being informed of the veteran leader's deteriorating health. He has been admitted in the coronary care unit of the cardiothoracic centre of the AIIMS, an official in Delhi said.

Farm stir: Diggy among 20
Cong netas arrested in MPRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JAN. 23

Police used tear gas shells and water cannons as Congress activists led by Madhya Pradesh party chief Kamal Nath here on Saturday staged a rally in protest against 3 farm laws brought by the Centre.

The police used "mild force" to disperse the Congress workers and leaders who were marching towards Raj Bhavan to gherao it.

"Police used tear gas shells and water cannons after the demonstrators went unruly", a police officer said.

"The situation is now under control," Bhopal district deputy inspector general of police Irshad Wali said.

Congress on Saturday launched the state level rally here after holding rallies at district headquarters in the state over the last past couple of weeks in support of the farmers' demand to repeal the 3 farm laws.

Hundreds of party workers and leaders drawn from various parts of the state joined the rally.

However, they were stopped near Jawhar Chowk here by police leading to minor scuffle between them.

Later, police lobbed tear gas shells and used water cannons to disperse them.

Police also resorted to mild baton charge when the demonstrators tried to break the police cordon to march towards Raj



Police baton charge on Congress party workers during their protest against the new farm laws in Bhopal on Saturday.

Tractors from Punjab, Haryana
set out for R-Day parade rally

Chandigarh, Jan. 23: Several batches of farmers from Punjab and Haryana set out on Saturday in their tractor-trolleys and other vehicles to take part in the proposed tractor parade on January 26 in Delhi.

Carrying some ration, mattresses and other essentials, cavalcades of tractors left for Delhi to press the Centre to accept their demands.

Tractors carried the flags of the unions, some sported the tricolour, and

his son and sitting MLA Jaivardhan Singh and party legislator Kunal Choudhury were arrested.

Mr Nath condemned police action, saying that police used force against the Congress workers who were staging a peaceful demonstration.

Twenty Congress leaders including former chief minister Digvijay Singh,

also posters with slogans of "Kisan Ekta Zindabad", "No Farmer, No Food" and "Kaale Kanon Radd Karo".

Farmer unions protesting the Centre's three farm laws had said they would go ahead with their tractor parade in Delhi on Republic Day.

They had announced to take out the tractor parade on the Outer Ring Road in Delhi.

Farmer leaders said that the tractor parade would be peaceful.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who on Saturday gave away ownership certificates to over one lakh families, asserted that both the central and state governments are committed to protect the land, integrity, culture and language of the people of Assam.

Pointing out as to how Assam is moving forward on the path of peace and progress, the Prime Minister while addressing a huge gathering of more than two lakh people at Sivasagar in Upper Assam said that in the last few years the government has distributed land pattas to over two lakh families.

He also alleged that due to the irresponsibility of the previous governments over six lakh indigenous families had no legal rights over their lands. "It is a matter of sadness that even after so many years of Independence, there are those in Assam who have

India must have 4 capitals,
including Kolkata: Mamata

Slams Centre for abolishing plan panel 'conceptualised by Netaji'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JAN. 23

Countering the idea "one nation, one election" of the Narendra Modi government, West Bengal chief minister and Trinamul Congress chief Mamata Banerjee called for region-wise bifurcation of the national capital. Ms Banerjee said India should have four capitals, including one at Kolkata, on a rotation basis and sessions of Parliament should be held in different locations in the country.

"Kolkata once used to be the capital of the country. When the British used to rule the nation sitting here, why can't Kolkata be one of the capitals of the country? I feel it has to be done since it was the origin of the renaissance and freedom movement. I ask the Centre to set up the country's capital in four corners: North, South, East and North East. Why would the parliamentary sessions be restricted to a particular place? What is there in Delhi? Maximum are outsiders there. So the parliamentary sessions should be held in four different places of the country alternatively," she said while addressing a gathering after participating in a grand procession to pay tribute to Netaji's 125th birth anniversary.

She also questioned why will the birth anniversary of Netaji not be celebrated as "Deshnayak Diwas".

Stoking the mass sentiment about Netaji on his anniversary in poll-bound West Bengal, chief minister Banerjee also sought the Centre to declare the iconic freedom fighter's birthday a national holiday, restore his concept of Planning Commission and unlock the mystery about his death.

The Trinamul Congress supreme raised the three key demands after paying tribute to Netaji at his statue at the Shyambazar



West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee participates in a rally to celebrate the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in Kolkata on Saturday.

— PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

7 hurt, vehicles vandalised in
BJP-TMC clash at Howrah

Howrah, Jan. 23: Several people were injured, many vehicles vandalised as BJP and Trinamool Congress supporters clashed in West Bengal's Howrah district on Saturday, police said.

BJP alleged that a party member was shot at, while some were beaten with rods and sticks.

Crude bombs were also allegedly hurled during the street fight at Bally, triggering panic in the area. Besides, a few bikes and a police vehicle were vandalised, officials said.

On Friday, Bally MLA

Baishaki Dalmia was suspended by the Trinamool Congress for alleged anti-party activities, hours after Domjur MLA Rajib Banerjee resigned as a minister in the Mamata Banerjee government.

The police was yet to confirm about the firing but the BJP claimed that party member Promod Dubey who received a bullet injury in a firing at Abhra Sen Street was rushed to the Howrah hospital.

The police said that a huge contingent has been deployed in the area to

control the situation and prevent any further flare-ups. Local TMC leaders said that some BJP members were allegedly extorting money from shops in the area, following which people of the area protested and roughed them up.

As the BJP men blocked the GT Road in protest, some TMC supporters tried to remove them, triggering the violence.

TMC claimed that BJP supporters hurled crude bombs and set on fire some vehicles to foment trouble in the peaceful locality.

Five-point crossing. She also lead an eight-km-long march across the city to outsmart Prime Minister Narendra Modi hours before his visit to Kolkata to inaugurate "Parakram Diwas" celebration.

Ms Banerjee told a rally at Red Road, "The Central government is yet to declare Netaji's birthday as a national holiday. We

are sad about it. In protest, we demand that Netaji's birthday has to be declared as a national holiday, either today or tomorrow. We also do not know how he had died. This should be revealed in an inquiry. Netaji, according to us, was eliminated because his freedom struggle had scared many."

She also questioned why

will the birth anniversary of Bose not be celebrated as "Deshnayak Diwas".

"What is the meaning of 'Parakram'? They may dislike me politically but could have consulted with me. They could have consulted with Netaji's great-grandsons Sugata Bose or Sumantra Bose on choosing a word," Ms Banerjee said.

PM gives land certificates to
1L landless people in AssamMANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, JAN. 23

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who on Saturday gave away ownership certificates to over one lakh families, asserted that both the central and state governments are committed to protect the land, integrity, culture and language of the people of Assam.

Pointing out as to how Assam is moving forward on the path of peace and progress, the Prime Minister while addressing a huge gathering of more than two lakh people at Sivasagar in Upper Assam said that in the last few years the government has distributed land pattas to over two lakh families.

He also alleged that due to the irresponsibility of the previous governments over six lakh indigenous families had no legal rights over their lands. "It is a matter of sadness that even after so many years of Independence, there are those in Assam who have



Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivers a speech during a public meeting in Sivasagar district of Assam on Saturday.

— PTI

not got recognition for their land. But now, chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal and his government here has worked to ensure that people get the recognition," he said.

The Prime Minister asserted that with addition of another lakh people securing their land rights, the government has been proving its commitment to protecting the rights of the indigenous people of the state.

"Today I am here to be a part of your happiness

and celebration as our government in Assam has completed a huge task. Today, those who love Assam and are from the state are getting recognition of their land," Mr Modi said while reiterating the commitment of his government to give land rights to the indigenous people of the state.

The land ownership certificates (pattas) will guarantee their "Swabhiman" (pride), Swadheenta (freedom) and Suraksha (protection), he added.

Scientists find
2 new species
of rare ant

New Delhi, Jan. 23: Two new species of a rare ant genus have been discovered in Kerala and Tamil Nadu by a team of scientists. The team was led by Himender Bharti of Punjabi University in Patiala.

One of the two species found in the Periyar Tiger Reserve of Kerala has been named Ooceraea Joshi in honour of professor Amitabh Joshi — a distinguished evolutionary biologist from Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, a DST institute. "The species of the ant genus Ooceraea found in Kerala and Tamil Nadu add to the diversity of this rare genus," the DST said.

New species are typically named after some distinguishing attribute or location but are often named after scientists as a means of honouring their research contributions, especially in the fields of evolutionary and organismal biology, ecology or systematics.

FISCAL | MATTERS

'Halwa Ceremony' kickstarts process of compilation of Budget documents

App for hassle-free access of Budget papers launched

New Delhi, Jan. 23: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur and senior officials of the finance ministry on Saturday participated in the symbolic 'Halwa Ceremony' that marks the beginning of compilation of budget documents.

Unlike the past, the voluminous budget documents will not be printed this year following the Covid-19 protocol and will instead be distributed electronically to the Members of Parliament (MPs).

Previously, the ceremony marked the launch of printing exercise for the budget.

This will be the first time since the presentation of independent India's first budget on November 26, 1947, that the documents containing income



Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, along with MoS finance Anurag Singh Thakur and others during Halwa ceremony to mark the commencement of final stage of Union Budget 2021-22 and launch of Union Budget Mobile App to provide easy and quick information to all stakeholders in New Delhi.

— PTI

and expenditure statement of the Union government along with the finance bill, detailing new taxes and other measures

for the new financial year, will not be physically printed.

"In an unprecedented initiative, Union Budget 2021-22 will

be delivered in paperless form for the first time. The Union Budget 2021-22 is to be presented on February 1, 2021," the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

On the occasion, the Finance Minister also launched the 'Union Budget Mobile App' for hassle-free access of Budget documents by Members of Parliament (MPs) and the general public using the simplest form of digital convenience.

The mobile App facilitates complete access to 14 Budget documents, including the Annual Financial Statement (commonly known as Budget), Demand for Grants (DG), Finance Bill etc. as prescribed by the Constitution, it said.

Finance secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey, economic affairs secretary Tarun Bajaj,

financial services secretary Debasish Panda, DIPAM secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey, expenditure secretary T.V. Somanathan and chief economic adviser K.V. Subramanian and other senior involved in the Budget preparation and compilation process, were also present in the customary pre-Budget event. "Later, the finance minister reviewed the status of the compilation of the Union Budget 2021-22 and extended her best wishes to the officials concerned," it said.

