





## SHORT TAKES

## People shouted 'Pakistan zindabad' in lighter vein: Cops

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 24

Six people, including three women and a teenager were found shouting "Pakistan zindabad" near the Khan Market Metro station in the early hours of Sunday. On Sunday at around 1 am, a PCR call was received at the Tughlaq Road police station about a few people shouting Pakistan zindabad near the Khan Market Metro station. "When the police team reached the spot, they found three women, two men and a teenager were present there on blue-coloured Yulu bikes. During questioning, it came to light that they had come to the India Gate area and had rented the Yulu bikes," said a senior police official. "They decided to race on the Yulu bikes and call each other by names based on countries, including that of Pakistan. Thus, they had shouted Pakistan zindabad in a lighter vein, he said adding that an enquiry is being conducted.

## Drones to be deployed to monitor tractor rally

Cops to safeguard farmers' rally as ordered by home ministry

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 24

Aerial surveillance using drones, video recording of the parade, more than 10,000 paramilitary personnel, and deployment of ambulance and anti-terror team are some of the arrangements the home ministry has asked the Delhi police to put in place for the farmer tractor rally on January 26. Sources claimed that the home ministry top brass was regularly co-ordinating with the Delhi police and monitoring all arrangements being made for the tractor rally, which is being seen as a "highly sensitive event" being organised on the same day as the Republic Day parade. "Irrespective of what the farmer leaders or Unions feel, there are specific intelligent

inputs that subversive or mischievous elements could use the tractor rally to foment trouble. So, we need to be extra cautious. There is technical evidence to suggest that Pakistan based subversive or terror elements could infiltrate this tractor parade," a senior home ministry official added.

It has already been decided that more than 10,000 para-military personnel will secure Delhi's border, particularly at Singhu, Ghazipur, and Tikri, for the rally. These are the three border points from where farmers will enter the national capital for the rally which would cover a distance of more than 100 km both within and outside Delhi.

In addition, more reinforcements will be stationed in both Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to

deal with any untoward incident during the farmer tractor rally. Apart from the Delhi police, the home ministry is also co-ordinating with the police of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

With talks between the Centre and the farmer Unions having failed on Friday, security deployment would be finalised and out in place latest by Saturday night. Senior home ministry officials along with the Delhi police top brass are holding regular security review meetings to ensure that no violent or untoward incident takes place in the run-up to the tractor rally.

The Delhi police had earlier denied permission to the agitating farmers to hold their proposed tractor rally on Outer Ring Road in view of the security threat.

## Farmers' tableaux to depict protest against agri laws

New Delhi, Jan. 24: The Republic Day tractor parade by agitating farmers will feature a number of tableaux from across states depicting village life, the protest against the Centre's contentious farm laws, and hail their courage, according to organisers.

A farmer leader told a news agency that directions were issued to all organisations participating in the protest to prepare tableaux for the parade.

"Around one lakh tractor-trolleys from across the country will participate in the parade. Around 30 per cent of these will have tableaux on different themes, including the histo-

ry of the farmers' movement in India, the role of women farmers, and farming practices followed in different states," he said.

A few children from Maharashtra's Vidarbha region have also planned a tableau on farmer suicides.

"Children of farmers, who committed suicide, are expected to participate in the parade. Their tableau will depict the hardships faced by farmers of the region that faces water scarcity," a member of Swaraj India said.

Tableaux from states like Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttarakhand will show how fruits and vegetables are cul-

tivated in the hilly regions.

Participants from Punjab and Haryana will showcase traditional and modern farming technology and statues of women milking cows and farmers driving bullock carts. Each tractor will carry a tricolour and there will be folk music and patriotic songs.

A member of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), a joint front of the protesting farmer Unions, said the parade is likely to start from the five border points of Delhi — Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur, Palwal, and Shahjahanpur — where farmers have been camping since November 28 last year. — PTI

## Delhi records 185 new Covid cases, 9 deaths

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 24

Delhi recorded 185 fresh Covid-19 cases and nine deaths on Sunday, while the positivity rate rose marginally to stand at 0.30 per cent, authorities 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 Sunday stood at 1,741, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department. The total number of cases has climbed to 6,33,924.



# REPUBLIC DAY 2021

SHANTI SEWA NYAYA

**Invitees to the Republic Day 2021 function at the Rajpath are requested not to bring the following prohibited items:**

आमंत्रित अतिथियों से अनुरोध है कि राजपथ पर गणतंत्र दिवस 2021 के समारोह में निम्नलिखित प्रतिबंधित वस्तुएं साथ में न लाएं:

**Entry strictly through invitation card/ticket only.**  
प्रवेश सिर्फ आमंत्रण पत्र/टिकट के द्वारा ही होगा।

Prohibited Items		वर्जित वस्तुएं	
Photo/फोटो	Particulars / विवरण	Photo/फोटो	Particulars / विवरण
	<b>Eatables</b> खाने-पीने की चीजें		<b>Cigarettes, Bidsies, Lighter</b> सिगरेट, बीडी, लाईटर
	<b>Bag, Briefcase</b> थैला, ब्रीफकेस		<b>Alcohol, Perfumes, Spray</b> शराब, इत्र, स्प्रे
	<b>Radio, Transistor, Tape Recorder, CD, DVD, MP3 Players</b> रेडियो, ट्रांजिस्टर, टेपरेकार्डर, सीडी, डीवीडी, एमपी3 प्लेयर		<b>Dagger, Sword, Cutting Material, Sharp/Pointed Edged Material, Screw Drivers</b> नुकीला हथियार, चाकू, पेंचकस
	<b>Camera, Binocular, Handycam</b> कैमरा, दूरबीन, हैंडिकैम		<b>Umbrella, Replica Fire Arms, Toy Gun or Toys</b> छाता, आग्नेयास्त्र, खिलौना पिस्तौल और खिलौने
	<b>Thermos Flasks, Water Bottles, Cans</b> थर्मस, पानी की बोतल, कैन		<b>Knives, Scissors, Razors, Blades, Wire, Pluckers</b> चाकू, कैंची, रेज़र, ब्लेड, तार, प्लकर
	<b>Inflammable Items, Match Boxes</b> ज्वलनशील पदार्थ, दियासलाई		<b>Arms &amp; Ammunition, Fireworks, Crackers Explosive etc.</b> हथियार और गोला बारूद, पटाखे आदि
	<b>Various Electronic Gadgets, Devices e. g. I-Pad, I-Pod, Palm Top/Laptop, Computer, Tablets, Power Bank etc.</b> विभिन्न इलेक्ट्रॉनिक उपकरणों जैसे आई-पैड, आई-पोड, पाम टॉप/लैपटॉप, कम्प्यूटर, टेब्लेट, पावर बैंक इत्यादि		<b>Avoid keeping Mobile Phones, Remote Controlled Car Keys as it may delay your entry due to checking</b> मोबाइल फोन, रिमोट कंट्रोल कार चाबी रखने से बचें क्योंकि इससे जांच के दौरान आपके प्रवेश में देरी हो सकती है।

**Any unidentified object, if noticed, may be brought to the notice of the nearest Security Personnel.**  
यदि, कोई लावारिस वस्तु दिखाई दे, तो निकटतम सुरक्षाकर्मी के नोटिस में लाएं।

**Please co-operate with the police for searching/frisking.**  
कृपया तलाशी देने में पुलिस के साथ सहयोग करें।

**Please be alert to your surroundings.**  
कृपया अपने आस पास नज़र रखें।

**Keeping in mind the threat of Covid-19, don't forget to wear face mask/cover and maintain Social Distancing**  
कोविड-19 के खतरे को ध्यान में रखते हुए फेस मास्क/कवर पहनना और दूसरों से उचित दूरी बना कर रखना ना भूलें।

E-mail to CP, Delhi at: cp.snshrivastava@delhipolice.gov.in | Write to: CP, Delhi at P.O. Box. No. 171, GPO, New Delhi

**FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112** **TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL 1090**



# TRAFFIC ADVISORY

## Republic Day Celebrations on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2021

Republic Day will be held on 26th January, 2021. The Parade will start at 9.50 AM from Vijay Chowk and proceed to National Stadium, whereas Tableaux will start from Vijay Chowk and proceed to Red Fort Ground. There will be wreath laying function at National War Memorial at 09.00 AM.

There would be elaborate traffic arrangements and restrictions in place for smooth conduct of the Parade and Tableaux along the respective routes.

**ROUTE OF THE PARADE/TABLEAUX :-**

(A) **Parade Route:-** Vijay Chowk - Rajpath - Amar Jawan Jyoti - India Gate - R/A Princess Palace-T/L Tilak Marg Radial Road - Turn right on "C" Hexagon - Turn left and enter National Stadium from Gate No. 1.

(B) **Tableaux Route :-** Vijay Chowk - Rajpath - Amar Jawan Jyoti - India Gate - R/A Princess Palace-T/L Tilak Marg - Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg - Netaji Subhash Marg - Red Fort.

**TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS**

In order to facilitate smooth passage of the Parade, movement of traffic on certain roads leading to the route of the Parade and Tableaux will be restricted as under:-

- No traffic will be allowed on Vijay Chowk from 06.00 PM on 25.01.2021 till Parade is over. Rajpath is already out of bounds.
- No cross traffic on Rajpath intersections from 11.00 PM on 25.01.2021 at Rafi Marg, Janpath, Man Singh Road till Parade is over.
- "C" Hexagon-India Gate will be closed for traffic from 05.00 AM on 26.01.2021 till Tableaux crosses Tilak Marg.
- From 04.00 AM on 26.01.2021 Traffic on Tilak Marg, BSZ Marg and Subhash Marg will not be allowed in both carriageways. Cross traffic will only be allowed depending upon the movement of the Tableaux.

Road users are requested to plan their journey in advance accordingly and avoid the route of Parade and Tableaux, from 0400 hours to 1230 hours, for their own convenience.

**SUGGESTED ROUTES**

If the journey is unavoidable, the road users are advised to take following routes:-

**NORTH-SOUTH CORRIDOR**

- Ring Road - Ashram Chowk - Sarai Kale Khan - I.P. Flyover - Rajghat - Ring Road
- From Madarsa - Lodhi Road "T" point - Aurobindo Marg - AIIMS Chowk - Ring Road - Dhaura Kuan - Vande Matram Marg - Shankar Road - Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Road or Mandir Marg.

**EAST-WEST CORRIDOR**

- Ring Road - Bhairon Road - Mathura Road - Lodhi Road - Aurobindo Marg - AIIMS Flyover - Ring Road - Dhaura Kuan - Vande Matram Marg - OR
- Ring Road - ISBT - Chandni Ram Akhara - Mall Road - Azad Pur - Ring Road.

**FOR NEW DELHI RAILWAY STATION**

- From South Delhi:-** Dhaura Kuan - Vande Matram Marg - Panchkuian Road -Outer Circle Connaught Place - Chelmsford Road for Paharganj side or Minto Road - Bhavbhuti Marg for Ajmeri Gate side.
- From East Delhi:-** Boulevard Road via ISBT Bridge - Rani Jhansi Flyover - R/A Jhandewalan - D.B. Gupta Road - Sheela Cinema Road - Paharganj Bridge and reach New Delhi Rly Station.

**FOR OLD DELHI RAILWAY STATION**

- From South Delhi:-** Ring Road - Ashram Chowk - Sarai Kale Khan - Ring Road - Rajghat - Ring Road - Chowk Yamuna Bazar - S.P. Mukherjee Marg - Chhatta Rail - Kauria Bridge and reach Old Delhi Rly. Station.
- Though there will be no restriction for people from North Delhi going towards New Delhi Railway Station or Old Delhi Railway Station, yet it is advised that they plan their journey in advance and take sufficient extra time to reach their destination to avoid possible delay.

**BUS TERMINATING POINTS**

Movement of the City Bus Services will be curtailed at the following points:-

- Shivaji Stadium
- ISBT Sarai Kale Khan
- R/A Kamla Market.
- Delhi Sachivalaya (IGI Stadium)
- Pragati Maidan (Bhairon Road)
- Hanuman Mandir (Yamuna Bazar)
- Mori Gate
- ISBT Kashmiri Gate

**INTER STATE BUSES:**

(i) Buses from Ghaziabad bound for Shivaji Stadium shall take NH-9 (NH-24), Ring Road and terminate at Bhairon Road.

(ii) Buses coming from NH-9 (NH-24) shall take right turn on Road No. 56 and terminate at ISBT Anand Vihar.

(iii) Buses coming from Ghaziabad side will be diverted at Mohan Nagar towards Bhopra Chungi for Wazirabad Bridge.

(iv) All Inter State buses coming from Dhaura Kuan side shall terminate at Dhaura Kuan.

