

SHORT TAKES

MINIMUM TEMP LIKELY TO RISE OVER NEXT 2 DAYS IN CAPITAL

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 21

Giving a respite from the chilling weather conditions, the minimum temperature in the national capital settled relatively higher at 7.6 degrees Celsius on Thursday. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has also said that the minimum temperature is also expected to increase slightly over the next two days due to the influence of a fresh Western Disturbance.

"A fresh Western Disturbance will start affecting the Western Himalayan region Friday onwards. As a result, the minimum temperature in Delhi is likely to increase slightly," an IMD official said.

The WD will lead to widespread snowfall in the upper hills of the Western Himalayas. Cold, dry winds from the snow-capped mountains will bring the mercury down to 4 degrees Celsius by Monday, he said.

A "cold day" is when the minimum temperature is less than 10 degrees Celsius and the maximum is at least 4.5 degrees Celsius below normal. Earlier, the minimum temperature in Delhi slipped to 5.7 degrees Celsius and the maximum temperature in the city dipped to 15.3 degrees Celsius, five notches below normal, the IMD said.

The official said the city's air quality is predicted to improve slightly as the wind speed picks up.

The air quality index stood at 304 at 9 am.

The city's 24-hour AQI was 283 on Wednesday, 404 on Tuesday, 372 on Monday and 347 on Sunday.

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.

Delhi has already registered six severe air quality days this month.

Scindia finally gets Bhopal bungalow

BJP leader is now neighbour ex-CM Uma Bharti at Shyamla Hills

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JAN. 21

Senior BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, the third generation leader of the erstwhile royal family of Gwalior, has finally got an address in Bhopal with allotment of a government bungalow to him in the state capital.

He was on Thursday allotted a government bungalow for being an MP in Shymla Hills that is famous for its picturesque landscape.

His address in Bhopal now reads: B-5, Shymla Hills.

Mr Scindia has thus become a neighbour of former chief minister Uma Bharti and his bungalow is hardly 3 quarters away from that of his bete noir and veteran Congress



Jyotiraditya Scindia

leader Digvijay Singh.

Mr Scindia had applied for a government bungalow much ahead of November 2018 Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, being an elected representative from Guna Lok Sabha constituency then.

He was in Congress then. He was then appointed the campaign committee chairman of Congress for MP in the 2018 Assembly

polls. There was however "undue" delay in processing of his application by the then Shivraj Singh Chouhan government, reportedly for political reasons.

He could not be allotted a government bungalow during the Kamal Nath government, which succeeded the previous Shivraj Singh Chouhan government in December, 2018, since he lost LS elections from Guna in 2019.

Mr Scindia, who crossed over to BJP from Congress in March 2020, was later elected to Rajya Sabha from MP.

"The Scindia family does not own a house in Bhopal. Mr Scindia used to stay either in a government guest house or in a hotel here whenever he visited Bhopal. Earlier, he

was not keen to take government accommodation in Bhopal. He had applied for a government bungalow in 2018 when he was appointed Campaign Committee chairman of Congress," a close aide of Mr Scindia told this newspaper requesting not to be quoted.

Mr Scindia was earlier staying in 27, Safdarjung Road, New Delhi, a government bungalow allotted to his father late Madhavrao Scindia as an MP 33 years ago.

He had vacated the bungalow in July 2019 after he lost the Lok Sabha polls from Guna.

The erstwhile royal family of Gwalior made their debut in electoral politics when Mr Scindia's grandmother late Vijayaraje Scindia was elected to Lok Sabha from Guna in 1957.

Sisodia seeks Centre grant for teachers

New Delhi: Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday requested Union education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank" to extend financial support for salary payment of contractual teachers employed under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan till March 31.

Mr Sisodia in a letter to the Union minister said the support can be extended on the existing cost sharing basis between the Union and Delhi governments. "I would like to draw your attention towards 2,766 teachers serving as contract teachers under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan in Delhi. Among them, while 1,673 serve in the schools run by the Directorate of Education, 1,093 serve in the schools run by East and South Delhi Municipal Corporations," Mr Sisodia said.

— PTI

Electrician held for ₹20cr jewellery theft in Kalkaji

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 21

A 25-year-old electrician has been arrested for allegedly stealing gold jewellery worth 20 crore from his employer's showroom in southeast Delhi's Kalkaji, police said on Thursday.

To hide his identity, he wore a PPE kit and covered his face with a mask, police said.

The accused has been identified as Sheikh Nur Rahman, a resident of Hooghly district in West Bengal, they said.

Rahman used to work in the showroom as an electrician. He told police that he was harassed by his colleagues who gave him orders like making tea, bringing water among others.

To teach them a lesson, the tech-savvy electrician planned to steal from the showroom. He watched videos on YouTube to learn to operate various tools, a

senior police officer said. On Wednesday, manager of Anjali Jewellers Arijit Chakraborty, informed the police about the burglary at the showroom.

Police rushed to the spot and found that most of the ornaments on the ground floor were missing and the locks of the drawers were also broken, they said.

Police found that the accused entered the showroom through the fiber roof sheet of the third floor. During investigation, sev-

eral teams of different police stations of the south-east district were formed. Police checked the CCTV footage of the showroom and found a person wearing PPE kit stealing the jewellery. The accused knew the exact place of the valuables, the officer said.

When police checked those who were absent from the showroom, they found that Rahman had gone on leave on January 10, saying he was visiting his native place. He was supposed to come back on January 25, police said.

However, with the help of technical surveillance, police found that he had not visited his native place and was in the city, they said.

"Police traced the accused in Karol Bagh area and nabbed him. The stolen jewellery worth ₹20 crore and ₹23,000 in cash was recovered from his possession," Deputy Commissioner of Police (southeast) Rajendra Prasad Meena said.

■ South Delhi Municipal Corporation clears move

Delhi eateries asked to clear halal, jhatka

New Delhi, Jan. 21: The BJP-led South Delhi Municipal Corporation has cleared a proposal that will now make it mandatory for restaurants and shops in South Delhi to display whether the meat being sold or served is cut using the "halal" or "jhatka" method, officials said on Thursday.

The proposal was moved by the Standing Committee of the SDMC on December 24.

A senior official of the SDMC said that the House cleared it in its special meeting on Wednesday.

South Delhi has a number of eateries, restaurants and streetside shops selling or serving non-vegetarian food items, prominent places being markers at Defence Colony, Amar Colony, Sarojini Nagar, South Extension, and INA.

Officials said restaurants and meat shops will have to "display clearly and visibly" whether they are serving "halal" or "jhatka".

The resolution passed by the SDMC panel had read, "There are thousands of restaurants in 104 wards of four zones falling under South Delhi Municipal Corporation. Out of these

► SOUTH DELHI has a number of eateries, restaurants and street-side shops selling or serving non-vegetarian food items, prominent places being markers at Defence Colony, Amar Colony, Sarojini Nagar, South Extension, and INA.

meat is served in about 90 per cent of restaurants but it is not mentioned whether the meat being served by the restaurants is halal or jhatka".

Similarly, the meat shops also do not make the distinction, it had said. The resolution further said, "According to Hinduism and Sikhism, eating halal meat is forbidden and against religion..."

Therefore, the committee resolves that this direction be given to restaurants and meat shops that it should be written mandatorily about the meat being sold and served by them that halal or jhatka meat is available here".

Standing Committee Chairman Rajdutt Gahlot had earlier said, "At present, while getting a licence made, owners take a

licence for selling on type of meat, and then start selling the other one too".

Also, the idea was to let a consumer know about the kind of meat being served to him or her and make an informed choice, Gahlot had said. The resolution in the Standing Committee was moved by Chhattarpur councillor Anita Tanwar.

Irshad Kureshi, general secretary, Delhi Meat Merchants Association, an umbrella body of 6,000 licensed meat shops in Delhi, on Thursday said, "The move seems like a way of diverting attention from other more important issues".

Meat shops have always been displaying what meat they have been selling, in compliance with the MCD by-laws of 1957. The authorities are needlessly making an issue out of this, he said.

"While restaurants don't display it, customers always check if they have a preference... It is like asking a restaurant to display whether they also serve vegetarian food. A vegetarian person will enquire about the menu as per his preference," he said. — PTI

Street in Delhi to be named after Sushant

New Delhi, Jan. 21: A stretch of road in Andrews Ganj in south Delhi will soon be named after the late actor Sushant Singh Rajput as the area's civic body has cleared a proposal for it, officials said on Thursday.

Sushant, who would have turned 35 on Thursday, was found dead at his Bandra residence in Mumbai on June 14 last year. His fans and admirers took to social media to remember the actor whose untimely demise was followed by a high-



Sushant

September 2020 had moved the proposal to name the road after the actor.


"It was cleared by the SDMC House in its meeting yesterday," a senior official said.

The Andrews Ganj councillor in the BJP-led South Delhi Municipal Corporation had sent the


proposal to the civic body's road naming and renaming committee.

In the written proposal to the committee, Dutt had said that a large number of people living in the area abutting Road No 8 hail from Bihar; and had claimed "they have been demanding" to name the stretch from Andrews Ganj to Indira Camp as 'Sushant Singh Rajput Marg'.


So, it is proposed that Road No 8 be named after the actor in his memory, Dutt had said. — PTI



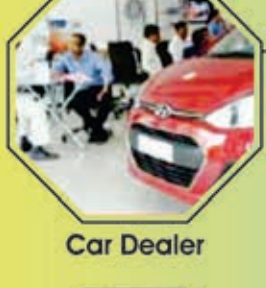
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Parking Attendant



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REPUBLIC DAY 2021

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

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

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

Prohibited Items

Photo/फोटो	Particulars / विवरण
	Eatables खाने-पीने की चीजें
	Bag, Briefcase थैला, ब्रीफकेस
	Radio, Transistor, Tape Recorder, CD, DVD, MP3 Players रेडियो, ट्रांजिस्टर, टेपरेकार्डर, सीडी, डीवीडी, एमपी3 प्लेयर
	Camera, Binocular, Handycam कैमरा, दूरबीन, हैंडिकैम
	Thermos Flasks, Water Bottles, Cans थर्मस, पानी की बोतल, कैन
	Inflammable Items, Match Boxes ज्वलनशील पदार्थ, दियासलाई
	Various Electronic Gadgets, Devices e. g. I-Pad, I-Pod, Palm Top/Laptop, Computer, Tablets, Power Bank etc. विभिन्न इलेक्ट्रॉनिक उपकरणों जैसे आई-पैड, आई-पोड, पाम टॉप/लैपटॉप, कंप्यूटर, टैब्लेट, पावर बैंक इत्यादि

वर्जित वस्तुएं

Photo/फोटो	Particulars / विवरण
	Cigarettes, Bidi's, Lighter सिगरेट, बीड़ी, लाईटर
	Alcohol, Perfumes, Spray शराब, इत्र, स्प्रे
	Dagger, Sword, Cutting Material, Sharp/Pointed Edged Material, Screw Drivers नुकीला हथियार, चाकू, पेंचकस
	Umbrella, Replica Fire Arms, Toy Gun or Toys छाता, आग्नेयास्त्र, खिलौना पिस्तौल और खिलौने
	Knives, Scissors, Razors, Blades, Wire, Pluckers चाकू, कैंची, रेजर, ब्लेड, तार, प्लंकर
	Arms & Ammunition, Fireworks, Crackers Explosive etc. हथियार और गोला बारूद, पटाखे आदि
	Avoid keeping Mobile Phones, Remote Controlled Car Keys as it may delay your entry due to checking मोबाईल फोन, रिमोट कंट्रोल कार चाबी रखने से वचें क्योंकि इससे जांच के दौरान आपके प्रवेश में देरी हो सकती है।

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

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

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

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



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

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SHORT TAKES

Gaja Capital Prize for book on Flipkart

Mumbai: A definitive account of one of India's biggest start-ups Flipkart by journalist Mihir Dalal won the Gaja Capital Business Book Prize 2020. The winner, who receives a prize of ₹15 lakh, was selected from a shortlist of six books, showcasing the vibrant Indian business ecosystem. "Big Billion Startup: The Untold Flipkart Story" was published by Pan Macmillan India. Established by the Gaja Capital equity firm in 2019, the Gaja Business Book Prize is one of the leading initiatives connecting the worlds of business and writing. The jury said the Flipkart story "reminds us that Indian entrepreneurs will forge their own independent paths of innovation serving a diverse and very demanding Indian consumer". The other shortlisted books were: *Bottle of Lies* by Katherine Eban; *HDFC Bank 2.0* by Tamal Bandyopadhyay; *Saying No to Jugaad: The Making of BigBasket* by T.N. Hari and M.S. Subramanian; *The Making of Hero* by Sunil Munjal; and *The Moonshot Game* by Rahul Chandra. Announcing the winner virtually, Gopal Jain, co-founder and managing partner of Gaja Capital, said, "The Indian growth phenomenon is one of the great stories of the 21st century. It needs to be told." — PTI

Those excluded from Assam NRC can vote

Congress, AIUDF welcome EC decision

Guwahati, Jan. 21: A day after the Election Commission announced that those excluded from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) will be eligible to vote in the upcoming assembly poll if their names are there on the voter list, the ruling BJP on Thursday said status quo about their voting rights has to be maintained while the Congress and the AIUDF welcomed the decision.

