

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | MONDAY 11 | JANUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 25°C
Min: 22°C
Rainfall: 15.8 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Margazhi 27
Tithi: Thrayodashi
Star: Kettai/ Moolam
Rahukalam:
7.30 am to 9 am
Yamagandam:
10.30 am to 12 noon

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.18 am
Zohar: 12.20 pm
Asar: 3.31 pm
Maghrib: 5.57 pm
Isha: 7.12 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.16 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.44 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 4.42 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 5.31 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+15,199)	(+136)
1,04,66,545	1,51,184

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+724)
TN: 8,26,261 12,222

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

9,03,81,294

DEATHS

19,39,210

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES
218

worldometers.info

Bird flu confirmed in seven states

New Delhi: The Centre on Sunday said bird flu outbreak has been confirmed in seven states -- Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, while test results are still awaited for Delhi and Maharashtra samples. No samples have been confirmed positive in wild birds from Balod district, Chhattisgarh which were tested earlier, the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying said in a statement. After confirmation of avian influenza (bird flu) positive samples in poultry (two poultry farms) of Panchkula district of Haryana, the state government has deployed nine Rapid Response team, and containment operation is underway in both the epicentres.

Srinagar-Jammu highway reopened

Srinagar: The Srinagar-Jammu national highway was reopened on Sunday after seven days in the wake of heavy snowfall last week, even as the city and some other parts of Kashmir received another spell of snowfall, officials said. The 260 kilometre-long highway -- the only all-weather road connecting Kashmir with the rest of the country -- was re-opened for fresh traffic on Sunday morning, the officials said.



Is there any queue for vaccination for bird flu?

STATE | 3

Rajini, Kamal popular stars, marginal political players: Aiya



WORLD | 5

Democrats ready for Trump's second impeachment today

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Jadeja might bat with injections



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College students to get free data cards of 2 GB a day: CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 10:

The state government has decided to distribute free data cards of 2GB per day for college students for their use during the remaining months of this academic year. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami made the announcement on Sunday for issuance of the free data cards. In a statement, the Chief Minister said the colleges are holding online classes for students owing to Covid-19 pandemic. In order to assist the students to attend the online classes, the government has decided to give free data cards with a usage capacity of 2 GB per day between January and April. About 9.69 lakh students studying in govern-



ment and government-aided arts, science colleges, polytechnic colleges, engineering colleges and students receiving scholarships in private colleges will benefit from the scheme.

The Corporation of Tamil Nadu Ltd. (Elcot), a state government-undertaking, will distribute the data cards to the students.

Electronics Corporation of Tamil Nadu Ltd. (Elcot), a state government-undertaking, will distribute the data cards to the students.

Farmers disrupt Khattar's meet

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar was forced to cancel his kisan mahapanchayat programme in Karnal on Sunday after the farmers who are protesting against the Centre's three new agricultural reform laws uprooted tents and damaged the stage at the venue.

The police resorted to a mild lathicharge and used teargas and water cannons to stop hundreds of farmers from reaching a helipad at Kaimla village where Mr Khattar was scheduled to land.

Lashing out at Mr Khattar for using water cannons and teargas shells against the farmers, Congress leader Randeep

Singh Surjewala tweeted: "Respected Manohar Lal ji, please stop this pretence of Kisan Mahapanchayat in Kaimla village. By playing with the sentiments of those who provide us with food, please stop meddling with the law and order situation." In another tweet, he said: "If you want to have a conversation, have it with those who have been protesting for the last 46 days."

BJP-ruled Haryana had hit the headlines in November when it decided to stop the farmers on their way to Delhi from across the state as well as those in Punjab. For days, there have been reports of the police clashing with farmers, using batons, barricades, teargas and water cannons.

FANS GATHER TO DEMAND RAJINI'S ENTRY TO POLITICS

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 10

Hundreds of Rajinikanth fans got together in the city on Sunday to protest the matinee idol's refusal to enter politics as promised. A Rajini Makal Mandram leader had warned them against holding any demonstrations but the disappointed fans did not pay heed. They got together peacefully to express their view that the superstar should join politics.

RMM office bearer Sudhakar had warned members against holding protests while 38 district secretaries of the outfit had put out a notice instructing members to stay away from demonstrations.

PG3

SDA CALLS OFF DHARNA FOR RECALL OF BEDI

Puducherry, Jan. 10: The ruling Congress-led Secular Democratic Alliance (SDA) in Puducherry on Sunday ended its three-day old agitation demanding the recall of Lt Governor Kiran Bedi, a day ahead of the original schedule, citing Pongal festivities.