The App can also be downloaded from the Union Budget Web Portal (www.indiabudget.gov.in), it said, adding, the App has been developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) under the guidance of the department of economic affairs (DEA).

— PTI



INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS
Sapru House, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi

REQUIRES

DIRECTOR (RESEARCH)

Applications are invited for appointment of a Director (Research) with requisite experience & qualifications on contract of two years at fixed gross monthly lumpsum remuneration. Applications in sealed covers addressed to Deputy Director General, ICWA must be received at ICWA, Sapru House by 06th February, 2021. Applications forms, terms & conditions are available at: www.icwa.in.

SHORT TAKES

India records 14,256 Covid cases

New Delhi: With 14,256 fresh cases, India's Covid-19 tally climbed to 1,06,39,684 on Saturday, while 1,03,00,838 patients have recuperated so far, pushing the national recovery rate to 96.81 per cent, according to the health ministry. There are 1,85,662 active cases of the coronavirus infection in the country currently, which accounts for only 1.78 per cent of the total caseload. The Covid-19 caseload has mounted to 1,06,39,684 and the death toll due to the disease has climbed to 1,53,184, with the coronavirus claiming 152 more lives in the country in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed. The Covid-19 case fatality rate stood at 1.44 per cent. According to the ICMR, a total of 19,09,85,119 samples have so far been tested for the viral disease in the country, including 8,37,095 on Friday. — PTI

Ram temple trust secy targets Sonia

Allahabad: VHP vice president and Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary Champat Rai on Saturday took a dig at Congress president Sonia Gandhi over her foreign origin, saying anyone can acquire Indian citizenship but the Ram temple should be built by the efforts of those born in the country. Rai was addressing a Ram temple construction fund collection event at an ashram in Alipohab here. "The Ram temple should be built with the efforts of the sons of Mother India. We do not have citizens here, but all are sons (of Mother India) here. Sonia Gandhi is a citizen. Anyone can become a citizen by filling in the form and depositing the amount fixed by the government," he said. Construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya will be completed in 36 to 39 months, he said. — PTI

Gujarat local bodies to go to polls in Feb.

Ahmedabad: Elections to six municipal corporations in Gujarat will take place on February 21 and to 81 municipalities, 31 district panchayats and 231 taluka panchayats on February 28, state election commission said. Counting of votes for the six municipal corporations will take place on February 23, and for the 81 municipalities, 31 district panchayats and 231 taluka panchayats on March 2. The ruling BJP expressed confidence about winning these polls, while the Congress said it would mount a legal challenge on poll authorities announcing two separate days for counting of votes. The six corporations to go to polls are Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Jamnagar and Bhavnagar. — PTI

LET'S HAVE DUEL: SHAH SLAMS VACCINE CRITICS

Guwahati: Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday lambasted those who have been criticising the efficacies of Covid-19 vaccines, saying that there should be no politics on public health. At a function in Guwahati to extend the benefit of the central health insurance programme to all the armed police forces in India by launching "Ayushman CAPF", Shah urged the personnel to get inoculated when their turn comes. "There are some people who are spreading misinformation on vaccine. Come to another platform and let's have a duel. But why are you creating doubt over people's health and doing politics? There are other issues for that," he said. Mr Shah said the vaccines developed by Indian scientists are fully safe and the personnel from all forces will be vaccinated after health workers are covered. "I appeal to all of you to go for the vaccine when your turn comes. Do not have any doubt over its efficacy. We've already launched the world's biggest vaccination drive," he said. Mr Shah ceremoniously distributed the "Ayushman CAPF" health cards among some personnel from the seven Central Armed Police Forces. He said that the CAPF personnel had three prime concerns — the existing health coverage was not comprehensive, the satisfaction of housing was not there and long duty hours without leaves. — PTI

Modi 'selling' everything that belonged to people: Cong Rahul hits campaign trail in TN

Coimbatore, Jan. 23: Launching his party's campaign for Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday alleged Prime Minister Narendra Modi partnered with big businessmen and was "selling" everything that belonged to the people.

Addressing people from an open van here, Mr Gandhi targeted the Prime Minister in his first of the three-day campaign of western Tamil Nadu.

In April or early May state assembly elections are likely in the state.

"What does Modi do? Modi partners with three or four big businessmen in this country. They provide him media and he provides them money," he



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has snacks at a roadside tea shop during his election campaign ahead of Tamil Nadu Assembly polls in Tiruppur on Saturday. — PTI

alleged. "Narendra Modi is one by one selling everything that belongs to the people of India and Tamil Nadu."

The Congress MP said what belonged to the farmers was now being taken away by three new farm

laws and alleged riyots "are going to be made servants" of biggest industries.

Attacking BJP, he said his party was involved in a fight against a 'particular' ideology that believed that "only one culture, one language and one idea should

rule India."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "no respect" for the culture, language and people of Tamil Nadu, he alleged.

Modi "thinks that the Tamil people, Tamil language and Tamil culture should be subservient to his ideas, his culture," Mr Gandhi claimed.

The Congress leader, who is visiting Tamil Nadu for the second time within 10 days, was accorded a rousing reception by Congress workers at the airport on his arrival from Delhi.

He is set to cover districts including Coimbatore, and Erode, in western parts of the state, popularly known as the "Kongu" (Tamil name) region. — PTI

India says it doesn't back N-arms treaty

New Delhi, Jan. 22: As the first-ever treaty to ban nuclear weapons entered into force, India said on Friday that it does not support the treaty and shall not be bound by any of the obligations that may arise from it.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 2017, but none of the nine countries known or believed to possess nuclear weapons supported it and neither did the Nato alliance. The treaty came into force on Friday.

In a statement, the ministry of external affairs said India continues to attach high priority and remains committed to universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament.

"As far as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is concerned, India did not participate in the negotiations on the TPNW and has consistently made it clear that it will not become a party to the Treaty," the MEA said.

India does not support the treaty and shall not be

bound by any of the obligations that may arise from it, it said.

India believes that the treaty does not constitute or contribute to the development of customary international law, nor does it set any new standards or norms, the statement said. The MEA stated that India reiterates its commitment to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

India believes that this goal can be achieved through a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment, and an agreed global and non-discriminatory multilateral framework, as outlined in the country's working paper titled 'Nuclear Disarmament', submitted to the UN General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament.

In this regard, India supports the commencement of negotiations on a comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention in the Conference on Disarmament, which is the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum working on the basis of consensus, the MEA said. — PTI

BSF detects tunnel along IB in Kathua

Jammu, Jan. 23: The Border Security Force (BSF) on Saturday detected a second underground tunnel constructed by Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district to facilitate the infiltration of terrorists, a spokesperson of the border guarding force said.

This is the second such structure found in 10 days.

The secret tunnel was detected during an anti-tunnelling operation in the border outpost (BOP) Pansar area of Hiranagar sector, opposite Abhiyal-Dogra and Kire-de-Kothe in Shakargarh, the spokesperson said.

This is the second underground tunnel detected by BSF personnel in Hiranagar sector during the past 10 days, fourth in the past six months along the International Border (IB) in Samba and Kathua districts and 10th in the past decade.

On January 13, a 150-metre-long tunnel was detected in Bobiyaan village in the same sector.

The spokesperson said the latest tunnel was unearthed on a specific intelligence input in the early hours of the day during the anti-tunnelling drive. — PTI

'India working on 5th-gen fighter jet'

Some 6th-gen capabilities will be added in it: IAF Chief

Jodhpur, Jan. 23: Eight Rafale aircraft have already arrived in India and three more are expected by the end of this month, Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria said here on Saturday.

The IAF Chief was speaking at a press conference after the conclusion of "Exercise Desert Knight-21" held in Jodhpur by the air forces of India and France.

He said IAF has initiated a fifth-generation fighter aircraft programme with the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) and plans to incorporate some sixth-generation capabilities in it as well.

"Our present vision is to incorporate all the latest technologies and sensors in our fifth-generation aircraft," Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria said.

"We started work on fifth-generation aircraft a little late. So technologies and sensors contemporary to that period of development would be added into fifth-generation fighters," he added.

Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria said when IAF received the Rafale aircraft, the first priority was to operationalise it and integrate it with the existing combat fleet.

"It has already been



Chief of Air Staff Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria with ambassador of France to India Emmanuel Lenain during a joint air force exercise between India and France, codenamed Desert Knight-21, at Jodhpur Air Force station on Saturday. — PTI

done, and the current exercise Desert Knight was the result of that," he said.

"We have some Indian pilots training in France and some in India itself. We have enough pilots to have a right pilot-cockpit ratio," the Air Chief Marshal said, adding that the entire induction would be completed by next year.

Earlier, Bhadauria congratulated both the air forces for successfully completing the exercise in just four days. Desert Knight-21 was scheduled to be held over five days.

"It is not in terms of interoperability which has been learnt in this

exercise, but employment of best practices, operational philosophies and mutual as well as professional interaction," he said.

Later, talking to the media, French ambassador to India Emmanuel Lenain said bilateral cooperation between the two countries has been going on ever since the first French aircraft landed in India in 1953.

"Now Rafale is the reflection of this strengthened cooperation and partnership," Mr Lenain said.

He said this partnership has persisted through good and bad times. — PTI

Balasaheb's statue unveiled in Mumbai



Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray inaugurated a statue of Shiv Sena founder late Bal Thackeray installed at Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Chowk in Colaba, Mumbai, on the occasion of his 95th birth anniversary on Saturday. Uddhav's his cousin and MNS president Raj Thackeray, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, former CM Devendra Fadnavis, and senior Congress leader Balasaheb Thorat attended the event. — RAJESH JADHAV

Online Davos meet to begin today PM Modi, Jinping among listed speakers over six days

New Delhi/Davos, Jan. 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese Premier Xi Jinping will be among the top world leaders who will participate in the six-day online Davos Agenda Summit of the World Economic Forum (WEF), beginning on Sunday.

In what could be the first major global summit of the year, the event will see more than 1,000 global leaders, including heads of state and government, CEOs and chairmen of big companies, heads of multilateral organisations as also members of academia and civil society, discuss economic, environmental, social and technological

challenges following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The WEF said there will be 15 special addresses from G20 heads of state and government and international organisations during the summit from January 24-29. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will deliver his address on Thursday.

Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar, health minister Harsh Vardhan and petroleum and steel minister Dharmendra Pradhan, as also business leaders such as Anand Mahindra, Salil Parekh and Shobana Kamineni will be among other speakers from India.

While the WEF will host its physical annual meeting in May in Singapore, as against the regular venue of the Swiss ski resort town of Davos, the Geneva-based organisation is hosting this online event, named 'Davos Agenda' around the same time it generally hosts its yearly congregation of the rich and powerful of the world.

