

IN BRIEF

AIR 'VERY POOR' IN GHAZIABAD, NOIDA, FARIDABAD

Noida, Jan. 18: The air quality was recorded in the "very poor" category in Ghaziabad, Noida, Greater Noida and Faridabad while it was "poor" in Gurgaon on Monday, according to data issued by a government agency. Levels of PM2.5 and PM10 pollutants also remained high in the air of the five cities neighbouring Delhi, according to the air quality index (AQI) maintained by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). According to the CPCB, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'. The average 24-hour AQI at 4 pm was 381 in Ghaziabad, 360 in Greater Noida, 363 in Noida, 332 in Faridabad and 292 in Gurgaon, according to the CPCB's Sameer app. On Sunday, the AQI was 368 in Ghaziabad, 384 in Greater Noida, 383 in Noida, 297 in Faridabad and 330 in Gurgaon. According to the CPCB, an AQI in the 'poor' category can lead to breathing discomfort for most people on prolonged exposure while a 'very poor' AQI may cause respiratory illness on prolonged exposure. The AQI for each city is based on the average value of all air quality monitoring stations there. Ghaziabad and Gurgaon have three such stations and Noida, Greater Noida and Faridabad have two stations each, according to the app. — PTI

TWO ARRESTED FOR FORGING STOLEN CHEQUES

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 18

Two men were arrested in connection with a case of bank fraud in Central Delhi's Karol Bagh, the police said on Monday. Accused Anurag (22) and his accomplice Anil Kumar (29) used to steal cheques from different banks and forge names and account number on them in order to get money credited into their own account illegally, it said. The police said that on January 16, a complaint was received from a bank in Karol Bagh stating that a person named Anurag deposited three different cheques for clearing. After the said amount was credited into his account in Moradabad, the bank received a complaint from one of its customers regarding a stolen cheque and the encashment of the same, it said. After scrutiny, the bank found that all the three cheques were issued in the names of different parties. The accused had forged the name on these cheques and had withdrawn the amount in the same way, duping the bank along with its customers, a senior police officer said. Following a raid, Anurag was nabbed from his house in Moradabad district of Uttar Pradesh, he said. Subsequently, his accomplice Anil Kumar was also nabbed, he added.

2 YOUTH HELD FOR KILLING RICKSHAW PULLER IN E. DELHI

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 18

Two men were arrested on Monday for allegedly killing a 55-year-old rickshaw puller to steal his vehicle and ₹60 from his wallet, the police said. The accused have been identified as Dilip Haldar (20), a resident of Extension Ashok Nagar, and Chhotan Singh (24), a resident of New Ashok Nagar, they said. On Friday, police received information regarding an unidentified body of a man in the bushes near Dashmesh Public School, Vashundhra Enclave. The throat of the man was slit by a sharp weapon and head of dead body was hit by stone, a senior police officer said. On Saturday, the deceased was identified as Jiban Mazumdar, who was a rickshaw puller. His rickshaw was also missing, the officer said. "During investigation, police analysed the CCTV footage and located the robbed rickshaw. Later, police apprehended Singh. On his instance, Haldar was also nabbed," DCP (east) Deepak Yadav said.

Classes 10, 12 reopen amid smiles, caution

Mandawali school decorates premises with balloons, teachers shower flower petals on student

New Delhi, Jan. 18: Balloons, flowers, sanitisers and smiling faces welcomed Class 10 and 12 students in schools in the national capital on Monday as they returned to campuses after over 10 months. The students who were elated to be able to attend the first offline class of the academic session wore masks and queued up outside schools maintaining social distance.

Schools reopened on Monday after over 10 months of being closed in view of coronavirus pandemic. Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said it was an emotional moment to see children back in school.

"Seeing kids back in school after a long time, is an emotional moment for me. Schools have reopened today after leaving behind a very difficult time. We are hopeful that soon, everything will be normal and all students will be able to come to schools and

meet their teachers and friends," he tweeted.

Pragati Diwan, an excited Class 12 student said, "it was optional to come but I was sure I have to. It is the last year of my school life and I haven't come to school even one day," said Pragati Diwan, an excited Class 12 student.

For another student at Geeta Bal Bharti School, the feeling was similar to that of attending first day at school.

"It does not feel like I am coming to school after ten months, it feels like I have come to school for the first time. I am looking forward to the preparations for board exams here," she said.

Prince, a student at Delhi government school, said, "The online classes were a great help for theoretical subjects but the practical subjects were a challenge. I am glad to be back at school so the practical concepts will be easily brushed up before the board exams".



A teacher at Rajkiya Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya waits for students after schools reopened for the students of Class 10 and 12 in New Delhi on Monday.

— PTI

The school put up posters of "welcome back" in corridors where teachers stood with sanitisers and checked the temperature of each student before letting them in.

Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya in Mandawali decorated the premises with balloons and the teachers showered flower petals on students, welcoming them.

Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia also visited a school in Chirag Enclave on Monday to assess the readiness of schools to welcome Class 10 and 12 students.

"Felt really good to meet children in schools after a long time. They are still adjusting to being back in school with safety norms but are extremely happy to meet their friends. The teachers are also overjoyed to meet students, saying it has filled an empty space in their life," Mr Sisodia said.

Calling students in different slots, shorter school hours, frequent sanitisation and staggered entry and exit are among the plans of various schools in the national capital as they gear to welcome Class 10 and 12 students on Monday for the first time in the academic session.

The schools are reopening in Delhi after 10 months, after being shut last year to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, and they have been instructed by the Directorate of Education (DoE) to follow all COVID-19 guidelines when classroom studies resume.

— PTI

VACCINATION DRIVE Nearly 3,600 healthcare workers received Covid-19 shots

Further dip in turnout, only 8 get jabs at AIIMS

New Delhi, Jan. 18: Nearly 3,600 healthcare workers received the Covid-19 vaccine shots in Delhi on Monday, a further dip in the figures compared to that on opening day of the immunisation drive, with sources saying just eight medical staff got the jabs at AIIMS.

Under the nationwide mega vaccination drive launched on Saturday, a total of 4,319 (53 per cent) health workers against a target of 8,117 were administered the vaccines at 81 centres across the city.

The sharp fall comes after one severe and 50 minor cases were reported, following the vaccination drive on Saturday.

Various reasons are being attributed to the low turnout, including some technical issues and fears related to adverse events.

However, the government has maintained that no case of serious/severe AEFI (adverse events following immunisation) is attributable to vaccination till date.

"On day two, 3,598 people have been administered corona vaccine. AEFI was reported in 26 persons," a senior official of Delhi health department said.

One "severe" and 51 "minor" cases of AEFI (adverse events following immunisation) were reported among health workers who were admin-



A medic administers the vaccine to a frontline worker at Max Hospital, Patparganj, in New Delhi. — ASIAN AGE

istered the coronavirus vaccine in Delhi on Saturday, according to official figures.

An All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) security guard had developed an allergic reaction

after receiving the vaccine. He was kept under observation of doctors, an official had said on Saturday.

According to the Union health ministry, 3,111 vaccinations were done in Delhi on Monday till 5.00 pm.

The numbers reported on day two were much lower, a dip of nearly 28 per cent from the corresponding figures on Saturday.

According to sources, eight vaccinations were done at AIIMS, 20 in Safdarjung Hospital and 69 healthcare workers were vaccinated at Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital.

Around 45 beneficiaries had turned up at the Safdarjung Hospital but then many of them had comorbidities or are on medication which are contraindicative for vaccination and that is why only 20 could be vaccinated.

Messages were sent to 100 healthcare workers, a source said.

As far as eight vaccinations at AIIMS are concerned, an official source said, it was related to multiple factors, including apprehensions of adverse events and late notifications through the Co-WIN app, due to which many people got the information late and were not able to come.

— PTI

Former NSEL CEO held for creating false stocks

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JAN. 18

The Delhi police has arrested the former CEO of National Spot Exchange Ltd for allegedly duping investors by assuring fixed returns on fictitious trading, officials said on Monday.

The accused has been identified as Anjani Sinha. He was arrested on Sunday from Mumbai, they said.

The police said the complainants alleged that the brokerage firm, M/s Integrated Commodity Trades Pvt. Ltd at Barakhamba Road in Delhi, through its directors, has cheated them by inducement and misrepresentation regarding commodity trading on the platform of National Spot Exchange Ltd (NSEL).

The complainants were induced by the directors to invest in the commodity market, which is undertaken by them as trading and clearing member of NSEL, presenting it to be completely safe and as being regulated by the government authorities, the police said.

Being the member of the exchange, the alleged broker was to ensure that at the time of issuing the delivery order, the seller of the commodity satisfies his clearing member that he owns and holds adequate stocks of the required commodity, it said.

The trading cum clearing member has to ensure that the commodities purchased by the clients or investors through contracts were delivered to the NSEL certified warehouses. The warehouse receipts were to be delivered by the member to its clients at the time of the settlement of the contracts, the police said.

Delhi chief hits out at Cong leader Sibal

New Delhi, Jan. 18: Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar on Monday attacked senior party leader and former Chandni Chowk MP Kapil Sibal, saying he should work towards strengthening the organisation instead of "needlessly" issuing statements.

Mr Kumar's attack was prompted by Mr Sibal's interview in a newspaper which quoted him as saying that there was no "clarity" over internal polls and there was "disenchantment" in the party.

"What did he do for the party organisation in the past 10 months? How many issues did he raise? How many times did the honourable ex-MP visit Chandni Chowk? Still, he questions the organisation. Is this how the organisation will become strong," Mr Kumar said in a series of tweets.

He claimed that many party workers, commoners and elected representatives from Chandni



Anil Kumar

people at the mercy of God after losing elections.

Mr Sibal was elected from Chandni Chowk Lok Sabha seat in 2004 and 2009 polls. He lost to BJP's Harsh Vardhan in the 2014 general election.

Mr Kumar alleged that Sibal was merely issuing statements that are not going to strengthen the party organisation.

"Sibal has been continuously issuing statements. He has been MP from Chandni Chowk, what did he do to strengthen the Congress there? Instead of needlessly issuing statements, he should

work to strengthen the party organisation," Mr Kumar said in another tweet. —PTI

Leaders feel Gupta failed to end confusion in party Festive events brings out fissures in BJP

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, JAN. 18

Confusion in the state BJP leadership over organising events and programmes has reportedly divided the party cadre in the national capital. The party organised two Makar Sankranti events — one was by its Poorvanchal Morcha and the other by state unit general secretary Dinesh Pratap Singh — on January 14 but no attention was paid to organise any Pongal function to please the South Indians in the city.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta had attended both the Makar Sankranti programmes. According to a Delhi BJP insider, the Poorvanchal Morcha event was technically the official programme of the party as it was held at the state unit headquarters while Mr Singh's event was a personal one.

A senior party leader told this newspaper that Mr Gupta not only failed to stop the organisation of the parallel events, but



▶ A SENIOR party leader told this newspaper that Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta not only failed to stop the organisation of the parallel events, but also failed to direct the state unit to organise an event to celebrate Pongal.

also failed to direct the state unit to organise an event to celebrate Pongal. He mentioned that Mr Gupta's attending the Makar Sankranti events also created a divide between the Poorvanchal leadership of the party.

"The state leadership led by Mr Gupta did not ask Mr Singh or Poorvanchal Morcha president Kaushal Mishra to end this show of one up man ship and organised a grand event as both the leaders represent the same Poorvanchal community. Instead of bringing them together, the state leadership encouraged the divide in Poorvanchal leadership of the state organisation," he added. During former Delhi BJP president

Manoj Tiwari's tenure, the only programme was organised by the Delhi BJP with the participation of Poorvanchal Morcha and its then president Manish Singh.

Questions were raised by leaders in the party why it ignored nearly 20 lakh South Indian voters when the Arvind Kejriwal government wooed them by creating a Tamil Academy.

"Till last year, events were organised to celebrate Pongal by the party's South Indian cell headed by Jai Kumar Anna and all of a sudden it was stopped this year. On Sunday, in his personal capacity, Mr Tiwari organised a function to celebrate Pongal, which was attended by a large num-

ber of people. "Despite invitation, Mr Gupta and state general secretary (organisation) Siddharthan did not attend the function organised by Mr Tiwari," said a senior party functionary.

On the organisation of two Makar Sankranti events, sources also said that Dinesh Pratap Singh forced party leaders and office bearers to join his programme and give a miss to Poorvanchal Morcha's event at the party office. A senior party leader pointed out that Mr Singh's holding a parallel event against an event at the state headquarters was an act of gross indiscipline.

"Mr Singh, being a state unit general secretary, should have backed the Poorvanchal Morcha function at the state office, but he organised a separate event at the same time. Leadership must act against this gross indiscipline of organising an event parallel to a party function," he said.



A woman rests on a footpath as members of President's Bodyguard practice during the rehearsals for Republic Day Parade 2021 on Rajpath in New Delhi.

— PTI

'Calls related to street crimes down by 30%'

New Delhi, Jan. 18: The number of calls related to robbery, snatching and motor vehicle theft received by the Delhi Police Control Room has declined by nearly 30 per cent in the first fortnight of 2021 as compared to the corresponding period last year, a senior officer said on Monday.

The force received 2,940 calls related to robbery (523), snatching (954) and motor vehicle theft (1,463) between January 1 and 15. It is a sharp decline of 29.72 per cent from the corresponding period last year, Delhi commissioner of police (New Delhi) Eish Singhal said.