Chief Minister V Narayanasamy, who addressed the participants on Sunday, said as the Pongal festival was being celebrated in the Union territory the number of days of the protest was reduced from four to three.

The protest was launched on January 8 with the ruling party accusing Bedi of "impeding developmental plans and welfare measures of the elected government."

Initially, the alliance had planned for an indefinite agitation but scaled it down to four days. He, however, said the agitation against Ms Bedi would be carried out in different modes.

PTI

Vegetable vendor raped in rly yard

SINDHIYA SAMUEL,
P.A. JEBARAJ | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 10

The Government Railway Police (GRP) arrested two railways contract staff for raping a 40-year old vegetable vendor on suburban trains who fell asleep inside an EMU train at the Tambaram railway yard during the late hours of Saturday. The incident comes close on the heels of the reports of the rape of another woman of the same age on a temple

premise in Nagapattinam. The incident happened after the woman, a resident on the city's outskirts, boarded a Chennai Beach-Chengalpattu suburban train from Pallavaram railway station. Police told DC that the woman had slept off on the floor without realising that she had missed her stop. The train reached Chengalpattu and returned to Tambaram railway station, and then to the railway yard in Tambaram.

PG2

Travancore royals to appear in court today

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 10

A Special court for central crime branch (CCB) cases in Chennai has summoned members of the erstwhile Travancore royal family to appear before it on Monday in connection

with a land grab case. The CCB court has summoned Puyam Thirunal Kellari Parvathi Boy, Aswathi Thirunal Gowri Lakshmi Boy, Aswathi Thirunal Rama Varma, Moolam Thirunal Rama Varma and Avittam Thirunal Aditya Varma.

PG2

CRICKET'S SHAME

Racist abuse of Indian team mars Sydney Test

Cricket Australia apologises, ICC seeks report

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
CHENNAI, JAN. 10

The ongoing third Test between India and Australia plunged into controversy after yet another incident of racist abuse rocked the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday. It was Hyderabad pacer Mohammed Siraj who, once again, faced racist slurs from the crowd even as Cricket Australia (CA) and the New South Wales Police are investigating the first incident reported on Saturday.

The game was halted briefly and a bunch of spectators was expelled from the stadium. It's learnt that Siraj was called a 'Brown Dog' and 'Big Monkey'.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has strongly condemned the incident and sought an action report from Cricket Australia (CA), the body that controls cricket in that country.

Apologising to the Indian team, CA promised to take the "strongest mea-



India pacer Mohammed Siraj (centre) gestures as Aussie captain Tim Paine looks on during the third Test between Australia and India at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Monday.

AFP

sures" against anyone found guilty of vilification. "It is most regrettable that an otherwise excellent test match contested in tremendous spirit by two friendly rivals has been tarnished by the actions of a small number of spectators over the past two days," head of Integrity and Security Sean Carroll said in a statement.

The behaviour of the

Sydney crowd has received widespread condemnation from cricketers. Indian captain Virat Kohli who was once fined for showing the middle finger at the SCG crowd called it "the absolute peak of rowdy behaviour".

"Having gone through many incidents of really pathetic things said on the boundary lines, this is the absolute peak of rowdy

Having gone through many incidents of really pathetic things said on the boundary lines, this is the absolute peak of rowdy behaviour. It's sad to see this happen on the field. —VIRAT KOHLI, Indian captain

behaviour. It's sad to see this happen on the field. The incident needs to be looked at with absolute urgency and seriousness and strict action against the offenders should set things straight for once," Kohli tweeted.

Meanwhile, Aussie cricketers showed great solidarity towards their on-field rivals. Skipper Tim Paine joined India's huddle when the play was halted for a few minutes. Coach Justin Langer, too, condemned the incident.

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BADALNA ZARURI HAI

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SHORT TAKES

₹16.81 lakh gold seized at airportDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 10

Customs officials at the Chennai International Airport seized gold worth Rs 16.81 lakhs. Based on intelligence tipoff, Jahir Hussain (35) of Chennai who arrived from Dubai by an Indigo flight was intercepted at the exit on suspicion of carrying gold.

On searching him, a bundle of gold paste weighing 390 grams was recovered from his person. On extraction, 329 grams of 24k purity gold valued at Rs. 16.81 lakhs was recovered and the same was seized under the Customs Act.

Union AMC aims to double AUM to ₹10K crore

Chennai: Union AMC's growth strategy is aimed at doubling its AUM (Assets under management) to ₹10,000 crore with growth coming in from B30 cities. The firm, co-sponsored by Union Bank and prominent Japanese foreign financial behemoth Dai-ichi Life Holdings Inc, has undergone changes in various facets of its operations as well as in ownership.