The event has been billed as a platform that will see top world leaders deliver special addresses and engage in dialogue with business leaders at the start of a "crucial year to rebuild trust".

The opening ceremony

on Sunday evening will begin with a welcome address by WEF founder and executive chairman Klaus Schwab, followed by a special address by Swiss Confederation president Guy Parmelin, presentation of the annual Crystal Awards and the world premiere of "See Me: A Global Concert".

The concert will be presented as a shared expression of trust, connection and hope and it features orchestras and choirs in Beijing, Drakensberg, Florence, Kabul, Philadelphia, Vienna and Sao Paulo, with the cellist Yo-Yo Ma and music director Marin Alsop. — PTI

Mamata refuses to speak at event

■ Continued from Page 1 to as a "street fighter" and has built her reputation through agitations.

"Jai Shri Ram at an official event to celebrate Netaji's 125th?... Netaji's daughter Anita Bose tells it like it is... that her father would not approve of Hindus being intolerant of other religions. Jai Shri Constitution," Trinamul's Lok Sabha MP Mahua Moitra tweeted. Eulogising Netaji, Mr

Modi said that his government has been following his "footsteps" to make the country

"Atmanirbhar" from "LAC to LoC."

Earlier, former TMC MP and grand nephew of the freedom fighter, Sugata Bose, got a call from the PMO to learn that Mr Modi would pay a surprise visit to Netaji Bhavan, the ancestral house of the family at Elgin Road in South Kolkata that now

houses the Netaji Research Bureau (NRB), which was earlier not in the PM's itinerary.

Some BJP leaders, including Kailash Vijayvargiya, who gathered outside Netaji Bhavan, tried to enter but were stopped. They shouted "Jai Shree Ram" slogans when Mr Modi dropped in at the Netaji Bhavan after landing in Kolkata.

Prof Bose, also the NRB

chairperson, said, "I had told the PMO that Mr Modi is welcome as a PM in honour of Netaji and not as a political personality."

The CM also visited here alone in the morning. The PMO agreed. Along With my brother Sumantra Bose, director of the NRB, I welcomed the PM and guided him to visit the museum. No political leader was allowed. We protected the sanctity of the occasion."

Farmers firm on repeal of laws

■ Continued from Page 1 parades that will be taken out only after 12 pm, after the Republic Day parade on Delhi's Rajpath concludes, according to protesting farmer unions.

The tractor parade will start from the Ghazipur, Singhu and Tikri border points of Delhi, but the final details of routes are yet to be finalised, a senior member of the Sanyukt

Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of the agitating unions, said.

Farmer leaders said that five routes have been decided in-principle and farmers will cover 100-km

with tractors on every route, and added that 70 to 78 per cent of the routes will be inside Delhi while the remaining will be outside the national capital. — Agencies

India-China meet on LAC

■ Continued from Page 1 pushing India to vacate strategic heights that Indian Army had occupied on the South bank of Pangong Tso in a surprise action in August.

The PLA had even made attempts to occupy these heights that were foiled by Army. India has maintained that it will discuss disengagement from all friction points in the Eastern Ladakh and not just south bank of Pangong Tso.

Earlier this month, the defence ministry in its annual review said that India had categorically conveyed to China that any attempt to unilaterally alter the status quo at the border is unacceptable and that India is determined to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

THE ASIAN AGE

24 JANUARY 2021



Shreya Sen-Handley

Off the beaten track

Trump, and the art of leaving

This month we left an old and truly awful year behind with almost as much fanfare as ever, despite life being far from normal. But the degree of jollity and bonhomie that attend year-end salutations are out of the ordinary in themselves. Not only do we not display such fellow feeling in the course of the year, there is almost nothing else we leave behind with such elan.

At the end of the year, we reach out to even those we don't particularly like and wish them well. Do we mean it? Mostly, yes. Does it improve our state of mind going into the new year, even if it doesn't improve the year itself (as 2021 has already proven)? Yes! Although centering on fresh starts for ourselves, our genuine intention to begin well makes us behave better than we ordinarily would with others, and with more integrity than when exiting anything else.

Amongst those rare affairs we leave behind with grace are school and college; quitted almost perfunctorily and with some relief at the time, they accrue copious layers of sentiment over the years. We depart kids' birthday parties too with some decorum, but only because we've been bribed with return gifts and cake, and are children still, under strict behave-or-else orders from our parents. It is childhood then that most of us renounce with a modicum of dignity, because of the quick-gilding memories and the hurry we are in to leave.

In almost any other situation, we appear to exit as if "pursued by a bear". Because it isn't human nature to leave things well. Or well alone. If something's going well, our instinct is to not end it at all. Why stop something, we ask ourselves, that works to our advantage? We only wrap things up when they no longer serve our ends. When they're beyond redemption with no recompense. But oh, they can't run out on us either; we have to be the one that walks, have that last word, or leave behind an indelible impression. Even if it's a negative one; rendering a place, person, or situation, broken and unusable for those who come along.

Is that what Donald Trump's been doing since his election defeat? Like a spurned lover, does he want to destroy America, if America won't have him? The Capitol riot on January 6 when Trump supporters stormed the House of Representatives has been cast as many things; from a righteous protest by its right-wing adherents, to an insurrection and coup attempt by almost everyone else. And the last two it would appear to be, even as it unfolded on our screens like a Hollywood horror movie. But was it also Trump's bid, like an entitled, mean-spirited rock star leaving a hotel room worse than they'd found it, to trash Washington and American democracy, if he could no longer preside over it?

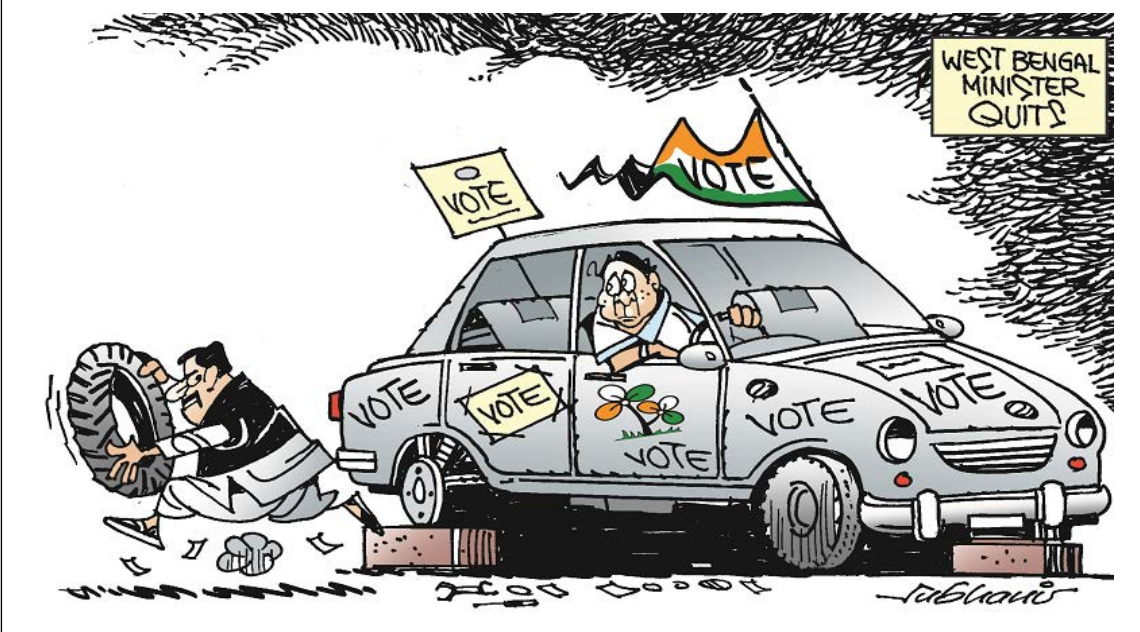
It's true we leave very few jobs with good grace, fearing a loss of earnings and very often, face. We might have been fired, or so thoroughly fed up by the time we call it quits, the goodwill naturally dissipates. Even those we revere rarely bow out well. Sunil Gavaskar, retiring right after his 37th test century, and at the height of his fame, timed it to perfection. But not everyone steps down at the top of their game, when people are still asking why, rather than why not. Some might say Kapil Dev bid adieu a tad too late, when questions over his fitness were already being raised. Celebrities, basking in our adoration, find leaving the limelight quite the wrench. Like Barbra Streisand, they may have flounced off saying they'd had enough, charging you \$1,000 to watch their "last" performance, only to return a few years later. But budge up Babs, having left five dead and a country in disarray, Donald now takes the cake!

Trump may be an extreme example; of bad grace, ill intent, reprehensible actions, and orangeness, but it's not just those we place on pedestals who make debacles of departures. In more modest ways, we're all deficient in the art of leaving well. In my personal life, I've been hopeless. Not only do I not know 50 ways to leave lovers, I haven't even mastered one. I know I'm fortunate to be happily settled with my second husband and three children (two human and one canine), despite never having managed to finish a relationship well. Or indeed, at all. Despite the abuse, I dithered every time, fervently trying to fix what oughtn't be fixed, till the other party found a new punching bag and I could move on. Having talked to women trapped in abusive relationships like myself, and heard countless other tales of romantic stalemates, I can attest that if there are indeed 50 ways to leave your lover, they've only ever worked for Simon. Or Garfunkel.

Of course, there's ending relationships badly, and then there's instigating armed revolt to lay siege to parliament, or trash it because you can't crash it as I half suspect, but we can still learn a valuable lesson from the shocking events of this month. We can learn how *not* to execute the world's worst departure from the King (Kong) of all bad losers, if not in 50 different ways then at least in one. Whatever you do, wherever you are, however hard-done-by you feel (or even if you actually are), don't be a chump, don't do a Trump, never take a dump on those you're leaving. And with that one surefire way to make an elegant exit, I will say adieu, but so bad am I at leaving, I'll proffer this too — that if you can think of 49 other excellent modes in which to walk, tell us, won't you?

Shreya Sen-Handley is the author of the recently published *Strange: Stories, the award-winning Memoirs of My Body, and a forthcoming book of travel misadventures*. Her Twitter and Insta handle is @shreyasenhana.

Subhani



Resist new usurpers of Hindus' eternal legacy



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

It is a truism to say that Hinduism is a way of life. What this essentially means is, that unlike many other religions, Hinduism does not lay down an inflexible code of do's and don'ts for its followers. It does not have only one God, nor only one book of faith, nor one Pope, nor a single place of paramount pilgrimage, nor only one presiding temple. Such diversity in practice often leads some uninformed observers to believe that Hinduism is not a cohesive religion: it is not one but many faiths. Such an assessment is wide off the mark. Hindus allow for differences of opinion, within and without, and variations in practice, dictated by choice not diktat, without diluting the core fealties of their faith.