**METRO SERVICES**

Metro Rail Service shall remain available for commuters at all Metro Stations during the Republic Day Parade on 26th Jan., 2021. However, Boarding/De-boarding at the below mentioned station will not be permitted as per schedule given:-

Name of Metro Station	Boarding/De-boarding not allowed
Kendriya Sachivalaya	From 5.00 AM till 1200 Noon on 26.01.2021.
Udyog Bhawan	
Lok Kalyan Marg (Race Course)	From 8.45 AM to 1200 Noon on 26.01.2021
Patel Chowk	
ITO	

**TSR/TAXIS**

No TSR and Taxi will be allowed to enter or ply after 0700 hours on 26.01.2021 in the Area bound by:-

**MOTHER TERESA CRESCENT - BABA KHARAK SINGH MARG - ASHOKA ROAD UPTO R/A PATEL CHOWK - SANSAD MARG UPTO TOLSTOY MARG UPTO - TOLSTOY MARG UPTO KASTURBA GANDHI MARG - KASTURBA GANDHI MARG UPTO FEROZESHAH ROAD - FEROZESHAH ROAD UPTO R/A MANDI HOUSE - BHAGWAN DASS ROAD - MATHURA ROAD - SUBRAMANIAM BHARTI MARG - HUMAYUN ROAD - A.P.J ABDUL KALAM MARG - KAMAL ATA TURK MARG - KAUTILYA MARG AND SARDAR PATEL ROAD (EXCLUDED).**

**INSTRUCTIONS TO GENERAL PUBLIC**

- In case any unidentified object or suspicious person is seen, information must be conveyed to the nearest policeman on duty.
- Flying of sub conventional aerial platforms like paragliders, para motors, hang gliders, UAVs, UASs, microlight aircrafts, remotely piloted aircrafts, hot air balloons, small size powered aircrafts, quadcopters or para jumping from aircraft etc. are prohibited over the jurisdiction of National Capital Territory of Delhi from 20.01.2021 upto 15.02.2021 (both are inclusive).
- General public and motorists are advised to keep patience, observe traffic rules & road discipline and follow directions of traffic personnel deployed at all intersections and remain updated through Traffic Police Facebook page, Twitter handle and Traffic Police Helpline. People are requested to plan their journey in advance and keep sufficient time in hand to avoid inconvenience.

Ministry of Defence, Government of India has also developed QR code giving details about Republic Day Parade. Name of the application is 'REPUBLIC DAY INDIA' and is available on Google Play Store.

**BE A TRAFFIC SENTINEL** Download App from  **24 HOURS TRAFFIC HELPLINE 011-2584444/1095** **FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL : 112** **TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL : 1090**



## SHORT TAKES

## RAM TEMPLE IN 3YRS; TO COST ₹1,100CR: TRUST

**Mumbai, Jan. 24:** The Ram temple in Ayodhya will be built in around three years and the construction cost of the project will exceed ₹1,100 crore, a prominent functionary of the temple trust has said.

"The main temple will be built in three to three and a half years and will cost ₹300-400 crore. The expenditure on the development of the entire 70 acre land there will exceed ₹1,100 crore," said Swami Govind Dev Giri Maharaj, treasurer of Ram Janmabhoomi Tirath Kshetra Nyas.

He said he arrived at these figures after consulting experts involved in the Ram temple construction project. The Nyas (trust) has not come out with an official statement so far on the expenditure involved in the project, he said while talking to a TV channel.

"It was possible for us to raise funds (for the temple construction) from some corporate people. Some (corporate) families had approached us, requesting us to hand over the (temple) designs and assuring us they will complete the temple project, but I humbly declined that request," he said.

— PTI

## STUDENT WORKS IN NREGA TO FUND EDU, HER FAMILY

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO**  
BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 24

An engineering student of Odisha has opted to work as a wage-earner under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to support her family income and clear her pending college dues.

Loji Behera, the 19-year-old daughter of Loknath Behera of Goradapidha village under Pipili block in Puri district is now working alongside her father to add to the family's income.

According to reports, Loji is a diploma engineering pass-out student from a private institute in Khurda district. However, she opted for working under MGNREGA to pay pending dues to the tune of Rs 24,000 to her college to get the certificate.

"I have completed my diploma degree in civil engineering during the session 2016-19. Though the course fee was paid by the state government my parents were unable to pay the hostel fee. Of the total due amount of ₹44,000, my parents paid ₹20,000. As I have not cleared my dues, I was denied to get my certificate," the poor student told the media.

Despite her repeated approach to college authorities regarding release of her certificate, the Chairman told her 'No' for the document.

"I had met my college principal, requested the chairman for my certificate, but nobody considered my plea," Loji said.

## FIR FILED AGAINST TANDAV ACTORS IN MP, K'TAKA

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY**  
with agency inputs  
BHOPAL/BENGALURU JAN. 24

A case was registered against actors Saif Ali Khan and Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub in a police station in Datia in Madhya Pradesh late on Saturday evening for their roles in OTT web series *Tandav* which sparked a furor among Hindu bodies for "hurting religious sentiments".

A FIR was filed against the two actors in Kotwali police station in district headquarters of Datia following a complaint lodged by the local unit of Hindu Jagaran Manch, police said on Sunday.

Earlier on January 21, a delegation of the outfit led by Ravi Sharma filed a complaint with local sub-divisional officer of police Sumit Agrawal saying that the two actors slighted Hindu deities in the film.

Meanwhile, a case has also been registered by the Bengaluru police against the cast and crew of *Tandav*.

Based on a complaint by one Kiran Aradhya, the case was registered on Friday against *Tandav* director Ali Abbas Zafar, producer Farhan Akhtar, actors Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub and Saif Ali Khan and the head of India Originals of Amazon Prime Video, Aparna Purohit.

Cases have been registered under section 295A, 298, 153A and 34 of the IPC for insulting religious belief and promoting religious enmity between groups.

## Haryana's 'khaps' to join tractor rally

About 1,500 tractors from villages under Kandela khap set out for 'tractor parade' in Delhi

**Chandigarh, Jan. 24:** Several khaps of Haryana are set to join farmers' tractor parade in Delhi on the Republic Day with thousands of these vehicles leaving various caste councils' villages for the national capital on Sunday.

About 1,500 tractors from villages under the Kandela khap set out on Sunday for the "tractor parade" in Delhi, Khap head Tekram Kandela said.

We have started from Jind. We will be proceeding in a peaceful and orderly manner and follow the route allotted by the authorities for the parade, Mr Kandela said.

The Kandela khap, which had spearheaded a farmers' agitation in Haryana nearly two decades ago, has lent its support to farmers against the new farm laws. Several other khaps' too are backing farmers' agitation against the new farm laws.

Tekram Kandela said his Kandela khap had recently adopted four resolutions at a khap panchayat for repealing the three farm laws, giving a legal guarantee of crop MSP, waiving the farm loans and implementing the Swaminathan Commission recommendations.

Independent MLA from Dadri in Haryana, Sombir Sangwan, who also heads the Sangwan khap said thousands of farmers in their tractors were starting for various border points of Delhi to take part in the 'tractor parade'. — PTI



Tractors arrive for farmers at Singhu border during an ongoing protest against the new farm laws in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

## Farmers from Maha dists reach Mumbai to protest farm laws

**BHAGWAN PARAB**  
MUMBAI, JAN. 24

Protesting against the Centre's farm laws, thousands of farmers from various districts of Maharashtra reached Mumbai on Sunday via a vehicle march.

The Nashik to Mumbai rally is part of the call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), which is leading the protests in Delhi. The farmers have started their statewide vehicle march from Nashik to Mumbai

on Saturday.

Arriving in cars, jeeps, vans and trucks flying red flags, the farmers reached the city's iconic Azad Maidan, where they will hold a massive rally on January 25 to protest the controversial agriculture laws. The rally will then march to the Raj Bhavan and submit a memorandum to the governor.

The rally will be attended by farmer organisations, as well as leaders of all three parties in the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi, including NCP president Sharad Pawar, Congress state president and revenue minister Balasaheb Thorat, Shiv Sena leader and state environment and tourism minister Aditya Thackeray, and leaders of the Left and democratic parties.

Mr Pawar has also appealed to people to support the farmers' march on social media. "The Delhi protests had received support on the social media from the common people. Likewise, the state people should also support the march," he said.

## Cong slams govt on rise in fuel price

**New Delhi, Jan. 24:** The Congress on Sunday slammed the Centre over fuel prices touching an "all-time high" and demanded that the excise duty hike affected by the Modi government during its tenure be immediately rolled back to give relief to the masses.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi attacked the Centre over the rise in fuel prices, saying people are suffering due to inflation while the Modi government is busy in tax collection.

The party's attack on the government came a day after petrol and diesel prices in the country touched new all-time highs after rates were increased for the fourth time in the week.

Congress spokesperson Ajay Maken said in Delhi on Sunday the petrol prices have reached an all time high of Rs 85.70 per litre and diesel has reached Rs 75.88 a litre.

"What is more shocking is that during the Congress' regime when we left power in May 2014, the international crude oil was \$108 per barrel, but petrol and diesel prices were at ₹71.51 and ₹57.28 per litre respectively, which have increased to ₹85.70 and ₹75.88 in Delhi today despite the crude oil prices coming down to half of that time," he said at a media briefing.

The Modi government has earned ₹20,00,000 crore in the last six and a half years by increasing the excise duty on petrol and diesel alone, Mr Maken alleged. "The most important question now is where has this more than ₹20 lakh crore gone," he said. — PTI



Erode: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during his election campaign ahead of Tamil Nadu assembly polls, at Poondurai in Erode district, Sunday, Jan. 24, 2021. (PTI Photo/R Senthil Kumar)(PTI01\_24\_2021\_000158A)

## Stalin deceiving people: TN CM

**Coimbatore, Jan. 24:** Tamil Nadu chief Minister K. Palaniswami on Sunday accused DMK president M.K. Stalin of deception for posing with Lord Muruga's spear like weapon, 'Vel' and said the divine symbol has come to leader of opposition's notice since Assembly elections were round the corner.

On the second day of his campaign here, the AIADMK leader referred to a photograph of the DMK chief holding the Vel alleging it was an act of deceit. The AIADMK respected all religions equally, but it was not the case with the DMK which involved in 'deception,' in such matters, he alleged.

Accusing Stalin of 'deceit,' the Chief Minister claimed Stalin spoke one thing for the outside world but in his

## MODIJI HAS BROUGHT GROWTH IN GDP (GAS, DIESEL, PETROL): RAHUL

**Chennai, Jan. 24:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday attacked the Centre over rise in fuel prices, saying people are suffering due to inflation, while the Modi government is busy in tax collection.

The former Congress chief's attack came a day after petrol and diesel prices in the country touched new all-time highs after rates were increased for the fourth time in the week. "Modi ji has brought about the tremen-

dous growth in GDP — gas, diesel and petrol — prices," Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

"People are suffering due to inflation, while the Modi government is busy in tax collection," he alleged.

The increase in prices took the petrol price in Delhi to ₹85.70 per litre and in Mumbai to ₹82.28.

Diesel rate climbed to ₹75.88 a litre in the Delhi and to ₹82.66 per litre in Mumbai, the price data showed. — PTI

heart of hearts he knew it was not his conviction. "The God will not grant you boon if you only

receive Lord Muruga's Vel. The boon will be only for the AIADMK."

The DMK has for a long

## Cong MP assaulted at Singhu border

**Chandigarh, Jan. 24:** Congress MP Ravneet Singh Bittu was Sunday allegedly assaulted, pushed around and his turban pulled off in what he described was a "murderous attack" by some "mischievous elements" at the Singhu border during a 'Jan Sansad' programme.

The Ludhiana MP's vehicle was also damaged in the attack at the Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji Memorial where he had gone with Congress' Amritsar MP Gurjeet Singh Auja and party MLA Kulbir Singh Zira to attend the event.

"Some mischievous elements whose intentions were unknown, tried to spoil the situation by launching a murderous attack on three of us," Mr Bittu said in a Facebook post.

Mr Bittu, the grandson of former Punjab chief minister Beant Singh who was assassinated in 1995, Mr Auja and Mr Zira have been holding a protest at the Jantar Mantar in Delhi for the past several days in support of the ongoing farmers' agitation against the Centre's three agriculture laws.

Mr Bittu claimed a few people thrashed him near the memorial and pulled



Ravneet Singh Bittu

off his turban. He described the incident as a "murderous attack".

Mr Bittu was also pushed around by angry protesters. In the melee, Mr Zira's turban also came off.

Some people were trying to save him and escorted him to his vehicle. However, even as Bittu entered into his vehicle, a group of people attacked his SUV with sticks, broke its glass panes, rear windshield and damaged its front windshield.

The reason why Bittu was attacked was not immediately clear.

In his Facebook post, Bittu also said they were fine and blamed some "mischievous elements" for the incident.

He wrote that he along with Zira and Auja had gone to attend Jan Sansad at Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji Memorial. — PTI

## Pak terror groups switch to new, 2G-friendly apps

**SUMIR KAUL**  
SRINAGAR, JAN. 24

Amid a raging debate over privacy offered by messaging platforms like WhatsApp, terrorist groups and their handlers from Pakistan are switching to new applications which include one developed by a Turkish company, officials here said.

The three new applications came to light after evidence was collected following encounters with terrorists or those who surrendered before the Army gave details about their mode of radicalisation by Pakistan-based terrorist groups, they said.

The names of the messaging apps have been withheld for security reasons.

While one of the applications is owned by a company based in the United States, the second is from Europe. The latest is an application developed by a Turkish company that has been frequently used by terrorist group handlers and their prospective recruits in the Kashmir valley.

The new applications have the ability to work with the slowest Internet connections where Enhanced Data for Global Evolution (EDGE), used in the late 2000s, or 2G is in operation. The government had suspended internet across Jammu

## Cong warns of stormy Parl session

**New Delhi, Jan. 24:** The upcoming Parliament session will be "stormy" if farmers' demand of repealing of the new agri laws is not accepted by the government, Congress' Lok Sabha chief whip Kodikunnil Suresh said on Sunday.

The Budget Session is starting from January 29 and it will be held in two parts. The first part will conclude on February 15 and the second part will be held from March 8 to April 8.

Mr Suresh said issues such as farmers' agitation and the purported WhatsApp chats of Republic's editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami will be raised by the Congress strongly.