Mr G. Pradeepkumar, CEO, said, "The AMC has implemented a more robust investment process resulting in improved performance of various schemes of Union AMC. The company also manages a portfolio for Daichi through FPI route. The contribution in the AAUM of Union Mutual Fund from Retail investors and from B30 cities has been good. We have close to 1% market share of the unique investors in the industry."

Mr VinayPaharia, Chief Investment Officer, said, "In the current market situation, we recommend asset allocation based mutual fund products. We prefer sectors such as IT and Telecom and are underweight Utility and Consumer Discretionary sectors. According to us, the key risk to both - equity and fixed income markets - would be any unanticipated spike in inflation leading to increase in interest rates."



Visitors taking a look at heritage cars at the Chennai Heritage Auto Display 2021, organised by Madras Heritage Motoring Club, in the city on Sunday.

— DC

Call for speedy Mega Street implementationT. SUDHEESH
CHENNAI, JAN. 10

The residents of the Textile Zone of North Chennai are calling for speedy implementation of the ambitious Mega Street Programme, which was introduced by the Civic body last February with a view to improving mobility, utility and liveability in the city. Their call comes at a time when Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) authorities have decided to construct a pedestrian plaza on MC Road to ensure hassle-free traffic in the area.

On Saturday, Chennai Smart City Limited said the textile zone of North Chennai would soon have a pedestrian plaza for ease of shopping and walking. As part of this, MC Road will be revamped with a pedestrian plaza, it had said.

Pedestrian plazas had been mooted under the non-motorised transport

policy and the projects come under the Mega Street Project, which is part of the Smart City mission. The GCC had earlier introduced pedestrian plazas in T Nagar and Nungambakkam. But, T. Nagar residents' welfare association urged the authorities to implement the project without delay.

"Under Mega street programme introduced as part of the Smart City Mission, GCC had announced various projects in T Nagar. But the encroachment on Ranganathan Street, Natesan Street and Railway Border Road near Mambalam Railway Station is always growing. A lane constructed as pedestrian plaza between Ranganathan and Natesan streets has now become a public urinal, and for nearby shops and commercial establishments to throw rubbish. If the Mega Street Programme is implemented, the lane can be kept

clean and the pedestrians could utilise the lane to reach the bus stand and railway station avoiding the congested Ranganathan Street", said V.S. Jayaraman, secretary of the association.

Meanwhile, an official, privy to the project, said that the Mega Street programme had slowed down because the corporation had to focus on the pandemic response. "The designers are onboard from a few months ago and they are currently developing the designs", the official said.

The Mega Street Programme was devised with a view to implementing continuous footpaths, streamlined carriage-ways, organised on-street parking and planned underground utilities. It also planned to integrate bus stops, street vending and other street furniture, locating them carefully so that they should not hamper the walking experience of pedestrians..

SL Navy apprehends nine Indian fishermen

Rameswaram (TN), Jan. 10: The Sri Lankan Navy has arrested nine Indian fishermen and seized one mechanised boat for allegedly fishing in that country's waters, besides damaging fishing nets in a separate incident, officials said here on Sunday.

The fishermen were arrested near Neduntheevu on Saturday, Fisheries department officials said.

Lankan navy personnel allegedly damaged fishing nets in 20 mechanised boats near Katchatheevu on Saturday, the officials added. They also allegedly hurled stones and bottles on the the Indian fishermen

cials said, adding that one boat was also seized by the Lankan navy. In a separate incident,

Lankan navy personnel allegedly damaged fishing nets in 20 mechanised boats near Katchatheevu on Saturday, the officials added. They also allegedly hurled stones and bottles on the the Indian fishermen.

Fishermen's association representative Sesuraja rued the acts of the Sri Lankan Navy, saying damage to equipment caused

distress to the fishermen.

The fishermen operating mechanised boats decided to strike work indefinitely from Monday, urging the Centre to expedite steps for the release of about 52 fishermen from Lankan custody at the earliest. About 800 boats and 5,000 fishermen would keep off the sea, representatives said.

— PTI

ESAF Small Finance Bank opens new branch

Chennai: ESAF Small Finance Bank opened a branch in Anna Nagar with SMN Swamy, Regional Director, RBI, Chennai inaugurating it in a virtual event. The bank has 506 branches in the country catering to more than 40 lakh customers through its outlets across 19 states and two union territories. The expansion underlines its mission to provide responsive banking services to the public and entrepreneurs alike. P. R. Ravi Mohan, Chairman, ESAF Small Finance Bank, also took part in the ceremony.