But there are some people now who want to convert this remarkably eclectic religion, that has evolved from centuries of cerebration and philosophical insight, into a prescriptive faith. They want to dictate to its followers what they should wear, what they should drink, what they should eat, how they should practise their religion, what constitutes "correct" Hindu behaviour, what morality is, and who is a "good" Hindu as against a "bad" one. This, of course, is anathema for most Hindus. Hindus have been used to being Hindus in a self-assured way without being told that there is a higher "authority" that will judge them on how good or bad they are. What makes it worse is that those who believe that they are "better" Hindus, and therefore the "authority" to judge

the conduct of "lesser" Hindus, are woefully ignorant of what Hinduism is really about.

Inexplicably, Hindus never took this threat seriously, but they should have been alerted to its dangers long before. The Shri Ram Sena was founded in the 1960s by Kalki Maharaj, close to the Shiv Sena, and a former member of the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. On January 24, 2009, members of the Shri Ram Sena barged into a pub — Amnesia — in Mangalore, and beat up a group of young men and women, on the grounds that the women were violating traditional Indian — read Hindu — values. Two of the women had to be hospitalised. Pramod Muthalik, the leader of the Sena said: "Whoever had done this has done a good job. Girls going to pubs is not acceptable. So whatever the Sena members did was right. You are highlighting this small incident to malign the BJP government in the state."

In January 2009, Muthalik announced a plan to target couples dating on February 14, Valentine's Day. "Our

There are some people now who want to convert this remarkably eclectic religion, evolved from centuries of cerebration and philosophical insight, into a prescriptive faith. They want to dictate to its followers what constitutes 'correct' Hindu behaviour.

With progress, a vast number of Hindus want to have the freedom of being Hindus in accordance with their own vision of what that means. They are emerging as confident citizens of a globalised world, and do not wish to be straitjacketed in a narrow vision...

activists will go around with a priest, turmeric, and a *mangalsutra* on February 14. If we come across couples together in public and expressing their love, we will take them to the nearest temple and conduct their marriage." Such incidents need to be recalled, because what then seemed to be a fringe trend, is increasingly becoming mainstream. The Love Jihad law passed by the UP government, and being emulated now by other BJP ruled states, may ostensibly be aimed at preventing fraudulent conversions of Hindu women through the ruse of marriage, but its real intent is to infantilise adult Hindu women and take away from them their constitutional right to marry whomsoever they wish.

Now, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, has announced a "samman" programme, where employed women can register at the local police station for their own safety. Ostensibly meant to protect women, what such a programme is likely to do in a patriarchal society is to empower policemen in the thana to keep a watch on where employed women go, who they meet, what they do, and why they don't return home at a "respectable" time. Women must become appropriately "chaste" in conformity with the limited vision of these self-anointed pro-

tectors of Hinduism, and Hindus in general must bow before their brittle and distorted notions of Hindu fidelity. Our memories are short-lived but we should not forget that some years ago, Govind Pansare, M.M. Kalburgi, Narendra Dabholkar and Gauri Lankesh, were shot dead allegedly by members of the Sanatan Sanstha and Hindu Janajagruti Samiti. The horrific murders were reportedly inspired by a book published by the Sanatan Sanstha, which argues that those who don't conform to prefixed ideas of Hindu spirituality and religion are villains of society and must be eliminated.

Hinduism has no 10 commandments. It has consciously chosen not to be prescriptive, and that is the key too for its survival and being a *sanatan* or eternal dharma. Its concept of dharma, while outlining a framework for ethics, leaves a great deal to the conscious choice that individuals make in given situations. With progress, education and modernity, a vast number of Hindus want to have the freedom of being Hindus in accordance with their own vision of what that means. They are emerging as confident citizens of a globalised world, and do not wish to be straitjacketed in the narrow vision of some blindly orthodox, patriarchal and largely upper-caste Hindus.

In the eighth century CE, the great Adi Shankaracharya could say: *Na manthro, na teertham, na vedo na yagna, chidananda roopah, Shivo ham, Shivo ham*: There is no mantra, no pilgrimage, no Veda, no ritual, all that matters is Bliss and Awareness that makes each one of us Shiva. If Hindus want to preserve this real Hinduism, they must learn to resist the new usurpers of their great legacy.

The writer, an author and a former diplomat, is in politics

LETTERS

SHAMELESS SCRAMBLE

Happy Netaji birthday! The great man would have cringed at the shameless scramble by the BJP to appropriate his legacy with an eye to the Assembly elections in West Bengal. The Prime Minister is releasing yet another volume of Netaji's Letters at the Victoria Memorial. Meanwhile, the farmers at Delhi's borders might well have brought the his government to the same pass that Subhas C. Bose had forced the British into many years ago with the INA trials threatening to trigger a mutiny in the British army. On Saturday morning, they apprehended a man who was planning to shoot four farmer leaders on Republic Day. The government has blinked in proposing the 1.5-year moratorium on the contentious laws and the farmers are still standing strong.

Priyanka Mathur
Kolkata

BAD POLICY BY NITISH

THIS REFERS TO the report, "Anti-govt posts a 'cyber crime' in Bihar". The Bihar government's edict sounds preposterous and draconian. Taking shelter under nebulous cyber laws and muzzling dissenters is unbefitting of the government of the day. It shall embolden people to rat out against their rivals in order to settle personal scores. The already choked courts shall be saddled with unwanted litigation. Interestingly, even people booked in sedition cases have invariably been let off by the court. In these trying times, the government machinery is trying to bite more than it can chew. The government ought to eschew this foolhardy proposition and be more sagacious.

Deepak Singhal
Noida

CLOUD ON US-IRAN TIES

NOW THAT the new US President Joe Biden is busy reversing a number of policy decisions of his predecessor, and has promised re-entering the 2015 deal with Iran, it will be interesting to see how he handles the White House's fragile relations with Tehran. On the one hand, Washington is holding talks with such religious fanatics as the Taliban, who had plotted and carried out the 9/11 terror attack, while, on the other, the Afghan terror group's co-conspirator, Al-Qaeda, has reportedly established a secret foothold in that country, and is discussing with the theocratic Shia regime there about the modalities of liquidating their common enemies, the US and Israel.

Arun Malankar
Mumbai

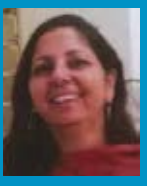
DON'T CENSOR OTT

THIS REFERS TO your editorial regarding OTT content. There is no need to subject the OTT films to censor board review or certification. This will affect the creativity of artistes. In 2020, Netflix, Amazon Prime and Disney Hotstar have provided wholesome entertainment to Indians. It is particularly important seeing as the television industry is struggling and not innovating new ideas. The OTT platform, at best, can be self-regulated. Censorship of OTT content will be a remedy worse than the disease.

D.B. Madan
New Delhi

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Anita Katyal
Political
Gup-Shup



Kharge or Sharma: Who will succeed Azad in RS?

Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad has been the leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha for over six years. This post will soon be falling vacant as Mr Azad's term ends next month. The Budget Session of Parliament is barely a few days away but there's no clarity about Mr Azad's successor in the Upper House. From all accounts, the post would have gone to Anand Sharma who is the party's deputy leader in the Upper House. However, Mr Sharma now has competition as veteran leader Mallikarjun Kharge, who was recently elected to the Rajya Sabha, is emerging as a serious contender. The Opposition leader's post is critical as he or she leads the charge against the Treasury. Mr Kharge held the post in the Lok Sabha for five years (he moved to the Rajya Sabha after he failed to make it to the Lower House in the 2019 election) and despite the Congress party's poor bench strength, the veteran leader from Karnataka managed to get under the government's skin on several occasions. Though Mr Sharma has acquitted himself well in the

Rajya Sabha, Mr Kharge's seniority could well tilt the scales in his favour.

There is a strong buzz in the capital that Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh chief ministers Trivendra Singh Rawat and Shivraj Singh Chouhan may be shifted to Delhi when Prime Minister Narendra Modi reshuffles his Cabinet, which may now take place only after the West Bengal election. Mr Rawat has made himself unpopular with the people and party workers. Both complain that Mr Rawat has no presence and has failed to make any impact. Furthermore, he comes across as a poor second in comparison to his Uttar Pradesh counterpart Yogi Adityanath. Unlike Mr Rawat, Mr Chouhan's popularity ratings remain high but the BJP leadership is unhappy at his acquiring a larger-than-life image. Mr Chouhan has become increasingly assertive and aggressive in his second term and this has not gone unnoticed by the leadership in Delhi. In fact, the party has been keen on promoting another leader in the state for some time but has not got an

opportune moment to do so.

First, Congress insiders had a grouse that Nehru-Gandhi scion Rahul Gandhi was inaccessible to them and that his politically-inexperienced team members kept him from meeting party cadres. And now it is the same story with his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Congress general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh. When Priyanka joined politics two years ago, excited Congress cadres were confident that her entry would bring about a much-needed change in the party as she was reputed to be more open and connected well with workers. But, unfortunately for Congress members, it is as difficult to get an audience with Priyanka as it is with Rahul Gandhi. In Priyanka's case, they blame Sandeep Singh, the main honcho in her office, for her inaccessibility. Unhappy Congress members maintain that Sandeep keeps a tight control on her appointments and is known to give preference to those who defer to him. There have been several instances when Sandeep has exchanged hot words

with party leaders, the latest being UP legislator Aradhana Mishra.

Ever since home minister Amit Shah visited Delhi Police headquarters for a review meeting last week, speculation has been rife that the force will finally get a full-fledged commissioner. According to the grapevine, S.M. Sahai, a 1987 IPS officer, presently serving in the PMO, is the frontrunner for the post. The present incumbent, S.N. Shrivastava, was given additional charge as police commissioner after his predecessor Amulya Patnaik demitted office last March. An order issued then had stated that Mr Shrivastava would hold this charge till further orders. He has since been continuing as an ad hoc police chief as his confirmation orders have yet to come. He is set to retire in June. This is perhaps the first time that Delhi Police has been functioning with an acting chief commissioner for such a prolonged period.

