

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
KARIMNAGAR | FRIDAY | 29 JANUARY 2021

## WEATHER

**Max:** 30.6°C  
**Min:** 20.3°C  
**RH:** 49%  
**Rainfall:** Nil  
**Forecast:** Cloudy sky.  
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 31/19 °C

## COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+10,819)	(+109)
1,07,12,246	1,53,971

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+184)	(+1)
TS: 2,93,921	1,594
(+117)	(+0)
AP: 8,87,466	7,152

## CASES AROUND THE WORLD

10,16,92,576  
**DEATHS**  
21,91,029  
**COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES**  
219  
worldometers.info/coronavirus

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Uttarayana  
**Tithi:** Pushya Bahula Padyami till 11.39 pm  
**Star:** Ashlesha till 3.19 am (Saturday)  
**Variyam:** 4.21 pm to 5.55 pm  
**Durmuhurtam:** 9.07 am to 9.51 am; 12.51 pm to 1.36 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 10.30 am to 12 noon  
**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
Jamadi-ul-Akhir 15, 1442 AH  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.46 am  
**Zohar:** 12.39 pm  
**Asar:** 4.33 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.15 pm  
**Isha:** 7.25 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.09 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.48 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 6.48 PM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 7.14 AM**

## COUNTER POINT



Can't we offer some sops to the people of Assam, Bengal and Tamil Nadu in the budget?

## SHORT TAKES

### No global flights till February 28

**New Delhi:** The Coronavirus-induced suspension of scheduled international passenger flights was extended till February 28, aviation regulator DGCA said on Thursday. "However, international scheduled flights may be allowed on selected routes on a case-to-case basis," the Director General of Civil Aviation added.

### SC notice for one project regulator

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Thursday sought response from the Centre on a plea seeking direction for constituting an autonomous and independent national regulator for appraising projects and enforcing environmental conditions. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde issued notice to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.

### UP police books Tharoor, 6 scribes

**Noida (UP):** Congress MP Shashi Tharoor and six journalists have been booked by the Noida Police for sedition, among other charges, over the violence during farmers' tractor rally in Delhi, officials said on Thursday. The FIR was also lodged against journalists Mrinal Pande, Rajdeep Sardesai, Vinod Jose, Zafar Agha, Paresh Nath and Anant Nath.

## NATION | 4

**UP tableaux wins first prize for R-Day**

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

## WORLD | 5

**Russia details allies of jailed Navalny**

## SPORTS | 8

**Ganguly undergoes another angioplasty**



## Unrelenting farmers will not stop protests till laws repealed

**Question cops why Red Fort protesters were not fired upon**

**SANJAY KAW and BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, JAN 28**

Farmers protesting against the Centre's contentious farm laws refused to give up with Bharat Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait announcing that he was ready to face bullets.

Refusing to budge, Mr Tikait made it clear that he would vacate the site only after the three agriculture laws are repealed. "I will commit suicide. But I will not leave this place," an emotional kisan leader said while appealing to other protesters to bring forward their tractors to form a cordon around him. He claimed that even electricity and water was cut at the site. "I will now drink water which is brought through tankers by protesting farmers."

Earlier in the day, Mr Tikait had questioned why Delhi Police did not open fire to stop protesters from breaking into the Red Fort and hoist a religion flag there. "Who was the person who maligne an entire community and organisation?"

The crackdown on protesters continued with the Delhi Police issuing look-out notice against leaders who were named in the FIRs filed in connection with January 26 violence. The police has sought answers from the leaders in three days on why the agreement with the law enforcing agency was broken and rules flouted during the tractor parade.

The farmers have said there was a conspiracy to sabotage and malign their peaceful protest.

A statement issued by the police said: "A preliminary assessment suggests there was pre-conceived plan to break the agreement reached between police and leaders of farmers organisations. Special cell is investigating larger conspiracy."



Union home minister Amit Shah speaks to a policeman injured in the violence during farmers tractor rally on Republic Day, during a visit to the hospital in New Delhi. — PTI

### Bengal resolution wants farm laws out

**Kolkata, Jan. 28:** The West Bengal on Thursday became the sixth state to pass a resolution against the three contentious farm laws enacted by the Centre. State parliamentary affairs minister Partha Chatterjee moved the resolution urging the Centre that the three laws be repealed. Punjab, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and Kerala have passed resolutions earlier.

■ Report on Page 4

### Centre mulls motion on Red Fort breach

**New Delhi, Jan. 28:** The Narendra Modi government is likely to bring a motion condemning the Red Fort incident on the Republic Day, during the Budget Session of Parliament beginning from Friday. The government, sources said, wants Parliament to pass a resolution condemning the incident after "considering the sense of the House."

■ Report on Page 4

## 16 parties to skip Prez address

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 28**

The leaders of 16 Opposition parties said Thursday they will boycott President Ram Nath Kovind's address to both Houses of Parliament on the opening day of the Budget Session on Friday over the controversial farm laws.

The 16 parties include the Congress, Trinamul Congress, NCP, Shiv Sena, DMK and Samajwadi Party. The remaining 10 parties are the National Conference, CPM, CPI, RJD, PDP, Muslim League, RSP, MDMK, Kerala Congress and AIDUF.

Announcing the decision, Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad said the 16 parties also sought an independent probe into the Centre's role in the violence that shook New Delhi on Republic Day. They also condemned the violence and expressed regret for the injuries sustained by Delhi cops when protesters reached the Red Fort.

In a joint statement, the Opposition leaders said the farm laws were an assault on states and vio-

lated the spirit of the Constitution. It said: "If not repealed, these laws will effectively dismantle the edifice of national food security that rests upon MSP, government procurement and the public distribution system."

The farm bills were brought without any consultations with states and farmers' unions and lacked a national consensus. Parliamentary scrutiny was bypassed and laws were pushed through muzzling the Opposition, in brazen violation of parliamentary rules, practices and conventions. The very

constitutional validity of these laws remains in question."

The joint statement noted that while lakhs of farmers were peacefully protesting at Delhi's border for 64 days and 155 farmers had died due to the cold and rain, the government didn't budge.

Attacking the Centre, the joint statement said: "The PM and the BJP government remain arrogant, adamant and undemocratic. Shocked by this insensitivity of the government, we, the following parties, demand the repeal of the anti-farmer laws."

## TROUBLE | BREWING

**TRS sensing resentment from jobless youth over increasing retirement age**

## KCR's dole for unemployed soon, says KTR

**DURGAM SRINIVAS | DC HYDERABAD, JAN. 28**

In an announcement that caught many unawares, Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) working president K. Taraka Rama Rao on Thursday said that very soon, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao would announce a monthly allowance for the unemployed youth in the state.

Though the ruling TRS party included an unemployment allowance of ₹3,000 per month for every

'eligible' unemployed youth in its 2018 poll manifesto, KTR's announcement about an announcement very soon, nearly mid-way through the government's term, seemingly coincided with the alleged leak of the Pay Revision Commission (PRC) report. The C.R. Biswal PRC committee recommended enhancing the retirement age of all government employees to 60 years from the present 58 years. Another significance attached to the announce-



ment was that Rama Rao, deviating from the regular practice of the ruling party, in which Chief Minister Chandrashekar

**KTR ANNOUNCEMENT** nearly mid-way through the government's term, seemingly coincided with the alleged leak of the Pay Revision Commission (PRC) report.

Rao comes out with the disruptive moves and catches everyone by surprise, revealed a government policy decision in advance, at

a time when the public opinion seems to have accepted him as a CM-to-be in a short time.

Official sources told *Deccan Chronicle* that the TRS government had been "sensing some resentment" from unemployed youth over enhancement of the government employees' retirement age.

"We have been instructed by the Chief Minister to immediately initiate the process of promotions at various levels, which would also create vacan-

cies at the lower and entry levels," a senior official said.

The government wanted to reach out to unemployed youth, who would be angry that if people retire two years later, the chances of any major recruitment drives in government during this TRS term would not happen, through this allowance and a promise to take up recruitments at the earliest, he added.

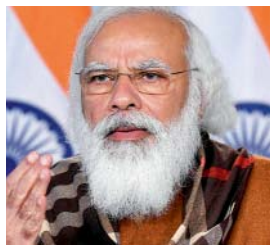
■ Page 2: 50,000 vacancies to be filled soon: KTR

**DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, JAN. 28**

India will soon make available many more Covid vaccines to other countries after two Made-In-India jabs have already been introduced to the world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday while emphasising the country's global responsibility in fighting the pandemic.

In a special address at the World Economic Forum's online Davos Agenda Summit, Modi also said he wants to assure the global business community that situation will now change rapidly on the economic front also and invited businesses from all over to participate in India's growth journey. Modi said that some had said in February-March 2020 that India would be the worst affected country by Covid and would face a "tsunami of corona infections".

"Some had talked about 70-80 crore people expect-



**Narendra Modi**

ed to get infected in India, while some talked about over 20 lakh possible deaths but India did not let the disappointment get better of it," he said. Modi said, "We transformed the fight against coronavirus into a people's movement and today India is among the most successful countries in saving lives."

"We focussed on developing Covid-specific health infrastructure, we trained our human resources to fight against this pandemic and we made full use of tech for testing and tracking," he said.

Modi said India has started the world's largest coronavirus vaccination programme and its speed

can be imagined from the fact that over 23 lakh health workers have been vaccinated in just 12 days.

Meanwhile, the external affairs ministry said India will supply 1 crore doses of the Covid vaccine to African nations. New Delhi is supplying the vaccine both on commercial basis and as "gifts" (free of cost) to foreign nations. India is also supplying the vaccine to a few nations on a commercial basis that includes Canada. India will also supply 10 lakh doses of the vaccine to UN health workers.

MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "From January 20, we gifted over 55 lakh doses to our neighbours and in our extended neighbourhood — Bhutan (1.5 lakh), Maldives (1 lakh), Nepal (10 lakh), Bangladesh (20 lakh), Myanmar (15 lakh), Mauritius (1 lakh), Seychelles (50,000), Sri Lanka (5 lakh) and Bahrain (1 lakh). These supplies are based on requests from these countries."

## India's Covid graph flat, no new case in 146 districts: Minister

**New Delhi, Jan. 28:** India has flattened its Covid-19 graph and 146 districts have reported no new case of the viral disease in the last seven days, 18 in 14 days, six in 21 days and 21 districts in the last 28 days, Union health minister Harsh Vardhan said on Thursday.

This has been achieved due to pro-active testing with more than 19.5 crore Covid-19 tests conducted in the country so far, Vardhan, who chaired the 23rd meeting of the high-level Group of Ministers (GoM) on Covid-19 through a video-conference, said, according to a

statement issued by the health ministry.

The current testing capacity is 12 lakh tests per day, the minister added.

Of the over 700 districts in the country, around 20 per cent have not reported any Covid-19 case in the last one week. — PTI

## Inter exams to start from May 1

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 28**

Education minister Sabitha Indra Reddy on Thursday said the Intermediate public examinations would be held from May 1.

Announcing the proposed schedule for the first and second years, the minister said that the TS Board of Intermediate Education, as per the proposed schedule, will hold the regular exams between May 1 and May 19 for first year and May 2 and May 20 for the second year.

The exams will be held from 9 am to 12 noon.

The ethics and human values examination is proposed to be conducted on April 1 from 10 am to 1 pm and the environmental education exam on April 3. The physical



**THE EXAMINATIONS** will be conducted from 9 am to 12 noon

examination is proposed from April 7 to April 20 (including Sundays) for both general and vocational courses. A separate timetable for vocational courses will be issued soon.

## GOVERNMENTS THAT MUZZLE FARMERS DO NOT LAST, SAYS ETALA

**DC CORRESPONDENT KARIMNAGAR, JAN. 28**

History shows that governments that tried to suppress the voice of farmers have not sustained for long, opined health minister Etala Rajendar.

He was speaking after inaugurating the Rythu Vedika building and Vykunta dam in Kanukulagidda village of Huzurabad mandal on Thursday. Rajendar said that everyone must salute jawans and kisans for protecting and feeding the nation.

Braving hardships, the scorching sun, biting cold and heavy rains, farmers produce food grains in order to ensure that people do not suffer from hunger and that they can lead healthy lives. They also play a big role in the development of the state and the nation. Software does not feed the people and industries do not provide total employment opportunities. It is the agriculture sector which is most important for a nation. Even today many jobs are available in agriculture-based sectors.

"Keeping this in mind, right from the beginning, the TS government has mainly focused on the agriculture sector."

■ Page 2: CM focussing on irrigation plans: Etala

**HE WAS speaking at inauguration of the Rythu Vedika building and Vykunta dam**



SHORT TAKES

CS TAKES OPINION OF TEACHERS UNIONS ON PRC

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

Continuing the process of consultation with employees associations, the three-member committee headed by Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar met representatives of the State Teachers Union, Telangana State (STUTS), Progressive Recognised Teachers Union (PRTU) and Telangana United Teachers Federation (TUTF) here on Thursday. The committee heard the views of the associations separately with regard to the Pay Revision Commission (PRC) recommendations and other employee issues. The employee unions demanded that fitment be increased to 43 per cent. The Chief Secretary assured that the committee will take their opinions to the Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao.

From the government side, the meeting was attended by principal secretaries Ramakrishna Rao (finance) and Rajat Kumar (irrigation). STUTS was represented by its president G. Sadanandam Goud, general secretary M. Parvath Reddy, and members B. Bhujanga Rao, P. Praveen Kumar, P. Rama Subba Rao. M. Anji Reddy, M. Chennaiah, Giridhar Reddy, Anantha Reddy and Abdul Hameed represented the PRTU. From the TUTF, present at the meeting were its president D. Malla Reddy, general secretary N. Babu, associate president D. Srinivas and members P. Raghunandan Reddy and J. Kailasam.