Individually, cases of robbery have gone down by 13.42 per cent during the period, snatching by

▶ INDIVIDUALLY, cases of robbery have gone down by 13.42 per cent during the period, snatching by 41.70 per cent

41.70 per cent and motor vehicle theft by 24.78 per cent.

Between January 1 and 15 in 2020, the Delhi Police received a total of 4,170 calls related to robbery (604), snatching (1,621) and motor vehicle theft (1,945).

Officials said that since the beginning of 2021, the force is making efforts, under close supervision of Delhi police commissioner S.N. Shrivastava, to curb street crimes such as robbery, snatching and motor vehicle theft. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Digvijay donates ₹1,11,111 for temple

Bhopal: Senior Congress leader and Rajya Sabha member Digvijay Singh on Monday donated ₹1,11,111 for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya through Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Singh sent a letter to the Prime Minister, with the cheque to Ram Janmabhomi Teertha Khetra Trust, appealing him to ensure that inflammatory speeches were not made by the volunteers during collection of funds for construction of Ram temple from the people. The former chief minister said he was sending the cheque through the Prime Minister for deposition at the proper place since he was not aware of the right address to send the cheque. He also demanded for public audit of the funds raised earlier by Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) for construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

CBI grills Bengal IPS officer

Kolkata: West Bengal IPS officer Tathagata Basu faced marathon grilling by the Central Bureau of Investigation for around six hours on Monday after he appeared at its anti-corruption branch office in Kolkata, responding to the summons in the high-profile coal smuggling case. Though Mr Basu is posted as the deputy commissioner of police at the Chandannagar Police Commissionerate at present, the summons were related to his previous tenure as the superintendent of police of Hooghly. According to sources, he was questioned by the CBI sleuths about his knowledge about the illegal trade. His statement was recorded before he was allowed to go. Mr Basu's appearance before the CBI however in sharp contrast to the move of two more IPS officers: Kallol Ganai, the inspector general (Intelligence branch) of the state police and DC of the Asansol Durgapur Police Commissionerate: Angshuman Saha who have prayed for relief from appearance.

ODISHA CONG CHIEF ATTACKED, BJP BLAMED

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 18

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee chief Niranjan Patnaik on Monday said he was attacked by some miscreants with BJP affiliations attacked his vehicle on Sunday night at Keonjhar. "The attack on me, my security personnel late on Sunday night was a handiwork of the BJP. Members of the saffron party's youth wing carried out the attack. This is a clear case of political vendetta and desperation of Odisha BJP," Patnaik alleged. He said that the miscreants thrashed his driver and personal security officer and damaged his car. "I was shocked to know that the miscreants were members of BJP's state youth wing. This is a clear case of political vendetta and desperation of Odisha state BJP. Congress is raising relevant issues in the state and speaking out against the policies of BJP, which is desperately trying to get a foothold in Odisha. Congress is the biggest hurdle for them," he tweeted. Condemning the attack, he BJP state chief Samir Mohanty and Odisha in-charge D. Purandeswari as to why the party is behaving like "a coward".

Tandav team apologises after 2 FIRs in UP

Security stepped up outside offices of Saif Ali Khan, Amazon Prime in Mumbai



BJP workers stage a protest against Amazon Prime over its web series Tandav, at Bandra in Mumbai on Monday.

New Delhi/Lucknow, Jan. 18: Faced with an FIR, the fear of arrest and loud calls for a boycott for its alleged depiction of Hindu deities, the cast and crew of Amazon Prime Video's starry political saga *Tandav* on Monday issued an unconditional apology if their fictional show had unintentionally hurt sentiments.

A day after the information and broadcasting ministry sought an explanation from Amazon Prime Video and BJP MP Manoj Kotak wrote to minister Prakash Javadekar, trouble escalated for the Ali Abbas Zafar directed thriller with an FIR against its makers in Lucknow and several politicians and others adding their voice to the 'ban Tandav' chorus.

The Uttar Pradesh police has booked the makers of web series, actors Saif Khan and Zeeshan Ayyub and Amazon India's content head over the alleged derogatory depiction of Hindu gods, with an aide of the chief minister

warning them of serious legal repercussions.

An FIR was lodged at Hazratganj police station against the Amazon's India head of original content, Aparna Purohit, series director Ali Abbas, producer Himanshu Krishna Mehra, writer

Gaurav Solanki, and an unknown person on Sunday night.

Another FIR was lodged up outside the offices of its star Saif Ali Khan and actors Saif Ali Khan and Zeeshan Ayyub on a complaint by BJP MLA Vikram Veer Singh from Katra constituency

at Katra police station, superintendent of police S Anand said.

As security was stepped up outside the offices of its star Saif Ali Khan and actors Saif Ali Khan and Zeeshan Ayyub on a complaint by BJP MLA Vikram Veer Singh from Katra constituency

chief minister Yogi Adityanath's media advisor Shalabhmani Tripathi said the makers will have to "pay a price for hurting religious sentiments" by depicting Hindu gods in an objectionable manner.

The UP police has left for Mumbai, that too in a car. There are strong sections in the FIR. Remain prepared, (you) will have to pay a price for hurting religious sentiments," Tripathi said in his tweet in which he tagged director Zafar, producer Himanshu Krishna Mehra, writer Gaurav Solanki and actors Saif Ali Khan and Zeeshan Ayyub.

At the end of a tense day that saw debate escalate around the show, which balances intrigue in Delhi's corridors of power and touches on current issues such as student unrest and farmer protests, the cast and crew of *Tandav*, which literally translates to 'dance of destruction', issued a statement in a bid to defuse the situation.

Shivraj demands ban on Web series

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOVAL, JAN. 18

Amid protests by Hindu bodies against Saif Ali Khan-starrer *Tandav* released by OTT giant Amazon Prime, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan demanded a ban on the Web series for hurting sentiments of Hindus.

Chouhan met Union information and broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar in New Delhi to place his demand, saying that the web series sought to denigrate Hindu deities.

Meanwhile, state medical education minister Viswas Sarang wrote a letter to Javadekar demanding to frame laws for censorship of films released on OTT platform to deny misuse of the platform by 'vested interests'.

MAHA BJP MLA CALLS FOR BOYCOTT

Mumbai: Maharashtra BJP MLA Ram Kadam on Monday urged people to boycott new web series *Tandav* for allegedly mocking Hindu deities.

In a tweet, Kadam said, "Seems like they are proud of or don't regret their demeaning act of mocking or targeting our Hindu Gods." I urge all Hindus to boycott Amazon's products, be it their shopping site or content platform, he said.

Hindu outfits along with BJP staged protests in various parts of the state demanding a ban on *Tandav*. They were seen damaging hoardings and billboards advertising the Web series in Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur and Gwalior.

580 adverse events reported in 3 days; 1.48L get vaccine on Day 3

2 people were reported dead; govts deny deaths connected to jabs

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JAN. 18

As India intensified its vaccination drive against Covid-19, 580 persons were found to have Adverse Effect Following Immunisation (AEFI) with seven needing hospitalisation in the last three days. Two people were reported to be dead following the Covid-19 shots — a 52-year-old ward boy working in a Moradabad (UP) hospital, and a 43-year-old man in Bellary (Karnataka). However, both central and state governments denied that the death in Moradabad had any connection to the vaccination while the post-mortem of the second person is yet to be conducted.

Since Saturday, a little over 3.81 lakh health, sanitation and frontline workers have been vaccinated out of which over 1.48 lakh were immunised on Monday.

"Post-mortem by a board of three doctors revealed death due to cardiopulmonary disease (pockets of pus in lungs, enlarged heart) and is not related to vaccination," Union health ministry official said about the death of the 52-year-old ward boy Mahipal Singh. However, the family of Mahipal Singh man alleged that his condition deteriorated after the jab. Mahipal Singh was given a vaccine shot on Saturday. His family said he had minor pneumonia, cold, cough and fever before the vaccine, but his condition deteriorated after the jab and he was breathless. He died the next day.

However, the Uttar Pradesh government said the man died due to septicemic shock and cardiac arrest and the death was not related to the Covid-19 vaccination.



Relatives mourn the death of a family member, Mahipal Singh, at their residence in Moradabad district on Monday.

Assam Cong questions efficiency of Covaxin, tells govt to instil confidence

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, JAN. 18

Amidst the report of a few temporary side effects after the vaccination and poor turn out of recipients, the Assam unit of the Congress party has questioned the efficacy of Covaxin and asked the government to instil confidence among people before inoculating them.

The reaction of the

Opposition came after two medical colleges in the state witnessed a poor 40 per cent turnout on the first day and the officials feel that the use of the "contentious" Covaxin is one of the reasons for many health workers not turning up.

In Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College and Hospital in lower Assam's Barpeta, only 27 of the 100 listed beneficiaries came for vaccination,

while at Tezpur Medical College and Hospital, only 52 of the 100 listed beneficiaries turned up.

Leader of Opposition in the Assam Assembly, Debabrata Saikia told reporters that the doctors in Delhi and Tamil Nadu are reluctant to take the vaccines as Covaxin has been given the nod for political gains as elections for the five states are due in

spring.

"The vaccine rollout has been done hurriedly without complete trial. The Centre has done it to reap benefit in polls. It is sad that the vaccination has become a political game as the inoculation drive kicked off without efficacy data and other considerations. Human life can't be compromised in pursuit of private profit and political gains," said Saikia.

He added that some employees were suffering from fever after taking the shots. "They were facing general problems but not like Mahipal," he said.

He added that some employees were suffering from fever after taking the shots. "They were facing general problems but not like Mahipal," he said.

● **A MAJOR** clash between the two sides was averted after a huge police contingent was rushed to the spot to control the incensed activists, the police said

Kolkata, Jan. 19: A little over a month after BJP national president J.P. Nadda's convoy came under attack in Bengal, a roadshow by the party was on Monday pelted with stones by miscreants, carrying TMC flags, near Rashbehari Avenue-Charu Market area, triggering tension in south Kolkata. The TMC, however, denied any involvement and accused the BJP of trying to vitiate the atmosphere.

The roadshow, which commenced at Tollygunge tram depot, was set to culminate at Rashbehari Avenue — often referred to as the backyard of chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

According to a police officer, as the rally, led by state BJP chief Dilip Ghosh and senior leader Suwendu Adhikari, proceeded toward Charu Market, unidentified miscreants threw bricks and stones at the entourage, injuring some of the saffron party activists.

Infuriated over the attack, BJP workers chased the miscreants, who by then had fled to nearby bylanes, the officer said. The saffron camp activists then ransacked a few motorcycles and shops in the vicinity.

A major clash between the two sides was averted after a huge police contingent was rushed to the spot to control the incensed

activists, the officer stated. The state BJP unit called the incident a "blatant attack on democracy".

"Today's attack has once again proved that democracy has no place in West Bengal. Earlier, our party president (JP Nadda) was attacked, today our roadshow was attacked. This only shows that the TMC has lost the plot ahead of the assembly polls," BJP state chief Dilip Ghosh said.

Taking to Twitter, the saffron party said, "Incorrigible TMC goons showing their true colours by unleashing violence during BJP's South Kolkata roadshow! No wonder they are unnerved by the people's support for BJP! This is a direct and violent attack on democracy!"

State minister Aroop Biswas also visited the troubled area, shortly after the incident, to take stock of the situation. Mr Biswas claimed it was the BJP activists who unleashed violence, following Mamata Banerjee's announcement that she would contest polls from Nandigram.

TRP | SCAM WhatsApp conversation are damning, says Cong

Opp. seek JPC probe into Arnab's chats

Mumbai/ New Delhi, Jan. 18: Opposition parties have sought answers from the government over the reported WhatsApp chats between Republic TV editor in chief Arnab Goswami and Partho Dasgupta, the former CEO of the Broadcast Audience Research Council (Barc), alleging that those showed a "serious breach of national security".

They demanded an investigation, including by a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), into the contents of the chats, the transcripts of which are part of the Mumbai police's supplementary chargesheet

in the TV rating point (TRP) manipulation case.

"The chargesheet and WhatsApp (conversation) are damning," AICC spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said at a press briefing on Sunday. "There are far, far bigger issues of financial fraud and breach of national security, and of people committing acts inimical to the security of the country" involved in it, he said.

Mr Surjewala said top leadership of the Congress was examining the 1,000-plus pages of the chargesheet, and would hold a press conference within a day or two to give a

comprehensive response on the issue. Congress leaders are also in touch with those in other like-minded opposition parties.

The Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) also asked the government to set up the JPC to probe the purported chats.

Referring to the purported chats widely reported in media which mentioned that Goswami was privy to the Balakot air strikes, NCP chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said, "It is extremely shocking and disturbing to know how issues related to national security have been used to

gain TRPs." Mr Tapase said he will meet Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Tuesday on the issue and seek clarification from Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the 'chatgate'.

"The question also arises how Arnab was privy to such sensitive information. The Ministry of Home Affairs has to identify the source and immediately take action," he said.

Goswami has been at the forefront in maligning the image of the Mumbai police and also the Maha Vikas Aghadi government in the state, Tapase claimed.

— Agencies

NORTHERN RAILWAY

First Corrigendum

Sub.: 1st corrigendum against Tender Notice No. 178-Sig/CW/32/9/PT-II Dated: 15.01.2021 to be opened on 10.02.2021 invited by Dy. CSTE/CW/NDLS for and on behalf of president of India for the work of "S&T work for alteration of PI at Kethua and Madhopur Punjab stations and associated telecom work at adjoining stations in c/w doubling across Ravi Bridge section over Firozpur Division of Northern Railway" May now be read with following correction.