The final NRC, a database of Indian citizens living in Assam which was updated under the supervision of the Supreme Court and published on August 31, 2019, excluded names of over 19 lakh of the 3.29 crore applicants.

However, it has not been notified by the Registrar General of India yet. This leaves the document without any official validity.

"Lakhs of Indian citizens were excluded in the NRC but names of many illegal immigrants are there in it. The NRC document in its present form has not



Women stitch the Indian flags ahead of the Republic Day celebrations in Guwahati on Thursday. — PTI

been accepted by the party and we have asked for a re-verification. Till it is done, status quo has to be maintained as the notification is yet to be issued," BJP Assam unit president Ranjeet Dass told PTI.

State Congress spokesperson Bobbeeta Sharma said that Names of many genuine Indian citizens were left out of the final NRC.

"The EC has taken the right step in allowing them to vote. Otherwise, their democratic rights would have been infringed upon," she said. The All India

United Democratic Front (AIUDF), an alliance partner of the Congress for the assembly polls due in March-April, also welcomed the EC's decision describing it as "a positive move".

AIUDF general secretary Aminul Islam said, "We also want a permanent solution to the problems of Doubtful or D-voters which exists only in Assam. We requested the Election Commission that doubtful voters should be allowed to vote unless they have been declared as foreigners," he said. — PTI

Army jawan killed in a sniper attack along Poonch LoC

AGE CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, JAN. 21

An Army jawan was killed in a sniper rifle attack from across the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Thursday.

The Army and police sources said that Havaldar Nirmal Singh from 10 JAK Rifles was deployed at a forward Indian Army post in Mankote area of the LoC when targeted either by the Pakistani troops or militants.

He received a bullet injury in right side of the chest and was immediately evacuated to the Army command hospital in garison town of Udhampur in a helicopter. However, before doctors could attend on him, he succumbed, the sources said.

The sources added that the soldier's corpse was flown back to Poonch and that it would be handed over to the family for last rites after completion of autopsy at the government-run sub-district

hospital at Mendhar.

However, a defence spokesman said in Jammu that the soldier was critically injured in unprovoked ceasefire violation by the Pakistani troops in Krishna Ghati sector of the LoC and later died while being evacuated to hospital. He added that the Indian Army responded "strongly" to the Pakistani firing.

"Havaldar Nirmal Singh was a brave, highly motivated and a sincere soldier. The nation will always remain indebted to him for his supreme sacrifice and devotion to duty," the spokesman said.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Army had claimed that it foiled yet another infiltration bid along the LoC's Akhnoor sector by killing three militants.

Four Army jawans were injured in the clash, it said.

The Army alleged that the Pakistan Army had tried to facilitate the infiltration by providing firing cover to the militants.

INCREASE IN THE FREQUENCY OF SPECIAL EXPRESS TRAIN

For the convenience of passengers, Railways have decided to increase the frequency of Train No. 04163/04164 Prayagraj Jn. - Meerut City - Prayagraj Jn. Special Express Train as per the schedule given below:

Train No.	From	To	Existing Frequency	Revised Frequency	Revised Frequency w.e.f
04163	Prayagraj Jn.	Meerut City	Tri-Weekly	Daily (till further advice)	31.01.2021
04164	Meerut City	Prayagraj Jn.	Tri-Weekly	Daily (till further advice)	01.02.2021

04163/04164 Prayagraj Jn. - Meerut City - Prayagraj Jn. Special Express Train (Daily)

Train No. 04163	STATIONS	Train No. 04164
ARR. DEP.		ARR. DEP.
---	Prayagraj Jn.	08:35 ---
17:55	Subedarganj	07:29 07:30
18:05	Bamhauri	---
18:16	Manauri	---
18:25	Saiyadsarawan	---
18:40	Bharwari	06:45 06:46
18:58	Sirathu	06:23 06:25
19:20	Khaga	06:00 06:02
19:47	Fatehpur	05:23 05:25
21:20	Kanpur Central	04:15 04:20
22:04	Rura	---
22:36	Phaphund	02:19 02:20
23:50	Etawah	01:25 01:30
00:18	Jaswant Nagar	---
00:46	Shikohabad	00:40 00:42
01:05	Firozabad	00:08 00:10
01:40	Tundia	23:45 23:50
02:22	Hathras	22:30 22:32
02:47	Aligarh	22:05 22:07
04:00	Khurja	21:30 21:35
04:19	Khurja City	20:58 21:00
04:33	Bulandshahr	20:38 20:45
---	Baral	20:22 20:24
05:37	Hapur	19:32 19:50
06:25	Meerut City	---

Accommodation: 1st AC, AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Reserved Second Seating.

Note: The above Special Train will have the reserved accommodation only.

Note: 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 passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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Security Helpline No. 182
Integrated Helpline No. 139

16721

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to cancel the following Clone Special Trains services due to operational reasons from the dates shown against each:-

Train No. & Name	Date of Cancellation
04060 New Delhi - Varanasi Jn. Superfast Spl.	From 29.01.2021 till further advice
04059 Varanasi Jn. - New Delhi Superfast Spl.	From 30.01.2021 till further advice
02573 Muzaffarpur Jn. - Anand Vihar (T) Spl.	From 31.01.2021 till further advice
02574 Anand Vihar (T) - Muzaffarpur Jn. Spl.	From 01.02.2021 till further advice

Note:- For any kind of information passengers are requested to conduct Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

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SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Rinkee D/o Ram Naresh R/o H.No. E-85/36 JJ Camp, Anand Vihar, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped from the area of PS: Anand Vihar, Delhi since 08.01.2021. In this regard, a case FIR No. 12/2021 u/s 363 IPC Dated 11.01.2021 has been registered at P.S. Anand Vihar, Delhi. The description of the missing girl are as under.



Age: 15 Years, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Height:** 4' 11", **Face:** Round, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Blue colour suit-salwar and grey colour sweater. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out her but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing/ kidnapped girl then please inform PS: Anand Vihar, Delhi at following Tel No./e-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in and Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>, providing clue about the missing girl.

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639

Sd/- SHO
PS: Anand Vihar, Delhi
Ph: 011-21210294-96

DP/336/SD/2021

DELHI POLICE
SHANTI SEWAINIYAYA

TRAFFIC ADVISORY

FOR REPUBLIC DAY FULL DRESS REHEARSAL

ON 23RD JANUARY, 2021

ROUTE OF PARADE: Vijay Chowk ► Rajpath ► Amar Jawan Jyoti ► India Gate ► R/A Princess Palace ► T/L Tilak Marg Radial Road ► Turn right on "C" Hexagon ► Turn left and enter National Stadium from Gate No. 1.

In connection with the Republic Day Celebrations-2021, there will be a Full Dress Rehearsal on 23rd January 2021. The Parade rehearsal will start at 09.50 AM on 23.01.2021 from Vijay Chowk & will proceed to National Stadium. There would be elaborate traffic arrangements and restrictions in place for smooth conduct of the Parade along the route.

TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS

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

- No traffic will be allowed on Vijay Chowk from 06.00 PM on 22nd Jan, 2021 till Parade is over on 23rd Jan 2021.
- No cross traffic will be allowed on Rajpath intersections from 11.00 PM of 22nd Jan, 2021 at Rafi Marg, Janpath, Man Singh Road till Parade is over.

SUGGESTED ROUTES

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

For North to South and vice-versa:

- Ring Road - Ashram Chowk - Sarai Kale Khan - I.P. Flyover - Rajghat - Ring Road
- From Madarsa - Lodhi Road 'T' point - Aurobindo Marg - AIIMS Chowk - Ring Road - Dhaura Kuan - Vande Matram Marg - Shankar Road - Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Road or Mandir Marg.

For East to West and vice-versa:

- Ring Road - Bhairon Road - Mathura Road - Lodhi Road - Aurobindo Marg - AIIMS Chowk - Ring Road - Dhaura Kuan - Vande Matram Marg - Shankar Road - Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Road or Mandir Marg.
- Ring Road - Boulevard Road - Barf Khana Chowk - Rani Jhansi Flyover - Faiz Road - Vande Matram Marg - R/A Shankar Road.
- Ring Road - ISBT - Chandgi Ram Akhara - I.P. College - Mall Road - Azadpur - Punjabi Bagh.

For New Delhi Railway Station:

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

For Old Delhi Railway Station:

- From South Delhi: Ring Road - Ashram Chowk - Sarai Kale Khan - Ring Road - Rajghat - Ring Road - Chowk Yamuna Bazar - S.P. Mukherjee Marg - Chhatta Rail - Kauria Bridge and reach Old Delhi Rly Station.

Though there will be no restriction for people from North Delhi going towards New Delhi Railway Station or Old Delhi Railway Station yet it is advised that they plan their journey in advance and take sufficient extra time to reach their destination to avoid possible delay.

BUS TERMINATING POINTS

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

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

INTER STATE BUSES:

- Buses from Ghaziabad bound for Shivaji Stadium shall take NH-9 (NH-24), Ring Road and terminate at Bhairon Road.
- Buses coming from Ghaziabad side will be diverted at Mohan Nagar towards Bhopra Chungi for Wazirabad Bridge.
- All Inter State buses coming from Dhaura Kuan side shall terminate at Dhaura Kuan.

METRO SERVICES

Metro Rail Service shall remain available for commuters at all Metro Stations during the Full Dress Rehearsal Ceremony on 23rd Jan, 2021. However, Boarding/De-boarding at the below mentioned station will not be permitted as per schedule given:

Name of Metro Station	Boarding/De-boarding not allowed
Kendriya Sachivalaya (Udyog Bhawan)	From 5.00 AM till 12.00 Noon on 23.01.2021.

TSR/TAXIS

No TSR and Taxi will be allowed to enter or ply after 0700 hours on 23.01.2021 in the Area bound by:-

MOTHER TERESA CRESCENT - BABA KHARAK SINGH MARG UPTO R/A GPO - ASHOKA ROAD UPTO R/A PATEL CHOWK - SANSAD MARG UPTO TOLSTOY MARG CROSSING - TOLSTOY MARG UPTO KASTURBA GANDHI MARG CROSSING - KASTURBA GANDHI MARG UPTO FERROZSHAH ROAD CROSSING - FERROZSHAH ROAD UPTO R/A MANDI HOUSE - BHAGWAN DASS ROAD UPTO MATHURA ROAD CROSSING - MATHURA ROAD UPTO SUBRAMANIAM BHARTI MARG - SUBRAMANIAM BHARTI MARG UPTO HUMAYUN ROAD CROSSING - HUMAYUN ROAD UPTO Q-POINT - A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM MARG - KAMAL ATA TURK MARG - KAUTILYA MARG AND SARDAR PATEL ROAD (PLEASE NOTE ALL THE ROADS MENTIONED ARE EXCLUDED).