**NEW ‘ERAS’ TECH TO HELP PATIENTS RECOVER IN A DAY**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

The Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) technique helps patients recover in a day from joint replacement surgery. The technique which has been introduced at Star Hospitals is evidence-based surgery where the dose of anesthesia is less. Dr Neelam V. Ramana Reddy, chief joint replacement surgeon at Star Hospitals, said, “This is a big advantage especially during the Coronavirus pandemic, since the patient is not required to stay for a prolonged period in the hospital. The critical part of this procedure is the patient selection and educating them about the procedure and its nuances. Preoperative counselling and education helps patient’s be prepared and aware of the procedure.” Star Hospitals is conducting this procedure in selective patients.

# Oppn case on Pharma City has no merit: KTR

KTR opens logistics park, says city needs 11 m sq ft space

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

Industries minister K T Rama Rao on Thursday slammed the Opposition parties for what he called “politically motivated attacks” on the TRS government’s plans for setting up Pharma City near Hyderabad.

Mincing no words, Rama Rao said the hostility to the project was rooted in hatred the Opposition parties have for the state government. “The purpose of the protests against the project is only to prevent the government from earning a good name,” Rama Rao said.

The minister was speaking at Batasingaram in Ibrahimpatnam Assembly constituency where he inaugurated a trucks logistics park. Hyderabad, he said, has emerged as the city that supplied the world with medicines to fight the Coronavirus, be it drugs like hydroxy chloquine tablets or Remdesivir, or the vaccines that have been developed in the city to combat Covid-19.

“Even former US President Donald Trump called our Prime Minister and asked India to send medicines to fight the Coronavirus and we sent them from here. Hyderabad is set to emerge further as the pharma and life sciences



Minister K.T. Rama Rao speaks at the inaugural of the truck logistics park at Batasingaram near Hyderabad. It has 2 lakh square feet of warehouses, parking for 500 trucks, cold storage for 10,000 metric tonnes, dormitory, restaurants, office space, fuel stations, health centre and service centre.

— By arrangement

## THERE WILL BE NO POWER PROBLEM FOR NEXT GENERATION, SAYS KTR

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

TRS working president K.T. Rama Rao said that there was no power problem in Telangana after the state formation. “We have reached a stage where we can proudly say that in future there will be no power problem for our children,” he said. He was speaking with electricity labour workers at Telangana Bhavan.

He recalled that earlier, there used to be a three-day ‘power holiday’, and

industrialists used to stage protests. “Our government has overcome all issues. We are producing 16,000 megawatts now from 7,000 megawatts earlier. In solar production, we have the second place in the country. We are supplying power without interruption,” he said.

The minister said the government would resolve the problems of the employees. “This government is yours. We take special care of the employees,” he said.

capital and the opposition to the Pharma City project is only to try and gain political mileage,” Rama Rao said.

He said fears over pollution from Pharma City were unfounded. The technology 30 or 20 years ago when pharma industry had come up in the city was different. Now, modern methods ensure there is no pollution from these industries. “Not just that, all those who will work in the Pharma City will live within it. When this can be done, there should be no fear of pollution among others,” Rama Rao said.

He said that farmers whose lands are to be used for Pharma City are being given plots and compensation and the project will create employment opportunities for the locals.

Rama Rao, on the truck logistics park, said there was enormous scope for Hyderabad, emerging as an industrial manufacturing hub, to ship products all over India and for export to other countries. Estimates are that the city will need 11 million square feet of logistics godown space against which we now have 50 lakh square feet.

There is tremendous scope for growth and the government is planning similar logistics parks around the Outer Ring Road.

# HC grills state on delays hitting unorganised sector

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

The Telangana High Court on Thursday asked the state government whether it had any sympathy for workers in the unorganised sector or not. The court said the doubt gains credence from the fact that it has not started the registration process for workers in that sector.

A division bench of Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy was adjudicating a PIL filed by Congress leader Cilarapu Damodar Rajanarsimha, espousing the cause of the unorganised workers, the problems they are facing and

the pathetic life they led during the lockdown. According to petitioner’s counsel Ch Ravi Kumar, the government had failed to constitute the State Social Security Board for unorganised workers numbering over one crore. Many of them lost their livelihood. Now, they are deprived of statutory protection and the benefits intended under the Labour Welfare Act.

Five months ago, during the first hearing the PIL, the then division bench asked the government to appoint all 32 members of the board. Only two were appointed — the labour minister and an official from the department.

The bench questioned the government as to why it has not constituted the board when it had issued GO No. 36 two years back. The court also directed the government to reveal the funding of the board.

The court summoned the labour commissioner on February 25 to explain the delay in constitution of a full-fledged board and why it had delayed starting the registration.

The Chief Justice found fault with the counter-affidavit of the labour commissioner stating that the appointment of the board is under active consideration, wondered if they wanted another five years to make the appointments.

# Nurse tests positive after Covid shot

**SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC**  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

A senior nurse at the Government Nizamia General Hospital at Charminar in the city, who received her first dose of Covid-19 vaccine on January 16, is now down with Covid-19. Four days after taking the vaccine, she is learnt to have developed fever and body pains, along with irritation in her throat.

When she realised that she was losing her sense

● **THE GOVERNMENT** Nizamia General Hospital has a sanctioned strength of 210, but has only 85 are on its rolls of whom 45 have been vaccinated.

of 210, but has only 85 are on its rolls of whom 45 have been vaccinated.

As per vaccine manufacturers, immunity against Covid-19 is expected to develop only a couple of weeks after a person receives the second dose.

Dr Nirugonda Kavitha, incharge superintendent of the hospital, told *Deccan Chronicle*, “Since the rapid antigen test which nurse had taken can show false positive, she has given a sample for the RR-PCR test, and the result is awaited.”

# 45% turn up for vaccine in private hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

The Covid-19 vaccination drive in the state on Thursday continued in fits and starts with a somewhat relentless reluctance on part of the intended beneficiaries to take the shots exclusively being made available to them.

Against the targeted 45,973 beneficiaries from among the medical professionals and workers in private hospitals on Thursday, only 20,636 — a mere 45 per cent — turned up to get their first vaccine dose.

The reluctance on part of private healthcare workers, including doctors and nurses, mirrors the response so far from their counterparts in the government sector hospitals who too are making their reluctance to take the vaccine evident with nearly half of them not turning up.

In the vaccination in private hospitals, doctors are leading their staff to get vaccines, but there is a lot of hesitancy as many of them want to wait and watch. A health worker said, “There is a lot of fear among the maintenance staff and those at the middle

● A health worker said, “There is a lot of fear among the maintenance staff and those at the middle level. They are abstaining from the drive. The senior doctors who are not dealing with Covid 19 cases are also hesitant and that too is causing problems.”

level. They are abstaining from the drive. The senior doctors who are not dealing with Covid 19 cases are also hesitant and that too is causing problems.”

According to Director of Public Health Dr G. Srinivasa Rao, so far, since the beginning of the vaccination drive on January 16, Telangana state has vaccinated 1,51,243 healthcare personnel and hospital workers who accounted for 58 per cent of the targeted beneficiaries.

No serious adverse effects events were reported on Thursday, he said in a bulletin on the vaccination drive, adding that three persons reported some mild symptoms and that these individuals were stable.

The vaccination drive for private health workers will continue on Friday, he said.

# Dealers continue to sell poisonous banned pesticide

**NARENDER PULLOOR | DC**  
NIZAMABAD, JAN. 28

Many fertiliser dealers are putting the lives of farmers in peril and posing a threat to ecological balance, by continuing to sell pesticides that were banned in Nizamabad district for the last few months.

The extent of illegal activity was found during raids carried out by Vigilance and Enforcement (V&E) department in Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts, recently.

The traders have been selling banned products like Celphos and Phorate 10g in the two districts. While the Centre banned Celphos long ago, the latter was banned last December. These two pesticides are being used to kill rats, bandicoots and pests in agriculture fields. There is a huge demand from the farmers for these pesticides and it is made available in select shops.

Celphos is categorised under restricted use norm for central warehousing godowns and other public undertakings. Under the supervision of experts, it can be used to kill rats and bandicoots, official sources said.

Meanwhile, there are reports of farmers dying while using the banned pesticides, which the traders also sell in large quantities without bills and receipts in Nizamabad and other towns.

District agriculture officer M. Govind said that they had seized Raja Rajeshwara and Ganesh fertilizers shops in Nizamabad for selling banned

● **CELPHOS IS** categorised under restricted use norm for central warehousing godowns and other public undertakings. Under the supervision of experts, it can be used to kill rats and bandicoots, official sources said.

pesticides, which were stored in unauthorised premises at Kalur village.

“The banned pesticides might have been brought from Maharashtra. Farmers should be aware about banned pesticides and protect themselves. We will conduct regular check and initiate stringent action against traders found guilty”, he said.

Meantime, Vigilance and Enforcement department, working on a tip-off, carried out raids on two fertilizer shops in Nizamabad and found banned pesticides worth ₹50 lakh recently. They handed over the seized material to I Town police and agriculture officials seized the shops. Stocks, transportation and manufacturing of banned pesticides will be traced during the police investigation.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Nizamabad I Town police station house officer A. Anjaneyulu said that they registered a case under Section 420 of IPC against two fertilizer shops.

All six accused—Satish Kumar, Venkateshwar Rao, Prakash, Chetan Yadav, Pentaiah, Suresh and Chandrasekar Goud have been arrested, he said.

# Fill vacant posts immediately



TPCC president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy along with party MLA Jeevan Reddy speaks to the media regarding the Pay Revision Commission recommendations, in Hyderabad on Thursday.

— P. SURENDRA

# Uttam demands minimum 43% fitment for state employees

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

The Congress has strongly criticised the Pay Revision Commission (PRC) for recommending a fitment of a mere 7.5 per cent for state government employees. Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Thursday alleged that the PRC’s recommendations appear to have been dictated by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao.

Uttam Kumar Reddy

demanding that the state government provide a fitment of not less than 43 per cent to the employees.

The TPCC chief, along with party MLC T. Jeevan Reddy, TPCC working president Ponnann Prabhakar and other leaders, was addressing a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan.

Uttam Kumar Reddy said that the fitment of 7.5 per cent was unrealistic and far below the expectations of government employees. He announced that the

Congress would support the agitation by the employees seeking at least 43 per cent fitment.

After having played a major role in the statehood agitation, and risking their jobs, government employees deserve a better future but Chandrasahekar Rao had shattered their dreams and continues to subject them to injustices, the TPCC president said. He slammed the other recommendations of the PRC on reducing house rent allowance and added that against the 1.91 lakh

vacancies in the government mentioned by the PRC, the government has been claiming that it will only 50,000 vacancies, which was not acceptable. It was shameful that the government had left 1.91 lakh posts vacant, he said.

The TRS came to power in 2014 on the promise of filling one lakh vacancies, and the promise was repeated more than twice in the Assembly by the CM. However, not even 25 per cent of vacancies were filled by the government in seven years, he said.

STILL | DIVIDED

# Court orders pay for staff posted in AP

## Split Telugu Academy: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

The Telangana High Court has directed the Telugu Academy and the governments of Telangana state and Andhra Pradesh to apportion the assets and liabilities of the academy as had existed on June 2, 2014, between the AP Telugu Academy Society and the Telugu Academy at Hyderabad.

This must be done as per provisions in Section 53(1) of the AP Reorganisation Act 2014 in the ratio 58.32 to 41.68 within two months.

A division bench of Justice M.S. Ramachandra Rao and Justice T. Amarnath

● **THIS MUST** be done as per provisions in Section 53(1) of the AP Reorganisation Act 2014 in the ratio 58.32 to 41.68 within two months.

● **THE COURT** directed the Telugu Academy in Hyderabad to pay wages to the petitioners on par with those employed in similar capacities in Telangana state from December 1, 2019, within six weeks.

Goud issued these directions in response to a plea from 17 outsourcing employees of the Telugu Academy. All were working at the centre in

Vijayawada. They had been appointed on contract/daily-wage basis as data entry operators and hamalis from 2002.

Since employees were not allocated between the successor entities even after June 2, 2014, they remained under the administrative control of the Telugu Academy at Hyderabad, which is under control of the Telangana state government. Their salaries were paid by it, though the petitioners are working in the regional centers situated in the residuary state of Andhra Pradesh.

They complained that because of their AP nativity, they were refused grant of

enhanced salary and wages from 2013 while the same was granted to those employed in the regional centres in Telangana state and the head office at Hyderabad.

The court directed the Telugu Academy in Hyderabad to pay wages to the petitioners on par with those employed in similar capacities in Telangana state from December 1, 2019, within six weeks.

The court directed both the Telugu academies of Telangana and AP to discuss and agree on the modalities/guidelines for allocation of employees as on June 2, 2014, including the petitioners, within two months.

# CM is focussing on irrigation projects: Etala

From Page 1



Etala Rajender

“Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has taken up major irrigation projects and by completing them in a record time, he is trying to supply water for irrigation needs to each and every acre of land. For the well-being of the farming sector, he introduced schemes like Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Bhima,” the health minister said.

The Union government introduced three new agriculture bills that are against the farming sector. The Centre should rethink on the bills, which are being vehemently opposed by farmers,

he said.