1. Earnest money may be read as NIL instead of Rs. 1,32,700/- Bid security deposit in lieu of Earnest money need to be submitted. Detailed tender schedule may be checked on IREPS Portal. No.: 178-Sig/CW/32/9/PT-II Dated: 15.01.2021 137/2021 Serving Customers with a Smile

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that the timings of following Special Train will be revised as under :-

Train No. & Name	Station	Existing Timings	Revised Time	Date (from originating station)
02618 Hazrat Nizamuddin - Ernakulam Jn. Special Express	Kalyan Jn.	06:12/06:15	05:12/05:15	from 19.01.2021 (Tuesday)
	Panvel	07:05/07:10	06:35/06:40	

Note :- The time-table of the other stations of the above special train will hold good.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc. may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

For any kind information such as detailed Time-Table and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

140/21
Security Helpline No. 182
Integrated Helpline No. 139

Please join us on

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Visit us at: www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

SHORT TAKES

Girl, 13, 'sold' twice for marriage; 5 held

Kota, Rajasthan: A 13 year-old-girl from Bihar was allegedly "sold" twice for marriage within 17 days, following which police has arrested five people on charges of human trafficking, including her mother. The arrested also include the two men who allegedly paid ₹1 lakh and ₹1.21 lakh, while three others are yet to be nabbed. The girl was found abandoned on the roadside in Chipabarode police station area last Tuesday and was produced before Child Welfare Committee, assistant superintendent of police, Baran, Vijay Swarnkar said. She alleged that she was forcibly "married" to Banwari (27) of Chipabarode area "for ₹1 lakh" on December 7 last year. When she refused to live with him, her mother and maternal aunt and uncle "married" her to Mukesh of the same area for ₹1.21 lakh on December 24. — *PTI*

5 tourists drown as boat capsizes in Guj

Navsari: Three children and two adults have drowned after their boat capsized in a lake in Gujarat's Navsari district when a large number of tourists tried to get on to the vessel while some others were disembarking, police said on Monday. Nearly 15 others were injured in the melee caused by tourists getting in and out of the boat in a rush on Sunday evening, and official from Chikhli police station said. The incident took place in a lake at Soldhara Eco Point, a tourist spot in Chikhli taluka of Navsari, he said. "Due to the rush of tourists, the boat capsized when people tried to get on to it at the same time when others were disembarking," he said. The deceased included a 30-year-old woman, her two children aged 1.5 and 10 years, another six-year-old child and a 28-year-old man, he said. — *PTI*

Student held for vulgar post on PM

Goa, UP: A law student of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University has been arrested for allegedly putting up a vulgar post against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on social media, the police said. The student was arrested on Sunday after which the university authorities also suspended him from the institution. As per the FIR lodged by the police itself taking cognisance of the post, LLB first year student Arun Yadav, a resident of Panditpura village in Chauri Chaura area, posted a vulgar post on social media and also wrote an objectionable remark a few days ago that was deleted later. — *PTI*

TEMPLE FUND: 3 HURT DURING CLASH IN KUTCH

Gandhidham, Gujarat: Three persons have been injured in a clash between members of two communities in Gujarat's Kutch district during a rally for collection of funds for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya. After the incident took place on Sunday evening, the body of a man was found about 200 metres from the clash site in Kidana village, and the police are trying to ascertain if he was killed as part of that violence, Kutch (east) SP Mayur Patil said. Two groups clashed and started throwing stones at each other in the village on Sunday evening when a procession was being taken out for the collection of funds for the construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, an official from Gandhidham (B-division) police station said. Some vehicles were also set afire by rioters, he said. The police lobbed teargas shells to bring the situation under control, he said. Three persons were injured in the incident and were admitted in a hospital. A man was killed with sharp weapons after a group attacked an autorickshaw on the village outskirts, and the police are trying to ascertain if he was killed as part of the clash, Mr Patil said. The victim, hailing from Jharkhand, was returning from work when a group of unidentified persons carrying sticks attacked the vehicle, he said. — *PTI*

PM lays foundation of Guj Metro projects Work underway on Metro network in 27 cities: Modi

Ahmedabad, Jan. 18: Work is in progress on over 1,000-km-long Metro rail network in 27 cities in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday.

He was speaking after performing the ground breaking ceremony of the Ahmedabad Metro Rail Project Phase-II and Surat Metro Rail Project via video conferencing.

"There was a time when there was no modern thinking and policy on Metro in our country. The result was that there was a different (type of) Metro in each city," he said.

There was no uniformity then on the Metro trains which started in different cities. There was no integration of Metro with other modes of transport back then," he said.

Now, an integrated approach has been brought in so that various modes of transport, such bus and trains, complement each other rather than running independently, he added. Both the Metro projects in Gujarat would come up at an estimated cost of around ₹17,000 crore, Mr Modi said.

The Metro network in Ahmedabad and Surat will further strengthen the connectivity in the two major business centres of the country, Modi said, adding the government is developing an integrated urban transport system.

The difference between the approach of his government and the previous governments is the (pace of) expansion of the Metro rail network across the



Narendra Modi

country, he said.

"Before 2014, only 225 km of Metro line became operational in 10-12 yrs. In the last six years, over 450 km of Metro network became operational," Mr Modi said.

The Ahmedabad and Surat Metro projects are expected to provide an environment friendly Mass Rapid Transit System to these cities. Mr Modi said the Metro projects are designed keeping in mind both present as well as future needs.

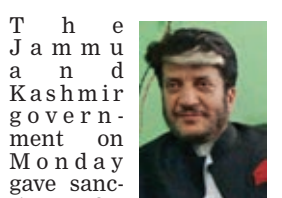
The Ahmedabad Metro Project Phase-II is 28.25 km long with two corridors. While corridor-1 is 22.8 km long and is from Motera Stadium to Mahatma Mandir; corridor-2 is 5.4 km long and is from GNLU to GIFT-City. The total completion cost of the Phase-II project is ₹5,384 crore, an official said.

Mr Modi inaugurated the 6.5 km stretch of Phase-I in March 2019.

The Surat Metro Project is 40.35 km long and comprises two corridors. While corridor-1 is 21.61 km long and is from Sarthana to Dream City. Corridor-2 is 18.74 km long and is from Bhesan to Saroli. The completion cost of the project ₹12,020 crore. — *PTI*

Shabir Shah to face trial under stringent law

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, JAN. 18



The home minister Jammu and Kashmir government on Monday gave sanction for prosecution of jailed separatist leader Shabir Ahmad Shah under stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, for allegedly instigating people against the sovereignty and integrity of India.

The case pertains to a speech made by Mr Shah outside the Valley's northern township of Sumbal about six years ago. According to the local police, the separatist leader had on March 28, 2015, after the conclusion of Friday prayers, addressed a public gathering during which he also raised slogans against the sovereignty and integrity of India.

"During the investigation, it was revealed that the accused after Friday prayers had appeared at Naidkhai and raised anti-national slogans and also instigated the youth of the area against the sovereignty and integrity of India," an order issued by J&K's home department reads. The Home department of the Union Territory is the competent authority to grant sanction in the FIRs registered under the ULA (P) Act, local news agency KNO reported.

The Home department order adds, "Now, therefore, in the exercise of powers conferred by sub-section 02 of section 45 ULA(P) Act, 1967, the government hereby accords sanction for launching prosecution against the above mentioned accused of commission of offences punishable under section 13 ULA(P) Act in the case FIR No. 52/2015 of police station Sumbal."

Mr Shah who heads J&K People's Democratic Freedom Party is currently lodged at Delhi's Tihar Jail. He was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in July 2017 in an alleged money laundering case dating back to 2005.

MSME sector vital for national growth: PM

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 18

The Prime Minister said that the micro small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector is vital for national growth and under the Aatmnirbhar Bharat campaign, many steps have been taken to help these small industries as they have been provided easy loans worth thousands of crore to tide over the difficult times.

Mr Narendra Modi made these comments while conducting the bhoomi puja ceremony for Surat and Ahmedabad Metro rail projects via video conferencing.

He emphasised that the small-scale industry gets the confidence that they have the support of good infrastructure when they compete globally.

Many steps have been taken to help these small industries as they have been provided easy loans worth thousands of crore to tide over the difficult times, he added. "Steps like the redefinition of MSME has helped in overcoming the fear of expansion, as traders were wary of losing benefits if they grew bigger than the defined limit," Mr Modi said.

Drugs case: Maha mantri's kin sent to judicial custody

SHAHAB ANSARI MUMBAI, JAN. 18

A local court in Mumbai on Monday remanded Sameer Khan, son-in-law of Maharashtra minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik, to 14-days judicial custody in connection with a drugs case.

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) had arrested Khan on January 13 and a magistrate had remanded him to NCB custody till January 18.

Upon his production before the court after completion of his police custody the NCB informed the court that they do need his further custody for interrogation following which the magistrate remanded him to judicial custody.

In an unexpected move Khan's lawyer didn't immediately move bail application. They said they would file the bail



Sameer Khan

plea in the next few days. Public prosecutor said that the NCB came to know that there were multiple transactions between Karan Sajani and him that were much more than ₹20,000.

This is the same case in which NCB had arrested Mumbai's famous Mucchad Paanwala. The police have charged all the persons arrested in this case for allegedly dealing in commercial quantity of drugs.

Mr Malik is the Cabinet minister under the Shiv Sena-led government in Maharashtra. He is also a spokesperson and Mumbai president of the NCP which is a part of the government.

NIA denies targeting farmers, says more summons soon

Notices issued to over 40 persons, mostly from Punjab

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 18

Dismissing allegations that it was specifically targeting the farmers' agitation, National Investigation Agency (NIA) sources claim the investigation agency will issue notices and summon to some more people in the coming days from Punjab in connection with an anti-terror case it had registered last month.

The NIA has issued notices to more than 40 persons, mostly from Punjab who are in some way connected to the ongoing farmers agitation.

These people have been summoned to be examined as witnesses in connection with a case lodged by NIA against a pro-Khalistan outfit, the Sikhs for Justice (SFJ).

The NIA officials argue that the notices have nothing to do with the farmers protest and presence of these people was required to investigate certain details related to the SFJ case.

These notices have been issued to a cross section of people ranging from farmer and religious leaders to local businessmen and journalists. They have been summoned under Section 160 Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) - Police officer's power to require attendance of witnesses in FIR no 40/2020 under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).



Women light earthen lamps, in a formation that reads Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, during the ongoing protest at Ghazipur Border in New Delhi on Monday.

— *PTI*

Statements of these have been recorded by NIA on Sunday and Monday.

Sources claimed that in the coming days NIA is likely to summon some more people in connection with SFJ case which is related to transfer of funds from abroad to certain outfits within India which are suspected to be linked to the Khalistani movement.

The FIR lodged by NIA names some of the designated terrorists like Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, Paramjeet Singh Pamma, Hardeep Singh Nijjar and others who have been involved in collection of funds in countries like United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Germany.

42 aircraft, including 15 fighter jets, will be seen in flypast Rafale to be R-Day show-stopper

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 18

India's latest acquisition Rafale fighter jet will be the show stopper during the Republic Day parade this year.

It will be for the first time that Rafale will be participating during the Republic Day parade.

Some 42 aircraft will be seen in the flypast, including 15 fighter planes, five transport and one vintage aircraft.

Some new formations too will be seen for the first time.

"The flypast would culminate with a single Rafale that shall carry out a Vertical Charlie abeam the dais (show stopper)," said a senior official.

The flypast would be flown in two blocks. The First block is planned along with the parade between 10.04 am to 10.20



Indian Air Force soldiers march during the rehearsals for the upcoming Republic Day parade at the Raisina Hills in New Delhi on Monday.

— *AP*

am and the second block is planned after the parade between 11.20 am to 11.45 am.

Block I comprising three formations, would be led by Nishan formation comprising 4 Mi17-V5 carrying the National flag and ensigns of the three serv-

ices (timed 10 seconds ahead of Parade Commander). Following Nishan will be Dhruv, 4 aircraft formation of the Army Aviation Corps .

The third and last formation is Rudra, which commemorates the Swarnim Vijay Jayanti of

the 1971 war and comprises single Dakota flanked by two Mi 17-1Vs in Vic formation (timed with the marching contingent from Bangladesh).

The Block II will comprise nine formations. The first two formations would be Sudarshan and Rakshak. Sudarshan will comprise one Chinook and two Mi 17-1Vs, while Rakshak would be led by a single Mi 171V with 4 Apache.

Following Rakshak would be Bhim formation of three C-130 aircraft.

The fifth formation will be Eklavya comprising one Rafale, two Jaguars and two MiG 29s which would be followed by three Su 30s in Trinetra formation carrying out the traditional Trishul manoeuvre. Trailing Trinetra will be three Sarang helicopters flying in Vijay formation.

Boy stabbed to death by juvenile over playing cricket

New Delhi, Jan. 18: A 17-year-old boy was allegedly stabbed to death by a juvenile over playing cricket at a ground in outer Delhi's Nangloi area, the police said on Monday.

Three juveniles have been apprehended while two men, including the father of one of the accused juvenile, have been arrested in connection with the incident, they said.