INSTRUCTIONS TO GENERAL PUBLIC

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

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24 HOURS TRAFFIC HELPLINE 011-25844444/1095

TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL 1090

FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112

SHORT TAKES

Shah to visit Assam, Meghalaya from Sat

Guwahati: Union home minister Amit Shah is scheduled to arrive in Guwahati on January 23 on a two-day visit to Assam and Meghalaya. He will launch the Ayushman Bharat scheme for Central paramilitary force personnel in presence of Union minister Dr Harsh Vardhan on Saturday. Mr Shah will then reach Meghalaya to chair the plenary session of the North Eastern Council to be held in Shillong on the same day. The NEC is the nodal agency for the economic and social development of the north-eastern region which consists of eight states. On Sunday, Mr Shah will return to Assam and attend an event to celebrate the first anniversary of the signing of the Bodoland Territorial Region Accord, which provides for political rights, economic package to the Bodo tribals living in Assam, at Kokrajhar. — *PTI*

6 women labourers killed in accident

Nalgonda, Telangana: Six women farm workers were among seven people killed and at least six others injured when a jam-packed autorickshaw and a container truck collided head-on on a highway in the district on Thursday, police said. The other deceased was the driver of the bigger sized auto which was carrying around 20 people, most of them farm labourers returning home from work, at the time of the mishap at Angadipeta, about 70 km from here, on Hyderabad-Nagarjuna Sagar Highway. All the seven died on the spot, Devarakonda Deputy superintendent of police Anand Reddy said, adding around six injured had been hospitalised. The official said they cannot immediately ascertain what caused the accident. Chief minister K. Chandrababhan Rao expressed shock over the accident. — *PTI*

India raises terror issue with Turkey

New Delhi: Participating in the 17th Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) ministerial meeting hosted by Turkey, Pakistan's close friend, New Delhi prominently raised the issue of terrorism and termed the menace as a "critical threat". The MEA's secretary (East) Riva Ganguly Das told the ACD meeting that "the multiple challenges ranging from the pandemic to terrorism, cyber crimes and conflicts over resources and territory, call on us to be more pro-actively engaged with each other to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the region". She added, "Even amidst the ongoing pandemic, terrorism continues to pose a critical threat. We must cooperate to eliminate terrorism in all its forms, for terrorists do not believe in a nation, state or nationalism."

Bhopal man held under MP's new 'love jihad' law

Bhopal: The Madhya Pradesh police has arrested a 25-year-old mechanic in Bhopal under a new law in the state that penalises religious conversions through fraudulent means, after a woman lodged a complaint against him, officials said on Thursday. In her complaint, the victim, a 23-year-old engineering student, accused the man of repeatedly raping her and bullying her besides threatening her to change her faith to marry him, they said. This is the second case registered in the state under the new law. Earlier this month, the state government promulgated the Freedom of Religion-2020 ordinance, which provides for 10 years in jail in some cases. "Accused Asad Khan was on Wednesday arrested and charged under seven IPC Sections, including 376 (2) (n) (repeated rape), 354 (stalking), 294 (obscene act) and 506 (criminal intimidation) and attempts to change religion by allurement and threat under the MP Religious Freedom Ordinance 2020," Ashoka Garden police station inspector Alok Shrivastava said. The woman hailed from MP's Balaghat district and befriended the accused in 2019 while using a public transport system. He told her that he was a mechanical engineer. The accused told the woman that his name was Ashu and he was a Hindu, Mr Shrivastava said.

CWC may take call on party poll today

Likely to deliberate on election of new party president

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 21

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) will be meeting on Friday to take stock of the political situation prevailing in the country.

The meeting is also expected to draw up a schedule for the long-pending organisational elections that could also pick a new party chief.

In the August meeting of the CWC, interim President Mrs. Sonia Gandhi had asked the CWC to relieve her of her duties and pick a new party chief.

The process of internal elections started in September with electoral roles of the party being revised.

Insiders say that an AICC session along with a "Chintan Shivir" is expected to be called after the budget session of Parliament to look for a new President.

Several leaders have come out in the open and demanded that Mr. Rahul Gandhi once again take up the reins of the party.

Several leaders had a written letter to Mrs. Sonia Gandhi in August last year demanding sweeping changes in the functioning of the party. They also pressed for internal elections for electing the President and

Congress to distribute calendars chronicling Priyanka's journey

Lucknow, Jan. 21: With its eye on the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, the Congress is preparing to distribute across the state calendars chronicling the political journey of party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

These calendars include pictures from the Congress leader's various public contact programmes, especially in the state, media incharge of Congress' Uttar Pradesh unit Lallan Kumar said on Thursday.

He said 10 lakh calendars have been sent to be distributed in every village and up to the ward level in cities. Instructions in this regard have been issued to party office-bearers. The district and city units are being given calendars according to their population, he added.

CWC members.

Last month Mrs. Gandhi had met some of these letter writers in a bid to assuage their feelings and to initiate the free flow of ideas.

Back room parleys have also been held with these leaders. The party does not want any embarrassment if a situation arises when elections are not being held.



Priyanka Gandhi

The calendar carries pictures of Priyanka Gandhi's public contact programmes and her 'struggles', Kumar said.

The pictures included in the calendar show her walking with tribal women in Sonbhadra district after the clash in Umbha village, saving party workers during baton charge by the police on the way to Hathras to meet the family of the rape-murder case victim, and hugging the victim's mother, he said. — *PTI*

The CWC is also expected to release a strongly worded resolution in favour of the farmers and against the farm laws. The issue of alleged Chinese incursions is also expected to be taken up. The issue of national security that came up post the purported chats of Arnab Goswami may find a mention.

Kannada actress gets bail in drugs racket case

PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, JAN. 21

The Supreme Court on Thursday granted bail to Kannada film actress Ragini Dwivedi who is in custody since September 4 last along with others in a drugs racket case.

A bench of Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman, Justice Navin Sinha and Justice K.M. Joseph set aside the November 3, 2020, order of the Karnataka high court, refusing bail to Dwivedi and others in the case registered under various provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act.

The court had heard the matter at length on Wednesday, the order was pronounced on Thursday.

The court noted that Ragini is entitled to get the bail since the maximum punishment for the crime alleged against her is only one year imprisonment.

She was in the Bengaluru prison for the past four months in the arrest affected after a raid on her house in the city on September 4.

Her lawyer noted that the officials did not recover any drugs from her house in the raid on September 4 and yet she was arrested on the charge of conspiracy.

She was arrested following a drug racket busted last August by the NCB in Karnataka.

Army Chief

■ **Continued from Page 1** versions of these equipment become available than in the original contract. But there is still no scope for negotiations to incorporate these new features and to make any mid-course corrections," Gen. Naravane said. He pointed out that any contemplated change takes this already delayed cycle back to the starting point. "And then you have to start once again, so this becomes a vicious cycle. We need to be able to fast-track all these things. Since we made the rules, we should also have the latitude to override them. Rules should be user-friendly for the customer; that is the armed forces, as well as the manufacturer. This waiver clause must be there to cater to operational conditions and to accommodate different specifications then were originally promulgated," the Army Chief said. The aim should be to end up the product fastest rather than trying to go through all the process and all the stages as a mandatory kind of requirement, he added.

The Army Chief said once skis for snow-bound terrain were rejected as the vendor offered ultra-light skis weighing 1.6 kg against formulated qualitative requirements (QR) of 2 kg-5 kg. Similarly, "punji", which are sharp pointed spikes used as obstacles, were rejected as it was found to weigh heavier, at 6 kg, against notified requirement between 3-5 kg.

3 Indian fishermen die in mid-sea collision with Lanka naval boat India lodges strong protest with Sri Lanka

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, JAN. 21

A "shocked" India on Thursday lodged a "strong protest" with Sri Lankan foreign minister Dinesh Gunawardena in Colombo and also issued a "strong demarche" to the acting high commissioner in New Delhi following the death of three Indian fishermen and a Sri Lankan national in a "collision" between their vessel and a Sri Lankan naval craft.

New Delhi also said it emphasised to Colombo

the "need to deal with issues pertaining to fishermen in a humanitarian manner", adding that "utmost efforts should be made (by Sri Lanka) to ensure that there is no recurrence" of such incidents.

The tragic incident reportedly took place three days ago, after which the Sri Lankan Navy on Thursday recovered the bodies of the four deceased.

According to media reports from Chennai, the Indian Tamil fishermen claim that the Sri Lankan

Navy deliberately rammed into a fishing boat, resulting in the deaths.

The Sri Lankan Navy has reportedly claimed that it was the fishing boat that collided with its naval craft after the Indian fishermen were resisting arrest for fishing in the Sri Lankan waters.

According to these media reports from Chennai, the incident took place in the wee hours of Monday when nearly 1,000 fishermen on 200 boats were travelling from Kottapattinam (in Tamil Nadu) for fishing. The

media reports further said that the fishermen alleged that the Sri Lankan Navy harassed them near Neduntheevu (Sri Lanka) when they were trying to return following which the tragic incident took place.

Much to India's dismay, such an incident has occurred despite external affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar's three-day visit to the island nation just earlier this month and his talks with both his Sri Lankan counterpart as well as Sri Lankan fisheries minister Douglas

Devananda.

In a statement on Thursday, the ministry of external affairs (MEA) said, "We are shocked at the unfortunate loss of lives of three Indian fishermen and one Sri Lankan national following a collision between their vessel and a Sri Lankan naval craft. Our strong protest in regard to this incident was conveyed by our high commissioner to the Sri Lankan foreign minister today. A strong demarche was also made to the Sri Lankan acting high commissioner in New Delhi.

Farmers reject govt's offer to pause laws

■ **Continued from Page 1** rejected. A full repeal of three Central farm laws and enacting legislation for remunerative MSP for all farmers were reiterated as the pending demands of the movement."

The union leaders also paid homage to the 143 farmers martyred in this agitation which has been going on at Delhi's borders for the last 57 days. The morcha said: "These companions are separated from us while fighting this mass movement. Their sacrifice will not go in vain and we will not go back without the repealing of these farm laws."

On Wednesday, when the Centre put forward the offer during their tenth round of talks with the farmers, the union leaders said they would decide upon it only after holding internal consultations. The next round of talks with the government has been scheduled for Friday.

The three laws were already stayed by the Supreme Court till further orders. An experts' committee set up by the court to find a solution to the impasse after studying the farm laws and talking to

the stakeholders also held its first virtual meeting with 10 farmers' organisations on Thursday. None of the unions which interacted with the panel have been protesting at Delhi's borders.

The farmers' organisation which interacted with the panel were from Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and Tamil Nadu. The panel will submit its report to the Supreme Court within two months.

A statement by the panel said: "The farmers' unions participated in the discussion and gave their frank opinion, including suggestions to how to improve the implementation of the laws."

Currently, the panel has three members — Maharashtra-based Shekhar Sanghatana chief Anil Ghanwat and agronomists Ashok Gulati and Pramod Kumar Joshi. Bhartiya Kisan Union president Bhupinder Singh Mann has recused himself from the committee.

While the protesting farmers decided not to appear before the panel,

they have also decided to go ahead with their peaceful tractor march on Republic Day on Delhi's Outer Ring Road. After meeting police officers from Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, Swaraj Abhiyan chief Yogendra Yadav said the police wanted the farmers' leaders to take out the tractor rally outside the national capital. "We will hold our parade peacefully inside Delhi. They wanted us to hold the tractor rally outside Delhi, which is not possible," he said.

Thousands of tractors in four tiers — the first led by representatives of the protesting farmers' unions and the second by women — will move out in a parade from different protest sites at Delhi's borders on January 26. The third tier will have the youth, while volunteers and others will make up the fourth tier.

BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) general secretary Sukhdev Singh Kokrikalan said they will synchronise the plan with the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha. Tractors will move from the Tikri, Singhu, Shahjahanpur, Palwal and Gajipur bor-

ders on to Delhi's Outer Ring Road and will have tableaux displaying the plight of farmers.

The bulk of the tractors in the parade will be those now on the way to the borders from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand. "Not more than 10 per cent of tractors already parked at the protest sites on Delhi's borders will take part in the parade. The tractors and trolleys parked at the borders are our home away from home, and we don't want to empty out the dharna sites. The protests at these sites will go on as usual," said Jagseer Singh Kothaguru, a farmers' leader from the BKU (Ugrahan) group.

A unique campaign — "Bharat Ke Mann Ki Baat Suno, Kisaano Ke Mann Ki Baat Suno" — has also been initiated by "Hamari Awaaz", an umbrella group under which several professionals and volunteers joined hands. Kanwar Deep Kaur, one of those behind the campaign, said the group's aim was to make it the world's biggest letter drive.

Azam family faces case of forgery of birth certificate UP plea against bail to Azam, kin junked

New Delhi, Jan. 21: The Supreme Court Thursday dismissed three separate pleas of Uttar Pradesh government challenging the bail granted to SP MP Azam Khan, his wife and son in a case of alleged forgery of birth certificate.

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, R. Subhash Reddy and M.R. Shah dismissed the appeal filed by the state government against the October 13, 2020, order of the Allahabad high court.

The special leave petitions are dismissed. We make it clear that any observation made in the impugned order shall have no bearing in trial since it was only with regard to granting bail, the bench

said in its order.