MLC Naradasu Laxman Rao and Zilla Parishad chairperson Kanumalla Vijaya were present along with others.

# 50,000 vacancies to be filled soon, says KTR

From Page 1

The IT and industries minister was speaking on the occasion of the electricity labour organisation meeting at Telangana Bhavan here. On the dot, he said that the TRS government was keen to fill up 50,000

vacancies in various departments soon.

The enhancement of retirement age and increase in salaries comes at a time when several youth and student organisations are demanding that the government take up a massive recruitment drive.



## OTHER STORIES

FOUR WORKERS  
INJURED AS  
AUTO OVERTURNSDC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JAN. 28

Five persons including the driver of an auto-rickshaw were injured in an accident on NH 365 in Kuravi Mandal of Mahbubabad district on Thursday.

The auto passengers were chilli picking workers who were on their way to Kothur village from Rajalpeta.

The police said the accident took place due to overspeeding and the driver losing control of the vehicle. The injured were rushed to the Mahbubabad area hospital for treatment.

The injured were identified as Dongari Muthamma with a severe head injury, Nallapu Vijaya, who injured her hand and head, Bandi Pichamma, who sustained fractures in her waist, and Sutharapu Chennamma with a fractured arm. The driver Azmeera Reddy escaped with minor injuries.

Tribal Welfare Minister Satyavathi Rathod, responding to the accident asked officials to ensure the injured receives proper treatment.

ACB ARRESTS AE  
FOR CORRUPTION,  
IN ADILABADDC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, JAN. 28

Chandrasekhar, Asst Engineer of Panchayatraj Dept, was caught red-handed by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) personnel in the Adilabad town on Thursday.

The ACB personnel took the Chandrasekhar into their custody while accepting Rs 2 lakh's bribe from a contractor Sunil to clear the bills regarding formation roads. Chandrasekhar is working as an Assistant engineer in the Adilabad Rural MPDO office.

According to sources, a team of ACB personnel led by the ACB Karimnagar in charge DSP Madhusudan hatched a plan when the contractor approached them and trapped the official. Other ACB officials CI Narasimha, Tirupati, Venugopal, Ravinder and Venkat, were among the team.

TD LEADER  
KILLED OVER  
LAND DISPUTEDC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JAN. 28

A former Telugu Desam (TD) councillor Pulli Swamy (52) of Jangaon Municipality was brutally murdered in Jangaon Town on Thursday morning by two youngsters with a grudge against him over a land rivalry.

While Swamy went for his morning walk, the two accused, Gaddam Akhil (22) and Gaddam Praveen (19) of Dharmakantha waylaid him and attacked him at a secluded location with axes leaving him dead on the spot.

However, when they tried to leave the spot, the two-wheeler they came on failed to start and fled, leaving it behind. Morning walkers who found Swamy in a pool of blood on the roadside alerted the police.

After inspecting the crime scene, the police located the accused within two hours and arrested them.

Encourage parents to send  
kids to school, officials told

## Gurukul schools to conduct Covid-19 tests on students

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, JAN. 28

Mahbubabad District Collector V.P. Gautam directed the education department to prepare the educational institutions as classes 9, 10, 11 12 are set to start from February 1.

The Collector reviewed the educational institutions' arrangements with the concerned authorities at the camp office on Thursday.

The Collector directed the schools and colleges in the district to be kept clean. He said teachers should go to the students' homes and talk to their parents and encourage them to send their wards to classes as schools have been closed for a long time. Every educational institution should take steps to ensure that one hundred per cent of the students attend. Gautam directed officers to ensure the Gurukul Ashram Schools menu is without any nutritional deficiencies and has no compromise on the quality.



Mahbubabad District Collector V.P. Gautam speaking with officials regarding re-opening of schools in Mahbubabad on Thursday. — BY ARRANGEMENT

Similarly, Gurukul schools are required to conduct Covid-19 tests which are mandatory for students coming to Ashram schools.

Additional collectors of the district M. Venkateshwarlu and Abhilasha Abhinav, district education officer Somasekhara Sharma, Tribal

Welfare deputy director Rupa Devi, Kasturba Gandhi Girls School officer Vijaya Kumari present among others.

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Rekurthi gutta will evolve  
as Yadadri, says GangulaDC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, JAN. 28

Sri Laxmi Narasimha Swamy Gutta, which is usually called Rekurthi gutta, will be developed into a tourist place like Yadadri, informed the minister for BC welfare, food and civil supplies department, Gangula Kamalakara on Thursday.

The minister inspected Ghat Road's construction works, which leads to Sri Laxmi Narasimha Swamy temple here at Rekurthi village in Karimnagar district.

Kamalakar said that the temple has a history of 400 years and is the only temple in the country in which the god Sri Laxmi Narasimha Swamy has presided in the form of Swayambu Sudarshana Chakram.

After reaching the Rekurthi village near Karimnagar, people used to visit the temple by foot as the ghat road was not in a condition to ride the vehicles in the past.

But after the formation of Telangana, the TRS government focused on the renovation of various temples across the state.

The government sanctioned ₹ 3.5 crore from DMFT funds for construction works of ghat road that



The minister for BC welfare, food and civil supplies department, Gangula Kamalakara, examines the map of construction works on ghat road which leads to Sri Laxminarasimha Swamy temple at Rekurthi village in Karimnagar on Thursday. — BY ARRANGEMENT

● The government sanctioned ₹3.5 crore from DMFT funds for construction works of ghat road that leads to the temple.

The works are going on at a brisk pace and will be completed within six months. Along with construction works of ghat road, the government will sanction ₹5 crore for the temple's development and transform the place into a tourist spot as beautiful hillocks surround it, he informed. Kamalakara

ordered the engineering department's concerned officials to design the ghat road perfectly so that devotees can reach the temple even in small vehicles effortlessly without facing any problems.

City Mayor Y. Sunil Rao, Commissioner V. Kranthi, corporators Madhavi Krishna Goud, Adulla Rajashekar, Bonala Srikanth, TRS leader Nandella Prakash and Assistant Engineer of Panchayat Raj department Ramana Reddy were among those who were present along with others.

SOMARAPU  
DENIES HE QUIT  
AS BJP UNIT HEADDC CORRESPONDENT  
PEDDAPALLI, JAN. 28

A social media post that former RTC chairman Somarapu Satyanarayana had resigned as BJP district unit created a buzz in political circles here on Thursday. Right from the time Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar took charge as BJP state chief, the party had seen some key leaders from other parties, including the TRS, joining it. To strengthen the party from the grass-root level, the party leadership recently appointed presidents for other districts and gave good positions to the loyalists. But from the past few months, Satyanarayana was not happy with the district leaders who were conducting meetings without informing him. He even took the issue to the notice of the party leadership and expressed deep concern.

However, putting the records straight, Satyanarayana said that he had not resigned but had only mentioned how he was being sidelined and how the district committee appointed by him four months back was yet to get the nod.

## Dharna for teachers, pensioners



BJP leaders and activists stage dharna demanding to solve pending problems of employees, teachers and pensioners in Karimnagar on Thursday. — BY ARRANGEMENT

Pocharam blames K'taka, Maha  
for low waterflow at ManjeeraDC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, JAN. 28

Legislative Assembly Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy said that the waterflow in the Manjeera has been reduced due to projects being constructed upstream of the river in Karnataka and Maharashtra.

The dream of a check dam on the Manjeera has been realised as Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has sanctioned it with an estimated cost of ₹28.29 crore, he said. The four check dams sanctioned for Banswada Assembly constituency will improve the groundwater table.

He laid the foundation stone for the check dam at Birkur on Thursday

and said that the former glory of Nizamsagar project would shortly be restored. In reverse pumping, Godavari water will reach the Nizamsagar project through the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation scheme, he said. Water will reach Nizamsagar project from the Konda Pochamma reservoir and Haldivagu.

"We are expecting Kaleshwaram water will reach Nizamsagar in the next 15 days," he added. Srinivas Reddy said that a permanent canal with a capacity of 5,000 cusecs will be constructed from Mallannasagar to Nizamsagar soon. Eighty-five per cent of families depend on agriculture and sufficient water and power will

increase the crop yield, he said and added that Telangana is the only state providing 24-hour power supply for farmers.

The state government ensured minimum support price to the agriculture produce, he said. He praised farmers under Nizamsagar project ayat area for better yield in different crops.

A bridge was constructed across the Manjeera in Birkur against a ₹100 crore budget and this has enhanced transport facility between Telangana state and Maharashtra, he said. TRS senior leader Pocharam Suren Reddy, DCCB chairman Pocharam Bhaskar Reddy and others were present.

## NEW | RESEARCH Michael Yorke to study rituals, philosophy behind the Gussadi dance

## Christoph's student to research on Adivasis

PILLAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC  
ADILABAD, JAN. 28

The research works of anthropologists Christoph Von Furer Haimendorf and his student Michael Yorke on Telangana's adivasis have become more relevant now in the context of the award of Padma Shri to Kanaka Raju of Marlaival. This is specially important to understand the culture and traditions of Gond adivasis, say activists.

Adivasi activists note that the research also threw light into the rituals and philosophy behind the Gussadi dance and its importance vis-à-vis the Dandari festival held by adivasis in Adilabad district during the Diwali season every year.

Over time, Michael Yorke has settled down as an internationally reputed documentary filmmaker.

The activists urged the tribal welfare department of Telangana to try and bring from London the

copies of the research work on Telangana adivasis by these anthropologists and the photographs they had captured during those days. These two social scientists had studied the Raj Gonds' culture and lifestyle from the early 1940 to the 1980s.

The Centre according to Padma Shri honour to Kanaka Raju is seen as the government's recognition of the importance of adivasi culture.

Michael Yorke's wrote two-essays on Raj Gonds have been translated into Telugu by Lalitha and turned into book form with the title, Velitha Pata, under the editorship of Sumanaspati Reddy in 2019.

Michael Yorke with his wife Valerie Yorke had visited Adilabad in February 2019 after a long gap of 40 years, from their base in London. The documentary titled 'Raj Gonds: Reflection in a Peacock Crown' by BBC was shot in Ginnedhari in 1979.

Michael Yorke worked as



Photo of Michael Yorke in Kurta Pajama in Ginnedhari village of Tiryani mandal in present Komaram Bheem Asifabad district in the late 1970s when visited with Anthropologists Christoph Von Furer Haimendorf for research.

an anthropologist for the documentary which later got many international awards.

Christoph Von Furer had stayed a long time at Marlaival for his research on Gond Adivasis of the erstwhile Adilabad while his

student Michael Yorke had stayed at Ginnedhari village in Tiryani mandal in what is now the Komaram Bheem Asifabad district.

Adivasi leaders feel that it would be better if tribal welfare department officials went through the BBC

● Michael Yorke's wrote two-essays on Raj Gonds have been translated into Telugu by Lalitha and turned into book form with the title, Velitha Pata, under the editorship of Sumanaspati Reddy in 2019

documentary as also the research works of the two scientists and, based on these, took steps to preserve the Adivasi culture in the state for the good of future generations and for framing policies for empowerment of the adivasis via education and healthcare.

"We must read 'The Gonds of Andhra Pradesh' written by Christoph Von Furer Haimendorf and the 'Tribes of India: The Struggle for Survival' (written by both Haimendorf and Michael Yorke) books in the light of the changing times," adivasi activists say.

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SHORT TAKES

INDIA FLAYS OMAR SHEIKH'S RELEASE IN PAK

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 28

India on Thursday termed the freeing of dreaded terrorist Omar Saeed Sheikh by the Pakistani Supreme Court as a "travesty of justice", adding that "this case truly demonstrates Pakistan's intent on taking action on the terror front". Sheikh was earlier convicted in Pakistan for the beheading of *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Daniel Pearl in 2002.

MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "I had mentioned earlier about the very low conviction rate in Pakistan when it comes to sentencing of terror accused. This case truly demonstrates Pakistan's intent on taking action on terror front. It is a travesty of justice not to find Omar Saeed guilty of any charges in this heinous act of terror. Our position on Pakistan taking sustained, verifiable, credible and irreversible action against terrorism and terrorist funding emanating from all territory under its control remain unchanged."

Sheikh was among the terrorists freed by India in December 1999, to secure the release of passengers on board the aircraft of erstwhile Indian Airlines that was hijacked by Pakistan-backed terrorists from the Kathmandu and finally taken to Kandahar.

INDIA RECORDS 11,666 NEW COVID CASES

New Delhi, Jan. 28: India's Covid-19 tally of cases crossed 1.07 crore with 11,666 new Coronavirus infections being reported in a day, while the national recovery rate climbed to 96.94 per cent, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Thursday.

The total infections have mounted to 1,07,01,193. The death toll increased to 1,53,847 with 123 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,03,73,606 pushing the national Covid-19 recovery rate to 96.94 percent. The Covid-19 casefatality rate stands at 1.44per cent. Active cases remained below 2 lakh for the ninth consecutive day.

There are 1,73,740 active Coronavirus infections in the country which comprises 1.62 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated.

India's tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7,30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28,70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

According to the ICMR,19,43,38,773 samples have been tested up to January 27 with 7,25,653 samples being tested on Wednesday.

The 123 new fatalities include 32 from Maharashtra, 20from Kerala, 10 from Punjab and 9 from Delhi.

UTTAR PRADESH WINS BEST R-DAY TABLEAU AWARD

New Delhi, Jan. 28: Uttar Pradesh's tableau at this year's Republic Day parade was adjudged the best and awarded by Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday, said the Defence Ministry.