The incident took place on Sunday when the boy was playing cricket with his friends, the accused juvenile along with his group of friends arrived and asked them not to play at the said ground, police said.

The accused along with his group usually played cricket at the said ground and so he objected to the victim when he was found playing cricket at the same ground, a senior police officer said.

On Saturday, the accused juvenile had quarrelled with the victim and even threatened him on seeing them play cricket, he said.

On Sunday, the victim was stabbed to death by the accused. — *PTI*

SC: Let govt, police decide on tractor rally

■ **Continued from Page 1** Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi. Request you to attend the meeting," agriculture secretary Sanjay Agarwal said in a letter to 40 farmers' unions.

There are indications the tractor rally may also figure in the tenth round of negotiations between the farmers and Central ministers. The two sides have failed to reach any understanding in nine rounds of talks over the repeal of three Central farm laws and the MSP Act.

In the Supreme Court, a three-judge bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad Arvind Bobde on Monday said the Delhi police was at liberty to invoke its powers under the law and it has the power to deal with law and order situations. "Who should be allowed and the number of people to enter are all matters of law and order, to be decided by the

police. We are not the first authority," Chief Justice Bobde said.

To this, attorney-general K.K. Venugopal said: "It is an extraordinary situation and the court may pass orders", noting that "public order", "police", "land" and "services" in the national capital are under the direct purview of the Centre. Calling the proposed tractor rally "illegal", Mr Venugopal told the court an order from it would "strengthen" the hands of the government as it was facing an "unprecedented situation". An unmoved CJI Bobde shot back, asking: "Does the Union of India need the Supreme Court to tell it what powers it has under the Police Act?" He said the court hadn't taken up the entire issue of the farmers' agitation and its intervention had been "misunderstood". "Does the Supreme

Court say what are the powers of the police and how they will exercise them? We are not going to tell you what to do," replied the bench, which included Justices L.N. Rao and Vineet Saran. The court told Mr Venugopal that since it was not the same bench that was hearing the matter, it was adjourning the hearing till January 20.

The Centre, in an application filed through the Delhi police, said that any rally or protest that may disrupt/disturb the Republic Day celebrations will cause an "embarrassment to the nation".

The farmer unions', which are firm on holding the rally on Republic Day, have pledged that the protesters will not carry weapons or indulge in any inflammatory speeches or violence. They also clarified there will be no occupation or attack on any

government building during the parade, that will see tractors start their journey from their respective positions at the Delhi borders and return to the same place.

"Farmers will celebrate Republic Day with huge fervour. The tractor parade will move in a circle on Outer Ring Road, that goes around areas like Janakpuri, Munirka, Nehru Place, Tikri. We hope that the Delhi and Haryana police will not cause us any problems or restrictions. This will be a very peaceful protest since our biggest weapon is non-violence," said Yogendra Yadav from Sanyukt Kisan Morcha.

Asked what would happen if the Delhi police doesn't give permission for the tractor parade, BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) chief Joginder Singh Ugrahan said the farmers have a constitutional right to

hold the tractor rally peacefully. "If the Delhi police has some issues over law and order on Republic Day, they can sit with the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha and give alternative routes for the tractor rally. Then our farmers' committee will decide. But we are very clear... the tractor rally will be taken out in the national capital on January 26."

Bhartiya Kisan Union (Lakhwal) Punjab general secretary Paramjit Singh said farmers aren't going to hold their rally on Rajpath or other high-security areas. He said: "We are stuck at Delhi's borders. We have not decided to sit at these borders ourselves, we have been stopped from entering Delhi. We'll take out the rally peacefully without disrupting law and order. We'll exercise our constitutional rights and will definitely enter Delhi."

Mamata takes the fight to BJP

■ **Continued from Page 1** cost." She also took a dig at the saffron party over the "leak of gameplan" in the Pulwama attack in a veiled reference to a transcript of journalist Arnab Goswami's conversation.

Leading a massive roadshow in her home turf later, Mr Adhikari told

the CM, "Nandigram has come to your mind after five years because another election has come. You said you would fight from Nandigram. Mark my words: I will quit politics if I cannot ensure your defeat by 50,000 votes whoever, me or someone else, the BJP gives a ticket to fight you."

THE ASIAN AGE

19 JANUARY 2021

Tejas decision a good one, but much more left to do

In a historic decision, the Cabinet Committee on Security on January 13 approved the country's largest-ever indigenous defence deal when it cleared the procurement of 83 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk 1-A — ten of which are to be trainers — for the Indian armed forces from Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd at an approximate cost of ₹47,000 crore, closing the circle that began with the commissioning of the LCA project in the 1980s.

The first rollout is expected in 2023-24, and then on 16 aircraft are to be manufactured every year on present reckoning. To start with, the indigenous content is to be 50 per cent, to be stepped up to 60 per cent within a short time-frame. HAL would be outsourcing the job to more than 550 domestic vendors.

This gives us an idea of the technological and economic spinoffs of the LCA programme for the Indian economy as a whole, going beyond the military aspect of acquiring a fighter jet at home which is billed as the workhorse of the future for the Indian Air Force, filling the gap left by the hoary MiG-21s of Soviet manufacture, which have been phased out.

The good news is that the LCA Mk-2 version with a bigger engine is in its design stage and is expected to be ready for trials next year. As of 2019, the IAF is committed to procuring 324 Tejas MK1-A fighters of different variants.

The LCA Mk-2 version with a bigger engine is in its design stage and is expected to be ready for trials next year. As of 2019, the IAF is committed to procuring 324 Tejas MK1-A fighters of different variants. That signifies the work-horse role visualised for this sophisticated fighter.

The domestic manufacture of the Tejas Mk 1-A is a signpost of enormous value, although it has been more than three decades in the making, starting from the conception stage when the Aircraft Development Agency (ADA) was set up in 1984. The ADA designed Tejas in collaboration with Aircraft Research and Design Centre (ARDC) of HAL.

To find true liberation from imports in the strategic sphere of fighter aircraft manufacture, it is now crucial to look at the propulsion aspect for upgrade. India's LCA is fitted with the GEF-404 engine. In the wake of the 1998 nuclear test, the United States had held up the supply of these engines. It is therefore important to return special focus to the development of the indigenous Kaveri engine, which has been in the works for decades. To achieve cent per cent indigenous content, radars and avionics will also need to be manufactured domestically. Only a country that can grow its own food and has the ability to defend itself can ultimately avoid being at anyone's beck and call.

WhatsApp: A lot to explain

The Mark Zuckerberg-acquired WhatsApp is throwing up as many headaches as its parent Facebook these days because netizens are getting smarter about their data privacy. In an intemperate push to monetise data out of WhatsApp, the popular messaging platform, Facebook got into a tangle that saw millions of individual users and groups sign off and download apps like Signal and Telegram that are less intrusive of personal territory like online data. It may have come as a shock to most Internet users that an app promising end-to-end encryption, and which routinely declines law enforcement enquiries with the excuse that it has no access to user chats, should talk of sharing user data with Facebook.

It is largely true that netizens sign off much of their rights over prized personal information when they sign on to social media platforms and the like. Big Tech has never been averse to building up their businesses and making money out of a large number of users running into millions. The leaks of personal data from breaches by hackers or emanating from sheer carelessness of the machinery that is supposed to ensure security of data have not stopped people from their modern-day existence in an inter-connected world. The advantage is very much with those who keep data as citizens seem to have no rights in the absence of a regulatory framework to govern the Internet.

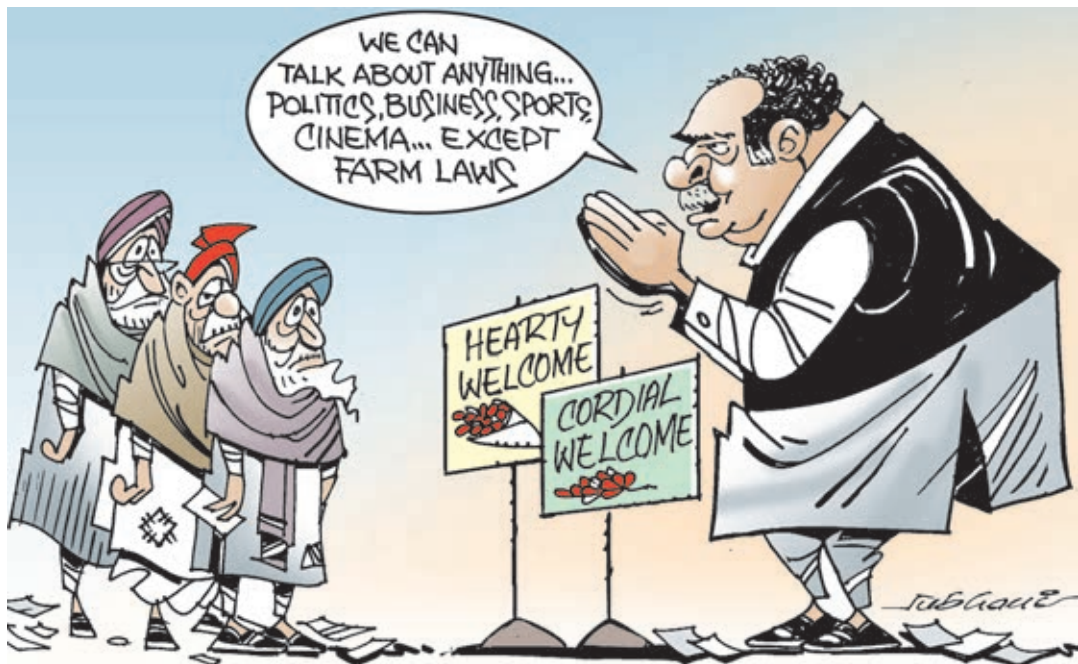
A parliamentary committee has summoned Facebook and Twitter officials to question them on the misuse of social media and online news platforms, but it is a long-drawn process that might not lead to foolproof measures to safeguard citizens' rights. Big Tech may have done signal service to the world in cutting off the communication of hate propaganda by maverick users like Donald Trump, but it must do a lot more to earn people's trust that it will not recklessly monetise their online presence by compromising their privacy. No algorithm has been invented yet that exposes the cavalier ways of the giants of the new economy. It is up to Internet users to be most discerning in signing on.

THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY
Editor in Chief

Printer & Publisher: K. SUBHAKAR
THE ASIAN AGE office is located at:
New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.
Published and Printed on behalf of and for
Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.
London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.
RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Subhani



Thoughts on democracy as Trump exits, finally..



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections

Not long before Donald Trump became the first-ever American President to be impeached for a second time — this time with a real possibility of conviction — his daughter Ivanka chose to remind the world of the close ties between her father and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The opening and closure in record time of a study centre in Gwalior that exalted Nathuram Godse, the killer of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, also occurred almost simultaneously.

It is the legal action against Mr Trump by America's senators and congressmen that grips the world's attention. The impeachment proceedings threaten to overwhelm President-elect Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion plan to end "a crisis of deep human suffering" by speeding up the supply of coronavirus vaccines and financially helping Americans who are still struggling with the economic disaster caused by the grim pandemic. It even distracts notice from the contradictions, if not crisis, of democracy that Mr Trump's rantings and ravings have unwittingly highlighted. For it should never be forgotten that 74 million Americans voted for the man who now seems bent on destroying the edifice on which he stood.

While he is believed to have broken many constitutional norms during his four years in the White House — including trying desperately hard to thwart the peaceful transition of power to his legitimately elected successor — millions of Americans had endorsed his excesses. The January 6 rioters who stormed the US Capitol

building in Washington chanting "Hang Mike Pence" and "Where's Nancy?" clearly saw both the Republican vice-president and the Speaker of the House — the first and second in the line of presidential succession — as national enemies.

There is footage available of the rioters beating a police officer with a flagpole as the crowd chanted "USA" and crushing another officer repeatedly in a door. The violence resulted in five deaths; more might have perished if the police hadn't distracted the mob from breaching the debating chambers long enough to whisk every legislator away to safety. The outrage to civilised governance was infinitely worse. Some Republicans, after encouraging or standing by mute as the President attacked the democratic process for months, have shaken consciences. Ten of them joined all 222 Democrats in the House vote accusing Mr Trump of "incitement of insurrection" that was passed on January 13, a week after the attack.

Even those who concede that Mr Biden obtained more votes can ask if that invalidates the views of 74 million Americans.

A similar question arose in 2000 when George W. Bush defeated Al Gore by winning 271 electoral votes, one more than a majority, despite Mr Gore receiving 543,895 more votes nationally. Many Americans did not regard it as a satisfactory outcome, but they accepted it without protest.

The flaw goes back to 507 BC when the Athenian Cleisthenes introduced demokratia, or "rule by the people", from demos, "the people," and kratos, or "power". Setting aside

the claims of Vaishali, Athens was the first democracy for the Western world. But it was a far cry from the universal adult suffrage which we identify with democracy today, and which can be indistinguishable from mob rule. In the middle of the 4th century, for instance, Athens boasted about 100,000 citizens (sons and daughters of citizens), some 10,000 metoikoi, or "resident foreigners", and 150,000 slaves. Only male citizens above 18 were a part of the demos, meaning only about 40,000 people could participate in the democratic process.