"Our main priority is the farmers' agitation and we plan to strongly raise the farmers' issue both in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. We will make use of all measures such as adjournment motion to discuss and debate the issue," he said. "We are also in touch with like-minded parties to have a joint strategy for the Parliament session with the main issue being the farmers' agitation," he said.

The Congress understands the "plight" of farmers who for over 60 days have been on the streets and "more than 145 of them have lost their lives", so it has to be raised inside Parliament strongly, the party's chief whip and MP from Kerala said. — PTI

► **WHILE ONE** of the applications is owned by a company based in the United States, the second is from Europe

► **THE NEW** applications have the ability to work with the slowest Internet connections

and Kashmir after the abrogation of the special status of the erstwhile state in August 2019. Early last year, 2G internet services were restored.

Terror groups had virtually stopped using WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. Later, it was found that they have switched over to new applications available free of cost on the world wide web, a security official said.

All encryption and decryption happen directly on the devices, therefore, reducing third party intervention at any point and these apps use encryption algorithm RSA-2048 which was adopted as the most secure encrypted platform.

RSA is an American Network Security and Authentication company that was founded in 1982 by US-born Ron Rivest, Israeli-born Adi Shamir and US-born Leonard Adleman. The acronym RSA is used worldwide as the foundation key in the cryptosystem. — PTI

## States to look for malnourished kids

**New Delhi, Jan. 24:** Identifying severe acute malnutrition in children and their referral to hospitals, using Ayush concepts and monitoring through 'Poshan Tracker' are among highlights of the government's new guidelines which aim to improve nutritional status of children and women in the country.

In a letter to all states and UTs, the women and child development ministry asked all chief secretaries to launch a drive for identification of severe acute malnutrition in children for referral to hospitals, if required, and Ayush centres and complete this exercise by January 31.

"The states shall launch a drive for identification of SAM children for referral to hospitals (if

required) and Ayush centres in accordance with the detailed action plan approved by the district nutrition committee to be finalised in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer. This exercise shall be completed by January 31, 2021," the ministry said. The ministry shared the guidelines and stressed on the need to ensure that entitlements of Supplementary Programme reach the intended beneficiaries in a time-bound manner as per quantity and nutritional standards.

The ministry has asked all states to mandatorily implement poshan tracker that uses centralised data architecture to align with digital technology systems of other ministries and programmes. — PTI

## WATER | WOES Families say no household is connected to piped water supply

## J&amp;K: Villagers pool funds for pipelines

**Bhaderwah (J&K), Jan. 24:** Claiming neglect over the past seven decades, the villagers in remote Thanhala Panchayat in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district have set out on a mission this winter to bring potable water to their homes.

To fulfill their objective, the mostly below poverty line (BPL) families of the snow-bound village in the lap of mighty Ashapati Glacier got into a hurdle recently and decided to contribute ₹40,000 to pur-

chase the required water pipes to get connected to the nearest water source. "We are living by the example of the proverb 'God helps those who help themselves' as the government had miserably failed to ensure tap water in our homes over the years. In the absence of the facility, we have to fetch water round-the-year from a nearby source even during this harsh winter and the lurking threat of avalanches," a local resident Aijaz Ahmad said.

► **BPL FAMILIES** decided to contribute ₹40,000 to purchase required water pipes to get connected to the nearest water source.

About 30 families live in the village bordering Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh, just 1.5 km from the interstate Bhaderwah-Chamba road. The villagers depend on the labour work in Bhaderwah town for a living. Despite 'Har Ghar Nal Yojna' under 'Jal Jeevan

Mission', villagers claim that none of the households are connected with the piped water supply. When contacted, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Bhaderwah, Rakesh Kumar said that providing potable water to every household is the priority of the government.

"The area being rich in natural water resources, I will take up the issue with the concerned department of 'Jal Shakti Vibhag' Bhaderwah to make temporary arrangements to

provide piped water to the village in view of extreme cold wave conditions unless permanent gravity line is laid under Jal Jeevan Mission," he said. Talib Hussain, another resident, said they literally ran from pillar to post to get piped water supply but no one listened to their woes.

"Under these circumstances, we have no other option but to pool money from our daily wages to bring water to our homes," he said. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## UP ATS arrests 2 Chinese nationals

**Noida:** The Anti-Terrorist Squad of the Uttar Pradesh police on Sunday said it has arrested two Chinese nationals from Noida for their involvement in a money laundering case. The duo, including a woman, had allegedly used forged documents to open bank accounts from which money was used in criminal activities, the ATS said in a statement. The Chinese nationals have been identified as Pochnli Tengli and Xu Xunfu, and they were held from Noida in Gautam Buddha Nagar district on Saturday, the ATS said. "The UP ATS had earlier got issued Red Corner Notices and Blue Corner Notices against the duo. Both the Chinese nationals were arrested on Saturday on the basis of evidence following an investigation into the money laundering case, it added. — PTI

## Nitish wishes Lalu speedy recovery

**Patna:** Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar wished speedy recovery to his arch rival Lalu Prasad, who has been rushed to New Delhi following marked deterioration in health and with whom he has shared a love-hate relationship for close to five decades. The JD(U) de facto leader also rued the fact that he now had to remain content with news about the ailing RJD supremo gathered from newspapers since his telephonic enquiries about the latter's health in the recent past had triggered a controversy. "It is my fervent wish that he gets well as soon as possible," Mr Kumar said. He was talking to journalists outside the JD(U) state headquarters, where he had gone to pay tributes to former chief minister Karpoori Thakur on his birth anniversary. Both Kumar and Prasad consider Thakur to be their political guru. — PTI

## Vaccinated teacher dies in T'gana dist

**Hyderabad:** A 45-year old anganwadi teacher who was administered Covid-19 vaccine nearly a week ago, died after complaining of chest pain overnight in Warangal district in Telangana, doctors said. The teacher, vaccinated on January 19, had taken some medicines on Saturday night as she was having chest pain and slept in her house at Shayampeta on the outskirts of Warangal. She was found dead Sunday morning, they said. Her body was shifted to state-run Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital, for post-mortem and samples were also collected there and sent for testing to ascertain the cause of death, its superintendent Dr K. Nagarajuna Reddy said. She is the second person, who had taken Covid-19 vaccination, to have died in the state after complaining of chest pain. — PTI

## DOWNLOADABLE E-VOTER CARD TO BE OUT TODAY

**New Delhi:** Law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad will on Monday launch the electronic version of the voter identity card which can be downloaded on a mobile phone or a personal computer. The e-electror photo identity card is non-editable digital version of the elector photo identity card and it can be saved in facilities such as digital locker and can be printed in the PDF format, Election Commission officials said. "Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad will launch the e-EPIC programme and distribute e-EPICs and Elector Photo Identity Cards to five new voters," a commission statement said on Sunday. The physical card takes time to print and reach the voter, and the idea is to provide faster delivery and easy accessibility to the document, the statement said. The Aadhaar card, Permanent Account Number (PAN) card and driving licence are available in digital mode. Introduced in 1993, the elector photo identity cards are acceptable as proof of identity and address. The e version of the voter card is being launched to mark the anniversary of the Election Commission. The EC came into being on January 25, 1950, a day before India became a republic. For the past few years, January 25 is also observed as National Voters' Day. — PTI

## NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY

## Daughters are our pride, a special joy, a unique bond, write Union ministers Ministers, celebs share photos with daughters on social media

**New Delhi, Jan. 24:** On the occasion of National Girl Child Day on Sunday, netizens, including Union ministers such as Smriti Irani and S. Jaishankar, shared photos with their daughters on Twitter. Women and child development minister Irani posted photos with her daughters on the microblogging website.

"My daughters are my pride who have set out onto different frontiers with determination and confidence. Give a shoutout to a #DeshKiBeti and celebrate their achievements," she tweeted.

External affairs minister Jaishankar also posted

photos with his daughter on Twitter.

"Daughters — a special joy, a unique bond. Their accomplishments always make us proud," he wrote.

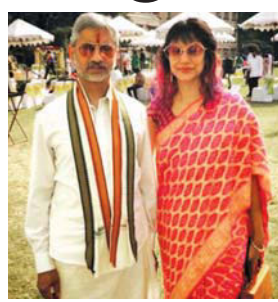
Education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank" said he considers himself fortunate to have three daughters.

"Today is National Girl Child Day. I consider myself fortunate that I have three daughters by the grace of God. Our daughters are our pride," he wrote on Twitter.

Mr Pokhriyal also called upon people to celebrate their daughters, give them good education and make them responsible citizens. "I call upon all the coun-



Photos shared by Union ministers Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank" (from left), Smriti Irani and S. Jaishankar and cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar with their daughters on Twitter.



trymen today on the occasion to celebrate the birth of girls and make daughters responsible citizens of the country by providing them highest education. My good wishes to all the daughters of the country

and heartfelt wishes for their bright future," he said in another tweet.

Legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar called on people to set a right example and celebrate daughters and sons alike

as he posted a photo with his children on Twitter.

"Love, care and opportunities for our girls and boys have to be equal at all times. We have to remember that our children learn from us. Let's set the right

example and celebrate our girls & boys alike!" he tweeted.

Many other netizens also took to Twitter to post photos of their daughters.

A Twitter user said she is proud of her daughters,

"who are good human beings, self-sufficient and my rock solid support".

Another Twitter user said "there is no bigger happiness when I am with my daughter".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his gratitude to the "daughters of India".

"On National Girl Child Day, we salute our #DeshKiBeti and the accomplishments in various fields. The Central Government has undertaken many initiatives that focus on empowering the girl child, including access to education, better healthcare and improving gender sensitivity," he said in a tweet. — PTI

## TMC MP says will quit politics if he fails to wipe out BJP in polls

## Didi nephew dares BJP, vows revenge

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, JAN. 24

A day after "Jai Shree Ram" chants prompted West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to refuse to address the Centre's Parakram Diwas celebration as a mark of protest in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's presence at Victoria Memorial, her nephew and Diamond Harbour Trinamul Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee vowed to take "revenge" against the BJP "in every inch" as the ruling party demonstrated across the districts, crying of an "insult" to its supremacy at the official event, to swing the public mood in the poll-bound state.

Advising the BJP workers to chant 'Jai Shree Ram' at their homes and on religious occasions Banerjee on Sunday told a party rally at Kulti in South 24 Parganas, "They polluted the environment when our elected CM was about to address the official event on the solemn occasion. When they did not allow her to speak, she protested and did not deliver her address to make the PM feel that no insult to iconic freedom fighter Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose is tolerated here. They did not learn a lesson even after demolishing the bust of another legend: Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar in 2019."

In a threatening mood he



Special armed police force contingent during the full dress rehearsals ahead of the Republic Day at Red Road in Kolkata on Sunday. — PTI

added, "It was Mamata Banerjee's magnanimity that she gave the slogan: *Bodla Noy, Bodol Chai* (We want change, not revenge). That is why they are now making tall talks. After coming to power again, revenge will be meted out to them in every inch. Be ready for that. You will be paid back in full. I will see then how much power you have."

The TMC MP also declared to quit politics if he can not wipe out the saffron party in the coming Assembly election. Apart from him, TMC ministers like Firhad Hakim and Bratya Basu also tore into the BJP for raising religious slogans in political overtones at a government event to "insult" the CM.

## Mamata hails from 'demoness' culture, has faulty DNA: BJP MLA

**Ballia (UP), Jan. 24:** BJP MLA from Uttar Pradesh's Bairaia, Surendra Singh, on Sunday said West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee hails from a "demoness culture" and that her DNA is "defected". Mr Singh was referring to Ms Banerjee taking offence at the chanting of slogans of "Jai Shri Ram" on Saturday at a programme held in Kolkata on the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. "There is defect in the DNA of Mamata Banerjee, and she hails from the demoness cul-

ture (Mamata Banerjee ke DNA mein dosh hai, woh raakshashi sanskriti ki hai). No demon can love Lord Ram. Mamata Banerjee is a dishonest and evil (shaitan) person. Her hatred for Lord Ram is natural," he said.

Ms Banerjee had on Saturday declined to speak at an official programme at the lawn of Victoria Memorial Hall to celebrate Bose's birth anniversary after "Jai Shri Ram" slogans were raised by a section of the audience in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. — PTI

## PM exhorts youth to defeat 'network of lies' on vaccines

**New Delhi, Jan. 24:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said Indian scientists have done their duty by developing the Covid-19 vaccine and "now we have to fulfil ours" by defeating through the right information every network spreading lies and rumours.

Addressing NCC cadets, NSS volunteers and artists who were participating in the Republic Day parade, Mr Modi said such organisations have always played their role in dealing with challenging times.

"In Covid times also, the work done by you is laudable. When the government and administration needed it, you came forward as volunteers and provided help," he said.

"Whether it was spreading awareness about the Aarogya Setu App or coro-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union ministers Rajnath Singh Kiren Rijju watch performances by cadets and artists in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

navirus infection spread, the work done by you was praiseworthy," Mr Modi said.

The Prime Minister said the youths should now step forward to assist in the Covid-19 vaccination programme by providing the right information to the people. "You need to

take it to the next level now. Your reach is in all parts of society. I request you to come forward to help the country with the Covid-19 vaccination programme. You have to provide the right information on vaccines to the poor and general public," Mr Modi said. — PTI

## India &amp; China hold Round 9 of Army talks

■ Continued from Page 1 points and not just about the South bank of Pangong Tso where the Indian Army occupied strategic heights in August in a surprise move.

The military stand-off in eastern Ladakh is in the ninth month with both sides having deployed around 50,000 troops on each side of the Line of Actual Control.