The high court had granted bail to Azam's wife Tazeen Fatima and son Mohammad Abdullah in the case on furnishing bonds as per the satisfaction of the magistrate concerned. It had said that Azam Khan will be released from custody after the statement of the "informant" is registered by the trial court.

The three had surrendered in February last year before a Rampur court as their anticipatory bail applications were rejected in connection with the case related to alleged forgery of Abdullah's birth certificate. The high court had directed that the three



Azam Khan

applicants shall not tamper with the prosecution evidence by intimidating or putting pressure on the witnesses during the investigation or trial.

It had also asked them to cooperate in the trial sincerely without seeking any adjournment.

A complaint was lodged by Akash Saxena, a member of BJP, alleging that Azam and his wife have

got two birth certificates issued for their son from different places, one dated January 28, 2012, from Nagar Palika Parishad, Rampur, and the second dated April 21, 2015, from Nagar Nigam, Lucknow.

The first birth certificate, which recorded his date of birth as January 1, 1993, was used for making passport, etc. and was misused in foreign travel, it alleged. The second birth certificate, which recorded his date of birth as September 30, 1990, was "misused" in government documents, contesting election to Legislative Assembly of the state and in different recognitions given to Jauhar University, it was alleged. — *PTI*

BJP MP Gambhir donates ₹1cr to Ram Temple trust

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 21



Gautam Gambhir

of Indians and finally this long standing issue has been put to rest.

"This will pave the way for unity and tranquillity in our country. Construction of a beautiful Ram temple will also provide an impetus to tourism in Ayodhya and surrounding areas which will lead to a growth in employment opportunities. "I wholeheartedly thank Prime Minister Narendra

Modi, whose leadership and vision turned this dream into reality," Mr Gambhir added.

The Delhi BJP has launched a campaign for the collection of donations through coupons across the city. The key responsibility to oversee the donation campaign in the city has been given to Delhi BJP general secretary Kuljeet Chahal. "Coupons of ₹10; ₹100; and ₹1,000 will be used for the collection of donations from as many households as possible. No cash is allowed to be taken from any person," he said.

Uma Bharti demands prohibition in BJP states

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, JAN. 21

BJP leader and former chief minister Uma Bharti on Thursday demanded prohibition in the BJP-ruled states.

Her demand incidentally comes in the wake of state home minister Narottam Mishra proposing to open more liquor shops in Madhya Pradesh to generate revenue.

Ms Bharti said she wanted to draw the attention of BJP national president J P Nadda through social media to her demand.

In a series of tweets, Ms Bharti said alcohol caused more deaths than road accidents. But, the government has ignored prohibition for the sake of revenue. In another tweet, she said the system promotes liquor consumption. The liquor lobby has been influencing the government to shun probation.

"Allowing to open liquor shops by the government is like a mother giving poison to her child," she said.

She attributed the victory of BJP in the recent Bihar elections to the prohibition imposed in the state.

■ **Continued from Page 1** vaccination. Union health minister Dr Hardh Vardhan blamed the Opposition for spreading "misinformation" as he launched a special campaign to address vaccine hesitancy and "misinformation."

"Let us put a stop to these falsehoods. Truth is powerful and shall prevail. The paradox is that countries across the globe are asking us for access to the vaccines while a section of our own is foment-

ing misinformation and doubts for narrow political ends," said Dr Harsh Vardhan while urging people to "follow the truth" and "seek the correct information from authentic sources."

The campaign will include publicising "impactful messages" from key technical experts from the country who have already taken the Covid-19 vaccine. The campaign will also try to convince beneficiaries on the safety and efficacy of

the vaccines and their critical role in controlling the pandemic. The government has also tweaked the Co-Win software to allow more session sites to increase the pace of vaccination.

The minister gave examples of polio and smallpox that could be eliminated due to large-scale immunisation. Commenting on the safety and efficacy of the vaccines, he said, "All eminent doctors of well-known hospitals have

taken the vaccine and praised the exercise for its desired end.

It is only a handful of vested political interests who are interested in spreading rumour and encouraging vaccine hesitancy among those vulnerable to such propaganda in the population. The paradox is that countries across the globe are asking us for access to the vaccines while a section of our own is fomenting misinformation and doubt for narrow political ends."



THE ASIAN AGE

22 JANUARY 2021

A return to decency in US will be good for the world

Young American poet Amanda Gorman may have stolen the show at the inauguration of the new US President with her words in verse: “And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us, but what stands before us.” In a sense, the poetic line summarises Joseph Robinette Biden Jr’s fundamentally reassuring message that the United States can heal while it recovers and rebuilds even as he attempts to reconcile and rectify the stark differences brought to the fore in four years of the Donald Trump era. The sense of calm resolve that Mr Biden, America’s 46th President, conveyed amid rhetoric and realism in bringing up “white supremacy” and “domestic terrorism” might have been just what was required after the tumultuous events of just two weeks ago when the same US Capitol, a pillar of democracy, was under siege.

Mr Biden’s ability to find the right words as he plays the healer who can stitch together the seemingly unbridgeable divide was the highlight. His talk of “American aspiration”, as opposed to the “America First” that his predecessor had emphasised at his 2017 inaugural, was tempered by post-pandemic humility after the US has been scarred more than any other nation with 400,000 deaths and millions more sick. The advent of the new presidency is not so much a transition as a sea change from the rule of his predecessor who showed scant regard for basic science and who upended news cycles with untruths distributed on social media platforms. In the face of crass challenges to democratic traditions, Mr Biden’s call for public comity was comforting: “Let’s begin to listen to one another again, hear one another, see one another.”

“Without unity there is no peace, only bitterness and fury, no progress, only exhausting outrage,” helped echo the ringing truth of old maxims on unity amid diversity that the world seems to have forgotten, thanks to the cascade of crises carried by the virus including the disruption of large parts of the global economy. In a welter of executive action, Mr Biden is bringing the United States back into the Paris agreement on climate change and into the World Health Organisation, besides stopping the construction of the “Mexican Wall” and addressing immigration issues thrown up by a racist and insular predecessor. The liberal revival promises more towards repairing hurt allies and equitable trade deals, obviating the need for tariff or sanctions-ridden confrontations that Mr Trump’s Washington had so preferred.

The dazzling optics of fireworks lighting up Capitol Hill was in keeping with the celebration of the inauguration while celebrity entertainers ushered in sobriety in view of the Covid-riddled times we are living in. There were messages to be read too in the ascension of vice-president Kamala Devi Harris, the first Black American and first person of Indian descent who was sworn in with her hand on two Bibles. The absence of the outgoing President Trump seemed inconspicuous, though he had the decency to leave a “generous letter” for his successor. In the end, the oldest democracy did survive the threat even as the “Proud Boys”, who were eulogised by Mr Trump, began mocking him as “a total failure”. One can only hope the return to decency and truth in America might ease the path to a global revival too.

Is Lone playing BJP games?

The recent decision of Sajjad Lone, the founder-leader of the small Kashmir valley party, the People’s Conference, to leave the People’s Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) not long after the PAGD parties performed well in the recent District Development Council (DDC) election cannot but cause surprise.

The impression it is likely to leave in Kashmir is that Mr Lone didn’t have the stomach for the fight ahead. The PAGD was created to struggle peacefully — using all democratic means — for the restoration of Article 370 of the Constitution, which gave constitutional autonomy to J&K and was squelched by the Centre in August 2019.

Since the PC has pulled out of what is an anti-BJP alliance, the surmise apt to be drawn in the valley is that the PC leader has been brought to his knees by the Centre, possibly through a deft mix of incentives and intimidation — the sorry fate of many in the country.

Mr Lone’s PC is limited to a corner of north Kashmir. Since the arrival of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the scene six years ago, the PC leader became the first valley politician to cozy up to the PM and the BJP. But in the environment created when the BJP scuttled its own alliance government with the People’s Democratic Party in J&K (in which Mr Lone was a minister), the latter joined the Gupkar Alliance founded by National Conference and PDP a day before Article 370 was read down and hundreds of valley politicians pushed into jail.

By breaking from the Gupkar group, Mr Lone would appear to have gone back to his position of affinity with BJP. Splitting away from PAGD carries the optics of the weakening of the anti-BJP forces in J&K. But in Kashmir valley such optics are likely to be derided in the present atmosphere. Mr Lone chose a lame explanation for his departure, saying PAGD parties had put up proxy candidates against official PAGD candidates in the DDC polls. This is true enough, but the remedy would seem to lie in taking steps to politically invigorate PAGD, not flit away from it. This is why the sense in the Valley is that Mr Lone’s tail has been twisted by the Centre.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



Transparency needed to remove all vaccine fears



Karan Thapar

As I See It

I’m used to school-boys squabbling, hacks quarrelling and, even, fish-wives shouting like alley cats but doctors and scientists lunging at each other’s throats came as a complete surprise. Unfortunately, that’s what we have witnessed as differences of opinion, particularly over Bharat Biotech’s Covaxin vaccine, transformed into vicious disputes and nasty divisions. The fact that this is not edifying is the least of my concerns. More important, I fear it is fuelling vaccine hesitancy, not just among the uninformed general population but also among those who are well aware of the need for vaccination.

In its main front-page story, Tuesday’s *Hindustan Times* reported that the average turnout was “less than 50 per cent” for the first three days of vaccination. Out of 7,704 sessions, where 100 people per session should have been vaccinated, only 381,305 people have taken the jab. What makes this low turnout worse is that at this stage it is health workers who are getting vaccinated. These are the people who understand the importance of vaccination. Normally, they don’t need to be convinced. So, if they’re backing off, that would suggest a possibly bigger problem.

It’s this problem that I want to focus on today. At its heart, I would say, is the controversy over the efficacy of Covaxin which, in turn, has been made considerably worse by an inexplicable attack by 49 doctors and scientists on the experts who were the first to raise legitimate questions about the vaccine. Far from allaying the concerns, which are

legitimate and need answering, these 49 gentlemen seem to suggest it is anti-national to raise valid doubts and it is our patriotic duty to grit our teeth and take the vaccine. Well, that is an attitude almost calculated to rile people. And it certainly had that effect on doctors, nurses, ward boys and other health workers.

To understand my point, let’s come to the perceived problem with Covaxin and then turn to the inflammatory critique it has unnecessarily provoked.

The problem arises from the fact Covaxin has been cleared “for restricted use in emergency situations ... in clinical trial mode” although its efficacy data from Phase 3 trials is not available. Two of India’s top virologists, Gagandeep Kang and Shahid Jameel, have questioned this. Their reasons for doing so are simple. Though safe, we still don’t know how efficacious it is. As they have explained, without credibly established efficacy data we don’t know if Covaxin works or how well it works. It’s being given in the belief that it will but if that turns out not to be the case not only will that seriously damage trust in vaccination, but it could also mean many recipients, who think they are protected and inevitably drop their guard, could end up getting needlessly infected. If this happens, it can only add to our problems.

However, the case against using Covaxin goes further. Experts also say the argument it is an acceptable shortcut in a pandemic doesn’t hold. First of all, both cases and deaths are a fraction of what they were when they peaked in September. So, there’s no emergency now.

Second, we have other vaccines with credibly established efficacy that we could use. And they’re available in sufficient quantity. So, as Dr Kang told me in a recent interview: “I would ask why would you want to give a vaccine without efficacy emergency-use authorisation in these circumstances?”

Now the government’s doctors have advanced a third reason for prematurely pushing Covaxin. They claim it could be better at tackling new strains of the virus. The problem is that there’s absolutely no data to support this. Both Dr Kang and Dr Jameel say it is simply “an hypothesis”. This time Krishna Ella, chairman of Bharat Biotech, which has made Covaxin, agrees. On January 4, he publicly admitted that “it’s only an hypothesis right now”. Isn’t it odd that the government should think otherwise?

In fact, on January 4, Dr Krishna Ella went one step further. Most people have forgotten about this additional point which is why it’s worth recalling. “Just give me one week’s time (and) I’ll give confirmatory data”, he said. Two weeks and more have passed but he hasn’t done so. Instead, he’s gone silent on the subject.