In total 32 tableaux - 17 from state and union territories, nine from Union ministries, departments and paramilitary forces, and six from the Defence ministry - were part of this year's parade on Rajpath.

The theme of Uttar Pradesh's tableau was 'Ayodhya: Cultural Heritage of Uttar Pradesh'. The cultural heritage of Ayodhya, replica of a Ram temple, glimpse of 'Deepotsav' and various stories from Ramayana epic were depicted in the tableau.

"The tableau of Tripura was adjudged the second best. It depicted promotion of eco-friendly tradition for achieving self-reliance (*aatmanirbhar*) in socio-economic parameters," the Defence ministry's statement noted.

Uttarakhand's tableau on the theme 'Dev Bhoomi - The Land of the Gods' was adjudged third among the states and union territories. The tableau of CPWD bagged a special prize for paying tribute to the fallen heroes of the armed forces.

Farmers agitation on UP NH ends

Protesters allege cops entered their tents, used force on sleeping farmers and chased them away



Security personnel conduct a flag march at Ghazipur border during the ongoing farmers' agitation against Centre's farm reform laws in New Delhi on Thursday.

Baghpat (UP), Jan. 28: A farmers' protest against three farm laws of the Centre, which was continuing on a national highway in this Uttar Pradesh district since December 19 last year, has come to an end with the protesters alleging use of force by police.

The police, however, claimed that the matter was resolved through deliberations and the protesting farmers were sent home on Wednesday night.

The protesters have alleged that police personnel entered their tents late on Wednesday night, used force on the sleeping farmers and chased them away.

Thamba Chaudhary, Brijpal Singh, Baljaur Singh Arya, Vikram Singh and other farmers who took part in the protest on Thursday said their agitation against the farm laws was going on on one side of the national highway.

Late on Wednesday night, a large number of police personnel entered their tents, resorted to lathicharge on the sleeping farmers and chased them away, they told reporters.

Charging the police with adopting repressive measures, they claimed that their tents were uprooted. About 40 farmers were present at the spot at that time, they said.

Refuting the charges, Circle Officer Alok Singh said the protest ended after deliberations with the farmers and the police did not resort to lathicharge on the protesters.

Whatever happened was in agreement with those present there, he said, adding that the protesting farmers returned home peacefully.

Meanwhile, ADM Amit Kumar Singh said the Project Director of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), Sanjay Misra, had written a letter complaining that work on the Delhi-Saharanpur highway was being hampered because of some anarchic elements.

Acting on the letter, the protesters were removed from the national highway and sent home, the ADM said. The protest was launched on the national highway at Badaut on December 19 last year.

- PTI

WB Assembly passes resolution against farm laws

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, JAN. 28

After Kerala, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and Rajasthan, West Bengal became the sixth non-BJP ruled state on Thursday to pass a resolution against the three farm laws in the Assembly as chief minister Mamata Banerjee

sought the Centre to repeal the laws or else Prime Minister Narendra Modi and union home minister Amit Shah should resign.

The anti-farm laws resolution was moved by state parliamentary affairs minister Partha Chatterjee on behalf of the ruling Trinamul Congress in the

House on the second day of a two-day Assembly session.

Speaking in its favour, Ms Banerjee said, "The central government passed the three laws without consulting us. It is trying to enforce them on the country. Its effect will be felt on the farmers of our state also. We might have

different political ideologies which however should not deter us from standing by the farmers."

Slamming the BJP for branding the farmers as "traitors" for opposing the farm laws she told the saffron party, "Either the Centre abolishes the three laws or else you must step down from power."

Later at another event, Ms Banerjee said, "If the farm laws are not repealed, the PM and the union home minister have to resign."

The CM also demanded the waiver of the farm loans. She lashed out at the saffron party for spreading fake information about the farmers'

stir at Red Fort on January 26. Protesting against her, the BJP MLAs however staged walk-out of the House shouting *Jai Shree Ram* slogan.

The resolution was later passed with the support of 101 votes from the Trinamul Congress against 27 of the Opposition.

Lens on funds for farmers protest

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 28

Following FIRs on farmer leaders in connection with the violence on the Republic Day, intelligence agencies have started a massive investigation to trace all hawala channels and operators through whom funds are coming from abroad for the ongoing farmers agitation.

In view of the violence reported from different parts of the Capital by farmers during the tractor rally, the Home Ministry has been acting extremely tough. As a first step, a number of FIRs have been lodged against union leaders and

some other in connection with the violence and events that unfolded at Red Fort. However, there is a growing view within the Capital's security establishment that there is an urgent need for a detailed investigation into the funding pattern of the ongoing agitation on the Capital's borders, particularly at Singhu and Tikri.

"It is largely suspected that a number of NRIs belonging to Punjab have been illegal sending money to fund this agitation. So clearly this money is not coming through legal and official channels," a senior intelligence official said.

Parliament Budget session starts today

New Delhi, Jan. 28: The crucial Budget session of Parliament is set for a stormy start with as many as 18 opposition parties announcing their decision to boycott the President's address to a joint sitting of both houses on Friday, in solidarity with the farmers agitating against the three contentious farm laws.

The session is also likely to witness acrimonious scenes, with the opposition all set to corner the government on issues like recession, job losses, handling of Covid crisis, LAC stand-off with China and the WhatsApp chat leaks of Arnab Goswami.

Alleging that the farm laws have been pushed by the BJP government without a national consensus, the opposition parties announced their decision on Thursday to boycott the President's address, a move termed as "most unfortunate" by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi.

To seek the cooperation of various parties for the smooth functioning of the Budget session, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has convened a meeting of all political parties on Friday which is expected to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The session will begin with the President's address followed by the presentation of the Economic Survey. The Union Budget will be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February

1. Both the houses will also debate on the Motion of thanks to the President's address after the budget presentation.

The session will be held in two parts - January 29 to February 15 and March 8 to April 8 and will have a total of 33 sittings.

With the session starting barely days after the national capital witnessed unprecedented violence on Republic Day during the farmers tractor parade, the issue is expected to echo in Parliament.

It is after almost six months that the Parliament will be convened, as the Winter session could not be held due to the Covid pandemic.

With a view to have a paperless Budget, all the documents and the

Economic Survey would be made available online soon after the authenticated copies are laid on the Table of the House.

This session will be held as per Covid-19 protocols, with Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha meeting in shifts of five hours each - with the upper house meeting from 9 am to 2 pm and the lower house from 3 PM to 8 PM.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha Adhir Chowdhury said in Kolkata that intelligence failure on the part of the Delhi Police was to blame for the chaos and violence at Red Fort on January 26.

He also cast doubt on the Centre's intention, stating that the Union government probably did not do much to avert violence as it "might have wanted to

take advantage of the situation".

Chowdhury said that the Delhi Police had given designated routes to the farmers to take out the tractor parade. "But the farmers took different routes and a section of them breached the Red Fort. Surely, it was due to intelligence failure on the part of Delhi Police and other agencies," he said.

Accusing the BJP of branding any and every issue raised against the saffron party as "anti-national, Pakistani or Khalistani", Chowdhury, further said, "At times I feel that the central government deliberately allowed this (January 26 incident) to happen to take advantage of the situation." - PTI

LEGAL | MATTERS

The trial court's punishment of six years was reduced to one year by HC

Holding kid, fly open, not sexual assault: HC

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, JAN. 28

The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court, whose judgment on 'no offence under POCSO is made out if there was no skin-to-skin touch', in another judgment passed earlier this month acquitted a man from provision of POCSO observing that holding a child's hand and unzipping pants do not fall under the POCSO Act.

The prosecution case is that on February 12, 2018 the mother of five-year-old lodged a complaint at Gadchiroli police station that when she returned from her duty, she noticed the accused was in her house and was holding

hands of her daughter. The complainant also noticed that the zip of the pant of the accused was open. She started shouting at the accused and soon her neighbours also gathered, but the accused ran away. Later, the victim told her that the accused had unzipped his pant and asked her to come to the bed to sleep.

The trial court convicted the accused under two different counts and sentenced him to suffer rigorous imprisonment for one year and five years, concurrently.

The accused challenged this judgement before the high court and Justice Pushpa Ganediwalla decided the appeal on January

● **THE PROSECUTION CASE** is that the mother of five-year-old lodged a complaint at Gadchiroli police station that when she returned from her duty, she noticed the accused was in her house and was holding hands of her daughter. The complainant also noticed that the zip of the pant of the accused was open.

● **SHE STARTED** shouting at the accused and soon her neighbours also gathered, but the accused ran away. Later, the victim told her that the accused had unzipped his pant and asked her to come to the bed to sleep.

15, in which she held that, "The acts of 'holding the hands of the prosecutrix', or 'opened zip of the pant' as has been allegedly witnessed by PW-1 (the girl's mother), in the opinion of this court, does not fit in the definition of 'sexual assault'."

In a detailed judgement the judge said that the

accused is prosecuted for the charge of 'aggravated sexual assault'. As per the definition of 'sexual assault', a 'physical contact with sexual intent without penetration' is essential ingredient for the offence. The definition starts with the words - "Whoever with sexual intent touches the vagina,

penis, anus or breast of the child or makes the child touch the vagina, penis, anus or breast of such person or any other person or does any other act with sexual intent....."

According to the judgment the words 'any other act' encompasses within itself, the nature of the acts which are similar to the acts which have been specifically mentioned in the definition on the premise of the principle of 'ejusdem generis (of the same kind)'. The act should be of the same nature or closure to that. Hence the judge said, "The acts of 'holding the hands of the prosecutrix', or 'opened zip of the pant' as has been allegedly wit-

nessed by PW-1, in the opinion of this Court, does not fit in the definition of 'sexual assault'."

"The minimum sentence for this offence is five years imprisonment. Considering the nature of the offence and the sentence prescribed, the aforesaid acts are not sufficient for fixing the criminal liability on the appellant/accused for the alleged offence of 'aggravated sexual assault'. At the most the minor offence punishable under Section 354-A(1)(i) of the IPC r/w Section 12 of the POCSO Act is proved against the appellant," the court held.

With the above observations, the court reduced his sentence to one year.

MODI TO VISIT BANGLADESH

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 28

With Bangladesh celebrating 50 years of its existence this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will soon visit Bangladesh.

Both countries are also celebrating 50 years of establishment of diplomatic relations with each other this year.

The Indian armed forces' victory over Pakistan in the war in December 1971, had led to the liberation of the erstwhile East Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh.

"India and Bangladesh will be holding the next round of Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi on January 29," the MEA said.



## SHORT TAKES

## CANNES FEST POSTPONED TO JULY 2021

Cannes, Jan. 28: The 2021 edition of the Cannes Film Festival has been postponed and will now take place in July.

In a brief statement, the festival's organisers said that the festival has been pushed by two months due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. "As announced last autumn, the Festival de Cannes reserved the right to change its dates depending on how the global health situation developed," Cannes said in the statement.

"Initially scheduled from May 11 to 22, 2021, the festival will therefore now take place from July 6 to 17, 2021," it added. The announcement comes after days of speculation that the festival might be postponed as cases continue to surge across Europe.

Last year's edition was cancelled due to the pandemic and replaced by a low-key event in October.

## 2 INDONESIANS CANED 77 TIMES FOR GAY SEX

Banda Aceh (Indonesia), Jan. 28: Two men in Indonesia's conservative Aceh province were publicly caned each 77 times Thursday after neighbours reported them to Islamic religious police for having sex.

Dozens of people witnessed the caning at Banda Aceh's Tamansari city park. It's the third time that Aceh, the only province in Indonesia to practice Shariah law, has caned people for homosexuality since the Islamic law was implemented in 2015 as a concession made by the government to end a long-running separatist rebellion. The men, aged 27 and 29, were whipped across the back and winced with pain as a team of five enforcers wearing robes and hoods took turns, relieving one another after every 40 strokes. The men were arrested in November after residents became suspicious and broke into their rented room where they were caught having sex.

## CONTINUE WITH AFGHAN TALKS, KHALILZAD TOLD

Washington, Jan. 28: The Biden Administration has asked Zalmay Khalilzad, who served as a Special US Representative for Afghan reconciliation under the previous Trump Administration, to continue with his peace talks, a top American diplomat said on Wednesday. At the same time, the Biden Administration has started the process of reviewing the peace deal with the Taliban, Secretary of State Tony Blinken told reporters at his maiden news conference here. "With regard to Afghanistan, one of the things that we need to understand is exactly what is in the agreements that were reached between the United States and the Taliban to make sure that we fully understand the commitments that the Taliban has made as well as any commitments that we've made," Blinken said in response to a question.

"And, with regard to Ambassador Khalilzad, we've asked them to continue the vital work that he's performing," Blinken said in response to a question.

## SCHOOL NAMES: WASHINGTON, LINCOLN TO GO

San Francisco, Jan. 28: The San Francisco school board has voted to remove the names of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln from public schools after officials deemed them and other prominent figures, including Sen. Dianne Feinstein, unworthy of the honour. After months of controversy, the board voted 6-1 in favour of renaming 44 San Francisco school sites with new names with no connection to slavery, oppression, racism or similar criteria, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported.

Feinstein's name was added to the list because as mayor she replaced a vandalised Confederate flag that was part of a long-standing flag display in front of City Hall. Critics called the process slapdash, with little to no input from historians and a lack of information on the basis for each recommendation. In one instance, the committee didn't know whether Roosevelt Middle School was named after Theodore or Franklin Delano. "I must admit there are reasons to support this resolution, but I can't," said community member Jean Barish.