Despite temperatures dipping to minus 30 degrees Celsius in the region, both India and China have maintained troops at forward posts this winter at LAC in Ladakh.

## 'Farmers can enter Delhi'

■ Continued from Page 1 security to remain in a ready position to move at short notice for law and order arrangement.

Giving details about the parade, Deependra Pathak, special commissioner of police (intelligence), said, "The rally will start from Singhu border and pass through Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar, Kanjhawala, Bawana, Auchandi Border, Kundli-Manesar-Palwal expressway and will return to Singhu border. It will cover around 62 kilometres stretch. Police teams have done the assessment of these routes."

"From Tikri border, the farmers have been given the route which will pass through Nangloi, Najafgarh, Jharoda, Kundli-

Manesar-Palwal expressway and then will head back to Tikri border. They will cover a distance of around 63 km," he added.

"The farmers tractor rally from Ghazipur border will pass through Apsara Border, Hapur Road, Kundli-Manesar-Palwal expressway and conclude at Ghazipur. Those farmers' groups will cover 46 kilometres," the special CP said.

"For the Delhi Police, it will be a challenging task. We have spoken to Haryana and UP police officers about how it will be conducted in a convenient way... We have also told farmers that the expected number of tractors should be distributed in a way that the rally is concluded in a peaceful

and disciplined way. Adequate security will be provided to the rally by the police," an official said.

Police said that the farmers union 'Sanyukt Kisan Morcha' had assured them that they will go back to their respective places from where the rally starts. While police tried to convince farmers' leaders to hold their tractor parade outside the national capital, they were adamant on holding the proposed rally on Delhi's Outer Ring Road.

Earlier three rounds of meetings were held between the unions and police officers from Delhi, Haryana and UP, but it was during the fourth round of talks over the parade on Friday where both sides reached an agreement.

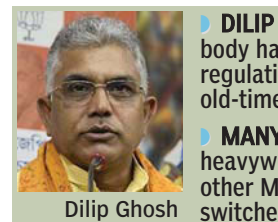
**Kolkata, Jan. 24:** Amid a spate of defections from the ruling TMC to the saffron camp in Bengal ahead of the assembly polls, state BJP president Dilip Ghosh on Sunday allayed apprehensions that the turncoats would be given more importance than the old timers, bringing relief to some of the party's angst-ridden leaders.

Switching political allegiance doesn't always guarantee leadership positions, he asserted.

Mr Ghosh, however, insisted that the party, in order to expand its base and come to power in Bengal, needs to induct people from other political outfits.

In an interview to PTI, he also clarified that everybody has to abide by the rules and regulations of the party, be it the old-timers or the newcomers.

"The BJP is a growing force in West Bengal. Our organisation is getting strengthened with each



Dilip Ghosh

► **DILIP GHOSH** clarified that everybody has to abide by the rules and regulations of the party, be it the old-timers or the newcomers

► **MANY TMC** leaders, including heavyweight Suwendu Adhikari, 14 other MLAs and a sitting MP, have switched over to the saffron camp

passing day; people from other parties including the TMC are joining us. If we don't take people from other outfits, how will we grow?"

"No matter who joins the camp, I would like to add that everyone has to abide by the rules and regulations of the party. No one is above the party," he said, when asked about reports of infighting in certain pockets of the state over induction of leaders from the TMC.

According to saffron camp sources, several party cadres and the RSS — the BJP's ideological parent — are not very happy with the induction of certain leaders in the

party.

Many senior TMC leaders, including political heavyweight Suwendu Adhikari, 14 other MLAs and a sitting MP, have switched over to the saffron camp in the last two years. Three Left MLAs and four Congress legislators have also joined the saffron camp.

Talking about Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's allegation that the BJP has turned into a "washing machine" that cleanses corrupt turncoats after inducting them, Mr Ghosh said taking someone into the party fold does not mean justifying his wrong deeds. — PTI

## Yogi likens Covid jab to 'Sanjeevani Booti'

## Announces free coaching facility

**Lucknow, Jan. 24:** Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday announced the launch of an ambitious, state-wide, free coaching facility programme to help students prepare for various competitive examinations.

Named "Abhyudaya", the free coaching facility will start from upcoming Basant Panchmi, the day of worship to the goddess of learning, Saraswati.

The CM also compared the Covid-19 vaccines given by India to Brazil to "Sanjeevani Booti", a mythological life-saving herb figuring in the Hindu epic Ramayana.

He made the comparison a day after Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro invoked Lord Hanuman while thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for providing two million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to fight the deadly coronavirus infection in his country, one of the worst-hit nations by the pandemic.

Referring to the



Yogi Adityanath

Brazilian president's tweet of an image of Lord Hanuman flying from India to Brazil with a mountain of the life-saving herb, Mr Adityanath said Mr Bolsonaro himself likened India's vaccine to "Sanjeevani Booti".

"While saving lives of the countrymen, the Covid-19 vaccines are also reaching other parts of the world," he said during his address on 71st Uttar Pradesh Shapna Divas.

Speaking about the free coaching facility, the chief minister noted that the educational infrastructure of various universities and colleges would be used for providing this facility to students in the state for which a panel too would be formed. — PTI

## BJP can keep Assam terror, graft-free: Shah

■ Continued from Page 1 the Bru-Reang issue and 700 members of 8 armed groups laid down arms," he said.

"I am here to assure people of BTR that the Government of India, under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi, will implement all BTR Accord clauses. Today, the insurgency era has ended and the peace era has started," he said.

Expressing satisfaction over the peaceful elections in Bodoland area, Mr Shah said, "Please identify those instigating disputes in the name of Assamese and non-Assamese, Bodo and non-Bodo. They are not doing it for our development but are playing politics. It is high time that people of Assam teach a lesson to such people... This rally is a reply to those who disturbed the peace in Assam by spreading venom in the name of Bodo and non-Bodo. Today, Bodos and non-Bodos both are present here."

The BTR Accord was signed on January 27, 2020.

## Army captain charged

■ Continued from Page 1 magistrate.

The SIT chargesheet gave details of forensic analysis of the crime scene which was photographed "from all possible perspectives". The FSL team recovered vital evidence that was seized.

Based on responses filed by 62 Rashtriya Rifles to the SIT about details of the ammunition fired during the incident along with a copy of SITREP (Situation Report), the "accused captain had claimed to have (sic) fired a total of 37 rounds from his service rifle".

The Army, in its FIR registered at the Heerpora police station, had claimed that based on "their own input about hiding of unknown terrorists in village Amsh-

ipora", the encounter was launched on July 17, 2020 during which three unidentified hardcore terrorists were neutralised.

Two pistols with two magazines and four empty pistol cartridges, 15 live cartridges and 15 empty cartridges of AK series weapon and other objectionable items were recovered from the encounter site. However, during the ballistic and forensic examination of the scene of crime, four empty cartridges were recovered — two of which were from 7.65 mm and two from 9 mm pistols (used by the Army).

"The seized fifteen 7.62x39 mm rifle cartridge cases (used in AK rifles) were found to have been fired from more than four firearms." — PTI



THE ASIAN AGE

25 JANUARY 2021

Is power only language in which to talk farm laws?

Agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar's statement to the farmers' unions during the 11th round of talks that there are no problems with the farm laws and that the government offered to suspend them for up to 18 months as a sign of respect for farmers is unhelpful, to say the least, in ending the stalemate. Instead, it casts a shadow over the sincerity the government displays in the talks.

It has been almost three months now that the farmers are in Delhi, agitating, demanding the repeal of the three laws that seek to rework the way agriculture in this country is conducted. They also want a legal assurance that the minimum support price (MSP) regime is retained. The government has been non-committal on all these demands.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the umbrella union of the 40 agitating farmers unions, cannot be faulted for rejecting the government's offer to suspend the laws and discuss them "clause by clause" for many reasons. First, such an offer has no legal backing. A bill, passed by Parliament and signed into law by the President, cannot be kept in abeyance by the government.

**Talks are unlikely to reach a conclusion if the government goes into them with the stand that all is well with the laws**

There has been no legal mechanism to ensure the laws are not acted upon, except that the government may delay the framing of the rules, but that cannot be a legitimate route a government can take while negotiating on critical laws that have serious ramifications for the future.

The government, as Mr Tomar has stated, has been insisting that the laws are for the good of the farmers and the agriculture sector. The farmers, on the other hand, fear that it's a bogey the government advances

and that it would, ultimately, want to withdraw from the sector and throw them at the mercy of the corporates. The government can either say the laws are good or they are bad; and it has said they are good. It is up to the government to explain what it seeks to gain by sticking to its stand and then offering negotiation, at a juncture when the Supreme Court has stayed the operation of the laws. Second, the farmers cannot be faulted for not taking the bait of clause-by-clause discussions as the government had failed to follow the regular, democratic law-making process in this case. It was in an unholy haste to rush them through the legislature.

The government agreed to the discussion only after the farmers showed their grit at the gates of the national capital. If the government understands only the language of power, then the farmers need to continue to talk that. The government may be concerned about the elderly farmers suffering in the extremely cold weather of Delhi; but for them, it's a do-or-die struggle, and they may be willing to pay the price for it.

The government has of late allowed the proposed tractor rally by the farmers' unions on Republic Day. The government must show the same spirit of accommodation and seriousness of purpose while sitting with the farmers next time. It's unlikely to reach a conclusion if the government goes into the talks with the stand that all is well with the laws.

Heed general on arms buys

Last week, Army chief Gen. M.M. Naravane did well to highlight in the public sphere the hidebound, time-consuming, procedures for defence acquisitions that impact our military capabilities and preparedness, especially in relation to potential adversaries who are able to absorb innovations in military technologies more speedily.

If our armed forces are working for a revolution in military affairs (RMA), it is inescapable that we also bring about a revolution in bureaucratic affairs (RBA), General Naravane aptly pointed out. It seems plain common sense to us that RMA — which the major powers have already brought about, and is an area in which India lags behind — cannot be achieved without RBA taking place. It is a rude awakening to hear from the country's military leader that while the Defence Procurement Procedure 2016 was 450 pages, the Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 is 681 pages. It's got worse, rather than better. This is surely a travesty.

The Army chief quotes the late defence minister Manohar Parrikar as saying that the system and procedures of military procurement is built on "distrust" — or, should we say, mistrust. The premium is on the detailed crafting of bureaucratic rules that attempt to take in every future infraction of procedure, and not on the quick availability of a much-needed equipment or defence system. In a word, the idea is to catch the thief, as it were. This is pathetic.

The whole system still appears to be paying the price for the then Opposition crying foul over the procurement of Bofors artillery guns with the purpose of bringing down the Rajiv Gandhi government. As we know since then the successive governments have not been able to establish corruption on the part of the then PM.

We must move on if we are to grow as a credible regional power, leave alone international power. The way things are, any mid-way course-correction in acquisition or introducing of a newly available useful technology requires the whole Quality Requirement procedures to start all over again. Sometimes more than a decade passes. By then what has been got at great cost is already antiquated.

Gen. Naravane is right. There must be built-in flexibility clauses for the end user (our armed forces) as well as the manufacturer. Similarly, overhaul of procurement procedures are needed in the civilian domain to gain efficiency and cut delays.

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Chandrajit Banerjee



Reviving growth: Govt needs to do a fine balance in Budget on Feb. 1

With economic activity resuming and the vaccine becoming a reality, the challenge of lives versus livelihoods is largely addressed. The next big challenge facing the government is getting growth back.

The government has been fiscally prudent in its Covid interventions, with support to industry coming in the form of loan guarantees and reform measures. However, as private consumption, investments and exports remain sluggish, the burden to nurture the unexpected but buoyant recovery falls primarily on public expenditure, at least in the immediate term.

Government spending in areas with high multipliers is important for demand creation, employment generation and catalysing private investments. The RBI estimates the Central government capex has a multiplier effect of 2.45 in the year the expenditure is incurred and 3.14 next year. This shows a hike in capital expenditure by the government crowds in higher private investments benefitting the economy in the next few years. Private investments have been slow even before the pandemic, and this boost can get them back on track. Higher investments, public and private, will lead to

employment generation, boosting consumer demand and savings.

The virtuous cycle of public expenditure, demand generation, private investment and employment generation can put the economy back onto a high growth trajectory.

However, the fiscal situation is now under stress driven by a shortfall in revenue collections due to a fall in GDP induced by the Covid-19 crisis, constraining higher public spending.

Supporting economic recovery and growth via greater public expenditure as well as ensuring prudent fiscal management to safeguard macro-economic stability is an immediate concern the Budget must address.

CII suggests a seven-point agenda. One, prioritise public investment in infrastructure and health. Infrastructure has one of the highest multiplier effects on the economy and boosts long-term competitiveness.

Therefore, the government must hike its infrastructure spend by one per cent of GDP, including higher allocations for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.

The pandemic highlighted the importance and need for a robust public health infrastructure. India should look at increasing its public health

expenditure to three per cent of GDP by 2025.

Two, the government should look at fiscal deficit management from a three-year perspective. The deficit target for next year should be realistic.

Three, the government should ensure greater transparency in the deficit numbers, inspiring confidence in markets, rating agencies and investors. This implies realistic revenue projections, avoiding off-Budget borrowings, realistic estimation of costs of schemes and accounting fully for borrowing for food subsidy. Last year's Budget listed off-Budget expenditures and their financing as an annexure. This year it should build on this positive step.

Four, given the uncertainties set a range-bound deficit target, instead of pursuing a single number, as was recommended by the economic advisory panel of the 15th Finance Commission.