When Arnab Goswami, Republic TV's editor-in-chief and co-founder, was arrested

by the Mumbai Police last year in an abatement to suicide case, the ruling BJP had gone all out to defend him. Union ministers and party spokespersons had lined up to attack the Maharashtra government for indulging in a witch hunt. Mr Goswami is currently embroiled in a fresh controversy over his long WhatsApp chats with the head of the Broadcast Audience Research Council revealing that he was fixing his channel's TRPs. But, unlike the last time, no minister or BJP spokesperson has come to his rescue suggesting that the saffron party wishes to distance itself from its favourite news anchor. Maybe it has something to do with Mr Goswami flaunting his proximity to the government's top bosses and how they were ready to hand down favours to him. Worse, he made fun of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's poetry. Clearly, Mr Goswami's benefactors have not taken kindly to his remarks.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

SHORT TAKES

MORE THAN 20
HURT IN BLAST
AT GAZA HOME

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories, Jan. 23: More than 20 people were injured and several homes destroyed by a large explosion Saturday in a residential area of the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, Palestinian officials said.

The source of the accidental explosion was apparently the home of a member of one of Gaza's armed groups.

"An explosion occurred in a house in Beit Hanoun this morning, resulting in a number of injuries," the interior ministry said, adding that an investigation had been launched into the cause of the blast.

Medical sources said more than 20 people were injured, two of them seriously.

Witnesses said several homes were damaged as a result of the explosion in the home of an "activist". Police cordoned off the area.

ITALY BLOCKS
TIK TOK AFTER
10-YR-GIRL DIES

Milan, Jan. 23: Italy's data protection authority said it was imposing an immediate block on Tik Tok's access to data for any user whose age has not been verified.

The authority said it was acting with "urgency" following the death of a 10-year-old girl in Sicily, who died while participating in a so-called "black-out" challenge while using the Chinese-owned video-sharing social network.

Prosecutors in Sicily are investigating the case. The data protection authority noted it had advised Tik Tok in December of a series of violations, including scant attention to the protection of minors, the ease with which users under age 13 could sign up for the platform — against its own rules — the lack of transparency in information given to users and the use of automatic settings that did not respect privacy.

LICENCE OF PAK
NEWS CHANNEL
SUSPENDED

Islamabad, Jan. 23: Pakistan's media watchdog has suspended the licence of a TV channel for 30 days and imposed a fine of Rs 1 million on it after one of its controversial anchors voiced "contemptuous" remarks and "cast aspersions" on the judiciary.

The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) took action against Bol News on Friday, according to a statement.

"PEMRA suspends Bol News for 30 days, fine of Rupees one million is also imposed," PEMRA said in a tweet.

It said anchor Sami Ibrahim on January 13 "aired contemptuous remarks against the ... chief justice of the Lahore High Court (LHC) and other honourable judges while discussing the matter of appointment of judges in the LHC".

The anchor "cast aspersions on the superior judiciary in violation of Article 19 read with Article 68 of the Constitution [...] and the PEMRA laws including the PEMRA Code of Conduct, 2015", it said.

SAUDI TV: DRONE
OR MISSILE
INTERCEPTED

Dubai, Jan. 23: Saudi Arabia said Saturday it intercepted an apparent missile or drone attack over its capital, Riyadh, amid the kingdom's yearslong war against neighbouring Yemen's Houthi rebels.

Social media users posted video of what appeared to be an explosion in the air over Riyadh. Saudi state TV quoted authorities in the kingdom acknowledging the interception. The Houthis did not immediately acknowledge launching a missile or a drone toward Riyadh. The Houthis have held Yemen's capital, Sanaa, since September 2014.

Saudi Arabia and its allies launched a war against them in March 2015 in support of Yemen's internationally recognised government.

The war has been mired in a stalemate for years. Riyadh has been targeted in sporadic missile attacks in that time, while the Houthis also have launched missile and drone strikes.

Western experts, Saudi Arabia and the US say Iran has supplied arms, including ballistic missiles to the Houthis. Iran denies that, though devices in the weapons link back to Tehran.

Trump impeachment trial in
Senate to begin on Feb. 8

VP Harris' crucial vote as Senate chairman gives Democrats a majority

Washington, Jan. 23: The United States Senate would begin the impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump on February 8, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said. "The January 6th insurrection at the Capitol, incited by Donald J. Trump was a day none of us will ever forget. We all want to put this awful chapter in our nation's history behind us. But healing and unity will only come if there is truth and accountability. And that is what this trial will provide," Schumer said on the senate floor.

Both the Republican and the Democratic Party now have 50 seats each in the 100 member Senate. However, the crucial vote of Vice President Kamala Harris in her capacity as the chairman of the senate gives the Democrats a majority in the upper chambers of the Congress.

Giving details of the impeachment process, Schumer said the house managers will come to read the article of impeachment at 7 pm on Monday. Members will then be sworn in the next day.

After that, both the house managers and the defense will have a period of time to draft their legal briefs, just as they did in previous trials, he said.

"During that period, the senate will continue to do other business for the American people, such as cabinet nominations and the Covid-relief bill, which would provide relief for millions of Americans who are suffering during this pandemic. Then, once the briefs are drafted, presentations by the parties will commence in the week of February 8th," Schumer said.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said that the impeachment began with an unprecedentedly fast and minimal process in the house.

The sequel cannot be an insufficient senate process that denies former president Trump his due process or damages the senate or the presidency itself, he said.

"Senate Republicans strongly believe we need a full and fair process where the former president can mount a defence and the senate can properly consider the factual, legal, and constitutional questions at stake," he said.

The Republican leader suggested that the impeachment trial begin on February 11. "That timeline would have provided the Senate some more floor time before we step fully into the unknown of a trial," he said.

The ruling Democrats did not agree to his timeline.



Work is done on a new border wall being constructed on Friday in Jacumba, California. President Joe Biden has unveiled an immigration reform proposal offering an eight-year path to citizenship for some 11 million immigrants in the US illegally as well as green cards to upwards of a million DACA recipients and temporary protected status to farmworkers already in the United States.

— AFP

Heads of America-funded
global broadcasters resign

Washington, Jan. 23: The heads of three federally-funded international broadcasters were abruptly fired late Friday as the Biden administration completed a house-cleaning of Donald Trump-appointed at the US Agency for Global Media.

Two officials familiar with the changes said the acting chief of the USA-GM summarily dismissed the directors of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks just a month after they had been named to the posts.

The changes came a day after the director of the Voice of America and his deputy were removed and

● **THE CHANGES** came a day after VoA director and his deputy were removed and the chief of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting stepped down. It followed the forced resignation of ex-Prez Donald Trump's handpicked choice to lead USA-GM only two hours after Joe Biden took office.

The firings followed the forced resignation of ex-President Donald Trump's handpicked choice to lead USA-GM only two hours after Joe Biden took office on Wednesday.

ne. Earlier in the day, House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced that article of impeachment for incitement of insurrection by Trump will be delivered to the senate on Monday. The lead house managers for this would be Congresswoman Jamie Raskin, along with lawmakers Dina DeGette, David Cicilline, Joaquin Castro, Eric Swalwell, Ted Lieu, Stacey Plaskett, Madeleine Dean and Joe Neguse.

— PTI

Biden orders intel review of
domestic extremism threat

Washington, Jan. 23: President Joe Biden has directed his intelligence community to study the threat of domestic extremism in the United States, an undertaking being launched weeks after a violent mob loyal to Donald Trump stormed the US Capitol.

The disclosure Friday by White House press secretary Jen Psaki is a stark acknowledgment of the

national security threat that officials see as posed by American extremists motivated to violence by extremist ideology.

The involvement of the director of national intelligence, an office created after the September 11, 2001, attacks to prevent international terrorism, suggests that American authorities are examining how to pivot to a more concerted focus on violence from radical extremists at home.

Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Chris Wray has said that, over the last year, the most lethal violence has come from anti-government activists, such as anarchists and militia-types. The rise of domestic violent extremism is a serious and growing national security threat," Psaki said.

— AP

Trump's USAGM chief Michael Pack had been accused by Democrats and others of trying to turn VOA and its sister networks into pro-Trump propaganda machines. Pack had appointed all of those who were fired on Thursday and Friday to their posts only in December.

The two officials said the acting CEO of USAGM, Keli Chao, had fired Middle East Broadcasting Network director Victoria Coates, Radio Free Asia chief Stephen Yates and Radio Free Europe head Ted Lipien in a swift series of moves late Friday.

It was not immediately clear if any of those removed would try to contest their dismissals.

— AP

BIDEN CALLS UP
TRUDEAU, LÓPEZ
OBRADOR

Washington, Jan. 23: President Joe Biden made his first calls to foreign leaders as America's commander in chief on Friday, dialing up Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador at a strained moment for the US relationship with its North American neighbours.

Biden's call to Trudeau came after the Canadian prime minister this week publicly expressed disappointment over Biden's decision — one of his first acts as president — to issue an executive order halting construction of the Keystone XL oil pipeline.

— AP

US to revisit its
deal with Taliban

Washington, Jan. 23: The Biden administration has said it will review the US-Taliban deal to assess whether the militant group is reducing violence in keeping with its side of the agreement in the Afghan peace accord. During a telephonic conversation with his Afghan counterpart Hamdullah Mohib, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan underscored that the US will support the peace process with a robust and regional diplomatic effort, "which will aim to help the two sides achieve a durable and just political settlement and permanent ceasefire", National Security Council spokeswoman Emily Horne said on Friday.

"Sullivan also made clear the United States' intention to review the February 2020 US-Taliban agreement, including to assess whether the Taliban was living up to its commitments to cut ties with terrorist groups, to reduce violence in Afghanistan and to engage in meaningful negotiations with the Afghan government and other stakeholders," she said.

The Trump administration had signed the peace deal with Taliban in February last in Doha. The accord drew up plans for withdrawal of United States troops from Afghanistan in exchange for security guarantees from the insurgent group. As part of the deal, the US committed to withdraw its 12,000 troops within 14 months.

There are currently only 2,500 American troops left in the country. The Taliban committed to prevent other groups, including Al Qaeda, from using Afghan soil to recruit, train or fund raise toward activities that threaten the US or its allies.

— PTI

Hong Kong in
strict lockdown

Hong Kong, Jan. 23: Thousands of Hong Kong residents were locked down on Saturday in an unprecedented move to contain a worsening outbreak in the city, authorities said.

Hong Kong has been grappling to contain a fresh wave of the coronavirus since November. Over 4,300 cases have been recorded in the last two months, making up nearly 40 per cent of the city's total.

Coronavirus cases in Hong Kong's Yau Tsim Mong district — a working-class neighbourhood with old buildings and subdivided flats — made up about half of the infections in the past week. Sewage testing in the area picked up more concentrated traces of the Covid-19 virus, prompting concerns that poorly built plumbing systems and a lack of ventilation in subdivided units may present a possible path for the virus to spread.