Around 460 BC, under the rule of the general Pericles (generals were among the only public officials who were elected, not appointed), Athenian democracy began to evolve into an autocracy (Herodotus' "the one man, the best") which eventually led to Mao Zedong's concept of "people's democratic dictatorship". The premise was that the party and the State represented the people and acted on their behalf to preserve the "dictatorship of the proletariat", and save the government from collapsing into a "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie", or liberal democracy. Mao famously used the term on June 30, 1949, commemorating the 28th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China.

However, not all democracies are killed by Army coups or declarations of emergency. Many are destroyed from within. The urge to perpetuate a particular group's stranglehold on power or the plea that a mere head count does not adequately reflect the mood and temper of the people explains opportunistic

However, not all democracies are killed by Army coups or declarations of emergency. Many are destroyed from within.

devices like Gen. Ayub Khan's "basic democracy" (Pakistan), King Mahendra's "panchayati democracy" (Nepal) or "guided democracy" (Indonesia). Mr Trump's "America First" slogan is strongly echoed in the implicit argument that India's majority feels disenfranchised unless it enjoys special privileges. Hence the Hindu Mahasabha's attempt to propagate the "true nationalism which Godse stood for" through an eponymous library.

Three years ago, the Mahasabha installed a statue of Godse and was about to organise prayer meetings there, but the statue was removed. This second try has to be seen in the context of the constitutional dismemberment and demotion of Jammu and Kashmir, motivated tinkering with academic curriculums, triumphalism over the new Ram temple in Ayodhya. Hindutva trolls, opposition to inter-faith marriages and attacks on Muslims in the name of cow protection. WhatsApp and Twitter are said to be the main instruments for hounding the community.

In view of such similar populist moves, it was not surprising that 39-year-old Ivanka Trump, a senior adviser to her father, should choose this moment to recall her 2017 visit when she led a high-powered delegation to the Global Entrepreneur Summit in Hyderabad. "As the world continues to battle Covid-19, our countries' strong friendship in promoting global security, stability, and economic prosperity is more important than ever," she tweeted, paying particular tribute to Mr Modi by name.

Given the association with a man who is widely accused of desperate attempts to subvert democracy, it's a compliment the Prime Minister of an India that is still proud of being the world's largest democracy could have done without.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

WODEHOUSIAN RISK!

Human rights lawyer Sudha Bharadwaj had requested the jail authorities for books. Like the earlier requests of a sipper, spectacles, warm clothing, etc, made by other accused in the case, it was taken to court. The NIA court agreed. However, jail officials are deciding which books can be given. Surely, the jailor is a well-read person, because one of the books rejected was a P.G. Wodehouse title. They were perhaps apprehensive it will make the prisoner laugh and defeat the punitive incarceration!

Anil Bagarka
Mumbai

DOUBTFUL ROLE

BRITISH PRIME Minister Boris Johnson has invited PM Narendra Modi on Sunday to participate in person as a guest at the G-7 summit to be hosted by the UK PM in Cornwall on June 11-13. It is a good idea to use the G-7 summit to unite leading democracies to "help the world build back better from the Coronavirus" and "create a greener, more prosperous future". But that is easier said than done. Can the PM heading a government that bypassed clearances and handed over forests to big business under cover of pandemic lockdown bring any worthwhile ideas to the table?

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

IS MEDIA FREE?

THE CREDIBILITY of the mainstream media has sunk so low that the farmers holding protests on Delhi's outskirts have had to bring out their own newspaper, *Trolley Times*, to counter the "fake narrative" of the media. It is easier to be fearless in airconditioned TV studios. A TV channel may prosper in gathering eyeballs for a short while but is not self-sustaining in its mission to find the truth. This is while an independent media is one of the basic needs of a democracy.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to N.J. Ravi Chander (Jan. 11). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Aakar Patel



Nehru a model of modernity... Why his vision & legacy endures

I was being interviewed for my book and was asked a question unrelated to it — Why does Hindutva hate Jawaharlal Nehru so much? It is an interesting question and has two parts to the answer. To know it, we must first understand what Nehru was and what he wanted.

Before Independence, Nehru wrote a series of works through which he aligned himself to India as a civilisational entity of the sort that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh also approves of. He traces the modern nation to its origins in the Indus Valley Civilisation (discovered only a few years before he wrote *Glimpses of World History* and only 15 or so years before he wrote *The Discovery of India*) to the periods of the first and second millennia after Jesus Christ.

But having acknowledged that India was ancient, Nehru sought also to align it to the modern world and the era he was a part of and the future that he saw for all mankind. To that end he used the State as an instrument to modernise the country. Nehru based his strategy on two things — heavy industry and higher

education. India had limited resources but these two would get priority.

You could argue about whether the strategy was good, bad or indifferent, but it would be difficult to say that he did not execute what he sought out to do. Having determined that he was going to modernise this civilisational entity he set about doing it because Nehru was not only a man of vision (you could argue with him about whether your vision was better) but also a man of action.

He began building institutions, including some which are today called "navratnas", but were then nothing and needed to be built. Some such examples are Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (1964), Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (1956), Steel Authority of India (1954), Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (1964), Indian Oil Corporation (1959), Iro (formerly INCOSPAR) 1962, Department of Atomic Energy (1954), Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (1954). And then Nehru set up the Indian Institutes of Technology (1951), the Indian Institutes of Management (1961), the National Institute of Design (1961), and the

Sahitya Akademi (1954).

The list goes on and on. Why were all these set up? They were set up because they were the means through which Nehru determined India would be modernised. He inherited a pre-modern economy, where the vast majority of production lay in agriculture and that agriculture was being largely managed by farmers whose means of farming had changed very little for over a thousand years.

Nehru did not inherit a trillion-dollar economy. He had to figure out how to get India there.

The problem is that nobody in the world of Hindutva has any vision — good, bad or indifferent — when compared to Nehru, and that includes our Prime Minister. He can offer us statements like "\$5 trillion economy" but he does not say, because he does not himself know, what needs to be done to get us there. More important, he does not know what the State needs to do differently to get there. You can only build institutions if you can think of what to do with them. The reason that Narendra Modi has not built institutions while Jawaharlal Nehru was

so prolific is because Mr Modi does not have even Nehru's starting point.

Nehru had said: Heavy industry and higher education! What does Narendra Modi say? If the answer to that is difficult for you to come up with, it is because there is no answer. This is the first reason that the BJP and Hindutva adherents hates Nehru: Jealousy.

The second reason is that Nehru was not a fraud nationalist. He was a real one. He did not only name China, he fought against it. Nehru lost because Nehru fought. And he fought because he could not bear the thought of surrendering any land of his precious India.

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar said at the Ramnath Goenka Lecture on November 14, 2019 that Nehru should have accepted Zhou Enlai's offer on the border dispute during Zhou's 1960 visit to India. What was that offer? That India should accept the Karakoram range as the Sino-Indian boundary. This is where the Line of Actual Control exists today. But this was not acceptable to Nehru. He wanted the border much further into Tibet.

And he was willing to fight for it. He may have lost, yes, but he did not give up India's claim.

This is unlike Mr Modi, who has not only given up the claim, but is also unwilling even to name the opponent for fear of what China might do. This is the second reason that the BJP and Hindutva hate Nehru. He was a nationalist who exposed thoroughly their own fraudulent nationalist credentials.

The name Nehru is used far too loosely in today's times without much understanding of what he really stood for because we have not explained his thinking in simplified terms.

He is not only much superior to whatever came after him, particularly as we see now in a period of economic collapse and national security failures, but he is a model for modernity. He died more than 55 years ago but is still spoken about and his legacy is all around us today. Of how many Prime Ministers, and that includes this current one, will we be able to say that?

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

SHORT TAKES

SAMSUNG CHIEF
JAILED OVER
FRAUD CHARGES

Seoul, Jan. 18: Billionaire Samsung scion Lee Jae-yong was sent back to prison on Monday after a South Korean court handed him a two and a half-year sentence for his involvement in a 2016 corruption scandal that spurred massive protests and ousted South Korea's then-president.

In a much-anticipated retrial, the Seoul High Court found Lee guilty of bribing then-President Park Geun-hye and her close confidante to win government support for a 2015 merger between two Samsung affiliates. The deal helped strengthen his control over the country's largest business group. Lee's lawyers had portrayed him as a victim of presidential power abuse and described the 2015 deal as part of "normal business activity."

Wearing a mask and black suit and tie, Lee was taken into custody following the ruling. He didn't answer questions by reporters upon his arrival at the court.

FRENCH MUSLIM
COUNCIL ACCEPTS
RULES BY MACRON

Paris, Jan. 18: France's Muslim federations agreed on Sunday on a "charter of principles" requested by President Emmanuel Macron in his bid to eradicate sectarianism and extremism.

Macron urged the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) to devise the charter in November, after the jihadist killing of a schoolteacher who showed cartoons of the Prophet Mohamed to students. The charter rejects "instrumentalising" Islam for political ends and affirms equality between men and women, while denouncing practices such as female circumcisions, forced marriages or "virginity certificates" for brides.

It also explicitly rejects racism and anti-Semitism, and warns that mosques "are not created for the spreading of nationalist speech defending foreign regimes".

"This charter reaffirms the compatibility of the Muslim faith with the principles of the Republic, including secularism, and the commitment of French Muslims to their complete citizenship," CFCM president Mohammed Moussaoui said.

ITALY PM TO
LAUNCH BID TO
SAVE GOVT

Rome, Jan. 18: Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte was due to address parliament's lower house on Monday at the start of a make-or-break week in a crisis that could bring down his government.

Against the backdrop of coronavirus pandemic that sparked fresh restrictions at the weekend, Conte will seek a show of support with lawmakers ahead of a crucial vote in the upper Senate the following day.

His coalition government, in power since September 2019, was plunged into turmoil by the withdrawal last week of former premier Matteo Renzi's Italia Viva party.

Conte was to speak at midday to the Chamber of Deputies, where his coalition partners including the Democratic Party (PD) and Five Star Movement (M5S) have a majority of support.

The real test will come on Tuesday, however, when he addresses the Senate and faces what will effectively be a vote of confidence.

JAPAN SLAMS
KOREA ON
BROTHEL RULING

Tokyo, Jan. 18: Toshimitsu Motegi, in a diplomatic policy speech in Parliament, said a recent South Korean court ruling ordering Japan to compensate 12 South Korean women who were sexually abused in Japanese military brothels during the war was "an abnormal development absolutely unthinkable under international law and bilateral relations."

"We strongly urge South Korea to correct the violation of international law as soon as possible" and restore healthy relations, Motegi said.

The Seoul Central District Court ruled on Jan. 8 that the Japanese government must give 100 million won (\$91,360) to each of 12 elderly women who filed lawsuits in 2013 over their wartime suffering as "comfort women."

Chilly slide



Young men slide on a snow covered street in the Balat District of Istanbul on Monday. Extreme cold and snow have hit large parts of Europe, with freezing temperatures causing causing railroad tracks in Poland to crack and snow blanketing most of the Turkish city of Istanbul.

— AFP

Navalny decries 'mockery of justice' in airport detention

Moscow, Jan. 18: Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny said on Monday his treatment was beyond a "mockery of justice" as he was brought before a hastily organised court a day after his dramatic airport arrest.

With calls growing in the West for Navalny's release, he was brought into a courtroom set up at a police station in Khimki on the outskirts of Moscow where he was taken following his detention on Sunday night.

Police seized Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most prominent opponent, at a border control post at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport less than an hour after he returned to Russia from Germany for the first time since he was poisoned with a nerve agent in August.

In a video posted by his

team from inside the hearing, an incredulous Navalny said he did not understand how a court session could take place at a police station and why no one had been notified until the last minute. "I've seen a lot of mockery of justice, but the old man in the bunker (Putin) is so afraid that they have blatantly torn up and thrown away" Russia's criminal code, Navalny said.

"This is ultimate lawlessness."

In another video, Navalny called for the hearing to be open to all journalists, after only pro-Kremlin media were allowed to attend.

"I demand that this procedure be as open as possible, so that all media have the opportunity to observe the amazing absurdity of what is happening here," he said.

— AFP

EU chief demands
Navalny's release

Brussels, Jan. 18: EU chief Ursula von der Leyen on Monday joined the international chorus of condemnation against Russia's arrest of opposition figure Alexei Navalny and demanded his release. "I condemn the detention of Alexei Navalny," she said in a statement.

"The Russian authorities must immediately release him and ensure his safety," Von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, also repeated Brussels' call for an independent investigation into an attempt on Navalny's life.

The 44-year-old returned to Russia on Sunday from

Germany, where he received treatment after being poisoned with what experts say was the Novichok nerve agent.

There have been calls for more Western sanctions against Russian President Vladimir Putin's government following the latest arrest.

But von der Leyen did not address what would be a decision for the EU member states, saying simply: "We will monitor the situation closely."

"We also continue to expect a thorough and independent investigation on the attack on Alexei Navalny's life," she said.

— AFP

Another 3 million in lockdown as
Covid-19 cases increase in China

Beijing, Jan. 18: Nearly three million people were put under lockdown in China Monday after a surge in coronavirus cases linked to a travelling salesman in the country's northeast.

While China has largely brought the virus under control, a sharp rise in cases in the past few weeks has prompted fresh lockdowns, travel restrictions and multiple rounds of mass testing. Monday saw three million residents of two cities in northeastern Jilin province placed under new measures, as China reported 109 new infections.

More than 19 million people across China's northeast are now barred from leaving their homes.

— AFP

France, UK boost
vaccine campaign

Paris, Jan. 18: France and Britain on Monday joined a growing list of nations starting mass vaccinations for all elderly citizens as the UK began demanding all arrivals quarantine to try and halt the spread of a new Covid-19 variant.