Five, adopt a suitable Fiscal Performance Index framework to capture both the quantum and quality of the deficit. Higher expenditure on areas like infrastructure, healthcare, education and sustainability boosts the economy's productivity and efficiency, leading to higher growth, which helps pay for itself in the long run.

CII wants a composite Fiscal Perfor-

mance Index with six components: (i) Quality of revenue expenditure: measured by the share of revenue expenditure other than interest payments, subsidies, pensions and defence in GDP; (ii) Quality of capital expenditure: measured by share of capital expenditure (other than defence) in GDP; (iii) Quality of revenue: ratio of net tax revenue to GDP (own tax revenue in case of states); (iv) Degree of fiscal prudence I: ratio of fiscal deficit to GDP; (v) Degree of fiscal prudence II: ratio of revenue deficit to GDP; and (vi) Debt index: Change in debt and guarantees to GDP.

Six, the government should look at raising revenues through non-tax measures. It should look at aggressive disinvestment, taking advantage of booming capital markets. The disinvestment plan should include both loss-making and profit-making PSUs. To get better valuations, that is often a concern, the government could announce a list of PSUs where it plans to bring down its holdings below 51 per cent. The positive market sentiment this creates may lead to higher interest and valuations.

Monetisation of assets of the government and public sector enterprises, like surplus land and buildings, profitable brownfield assets like roads, transmission lines, airports, power

plants, etc, could be another source of significant revenue. State governments should also be encouraged to do so.

The proceeds should be ring-fenced for creating health infrastructure and other physical infrastructure in both urban and rural areas.

Seven, further rationalise subsidies and non-productive expenditure. Some of the measures that can help achieve this objective include: pursue Aadhaar-enabled direct benefit transfer (DBT) for food and agri-input subsidy. A policy of giving subsidised kerosene and LPG through DBT only to BPL families should also be explored.

The term for extension of the urea subsidy, given by the CCEA, will come to an end in 2020. The government should use this opportunity to carry out urea price decontrol and rationalise the fertiliser subsidy based on soil health card scheme data.

Savings can accrue from rationalisation of power subsidies. For the deserving, the subsidy could be provided through direct benefit transfer. This will also reduce the cost of power for industrial users, helping Indian manufacturing become more competitive.

The writer is the director-general of the Confederation of Indian Industry

Subhani



Trump to Biden: Modi's US ties in need of reset



Sanjaya Baru

Sanjayovacha

Ending his much-acclaimed address to a joint session of both Houses of the American Congress in July 2005, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said, to rapturous applause: "Partnerships can be of two kinds. There are partnerships based on principle and there are partnerships based on pragmatism. I believe we are at a juncture where we can embark on a partnership that can draw both on principle as well as pragmatism. We must build on this opportunity."

The India-US relationship has waxed and waned depending on how this mix between values, defined by principles, and interests, based on pragmatism, has worked out. As a new administration with a very different and well-defined ideological orientation takes charge in Washington D.C., diplomats and observers in both countries will wait to see what kind of a balance would be struck between the two considerations in taking the India-US relationship forward.

For a long time, when leaders of both countries met, they could only speak about their shared democratic values because their interests were so wide apart. The simultaneous occurrence in 1991 of India's economic opening up and the end of the Cold War added the ballast of shared interests to the relationship. India's desire to secure new markets, new technologies and foreign investment as well as its need to diversify the country's sourcing of defence equipment and bolster its national security, at a time when China was rising and jihadi terrorism had come closer home, created a powerful and potent mix of values and interests.

Long-term and durable bilateral relations between

nations do require a balance between values and interests. The principles by which nations define themselves constitute their values, but a purely values-defined relationship cannot endure unless it also addresses the individual needs of both partners. While political and intellectual leaders define values, it is left to diplomats to identify and secure the pragmatic foundations of a relationship.

Several developments at home and around the world over the three decades, from 1990 to 2020, ensured that the bilateral relationship grew from strength to strength. However, even as global developments continued to favour closer India-US relations, domestic political and economic developments during the tenures of President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi did emerge as potential problems for the durability of the relationship.

Mr Trump's "America First" policies created new uncertainties for India's "interests", in areas such as trade and immigration policy, while Prime Minister Modi's "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" trade and industrial policies and India's desire to maintain its good equations with Russia and Iran, raised concerns in Washington.

However, the weakening of the "interests" side of the equation was balanced by greater emphasis on the "values" side, with Mr Trump hailing India's democracy while turning a blind eye to Mr Modi's majoritarian communal politics, in his campaign against non-democratic China. If Mr Trump had been re-elected it remains to be seen how this equation would have worked out. President Trump may well have continued to ignore the BJP's politics, but would perhaps have demanded his pound of

flesh on the trade and market access side.

What now with the Joe Biden-Kamala Harris duo? Clearly, their values are very different from Mr Trump's, and in a world where domestic politics increasingly influences foreign policy no country can ignore the influence of these "new values" at home on US foreign policy. At the same time, given the domestic economic pressures and promises made, Mr Biden may well not be able to ease up on the demands being made on India on the trade and economic side.

Consider then the emerging balance between principles and pragmatism — the "principles" dear to the new Democratic administration in the US may favour Mr Modi's India less than the principles that defined Mr Trump's attitude; and domestic policy pragmatism may require Mr Biden to stay the course on the economic demands the United States has been making on India.

On the Indian side, Mr Modi has weakened India's global standing as a multicultural, pluralistic, liberal and secular democracy, especially in his second term in office, while at the same time pursuing insular trade policies that raise hackles in Washington D.C. How Mr Modi intends to redefine and rework his approach to the new America of Mr Biden and Ms Harris remains to be seen.

The fact that vice-president Kamala Devi Harris is partly of Indian origin and that several Indian Americans have been nominated to serve the

**Mr Modi has weakened India's global standing as a multicultural, pluralistic, liberal and secular democracy, especially in his second term in office, while at the same time pursuing insular trade policies that raise hackles in Washington D.C**

Biden administration is no guarantee of a smooth ride for India in the US capital. While the interest groups that lobby for good relations between India and the US may have better access to the Biden-Harris team, the team itself may have many whose values clash with the BJP's majoritarianism. Listen carefully to Mr Biden's speech.

In the past it used to be assumed all too easily that Indian Americans are India's diplomatic asset. Indeed, they were. Their role in ensuring congressional support for the India-US civil nuclear agreement cannot be underestimated. Prime Minister Modi's rallies in New York and Houston, attended by enthusiastic Indian Americans, also helped Indian diplomats build bridges with Mr Trump's people. However, those Indian Americans lost out in this election. The Indian Americans now in office are the ones who may well have disliked external affairs minister S. Jaishankar refusing to meet US Congresswoman Premila Jayapal and her delegation, or his quoting Donald Trump approvingly in his book.

Among senior Biden administration officials there are many from the Obama administration who know India and Indians well, including the new CIA director William Burns and the pointman for Asia, Kurt Campbell. They may well wish to strengthen relations with India. It remains to be seen if their diplomatic "pragmatism" in the pursuit of "interests", is able to score over the assertion of "principle" by those who seek to defend the liberal, democratic "values" of the Democratic Party. Clearly, Prime Minister Modi will have to undertake some reset in his domestic politics and policies to ensure that he gets as warm a reception in Joe Biden's America as he did in Donald Trump's.

The writer is an economist, a former newspaper editor, a best-selling author and former adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

LETTERS

BJP WON'T SWING IT

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has demanded that India must have four rotating capitals instead of just one national capital in Delhi. She said it was in view of her state's contributions to the Independence movement but that she was not being parochial, just against unitarianism. Ms Banerjee's point is well-taken and her confidence indicates that the BJP may not swing it in the coming elections in the state, after all.

Bhagwan Thadani  
Mumbai

SHAMELESS HYPOCRISY

IN A RECENT RULING by the Nagpur bench of the Bombay high court, it was observed that there should be "skin-to-skin contact with sexual intent" in order for a complaint to be considered as one of sexual assault. The ruling was given by the single-judge bench of Justice Pushpa Ganediwalla. Perhaps, she believed herself to be exceptional like Caesar's wife, beyond all reproach, while pronouncing this spectacularly hypocritical and status-quoist verdict. Was she victim-shaming? *Bad se badnami bura*, ill repute is worse than (committing) the sin, goes the popular saying.

Priyanka Mathur  
Kolkata

TRACTOR FACTOR

INDIA PRODUCES over a third of the world's tractors. It is our accomplishment and that is clearly being put to use by the agitating farmers. Now, the farmers will be able to follow a route that will take them inside the national capital and out again. The Delhi Police, which reports to the Union home ministry, has given the nod to the tractor rally. The rally that may see as many as two lakh tractors will kick off after the ceremonial R-Day parade. It showcases India's achievement.

C.K. Ramani  
Navi Mumbai

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Deepak Singhal (Jan. 24). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.



## SHORT TAKES

## 11 IRAQI FIGHTERS DIE IN IS AMBUSH

**Samarra, Iraq, Jan. 24:** At least 11 fighters from Iraq's state-sponsored Hashed al-Shaabi force were killed in an ambush by the Islamic State group north of the capital on Saturday, Hashed security sources said.

The jihadists used light weapons and the cover of darkness to target the Hashed east of Tikrit, the capital of Iraq's Salahaddin province, two days after a twin suicide attack claimed by the group killed 32 people in Baghdad.

"IS launched an attack on the Hashed's Brigade 22," said one of the unit's officers Abu Ali al-Maliki.

Maliki said the brigade commander was among those killed before reinforcements from the federal police came to the unit's aid.

Hashed security sources said the total toll was 11 dead and 10 wounded.

## 'STEALING' FILES: TESLA SUES EX-EMPLOYEE

**San Francisco, Jan. 24:** Tesla has sued a former employee for allegedly stealing about 26,000 confidential files in his first week of working at the company, according to a court filing seen by AFP.

The company said on Friday that within three days of being hired, software engineer Alex Khatilov "brazenly stole thousands of trade computer scripts that took Tesla years to develop" and transferred them to his personal Dropbox, a cloud storage service.

Tesla said that when confronted by Tesla's security team, Khatilov claimed he had only transferred "a couple of personal administrative documents", whilst trying to delete the evidence.

Khatilov told the New York Post the software files ended up in his Dropbox by mistake when he had been trying to make a backup copy of a folder on his computer.

## SCOTLAND WILL HOLD VOTE REFERENDUM

**London, Jan. 24:** Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon on Sunday said she planned to hold a legal referendum on independence from Britain despite Westminster's opposition, as an opinion poll showed a majority would vote yes.

If her Scottish National Party (SNP) wins a strong showing in regional elections in May, Sturgeon said she would seek a fresh referendum even though Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said such a vote should only be held once in a generation.

"I want to have a legal referendum, that is what I am going to seek the authority of the Scottish people for in May and if they give me that authority, that's what I intend to do," she told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show.

Johnson "will flatly refuse the demand," The Sunday Times quoted senior government sources as saying.

## PM OLI EXPELLED FROM NCP'S MEMBERSHIP

**Kathmandu, Jan. 24:** The ruling Nepal Communist Party's splinter faction led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda' on Sunday expelled Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli from the party's general membership.

The decision to remove Oli from the party's general membership was taken at the Standing Committee meeting of the faction led by former prime ministers Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal after Oli failed to produce explanation to his recent moves as sought by party leadership, sources said.

Earlier in December, the splinter group had removed Oli, one of the two chairmen of the ruling party, as the party chair. Madhav Nepal was named as the party's second chairman. Prachanda is the first chairman of the party.

The Prachanda-led faction on January 15 sought clarification from Oli alleging that he was carrying out activities that go against the party's policies. The faction decided to strip Oli off even from the ordinary membership of the party after he chose not to furnish any clarification, party sources said.

Oli had been accused of violating party statute by the splinter group.

## Russian cops go on the rampage

3,500 protesters arrested at rally in support of jailed Putin critic Navalny, says monitor

**Moscow, Jan. 24:** Nearly 3,500 protesters were arrested at demonstrations in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, a monitor reported on Sunday, as authorities probed violence on the part of both protesters and police.

Police clashed with demonstrators in Moscow as tens of thousands took to the streets across the country on Saturday following Navalny's call to demonstrate against President Vladimir Putin's 20-year rule.

A number of protesters were injured, including a woman in Saint Petersburg who was hospitalised with a head injury and was in intensive care Sunday.

The West condemned the arrests and "harsh tactics" used against demonstrators, with EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell saying the bloc would discuss "next steps" on Monday.

Late Saturday the Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said it launched criminal inquiries in Moscow over the use of violence against law enforcement, hooliganism and property damage.

"Investigators are continuing to study and analyse a large amount of photo and video materials," the Committee said.

In a separate statement, investigators said Sunday a 36-year-old man hit two policemen at the Saint Petersburg protest and was detained.

But Saint Petersburg prosecutors also said they were probing violations "on the part of law enforcement" and the use of force against a woman.

The statement was released after local media published a video showing a middle-aged woman falling to the ground after being kicked by riot police.

In the video, a woman — identified as Margarita Yudina — is seen asking three policemen in full riot gear why they are detaining a young protester. One of the policeman then kicks her in the

**Washington, Jan. 24:** Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, in his first directive since taking office, has given his senior leaders two weeks to send him reports on sexual assault prevention programmes in the military, and an assessment of what has worked and what hasn't.

Austin's memo, which went out Saturday, fulfills a commitment he made to senators last week during confirmation hearings. He had vowed to immediately address the problems of sexual assault and harassment in the ranks.