Rape victim identifies 2 railway contract staff

From P1

Two railway contract staff, identified by the police as Suresh (31) and Abdul Ajiz (30), entered the yard to clean the train and found the sleeping woman, and molested her. Police sources said Suresh and Abdul Ajiz threatened her of dire consequences if she complained to the police, or others, lest she should be accused of being a thief. The duo then accompanied her outside the yard to ensure that she did not approach the railway police.

When they were stopped by an RPF constable, the

The GRP personnel also checked the attendance details of the staff and found that Suresh and Abdul Ajiz had punched in around the time of the incident

staff told him that the woman was found sleeping inside a train in the yard.

Around 3:30 am on Sunday, the woman lodged a complaint with the GRP and its Tambaram unit registered a case. The police also took the woman to the railway

yard where she identified the accused.

The GRP personnel also checked the attendance details of the staff and found that Suresh and Abdul Ajiz had punched in around the time of the incident.

Both were booked for rape and threatening the woman (IPC 376, 506 (1)), and remanded in judicial custody.

The incident happened less than a week after a 40-year-old woman was raped by two men inside a temple premises in Vandipettai in Nagapattinam.

Cheating case against Travancore family

From P1

Former head of the family Uthradom Thirunall Marthanda Vrama, who died in 2013, was also on the list of accused.

The court directed other accused ACR Raj Ganesan

and BR Ramprabhu Raj also to appear before the court tomorrow.

The matter relates to the property belonging to the erstwhile Maharaja of Travancore in Adyar.

One Singaravelan had

purchased the land from the legal heirs of the family. However, subsequently, they allegedly sold the property to another person using fake documents.

Based on a complaint, CCB registered a case in

1994 against them.

After probe a chargesheet was filed before the court last week.

Based on this, the court directed them to appear before the court on Monday at 10 am.

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: Money spent today is likely to be quickly replenished. Business and financial deals will probably prove very profitable. You may be feeling too energetic to relax.



Taurus: If you can go to work, you will achieve twice what you have been doing. You will find that you have a single-minded determination to succeed today.



Gemini: A little tension is possible, as you will not take no for an answer. Don't overdo it and scare a beloved away. Extreme care will be needed to earn profits.



Cancer: You will be torn between problems in your private life and work. Focus on a pressing matter at home. Work may not go well, as you have too many things on your mind.



Leo: Your energy levels may not be as high as expected. It's best to avoid physical work as mistakes and accidents are likely. If unavoidable, be extra careful.



Virgo: You may not agree with your partner on spending money. Unavoidable changes are on the way. Plan for the future carefully. Walk away from arguments, you are unlikely to win.

You share your b'day with

Rahul David is a former Indian cricketer and captain of the Indian national team. He is the Director of Cricket Operations at National Cricket Academy, Bengaluru, India. He also monitors the progress of India A and India under-19 cricket teams.



Libra: Major changes to your living arrangements and family life are likely. These may cause short-term problems in joint finances. You will be tempted to spend money.



Scorpio: A major disruption of plans is indicated. Although the news you get is unlikely to be bad, you may feel the repercussions for months to come.



Sagittarius: The day will simply fly past. You will achieve deep concentration and not be keen on routine tasks. You will be satisfied with what you have achieved.



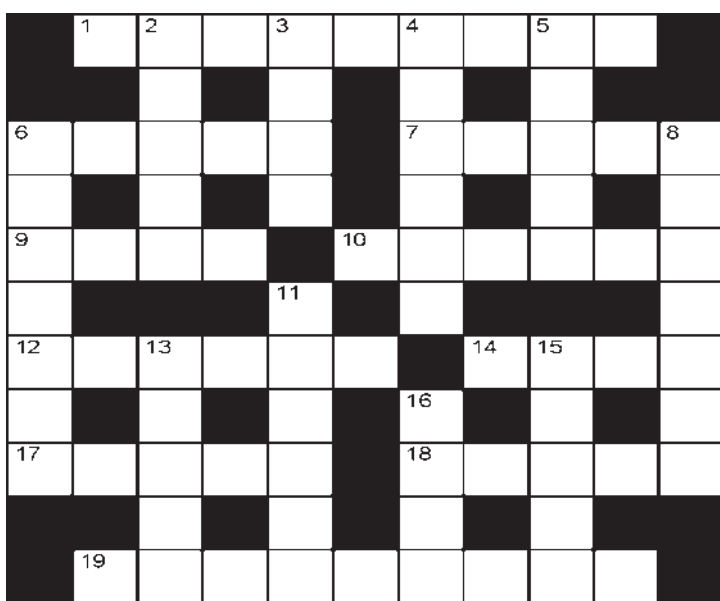
Capricorn: There will be a huge increase in the number of people who contact you. Unexpected visitors will delay plans. Someone could bring some welcome news, and even an opportunity to create wealth.