It was in the face of such well-established concerns that 49 doctors and scientists decided to vindictively pounce on those who initially raised them. In a statement released on January 14 and within hours tweeted by the health ministry, they attacked what they

It’s both bizarre and deplorable to frame differences over the efficacy of Covaxin as issues of national pride or as an attempt to run down Indian achievements. Yet that is what the 49 did.

called “irresponsible statements by vested interests ... defaming (the) Indian scientific community and casting aspersions upon its integrity by making politicised statements about the recent research in the field of Covid-19 vaccines”. Referring to doubts about Covaxin as “reprehensible utterances”, the 49 sought to wrap themselves in the flag by asserting they have “a vision to make India a global leader in scientific research” and “a name to reckon with”. And, presumably for Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s benefit, they added they are “*atma nirbhar*”.

Frankly, it’s not just bizarre but deplorable to frame differences over the efficacy of Covaxin as issues of national pride or as an attempt to run down Indian achievements. Yet that is what the 49 did. No doubt the sound of the patriotic drum they tried to beat was music to their ears, but it turned out to be a discordant and disturbing note for the doctors, nurses and assorted health workers who they imagined would be reassured. It seems to have put them off in very sizeable numbers. As I said earlier, they’ve probably made matters much worse.

So, if we are going to ensure that Indians in their hundreds of millions get willingly vaccinated, we must be fully transparent about the vaccines we are using and their efficacy and not attack as “anti-national” all those who raise legitimate concerns. But if that doesn’t suffice to resolve the spreading doubts, we might have to consider temporarily withdrawing Covaxin till its efficacy is sufficiently and credibly established. Remember, the important goal is to get the largest number of people vaccinated. Which vaccine is used should be a mere detail.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

UP’S HATE LAB

When people lose their jobs and have no gainful engagement they become the perfect fodder for hate and hooliganism. The classic laboratory for this experiment has been Uttar Pradesh. No surprises then that a bunch of hooligans have demolished a toilet which stood at the Saharanpur bus depot and proved a blessing for daily travellers for 40 years. The thing that angered them was that it was situated next to a temple. But then where were these hooligans for 40 years? The rowdies kept chanting the name of Lord Ram during demolition. By the way, the toilet was on government land. Will the Yogi government recover the damages?

Syed Abdul Monim
Navi Mumbai

‘REPUBLIC OF ARNAB’

THE LEAKED WHATSAPP chats between former BARC CEO Partha Dasgupta and Republic TV editor Arnab Goswami are clear evidence of foul play. As the Maharashtra Congress has alleged, it doubtlessly amounts to a violation of the Official Secrets Act, 1923, which the Mumbai police are probing. The conversations show that the two lobbied with those in power for good ratings and colluded to give Goswami’s channel an advantage. This is serious breach of national security, media ethics, rule of law and governance.

Shovanlal Chakraborty
Kolkata

UNASSUMING JILL

THE SWEARING-IN of Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States by Chief Justice John Roberts brings the curtains down on Donald Trump’s tainted legacy, made bitter by the January 6 riot at the US Capitol. We expect Mr Biden, the oldest president in US history, to undo many of Mr Trump’s policies. Significantly, Mr Biden pledged to repair America’s global alliances and end ban on arrivals from certain Muslim countries. Will he make America great again? At his side is not only his illustrious vice-president, Kamala Harris, but his trusted All American wife, Jill, who, unambitious but progressive as she is, will function as his anchor.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

Rafia Zakaria



How Big Tech giants finally dealt crushing blow to Trump

Donald J. Trump spent the last days of his presidency sulking in the White House residence, isolating himself from nearly everyone and busying himself in making an enemies list, which included his own vice-president. One of the few people seen visiting him was a man who made a small fortune selling pillows on television and is a consumer of the most bizarre conspiracy theories possible.

Washington D.C. was a ghost town peopled only by National Guardsmen called up to defend the Capitol against the angry mobs unleashed by the President’s caustic vitriol. Even these men weren’t quite trustworthy; they were being vetted again to ensure they weren’t secret Trump supporters who would compromise the new President’s security.

Of all the humiliations Donald Trump has been subjected to, however, the worst hadn’t come from his political opponents. It came not on the day of the Capitol insurrection or even the impeachment that followed, but on the day that Twitter suspended his account. In an instant, the President who had goaded his supporters to fight

hard, feeding them a steady diet of lies, conspiracy theories and deceit for years, had no means to get in touch with them.

Mr Trump himself was likely stunned when this finally happened. For years, his detractors were hounding social media giants Twitter and Facebook to boot him out from their platforms. None of their entreaties worked; Mr Trump kept lying, riling up supporters, destroying careers, firing high-level Cabinet members, threatening politicians, instigating his supporters to deliver death threats, and his accounts were untouched. Even as he was actively spreading lies before and after the election, lies about mail-in voting, lies about who had won, and lies about rigging, Twitter and Facebook did nothing.

That changed after the Capitol Hill insurrection. Facebook and Twitter finally jettisoned Mr Trump. When an irate President tried to access the official POTUS account and started to tweet from there, that account was also suspended. In a belated purge, the two platforms began to delete pages and other accounts that were pushing for further attacks on the Capitol.

Extreme right-wing Trump supporters, members of militia groups like the Boogaloo Boys or neo-Nazi groups like The Proud Boys and many others immediately cried foul. Twitter and Facebook were engaging in censorship, they claimed, trying to quash speech on the right even as they let left-oriented groups operate without restrictions. The argument reflected just how far Trump supporters are from the one-time conservatives who used to make up the Republican Party. The latter group, with many who have long turned away from Donald Trump, would know, for instance, that freedom of speech and censorship rights do not apply to private companies but to governments. Free enterprise, a cherished conservative principle, stands for the freedom of Twitter and Facebook, both private companies, to kick out whomever they wish.

Annoyed at being booted out, Mr Trump’s MAGA supporters turned to a different quasi-Twitter service called Parler that was geared towards just those conservatives who were against Twitter’s rules of content and moderation. Parler doesn’t moderate any of its

content, allowing anything and everything to be said and shared on the site. In the minds of Mr Trump’s staunchest supporters, this was the ideal free-speech zone, where the harm words can cause was simply no consideration at all. Mr Trump’s faithful, many of whom already had Parler accounts, trooped off. If the liberals in charge of Twitter and Facebook would kick them out, Parler was there to welcome them.

The tentacles of Big Tech, however, could reach longer and deeper than they imagined. Parler may have been a separate service that didn’t moderate its content, but it used Amazon Web Servers to host content, and the app was distributed via the Apple App Store and Google Play. These made it subject to the rules of service of Apple, Amazon, Google, etc. These other tech giants stepped in. If Parler wouldn’t moderate its content, they would refuse to host the site or allow the app to be sold. Ultimatums were handed down; they couldn’t be met, and so the week after the Capitol insurrection Parler went dark. The conservatives who funded it vowed the site would be back, but without web server hosting it appeared this would be a tall order.

Big Tech’s role in first pushing and then ultimately (belatedly) removing Mr Trump will be debated for decades to come. It’s hard not to wonder about how many people would still be alive if Twitter and Facebook had done what they did this January a year ago; they would have denied Mr Trump a platform to spread lies about Covid-19 and the election. A study completed by the *Washington Post* found that in the two weeks since Mr Trump was suspended from Twitter, misinformation on the election and the events that followed had been reduced by a whopping 72 per cent.

Donald Trump, who tweeted hundreds of times a day on some days and whose tweets are now a part of history, will never have access to a Twitter account again. His is a lifetime ban applied not to a particular account but to him as a person regardless of which account he uses. The story of Mr Trump’s end is in this sense as much a tale of how giant tech companies now have the power to make or break governments, even in the most powerful country in the world.

By arrangement with Dawn

SHORT TAKES

POPE CALLS ON BIDEN TO FOSTER 'RECONCILIATION'

Vatican City, Jan. 21: Pope Francis on Wednesday urged the United States' new president Joe Biden to promote "reconciliation and peace" around the world following his inauguration.

He offered Biden, the second Roman Catholic to become US president after John F. Kennedy, his "cordial good wishes and the assurance of my prayers" in the task ahead.

"Under your leadership, may the American people continue to draw strength from the lofty political, ethical and religious values that have inspired the nation since its founding," he said. "At a time when the grave crises facing our human family call for far-sighted and united responses, I pray that your decisions will be guided by a concern for building a society marked by authentic justice and freedom," the Pope said.

MEXICO LAUDS BIDEN HALT TO BORDER WALL

Mexico City, Jan. 21: Mexico on Wednesday hailed US President Joe Biden's order to halt construction of former President Donald Trump's wall along the US-Mexican border, as well as his other immigration-linked reforms. "Mexico welcomes the end of the construction of the wall, the immigration initiative in favour of DACA and a path to dual citizenship," Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard wrote on Twitter.

He was referring to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals programme to regularize the immigration status of young people who arrived illegally as children, which Trump tried to shut down.

The Republican sparked anger during his 2016 election campaign when he branded Mexican migrants "rapists" and drug dealers, and vowed to build a wall across the southern US border.

'STRENGTHEN' U.S.-ISRAEL TIES, BIBI TELLS BIDEN

Jerusalem, Jan. 21: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday urged new US President Joe Biden to "strengthen" a long-standing alliance between the two countries, partly to confront the "threat" posed by Iran. "I look forward to working with you to further strengthen the US-Israel alliance, to continue expanding peace between Israel and the Arab world and to confront common challenges, chief among them the threat posed by Iran," Netanyahu said.

The Israeli leader was speaking in a video congratulating Biden moments after he was sworn in as US president.

Netanyahu, who has referred to Trump as the "best friend" Israel has had in the White House, noted that he had "a warm personal friendship going back many decades" with Biden. Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, said it was "not sorry" to see Trump depart, calling him "the world's main source and sponsor of oppression, violence and extremism" and partner in "Israeli aggression" against the Palestinians.

INTEL CHIEF 1ST NOMINEE TO GET SENATE NOD

Washington, Jan. 21: The US Senate voted Wednesday to confirm former CIA official Avril Haines as director of national intelligence, making her the first member of newly-inaugurated President Joe Biden's Cabinet to gain approval. Senate Democrats and Republicans gave strong support to Haines, voting 84-10 to make her the first woman ever to lead the 18 entities of the US intelligence community.

Biden and the Senate are moving quickly to get key members of his government in place, with votes expected in the coming days on the secretaries of defence, state and the Treasury.

Biden, sworn in Wednesday as successor to Donald Trump, has pledged to hit the ground running to deal with several major challenges.

But until the Senate approves his nominees, government departments will be led by acting secretaries and directors, keeping a brake on some of his administration's momentum.

Haines, 51, is a veteran of the intelligence world, having served as deputy CIA director and deputy national security advisor in the previous Obama-Biden administration.

US rejoins climate accord, Muslim travel ban lifted, masks mandatory

President Biden reverses Trump's decisions, sets a clear policy path for new administration

Washington, Jan. 21: US President Joe Biden signed a series of executive orders to launch his administration Wednesday, including a decision to rejoin the Paris climate accord and a mask mandate for all federal buildings.

The orders included keeping the United States in the World Health Organization, ending the ban on entries from mostly Muslim-majority countries, bolstering environmental protections and strengthening the fight against Covid-19.

Also among the directives was a halt to construction of the wall on the US-Mexico border, and efforts to expand diversity and equality for minority groups in the federal government.

The orders were aimed at reversing decisions by his predecessor Donald Trump and setting a clear policy path for Biden's new administration, just hours after he was sworn in as president.

"Some of things we are going to be doing are going to be bold," he said in the Oval Office.

"We are going to combat climate change in a way we have not done so far," Biden said of returning to the Paris agreement, a treaty signed by most nations in 2016 to limit global warming.

He said his actions on the Covid-19 pandemic, which has claimed 400,000 American lives, would help change the course of the crisis.

His return to the Paris Agreement, which the United States joined Barack Obama was president and Biden vice president, was lauded by other leaders.

"Welcome back," said French President Emmanuel Macron.

"We are together. We will be stronger to face the challenges of our time. Stronger to build our future. Stronger to protect our planet." UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also welcomed the move, saying it was a large step for the leading producers of global carbon pollution. "But there is a very long way to go," he said in a statement.

"We look forward to the leadership of United States in accelerating global efforts towards net zero" emissions, he said, calling for "ambitious" new targets for 2030 and expanded climate finance.

Biden's climate czar John Kerry hailed the move as a boon for "America's credibility and commitment — setting a floor, not a ceiling, for our climate leadership."

— AFP

SOME ORDERS THAT BIDEN SIGNED

● **KEEPING THE** United States in the World Health Organisation.