Authorities said in a statement Saturday that an area comprising 16 buildings in Yau Tsim Mong will be locked down until all residents have undergone tests.

Residents will not be allowed to leave their homes until they have received their test results to prevent cross-infection. "Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained," the government said in a statement.

Hong Kong has previously avoided lockdowns in the city during the pandemic, with leader Carrie Lam stating in July last year that authorities will avoid taking such "extreme measures"

COVID DEATHS
COULD SURPASS
600,000: BIDEN

Washington, Jan. 23: President Joe Biden warned on Friday that the number of Coronavirus deaths in the United States was expected to surpass 600,000 and urged Congress to move fast on his \$1.9 trillion plan to battle Covid-19 and provide economic relief to struggling Americans.

While Biden called for urgent passage of his "American Rescue Plan," his efforts to get Congress to cooperate on his fast-paced agenda could be complicated by Donald Trump's looming impeachment trial in the Senate.

Top Democratic lawmakers said Friday that they planned to send the article of impeachment passed by the House of Representatives to the Senate on Monday, triggering Trump's trial in the body.

"The virus is surging," Biden told reporters at the White House. "We're at 400,000 dead, expected to reach well over 600,000. Families are going hungry. People are at risk of being evicted. Job losses are mounting again. We need to act now..."

— AFP

unless it had no other choice. The restrictions, which were announced at 4 am in Hong Kong, are expected to end within 48 hours, the government said.

It appealed to employers to exercise discretion and avoid docking the salary of employees who were affected by the restrictions and may not be able to go to work.

— AP

Hospitals fill up
fast in Portugal

Lisbon, Jan. 23: Ambulances waiting to deliver Covid-19 patients queued outside hospital emergency departments Friday as Portugal's Covid-19 surge continued unabated, adding a new record of daily deaths for the fifth day in a row.

The number of Covid-19 hospitalisations and patients in intensive care also reached new highs over the previous 24 hours, placing the public health system under severe strain, health authorities said.

Authorities reported 234 deaths, bringing the total in the country of 10.3 million to 9,920.

Hospitals added another 149 Covid-19 patients to their wards, with another 13 in ICUs.

Hospital Covid-19 wards and ICUs are on average around 90 per cent full. The almost 14,000 officially reported new cases was the second highest number during the pandemic. Portugal has the highest seven-day average rate in the world of new cases per 100,000 population and the highest rate of new deaths, according to data collated through Thursday by Johns Hopkins University.

At Lisbon's Santa Maria Hospital, the capital's largest, more than a dozen ambulances queued along an approach road, waiting to hand over their Covid-19 patients to medics. At some hospitals, ambulance drivers have complained about waiting for hours.

— AP

UK docs debate
gap for vaccine

London, Jan. 23: Senior medics are at odds in the UK over the optimum gap between the two doses of vaccines being administered for protection against Covid-19.

The two vaccines currently being injected among the country's priority groups, Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca, both require a booster shot a few weeks later.

Initial advice for the second dose to be delivered within 21 days was modified by the UK government scientists to up to 12 weeks apart, with the aim

of vaccinating larger numbers with at least one jab to inject some level of immediate protection.

The government's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) claims unpublished data suggest that the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is still effective with doses 12 weeks apart. But American pharma major Pfizer has said it has tested its vaccine's efficacy only when the two doses were given up to 21 days apart, creating some doubt over its efficacy with a larger time gap.

— PTI



OUR CRITIC'S RATING

Outstanding ★★★★★ | Great ★★★★ | Good ★★★ | Okay ★★ | Poor ★ | Truly Terrible TT

Unraveling the tandav over Tandav

SUPARNA SHARMA

Having raged and protested, threatened and FIR-ed the creators of *Tandav* on various counts, the Bharatiya Janata Party and their sanghi karya-kartas received an unconditional apology and the offending scenes have been removed. Lord Shiv no longer chants “aazadi” with the students of a university called VNU, and the offensive references to dalits by upper caste characters have been taken out. Seemingly, the outraged sanghis have won, but they know they have been had.

That is why even as four UP cops have driven to Mumbai to question and book the makers of *Tandav*, there are more FIRs on rather vague charges — “India’s Prime Minister can’t be shown saying such-and-such... UP ka naam badnam... UP cops don’t drink on duty...”

The problem is that the BJP and sanghis can’t really say what is enraging them because that would tantamount to admitting that *Tandav* is, indeed, a “roast” of the BJP’s stalwarts and their anything-goes pursuit of power towards two specific but intertwined goals — dismantling a democracy for the creation of a Hindutva Rashtra, and ensuring that complete power rests with one supreme leader.

The enraged know that the writers and makers of *Tandav* have cocked a snook at them and may get away unless they do something. Anything. Including ensnaring another series, *Mirzapur*.

The nine-episode *Tandav* tells the story of a political party, the Jan Lok Dal (JLD), that leans to the right and is in the throes of a generational shift.

The JLD’s colour is yellow, but it is a party that rose in opposition to a “ghamadi aurat” who imposed Emergency, sent their leaders to jail, and whose son, Sanjay, died very young.

At 7, Jan Kalyan Marg, JLD’s two veteran leaders — two-time Prime Minister Devki Nandan (Tigmanshu Dhulia) and his trusted aide, Gopal Das Munshi (Kumud Mishra) — think they hold the reins of the party even as they look on at a much younger man, Samar Pratap Singh (Saif Ali Khan), wave at his legions of fans whose faces are hidden behind paper masks of his smiling mug.

The JLD is poised to claim unprecedented victory and Devki Nandan is all set to take oath again. He looks at Samar from a distance and tells Gopal that he is watching a “tanashah” in the making “jo desh mein Loktantra khatam kar dega”. Gopal pays no heed. Samar has risen on the work done by these two political veterans, but he feels that this victory is his, that his time has come.

As if all these hints were not enough, Samar’s career really takes off when he, with the help of the owner of a TV channel and his trusted right-hand man, Gulpal (Sunil Grover), obliterates his two mentors. Gulpal is the

very

Tandav

CAST: Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia, Sunil Grover, Kumud Mishra, Tigmanshu Dhulia, Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, Anup Soni, Sarah Jane Dias, Paresh Pahuja, Kritika Kamra, Gauahar Khan, Dino Morea, Sandhya Mridul, Shonali Nagrani, Hiten Tejwani

DIRECTOR: Ali Abbas Zafar

RATING: ★★★★★

STREAMING ON: Prime Video

embodiment of Chanakya’s neeti — saam, daam, dand, bhed.

Tandav’s plot dips into the karesh we see all around us today and its main characters are very obviously based on real-life politicians and activists. But the creators of *Tandav*, while retaining the essence of these real-life characters, their rise and fall, their politics and antecedents, have added enough diversionary details to throw off the

hounds. Samar is Devki’s son here, but *Tandav* gives Devki a girlfriend, Anuradha Kishore (Dimple Kapadia).

However, Anuradha is not a homebody. She has ambitions of her own and an idiot son (played brilliantly by Paresh Pahuja) who craves a ministry.

Tandav even adds a wife, Ayesha, to Samar (played with poise, a pout and little else by Sara Jane Dias). But, Gopal is another name for Krishna.

It is at about 16 minutes into the series when the offending, now deleted Lord Shiva scene arrives. At the VNU (Vivekananda National University), a play is being staged by students, many of them Muslim, who supported farmers. At the goading of Lord Shiv, played by student leader Shiva Shekhar (Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub), there are joshile chants of aazadi.

This scene ends with a line that thrilled me to bits — ... “Jio”, lekin hamein bhi toh jeene do.

Deleting this and other scenes takes away nothing from the delightfully subversive series because *Tandav*’s plot is devious. Like a

knot of snakes, it slithers in various directions, and wherever it lands, it stings.

On one hand is Samar Pratap Singh and his desperate desire to acquire power, on the other is VNU where JLD, with the help of cops and friends in the faculty, is sponsoring mayhem.

In the JLD, as another power centre rises to challenge Samar, loyal Gulpal gets to work. Eager IT cells, arrests of Muslim students under UAPA and murders work in tandem to restore Samar’s place on top of the pyramid.

Written by Gaurav Solanki and directed by Ali Abbas Zafar, *Tandav* opens with a piece of gyaan from the Polish philosopher and historian, Leszek Kolakowski: In politics, being deceived is no excuse.

The BJP may not have been deceived by *Tandav*’s clever writers, but it has certainly been outwitted. It won’t rest till it has drawn blood. OTT platforms beware.

Tandav’s end is a bit meh and a few questions remain unresolved, but the series is a riveting watch because it gives us a peek into how power is amassed, many disruptions playing out simultaneously.

The show has excellent actors,

including Kritika Kamra, Gauahar Khan, Kumud Mishra, Tigmanshu Dhulia, Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, Anup Soni and Sandhya Mridul. Even the not-so-excellent ones, like Dino Morea, have given very decent performances. But three actors stand out and carry the series — Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia and Sunil Grover.

Both Saif Ali Khan and Dimple Kapadia’s characters have a sophisticated, glamorous veneer but nurse a touch of evil within.

Samar’s ambition and pursuit of power have the entitled, haughty air of a well-heeled heir, and Saif brings a bit of Frank Underwood’s flashy razzmatazz that adds a sexy glint to his maleficence.

Anuradha Kishore’s hunger for power and cynicism is lit by her intense rage at never getting her due. Dimple’s Anuradha looks lovely in graceful linen saris, but the cold, grisly inner cosmos they drape is all her own.

No one, however, is more memorable and menacing than Sunil Grover’s Gulpal. He is the amoral centre-piece without whom this house of cards would collapse. Gulpal is so good that he should get a series of his own. And if, like me, you are given to drawing parallels between reel

and real life, then he may very well get one, soon enough.



In Regina King’s film, speculative history sings

One Night In Miami

CAST: Kingsley Ben-Adir, Eli Goree, Leslie Odom Jr., Aldis Hodge

DIRECTOR: Regina King

RATING: ★★★★★

STREAMING ON: Amazon Prime

celebration quickly fades, and not only because, in observing Malcolm’s religious dictates, they aren’t drinking. (Malcolm instead offers vanilla ice cream.) Each character is contemplating how they fit, or don’t, in a white-controlled world, and how their fame brings burden as much as it does opportunity. Are they risking enough? Or too much?

“We are fighting for our lives,” says Malcolm.

Some of the same dialogue, of course, resonates directly with today. And it goes without saying that films this intimate with the existential anxieties of Black identity aren’t common. “One Night in Miami ...,” the first film by a Black female director selected to play at the Venice Film Festival in its 77 years, comes through stirringly unfiltered.