Aquarius: A good day to start sorting out a domestic dispute. Your confidence continues to grow. Your positive attitude enables you to tackle work with renewed vigour and more success.



Pisces: A very busy day. You will gather a team of people keen to help you and share the glory coming your way. You probably have been experiencing highs in your romantic life.

QUICK CROSSWORD

Across
1. With true Identity disguised (9)
6. Deadens (5)
7. Covered internally (5)
9. Delites (4)
10. Hire (6)
12. Accessories (6)
14. Horse farm (4)
17. Linger (5)
18. Intimidated (5)
19. Demote (9)

Down
2. Identified (5)
3. Hops kiln (4)
4. Stockings (6)
5. South Pacific kingdom (5)
6. Fall to care for properly (7)
8. Feared greatly (7)
11. Ravine (6)
13. Body trunk (5)
15. Pulled behind (5)
16. Skin mark (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER
Across: 1. Building, 7. Unwed, 8. Level, 9. Malice, 10. Club, 12. Nick, 14. Guests, 17. Evade, 18. Knave, 19. Weakness.
Down: 1. Bowl, 2. Indict, 3. Dull, 4. Navel, 5. Augmented, 6. Albaster, 11. Buckle, 13. Chafe, 15. Spats, 16. Meek.

Word Mine

K
E
C
D
A
H
Y
N
E

TODAY'S RATINGS: 19 AVERAGE; 21 GOOD; 23 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

Answers (tonight)
Yesterday's Jumble: STUNT (BAND GIGGL BOOTH) Answer: When it comes to stunt, Chuck Norris has numerous accomplishments — UNDER HIS BELT

jumble

GREVE
THACC
ESSUTN
DNORIO

Now that I've been able to see the most and the drawings I created when you're envisioning... I'm glad we had this conversation. We should be glad to be...
THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE ARCHITECT AND GENERAL CONTRACTOR WAS...
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.
(Answers tomorrow)

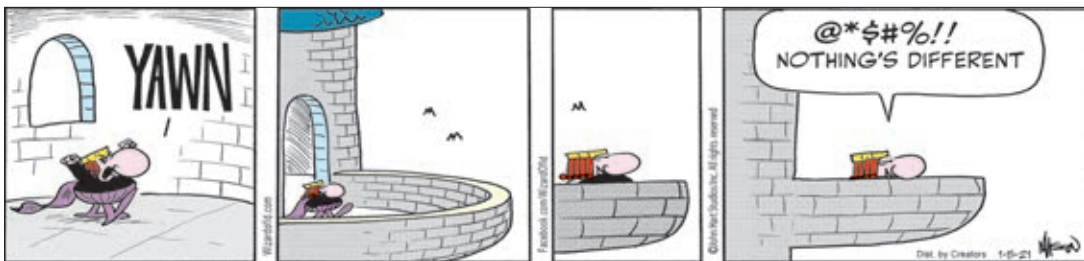
issue, declarer should win the first trick with dummy's diamond ace and play a spade to his ace (to guard against a 4-0 split). He draws trumps, cashes his three hearts, discarding a club from hand, and concedes one diamond and two clubs. But when overtricks are valuable, it is certainly reasonable to take the diamond finesse at trick one. Here, though, it loses, and East will shift to a low club. After South also plays low, 99.99%

of players would win the club jack and cash the club ace. A few moments later, declarer will claim his contract.
The genius receiving a positive mental push will win trick two with the club ace and return the club jack. Then East can win with his king and give partner a club ruff to defeat the contract.
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CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs

bridge
PHILLIP
ALDER

**SOME
PLAYS
ARE
TOO HARD
TO FIND**

Richard M. DeVos, who was a businessman and owner of the Orlando Magic basketball team, said, "Few things in the world are more powerful than a positive push. A smile. A word of optimism and hope. A 'you can do it' when things are tough."

Some defenses are just too tough for (almost) everyone. This deal is doubly difficult for both sides because it occurred during an online duplicate.

After West leads a low diamond, how should South play in four spades when overtricks are not important? How would his line change if he hoped to collect an overtrick? In addition, how would the defenders play?

North used the Jacoby Forcing Raise. South's jump to game indicated a minimum opening without a short side suit (singleton or void).