## Russia detains allies of jailed leader Navalny

Moscow, Jan. 28: Several allies and supporters of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny were detained in Moscow early Thursday after mass protests last Saturday demanding his release from prison drew tens of thousands to the streets in over 100 Russian cities.

Navalny's top ally Lyubov Sobol, Dr. Anastasia Vasilyeva from the Alliance of Doctors union backed by Navalny and Maria Alyokhina from the Pussy Riot punk collective have been detained for 48 hours along with Navalny's brother Oleg.

All four are reported to be suspects in a criminal probe into alleged violations of Coronavirus regulations during the mass rally in Moscow. The raids came four days before new protests that Navalny's supporters have called for Sunday. The 44-year-old Navalny, the most well-known critic of President Vladimir Putin's government, was arrested January 17 upon his return from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin. Russian authorities have rejected the accusations. The overnight detentions of his supporters came after more than a dozen raids on apartments and offices of Navalny's family, associates and supporters in connection to the probe.

Searched locations included Navalny's apartment, where police detained his brother, and a rented apartment where Navalny's wife, Yulia, has been living. Also Thursday, Russia's Investigative Committee said it opened a criminal probe against Navalny's top strategist Leonid Volkov, accusing him of encouraging minors to participate in unauthorised rallies.

In a further challenge to Putin, two days after Navalny's arrest, his organisation released an extensive video report on a palatial seaside compound allegedly built for Putin. It has been viewed

## HR SITUATION IN RUSSIA CONCERNS U.S.: BLINKEN

Washington, Jan. 28: The United States is concerned about the human rights situation in Russia and is worried about the safety and security of the Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, US Secretary of State Tony Blinken told reporters here on Wednesday.

"We've already expressed our deep concern for the treatment of Mr Navalny specifically and more generally with the human rights situation in Russia, and it remains striking to me how concerned and maybe even scared the Russian government seems to be of one man, Mr Navalny," Blinken said at his maiden news conference.

Across the board, he said the US is reviewing all of these actions that are of deep concern to the United States, whether it is the treatment of Navalny or the apparent use of a chemical weapon in an attempt to assassinate him.

— PTI

over 98 million times, further stoking discontent. Demonstrations calling for Navalny's release took place in more than 100 cities across the nation last Saturday, a strong show of rising anger toward the Kremlin.

Nearly 4,000 people were reported arrested at those protests. Navalny fell into a coma while aboard a domestic flight from Siberia to Moscow on August 20. He was transferred from a hospital in Siberia to a Berlin hospital two days later. Labs in Germany, France and Sweden, and tests by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, established that he was exposed to the Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent.

— AP

## MEXICO'S NEW CASE RECORD OF ALMOST 28,000

Mexico City, Jan. 28: Mexico posted its highest one-day total of newly confirmed Coronavirus cases Wednesday, with 27,944 infections, and a near-record 1,623 confirmed deaths.

That brings the country's total so far to just over 1.8 million cases and 153,639 deaths. However, Mexico has an extremely low rate of testing, and estimates of excess deaths suggest the real toll is over 195,000.

A group of over a dozen of the country's top universities and medical institutes also recommended Wednesday that the use of face masks be made mandatory in Mexico, a move that President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and his advisers have long opposed.

The president himself seldom wears a mask, and over the weekend tested positive for Coronavirus.

— AP

## Pfizer vax effective against mutations

Paris, Jan. 28: The vaccine made by Pfizer and BioNTech appears to retain its effectiveness against Coronavirus mutations in worrying new variants that have emerged recently in Britain and South Africa, the firms said Thursday.

Several new variants — each with a cluster of genetic mutations — have sparked fears over an increase in infectiousness as well as suggestions that the virus could begin to elude immune response, whether from prior infection or a vaccine.

Pfizer/BioNTech, which had previously said it was unlikely that the strain originally found in Britain could escape vaccine protection, said Thursday that early tests suggest their immunisation would be similarly protective against the variant in South Africa.

In a statement, the two companies said these preliminary findings "do not indicate the need for a new vaccine to address the emerging variants".

They said they are "prepared to respond" if a new

## Ukrainians' 'taxing' stir



Demonstrators, including small businesses owners, holding flags reading "Save small business" take part in a march to demand the recall of the law cancelling the simplified tax system in Kiev, Ukraine on Thursday.

— AFP

## Release Pearl murder prime suspect: Pak SC

Daniel, the WSJ South Asia bureau chief, was killed in '02

Islamabad, Jan. 28: Pakistan's Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed appeals against the acquittal of British-born al-Qaeda terrorist Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh in the kidnapping and murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002 and ordered his release in the sensational case.

Pearl, the 38-year-old South Asia bureau chief for *The Wall Street Journal*, was abducted and beheaded while he was in Pakistan investigating a story in 2002 on the links between the country's powerful spy agency ISI and al-Qaeda. Sheikh and his three aides were convicted and sentenced in the abduction and murder

● A THREE-JUDGE bench of the apex court led by Justice Mushir Alam on Thursday dismissed the Sindh government's appeal against the Sindh High Court's decision to overturn the conviction of Sheikh in the Pearl murder case.

case of Pearl in Karachi in 2002. Pearl's murder took place three years after Sheikh, along with Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar and Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, was released by India in 1999 and given safe pas-

sage to Afghanistan in exchange for the nearly 150 passengers of hijacked Indian Airlines Flight 814. He was serving a prison term in India for kidnappings of Western tourists in the country.

A three-judge bench of the apex court led by Justice Mushir Alam on Thursday dismissed the Sindh government's appeal against the Sindh High Court's (SHC) decision to overturn the conviction of Sheikh in the Pearl murder case. The beheading of the American journalist in 2002 had grabbed international headlines.

According to the short verdict, the bench also directed to release the suspect. One member of the

bench opposed the decision. The bench upheld the SHC order by rejecting the appeals and ordered Sheikh should be set free, his lawyer Mahmood Sheikh told the media.

In April 2020, a two-judge Sindh High Court bench commuted the death sentence of 46-year-old Sheikh to seven years imprisonment. The court also acquitted his three aides — Fahad Naseem, Sheikh Adil and Salman Saqib — who were serving life terms in the case, almost two decades after they were found guilty and jailed. The Sindh government and family of Pearl filed petitions in the apex court, challenging the high court verdict.

— PTI

## US DEMANDS 'ROBUST' VIRUS ORIGIN PROBE

Washington, Jan. 28: The United States demanded a "robust and clear" international probe into the origins of the Coronavirus pandemic, as a team of World Health Organisation experts in China waited Thursday for the green light to begin its long-awaited Covid-19 probe. The call came as Coronavirus infections shot past 100 million and governments scrambled to get their hands on scarce vaccine doses, with a bitter row erupting between the European Union and Britain over the supply of AstraZeneca shots.

Beijing has so far frustrated international efforts to track the origins of the virus, which has killed more than 2.1 million people globally, and only recently allowed the WHO team into China after repeated delays.

— AFP

## Lanka Prez receives free Indian vaccines

Colombo, Jan. 28: Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Thursday thanked India for its generosity after he received 500,000 doses of Covishield vaccine donated by the country under the 'Neighbourhood First' policy.

India last week announced that it will send Covid-19 vaccines under grant assistance to Sri Lanka and seven other countries — Bhutan, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Seychelles, Afghanistan and Mauritius. Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and the Maldives have already received India's Covid-19 vaccines under grant assistance in sync with its "Neighbourhood First" policy.

President Rajapaksa was at the Colombo international airport to receive the consignment of free Indian Covid-19 vaccines

which arrived on a special Air India flight.

"Received 500,000 #COVID?19 vaccines provided by #peopleofindia ... Thank you! PM Shri @narendramodi & #peopleofindia for the generosity shown towards #PeopleofSriLanka at this time in need," Rajapaksa tweeted. The consignment was packed in 42 boxes. Rajapaksa was joined at the airport by the Indian envoy in Colombo Gopal Baglay.

"The arrival of 500,000 doses of Covishield vaccines happens on blessed Poya Day, which marks the 1st visit of The Buddha to Lanka. High Commissioner offered prayers at the sacred Gangaramaya Temple for the health and well being of the people of Lanka on auspicious Duruthu Poya Day," the Indian High Commission here tweeted.

— PTI

## LOCAL | SIGN

Result of fighting case in EU against India move to get it registered as its product

## Pakistan gets GI tag for its Basmati rice

Islamabad, Jan. 28: Pakistan has received the Geographical Indicator (GI) tag for its Basmati, paving the way for creating a local registry for the particular strain of rice and making a case in the international market, as the country fights a case in the EU against India's move to get Basmati rice registered as its product.

A GI tag is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess origin-based qualities and reputation in the region. Pakistan is

fighting a case in the 27-member European Union against India's move to get Basmati rice registered as its product.

Laws require that before applying for registration of any product in the international market it has to be protected under the geographical indication (GI) laws of that country. A top Pakistan official said on Tuesday that the country had received the Geographical Indicator (GI) tag for its Basmati. "I am glad to inform you that Pakistan has registered Basmati

● THE ISSUE of protecting Basmati rice as a product of Pakistan came to the forefront after India submitted an application to the European Union claiming sole ownership of the commodity in September last year.

Rice as a Geographical Indication (GI) under the Geographical Indications Act 2020. Under this Act, a GI registry has been formed which will register GIs and maintain the

basic record of proprietors & authorised users of GI." Commerce Advisor Abdul Razak Dawood announced on Twitter.

"This will provide protection of our products against misuse or imitation & hence will guarantee that their share in the international market is protected. I encourage you to send your suggestions of products that can be registered as GIs to the Intellectual Property Organisation of Pakistan," he said. It is believed that a GI tag would strengthen

Pakistan's case in the EU.

The issue of protecting Basmati rice as a product of Pakistan came to the forefront after India submitted an application to the European Union claiming sole ownership of the commodity in September last year.

In its application, India claimed that "Basmati" is special long grain aromatic rice grown and produced in a particular geographical region of the subcontinent. After highlighting the brief history of Basmati rice, India also

claimed that the region is a part of northern India, below the foothills of the Himalayas forming part of the Indo-Gangetic plain.

The Indian claim to the EU was challenged in December and the main argument by Pakistan was that Basmati rice was a joint product of India and Pakistan. Pakistan exported 500,000-700,000 tonnes of Basmati rice annually to different parts of the world out of which 200,000 tonnes to 250,000 tonnes is being shipped to EU countries.

— PTI

## BIDEN WARNS BEIJING OVER EXPANSIONISM

Washington, Jan. 28: One week into the job, US President Joe Biden has sent a clear warning to Beijing against any expansionist intentions in East and Southeast Asia. In multiple calls and statements, he and his top security officials have underscored support for allies Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines, signalling Washington's rejection of China's disputed territorial claims in those areas.

On Wednesday, Biden told Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga that his administration is committed to defending Japan, including the Senkaku Islands, which are claimed both by Japan and China, which calls them the Diaoyu Islands.

That stance was echoed by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who told Japanese counterpart Nobuo Kishi on Saturday that the contested islands were covered by the US-Japan Security Treaty. Austin affirmed that the United States "remains opposed to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea," according to a Pentagon statement on the call.

Meanwhile, three days into the Biden administration, State Department spokesman Ned Price warned China about menacing Taiwan after it repeatedly sent more than a dozen military fighters and bombers through the island's air defence zone.

— AFP

## US PUTS HOLD ON FOREIGN ARMS SALES

Washington, Jan. 28: The Biden administration has put a temporary hold on several major foreign arms sales initiated by former President Donald Trump.

Officials say that among the deals being paused is a massive \$23 billion transfer of stealth F-35 fighters to the United Arab Emirates. That sale and several other massive purchases of US weaponry by Gulf Arab countries had been harshly criticised by Democrats in Congress.

The officials did not identify the other sales that had been temporarily halted. The new administration is reviewing the sales but has not made any determination about whether they will actually go through, the State Department said.

"The department is temporarily pausing the implementation of some pending US defence transfers and sales under Foreign Military Sales and Direct Commercial Sales to allow incoming leadership an opportunity to review," the department said.

— AP



## DECCAN Chronicle

29 JANUARY 2021

### Budget: A challenge and an opportunity

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman would present her third Union Budget on Monday. In normal circumstances, it would have been an annual, monotonous and predictable affair that would have consisted mainly of a statement of the government's intent and allocation of money for different purposes. With consumption tax going out of the Central government's jurisdiction after the rollout of the Good and Services Tax, the Budget speech had lost even the power to influence prices — a fear factor that had made the Union Budget so special and frightening.

This year's Budget, however, could be special, especially in the wake of Covid-induced economic catastrophe in the country. There is a hope among people and businesspersons that the government — the country's biggest consumer — would come out in support of the economy. The country needs a path-breaking Budget to bring back the tottering economy on the growth track and revive investor confidence in the country.

While the Covid pandemic offers a great opportunity for the finance minister to reset the economy and administer bitter medicine for its health, it also increases expectations that could be difficult to fulfil. For example, people belonging to the middle class want lower income-tax outgo, companies want tax concessions, and farmers want freebies. In a nutshell, everybody wants to pay less or nothing. Therefore, instead of opting for a welfare budget, the finance minister should support sectors such as infrastructure and construction that could have a greater and faster positive effect on reviving the economy. She could also try to put more money in the hands of the people who could use it for consumption. A few thousands of rupees more in the pockets of a middle-class family would invariably boost retail sales.