This is a leadership issue, Austin said in his two-page memo. We will lead. Senator after senator demanded to know what Austin planned to do about the problem, which defense and military leaders have grappled with for years. Reports of sexual assaults have steadily gone up since 2006. — *PTI*

## 11 TRAPPED MINERS SAVED

**Beijing, Jan. 24:** Eleven miners, trapped underground for two weeks following a blast in a gold mine in east China's Shandong Province, have been rescued, the state media reported on Sunday. Authorities have been racing to dig out 22 miners trapped underground in the partially built gold mine in the city of Qixia in Shandong Province, since the explosion blocked their exit on January 10. The rescuers set free two workers on Sunday, bringing the number of rescued miners to 11. — *PTI*

## US condemns 'harsh tactics'

**Washington, Jan. 24:** Washington on Saturday rebuked Moscow over its use of "harsh tactics" against protesters demanding the release of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

"The United States strongly condemns the use of harsh tactics against protesters and journalists this weekend in cities throughout Russia," State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement.

Navalny being taken into custody and the arrests of his supporters were "troubling indications of further restrictions on civil society and fundamental freedoms," he added.

"We call on Russian authorities to release all

those detained for exercising their universal rights and for the immediate and unconditional release of Aleksey Navalny," Price said, using an alternative spelling.

"We urge Russia to fully cooperate with the international community's investigation into the poisoning of Aleksey Navalny and credibly explain the use of a chemical weapon on its soil."

In Russia tens of thousands nationwide answered Navalny's call to rally, which he issued after he was detained at a Moscow airport on arrival from Germany, where he had been recovering from a near-fatal poisoning with a nerve agent.

— *AFP*

## US INTERFERING IN 'DOMESTIC AFFAIRS': KREMLIN

**Moscow, Jan. 24:** The Kremlin on Sunday accused the US embassy of interfering in Russia's domestic affairs after the mission distributed a "demonstration alert" to US citizens in Russia recommending they avoid protests.

Ahead of the demonstrations, the US embassy issued a safety warning to Americans based in Russia.

"Of course, these publications are inappropriate," President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a state TV channel.

"And of course indirectly, they are absolutely an interference in our domestic affairs," he added. He accused the US embassy of "indirectly" supporting the violation of Russian legislation and backing "unauthorised protests". — *AFP*

## Review military sex assault programmes: Defence secy

## AUSTIN CALLS COUNTERPARTS FROM JAPAN, S. KOREA, UNITED KINGDOM

**Washington, Jan. 24:** US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke to his counterparts from Japan, Britain, and South Korea, the Pentagon has said. During his interaction with Japanese Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi, Austin reiterated America's commitment to the US-Japan alliance and emphasised on the importance of maintaining peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region.

Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said.

"Austin and Kishi discussed a range of security issues in the Indo-Pacific and exchanged views on ensuring the readiness of the alliance despite the challenges posed by Covid-19," Kirby said. They also discussed the need to continue implementing

US force realignment initiatives including continued efforts regarding the construction of the Futenma Replacement Facility in Henoko, he said. Austin affirmed that the Senkaku islands are covered by Article V of the US-Japan Security Treaty, and that the US remains opposed to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea.

"Austin thanked Kishi for Japan's continued leadership in implementing UNSC Resolutions regarding North Korea and encouraged minister Kishi to strengthen Japan's contribution to the role that the alliance continues to play in providing security in the Indo-Pacific region," Kirby said. — *PTI*

## Snowing in London



Snow settles on one of the Trafalgar Square lions in central London on Sunday.

— *AFP*

## Vaccine immunity will take 3 weeks: UK medical officer

**London, Jan. 24:** One of England's leading medical officers on Sunday urged the public to continue to follow the strict lockdown rules because any vaccine-related immunity from Covid-19 takes at least three weeks to kick in. Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, England's Deputy Chief Medical Officer, also warned that there is no clear evidence yet to show that vaccinated people cannot transmit the deadly virus on to others.

"Regardless of whether someone has had their vaccination or not, it is vital that everyone follows the restrictions and public health advice, as protection takes up to three weeks to kick in and we don't yet know the impact of vaccines on transmission," said Van-Tam. His warning comes as the UK registered another high daily death toll from the virus of 1,348 this weekend.

He pointed to an additional 32 vaccination sites coming on stream to add to the thousands of venues where the National Health Service (NHS) has been delivering 140 jobs a minute, taking the vaccinated total to over 5.8 million. "The vaccine is rightly something to celebrate — let's stay patient, stay at home and support the NHS as it continues to roll out the vaccine," he said. A Living Museum where the BBC filmed a hit drama series 'Peaky Blinders' based on the notorious Birmingham gang in the 1920s is among the new vaccine sites. — *AFP*

## Hindu priests charge more for SA funerals

**Johannesburg, Jan. 24:** Cashing in on the fearful atmosphere prevailing in South Africa amidst a second wave and a new variant of the Covid-19 virus, some Hindu priests in the country are allegedly charging exorbitant rates for conducting funerals of coronavirus victims.

The priests are under fire for charging between 1,200 rand (\$79) and 2,000 rand (\$131) to conduct a funeral, according to Pradeep Ramallal, a member of the Hindu Dharma Association of South Africa and Manager of the Clare Estate Crematorium in Durban.

This is not right. As per our scriptures, this is our seva (service) to the community. If a family wants to give a priest a donation, then that is acceptable but priests should not be charging people, he told the Weekly Post newspaper as he slammed the priests who are overcharging. Ramallal said the organisation has received a number of complaints from people whose relatives succumbed.

In view of a second wave and a new variant of the virus, the crematorium has had to introduce double shifts amid daily deaths. — *PTI*

## A NASAL SPRAY THAT BLOCKS OUT COVID-19

**London, Jan. 24:** A nasal spray which can prevent a Coronavirus infection for up to two days is being prepped for mass production by scientists at the University of Birmingham with the hope of having them available over-the-counter in pharmacies in a few months, a UK newspaper report said on Sunday. Dr Richard Moakes, the study's lead researcher, told 'The Sunday Telegraph' that he is confident in the spray's formula to help unlock society from social distancing restrictions. — *PTI*

## Oman limits jobs for expats

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

Gulf nation Oman's reported move on Sunday to bar certain jobs for foreigners such as finance, commercial and administrative positions in insurance companies, shops and car dealerships as well as nationalise some jobs in the private sector is set to impact Indian workers there. Although there was no official reaction from New Delhi till late on Sunday evening, it

is expected that India will examine the matter to ascertain what impact the move will have on Indian workers in the Gulf nation. A huge number of Indian workers stay and work in the entire Gulf region spanning several countries.

According to media reports, the Omani Labour Ministry was quoted as saying, "A number of jobs in the private sector will be nationalised," adding that certain jobs in insurance

companies, shops and car dealerships, including finance, commercial and administrative positions, will be "limited to Omanis only". Oman also reportedly announced that work permits of foreigners in those professions will not be renewed after their expiry date.

According to media reports, Oman has undertaken the move in an effort to create more employment opportunities for its citizens amid an economic downturn.

## Biden talks to Boris, Obrador

**Washington, Jan. 24:** US President Joe Biden spoke to British Prime Minister Boris Johnson over phone and conveyed his intention to strengthen the "special relationship" between the two countries and revitalise transatlantic ties, the White House has said.

During the call on Saturday, Biden noted his readiness to work closely with Johnson as the United Kingdom hosts the G-7 and United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) this year.

"The president conveyed his intention to strengthen the special relationship between our countries and revitalise transatlantic ties, underscoring the crit-

ical role of NATO to our collective defense and shared values," the White House said in a readout of the call.

Biden also noted the importance of cooperation, including through multilateral organisations, on shared challenges such as combatting climate change, containing

deadly Covid-19, and ensuring global health security, it said.

The leaders also discussed the need for coordination on shared foreign policy priorities, including China, Iran, and Russia, the White House said.

Biden also spoke to Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on Friday to review bilateral cooperation on a range of issues, particularly regional migration, according to a readout of the call issued on Saturday. "The president outlined his plan to reduce migration by addressing its root causes, increasing resettlement capacity and lawful alternative immigration pathways, improving processing at the bor-

der to adjudicate requests for asylum, and reversing the previous administration's draconian immigration policies," it said.

Biden and Obrador agreed to work closely to stem the flow of irregular migration to Mexico and the United States, as well as to promote development in the Northern Triangle of Central America.

They also recognised the importance of coordination to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, the White House said. After his swearing in on January 20, Biden has so far spoken with three world leaders.

His first call was to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. — *PTI*

## WATER | DANGER

Over 1,000 large dams in India will be roughly 50 years old in 2025

## Ageing dams in India, US pose threat: UN

**New York, Jan. 24:** Over a 1,000 large dams in India will be roughly 50 years old in 2025 and such aging structures across the world pose a growing threat, according to a UN report which notes that by 2050, most people on Earth will live downstream of tens of thousands of dams built in the 20th century.

The report, titled 'Ageing water infrastructure: An emerging global risk' and compiled by United University's Canadian-based Institute for Water, Environment and Health, says

most of the 58,700 large dams worldwide were constructed between 1930 and 1970 with a design life of 50 to 100 years.

It said at 50 years, a large concrete dam "would most probably begin to express signs of ageing." Ageing signs include increasing cases of dam failures, progressively increasing costs of dam repair and maintenance, increasing reservoir sedimentation, and loss of a dam's functionality and effectiveness, "strongly interconnected" manifestations, the report

said. "By 2050, most people on Earth will live downstream of tens of thousands of large dams built in the 20th century, many of them already operating at or beyond their design life," according to the UN University analysis.

The analysis includes dam decommissioning or ageing case studies from the USA, France, Canada, India, Japan, and Zambia and Zimbabwe. According to the report, the world is unlikely to witness another large dam-building revolution as in the mid-20th

century, but dams constructed then will inevitably be showing their age.

The report said that 32,716 large dams (55 per cent of the world's total) are found in just four Asian countries: China, India, Japan, and South Korea — a majority of which will reach the 50-year threshold relatively soon. The same is true of many large dams in Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe, it said.

In India, there are over 1,115 large dams that will be roughly 50 years old in

2025, more than 4,250 large dams in the country will be over 50 years old in 2050 and 64 large dams will be more than 150 years old in 2050, it said. The report said that approximately 3.5 million people are at risk if India's Mullaperiyar dam in Kerala, built over 100 years ago, "were to fail".

"The dam, in a seismically active area, shows significant structural flaws and its management is a contentious issue between Kerala and Tamil Nadu States," it said. The report

added that dams that are well designed, constructed and maintained can "easily" reach 100 years of service but predicts an increase in "decommissioning" — a phenomenon gaining pace in the USA and Europe — as economic and practical limitations prevent ageing dams from being upgraded or if their original use is now obsolete.

In the US, the average age of 90,580 dams is 56 years. More than 85 per cent of US dams in 2020 were operating at or beyond their life expectancy. — *PTI*



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,878.54	-1.50
Nifty 50	14,371.90	-1.50
S&P 500*	3,841.47	-0.30
Dollar (₹)	72.97	0.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.67	0.57
Euro (₹)	88.79	-0.16
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,861*263	0.53
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.64	-0.82
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.939	-0.29
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.094	-0.013

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Reliance spins off O2C business into new unit

Reliance Industries Ltd has completed spin-off of the firm's oil-to-chemical (O2C) business into a new unit that will help it pursue growth opportunities with strategic partnerships, RIL has said. The O2C business unit holds Reliance's oil refinery and petrochemical assets and retail fuel business but not upstream oil and gas producing fields such as KG-D6 and textiles business.

FPIs invest over ₹24,400 crore in stocks this month



Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) remained net buyers to the tune of Rs 18,456 crore so far in January as global liquidity led to continued investment in emerging markets. According to depositories data, overseas investors pumped in Rs 24,469 crore into equities but pulled out Rs 6,013 crore from the bonds market during January 1-22. The total net investment during the period stood at Rs 18,456 crore.

NCLT admits Devas Multimedia, names liquidator

The National Company Law Tribunal has admitted the petition filed by Antrix Corporation, the commercial arm of Indian Space Research Organisation, for winding up Devas Multimedia and has appointed a provisional liquidator for the firm. A two-member NCLT Bengaluru bench of the NCLT has directed the provisional liquidator to take control of the management, properties and actionable claims of Devas Multimedia.

NIIF invest less than ₹5,000 crore in five years

The National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) in its five years of existence has made equity investments of less than Rs 5,000 crore in infra projects, sources said. The Rs 40,000-crore NIIF was set up in Dec. 2015 for investing in greenfield, brownfield and stalled projects. NIIF has made an equity investment of Rs 4,689 crore while the co-investment by its partners stood at about Rs 7,053 crore by Sept.

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Lockdown reverses trends in space demand Apartment size expands as office space shrinks

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JAN. 24

Bucking a four-year declining trend, average apartment sizes grew by 10 per cent in Covid-hit 2020 while office spaces have started shrinking. A major contributor to this trend reversal is the new work from home (WFH) culture. The average apartment sizes in the top seven cities rose by 10 per cent to 1150 sq. ft. in 2020 from 1050 sq. ft. in 2019.

Last year, space-starved Mumbai saw the highest, 21 per cent, increase in apartment sizes to 932 sq ft from 773 sq ft in the previous year.

Among the big seven cities, Hyderabad has the largest average apartment size of 1750 sq ft, says an update from Anarock Property Consultants.

The average apartment sizes have been declining since 2016. In 2016 it was 1440 sq ft and by 2017 it had declined 13 per cent to 1260 sq ft.