When overtricks are not an

South: ♠ 7 6 2
♥ A Q 9
♦ A Q
♣ 10 7 5 3 2
West: ♠ 10 9 8 7 6
♥ K 8 4
♦ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 3 2
♣ A 4
Declarer: South
Valueable: Tractor
South: ♠ A K 10 9 8
♥ K 2
♦ A 10 9 8
♣ K 10 9 8
West: ♠ 10 9 8 7 6
♥ K 8 4
♦ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 3 2
♣ A 4
East: ♠ 7 6 2
♥ A Q 9
♦ A Q
♣ 10 7 5 3 2
Opening lead: ♠ K

SHORT TAKES

MTR reopens to tourists after 10 mnts

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, JAN. 10

Following all the others, finally, wildlife tourism has also resumed in the Nilgiris this weekend, opening the prospects of full-fledged tourism, with sustained flow of revenue.

While all tourist spots including public parks and lakes have been thrown open to tourists since September in a phased-manner, only the re-opening of wildlife tourism was pending. Now, much to the cheers and enthusiasm of wildlife tourists, the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR), was reopened for tourists on Saturday after nearly 10 months. Even now, some restrictions are being imposed in the MTR for tourists to visit the jungles and take a safari in the prescribed tourist zones within the MTR limits.

It is mandatory for MTR visitors to wear either a triple layer mask or N95 mask and undergo thermal scanning. Valid ID proof is also needed. Social distancing is to be strictly maintained. Fifty percent capacity will be allowed for vehicle safari.

Rest houses and dormitories in MTR will be open from January 11. Rest houses occupation can be made with maximum two persons per suite and dormitories with 50 percent occupancy. Persons with symptoms of cough and fever will not be allowed to enter the MTR. Vehicle safari will be held between 6:30 am and 10 am and between 2 pm and 5 pm.

Five police teams to crack twin migrants' cases

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, JAN. 10

Five police teams with a total strength of a little over 100 persons have been pressed into service to search the vicinity of a private tea estate in Kolakombai limits near here, for an eight-year-old girl child of a migrant labour, who went missing since the third week of December.

It may be recalled that the girl child of a Jharkhand-based migrant labour working in the private estate in Kolakombai limits went missing, and a complaint was lodged by her parents in the Kolakombai police station.

Even as investigation was in progress and a special team formed to trace the child, a family of another four Jharkhand-based migrant labourer, who are neighbours to the family of the missing girl, were found dead in their house last week, adding to the mystery.

Though cops in Kolakombai failed to make a breakthrough in both the cases, the ST wing of the BJP in Jharkhand is said to have informed ST wing of BJP in Tamil Nadu, to take up this issue with the cops and speed up investigations, since both the families are said to belonging to a tribal community in Jharkhand.

Now, the police administration in the Nilgiris has formed five teams to search the vicinity along the private tea estate in Kolakombai to trace the missing girl or to get some clues on the case.

Team to monitor ban on fox hunting

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC SALEM, JAN. 10

A special task force has been set up on behalf of the forest department to prevent the capture of the 'Bengal fox' ahead of the Kannum pongal festival. The 'Bengal fox' is an endangered species, and hence, is banned from any sport or hunting, according to the Indian wildlife Act. The 'Vanga Nari' jallikkattu is usually held in the villages of Vazhappadi and Attur areas in the district on the eve Kannum pongal, whereas the forest department has banned the worship of the Bengal fox.

People believe it will bring bountiful rain and good fortune. The animals are captured, muzzled and their hind legs tied with rope. After special rituals, the animals are chased through the village streets, much like the bulls in the conventional jallikkattu. After the event, the animals are released into the forest.

Every year, on the eve of Kannum pongal, the forest department sets up a team of officials to monitor and prevent the capture of the Bengal fox by villagers. The forest department is also raising awareness among the people that catching the Bengal fox is a crime under law. District Forest Officer, Murugan, said that it is an offense under the Wildlife Conservation Act to catch a Bengal fox and hold a jallikkattu. Catching a Bengal fox is punishable up to three years to seven years in prison.

'Rajini, Kamal popular stars, marginal political players'

New Delhi, Jan. 10 Describing Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan as "marginal political players", senior Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar has said they remain very popular film stars but are unable to attract public opinion to their point of view in political terms.

Aiyar, who has been named in three key panels set up by the Congress for Tamil Nadu polls, asserted that superstar Rajinikanth's decision that he will not enter electoral politics will not make a tinker's difference as the state readies for the assembly polls.

"When he (Rajinikanth) said he was going to come into politics, I said it is not going to make a tinker's difference, now that he has decided not to come into politics, I repeat what I said, it is not going to make a tinker's difference," Aiyar said.

"Kamal and Rajini are not anything but marginal political players. It was different in the old days when people like M G Ramachandran (MGR), Sivaji Ganesan and even Jayalalithaa were involved in films that carried a revolutionary social message," he said.