And, as the dialogue surges, the movie crackles. Malcolm confronts Cooke, suggesting he left Gospel music behind to sing sweet ballads for white audiences like “a wind-up toy in a music box.” This may be the film’s most questionable departure from history — Cooke, you could argue, deserves better — but it sets up a charged back-and-forth on making change from within or without, declaring all-out war or subverting with a smile. Malcolm charges Cooke with not writing songs about the movement, claiming Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind” beat him to it. Cooke responds the only real freedom is economic freedom.

“Everybody talks about getting a piece of the pie,” says Cooke. “I want the goddamn recipe.” I won’t go further into the details of the exchange, but King builds it, beautifully, toward the creation and performance of one of the era’s greatest songs, Cooke’s “A Change Is Gonna Come.” If the opening prelude of “One Night in Miami ...” is less purposeful, the payoff of the film’s final crescendo is exhilarating.

The movie’s gathering momentum, even as it grows more claustrophobic, is owed to a few things. It comes from Ben-Adir’s artfully calibrated performance as Malcolm — here more consumed with doubt, worry and self-awareness than the usual fire-brand portrayal. It comes from Odom’s deft sense of Cooke. And it comes from King’s remarkable elegance as a director in this, her first feature (though she’s been directing television series for nearly a decade). Like the foot-stomping “ohh-ahh” Cooke coaxes from an audience in a poignant flashback of an a cappella performance of “Chain Gang,” “One Night in Miami ...” ultimately throbs with the soulfulness of shared brotherhood. For these four Black men, yes, and for many others. — AP

An epic for modern-day India

White Tiger

CAST: Adarsh Gourav, Rajkumar Rao, Priyanka Chopra, Mahesh Manjrekar, Vijay Maurya, Swaroop Sampat, Kamlesh Gill

DIRECTOR: Ramin Bahrani

RATING: ★★★★★

STREAMING ON: Netflix

Ramin Bahrani, the Iranian-American filmmaker, started out small, with the simple story of a pushcart vendor, a Pakistani immigrant selling coffee and doughnuts in New York, in 2005’s “*Man Push Cart*.” In the years since, his films have steadily grown in scale and melodrama, but they’ve stayed resolutely within the gap separating rich and poor.

Bahrani’s last film, 2014’s “*99 Homes*” — a movie dedicated to Roger Ebert, who championed Bahrani’s early work — plunged into the heart of the Great Recession in a damning economic parable of foreclosure in Florida, with a titanic performance by Michael Shannon as a predatory real-estate broker. Bahrani’s latest, the India-set “*The White Tiger*,” is a step higher, still, in scope and vigor.

“*The White Tiger*” is the kind of widescreen epic of class struggle about an ambitious, cunning climber

that has long been a rich domain of movies. Bahrani may have begun as a neorealist but “*The White Tiger*” finds him reaching for the operatic heights of “*Goodfellas*.”

He doesn’t get there. But “*The White Tiger*,” about a loyal chauffeur to a corrupt landlord in India, is an engrossing tale of servant and master that makes a dynamic portrait of the world’s largest democracy, and the caste system that divides it.

The film faithfully and affectionately adapts Aravind Adiga’s 2008 Booker Prize-winning novel, a book that — since Bahrani and Adiga are longtime friends — was dedicated to Bahrani. We first meet Balram Halwai (Adarsh Gourav), as he sits in regal costume, in the back of a car speeding through Delhi in 2007 on a joyride cut short when a child walks into the road. It’s a misleading opening; Balram is the driver, and we’ll later learn it’s his boss, Ashok (Rajkumar Rao), behind the wheel and Ashok’s wife, Pinky (Priyanka Chopra Jonas) in the front seat.

Bahrani will return to this moment but not before a lengthy flashback that runs at least half of the film. Balram comes from the poor village of Laxmangarh, where his prospects are dim. With an ingratiating smile and some pandering, he convinces a wealthy landlord known as the Stork (Mahesh

Manjrekar) to take him on as a driver. Balram narrates along the way, sharing his strategy for advancement while selling his story as reflecting a much-needed rebellion for India’s millions of poor. They are psychologically locked in a rooster coop, he says, too timid to rebel despite knowing their fate.

“Don’t believe for a second there’s a million-rupee game show you can win to get out of it,” says Balram.

It’s a pointed jab at the best picture-winning “*Slumdog Millionaire*,” a movie that — like “*The White Tiger*” — cast a bright spotlight on India’s underclass, but one that offered a more fantastical vision of escape. “*The White Tiger*,” it could be argued, isn’t so different as an against-the-odds success story. If “*Slumdog*” gave us the musical version of uprising in India, “*The White Tiger*” instead filters modern India through a crime drama like “*Scarface*.”

But “*The White Tiger*” more rigorously examines and subverts Hollywood (and Bollywood) stereotypes of Indian life. Balram, a self-made hero, capable of ruthlessness and selfishness, is a more complicated protagonist, worthy of empathy and scorn. In “*The White Tiger*,” he represents India’s future.

“The Indian entrepreneur has to be straight and crooked, mocking and believing, sly and sincere, all at the same time,” he says.

Watching Gourav pull

off such a balancing act is the best reason to see “*The White Tiger*.” An actor and singer, Gourav’s charisma animates a film that otherwise can sag with heavy-handedness. Bahrani isn’t a director with a light touch, but, then again, he’s drawn to subjects that deserve bluntness.

Bahrani, with Paolo Carnera’s vivid cinematography, builds a dense, incisive film that nevertheless feels uneven in structure. The movie is so invested in the mentality of the

slave-master relationship between Balram and Ashok, the landlord’s hipster son, that it overwhelms. Almost as soon as Balram, through bloodshed and Machiavellian guile, achieves independence, “*The White Tiger*” is wrapping up. Maybe it’s too American a thing to say, but it skips over the best part.

— AP



SHORT TAKES

Murray pulls out of Oz Open

Melbourne: Five-time Australian Open finalist Andy Murray withdrew from the year's first Grand Slam tournament, saying on Friday he could not figure out a workable quarantine that would allow him to compete amid the coronavirus pandemic. The announcement comes a little more than a week after Murray, who has won three Grand Slam singles titles elsewhere, said he tested positive for Covid-19 shortly before he was due to board a charter flight to Melbourne. "Gutted to share that I won't be flying out to Australia to compete at the Australian Open. We've been in constant dialogue with Tennis Australia to try and find a solution which would allow some form of workable quarantine, but we couldn't make it work," Murray said. — AP

Hockey women slump to 1st loss

Buenos Aires: Indian women's hockey team suffered their first defeat on the tour of Argentina when they lost 1-2 to B side of the hosts, letting Agustina Gorzelany strike late in the match. Sol Pagella (11') put the Argentina side ahead while Indian forward Salima Tete (54') scored in the final quarter. However, the Indian defence let Gorzelany score three minutes after finding the equaliser. In the previous matches, India drew 2-2 and 1-1 respectively with the Argentina junior team. "Today we played against a stronger Argentina squad consisting many of their senior players. This was a perfect practice match for us ahead of next week's schedule where we play against the Senior side," said chief coach Sjoerd Marijne. — PTI

Neeraj tense over 'uncertain' Games

New Delhi: Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on Saturday admitted that the uncertainty over the staging of the postponed Olympics due to coronavirus creates anxiety but said he is proceeding with his preparations thinking that the Games will happen and he will give his 100 per cent. There has been intense speculation over the staging of Tokyo Olympics in July-August with some reports suggesting that the Games may be scrapped. "There is some anxiety for sure. If Olympics is happening, the target is clear, I have to give my 100 per cent in Olympics. But by chance if Olympics is not held, I may plan differently. "There are sometimes this thought in mind that we are training so hard but Olympics may not happen," said the 23-year-old reigning Asian Games and Commonwealth Games gold medalist. — PTI

Clippers score sixth win in row

Los Angeles: Kawhi Leonard scored 31 points, Paul George added 29 and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 120-106 for their sixth straight win. Serge Ibaka had 17 points and 11 rebounds to help the Clippers improve to 12-4, tying the Lakers for the NBA's best record. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 30 points and eight assists against his former team. Lu Dort added 19 points. — AP

Live on TV

BADMINTON
Thailand Opens: Final from 10.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD, 3
CRICKET
Big Bash League: Sydney Thunder vs Adelaide Strikers from 10.35 am; Sydney Sixers vs Hobart Hurricanes from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD
FOOTBALL
Indian Super League: Jamshedpur vs Hyderabad FC from 4.50 pm; Bengaluru vs Odisha from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3
Italian League: Verona vs Napoli from 7.30 pm; Lazio vs Sassuolo from 10.30 pm; Parma vs Sampdoria from 1.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD
UFC
Fight Night: Dustin Poirier vs Conor McGregor and other bouts from 8.30 am on Sony Ten 1, HD

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NO PAIN NO GAIN

Saini says he risked aggravating his injury to play in Brisbane Test

New Delhi, Jan. 23: A groin strain prevented India pacer Navdeep Saini from giving his best in the Brisbane Test but fearing that he may not get such a big stage again, he remained at the beck and call of his captain and ended up bowling five overs despite injury.

The 28-year-old, who finally made his Test debut in the Australia series after years of wait, said he risked aggravating his injury by bowling in the second innings but given what was at stake, "it was a no brainer".

"Ajinkya *bhaiya* asked me if I would be able to bowl with the injury, I just had to say yes," Saini, who was in the middle when Rishabh Pant hit the winning runs at the Gabba, said.

Having taken four wickets in his debut game at Sydney, Saini suffered a groin strain in Australia's first innings and could bowl only 7.5 overs at the Gabba, increasing concerns for an already injury-hit India, who were forced to go into the game with a bowling attack which had the combined experience of four games.

For someone who made a massive leap of playing Ranji Trophy for Delhi in 2013 straight from making a quick buck in tennis ball cricket across Haryana, Saini wondered about the timing of his injury as he had just realised his dream of playing Tests.

But the like of the rest of his teammates, he showed a steely resolve and carried on.

"I was fine and suddenly I got injured. I was wondering 'why it is happening in such a crucial game and have got the opportunity to play after a long time'.

"I just wished if could keep going with that injury and support my team. I knew I might not get a stage like that again. Captain asked me if I could do it. I was in pain but said I would do with whatever I could.

"I am recovering now



Paceman Navdeep Saini bowls on Day Four of the fourth Test against Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane in this file photo. — AFP

and should be fit soon," said the lanky fast bowler from Karnal who was fast-tracked into first-class cricket by former India opener Gautam Gambhir and received his maiden Test call-up in back in 2018. Saini is not part of India's squad for the first two home Tests against England starting February 5 in Chennai.