● **A DECISION** to rejoin the Paris climate accord, a treaty signed by most nations in 2016 to limit global warming. His return to the Paris Agreement, which the United States joined Barack Obama was president and Biden vice president, was lauded by other leaders.

● **A MASK** mandate for all federal buildings.

● **END TO** the ban on entries from mostly Muslim-majority countries.

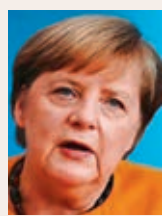
● **BOLSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL** protections.

● **STRENGTHENING** THE fight against the deadly Coronavirus pandemic.

● **EFFORTS TO** expand diversity and equality for minority groups in the federal government.



A TV screen broadcasts the news of the inauguration of US President Joe Biden at a shopping mall in Hong Kong, on Thursday. — AP



There is a much broader scope of political accord with President Biden. There would be debates about how we can do things well for both countries. Biden represents the interests of the US, I represent those of the Federal Republic of Germany.

— ANGELA MERKEL
German Chancellor

Best wishes on this most significant day for the American people! We are together. We will be stronger to face the challenges of our time. Stronger to build our future. Stronger to protect our planet. Welcome back to the Paris Agreement!

— EMMANUEL MACRON
French President

Even in dark times, we not only dream, we do: Harris

Washington, Jan. 21: In her first remarks to the nation as US Vice President, Kamala Harris has highlighted "American aspiration" and underlined that President Joe Biden has summoned the people to look beyond crisis and aspire to unite. Harris, 56, made history on Wednesday when she was sworn in as the first female, first PoC and first Asian-American US vice-president. The former senator was sworn in just before

Biden took the oath of office to become the 46th US President.

"In many ways this moment embodies our character as a nation. It demonstrates who we are, even in dark times. We, not only dream, we do. We not only see what has been, we see what can be.

"We shoot for the moon, and then we plant our flag on it. We are bold, fearless and ambitious. We are undaunted, in our belief that we shall overcome,

that we will rise up. This is American aspiration," Harris said outside the Lincoln Memorial.

She cited the accomplishments of President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, who "saw a better future and built it with land grant colleges, and the transcontinental railroad."

She also highlighted how Martin Luther King Jr fought for racial and economic justice.

— PTI

Harris success inspire students

Montreal, Jan. 21: Students at a high school in Canada were glued Wednesday to coverage of former student Kamala Harris's inauguration as US vice president, saying her achievements would drive them to reach new goals. Harris, then aged 12, moved to Montreal

with her sister Maya in 1976 when their divorced mother relocated the family to pursue her career as a cancer researcher.

From 1978 to 1981 Harris attended Westmount High, which also counts singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen among its alumni. "I find it so crazy that a

woman from this school, my own high school, went and became such a great woman, and now she is the vice president of the USA," a student named Brenda said. Harris was an extroverted American teenager who identified as African-American, former classmates said.

— AFP

Harris credits mom for showing faith

New York, Jan. 21: Kamala Harris, who scripted history by becoming the first-ever woman Vice President of the US, has credited her Indian mother for showing faith in her and always reminding her two daughters that "though we may be the first, we should not be the last."

Harris remembered her late mother Shyamala Gopalan, a cancer researcher and civil rights activist from India, saying she has always carried that lesson from her mother with her throughout her career from serving as the first woman District Attorney of San Francisco, to the first woman Attorney General of California, and the first woman of colour to represent California in the United States Senate.

Harris, 56, created history on Wednesday by becoming the first-ever woman Vice President of the United States.

She is also the first female, first PoC and first

South Asian American vice president.

"My story is the story of millions of Americans. My mother Shyamala Gopalan arrived in the United States from India. She raised my sister Maya and me to know that though we may be the first, we should not be the last, Harris said at the Presidential Inaugural Committee's official Asian American inaugural ball, hosted virtually by IMPACT, the leading Indian American advocacy and political action committee on Wednesday.

"Your continued faith in me has brought me to this moment, she said.

She thanked IMPACT and RUN AAPI, an Asian American voter outreach organisation, for their leadership, asserting that the contributions of the Asian Pacific American community are woven throughout the fabric of the US.

— PTI

Bring ties back on the right track, urges China

Beijing, Jan. 21: A visibly relieved China on Thursday warmly congratulated new US President Joe Biden and urged him to heal and rebuild the severely damaged bilateral ties by his predecessor Donald Trump. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying, known for fiery retorts against the US, welcomed Biden's first moves to join the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organisation (WHO) which was trashed by

Trump as a puppet of China over its conduct to deal with the Covid-19.

"We express congratulations on the inauguration of President Biden. I noted many US media say this is a new day in America...After travelling an extraordinary period, we believe our two peoples deserve to embrace a better future. We hope Biden will be successful in governance," she said.

"I noticed the word unity has been mentioned several times in his inaugural

speech. This is what is urgently needed in our bilateral relations," she said, adding that over the past four years "a handful of US politicians made so many lies and incited so much hatred and division".

"Chinese and Americans have fallen victims to this," she said and asked the new US administration to bring the damaged China-US ties on the right track.

"We have different social systems, development stages and historical cul-

ture. It is only natural for us to have differences. Just as Biden said democracy should allow the right to dissent and disagreement must not lead to disunion, this should also be true to international relations," she said.

"Countries with different ideologies, social systems and culture can live in harmony and achieve the goal of common development and peace and development for the world," she said.

— PTI

TRUMP'S LETTER 'GENEROUS': BIDEN

Washington, Jan. 21: US President Joe Biden has said his predecessor Donald Trump has left him a "very generous" letter in the Oval Office before departing the White House. It is customary for outgoing presidents to write their successors a letter and leave it for them on the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office.

However, given that the

former president broke several of the past traditions, including by opting to skip Biden's inauguration ceremony and never formally congratulated him on his election win, it was unclear until Wednesday whether Trump would maintain the tradition of outgoing presidents leaving notes for their successors.

— PTI

WOMEN'S | SUFFRAGE

Michelle Obama drew praise from fans on social media for her belted pantsuit in plum

Inauguration fashion: Purple, pearls, US designers

Washington, Jan. 21: Joe Biden and Kamala Harris showcased American designers at their inauguration Wednesday, and Harris gave a nod to women's suffrage, Shirley Chisholm and her beloved sorority in pearls and purple.

Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush also donned hues of purple. Harris has cited Chisholm, a Democrat from New York, as an inspiration for her career.

Chisholm was the first PoC woman elected to

Congress and the first PoC major-party candidate to run for US president.

Pearls had a strong fashion showing, in line with a social media campaign that had inauguration watchers donning strands in support and celebration of Harris. Nobody in attendance did them quite like Jennifer Lopez — from earrings to bracelets — as she sang "This Land is Your Land" in head-to-toe white Chanel.

Rep. Barbara Lee, a California Democrat, wore a pearl necklace owned by

Chisholm herself. It was a gift from Chisholm's goddaughter.

"Because of Shirley Chisholm, I am," Lee, who is PoC, posted on Twitter. "Because of Shirley Chisholm, Vice President Harris is."

The pearls Harris wore, by Wilfredo Rosado, were also a symbol of unity with her sisters in Alpha Kappa Alpha, the first African American Greek-letter sorority, said Rachel Torgerson, fashion features director for *Cosmopolitan*.

The sorority's founders are referred to as the "Twenty Pearls." Every new member receives a badge adorned with 20 pearls.

Harris attended Howard University, one of the nation's historically PoC colleges and universities.

"There's no doubt that every part of her look today celebrates who she is, where she came from and where she hopes to lead the country. Every piece was carefully considered and packed with meaning," Torgerson said.

Like Harris, Rosado is the child of immigrants. Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders drew fashion praise on social media for his cozy, comfortable inauguration wear: His signature beige parka and a pair of knit patterned mittens. The look earned him his own inauguration Bobblehead to mark his viral fashion moment. It's now on pre-sale for \$25 at the National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum's online store.

Jill Biden wore an ocean blue wool tweed coat over

a dress by American designer Alexandra O'Neill of the Markarian label. Aides said Harris was dressed in Christopher John Rogers and Sergio Hudson. Both are Black designers, Rogers from Louisiana and Hudson from South Carolina. Harris' husband, Doug Emhoff, wore a Ralph Lauren suit.

Michelle Obama, a fashion icon, drew praise from fans on social media for her belted pantsuit in plum, also by Hudson.

— AP



Michelle Obama

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49624.76	-0.34
Nifty 50	14590.40	-0.37
S&P 500*	3,854.89	0.08
Dollar (₹)	72.98	0.06
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.02	-0.04
Euro (₹)	88.44	0.12
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,125.575	1.17
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.95	-0.23
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.956	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.114	0.024

* As of 8:30 PM IST

SBI Cards net profit plunges 52% to ₹210 cr

SBI Cards and Payment Services Ltd reported nearly 52 per cent dip in its net profit to Rs 210 crore in the December quarter on higher provisioning. The pure-play credit card firm had posted a net profit of Rs 435 crore in the year-ago quarter. Its total income grew marginally to Rs 2,540 crore from Rs 2,563 crore. SBI Cards said its total management overlay provision stood at Rs 1,113 crore in Q3 against Rs 758 crore in Q2.

Asian Paints Q3 profit jumps 62% to ₹1,265 crore



Asian Paints reported a 62.28 per cent jump in its consolidated profit to Rs 1,265.35 crore for the third quarter against Rs 779.71 crore a year ago, Revenue from operations stood at Rs 6,886.39 crore, up 25.43 per cent, against Rs 5,490.11 crore. Amit Syngle, MD & CEO, said demand conditions continued to exhibit a strong recovery across business segments, spread over most regions in the third quarter.

Bajaj Auto PAT jumps 23% to ₹1,556 crore

Bajaj Auto reported a 23 per cent jump in profit after tax at Rs 1,556 crore for the December quarter on the back of higher volumes and exports against a PAT of Rs 1,262 crore in the year-ago quarter, the firm said. Its sales from operations rose 17 per cent to Rs 8,910 crore, compared with Rs 7,640 crore in the year-ago period. The firm sold 13,06,810 vehicles during the third quarter, a rise of 9 per cent.

Cyient Q3 net profit falls 12% to ₹95 crore

IT firm Cyient reported a 11.9 per cent decline in net profit at Rs 95.4 crore for the December quarter. The Hyderabad-based firm had posted a net profit of Rs 108.3 crore in the year-ago period. Its revenue fell 5.6 per cent to Rs 1,044.3 crore from Rs 1,106 crore YoY. On sequential basis, net profit was higher by 13.8 per cent from Rs 83.9 crore, while revenue was higher by 4.1 per cent from Rs 1,003.3 crore in the September quarter.

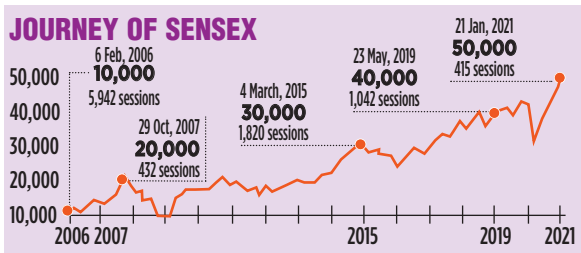
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■ It has taken 30 years for index to go from 1K to 50K
Sensex retreats after breaking 50000 barrier

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 21

The Sensex breached the 50000 barrier for the first time ever in early morning trade and made a new all time high of 50,184 on positive global cues. However, due to profit taking in the last hour of trading, the benchmark index fell sharply from the historic highs and closed at 49624, down by 167 points or 0.34 per cent. The broader Nifty-50 Index also made a new all-time high of 14753 but closed lower at 14590.35, down by 54.35 points.

Provisional data showed profit taking by the domestic institutions of Rs 1,039.48 crore while the foreign portfolio investors were net buyers by Rs 1,614.66 crore. The market's rally has been driven by ample liquidity, as foreign portfolio



investors have pumped the highest ever money into Indian market of Rs 2,41,021 crore so far in this financial year, far more than the previous high of Rs 1,40,033 crore in 2012-13. This month, too, they have bought equities worth over Rs 22,730 crore. From 1990 when the index crossed the 1000-mark the first time ever, it took 30 years for the Sensex to reach 50000, analysts said.

Apart from the sharp rebound from the Covid-19 inflicted dislocation of eco-

nomics activity, liquidity and low interest rate have been major drivers of the current bull market rally, analysts said.