Noting that former Tamil Nadu Chief Ministers M Karunanidhi and C N Annadurai were also deeply involved in cinema, he said the powerful scripts written by Annadurai and extremely powerful dialogues by Karunanidhi that were delivered magnificently by MGR resulted in films in Tamil cinema having in the 1950s the same role as social media is today having in determining the politics of northern India.

"Since these two (Rajinikanth and Haasan) have never used cinema as a medium for a political message, they remain what they are - very very popular film stars, but not people who attract public opinion to their point of view in political terms," Aiyar said.

He argued that there have been no two actors more popular on the Hindi silver screen than Amitabh Bachchan and Rajesh Khanna, but "what flops they were in politics". The same thing applies in the South, he



Rajinikanth fans from all over Tamil Nadu gathered at Valluvar Kottam staging a peaceful protest urging him to change his decision and enter politics.

— DC

Fans believe they can push Rajinikanth into reconsidering decision not to enter politics

From P1

But Rajini fans were seen gathering at Valluvar Kottam from early in the day. The crowd only kept increasing through the day before the rally was wound up in the evening.

The actor had made it clear in a letter in the last week of December 2020 that his health may not permit him to participate in poll politics and expressed his inability to campaign during the pandemic. The actor had said that meeting lakhs of people during the pandemic may be risky and that

added.

Making a U-turn, superstar Rajinikanth last month announced he will not enter politics in view of his frail health, putting an end to his long-nurtured plans and describing his recent hospitalisation as God's warning. "Only I know the pain behind making this



even a vaccine may not offer full protection.

Rajini's statement in a letter had read - "Even if

announcement," the 70 year-old actor had said, just days before he was to spell out the contours of his party based on spiritual politics aimed at bringing a total change in the Dravidian heartland Tamil Nadu in the 2021 assembly elections.

Kamal had launched MNM in February 2018

and the vaccine comes, if something happens to my health since I take immunosuppressants, then people who have trusted me and joined me will have to face several difficulties mentally and financially. Just because people will question me after I gave my word on my entry into politics, I don't prefer to sacrifice my allies and friends.

Forgive me because this decision will cause disappointment to those in Rajini Makkal Mandram and those who expected that I will enter politics."

— PTI

Former IAS officer is man on a different mission now

A. ARUL PALANI | DC DC, CHENNAI, JAN. 10

Former IAS officer, S. Sasikanth Senthil, is all set to walk on new turf. Senthil, a 2009-batch Karnataka cadre IAS officer quit the service in September 2019 and is ready to march miles to accomplish his mission.

Relieving himself from government service, he has decided to pursue his childhood dream of serving the people in the political arena. He has plans to embark on the journey to meet youth and elders in remote villages across the State after Pongal.

Dejected over anti-people, anti-farmer and anti-labour policies of the Central government, Senthil had taken the extreme step to quit a government job which remained a dream of thousands of youth across the country.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, he said "I have been monitoring BJP since it came to power in 2014. It had introduced several anti-people policies and demolished institutions which were built by our leaders over decades. It destroyed the cultural ethos and diversity of the people and the nation".

Government policies and actions had moved towards centralisation of power and oneness. "I hoped our institutions are strong and people will not tolerate the BJP for more than five years. However, to my shock the party returned to power in 2019", he said.

Registering his protest against abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution in August 2019 he quit the service in the next month. Prior to his resignation he was hailed as "People's Collector" and soon after resignation he



S. Sasikanth Senthil

was trolled as "anti-national." Since then he has taken part in protests against the government over CAA, CRC and other issues faced by the people. Last November he joined Congress.

Senthil was born in Chennai. After schooling in Perambur he had completed BE in Electronics and Communications at the then Regional Engineering College, (now National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli) in 2000 and graduated in first class. During the campus interview he was selected for famous IT firm Polaris and worked in IT for a year before taking up a lecturer's job in an engineering college and then he also worked for an NGO.

His urge to serve the masses made him sit for UP-SC Civil Service examination and in 2008 he was one of the toppers in the country securing 9th position in the civil service examination and was allotted IAS in Karnataka cadre. Senthil became known as a darling of masses and a responsible government officer.

He was known for adopting pro-farmer and people friendly policies. With support from the police he came down heavily on the mining mafia in Ballari. He maintained cordial relations with all the parties and brought in systemic changes in the lives of people and farmers. The number of cases relating to communal riots in Mangalore district came down to 6 from 100 per year when he was serving there.

"I felt it is unethical for me to continue as a civil servant in the government when the fundamental building blocks of our diverse democracy are being compromised in an unprecedented manner," he said.