The French drive aims to cover all people over 75 and comes after Brazil and India, which figure among the worst-affected countries, administered their first jabs over the weekend.

Health Minister Olivier Veran said more than one million vaccinations are being targeted by January and between 2.4 and 4 million by February.

France had earlier offered vaccinations to residents of retirement homes and health workers on the frontline.

Britain on Monday extended its own vaccination campaign to people over the age of 70, after first attending to over-80s, and frontline health workers and care givers.

— AFP

W.H.O DEMANDS
FAIR ACCESS TO
COVID VACCINE

Geneva, Jan. 18: The world is on the brink of a "catastrophic moral failure" if rich countries hog Covid-19 vaccine doses while the poorest suffer, the head of the WHO said on Monday. World Health Organisation director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus denounced the "me-first" attitude of wealthy nations and also blasted vaccine manufacturers for chasing regulatory approval in rich countries rather than submitting their data to the WHO to green-light vaccine use globally.

— AFP

Biden all set for
busy 1st week

Washington buzzes with increased security

Washington, Jan. 18: President-elect Joe Biden's top advisors on Sunday outlined his plans to tackle the nation's multiple crises while balancing the impeachment trial of Donald Trump, as an historic inauguration week opens in the United States.

Washington was under the watch of thousands of National Guard troops and ringed with security barriers ahead of Biden's swearing in on Wednesday, in a nation still rattled by the January 6 attack on the Capitol.

Pro-Trump protests planned at state capitols nationwide got off to a quiet start with only small groups of armed demonstrators gathering in states including Ohio, Texas, Oregon and Michigan.

"The events of the past few weeks have proven just how damaged the soul of America has been and how important it is to restore it. That work starts on Wednesday," Biden's incoming chief of staff Ron Klain said.

"We're inheriting a huge mess here, but we have a plan to fix it." As the president-elect prepares to take power in a city where only two weeks earlier Trump supporters launched a violent attempt to overturn the election, Biden faces overlapping crises: not only the pandemic but a struggling economy, climate change and racial tensions.

Biden wants the Congress to act quickly on a massive, \$1.9-trillion stimulus package to revive the economy, and he plans a blitz to accelerate America's stumbling Covid vaccine rollout.

His target of seeing 100 million doses of coronavirus vaccine injected within his first 100 days in office is "absolutely" achievable, top US scientist Anthony Fauci said on Sunday.

"The feasibility of his goal is absolutely clear, there's no doubt about it," said Fauci, who will be Biden's chief advisor on the virus, as he was

FBI screens troops
ahead of function

Washington, Jan. 18: US law enforcement agencies are screening National Guard members to make sure they do not pose a security risk during President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration, a four-star general said in comments broadcast on Sunday.

Following the January 6 riots at the Capitol building in support of outgoing President Donald Trump, it emerged that some of those involved had current or former ties to the military.

General Daniel Hokanson, who heads the National Guard Bureau, was asked by CBS News on Sunday if troops were being checked as they

arrived in Washington.

"In coordination with the Secret Service and the FBI, they're screening all the personnel that are coming in," Hokanson said.

Much of Washington resembles a fortified compound in a war zone, with most of the downtown area blocked off, security fences topped by razor wire and about 25,000 National Guard troops deployed to the capital.

In a recent letter to all US troops, the Joint Chiefs of Staff told service members the January 6 riots were "inconsistent with the rule of law" and said troops "must embody the values and ideals of the nation."

— AFP

VP-ELECT HARRIS
TO RESIGN FROM
HER SENATE SEAT

Wilmington (Delaware), Jan. 18: Vice president-elect Kamala Harris will resign her Senate seat on Monday, two days before she and president-elect Joe Biden are inaugurated. Aides to the California Democrat confirmed the timing and said Gov. Gavin Newsom was aware of her decision, clearing the way for him to appoint fellow Democrat Alex Padilla, now California's secretary of state, to serve the final two years of Harris' term.

Padilla will be the first Latino senator from California, where about 40 per cent of residents are Hispanic. Newsom announced his choice in December, following intense lobbying for the rare Senate vacancy from the nation's most populous state.

— AP

Fearing Biden, Erdogan
tries to mend ties with EU

Ankara, Jan. 18: Facing a potentially hostile US administration, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is trying to break his isolation by mending EU relations, torn by what the bloc views as his belligerent foreign policy.

Ties between Ankara and Brussels have plunged to a nadir not seen since Turkey formally opened talks to join the bloc in 2005, a process which is now frozen.

And while Erdogan speaks of turning "a new page", the list of European grievances is long.

Most recently, Brussels began drawing up a list of sanctions over Turkey's hunt for natural gas in the eastern Mediterranean, which triggered a naval

standoff with Greece last year. But older suspicions simmer. Erdogan's direct military interventions in the Syrian and Libyan conflicts raised hackles in Europe, while his vocal backing of Azerbaijan in the six-week Nagorno-Karabakh war upset

Armenia's allies across the West.

Erdogan's threats to send millions of Syrian and other refugees Turkey is hosting to Europe if the bloc fails to provide more funding are a constant menace. And he has made the animosity personal by attacking French President Emmanuel Macron's treatment of Muslims, which Europe counters by pointing to Turkey's grim record on human rights.

Some believe this standoff is unsustainable for Erdogan.

"Ankara cannot afford an escalation with both the US and Europe, especially with an economy this fragile," a European diplomat said.

— AFP

DISASTER | RUINS

At least 84 got killed and thousands left homeless after 6.2-magnitude of earthquake

Indonesian medics exhausted by quake casualties

Mamuju (Indonesia), Jan. 18: Medics battled exhaustion and the risk of Covid-19 as they raced on Monday to treat scores of people injured by a devastating earthquake on Indonesia's Sulawesi island.

At least 84 were killed and thousands left homeless by the 6.2-magnitude quake that struck early on Friday, reducing buildings to a tangled mass of twisted metal and chunks of concrete in the seaside city of Mamuju.

Doctors in hazard suits treated patients with broken limbs and other injuries at a makeshift medical centre set up outside the only one of the city's hospitals that survived relatively intact — one was flattened by the violent tremor.



Rescuers lead a sniffer dog during a search operation at the ruins of a building collapsed in earthquake in Mamuju, in Indonesia on Friday.

— AP

A handful of doctors and nurses worked "non-stop" in the first couple of days after the quake until reinforcements arrived, but it was still barely enough

amid shortages of medicine and other supplies.

"We were completely overwhelmed at one point," said Indahwati Nursyamsi, director of

West Sulawesi General Hospital.

"My nurses were also quake victims and had to help their families." Medics scrambled to quarantine Covid-19 positive patients in a bid to prevent an outbreak at the crowded open-air triage centre.

Some with coronavirus have been put in a prayer room — common in the Muslim majority nation — at the back of the hospital.

The hospital was trying to open up more rooms for surgery and erect additional tents outside to treat the injured.

But fears that another quake could bring down the building added to the challenges as patients, and some staff, refused to stay inside.

— AFP

Trapped Chinese miners
send SOS after a week

Beijing, Jan. 18: At least 12 gold miners trapped hundreds of metres underground in China for more than a week have sent up a note warning that they are injured, surrounded by water and urgently need medicine.

Twenty-two workers were trapped more than 600 metres from the mine's entrance after a blast eight days ago near Qixia city in eastern Shandong province.

After days without any signs of life, rescuers heard knocking sounds on

Sunday afternoon as they drilled through the mine's shaft.

A note was sent up on a line from the depths below saying that at least a dozen of the miners are still alive, but that they urgently needed help as their health deteriorates.

"We are in urgent need of medicine, painkillers, medical tape, external anti-inflammatory drugs, and three people have high blood pressure," the note read.

The condition of the other ten workers is

unknown. Four people were injured, according to the note, which was crumpled, water-stained and scrawled in pencil on pages ripped out of a notebook.

"We wish the rescuers won't stop so that we can still have hope. Thank you," the note read.

The writer of the note asked rescuers to send down some medication from his car, and warned that there was a large amount of underground water where the miners are trapped.

— AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,564.27	-0.96
Nifty 50	14,281.30	-1.06
S&P 500*	3,768.25	-0.72
Dollar (₹)	73.28	-0.31
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.18	0.49
Euro (₹)	88.47	0.27
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,332▲117	0.24
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	54.87	-0.42
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.957	-0.52
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.087	-0.92

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Maruti Suzuki increases prices of most vehicles

Maruti Suzuki India said it has increased the price for select models by up to Rs 34,000 to offset adverse impact of rising input costs. The new prices are effective from January 18. While the company did not specify the models, according to dealer sources the price hike impacts most of its models, but select variants of certain models have been left untouched in price hike. Last month, Maruti said it would hike prices from January.

Cure.fit acquires US-based digital fitness firm Onyx



Health-tech startup Cure.fit said it has acquired California-based fitness company Onyx. The company, however, did not disclose the value of the deal. Cure.fit's acquisition of Onyx is a step towards improving its computer vision technology for its at-home fitness product and expanding its international business, a statement said. Onyx specialises in body tracking technology and personalisation of workout feedback.

Mindtree net profit rises 65.7% to ₹326 crore

IT firm Mindtree reported a 65.7 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 326.5 crore for the December 2020 quarter compared with Rs 197 crore a year ago. The Bengaluru-based company saw its revenue grow 3 per cent to Rs 2,023.7 crore from Rs 1,965.3 crore. In dollar terms, its net profit rose 59.3 per cent to \$44.2 million, while revenue declined marginally to \$274.1 million. The company's active client base stood at 276.

IRFC IPO: Retail portion oversubscribed

The initial public offering of the Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) was subscribed 65 per cent on the first day of subscription on Monday. The offer received bids for 80,89,30,700 shares against 1,24,75,05,993 shares on offer, as per data available with the NSE. The category reserved for non-institutional investors was subscribed 9 per cent and retail individual investors, 1.25 times.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

■ Import of appliances, furniture, EV parts to get costlier Budget may raise duties by 5-10% to aid local mfg

AFTAB AHMED & MANOJ KUMAR NEW DELHI, JAN. 18

The government is considering hiking import duties by 5-10 per cent on more than 50 items, including smartphones, electronic components and appliances in the upcoming budget, three government sources privy to the discussions told Reuters on Monday. The move to increase import duties is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's self-reliant India campaign that aims to promote and support domestic manufacturing, said the sources, who asked not to be named as the discussions are not public. One of the sources said

FOCUS ON SELF-RELIANCE

- ▶ Customs duty hikes part of revenue raising and Atmanirbhar Bharat plan
- ▶ Govt seeking additional revenue of about ₹120,000 crore-₹21,000 crore from duties
- ▶ Duty hikes could hurt Swedish furniture maker Ikea and electric vehicle maker Tesla

the government was seeking to target additional revenue of about Rs 20,000 crore- 21,000 crore from the moves, as it looks to shore up revenue amidst the pandemic-driven slowdown. Two of the government sources also said the duty hikes could impact furniture and electric vehicles, potentially hurting the likes of Swedish furniture maker Ikea and Tesla,

which is planning to launch its cars in India this year. Both Ikea and Tesla executives have previously expressed concerns about the steep duty structure their products already face in India. The list of items likely to attract steeper duties is set to include appliances such as refrigerators and air-conditioners too, three of the sources said.

The sources said the proposals may still be tweaked further before they are finalised. India has in recent years taken a series of measures that industry executives say discriminate against foreign companies. Government officials say such taxes are essential to promote India as a destination for local manufacturing and to support domestic businesses. "This is part of revenue raising and Atmanirbhar Bharat plan," said one of the government sources. Last year, India raised import taxes on a wide range of products such as footwear, furniture, toys, electrical and electronics items by up to 20 per cent. —Reuters

Beware of tricky January, budget moves of mkt

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 18

Sensex and Nifty-50 fell close to 1 per cent for the second session in a row on profit taking amid negative global cues, though foreign portfolio investors were still buying shares. The Sensex closed 470 points down at 48,564 while the Nifty-50 closed 152.40 points lower at 14,281.30. The broader market fall was even sharper with the BSE Mid-cap Index down 2.01



per cent and BSE Small-cap Index, 1.89 per cent. "The news of fresh Covid cases in China has spooked the markets across the globe, including India, as participants are worried about global economic recovery," said

Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking. It's time to remain cautious as the January-February period has seen big market falls in the past—the biggest fall after a sharp rise took place on January 21, 2008—and later between 2015 and 2018 the market saw sharp falls post-Union Budget. With little headroom for the government to present a popular budget, profit taking before budget day cannot be ruled out.

"Unusual strength in the dollar index and sustained run up in the commodities have battered the sentiment of the equity market. It has triggered selling in commodities and the Nifty Metal Index closed 4.57 per cent lower," said Shrikant Chouhan, analyst-equity technical rese-arch, Kotak Securities. Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 650.60 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 42.51 crore.

RBI forex intervention to touch \$93 bn by Mar.