"The two main reasons



for apartment sizes reducing in previous years were affordability and millennials' preference for low-maintenance homes. Keen to generate more buyer interest with smaller price-tags, developers whittled down their flat sizes. But 2020 saw an almost immediate reversal of buyer preferences. With the accent suddenly being on accommodating the WFH and learn-from-home culture, flat sizes began increasing for the first time in four years,"

said Anuj Puri, chairman, Anarock Property Consultants.

The same work from home (WFH) culture saw the average size of office space shrinking in 2020. According to Nobroker.com, companies are choosing smaller office spaces now compared to pre-Covid times as many of them have adopted WFH as an option for at least a part of their employees.

Start-ups, IT companies and financial services

have freed up office space during the lockdown and are looking to work out a hybrid model in the future where work-from-office would be on a rotational basis for the employees. About 30-40 per cent of the companies, mainly driven by start-ups, IT and financial services companies, have let go of their leased office spaces either partially or completely post-lock-down.

This led to a drastic fall in demand for office space, especially larger sapce.

"While we have witnessed the overall office demand fall by about 50 per cent during the November-January period compared to the same period a year ago, the demand for office spaces which are lesser than 5000 sq ft is witnessing a less severe decline in demand," said Amit Agarwal, co-founder and CEO of NoBroker.com.

Demand for small office space has fallen only by about 25 per cent during the same months.

Separate cheques for vehicle, insurance likely

New Delhi, Jan. 24: Buyer of a new vehicle may have to pay the cost of vehicle and insurance premium through separate cheques, if the recommendations of a committee to review MISP guidelines are accepted by the Irdai.

The insurance regulator had issued Motor Insurance Service Provider (MISP) guidelines in 2017

with the intention of streamlining the process and bringing the practices of vehicle insurance, being sold by automotive dealers.

MISP refers to an automobile dealer appointed by the insurer or the insurance intermediary to distribute and/or service motor insurance policies of vehicles sold through it.

In June 2019, the Irdai

had set up a committee to review the MISP guidelines. The panel examined the current practice of collecting the premium payment from the customer. It observed a lack of transparency in the cost of insurance premium when the customer buys the vehicle through the dealer and makes the payment via a single cheque.

As the MISP makes payment to the insurance company from his own account, "the customer does not know the insurance premium being paid as it is subsumed in the cost of the vehicle", the committee said.

The panel recommended the customer should make payment to the insurance company directly. —PTI

Q3 SEES 19 IPOs WORTH \$1.84 BN: REPORT

New Delhi, Jan. 24: Reflecting strong momentum, India witnessed 19 initial public offerings (IPOs) worth \$1.84 billion in the December quarter of 2020 and the market sentiment remains positive in what could be a stellar 2021, according to a report.

There were 10 IPOs in the main market and nine in the small and medium enterprises (SME) segment during this period.

There were 19 IPOs valued at \$1.836 billion and the largest was that of Gland Pharma's with an issue size of \$869 million. There were just 11 IPOs in the year-ago quarter.

India ranks ninth globally in terms of the number of IPOs in 2020 with 43 IPOs raising \$4.09 billion, as per the report by EY.

Real estate, hospitality and construction and diversified industrial products were the most active sectors in terms of the number of IPOs, with three IPOs launched in each sector (including main and SME markets), the report said.

It said in 2020, global IPO volumes continued to accelerate, increasing by 19 per cent to 1,363 while proceeds rose 29 per cent YoY to \$268 billion. —PTI

Diamond trade roaring back from WFH shoppers

THOMAS BIESHEUVEL & YULIYA FEDORINOVA JAN. 24

The global diamond trade spent years in the doldrums, only to be crippled by the pandemic just as things started looking up. Now, at last, business is booming again.

Factories in the industry's "engine room"—the Indian city of Surat—are so desperate to boost production that the most-skilled cutters and polishers are being headhunted with offers of 50 per cent pay hikes and perks like free food and housing. Miner De Beers is poised for its biggest rough-diamond sale in three years, even after raising prices, and rival Alrosa PJSC said last week it expects the recovery will keep going for some time.

The boom is being driven by bumper holiday jewellery sales, particularly in the vital US and Chinese markets. For years, diamonds faced growing competition from travel as a form of luxury spending. Now, with vacations on hold due to lockdowns and other restrictions, consumers are putting their disposable income into online purchases.

"People have not only learned to work remotely, but also buy online, including diamonds," Alrosa chief of sales Evgeny Agureev said in an interview. "Money was previously spent on trips or on dinners at expensive restaurants, but now part of this demand has gone to diamonds. Online sales almost doubled last year to about 20 per cent of the total."

The sales boost is feeding

through to surging demand for polished diamonds, at a time when stocks held by factories and traders had shrunk dramatically following the initial Covid-19 lockdowns.

But for an industry long familiar with dramatic booms and busts, it's unclear whether the rebound will take hold, or represents only a temporary respite. Some industry participants are also concerned that the market is running too hot, risking a slump later in the year.

Annual diamond jewellery demand had been stagnant at about \$80 billion for the past five years and the sector's middlemen were struggling to turn a profit. As global vaccines roll out and other luxury purchases become viable again, there's a risk that the industry finds itself facing the same old challenges as before.

For now, money is pouring in. Signet Jewellers Ltd reported a 7.8 per cent jump in holiday sales in North America, by far the industry's biggest market. The jeweller's online sales surged in the period. It was a similar story in China, the second-biggest market, where Chow Tai Fook reported an 18 per cent rise in quarterly sales.

India, where about 90 per cent of diamonds are cut or polished, imported almost \$2 billion in rough diamonds last month as cutters and polishers raced to meet the increased demand and restock their inventories.

De Beers and Alrosa have both responded by raising prices, seeking to recover some of the ground they lost last year when demand



collapsed.

But while De Beers implemented an increase of about 5 per cent in its first sale of the year last week, customers are still buying. The sale hasn't yet been finalised, but the miner was on course for its biggest rough-diamond auction in three years—at about \$600 million—according to people familiar with the situation.

Still, the first sales of the year are the traditionally the busiest, when the industry's middlemen rush to restock. If sales slow later in the year, prices could come

under pressure again.

The risks of a short-lived revival are compounded by the billions of dollars of rough diamond stocks held by the two big miners. So far, they've resisted the temptation to start offloading the inventories.

"There's a dilemma for the miners. If they choose not to sell, they lose out on monetising stock, but if they sell too much they risk over-saturating the market," said Anish Aggarwal, a partner at specialist diamond advisory firm Gemdax. "If they get this right, there will be support for prices."

At the moment, the middlemen who cut, polish and trade the world's diamonds are making money. In the so-called secondary market—where buyers sell to gem manufacturers who don't have direct access to De Beers or Alrosa—boxes have been changing hands at premiums above 5 per cent, and some in double digits, even after the price rise. That suggests manufacturers believe they can make a profit at current prices.

Rough diamond prices generally have recovered back to pre-pandemic levels, while polished prices are slightly higher. That's good news for mostly small and private family-run businesses that cut, polish and trade the stones.

"So long as midstream stocks don't get saturated, margins can be defended," said Aggarwal. "All industry stakeholders—miners, midstream and retailers—will need to work in a measured way to enable this to continue."

—Bloomberg

Chip shortage: VW may claim damages from supplier Bosch



Berlin, Jan. 24: German car manufacturer Volkswagen is looking into possible claims for damages against its suppliers Bosch and Continental due to a lack of semiconductors, Automobilwoche magazine reported on Sunday.

Automakers around the world are shutting assembly lines due to problems in the delivery of semiconductors, which in some cases have been exacerbated by the former Trump administration's actions against key Chinese chip factories.

The shortage has affected Volkswagen, Ford Motor Co, Subaru Corp, Toyota Motor Corp, Nissan Motor Co Ltd, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles and other car makers.

Citing people familiar with the matter, Automobilwoche reported that Volkswagen was in talks with alternative suppliers of semiconductors but there were concerns this could lead to higher prices.

Volkswagen wants to make sure that both Bosch and Continental share the burden and partly compensate the company for the resulting additional costs, the magazine reported.

Contacted by Reuters, a Volkswagen spokesman declined to comment, and Bosch and Continental did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The magazine cited Bosch company sources which said the car supplier was ready to discuss the matter directly with its customers and suppliers in due course.

German economy minister Peter Altmaier has asked his Taiwanese counterpart Wang Meihua to persuade Taiwanese manufacturers to help ease the shortage of semiconductor chips, which is hampering its fledgling economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Altmaier asked Wang to address the issue in talks with Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co Ltd (TSMC), the world's largest contract chipmaker and one of Germany's main suppliers.

—Reuters

Cancelled Keystone XL pipeline may yield 48,000 tonnes of scrap



JOE DEAUX JAN. 24

The scrapping of Keystone XL not only means the end of multi-billion-dollar pipe dream for TC Energy Corp—it also leaves behind 48,000 tonnes of steel.

US President Joe Biden revoked permits for the oil pipeline on his first day in office, killing a cross-border project that had won a four-year reprieve under his Republican predecessor, Donald Trump. The pipeline would have spanned almost 1,900 kilometres. TC Energy anticipated needing about 660,000 tonnes of steel just for the US portion.

About 150 km of pipe had been installed and an additional 2.2 km had been completed at the Canada-US border as of the end of 2020, the Canada Energy Regulator said in a January 22 email. That would amount to nearly 48,000 tonnes of steel, assuming standard dimensions of line pipe, according to Bloomberg calculations based on industry criteria.

The benchmark steel price is about \$1,060 a tonne, which would value the haul at almost \$51 million—though as scrap it would be sold for less. Once sold, the scrap metal is remelted by the buyer and formed into new steel products.

TC Energy may have to sell already delivered metal to secondary markets. —Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## Nets hold on to beat Miami Heat

**Los Angeles:** Kevin Durant scored a team-high 31 points as the new-look Brooklyn Nets solved some of their defensive woes on Saturday to hold on and beat the shorthanded Miami Heat 128-124.

Since putting together the dynamic trio of Durant, Kyrie Irving and James Harden, the Nets have had no trouble showcasing their offence but have struggled at the other end of the court. Irving finished with 28 points, and Harden was held to just 12 but dished out 11 assists, as Brooklyn halted a modest two-game losing streak. "It's not every day you see this collection of guys playing together in NBA history, so we want to take full advantage of that," Irving said.

Brooklyn has now allowed 396 points in their last three games including back-to-back losses to the Cavaliers, including an 147-135 double overtime defeat on Wednesday. — *AFP*

## Hockey jr girls pip Chile seniors

**Santiago, Chile:** The Indian women's junior hockey team extended their unbeaten run by notching up a 2-0 victory over the Chile senior side here.

Playing their fifth match of the tour of Chile, goals from Sangita Kumari (48th minute) and Sushma Kumari (56th minute) in the last quarter gave India the win.

It was India who drew first blood as they orchestrated a beautiful team move to open the scoring through Sangita. The young forward took her chance confidently, and maintained her goal-scoring form. Minutes later, Chile had a glorious chance to equalise through a penalty corner, but India's rushers performed their task decently enough.

In the 56th minute, it was the visiting team's turn to get a penalty corner, which proved to be the decisive moment in the match. — *PTI*

## Hyderabad split points with JFC

**Vasco:** Jamshedpur FC and Hyderabad FC earned a point each after playing a goal-less draw in an Indian Super League match here on Sunday.

While Hyderabad ended up drawing their third game on the trot, Jamshedpur grabbed their first point, after a treble of losses.

New signings Farukh Choudhary and Seiminlin Doungel were among the four changes made by Jamshedpur while Roland Alberg was handed his first start as Hyderabad rang in two changes.

The opening half was an intriguing, open-ended contest with both sides hitting the post but failing to find the net. Hyderabad had better chances but Jamshedpur keeper T.P. Rehenesh produced two fine saves to keep the scoreline goal-less heading into the break. — *PTI*

## Poirier knocks out McGregor

**Abu Dhabi:** American underdog Dustin Poirier shook up the world of mixed martial arts on Sunday, beating up the legs of Irish superstar Conor McGregor before knocking him out at UFC 257 in Abu Dhabi.

"I'm happy but I'm not surprised. I put in the work," Poirier after the referee stepped in after 2min 32sec of the second round to save McGregor from further damage after he was dropped by a fierce combination of punches. Poirier was ranked second in the flyweight division going into the fight. — *AFP*

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**Big Bash League:** Adelaide Strikers vs Sydney Thunder from 1.45 pm; Brisbane Heat vs Perth Scorchers from 7.35 am (Tuesday) on Sony Six, HD

## FOOTBALL

**English FA Cup:** Wycombe Wanderers vs Tottenham Hotspur from 1.15 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

## WWE

**RAW:** Bouts from 6.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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## Rising from Ash-es

Constantly put under microscope, Ashwin says it's a start over, again &amp; again

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR  
CHENNAI, JAN. 24

R. Ashwin would not have featured in the first Test against Australia at Adelaide if Ravindra Jadeja had been available. Ashwin himself knew that. And that's why it felt like starting all over again for the off-spinner who has been constantly put under the microscope despite proving his worth time and again.

Apart from taking 12 wickets — he dismissed big fish Steve Smith thrice — in three Tests, Ashwin scored a gritty unbeaten 39 to save the Sydney Test. In a chat on Sunday, Ashwin spoke about the importance of his Sydney knock and how he has been subjected to unfair comparisons with other spinners. **Excerpts:**

**Is this the best that you have bowled in Australia?** Looking back, you can say that but I think this is just another dimension of cricket that I'm seeing myself in. It didn't look like I was going to start the series in all honesty but Jadeja damaged his hamstring and that is how I got an opportunity in the first Test. Yes, 2018-19 was good, but I think 2020-21 was one of the best if you compare the last three years.