The next issue is how does the minister raise money for boosting the economy. As tax collection could be a tad lower than normal, the government appears to be ready to go easy on borrowing more money. The minister, however, should exhaust all options before going on a borrowing spree. The Central government owns hundreds of companies, which have been undervalued because of their poor performance and bureaucratic interference. Navratna companies like Coal India, NMDC, Sail and Bhel among others could see a great appreciation in value if the government followed the model of the joint venture between Maruti Udyog Limited and Suzuki Motors by letting private partners run the company. The government could also consider exiting all public sector banks, which will unburden taxpayers and bring in new capital and employment. The State Bank of India and Postal Bank with a vast pan-India network could be used for government schemes and welfare purposes.

In history, very few people get an opportunity to prove their mettle. This Budget could become a Manmohan Singh moment for Ms Sitharaman to script the second turnaround story for India. If the opportunity is lost, it would be a tragedy for her as well as the country.

### Inconsequential homecoming?

There will be hype and hoopla, possibly a grand reception evoking a wide range of sentiments like excitement, anticipation and fear. Yes, it is V.K. Sasikala, who has been released from the Parappanna Agrahara prison on completion of her four year prison term, who will be evoking all these and even more when she comes home to Chennai on her discharge from hospital. However, the common man wants to know if she can turn the politics of Tamil Nadu upside down. Indeed many find it intriguing as to how someone who has never ever run for any office, not even a panchayat ward councillor post, could invoke such extraordinary fear in the minds of the top honchos of the ruling AIADMK. Even in the party she had held the post of general secretary for a very brief insignificant period before being unceremoniously thrown out.

But when the party leaders crack down on an ordinary cadre in a district for putting out a wall poster welcoming Ms Sasikala, it only points to the fear that has gripped them. The inauguration of the mausoleum and the memorial for former chief minister J. Jayalalithaa in a jiffy is another pointer to the pervading fear. Even when Edappadi K. Palaniswami avers that he was made chief minister not by Sasikala, the fear is palpable.

It's an open secret that as the reigning confidant of the former party head and chief minister, Ms Sasikala was calling the shots in the party and the government and obviously there had been too many beneficiaries of her largesse and kind heartedness, who would have enjoyed power or made pelf. And not all of them would be as amnesiac as Mr Palaniswami. But even if hordes of avid loyalists and grateful souls rush in to welcome her, Ms Sasikala's say and stay in politics would depend solely on the will of the people, who would decide with their valuable votes.

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Subhani



## Vaccine diplomacy is India's finest hour

Sreeram Chaulia

Foreign Pulse

Operation "Vaccine Maitri", which was launched earlier this month, is a milestone in the history of India's assistance to fellow developing countries. As millions of India-made Covid-19 vaccines, packed in boxes labelled with the uplifting Sanskrit verse *Sarve Santu Niramaya* (may all be free from disease), reach countries across South and Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America, India's stature as a Good Samaritan and a responsible power in the world is rising.

The most remarkable feature of India's mission to supply the much-sought-after doses to a pandemic-plagued world is its timing. Within days of approval from India's regulatory authorities and their foreign counterparts, the export of vaccines began in earnest. India's domestic vaccine rollout, which is a humungous task in itself due to the vast size of its territory and population, did not in any way delay its health rescue diplomacy towards countries near and far such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, the Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius, South Africa, Bahrain, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Brazil.

A friend acting speedily in a time of need is the best. Bhutan's Prime Minister Lotay Tshering articulated how important India's support at the present critical juncture was by saying: "It is of unimaginable value when precious commodities are shared even before meeting your own needs." Unlike some countries that imposed export bans on essential medicines, protective equipment and vaccines in order to attend solely to their own citizens' pressing needs, India has threaded the needle right since the coronavirus pan-

demie broke out to share whatever it could with less endowed nations.

The ethos driving "Vaccine Maitri" and the earlier export of Covid-19 treatment drugs and medical gear is summed up by external affairs minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar's formulation that "we are more nationalistic, but at the same time we don't see a tension between being nationalistic and being international".

Guided by the holistic philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family), India is extending a helping hand to others with the conviction that if sickness prevails in any corner of the world, then Indians themselves remain vulnerable. In today's interconnected world, the well-being of 1.3 billion Indians cannot be isolated from that of the remaining 6.3 billion inhabitants of the planet.

With many recipient countries getting Indian vaccines either free of cost or minimally priced at actual production cost, and India also training medical personnel in some nations to administer the vaccines, the global public goods India is supplying are truly invaluable. "Vaccine Maitri" is India's reputation-enhancing initiative, not a money-making enterprise or a bargaining chip to extract concessions and impose conditions. Unlike China, which has explicitly demanded diplomatic, geopolitical and economic quid pro quos for its masks, gowns and vaccines, India is not expecting anything material in return.

That is why the gushing gratitude from the recipients towards India is so genuine and quoteworthy. Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro tweeted an image captioned "*Dhanyavaad Bharat*" and "*Obrigado India*", depicting the epic hero Hanuman carrying

vaccines by air, all the way from India. The analogy was to Hanuman bringing the lifesaving Sanjeevani medicinal herb by lifting an entire mountain with his superhuman power and flying from the Himalayas to the battlefield in what is considered to be present-day Sri Lanka.

For Brazil, one of the worst sufferers from Covid-19, the Indian vaccines mean a lot because of its tortuous experience with Chinese vaccines. Mr Bolsonaro's political rival, João Doria, governor of São Paulo state, had bypassed the federal government and banked heavily on Chinese vaccines. In the end, for all the propaganda and hype whipped up by China about its Covid-19 vaccines, clinical trials in Brazil found their efficacy to be barely 50 per cent. India-made vaccines, both indigenously researched ones as well as foreign-contracted ones, are more reliable.

India has a huge comparative advantage in terms of credibility and capability of development and manufacturing of vaccines. Like space exploration, commercial satellite launches and information technology-enabled services, this is a niche scientific area where India is way ahead of many countries, even richer ones. Extensive manufacturing contracts and partnerships with Western pharmaceutical companies, such as Britain's AstraZeneca, give Indian firms a distinct edge over their Chinese and Russian competitors.

India's vaccine diplomacy rests on this qualitative and quantitative leverage. It does not take a lot of persuasion or salesmanship by New Delhi for countries to ask for Indian vaccines because their track record is proven, given the multi-

ple dozens of Indian vaccines which have previously been pre-approved by the WHO. While China beats India overall in manufacturing, in this particular sector, one must place on record that China's top vaccine maker Shenzhen Kangtai can't hold a candle to India's Serum Institute in Pune in churning out billions of doses per annum.

With China ending 2020 as the only major economy eking out a positive economic growth rate, some have adjudged it as the big winner riding out the storm of a global pandemic that China itself had spawned. But given its plummeting soft power resulting from hegemonic overreach, as evident from public opinion surveys, and the cloud hanging over Chinese vaccines owing to their safety and debt trap risks, it is obvious that others have to step up and show leadership in a world reeling from the pandemic.

To argue that India rose to the occasion and is winning the hearts and minds of the world is not a public relations claim but an internationally recognised reality. It bears reiteration here that India's altruism does have concrete goals and objectives. The goodwill being accumulated from India's vaccine diplomacy is expected to yield longer-term benefits of increased bilateral and regional trust and faith, which is why New Delhi prioritised neighbouring nations to be the initial beneficiaries.

Vaccine Maitri's scale, speed and positive reception in country after country mark India's finest hour as a net provider of international security. Playing to one's strengths and maximising potential gains from them in the global arena have been cardinal principles of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy. Critics who instinctively pounce on him for all acts of omission and commission should tip their hats for a job well done and well planned.

*The writer is a professor and dean at the Jindal School of International Affairs*

#### LETTERS

#### FARMERS PROTEST

Subhani's cartoon says it all. The disruptors of peaceful tractor rally were indeed the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing. But the moot question is who were they? Whoever they were, they succeeded in their agenda and have a confused a lot of farmers who do not know what is next.

Varghese George  
Secunderabad

It was a wise decision by farmers to cancel their march to Parliament on Budget day. With rogue elements on the prowl, we cannot rule out a recurrence of violence that was seen during the tractor parade on Republic Day. It could only harm the farmers' cause. Though the Delhi incident toughens the Centre's stand, they find the agitating farmers only from Punjab, Haryana and a part of UP. The response from other states appears to be lukewarm.

S. Nageswara Rao  
Hyderabad

One doesn't understand what lessons the Delhi police needs to learn from the Republic Day tractor parade. If the police tried to block the 'minor explosion' with force, critics would have easily termed it police brutality. Critics always blame police and government. Delhi police allowed farmers to prevail for a day. It was a good tactic. It was a bloodless coup of sorts. Obviously forces opposed to government are disappointed because police outwitted them.

P. Vijayachandran  
Hyderabad

#### 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

#### Scientists' call to banish malnutrition

HYDERABAD, January. 28

The first Asian Congress of Nutrition, which represents a determined attempt to eradicate malnutrition from Asian countries, was inaugurated here today by Governor Khandubhai Desai.

The speakers stressed on the importance of treating nutrition programmes as an integral part of the overall economic development of a nation and marked the commencement of the six-day Congress, About 500 nutrition scientists, administrators and policy-makers, — including 100 delegates from 23 countries — are attending the Congress being held at the Jubilee Hall.

Anand K. Sahay  
Far & Near



### Can Rahul or anyone salvage Congress, or will it break?

Sonia Gandhi is in frail health. She had to leave New Delhi for a while on medical advice in order to escape the winter pollution. Is there a vacancy at the top that can be filled in orderly fashion and even routine party functioning restored, or will the old firm break? India's founding party may just be at that sort of moment.

Should the Congress break, it is unlikely to become two as in 1969, and then again become one under a decisive leader. There is no such leader on the horizon. It will therefore likely become several regional entities, and then probably scatter like the Janata Party, which had some big names in it but no stalwart with mass, nationwide, appeal.

Mrs Gandhi had pulled a rabbit out of the hat when she produced two UPA governments at the Centre on the trot through sheer political sagacity, coalition-building prowess, and light-touch political management. This reprieve for the Congress was gained in 2004 in the face of sheer adversity and was the more remarkable for that.

The circumstances then were not propitious. The BJP had come into its own and formed governments at

the Centre under a well-liked figure. In contrast, the Congress had haemorrhaged. Key party leaders — Sharad Pawar and Mamata Banerjee — had split away in the late 1990s, with Ms Banerjee even joining the BJP-led NDA alliance for a while and Mr Pawar doing tactical manoeuvres with the BJP as per his convenience, although he would later join the UPA government.

While Mrs Gandhi's shepherding of her party in such circumstances is the stuff of folklore, it is now equally plain that in those years of warring power (2004-14) the Congress leadership did little to ground the party organisation and nurture it, although it was clear that a cadre and ideology-based national party — so far on the fringes — had already emerged as an alternative.

The Congress had little to offer to counter the ideological propaganda of the RSS-BJP. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government had delivered a sustained average rate of economic growth of nearly eight per cent per annum over a 10-year period. The Congress gullibly thought this would be enough to see it through in the elections.

This was a gross underestimation

of the power of industrial-scale communal propaganda, aided by a hostile media which, effectively, acted as a force-multiplier. The media's stance was an indication that India's big business was far from pleased with the Manmohan-Sonia government. The reason was that the government had gone well outside the prism of a hundred-per-cent-market focus to extend benefits to poorer communities. This was too much for the corrupt, self-serving, elite.

At the same time, the small and medium companies and the urban middle classes and the rural communities — the very sections for whom Congress rule had been benign — became hostage to the continuous stream of a vicious, communal, mind-bending, propaganda onslaught. These in fact participated, happily, in preparing the ground for the mythical hero to arrive — one who will slay every demon.

The Congress comprehensively failed to meet the challenge of majoritarian right-wing elements because it had frittered away the thought-and-action system nurtured by Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhash Chandra Bose, Maulana

Azad and countless fearless men and women who gave their lives for an ideal that would necessarily unify India, rather than divide it, or cater only to particular sections of it.

Rajiv Gandhi downwards, the Congress projected itself merely as a party of governance — and not one that united the people on the basis of effective policies, effectively communicated.

This is fundamentally why it permitted itself, in slow stages, to overlook the importance of having a worthwhile party organisation. Even when a party has an active ideological ingredient, it is of no use when there is no organisation to back it, and to disseminate it. And the Congress, for long, has become a party which, in the main, has left its ideology on a museum shelf. It also lacks an organisation.

Ideology and organisation are indeed inextricably bound. There is some irony in the fact that prominent Congress dissidents — who go under the rubric of G-23 — rightly underline a democratically elected organisation but do not even mention ideology. That is a fool's errand.

Once the Congress' demise is guaranteed, how long many of the so-

called secular regional parties, or those on the Left, survive is also a matter of conjecture. Historically, these are — in the main — a derivative of the wider "Congress system" that Rajni Kothari spoke of, although each emphasised specific concerns (some caste, some class) and arose in opposition to the Congress.

This question needs to be considered in the face of entrenchment in power of a far-right, chauvinist, cadre-based, party whose priority is to mobilise the resources, agencies, departments and all institutions of the State — including the uniformed forces and the judiciary — to obliterate other political parties, big or small. The Constitution of India can then simply be dispatched to a dusty corner of the archives.

Rahul Gandhi, an honourable and intelligent man, had resigned as party president on a point of principle. He supports democratic elections from top to bottom. He must be permitted to have his way. Among the contemporary generation, he alone displays an ideological will. Let him provide that ballast to his party and not be distracted by the burden of dynasty.