Mumbai, Jan. 18: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to spend at least \$20 billion more to support the rupee and increase the forex kitty through the remainder of the financial year, taking its overall forex intervention to \$93 billion, according to a report. The report by the Wall Street brokerage Bank of America Securities also expects the central bank to raise banks' HTM (held-to-maturity) limits of excess government securities by 2 per cent of their books to fund the fiscal deficit if high forex intervention limits its open market operations (OMOs). So far this fiscal, the RBI's forex intervention has touched \$73.7 billion, according to the assessment by brokerage's India economists Indranil Sen Gupta and Aastha Gudwani. They also feel the RBI to intervene with \$45 billion in 2021-22 if the current account deficit (CAD) stays 0.5 per cent of the GDP. After eight years, the RBI under the current governor Shaktikanta Das has been building up the forex reserves, which as of

January 15 stood at \$58.1 billion, a lifetime high. While delivering the Nani Palkhivala lecture last Saturday, Das repeated his resolve to not let the 2008 or 2013 run on the rupee to be repeated again. "Our BoP (balance of payment) forecasts place RBI forex intervention at \$93 billion (\$73.7 billion so far) in 2020-21 and \$45 billion in 2021-22 if the the CAD remains at 0.5 per cent of GDP, which is dependent on the crude oil averaging at \$50 a barrel," the report said. It said since high forex intervention is limiting OMOs, the RBI is expected to raise banks' HTM limits by 2 per cent of their books to fund the fiscal deficit. The report further said it is sure the RBI will continue to buy forex when the dollar is weakening and let the rupee depreciate when it strengthens. On Saturday, Das had said, "To mitigate global spillovers, EMs (emerging markets) like India have no recourse but to build their own forex reserve buffers, even though at the cost of being included in the currency manipulators list." —PTI

Total to buy 20% in Adani Green for \$2.5 bn

BAIJU KALESH, MANUEL BAIGORRI, FRANCOIS DE BEAUPUY & P. R. SANJAI JAN. 18

Total SE has agreed to a \$2.5-billion deal that includes a minority stake in India's renewables major Adani Green Energy Ltd, as it expands its efforts to diversify beyond oil. Paris-based Total will acquire 20 per cent of Adani Green, take a board



seat and add a 50 per cent stake in a portfolio of operating solar assets with capacity to transmit 2.35 gigawatts of power to consumers, the company said on Monday in a statement.

The deal is the third in a week for Total in the renewable area, following the acquisition of a French biogas producer and of a stake in a large US solar portfolio. The French oil and gas giant and its European peers are increasingly investing in clean power and renewable fuels amid mounting pressure from investors, governments and consumers to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. —Bloomberg

WhatsApp rival Hike goes off the air in India

SARITHA RAI JAN. 18

Hike, the messaging app backed by SoftBank Group Corp. that aimed to compete against WhatsApp in the world's second-most populous country, shut down and vanished from app stores on Monday. The startup valued at \$1.4 billion in a 2016 funding round announced its app was going off the air earlier this month without explanation. The app started by billionaire-family scion Kavin Bharti Mittal has failed over several



years to displace Facebook Inc's rival app as India's go-to venue for social media and mobile communications. The country remains WhatsApp's largest market globally. Hike, backed also by

Chinese WeChat-operator Tencent Holdings Ltd, has in recent years ventured into adjacent areas such as no-frills phones and expanded even into spheres such as mobile entertainment. On January 6, Mittal—son of Sunil Bharti Mittal, chairman of Bharti Airtel Ltd—announced the closure of Hike StickerChat. Its demise coincides with a growing global backlash among technology experts, privacy advocates, billionaire entrepreneurs and government organisations against WhatsApp's new

policy of reserving the right to share user data with the broader Facebook network. Over the past year or more, Mittal has steadily diversified Hike into social and virtual-mobile products. His company will continue to develop its Vibe social media app and work on a new gaming product called Rush, he wrote on Twitter. "India won't have its own messenger," Mittal wrote. "Global network effects are too strong (unless India bans Western companies.)" —Bloomberg

Chip shortage forces Ford to advance plant shut down

New Delhi, Jan. 18: The global shortage of semiconductors will impact production of US auto major Ford's plants in India in the coming months, even as the company advances a scheduled week-long shutdown to this week at its Chennai factory, according to a company official.



AUDI DELAYS OUTPUT, IDLES 10,000 STAFF

YUEQI YANG JAN. 18

A global semiconductor shortage is forcing Audi to delay the production of some high-end cars and furlough workers, its chief executive officer told the Financial Times. The Volkswagen AG brand has put more than 10,000 workers on furlough as production slowed, but overall output for 2021 shouldn't be affected because the company expects to make up for lost time in the second half, Markus Duesmann said in the interview. VW, the world's biggest carmaker, had said last month that it's bracing for a major production

disruption in first-quarter manufacturing around the globe because of the bottleneck. Other carmakers, including Daimler AG, Nissan Motor Co, Honda Motor Co, Ford Motor Co and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV, have also said they face impact from the chip shortage. In the FT interview, Duesmann said Audi will "do everything we can to keep it below 10,000 [fewer models produced] for the first quarter." The supply challenge came as Audi saw unexpected rise in demand for cars, largely due to a rebound in China, he said. —Bloomberg

per cent at 6,943 units. The company's domestic sales were at 1,662 units, down 45.06 per cent from the year-ago month, whereas its exports were at 6,992 units, a decline of 53.83 per cent from December 2019.

Last month, due to the shortage of semiconductor supplied by Bosch Ltd, Mahindra & Mahindra had also stated it was expecting reduction in production and sales volumes. —PTI

LEXUS DRIVES IN SEDAN LS 500H NISHIJIN AT ₹2.22 CR



MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, JAN. 18

Japanese luxury car maker Lexus, the arm of Toyota, on Monday introduced a new variant of its flagship sedan LS, called the Lexus LS 500H Nishijin priced at Rs 2.22 crore at New Delhi showroom while the entry level variant the LS 500h costs Rs 31 lakh less at Rs 1.91 crore. The brand has given the LS 500h a few crucial updates across the range. Although priced higher, it rivals the Mercedes-Benz S-Class, Audi A8L, and the BMW 7 Series. The new LS 500h Nishijin variant has interiors crafted with an expression of style and comfort, featuring a unique collaboration involving traditional Japanese crafts. It is inspired by the path of the moonlight on the sea, a rare phenomenon witnessed for a few days before and after a full moon. Lexus India president P. B. Venugopal said the new Nishijin variant and improvements to the flagship model have been introduced following positive response of the LS 500h in India. "These upgrades keep in line with the sophistication and craftsmanship of the Lexus LS 500h flagship luxury model," he pointed out. These will deliver optimum performance with cutting-edge technologies, while keeping in mind the environmental benefits and the comfort, Venugopal said. There is no change to the engine. It continues to pair a 3.5-litre petrol engine with an electric motor, generating an output of 358PS.

BULL | CASE 'Looking at a single metric of value or P/E is not a fair way to judge the market'

Unfazed by high prices, MF stays bullish on stocks

NUPUR ACHARYA JAN. 18

A record price-to-earnings valuation for Indian shares shouldn't act as a deterrent for stock investors, according to Radhika Gupta, the head of Edelweiss Asset Management Ltd. Gupta, the only female chief executive officer of a major asset manager in India, says it's "risky to be underweight equities" at a time when local stocks remain "heavily" driven by liquidity. Her firm, which oversees Rs 46,500 (\$6.3 billion) in assets, is putting its money to work: an Edelweiss balanced fund that invests in both

stocks and bonds has boosted its equity allocation to about 75 per cent, from just 30 per cent in March. "Looking at a single metric of value or P/E is not a fair way to judge the market at a point when domestic economic activity is bottoming out, and you have such high liquidity," she said. "We are buyers of businesses. We are looking at corporate earnings, the domestic economy, flows and risk appetite." The benchmark S&P BSE Sensex has rallied around 90 per cent from its low during the March swoon in 2020, hitting fresh records on the way

The rally fuelled by central bank liquidity and incessant foreign inflows has the gauge trading at 23 times its 12-month forward earnings. That's versus a five-year average multiple of 19 times. Gupta's optimism is at odds with rising concern among many market watchers that stock prices in India have run ahead of themselves as the economy braces for its biggest annual contraction in records going back to 1952. Last week, the Reserve Bank of India also warned about the rally, citing a widening "disconnect" between certain sections of the financial mar-



kets and the real economy. The RBI will also start draining cash from the banking system as it seeks to revert to normal liquidity operations from pandemic-imposed emergency measures. Gupta, on the other hand, points to improving

corporate earnings and the strength shown in recent months by high-frequency economic indicators such as exports, automobile sales and manufacturing output amid an uptick in consumption. Analysts surveyed by Bloomberg have revised up 12-month estimated earnings for Sensex members by about 20 per cent since a trough in July. "A lot of the uncertainty surrounding markets has ebbed," she said. "The second quarter was good for company earnings led by margin expansion, the tail risk for banks has been contained and a couple of government

reforms in the pipeline tell you that the downside risk isn't very high." Foreigners continue to pile into Indian stocks, having bought a net \$2.2 billion in two weeks in the new year, after pumping in \$23.4 billion in 2020. That was the most since 2012. "Vaccines and the low interest environment that we are in could be a very good thing for emerging markets" like India, said Gupta. "We are hoping to see a scenario of better-than-expected performance for the corporate sector. With lockdowns opening up, we expect revenues to come back." —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Chandrasekhar suffers stroke

Bengaluru: Former India cricketer B.S. Chandrasekhar has been hospitalised after suffering a stroke but is recovering well and is set to be discharged in the next couple of days, his family said on Monday. The 75-year old legendary former leg-spinner complained of “tiredness and fatigue” on Friday evening and his speech became a “little bit cluttered”, his wife Sandhya Chandrasekhar Bhagwath said, describing the health scare as a “very, very minutest stroke”. “Chandra is recovering very well, and he will be back home on Wednesday or Thursday,” she said. On advice of doctors, the Mysuru-born Chandrasekhar was admitted to the Aster RV Hospital, where he was kept in the emergency care unit for observation. — PTI

Eng win opening Test in Lanka

Galle, Sri Lanka: Jonny Bairstow and Dan Lawrence held their nerve in a 62-run unbroken stand to guide England to a seven-wicket win over Sri Lanka on Monday on the series-opening Test.

England ensured they didn't have any more hiccups in erasing the remaining 36 required on the last day after Sri Lanka had set up a tricky 74-run target on a turning wicket. England had slumped to 14/3 late on the fourth evening, included a crucial run-out of their captain Joe Root for just 1, before Bairstow and Lawrence combined to usher the tourists to 76/3. Bairstow remained unbeaten on 35 and Lawrence finished 21 not out. — AP
Brief scores: Sri Lanka 135 & 359 vs England 421 & 76/3 (Bairstow 35 not out)

Dungdung stars in hockey girls win

Santiago, Chile: Striker Beauty Dungdung scored a hat-trick as the Indian junior women's hockey team thrashed their Chilean counterparts 5-3 in a high-scoring match to make a successful return to competition following a year-long break due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The striker from Jharkhand scored in the 29th, 38th and 52nd minutes, while Lalrindiki (14th) and Sangita Kumari (30th) also registered their names on the scoresheet for India. Chile's goals were scored by Simone Avelli (10th), Paula Sanz (25th) and Fernanda Arrieta (49th). The match started with the Chile junior team retaining most of the possession, and scoring in the 10th minute as Avelli was on the end of a perfect pass to score the hosts' opening goal. — PTI

72 players in Oz Open quarantine

Melbourne: The number of players in hard quarantine swelled to 72 ahead of the Australian Open after a fifth positive coronavirus test was returned from the charter flights bringing players, coaches, officials and media to Melbourne for the season-opening tennis major. That means they won't be allowed to leave their hotel rooms or practice for 14 days, creating a two-speed preparation period for the tournament. Other players in less rigorous quarantine will be allowed to practice for five hours daily. — AP

Live on TV

BADMINTON

Thailand Open: Round of 32 matches from 7.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

CRICKET

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament: Haryana vs Kerala from 11.55 am; Mumbai vs Andhra Pradesh from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

Big Bash League: Perth Scorchers vs Brisbane Heat from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Hyderabad vs Odisha from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

English Premier League: West Ham vs West Brom from 11.30 pm; Leicester City vs Chelsea from 1.45 am (Wednesday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002, and Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C-9, Sector-III, Noida-201301
Editor — T. Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep. Rs. 20.00 per copy.

NEWBIES STING

Siraj's five-for and Shardul's 4/61 keep India in contention

Brisbane, Jan. 18: Indian pacers Mohammed Siraj and Shardul Thakur produced another inspirational effort in adverse circumstances but India were set a a challenging target of 328 by Australia as the Border-Gavaskar Trophy headed towards an exhilarating finale in the fourth Test here.

The target is a tricky one and the Indian batsmen would get a fair idea whether to go for it by lunch on the final day, which is Tuesday. This was after Siraj and Thakur combined to share nine wickets while dismissing Australia for 294 in their second innings.

Siraj (19.5-5-73-5) punched way above his weight with his maiden five-wicket haul but couldn't prevent hosts from posting an imposing target for his team in only 75.5 overs of the second innings batting.

At stumps, India were 4 for no loss with Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill at the crease.

The highest target chased at Brisbane is 236 and that was seven decades ago which is an indicator why this Australian ground can be equated with Fort Knox. The home team hasn't lost a game here since 1988.

Thakur's dream Test match also got better with figures of 4/61 and a match haul of seven wickets. The most poignant moment was his apparent joy when he took the catch to help Siraj pip him to the coveted five-for landmark.

As Siraj showed that scuffed red kookaburra acknowledging the 957 people in the stands on the first working day of the week, the most generous applause came from his partner in crime, who walked a foot behind him clapping with gusto.