"The combination of strong capital inflows, low interest rates and leaner balance sheet of Indian corporates along with government measures for growth is expected to lift the economic growth ahead. The same is likely to resonate in capital markets, thereby keeping the markets buoyant in the long term," said Vijay Chandok-MD & CEO, ICICI

Securities.

Nilesh Shah, group president & MD, Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company, said, "The Sensex touching 50000 in 2021 is like Indian cricket team winning test series in Australia against all odds of Covid-19. While economic data is about the past which is improving month-on-month, the Sensex is reflecting the positivity about the future."

"As the sensex crosses the 50K, the valuations do look stretched. The valuations are a function of earnings and earnings not coming through remains the key risk at the current juncture. The continuous up-move not backed by fundamentals may make the rally fragile, going ahead," said Joseph Thomas, head of research-Emkay Wealth Management.

Govt okays closure of Scooters India

New Delhi, Jan. 21: The company that manufactured famous scooters like Lambretta and Vijai Super will be shut down after the Cabinet gave its nod to a proposal to close the loss-making state-owned firm, sources said.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) is believed to have given consent to shutting down Lucknow-based Scooters India Ltd at its



meeting on Wednesday, they said.

The Scooters India brand name shall be sold separately as the company holds famous brands such as Lambretta, Vijai Super, Vikram and Lambro,

shared an official. The company produces several types of three-wheelers under the Vikram brand.

The government's go-ahead to the closure proposal paves the way for the heavy industry ministry to begin the process of winding up of the firm.

As per the proposed plan presented to the Cabinet, Rs 65.12 crore required for closure of Scooters India is being sought as loan

with interest from the Government of India, sources said.

The proposal also entails offering voluntary retirement scheme/voluntary separation scheme (VRS/VSS) to the regular employees. The firm has around 100 employees.

Moreover, 147.49 acres of the company's land shall be returned to the UP State Industrial Development Authority. —PTI

France to shut 40% of cash-handling centres

WILLIAM HOROBIN
JAN. 21

The Bank of France will shut down more than a third of its cash handling centres by the end of 2022 as the Covid-19 pandemic accelerates a decline in the use of notes and coins.

Operations will cease at 14 of the 37 centres that stock currency and replace damaged notes and coins. The central bank estimates the network would be 40 per cent underused if it remained as expansive as it is now.

Lockdowns to curb virus infections have pushed more shoppers onto online platforms, while the raising of the ceiling for contactless payments has encouraged card use. There are also concerns over contagion via bank notes, although the central bank has denied there are risks.

That's given extra impetus to the decline in cash usage, which already fell 20 per cent between 2012 and 2019. The central bank expects a further 25 per cent drop by 2022 from last year's levels.

France, along with the Netherlands and Finland, is one of the euro-area



countries where consumers have traditionally favoured cards over cash, said Erick Lacourrege, managing director of cash, branches and services at the Bank of France. In contrast, Germany, Spain and Italy have been much slower to move away from notes and coins.

"There's a generalised decline in the use of cash throughout the world," Lacourrege said, but "the speed of decline isn't the same in every country, and France is one place where it is falling the fastest in the euro area."

The closures will impact 134 people at the Bank of France, he said. They'll be offered early retirement packages, retraining for other jobs, or posts in cash centres that remain open. —Bloomberg

NSE arm takes over Cogencis

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 21

NSE Data & Analytics Ltd, a 100 per cent subsidiary of the National Stock Exchange of India, has acquired Cogencis Information Services Ltd, which provides real-time market data terminals to institutional customers.

"NSE Data has acquired 100 per cent equity in Cogencis from Samara Capital and minority shareholders, including the company's founder, co-founder, and an employee welfare trust," the NSE said.

The Cogencis Work-Station provides data on all asset classes, including foreign exchange, fixed income, equities, commodities, as well as macro-economic data, either generated on its own or aggregated through various sources.

As a part of the transaction, the news department of Cogencis has been sold to Informist Media Private Ltd. Cogencis has entered into a five-year exclusive commercial arrangement with Informist Media to source news.

IndiGo is now world's 7th biggest by capacity

ADITI SHAH & JAMIE FREED
NEW DELHI/SYDNEY, JAN. 21

IndiGo has emerged as one of the world's biggest airlines by capacity, aided by a swift recovery in the domestic aviation market to nearly 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels and the financial strength to boost market share as rivals struggle.

The airline is now the world's seventh biggest by capacity and the largest outside the United States and China, according to data firm OAG. It is a rare bright spot in a battered global aviation industry, providing a lifeline to squeezed lessors and aircraft manufacturers by paying bills on time and in full.

IndiGo took 44 planes from Airbus SE last year—the most of any customer and topping Delta Air Lines Inc and China Southern Airlines Co Ltd—as it replaced older planes with more fuel-efficient newer models. It is also gearing up to expand its fleet further from 2023.

With a 52 per cent domestic market share in 2020



versus 47 per cent in 2019, and profitability in sight after a loss last fiscal year, IndiGo is expanding its reach to smaller cities such as Ranchi, Patna and Gorakhpur to replace a fall in business travel on larger routes like New Delhi-Mumbai, CEO Ronojoy Dutta told Reuters.

It is also betting that faster growth and higher margins will come from non-stop flights to international destinations like Moscow, Cairo and Manila, which it can reach with its narrowbody planes, eliminating the need to complicate its fleet with widebody aircraft.

"As things stabilise, I'm very optimistic that by the end of 2021, I think we'll be totally back to normal,"

Dutta said, referring to the calendar year rather than the financial year ending March 31.

"And I think 2022 will be a great year for us in terms of growth and profitability," he added.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought global air travel to a halt, plunging airlines into the red. India imposed one of the toughest lockdowns and even now airlines can only fly 80 per cent of their capacity on domestic routes.

IndiGo already had free cash of Rs 8,930 crore (\$1.22 billion) as of March 31, 2020, a week after India went into lockdown, which it bolstered by raising more than Rs 3,000 crore over the next six months through the sale and leaseback of some assets and other cost-cutting measures.

Once IndiGo can operate at full capacity, it wants to ramp up its utilisation rate to a breakeven level of around 12 hours per day, compared with 10 hours currently, said Dutta, adding it would also be able to fill more seats and reduce unit costs. —Reuters

Sebi gives conditional nod to Future-Reliance deal

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 21

Ignoring the requests made by Amazon.com, the Securities and Exchange Board of India has given a conditional approval to the contested Future Group and Reliance Retail deal.

As per Sebi riders, indebted Future Group will have to seek the approval of shareholders and the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for the deal.

Based on the Sebi comments, BSE and NSE, in their separate observation reports, have stated that the comments on the draft scheme of arrangements are "subject to the outcome of any of the ongoing litigations/arbitration/ legal proceedings involving the draft scheme and/ or the decision by any competent authority/ competent court in this regard".

As per the Rs 24,713 crore deal, Future Group would be selling its retail, wholesale, logistics and warehouse businesses to Reliance Retail Ventures. But Amazon has opposed the deal.

Amazon, which had entered into another deal with Future Group earlier, had asked Sebi not to grant no-objection certificate to the deal. Both Delhi High Court and Singapore International Arbitration Centre are looking into the dispute between Future Group and Amazon.

K. Narasimhan, senior advocate, Madras High Court, said the Singapore Tribunal's proceedings would not be affected by



the Sebi approval. "The approval with conditions is just one part of the process," he said.

The Sebi said, the "company shall ensure that any future disputes, complaints, regulatory actions or proceedings, or orders issued therein involving the draft scheme if any, shall be brought to the notice of shareholders prior to the approval by NCLT".

Airing the concern of Amazon it said: "Company shall ensure that the details of the complaints made by Amazon.com NV Investment Holdings, the submissions of Future Retail and the counter submissions of Amazon and all the proceedings pending and completed relating to the same in the Delhi High Court, the award of Emergency Arbitrator in the Singapore International Arbitration Centre or any other ongoing court/arbitration proceedings or any other orders issued therein are brought into the notice of the shareholders of the listed entities involved in the scheme before taking shareholder approval.

Further the same shall also be brought to the notice of NCLT while filing the draft scheme for their approval".

Commenting on the approval, Amazon spokesperson said : "The letters issued by BSE & NSE clearly state that comments of Sebi on the "draft scheme of arrangement" (proposed transaction) are subject to the outcome of the ongoing Arbitration and any other legal proceedings. We will continue to pursue our legal remedies to enforce our rights".

Future Group founder and CEO Kishore Biyani had earlier indicated that it would take around 45 to 60 days to complete the deal after getting approval from the Sebi.

The stock exchanges have asked Future to ensure shareholders are informed that 74.2 per cent of the business value of the Future Enterprises Ltd is getting transferred to Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd and Reliance Retail and Fashion Lifestyle Ltd and that these two companies would not be seeking listing post the scheme of arrangement.

Nasscom keen to help US on STEM skills gap

New Delhi, Jan. 21: IT industry body Nasscom said it is looking forward to working with the new US administration to find solutions to the STEM skills gap and enable America to be more competitive and create more jobs.

The statement by Nasscom, which represents the over \$190-billion Indian IT sector, comes after Joe Biden was sworn in as the 46th US President and Kamala Harris took oath as America's first woman vice president on Wednesday.

Nasscom said a key challenge the technology sector faces is the lack of required STEM talent in the US and noted that despite a high degree of overall unemployment in the US, demand for high-tech skills continues to remain robust, endorsing the argument that there are just not enough workers with relevant skills to fill them. —PTI

STOVE KRAFT IPO FROM JAN.25

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 21

Kitchen appliances maker Stove Kraft's initial public offering in the price band of Rs 384 to Rs 385 per equity share of Rs 10 face value opens on January 25.

The IPO comprises a fresh issue of shares aggregating to Rs 95 crore and an offer for sale by promoters and private equity investors of up to 82.50 lakh equity shares to raise Rs 412 crore in total. The net proceeds from the fresh issue would be utilised in repayment of certain borrowings (Rs 76 crore) and for general corporate purposes.

Only 10 per cent share in the public issue will be offered to retail individual investors.

SHORT TAKES

Women hockey side stun Chile

Santiago, Chile: The Indian women's junior hockey team rallied from a goal down to script a stunning 3-2 win over the Chilean senior side at the Prince of Wales Country Club here. Deepika (39th), Sangita Kumari (45th) and Lalrindiki (47th) scored for India after Fernanda Villagran (21st) had given the hosts the advantage. Chile's Simone Avelli (56th) pulled one back late in the match, but it was not enough to force a comeback as the Indian junior team secured a creditable win. It was India's third consecutive victory on the tour. They had defeated Chile's junior side twice earlier this week. India started the match on the front-foot, twice penetrating inside Chile's striking circle, but without causing much damage. The home side's first real attack came in the 10th minute when they earned a penalty corner, but to no avail as the visitors defended it well. — PTI

Lewa shines to stifle Augsburg

Berlin: Robert Lewandowski scored his 22nd Bundesliga goal of the season as Bayern Munich stayed four points clear, helped by a late penalty miss from Alfred Finnbogason in a 1-0 victory at Augsburg on Wednesday. Lewandowski's 13th-minute penalty was enough for a win which kept the reigning champions clear of second-placed RB Leipzig, who edged out Union Berlin 1-0 thanks to an Emil Forsberg goal. But Bayern survived a late scare in the Bavaria derby as Finnbogason could only hit the post from the spot with 14 minutes to play. Poland striker Lewandowski has scored 10 goals more than his nearest rival, Dortmund's Erling Braut Haaland, in the Bundesliga this term. Bayern battered the hosts' goal with 15 first-half shots while Augsburg did not trouble the European champions with a single attempt in the first 45 minutes. — AFP

Collin's 42 puts Nets in shambles

Los Angeles: Collin Sexton scored a game-high 42 points as the Cleveland Cavaliers overcame a James Harden triple double and spoiled the debut of the Brooklyn Nets' Big Three with a 147-135 double overtime victory. Wednesday's marathon contest was supposed to showcase the Nets' star trio of Harden, Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving playing together for the first time together. Irving finished with 37 points, Harden had a triple double of 21 points, 10 rebounds and 12 assists and Durant tallied a team-high 38 points and 12 rebounds, but it wasn't enough as the Cavaliers had seven players in double-figure scoring at the Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse arena in Cleveland. Elsewhere, Dallas Mavericks got the better of host Indiana Pacers 124-112. — AFP

No threat to CWG in 2022

New Delhi: The Commonwealth Games Federation is confident the 2022 Birmingham CWG will go ahead as scheduled next year despite the host city's council leader's recent expression of doubts in view of a surge in Covid-19 cases in the UK. The Commonwealth Games are still 18 months away and Birmingham City Council leader Ian Ward last week said "we can't be certain" that the Games will go ahead amid concerns over pandemic. The council leader of town Walsall, Mike Bird, has also expressed concerns over the staging of the Games and has called for contingency plans. — PTI

Live on TV

BADMINTON
Thailand Open: Quarterfinal matches from 9.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

CRICKET
Big Bash League: Hobart Hurricanes vs Perth Scorchers from 10.35 am; Sydney Sixers vs Sydney Thunder from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

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Warm welcome for warriors

Nation's pride Rahane and victorious Indian team back home

Mumbai/ New Delhi, Jan. 21: Chants of 'aala re aala Ajinkya aala' headlined a red carpet welcome for Ajinkya Rahane as the stand-in captain, along with coach Ravi Shastri and some other members of the team, returned to the country on Thursday after India's epic triumph in Australia.