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	46874.36	-1.13
Nifty 50	13817.50	-1.07
S&P 500*	3,817.04	1.77
Dollar (₹)	73.04	-0.16
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.82	0.32
Euro (₹)	88.42	-0.03
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,183▼109	0.22
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.70	-0.20
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.933	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.048	0.034

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## US economy shrinks 3.5% in 2020

The US economy grew at a 4 per cent annual rate in the final three months of 2020 and shrank last year by the largest amount in 74 years. For 2020 as a whole, the economy contracted 3.5 per cent and clouded the outlook for the coming year. The Commerce Department estimated that the US GDP slowed sharply in the October-December quarter from a record 33.4 per cent surge in the July-September quarter.

## Swaminathan, Tewari take over as SBI MDs



State Bank of India said Swaminathan J. and Ashwini Kumar Tewari have taken charge as managing directors. They would be holding this position for up to three years, the lender said in a release. Before this, Swaminathan was the deputy managing director (finance) at the bank. Tewari served SBI Card as MD&CEO before he was appointed as an MD of the bank. SBI chairman Dinesh Khara is assisted by four MDs.

## IDBI Bank posts Q3 net of ₹378 cr as NII grows

LIC-owned IDBI Bank reported a standalone net profit of Rs 378 crore for December quarter 2020-21 on the back of healthy growth in interest income. The lender, which is under the RBI's prompt corrective action (PCA) since May 2017, had reported a standalone net loss of Rs 5,763 crore in the year-ago quarter. On a consolidated basis, its PAT stood at Rs 393.15 crore versus a loss of Rs 5,728.70 crore last year.

## Laurus Labs Q3 net jumps nearly 4-fold to ₹273 cr

Drug firm Laurus Labs reported a nearly 4-fold jump in its consolidated net profit to Rs 272.85 crore for the December quarter against Rs 73.47 crore in the year-ago quarter. Consolidated revenue from operations stood at Rs 1,288.42 crore against Rs 729.59 crore. "Our consolidated revenue for the quarter increased by 76 per cent driven by growth in all the divisions," founder and CEO Satyanarayana Chava said.



■ Demand contracts 35 per cent in 2020

## Gold demand dips to lowest in 25 yrs

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JAN. 28

Despite the recovery made in the December quarter, gold demand contracted 35 per cent in 2020 to the lowest level in 25 years.

The gold demand for the full-year 2020 was 446.4 tonnes compared to 690.4 tonnes in 2019—a decline of 35 per cent, according to data from the World Gold Council. This was the lowest demand since 1995.

The year 1995 had seen one of the lowest yearly demand of 462 tonnes since the World Gold Council has been recording annual gold demand.

"India's gold demand dropped by over a third in 2020, settling at 446.4 tonnes, on the back of Covid-induced lockdowns and lifetime high prices. However, the drop was significantly lower when viewed in value terms, 14 per cent lower than 2019 as prices were up 34 per cent, hovering around Rs 50,000 per 10 gm for most part of the year," said Somasundaram P.R., managing director, India, World Gold Council.

Jewellery demand fell 42 per cent to 315.9 tonnes and investment demand fell by 11 per cent to 130.4 tonnes in 2020.

In the first three quarters of 2020, gold demand stood at 252 tonnes, which was 49 per cent down from 496 tonnes in the same period last year. In the fourth quarter of festivals, however, demand



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—Somasundaram P.R.  
MD, India, World Gold Council

was just 4 per cent down at 186.2 tonnes compared to 194.3 tonnes in the same quarter of 2019.

While jewellery demand was down by just 8 per cent at 137.3 tonnes, investment demand was up by 8 per cent at 48.9 tonnes against 45.3 tonnes in Q4 of 2019.

"The demand for bars and coins had gone up not just during the auspicious occasions but even otherwise," said Somasundaram.

Import of official gold was down 46 per cent in 2020 and the restrictions on international travel due to the pandemic also saw the grey market sup-

ply shrinking by one-fourth of last year's 115 tonnes.

Closure of stores and retail establishments also saw the quantum of recycled gold coming down to 95.5 tonnes compared to 119.5 tonnes in 2019.

Globally, annual demand was 14 per cent down to 3,759.6 tonnes and 2020 saw the demand falling below 4000 tonnes for the first time since 2009.

The largest gold consumer, China, saw the demand shrinking by 28 per cent. However, Germany's investment demand grew in 2020, replacing India from the second slot.

## TIM COOK: INDIA BIZ DOUBLED, FEEL GOOD ABOUT TRAJECTORY

YOSHITA SINGH  
NEW YORK/NEW DELHI, JAN. 28

Apple has doubled its business in India in the December quarter on the back of strong performance of its online store, and the tech giant sees a good growth trajectory going ahead, its CEO Tim Cook said.

The Cupertino-based tech giant posted an all-time record revenue of \$111.4 billion globally for the first quarter ended December 26, 2020, up 21 per cent year-on-year.

International sales accounted for 64 per cent of the quarter's revenue.

"... If you take India as an example, we doubled our business last quarter compared to the year-ago quarter. But our absolute level of business there is still quite low relative to the size of the opportunity," Cook said during an analyst call.

The company, which competes with players like Samsung and OnePlus in the premium smartphone segment, has been aggressively ramping up its presence in the Indian market. —PTI

## Sundaram AMC buys Principal AMC

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, JAN. 28

Sundaram Asset Management Company, a 100 per cent subsidiary of Sundaram Finance, announced the purchase of the asset management businesses of Principal Asset Management.

Sundaram will acquire the schemes managed by Principal Asset Management, besides buying 100 per cent share capital of Principal Asset Management, Principal Trustee Company, and Principal Retirement Advisors, said a release issued by Sundaram AMC.

"The transaction is subject to the receipt of necessary regulatory approvals and Sebi prescribed processes, and Principal will continue to operate the businesses until the deal is closed," the release added.

Sundaram is a significant player in the fund management space with a 25-year track record.

Principal Asset Management has assets under management of Rs 7,447 crores as on December 31, 2020, with about 90 per cent of this in equity-oriented schemes.

Commenting on the acquisition, Sunil Subramaniam, managing director, Sundaram AMC said, "This transaction will strengthen our presence in the market-place with the addition of a range of schemes with a good long-term performance track record."

## Maruti Suzuki net rises 24% on higher sales

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, JAN. 28

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest car maker, on Thursday posted a 24.1 per cent year-on-year rise in the December quarter standalone net profit at Rs 1,941.4 crore, thanks to higher festive sales and preference for personal mobility amid the pandemic that raised the demand for its small cars.

In the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year, Maruti Suzuki's net profit stood at Rs 1,564.8 crore.

The maker of popular models like Swift and Vitara Brezza reported a 13.3 per cent YoY rise in revenue at Rs 23,457.8 crore against Rs 20,706.8 crore in Q3FY20.

The revenue numbers



were slightly below the market expectations. A CNBC-TV18 poll had estimated the revenue numbers to the tune of Rs 23,655 crore.

The company's earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation, or Ebitda, grew 5.9 per cent YoY to Rs 2,226 crore against Rs 2,102 crore in the correspon-

ding quarter last year. The Ebitda margin for the quarter stood at 9.5 per cent against 10.1 per cent a year ago.

Maruti Suzuki said its operating income rose on higher sales volume, cost cuts and lower sales promotion. But the increase was partially offset by an increase in commodity prices and adverse foreign exchange movement.

The company sold a total of 4.95 lakh vehicles during the December quarter, higher by 13.4 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year.

Sales in the domestic market stood at 4.67 lakh units, growing by 13 per cent. Exports stood at 28,528 units, higher by 20.6 per cent.

## Airtel says it has 5G ready network

FC BUREAU  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

Bharti Airtel on Thursday said its telecom network is now 5G ready after it has demonstrated live fifth-generation (5G) service over an existing commercial network in Hyderabad.

"Today, we have conclusively demonstrated that as far as Airtel is concerned, we are 5G ready," Bharti Airtel MD and CEO Gopal Vittal said at a virtual conference.

He said the company had seamlessly operated 5G and 4G concurrently within 1800 MHz spectrum



using dynamic spectrum sharing in Hyderabad.

"Every single part of our network is now fully 5G ready...and can use any spectrum band to click on 5G experience in a matter of months," Vittal said.

The 5G service offers ultra high-speed internet, which allowed users during a demo run in

Hyderabad to download a movie in a few seconds.

The latest demonstration underscores the company's technology capabilities for the 5G roll-out whenever adequate spectrum is made available.

"Even on existing bands of spectrum, 5G can be turned on but the full power of the experience will be felt only when the adequate spectrum is available from the government... The moment we receive government approvals and we have the right spectrum bands in adequate quantities, we will be able to roll this out, immediately," he said.

## Realtors seek tax sops, industry & infra status

New Delhi, Jan. 28: Real estate developers expect the government to provide industry status as well as infrastructure status for the sector, increase the corpus of Rs 25,000-crore stress fund, and more tax sops for both homebuyers and builders in the upcoming Budget to boost property demand.

They also hope for single-window clearance for projects, measures to boost liquidity, reduction in the GST rates and availability of input tax credit on the GST paid in the Budget 2021-22, which will be presented on February 1.

"We sincerely hope that Budget 2021 brings some much-needed relief to homebuyers as well as developers," Tata Realty and Infrastructure MD & CEO Sanjay Dutt said.

As the sector's growth relies heavily on the upcoming financial amendments, he said the government should grant industry status to the real estate sector and a single-window clearance mechanism for faster completion of projects.

"One GST, one or no



stamp duty regime and reduction in registration charges across states are some of the other recommendations which will make a significant difference to the cost of a project and will definitely encourage home buyers to invest," Dutt said.

Anshuman Magazine, chairman and CEO (India, South East Asia, Middle East and Africa) of CBRE, said, "Budget 2021 could go a long way towards meeting this goal by way of introducing tax reforms such as enhancing the principal deduction limit on home loans under Section 80C of the IT Act, 1961; lowering the long-term gains tax for sale of house property;

and rationalising the GST for under-construction properties."

The government could also consider increasing the corpus of Rs 25,000-crore Swamim fund, Magazine said.

Mumbai-based Kalpataru Ltd MD Parag Munot said the measures such as raising the income tax deduction ceiling on home loan interest, input tax credit on GST, and expanding the ambit of affordable housing to properties up to Rs 1 crore in Super Tier 1 cities such as Mumbai and Delhi, will significantly incentivise buying. "It would give the sector a much-needed boost and accelerate the mission to provide housing for all by 2022."

Salarpuria Sattva MD Bijay Agarwal demanded the industry status to the real estate sector and a single-window clearance system.

PropTiger and Housing.com CEO Dhruv Agarwala said the liquidity crunch being faced by the sector needs to be resolved and the subvention scheme reintroduced in the Budget. —PTI

## INDIGO REPORTS FOURTH STRAIGHT QUARTERLY LOSS, REVENUE HALVES



Bengaluru, Jan. 28: Interlobe Aviation Ltd, which runs India's biggest airline IndiGo, reported its fourth straight quarterly loss on Thursday, as the Covid-19 pandemic kept air travel well below normal levels.

Its loss in the December quarter was smaller than in the previous two quarters, when the health crisis had brought global air travel to a halt, but the company's revenue halved from a year earlier, signalling that a full recovery was still far away.

The festive season in October and November saw more air travel, and domestic traffic has now recovered to about 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, mitigating some of Interlobe's losses during the quarter.

IndiGo also benefited from lower fuel costs, which plunged nearly 66 per cent year-over-year.

"The low level of international capacity continues to remain a major concern for us and continues to hurt our financials," CEO Ronojoy Dutta said on a conference call with analysts.

IndiGo expects to reach 50 per cent of its pre-pandemic international capacity only by mid-2022, and 100 per cent by end-2022, Dutta said.

"We'd like to hit the seasonally strong first quarter next year with all cylinders running, and at full capacity, at least domestically," he added.

IndiGo said it expects current-quarter average seat kilometers—a measure of passenger-carrying capacity—to be 75-80 per cent of the capacity of the same period last year.

The New Delhi-based airline's daily average cash burn had halved to Rs 15 crore in the quarter from June-quarter levels.

—Reuters

NEW | STREAM Walmart Connect eyes top 10 ranking in 5 years

## Walmart aims to be advertising titan

THOMAS BUCKLEY  
JAN. 28

Walmart Inc plans to ramp up growth in its digital media business as the world's largest retailer seeks to become a top-ten advertising platform in the US within five years.

The media group, which will be renamed Walmart Connect, will offer targeted ads on e-commerce platforms such as Walmart.com and the Walmart app to shoppers as they're purchasing in real time, the company said on Thursday in a statement. Walmart will also allow brands to advertise on almost 170,000 digital screens at



self-checkout kiosks and on TV walls in more than 4,500 stores.

With a major brick-and-mortar footprint tied to a growing e-commerce business, Walmart is trying to position itself as a premier destination for companies to advertise

wherever—and however—a customer chooses to shop. "We've built a substantial business that can serve clients in a way no one else can," chief customer officer Janey Whiteside said in the statement.

Walmart Connect is

another instalment in the company's long-running bid to diversify its income away from its core operations. The move comes as the company seeks to simplify its shopping experience to better compete with Amazon.com Inc while enhancing the reach of its advertising clients. Last fiscal year, Walmart's digital advertising operations nearly doubled in revenue and signed up more than twice the number of advertisers from a year earlier, the company said.

Walmart shares rose less than 1 per cent in pre-market trading in New York.

—Bloomberg



## RENAULT UNVEILS KIGER SUV, LAUNCH IN Q1

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, JAN. 28

French car giant Renault on Thursday made a global unveil of its much-awaited Renault Kiger, a subcompact SUV, in India in the production form, ahead of its launch in the Q1 this year when its price would be revealed.