Before each Test, I sat and watched match videos for eight hours on the bounce. I made my own plans about where the fielders should be. For example, how Tim Paine got out in Melbourne came from what happened in Adelaide with the short-leg fielder and where the ball might go. So these are orchestrated moves and thanks to the freedom the team management gave me in how I should be working it.

**On his back injury:** It (back injury) was looking good for the fourth Test and looked like I would play. But there was some unfortunate turn of events. Even the swimming pool access was cut. The pool is an important activity in the recovery process. Then we had to do a plunge pool activity but it is not the same. The physio also felt if the recovery process was in place, there was a good chance I could play. It was a freakish injury. By day three or four, I was alright to bowl. After that 1-1 draw, things took a U-turn. The way things happened in Sydney and Brisbane, we had to quarantine. Sometimes it was questionable. There



Ravichandran Ashwin

was insensitivity around people commenting on why we were complaining. The rules were not such. It was off the beat. But, we buckled down and put on a good show.

**On the importance of his Sydney knock:** There have been questions raised over my batting since that West Indies tour. But another thing that needs to go into consideration is I was an all-format player and sometimes the roles of people playing Test cricket alone don't really sit down well or people don't quite make an effort to understand how it works. I feel ever since that particular thing where I've just been playing Test cricket, it's pretty much a one game here or there and I'm constantly fighting with someone else for the lone spinner spot. And if I have to be judged purely on my batting skills and batting averages, then I think a decision based on an innings or two alone to drop me out of a particular series wasn't quite justified. I am looking to fight for my place and when I'm doing that I need to emphasise on my primary skill which is to pick up wickets, which I think over the last two years in South Africa, England or Australia, I have done justice to.

**Despite being on the international stage for more than a decade, why do you feel that you have to prove yourself in every game?** I have had some wonderful interactions with batting coach Vikram Rathour (a former selector) throughout this series. He told me that they were looking to leave me out after the England series in 2011-12. He said, 'We didn't quite think that you were bowling well'. But I made close to 400 runs in that series and picked up 14-15 wickets. It's a battle that I have always fought. It's not new territory for me.

Whenever I was pitted against another off-spinner, the series has turned out well for me. From 2013 to 2015, I was competing with Harbhajan who had made a comeback. In 2015-16, it was Jayant Yadav. For me, competition has always got the best out of me. I feel whatever I have left ahead of me will also be along these lines. So I have decided to play every Test like it's my first. If I can't be excellent, I should just move on.

**On comparisons with Nathan Lyon and the duel with Smith:** There has been a lot of noise about how I am bowling, and constant references to someone like Nathan

Lyon. During the previous tour in Adelaide, I picked up six wickets and kept on bowling despite a tear in the abdomen. After the match, there were comparisons between us. I felt it was extremely insensitive after a good performance. That was the lowest I ever felt in my life. I feel I have been constantly put under the microscope. I did take it personally. So rather than me competing against Lyon, I thought I must be competing against Smith. Lyon is a lovely bowler and I have respect for him. But my focus was on something else. There were records that Smith had never got out to spinners in Australia. I wanted to turn that around. I am entitled to think I am, probably, the best in the world. I wanted to think along those lines. I thought 'who is the best in the series?' I can't compete with Virat Kohli so I decided to compete against Smith. A lot of people were talking about who will dismiss Smith. But, nobody even gave me a chance. Then, I made sure that people spoke about me at the end of the series.

**Now, there will be comparisons with Washington Sundar...** Honestly, I have always

said it is irrelevant who walks alongside me into the ground. When I walk into the next Test, I will be looking at Burns, Sibley, Crawley, Root. Why would I worry about someone who is going to stand beside me because for all you know I'm walking with a guy who is going to help me over the next five days and he has to do his job and I have to do mine. These are insignificant things and sometimes people tend to talk about it to such an extent because of their mindset.

**Did the Aussies underestimate India's bench strength?** I am not too sure. They were bowled out for 190 in Adelaide. With another hundred runs on the board, even that pink ball Test could have gone either way. I think they knew our bowling was going to challenge them throughout the series. I think it is just that the team found ways to bounce back from 36 all out. I think people rallied around really well, they realised how tough the tour could get. One piece of good fortune is that there were new people and fresh legs especially in the bowling department. Sometimes when you're playing a long series, fresh legs and mind can do the trick.

**Is there a tinge of disappointment that you were not considered for the vice-captaincy role when Rahane took over from Kohli?** I am not disappointed and it's irrelevant to me. I go out there and make my own plans and get the fields that I want. The captains and vice-captains that I have played with have been very supportive of whatever I have wanted. Leadership is just leading yourself and keeping your space upbeat for any situation that arises. If you can help another teammate, that's also leadership, so it really doesn't matter.

**On the impending 400-wicket milestone and the England series:** I am not thinking about milestones! Once I crossed 200 wickets, I stopped looking at milestones. It just happened over a course of time. The England series is going to be good. They are coming with an amazing preparation in Sri Lanka where the wicket has spun over the last two Tests. Joe Root has been batting beautifully. England are one of the teams who come well-prepared. A hard-fought Test series is on the cards.

## Natarajan owes it to his teammates

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JAN. 24

It was a dream international debut for T. Natarajan who had travelled to Australia only as a net bowler. He grabbed his opportunities in all three formats and emerged as one of the unlikely heroes of India's historic triumph. Natarajan, who is enjoying a new found cult status in Tamil Nadu, credited Team India's support staff, skipper Virat Kohli and stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane for backing him.

"They supported and motivated me a lot. I was able to perform well only because of their backing. I enjoyed playing under the captaincy of Kohli as well as Rahane. They had a lot of positive things to say and encouraged me a lot," said the 29-year-old who took three wickets on debut at the Gabba.

"I didn't expect to get an opportunity in the ODIs, but I was keen to do my job. When I was told that I would be playing, I could feel the pressure. But, I wanted to make use of the opportunity," he added.

Natarajan feels being a left-arm pacer and the new angle he brings in add to his advantage. "The main reason for me playing all the formats has to go towards my training and all my coaches. They would have known about my



T. Natarajan

strength in the formats so they gave me a chance to play in all formats. I am a left-arm so that works as an advantage for me," said Natarajan.

Natarajan who runs a cricket academy for players in his village said he would strive hard to help more people achieve their dreams. "I will try to support the Salem Cricket Association as much as I can. It is because of people's support that I am here. People know how I came here, if one does hard work he can achieve anything," he added.

## Sundar now wants to open batting in Tests

**New Delhi, Jan. 24:** Coach Ravi Shastri's dressing room stories of grit and determination work as a tonic for young Washington Sundar, who is ready for any challenge even if it means opening the batting for India in Test matches.

The 21-year-old Washington was a specialist top-order batsman during his India U-19 days but then honed his off-spin to such an extent that he is now an automatic choice in India's T20 team.

One of the heroes of India's epic triumph in Brisbane, which gave them the four-match Test series against Australia, Washington spoke about the head coach's influence on him.

"I think it will be a blessing for me if I ever get an opportunity to open the batting for India in Tests. I think I will accept the challenge just like our coach Ravi sir did during his

playing days," Washington said during an interaction from his Chennai residence.

He scored 62 in the first innings at Gabba to keep India in the match and then a quick 22, including a hooked six off Pat Cummins, to play a part in the finishing act, apart from a match-haul of four wickets.

"Ravi sir tells us very inspiring stories from his playing days. Like how he made his debut as a specialist spinner, got four wickets and batted at number 10 against New Zealand on debut.

"And how from there, he became a Test opener and played all those great fast bowlers. I would love to open batting in Tests like him," said Washington, who enjoys a decent first-class batting average of 32 plus, which can only improve from hereon as he gets to play more games for India. — *PTI*



Action from the final day of the 23rd JK Tyre FMSCI National Racing Championship in Coimbatore on Sunday.

## Sandeep, Amir clinch top spots in JK Racing

**Coimbatore, Jan. 24:** Chennai's Sandeep Kumar and Amir Sayed from Kottayam emerged champions in the Formula LGB 4 and Novice Cup category respectively in the 23rd JK Tyre-FMSCI National Racing Championship here on Sunday.

At the Kari Motor Speedway, the final day provided plenty of sparks as the Formula LGB 4 championship went down to the wire till the last lap of the last race.

It was heartbreak for Ashwin Datta, who led overnight in the Formula LGB 4 category with 63 points.

Sandeep's experience and ice cool nerves stood him in good stead as he finished fifth in the last race. He totalled 66 points to seal the Formula LGB 4 championship.

Ashwin finished with 63 points, as per provisional standings. Vishnu Prasad was third with 45 points. Teen sensation Amir

Sayed crowned himself in glory in the Novice Cup category.

**RESULTS**  
**Formula LGB 4**  
**Race 4 (14 laps):** 1. Mohamed Ryan (MSport) 20:21.929, 2. Vishnu Prasad (MSport) 20:23.545, 3. Arya Singh (Dark Don Racing) 20:25.170.  
**Race 5 (15 laps):** 1. Diljith TS (Dark Don Racing) 23:58.426, 2. Sandeep Kumar A. (Dark Don Racing) 23:58.890, 3. Sarosh Hataria (Ahura Racing) 23:59.793.  
**Race 6 (15 laps):** 1. Vishnu Prasad (MSport) 21:01.907, 2. Mohamed Ryan (MSport) 21:07.490, 3. Sarish Hataria (Ahura Racing) 21:14.292.  
**JK Tyre Novice Cup**  
**Race 5 (10 laps):** 1. Amir Sayed (MSport) 14:17.157, 2. Chetan Surineni (Momentum Motorsports) 14:31.672, 3. Aman Chaudhary (DTS Racing) 14:32.509.  
**Race 6 (10 laps):** 1. Amir Sayed (MSport) 16:34.084, 2. Chetan Surineni (Momentum Motorsports) 16:56.452, 3. Neym Rizvi (MSport) 17:01.933.

**OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS**  
**LGB Formula 4**  
**Champion:** Sandeep Kumar (Dark Don Racing) 66 points  
**First Runner-Up:** Ashwin Datta (Dark Don Racing) 63 points  
**Second Runner-Up:** Vishnu Prasad (MSport) 45 points  
**Novice Cup**  
**Champion:** Amir Sayed (MSport) 120 points  
**First Runner-Up:** Dhruvin Gajjar (DTS Racing) 49 points  
**Second Runner-Up:** Aman Chaudhary (DTS Racing) 46 points

## ROOT HELPS ENG CLOSE IN ON LANKA

**Galle (Sri Lanka), Jan. 24:** Skipper Joe Root was run out shy of a second successive double century Sunday as England scored 339 for nine in reply to Sri Lanka's 381 on Day Three of the second Test in Galle.

Root was out to a direct throw from Oshada Fernando on 186 in the final over of the day as stumps were called with England trailing by 42 runs.

Sri Lanka's Lasith Embuldeniya claimed seven wickets and broke a

key seventh-wicket stand of 81 between Root and Dom Bess, who fell to the left-arm spinner for 32.

Root, who completed his 19th Test ton in 99 matches before lunch, kept pushing in the marathon knock of 309 balls.

The captain, who hit a match-winning 228 in his team's opening win, was helped along by wicket-keeper-batsman Jos Buttler in a partnership of 97 runs.

Embuldeniya, who registered his third five-wicket haul, struck twice early in

the day with his left-arm spin, including the key wicket of Jonny Bairstow, to break a 111-run third-wicket stand with Root.

Bairstow, who added just four more to his overnight 24, was given not out by the umpire but Sri Lanka successfully reviewed the call as replays suggested the ball had grazed the bat before hitting the pad and being caught second slip.

**Brief scores: Sri Lanka 381 vs England 339/9** (Root 186, Buttler 55, Embuldeniya 7/132).

## Saints dump Gunners out, Blues cruise

**London, Jan. 24:** Manchester City were given a huge FA Cup scare by fourth-tier Cheltenham before a late blitz gave them a 3-1 win on Saturday after Southampton dumped holders Arsenal out of the competition.

Six-time winners City were minutes away from exiting at the fourth-round stage before goals from Phil Foden, Gabriel Jesus and Ferran Torres broke the hearts of the brave League Two side.

City boss Pep Guardiola made 10 changes for the trip to the southwest of England but his side was still packed with internationals.

The home team — 72 places below City in the football pyramid — produced a stirring defensive

display but also sporadically threatened at the other end of the pitch.

Jesus hit the post shortly after the restart as City upped the tempo following a goalless first half but it was the home team who broke the deadlock.

The visitors failed to deal with the outstanding Ben Tozer's long throw and Alfie May fired in from close range just before the hour mark.

Guardiola threw on Ilkay Gundogan and Joao Cancelo in a desperate bid to find a way back into the game and was rewarded in the 81st minute when Foden volleyed in Cancelo's cross.

Three minutes later Jesus made amends for his earlier miss and Torres made it 3-1 with the final kick of the game,

FA CUP   4TH RD	
THE RESULTS	
Chelsea (Abraham 11, 17, 74)	3
Luton (Clark 30)	1
Brighton (Bissouma 27, Alzate 58)	2
Blackpool (Madine 45)	1
Cheltenham (May 59)	1
Manchester City (Foden 81, Jesus 84, Torres 90+4)	3
Southampton (Gabriel 24-og)	1
Arsenal	0
West Ham (Fornals 2, Yarmolenko 32, Butler 54-og, Afolayan 78)	4
Doncaster	0