The chants (meaning here comes our Ajinkya) were heard amid the beating of the traditional dhol tasha and showering of flower petals at Rahane's residential complex.

Besides Rahane and Shastri, also arriving in Mumbai were star bats-

man Rohit Sharma, pacer Shardul Thakur and opener Prithvi Shaw, while Brisbane Test hero Rishabh Pant landed in the national capital early this morning.

T. Natarajan, who was originally picked as a net bowler but became the first Indian cricketer to make his international debut across all three formats during the same tour, landed in Bengaluru and then took off for his village in Tamil Nadu's Salem.

The players from Chennai, including veteran off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, rookie

Washington Sundar and bowling coach Bharat Arun are currently in Dubai and are expected to reach the country early morning on Friday.

On arrival in Mumbai, Rahane, Shastri, Rohit, Shardul and Shaw were felicitated by Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) officials, including President Vijay Patil and Apex Council members Ajinkya Naik, Amit Dani and Umesh Khanvilka.

Rahane also cut a cake to celebrate the team's win.

However, more surprises awaited the reticent batsman after he drove straight to his housing

society in suburban Matunga, where residents had made elaborate preparations to accord their hero a royal welcome.

Rahane was welcomed with the beats of dhol, while others showered the cricketer with flower petals. Rahane was also joined by his wife and two-year-old daughter in the celebration.

Soaking in the carnival-like atmosphere, Rahane acknowledged the love and adulation showered on him by the people of the city, many of whom waited for his team at the airport wearing masks amid the Covid-19 pan-

demic. In his society, residents and videographers jostled to capture the moments and the unassuming batsman posed happily for them.

Rahane was then greeted in a traditional manner as he walked towards the entrance of the building.

Dhol tasha is usually played to celebrate special achievements and during joyous occasions.

An injury-ravaged India beat Australia by three wickets in the series-deciding fourth Test in Brisbane on Tuesday to clinch the Border Gavaskar Trophy 2-1.

— PTI



India's stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane (centre) carries his daughter while his wife walks behind as they are welcomed by family and supporters on his arrival at his residence in Mumbai on Thursday. — PTI

5 Team India members advised home isolation

Mumbai, Jan. 21: Five members of the Indian cricket team arrived here from their Australia tour on Thursday morning and they have been advised to remain in seven-day home quarantine, officials said.

The cricket team members will have to undergo RT-PCR test on arrival at the international airport here, Brihanmumbai Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal said.

"The players are also advised to remain in home quarantine for

● **Ajinkya Rahane, Rohit Sharma, Shardul Thakur, Prithvi Shaw and coach Ravi Shastri have been advised to remain in seven-day home quarantine after arriving in India.**

next seven days," Chahal said.

The Indian cricket team's stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane, players Rohit Sharma, Shardul Thakur and Prithvi

Shaw, and head coach Ravi Shastri landed in Mumbai in the morning, after their momentous Test series victory over Australia, an official from the BCCI said.

An injury-ravaged India beat Australia by three wickets in the series-deciding fourth Test in Brisbane on Tuesday to clinch the Border Gavaskar Trophy. On their arrival in Mumbai, the players were felicitated by Mumbai Cricket Association officials.

— PTI

Pant wants to make his own mark in the game

New Delhi, Jan. 21: The comparisons with the iconic Mahendra Singh Dhoni are flattering but young Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant on Thursday said he wants to carve his own identity in the game after playing a key role in the side's historic Test series win in Australia.

Pant is often compared with the two-time World Cup winning former captain and wicketkeeper batsman, who retired last year after a glorious international career.

"You feel amazing when you are compared to someone like MS Dhoni and you compare me with him," Pant told reporters after landing here from Australia where his match and series-winning effort of 89 in the second innings of the fourth Test won him all-round praise. "It's amazing but I don't want to be compared with anyone, I want to make myself as a name in Indian cricket, because

You feel amazing when you are compared to someone like MS Dhoni and you compare me with him. It's amazing but I don't want to be compared with anyone, I want to make myself as a name in Indian cricket, because it's not good to compare some legend with some youngster.

— **RISHABH PANT**
India star cricketer

it's not good to compare some legend with some youngster," he added. The 23-year-old also scored a 97 in the drawn third Test in Sydney. And he wants to savour the triumph for now.

"I think the whole team is very happy with the way we played the series in Australia," he said.

India made a stupendous fight-back after being bowled out for a record lowest score of 36 in



Mohammed Siraj prays at his father Md Ghouse's grave after his arrival in Hyderabad on Thursday. — PTI

Siraj goes from Gabba to abba

AGE CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 21

An emotional Mohammed Siraj drove straight from the airport to the graveyard and paid his last respects to his father on his return to Hyderabad on Thursday from a successful tour of Australia with the national cricket team.

Mohammed Ghouse, who had wanted to see his son play at the highest level for India, had died on November 20 last year about a week after the fast bowler landed in Australia with the Indian team. Siraj was advised by family members to stay back and play on, as his father would have wanted.

He did, and played a key role in India's historic series win, taking 13 wickets (most by an Indian bowler) in three Tests, including a five-wicket haul in the fourth and final game in Brisbane.

Siraj laid flowers at his father's grave and offered prayers before heading home. "I want to dedicate my performance to my

Dad. I miss him a lot... at times I almost reached out to my phone to call him but realised he is no more," he said.

Siraj also recalled help from all around. Senior pace partner Jasprit "Bumrah bhai supported me a lot and kept giving me constant tips with regard to bowling as well as mental framework during the series," he said.

Then there was "Virat Kohli bhai who backed me while I was playing white ball cricket. As you know the chances for bowlers are rare in T20s and the 2018 IPL was a bad season for me, but he kept encouraging me. At the IPL last year, I got to learn quite a bit from Dale Steyn (RCB's pacer)," he said.

Speaking about competition at the highest level, Siraj said: "There was pressure but I just wanted to go out and give my best. It's time to relax now, only a bit though. I will continue to work hard, keep playing for the country as long as I can and bowl my heart."

WE HAVE TO BE ABSOLUTELY BEST vs INDIA: ROOT

Galle, Jan. 21: India's come-from-behind series win over Australia was a "great advert" for Test cricket and his side will have to be at their "absolute best" to challenge them at home, said England captain Joe Root.

"It was a fantastic series to watch from start to finish with some brilliant cricket played," Root told reporters on the eve of England's second Test against Sri Lanka here.

"India showed great fight, character and resilience and depth in their squad for guys to come in and perform the way they did. As a cricket fan watching Test cricket it was a great advert for the game and for us going out to India it makes that tour even more exciting now," Root added.

England will tour India to play four Tests, beginning in Chennai on February 5. The Test series will be followed by five T20Is and three ODIs.

— PTI

Sindhu, Sameer, Satwik in quarters

Bangkok, Jan. 21: Indian shuttlers P. V. Sindhu and Sameer Verma stormed into the quarterfinals of the Toyota Thailand Open after registering straight-game wins but HS Prannoy bowed out of Super 1000 tournament here on Tuesday.

Olympic silver medalist Sindhu expectedly outclassed Malaysia's world No. 92 Kisona Selvadurai 21-10, 21-12 in a lop-sided second-round contest that lasted just 35 minutes. She will face either Thailand's Ratchanon Intanon or Korea's Sung Ji Hyun next.

World No. 31 Sameer also continued his impressive run, stunning world no. 17 Rasmus Gemke 21-12, 21-9 in just 39 minutes for his third victory over the Danish player.

The Indian, who had shocked Malaysia's eighth seed Lee Zii Jia in the opening round, will face third seed Anders Antonsen of Denmark, who received a walkover, in the quarterfinals.

The mixed doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa

● **Olympic silver medalist P. V. Sindhu outclassed Malaysia's World No. 92 Kisona Selvadurai 21-10, 21-12 in the second-round of Thailand Open.**

also made it to the quarterfinals with a stunning 22-20, 14-21, 21-16 win over world No. 17 German duo of Mark Lamsfuss and Isabel Herttrich in a match that lasted close to an hour.

Satwiksairaj also paired up with Chirag Shetty in the men's doubles to notch up an upset 21-18, 23-21 win over seven seeds Korean combination of Choi Solgyu and Seo Seung Jae.

Prannoy, however, failed to cross the second round hurdle, going down 17-21, 18-21 to Malaysia's Daren Liew.

Meanwhile, Indonesian fifth seed Anthony Ginting suffered an unexpected defeat to Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk-yiu, who moved into the quarterfinals with a 21-19, 13-21, 21-12 win. — PTI

3rd-tier Alcoyano humiliate Madrid

Madrid, Jan. 21: Real Madrid suffered an extraordinary defeat in the Copa del Rey on Wednesday as La Liga's reigning champions lost 1-2 to Alcoyano, who play in Spain's third tier and had a man sent off in extra-time.

Zinedine Zidane threw on the likes of Eden Hazard, Karim Benzema and Toni Kroos as substitutes, while Alcoyano's Ramon Lopez was sent off in the 109th minute for a late challenge on Casemiro.

But against all the odds, Alcoyano still scored the winner, Juanan diverting in at the near post to pull off an incredible upset that continues a worrying dip in form for Madrid.

After a surprise loss to Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish Super Cup semifinal last week, Madrid have now responded with

an embarrassing exit in the cup.

Alcoyano were comfortable in the first period but Madrid scored with their first chance on the stroke of half-time as Marcelo's delivery to the back post found a diving Eder Militao, who headed in.

But Madrid still laboured in the second half, even after Benzema replaced Mariano Diaz, and Alcoyano equalised in the 82nd minute, a corner flicked on by Lopez to the back post, where the sleeping Vinicius allowed Solbes a simple finish.

Lucas Vazquez went close with a late header and then Madrid could have had a penalty when Angel booted Militao in a scramble in the box.

But without VAR to check, Alcoyano survived. — AFP



Alcoyano's Jose Solbes (left) and Real Madrid's Mariano Diaz jump for a high ball during their Spanish Copa del Rey Round of 32 match at the El Collao stadium in Alcoy, Spain, on Wednesday. Alcoyano won 2-1. — AP

Paul punches big as Man U on top

London, Jan. 21: Paul Pogba produced a moment of magic as Manchester United came from behind to beat Fulham 2-1 and reclaim the Premier League lead on Wednesday, ending Manchester City's short stay at the top who got better of Aston Villa 2-0 with the help of Bernardo and Gundogan's goals.

The win sent the Red Devils two points clear and equalled the club record of 17 Premier League away games without defeat set by the treble-winning side of 1999.

United were forced to dig deep after Ademola Lookman punished them for an untidy start before Edinson Cavani pulled them level with a poacher's goal later in the first half.

Pogba — back in the starting line-up in recent weeks after a spell on the periphery of Solskjaer's team — put United in front with a stunning left-foot curling effort from outside the area in the second half.

— AFP

JUVENTUS NICK PAST NAPOLI TO BAG SUPER CUP

Reggio Emilia (Italy), Jan. 21: Andrea Pirlo won his first trophy as a coach on Wednesday as Juventus beat Napoli 2-0 in the Italian Super Cup.

Ronaldo blasted in his 20th goal of the season following a corner on 64 minutes in Reggio Emilia, before Lorenzo Insigne missed a penalty and Alvaro Morata added a second deep into injury time.

Pirlo, 41, clinched his first silverware five months after taking over at his former club where he won four league titles. Juventus won the annual trophy, played between the league champions and Italian Cup holders, for the ninth time, having finished runners-up last year to Lazio. — AFP