The possibility of rain adds to the excitement and the changing weather did affect the contours of Australia skipper Tim Paine's facial expressions which exhibited relief and despair in equal measures. Among the two captains, Paine is supposed to be the enforcer but this Indian team has n't stopped surprising their detractors with a spirit, which has made this series one of the finest played in recent times. — PTI



Paceman Mohammed Siraj (right) points to the sky to pay tribute to his father who passed away in India while the bowler was on national duty in Australia, as he celebrates his fifth wicket with teammate Mayank Agarwal on the fourth day of the fourth Test against Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane on Monday. — AFP

Mum's call did wonders for Siraj

Brisbane, Jan. 18: Mohammed Siraj revealed how a phone call with his mother and the memory of his late father spurred him on to a five-wicket haul in the final Test against Australia on Monday.

Siraj, playing only his third Test, ably deputised for the injured Jasprit Bumrah in Brisbane, where India need a draw to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with the series locked at 1-1.

It has been an emotional series for the 26-year-old, who lost his father in November and welled up with tears during the national anthems in Sydney.

"I am very thankful that I got five wickets. It was a very tough situation for me because I lost my dad recently," said Siraj.

"I called up home and I felt strong after talking to them and to my mother. She motivated me to feel strong. So I was mentally strong and my focus was to make sure my dad's dream comes true."

SIRAJ'S MAIDEN 5-WICKET HAUL IN TESTS

- Mohammed Siraj recorded the best bowling in Tests by taking 5/73 against Australian in the fourth Test.
- The right-arm medium pacer from Hyderabad also became the 18th Indian to take five wickets in an innings in Australia.
- Kapil Dev holds the Indian record of taking the highest number of five-wicket hauls in Australia. He claimed five five-wicket hauls in 21 innings of 11 Test Down under.
- Siraj's previous best bowling was 3/37 on debut in the second Test of the series at Melbourne.
- Shardul Thakur also recorded his best bowling after taking 4/61 on Monday. His previous best was 3/94 in the first innings of the fourth Test.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

Siraj's father, an auto rickshaw driver from Hyderabad, died on November 20 as India prepared for the start of their tour.

'CRACKS ON GABBA CAN BE CONFUSING'

An emotional Siraj struggled to describe his maiden five-wicket haul in words but sounded a word of caution about the cracks on the Gabba surface creating confusion in the Indian batsmen's minds on the final day.

He believed that there are a few spots on the surface, from where the ball might rear up awkwardly when his team sets out to chase a record target of 328 on Tuesday to win the series against Australia.

"When they bowl, obviously there will be some confusion, it will play in the mind of the batsmen that there are cracks on the pitch but our batsmen are prepared for this. We will come to know only tomorrow," Siraj said. — Agencies

DRAWN TEST SERIES WILL BE WORSE FOR HOSTS: PONTING

Brisbane, Jan. 18: Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting feels a drawn Test series against a severely depleted India will be a worse result for the hosts than the loss they suffered at home in the Border Gavaskar Trophy two years ago.

The injury-ravaged Indian team has shown great resilience and grit throughout the current tour of Australia. In the ongoing fourth and final Test, the tourists are without their premier fast bowlers, skipper Virat Kohli and a few specialist batsmen.

"I think a drawn series will be worse than the loss a couple of years ago," Ponting told *cricket.com.au*. "That's the way I look at it, considering how hard India have found it going through 20 players in a series, (Australia) having (David) Warner back for the last couple of games, (Steve) Smith back for all them that they didn't have last time around."

"A draw would not only feel like a loss to them but be a worse result than last series," he added. The 46-year-old batting great backed Australia to eke out a win, saying the Indian resilience is bound to crack. — PTI

SCORECARD

Australia 1st Innings: 369
India 1st Innings: 326

Australia 2nd Innings (overnight 21/0): Marcus Harris c Pant b Thakur 38, David Warner lbw Washington Sundar 48, Marnus Labuschagne c Rohit b Siraj 25, Steven Smith c Rahane b Siraj 55, Matthew Wade c Pant b Siraj 0, Cameron Green c Rohit b Thakur 37, Tim Paine c Pant b Thakur 27, Pat Cummins not out 28, Mitchell Starc c Navdeep Saini b Siraj 1, Nathan Lyon c Mayank Agarwal b Thakur 13, Josh Hazlewood c Thakur b Siraj 9. Extras (b-5, lb-2, w-2, nb-4) 13. **Total (all out, in 75.5 overs) 294.**

FOW: 1-89, 2-91, 3-123, 4-123, 196-5, 227-6, 242-7, 247-8, 274-9, 294-10.

Bowling: Mohammed Siraj 19.5-5-73-5, T Natarajan 14-4-41-0, Washington Sundar 18-1-80-1, Shardul Thakur 19-2-61-4, Navdeep Saini 5-1-32-0.

India 2nd Innings: Rohit Sharma batting 4, Shubman Gill batting 0. **Total (For no loss in 1.5 overs) 4.**

Bowling: Mitchell Starc 1-0-4-0, Josh Hazlewood 0.5-0-0-0.

SYED MUSHTAQ | ALI TROPHY

Jharkhand defeat Hyd in super over

Kolkata, Jan. 18: Jharkhand saw off the challenge of Hyderabad via a super over in an Elite Group B match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament here on Monday.

Jharkhand restricted Hyderabad to 139/8 in 20 overs, with Vikash Singh and Vivekanand Tiwary picking up three wickets each.

B. Sandeep (37) was the top-scorer while Himalay Agarwal and Buddhi Rahul contributed 26 each as Hyderabad posted a modest score.

In reply, Jharkhand started in earnest with skipper Ishan Kishan (27) and Utkarsh Singh (29) going on the attack. The dismissal of Kishan by T Ravi Teja did not seem to deter Utkarsh and Virat Singh, who went for their shots.

In the super over, Kishan smacked two sixes off C. Rakshann Reddy while Roy hoisted one over the boundary as Jharkhand ended up with 23 runs. Hyderabad could only muster 14 for one.

Jharkhand are in third place with 12 points after completing their engagements in the group while Hyderabad are fifth with 4 points. Odisha beat Assam by four wickets to finish at the bottom with one win.

Tamil Nadu, who have so far won all their four games, meet hosts Bengal (three wins from four games) in the final Group B match.

BARODA GO INTO KNOCKOUTS UNBEATEN

Unbeaten Baroda qualified for the knockout stage as they finished on top in Group C following a 12-run win over Gujarat in Vadodra on Monday.

Baroda had come into the final Elite Group C match, after winning their first four games.

Baroda rode on an unbeaten 59 by Vishnu Solanki and a whirlwind 17-ball 34 by Abhimanyusingh Rajput to post a competitive 176/4 and then restricted Gujarat to 164/9 to eke out a win.

In Alur, Mandeep Singh led from the front with an unbeaten 99 to help Punjab trounce Tripura by five wickets and storm into the quarterfinals as table-toppers from Group A.

Defending champions Karnataka also remained in the hunt for the last-eight berth, securing a five-wicket win over Uttar Pradesh that took their net run-rate to 0.292.

BRIEF SCORES

■ Hyderabad 139/9 in 20 overs (B. Sandeep 37, Himalay Agarwal 26, Rahul Buddhi 26, Vivekanand Tiwari 3/25, Vikash Singh 3/36) tied Jharkhand 139/9 in 20 overs (Utkarsh Singh 29, Anukul Roy 28, Ishan Kishan 27, Ajay Dev Goud 4/22). **Super over:** Jharkhand 23/0 beat Hyderabad 14/1.

■ Uttar Pradesh 132/8 in 20 overs (Abhishek Goswami 47, Karan Sharma 41, J. Suchith 3/21, Praveen Dube 3/15) lost to Karnataka 156/5 in 19.3 overs (Shreyas Gopal 47 n.o., Sharma 2/23) by five wickets.



P.V. Sindhu

Sindhu & Co. eye improved results

Bangkok, Jan. 18: Indian shuttlers, including Olympic hopefuls P.V. Sindhu and Saina Nehwal, will hope to give a better account of themselves at Toyota Thailand Open Super 1000 tournament, starting here on Tuesday, after a lacklustre show last week.

The Indian players seemed to struggle with their fitness as none of them could cross the second round at the Yonex Thailand Open, the first event of the Asia leg here.

Barring Kidambi Srikanth, it was the first tournament for the whole Indian contingent in nearly 10 months.

If Olympic silver medalist Sindhu struggled to keep pace with her first-round opponent Denmark's Mia Blichfeldt, London Games bronze winner Saina simply ran out of steam in the second round.

Among others, world No. 13 B. Sai Praneeth looked against Thailand's Kantaphon

Wangcharoen, while former world No. 1 Srikanth and 2014 Commonwealth Games champion Parupalli Kashyap were either forced to withdraw or retire after suffering calf muscle pulls.

Sindhu, a medal contender at Tokyo Games, has been training at London for last two months and she will be itching to go deep in the draw when she opens against world no 12 Busanan O., who had outlasted Saina last week.

Saina, who recently recovered from Covid-19 and had to go through the ordeal of a false positive test last week, will however have an imposing task as she faces fourth seed and home favourite Ratchanok Intanon in the first round.

In the men's singles, Praneeth will need to find his rhythm when he takes on Daren Liew of Malaysia, while Srikanth, faces Thailand's Sittikorn Thammasin, an opponent he has beaten twice in the past. — PTI

JAPAN'S PM VOWS OLYMPICS WILL BE PROOF OF VICTORY OVER VIRUS

Tokyo, Jan. 18: Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga vowed on Monday to get the pandemic under control and hold the already postponed Olympics this summer with ample coronavirus protection.

In a speech opening a new Parliament session, Suga said his government would revise laws to make anti-virus measures enforceable with penalties and compensation.

Early in the pandemic, Japan was able to keep its virus caseload manageable with non-binding requests for businesses to close or operate with social distancing and for people to stay home. But recent weeks have seen several highs in new cases per day, in part blamed on eased attitudes toward the anti-virus measures, and doubts are growing as more contagious variants spread while people wait for vaccines and the Olympics draw closer.

Suga pledged to achieve the Olympics as a proof of human victory against the coronavirus.

"We will have full anti-infection measures in place and proceed with preparation with a determination to achieve the Games that can deliver hope and courage throughout the world," he said. — AP

Smith says patience will be key for Aussies on fifth day

Brisbane, Jan. 18: Australian batsman Steve Smith reckons that with the Gabba track starting to play a few tricks, staying patient would be imperative for his team's bowlers when they defend an imposing 328 against a determined India on the last day of the and final Test here.

"I think the game is in a nice place for us. I think the wicket has started to play a few tricks today, couple of balls shot up," Smith said.

"So, tomorrow it is just

going to be about bowling (in) good areas and letting the natural variation of the day five wicket sort of do its work and hopefully we can hold on to all the chances."

The rain factor is also going to be a crucial one on the final day but Smith would rather focus on controllables.

"Who knows? That is a tough question."

He said the Australian bowlers should remain patient and not go searching for too much.

"The Indian players have obviously batted

well. Obviously in Sydney, it was 130 (overs) or something, obviously it is a different wicket to that. But for us it is just being patient, not searching too much, bowling good areas and just letting it happen," the prolific player said.

"I think the more you sort of go searching for on these kind of tracks, then you probably don't get the reward. So, it is just about hitting good areas consistently and letting the natural variation of the wicket take its course." — PTI

Messi sees red as Bilbao lift Super Cup

Madrid, Jan. 18: Lionel Messi lost his cool after another Barcelona collapse, hitting an opponent away from the ball and being sent off for the first time while playing with the Catalan club in the team's 2-3 loss to Athletic Bilbao in the final of the Spanish Super Cup.

Inaki Williams' goal in extra time gave Athletic the lead and a come-from-behind win. Barcelona had little chance of recovering when Messi swung his right arm toward the head of an Athletic player while trying to free himself. Messi was shown the red card following a video review.

After Athletic scored in the 90th minute to seal a 2-2 draw and force extra time, Williams netted the

title-clinching goal with a neat curling shot from just inside the area, with the ball hitting the far post before going into the top corner.

The goal three minutes into extra time secured Athletic their third Super Cup title, and first since they beat Barcelona in the 2015 final. The Basque Country club also won the title in 1984.

Barcelona were seeking their 15th Super Cup title, and third in the last five seasons. It was also looking to end their title drought after going without a trophy last season, something that hadn't happened since 2007-08.

It was an even match at the La Cartuja Stadium in Seville, with neither team creating many significant



Athletic Bilbao players celebrate after winning the Spanish Supercopa final against FC Barcelona. — AP

scoring opportunities.

Barcelona opened the scoring with a shot from the middle of the area by Antoine Griezmann in the 40th minute but Athletic

equalized two minutes later.

MAN UTD STAY TOP

Manchester United maintained their three-point

advantage over Liverpool at the top of the Premier League but were denied a famous win at Anfield by Alisson Becker's heroics in a 0-0 draw on Sunday.

Liverpool remain third after failing to score for a third straight league game, but were grateful to their goalkeeper to extend a 68-game unbeaten home run in the League as he denied Bruno Fernandes and Paul Pogba late on.

United are now unbeaten in 12 league games as they bolstered their claim to be title contenders for the first time since former manager Alex Ferguson retired eight years ago.

But Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men may rue the chance to open up a six-point gap against the champions. — AFP