'SIRAJ AMONG MY BEST MATES'
Mohammed Siraj, the

find of Australia tour in coach Ravi Shastri's words, was seen counselling Saini consistently in the latter's maiden Test. It helped the Delhi pacer immensely as he and Siraj go back a long way.

"He is one of my best mates. We have played a lot together (for India A). We talk a lot about bowling. He was always there for me in the first game. Pace is important but he was telling me to also

focus on line and length to be effective.

"Siraj is a very different bowler. He showed a lot of courage by staying back after his father's death. What he achieved was very crucial for the team and showed his character."

Talking about his extraordinary journey, Saini, son of a bus driver, said he never planned to be a professional cricketer, it was only fate at play. — PTI

ANDERSON'S 6-FOR KEEPS SL IN CHECK

Galle (Sri Lanka), Jan. 23: England paceman James Anderson returned his best figures of 6-40 in Asia to help bowl out Sri Lanka for 381 on Day Two of the second Test on Saturday.

The tourists were 98/2 at stumps after Lasith Embuldeniya struck early to remove the openers. Skipper Joe Root, on 67, and Jonny Bairstow, on 24, were batting as England trail by 283 runs in Galle.

Anderson, 38, denied wicketkeeper-batsman Niroshan Dickwella a century after sending him back on 92 to claim his 30th five-wicket haul and second in Sri Lanka—his previous best was 5-75 in Galle in 2012.

Anderson, who replaced Stuart Broad in the team for this Test, bowled 29 overs with 13 maidens before Sri Lanka were bowled out in an extended second session with Dilruwan Perera scoring a defiant 67.

The pace spearhead struck in his first over of the day to send Angelo Mathews caught behind for 110 after the former captain added just three runs in the morning.

But the dismissal was skipper Joe Root's mastermind after he reviewed the umpire's call, which was not out, and replays suggested the ball had grazed Mathews' bat.

Fast bowler Mark Wood sent debutant Ramesh Mendis trudging back to the pavilion for nought with wicketkeeper Jos Buttler taking a one-handed diving catch towards his left. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES
Sri Lanka 381 in 139.3 overs (A. Mathews 110, N. Dickwella 92, D. Perera 67; Anderson 6/40, Wood 3/84) vs England 98/2 in 30 overs (J. Bairstow batting 24, J. Root batting 67; Embuldeniya 2/33).

FA CUP | FOURTH ROUND

Wolves survive Chorley scare

Chorley (England), Jan. 23: Separated from Chorley by 109 places in the English football pyramid, Wolverhampton didn't only manage a single goal in their 1-0 win.

The Premier League millionaires also only managed a single shot the goal against the part-timers from the sixth tier.

Vitinha's 35-yard, swerving strike in the 12th-minute moved Nuno Espirito Santo's side into the round of 16 in the FA Cup on Friday night. It was spectacular but actually a rare moment of quality from the visitors to this tiny stadium in a former mill town in northern England.

Contrast that with the attacking threat from the minnows. Incredibly, John Ruddy from Wolves was the busier of the two goalkeepers facing five shots on target, including tipping over a header from Andy Halls, who is a personal trainer in his day job.

And it was Wolves having to hang on to avoid being forced into extra team by a disciplined Chorley side that belied its lowly status.

No wonder manager Jamie Vermiglio wasn't

THE RESULT	
Chorley	0
Wolverhampton	1
<i>(Vitinha 12)</i>	

just savouring his chance to take on a Premier League side. A primary school headmaster in his day job, Vermiglio felt far from outclassed by his Wolves counterpart.

"I thought we were fantastic I feel really proud, of course I do," Vermiglio said.

"But I feel disappointed as well and I never thought I would come off the field feeling the way I feel. It's a strange emotion because I feel we have just taken a Premier League team all the way. We were in a game right until the last minute," he added.

It says a lot about the breadth of English football that the last non-league side remaining in the FA Cup could prove more than a match to a Wolves side that reached the Europa League last-16 last season.

"Credit to Chorley. They are in the lower divisions but they were organized and had a good striker that fights,"Nuno said. — AP



Vitinha (centre) of the Wolverhampton Wanderers celebrates scoring against Chorley in their England FA Cup fourth round match at the Victoria Park Stadium in Chorley, Lancashire, on Friday. — AFP

Roma handed loss for impermissible 6th sub

Milan, Jan. 23: An impermissible sixth substitution prompted the Italian league judge to inflict Roma with a 0-3 loss to Spezia in the Italian Cup on Friday.

Nine-man Roma had already lost Tuesday's round of 16 match 4-2.

In extra time, Roma sent on Daniel Fuzato for Bryan Cristante and Ibanez for Pedro even though it had already made four changes.

Five substitutions are permitted under new rules introduced amid the coronavirus pandemic. The changes can made during a maximum of three inter-

ruptions during the first 90 minutes and during one more stoppage in extra time.

The substitutions occurred during a chaotic finish after Roma defender Gianluca Mancini and goalkeeper Pau Lopez were sent off within 30 seconds of each other in extra time. Former Roma winger Daniele Verde and Riccardo Saponara then scored for Spezia.

Spezia face Napoli in the quarterfinals.

It's been a miserable spell for Roma, who were beaten by rivals Lazio 3-0 in the capital derby last week in Serie A. — AP

Indian doubles pairs fizzle out in semifinal

Bangkok, Jan. 23: The Indian mixed doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa produced a spirited performance before going down narrowly to top seeds Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai in the semifinals of the Toyota Thailand Open here on Saturday.

Up against the world number three Thai pair, Satwik and Ashwini, who are ranked 36th, showed great skills and temperament as they scripted an extraordinary fightback after losing the opening game by a whisker.

However, in the end, Dechapol and Sapsiree prevailed 22-20, 18-21, 21-12 over the Indians in a 57-minute battle.

Satwik and Ashwini,

● **Satwik and Ashwini showed great skills and temperament to script a strong fightback after losing the opening game, but could not punch through.**

who spent most of the last year away from the court in two different cities and could only practice together for a few weeks, on Friday became the first Indian mixed doubles pair to reach the semifinals of a BWF World Tour Super 1000 event.

Earlier, the impressive run of Satwik and Chirag Shetty also came to an end after a close semifinal defeat in men's doubles.

The Indian pair, ranked 10th in the world, lost 18-21, 18-21 to world number nine Malaysian combination of Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik in a 35-minute match.

MARIN CLINCHES SPOT IN FINAL

Spain's fifth seed and former world number one Carolina Marin breezed into the final, beating South Korea's An Se-young 21-19, 21-15.

She came out on top last week against top-seeded Tai Tzu-ying, and continued her winning streak Saturday, maintaining her signature aggressive play against seventh-seeded An.

An, an 18-year-old who was awarded "Most Promising Player" in 2019, was downcast after Saturday's defeat. — Agencies



Spain's Carolina Marin celebrates after winning her semifinal match against An Se-young from South Korea at the Toyota Thailand Open in Bangkok on Saturday. — Badminton Association of Thailand/AFP

Shastri's contribution in Oz win can't be undermined



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

Accolades have been profuse — and from all quarters — for India's cricketers that beat Australia to win the recent Test series. There is not an iota of exaggeration or hyperbole, which usually accompanies success, in this. Every word of praise has been richly deserved.

The hard-fought 2-1 triumph will be forever remembered, in fact gain even more lustre with time. Beating Australia in their backyard is considered the toughest assign-

ment in international cricket. India did this against such heavy odds as to make the result mind-boggling, beyond belief.

The hardships endured both physical and psychological — by the team finds few parallels, not just in Indian cricket history, but in the sport itself. Heroes emerged in each daunting situation — senior pros, those with the experience of just 2-3 Tests, some even debutants — debutants, taking a cue from each other to lead the team to the incredible

series win.

In hindsight, it wasn't calibre which won the series for India. In fact, skills wise, Australia may have been marginally ahead, as statistics suggest.

Top scorer and highest wicket-taker in the series were both Aussies.

Where India scored was in grit, courage, self-belief, application, ambition, and not the least, judicious use of attrition or aggression to outplay the opponents. What this reflects better planning, proactive strategizing, time and meaningful communication with players.

This redounds to the credit of chief coach Ravi Shastri, and his support staff. B. Arun, Vikram Rathour and R. Sridhar. The efforts of the players,

their resilience and der-ring-do, cannot be diluted even a whit. But Shastri's contribution in the victory can't be undermined either.

His strong influence comes through clearly in the entertaining and insightful conversation between R. Ashwin and fielding coach Sridhar after the series which the off-spinner has put on social media, followed by what bowling coach B. Arun had to say in a press conference on Friday.

What I've gleaned from the Ashwin-Sridhar *tete-a-tete* and Arun's press conference, these are the areas where Shastri's planning was crucial:

a) Bowling strategy against Smith, Labuschagne etc started in July, almost five months

before the tour, along with Kohli and Sridhar. This entailed detailed studying of the Aussie batting during the hard lockdown period. The strong on side field to Smith, shutting up his off side run scoring opportunities paid off to a large extent. Shastri also asked Rahane to use Ashwin within the first 10 overs after Australia chose to bat first at Melbourne. The off-spinner got the master batsman cheaply.

b) Not reacting adversely when the team got bowled out for 36 at Adelaide. From what Sridhar says, Shastri in fact says the players should wear it as a badge, take lessons from the debacle so that it inspires them to success. This was crucial in keeping the morale of the team

intact despite the freakish yet massive setback, and showed fine understanding of human nature.

c) Changing tactics after the first Test, confabulating with Kohli (before he left) and stand-in captain Rahane to play five bowlers, show more aggression against the Australians who appeared to be trying too hard to exacts revenge for the 2018 loss.

d) Not sending members of the ODI and T20 squads, plus the net bowlers like Shardul, Washington and Natrajan, back to India. His apprehension that some players might get injured came true when more than half a dozen got injured. These three did the start turn in the final

Test.

e) Tackling each player's failures/shortcomings (deploying other coaches in this too), with a mix of compassion and firmness to get the best out of them

Shastri's booming, often bombastic approach has frequently made him the butt of criticism in mainstream media, memes and scorn on social media. But he's stuck his neck out, in picking players (remember Jasprit Bumrah being given a Test place against all advice) or not (Rahane, Pujara, Ashwin have been dropped), taking the jibes and barbs on the chin when the plays fell, all the while expressing confidence that the Indian team would deliver big time.

I think Shastri deserves a hat tip.