Auto experts said it could be aggressively priced at Rs 5.5 lakh to Rs 9.5 lakh to take on competition.

The sporty Renault Kiger will be first sold in India followed by other global markets.

The car maker, which sells Duster and Kwid models, revealed its SUVs specifications, the features available in top-spec form, the design, its interiors and the engine and gearbox options on offer.

The Kiger is powered by the 72HP, naturally aspirated petrol and 100HP, 1.0-litre turbo-petrol engine.



## SHORT TAKES

## Ronaldo violates Covid-19 code

**Rome:** Cristiano Ronaldo broke coronavirus travel restrictions with a trip to a mountain resort, according to media reports Thursday. Juventus striker Ronaldo allegedly travelled to Courmayeur, 150 kilometres north-west of the Serie A club's Turin headquarters, for his girlfriend Georgina Rodriguez' birthday. Rodriguez, who turned 27 on Wednesday, apparently posted a video of the couple on a snowmobile on Instagram. She later removed it, but it was picked up by several Italian news sites. The *Gazzetta dello Sport* newspaper said Ronaldo and Rodriguez spent Tuesday night in a hotel and took a ride in the snow the next morning, before returning to Turin. Under current Italian coronavirus rules, the couple should not have left the town of Turin. They each risk a fine of \$485. — *AFP*

## Virus hits Olympic test competition

**Tokyo:** The first Tokyo Olympics test event of 2021 has been postponed because of travel restrictions under Japan's coronavirus state of emergency, organisers confirmed on Thursday. The artistic swimming event will double as the sport's final qualifier for the virus-postponed Games. It was due to be held on March 4-7 in Tokyo but will now take place two months later.

Tokyo 2020 organisers said a decision to delay it had been taken for reasons including "ensuring the fairest possible conditions for athletes to participate" and ongoing entry restrictions in Japan. The qualifier has now been rescheduled for May 1-4 at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre. — *AFP*

## Yasir strikes late, Pak in charge

**Karachi:** Pakistan's spinners Yasir Shah and Nauman Ali grabbed three wickets in the space of ten runs to halt South Africa's fightback on the third day of the first Test here. When it looked like South Africa would end the day at parity after wiping out Pakistan's big 158-run first innings lead, Yasir struck twice and Nauman once to leave the tourists on 187 for 4 at close. Nightwatchman Keshav Maharaj was unbeaten on two and skipper Quinton de Kock was yet to score, as South Africa now lead by 29 runs with six second innings wickets in hand. Earlier, hosts scored 378 to take a crucial lead over South Africa's total of 220. — *AFP*

**Brief scores:** South Africa 220 & 187/4 (Markram 74, van der Dussen 64, Yasir 3/53) vs Pakistan 378 (Fawad 109, Rabada 3/70, Maharaj 3/90).

## Man United's title hopes suffer blow

**London:** Manchester United's Premier League title hopes suffered a huge blow on Wednesday with a 2-1 defeat by bottom side Sheffield United as Chelsea started the Thomas Tuchel era with a goalless draw against Wolves. The shock result at Old Trafford leaves Pep Guardiola's Manchester City a point clear at the top with a game in hand and looking increasingly hot favourites to win a third title in four years. Elsewhere on a busy night of midweek action, Leicester drew 1-1 with Everton, Burnley beat Aston Villa 3-2 and Brighton drew 0-0 with Fulham. Earlier, former Paris Saint-Germain boss Tuchel took charge at Stamford Bridge against misfiring Wolves less than 24 hours after replacing the sacked Frank Lampard. — *AFP*

## Live on TV

## BADMINTON

**BWF World Tour Finals:** Group matches from 9.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD, Star Sports 3

## CRICKET

**Pakistan vs South Africa:** First Test, Day 4 from 10.30 am on Sony Ten 2

**Big Bash League:** Eliminator from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

**Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament:** Semifinal — Tamil Nadu vs Rajasthan from 11.55 am; Punjab vs Baroda from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

## FOOTBALL

**Italian League:** Torino vs Fiorentina from 1.15 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

## WWE

**SmackDown:** Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

Burns eyes Rory return  
England opener joins team after paternity break

C. SANTOSH KUMAR | DC  
CHENNAI, JAN. 28

When England's Test cricketers were preparing for their subcontinental tour by training on worn surfaces at ECB's high performance centre in Loughborough, opener Rory Burns had other thoughts. Burns, who had spoken candidly about the effect of the bio-bubble environment in the summer, knew his most important preparation would be for the mental side of the game.

Burns, who has returned to the England Test squad after skipping the Sri Lanka tour for the birth of his first child, admitted that it was tough leaving his newborn daughter and wife back at home. "But, I'm ready to get back to work," said Burns who has scored 1,233 runs in 21 Tests.

The 30-year-old Epsom-born is also taking a short course in Psychology to fill the long hours in the bio-bubble.

"It's going to take quite a bit of my off-time. If I maintain a healthy headspace, I can focus well on my cricket. The break (paternity) helped me freshen up.

"The time that my child was giving me, I saw more of the India-Australia series than our series against Sri Lanka. Because I was getting up and doing my own training back home," he said.

On his maiden India tour, Burns is hoping to join with his teammates Jofra Archer and Ben Stokes for the first time in Chennai on Sunday. The rest of the squad who arrived on Wednesday from Colombo will commence their training only on Tuesday.

"It is obviously a challenge, we can't do much about the schedule. If you waste time thinking about that, it won't be any good to you. We have three days to put in the



Rory Burns. — *Instagram*

work and try to get used to the conditions here. Then it's a mental switch. I guess that's the challenge and I have been around for a while now so I have some experience to draw from," said Burns.

The Surrey cricketer, however, doesn't expect the wickets in India to turn straight away.

"I think we will get good cricket wickets that will spin as the game goes on. I have drawn on various people's experience who I have worked with, they tend to suggest about India as opposed to Sri

Lanka which is slightly fast forward from the start with regards to spin. We are preparing in that respect," he said.

Burns said India's Jasprit Bumrah is a hard bowler to prepare for.

"He is obviously unique in terms of how he comes and bowls. It would just be about working those angles. I saw the recent series between India and Australia and they are in a pretty handy form, not necessarily their first playing XI at different points, but still, they managed to get over the

line, it is just going to be a big challenge in their own conditions, looking forward to it," added Burns.

India would be fielding their full-strength side with Virat Kohli back to bolster the batting lineup. Burns knows India are in pretty handy form. "India could not necessarily play their first eleven, but they still managed to get past Australia, which is testament to the side. They will be a big challenge in their conditions and they are No. 1 in the world," further added the 30-year-old.

## Allrounder Kapil now drives on golf courses

MOSES KONDETY | DC  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 28

India's greatest fast-bowling all-rounder Kapil Dev has a word of caution for new speed sensation Mohammed Siraj: Slow and steady wins the long race.

India's 1983 World Cup winning captain, who has never missed a match because of injury in his 131-Test career spanning 16 years between 1978 and 1994, is impressed by the exploits of the Hyderabad quick in the recent Test series in Australia but says the onus is now on the pacer to keep performing. "Siraj is a good bowler who has done extremely well but he has to go a long way," Kapil told this newspaper during his visit to Hyderabad on Thursday.

"He needs to carry on for at least five seasons. I get scared about the fast bowlers because they get injured very fast," Kapil quipped.

"So many of them have come up in the last 10 years but have got injured — Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Ishant Sharma, Ashish Nehra are examples. It's tough yes, but you can overcome the difficulties if you are passionate about playing for the country," he added.

The 62-year-old lauded Team India that emerged on top Down Under. "They have done wonderfully well. I never ever expected a performance like that when more than half the side was injured... hats off!"

"Your captain, the most important player, is not there, and there are so many on the injury list and then you come back and play so well... I haven't seen better cricket than that in the 40 years that I have played and watched the game. The series win in Australia was definitely the cherry on the cake," Kapil continued to heap praise.

"After such a high in Australia, I hope and pray that they maintain the momentum in the upcoming home series against England," Kapil added.

Asked if it was time for India to have separate captains for Tests,



**It's the beautiful, serene surroundings that draw me to golf. Just imagine strolling and playing your strokes in a 150-acre garden. It's green all around. You feel the breeze, smell the grass and simply love nature. I wish my house was in the middle of a golf course. As long as the sun is up I can be out there.**

— KAPIL DEV  
India's World Cup winning cricket captain says he can play golf all day

ODIs and T20s, Kapil was non-committal. "Let's leave that to the selectors and their collective wisdom. If one captain is overburdened, try and lessen his workload so that he is more relaxed. It's nice to see Ajinkya Rahane doing so unbelievably well in the absence of Virat Kohli. Then there were Rohit and Ashwin too as a back-up. So I would say we have enough players and experience to lead the side, thanks to IPL and domestic cricket," he said.

Who are his favourite cricketers?

## TEST SERIES TV RIGHTS STILL UNDECIDED

**London, Jan. 28:** The television rights in the UK for England's tour of India remain undecided with just a week left for the series-opener in Chennai from February 5.

*Telegraph Sport* reported that *Star India*, the host broadcaster of the series, was considering showing the tour via its streaming app Hotstar instead of selling it to a conventional broadcaster like *Sky*.

"But India's win in Australia and good audience figures on *Sky* for England's recent series in Sri Lanka, has increased the market for the rights with even *Channel 4* showing an interest," claimed the report.

The rights, worth around £20 million, are expected to be awarded soon for the four-Test series, which is part of the World Test Championship. *Sky* remains the front-runner to secure them, having shown most of England's tours over the past three decades, the report stated.

The England squad flew into Chennai on Wednesday from Sri Lanka, where they trounced the hosts 2-0.

— *PTI*

## WORLD TOUR | FINALS

## Sindhu, Srikanth out of reckoning

**Bangkok, Jan. 28:** Indian shuttlers P. V. Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth were virtually out of contention for the knockout stage after losing their respective second round matches in the BWF World Tour Finals here on Thursday.

A week ago Sindhu had suffered a demoralising defeat to Ratchanok Intanon and there was no change of fate for the World Champion this time too as she went down 18-21, 13-21 to the third seeded Thai.

"It wasn't my day. Losing the first game made the difference. My timing was a bit off, so a bit disappointed," Sindhu said.

Srikanth enjoyed a 3-0 head-to-head count against Wang Tzu Wei ahead of his match but it mattered little as the Taiwanese world no 12 claimed a come-from-behind 19-21, 21-9, 21-19 win over the Indian.

"I have to figure out a way to pull out these close matches. I was dominating him for most part of third game," Srikanth said after losing yet another three-game contest.

With only the top two players from each group making it to the semifinals, the twin defeat almost sealed the fate of the Indian duo in the tournament.

Earlier, Srikanth and Wang fought tooth and nail right from the start, moving together 5-5 to 9-9 before Srikanth managed to grab a slender 11-10 lead

with a smash.

Srikanth opened up a significant 15-11 lead with Wang sending the shuttle wide twice.

Srikanth continued to dominate the rallies with his angled returns to reach 17-12. Wang, however, narrowed it down to 18-19 with Srikanth committing few errors but the Indian managed to grab two game points with a smash. He lost one before converting the next with Wang making a poor judgement at the backline.

Both the shuttlers engaged in some energy-sapping rallies but Wang played some superb shots to open up a 9-5 lead as Srikanth made a poor judgement. The Indian made successive errors at the net to allow Wang grab a healthy 11-5 advantage at the interval.

Wang simply ran away with the game as he led 16-6 and eventually sealed it.

The decider started with attacking rallies with Srikanth leading 4-1 but Wang produced a rear-guard action to make it 8-4 with seven straight points.

Srikanth bounced back to make it 10-10 but Wang again grabbed a lead at 17-13. Srikanth then made Wang run around the court, leaving him flat on the ground in the end. He made it 16-17 before finding the net and going wide. Srikanth again missed the line as Wang grabbed four match points. The Indian could save three. — *PTI*

## GANGULY UNDERGOES ANOTHER ANGIOPLASTY

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, JAN. 28

Board of Control for Cricket in India president Sourav Ganguly, admitted at Apollo Gleneagles Hospital, underwent another angioplasty on Thursday afternoon, in which two more stents were implanted for the removal of blockages in the two other arteries of his heart.

The 48-year-old former Indian cricket team captain had received the first one in one of his three affected arteries at Woodlands Hospital after suffering a 'mild' heart attack on January 2.

The second angioplasty, which was then deferred by

the doctors by two-three weeks, was planned after Sourav was examined by eminent cardiac surgeons — Dr Devi Shetty and Dr Ashwin Mehta — during the day.

The private hospital stated, "Dr Aftab Khan and the team comprising Dr Ashwin Mehta, Dr Devi Shetty, Dr Ajit Desai, Dr Saroj Mondal and Dr Saptarshi Basu successfully performed angioplasty on Mr Sourav Ganguly."

It added, "Two stents were placed. The procedure was uneventful. Mr Ganguly is stable and under close observation."

One of the doctors said the angioplasty took an hour. West Bengal chief

minister Mamata Banerjee visited Sourav in the evening.

"Sourav received two stent implantation. The operation was successful. He is stable and doing well. He also spoke to me. I wish him all the best and congratulate the doctors also," she said later.

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar tweeted, "Got an update on health of @SGanguly99 Sourav Ganguly, President Board of Control for Cricket in India @BCCI under treatment in Kolkata. As per doctors and family members his condition is fine."

Sourav is likely to be released from the hospital after some days.

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