He said, "Congress is not only a national party, it is also a people's movement. Both my ideals and principles of Congress are the same. Congress stands for unity in diversity, social justice, upliftment of downtrodden, women empowerment, eradication of poverty and social evils."

Senthil said "I have visited many places and participated in several protests and was "able to contribute to the great anti-NRC/CAA movement, which proved to me that people in this country are ready to stand up for one another". He says he understands the BJP and never backed away from attacking its principles and policies. "People have neither rejected Congress nor accepted BJP in the country. Congress always travelled with the masses. It will come back to power. I will visit all the places including remote villages to highlight achievement of the Congress and anti-people policies adopted by BJP."

"The farm acts would not only affect the farmers and traders engaged in agro-products it will pose a serious threat to the people and affect the economic growth of the nation," he said. While campaigning for Congress and alliance partners Senthil has planned to meet elders, youth and teenagers. "I have been an activist trying to be a voice for the less privileged all through my life, wherever I was and would continue the same until my last breath", he added.

Covid slum relief project benefits many in city

Chennai: The Covid Slum Relief Project, initiated by Rajan Eye Care Hospital and Chennai Vision Charitable Trust, has covered more than 25,000 families in 95 slums in the city. The project also saw the distribution of 3M goggles, sanitisers, N95 masks, face shields to more than 2,000 members

of the City Police besides general hospitals and Corporation dispensaries. Around 4,000 nitrile gloves were given to Namakkal and other government hospitals. N95 Masks, Rice, wheat, bread and masks were given to Corporation and sanitary workers. Other beneficiaries of rice and food were

Metro water tanker drivers, cleaners, and other staff, besides auto rickshaw drivers and their families. As many as 300 families of members of the Tamil Nadu Cameramen Association, families of 250 transgender people and Thirupurur Drivers Association.

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IN BRIEFS

Pregnant rape survivor dies in UP

Bareilly (UP): A 15-year-old rape survivor who was seven months pregnant died of pregnancy-related complications at the district hospital here, police said on Sunday. She was admitted to the hospital on Saturday night and passed away on Thursday night, they said. Additional director and superintendent in-charge of the hospital Dr Subodh Sharma said the girl was brought to the hospital in serious condition and her health deteriorated further. Despite best efforts by the doctors, she could not be saved, he added. Senior superintendent of police, Bareilly, Rohit Singh Sajwan said, "The post-mortem report says that the death took place due to infection." "The viscera of the victim has been preserved," he added.

Sri Lankan Navy nabs 9 fishermen

Rameswaram (TN): The Sri Lankan Navy has arrested nine Indian fishermen and seized one mechanised boat for allegedly fishing in that country's waters, besides damaging fishing nets in a separate incident, officials said here on Sunday. The fishermen were arrested near Neduntheevu on Saturday, Fisheries department officials said, adding that one boat was also seized by the Lankan navy. In a separate incident, the Lankan navy personnel allegedly damaged fishing nets in 20 mechanised boats near Katchatheevu on Saturday, the officials added. They also allegedly hurled stones and bottles on the Indian fishermen, they said. Fishermen's association representative Sesuraja rued the acts of the Sri Lankan Navy, saying damage to equipment caused distress to the fishermen. Meanwhile, the fishermen operating mechanised boats decided to strike work indefinitely from Monday, urging the Centre to expedite steps for the release of about 52 fishermen from Lankan custody at the earliest.

K'TAKA CABINET REJIG SOON: YEDIYURAPPA

New Delhi/Bengaluru, Jan. 10: Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Sunday expressed confidence of soon getting a final clearance from the central BJP leadership for the much-awaited cabinet rejig in the state after he met senior party leaders including its chief J.P. Nadda and Union home minister Amit Shah.

State party in-charge Arun Singh was also present in an hour-long meeting held at Shah's residence in Delhi. "On cabinet expansion, there was a detailed discussion. You will get good news soon," Yediyurappa told reporters after the meeting.

He said the final names will be cleared as early as possible because there was "positive, fruitful and satisfactory discussion".

"I am happy with the discussion. ...we will wait for their instructions," he said, adding the central leadership has assured its support. When asked if this was the last meeting on cabinet expansion with the senior party leaders, the CM said, "101 per cent this is the last meeting. They are going to clear the names as soon as possible."

The cabinet expansion in the state has been on the cards for over a year now, but it could not take place, giving some anxious moments to ministerial aspirants and also leading to dissatisfaction.

Further, the CM said he suggested some names and also expressed confidence that the central BJP leadership will respond to that in a positive way. Asked if it would be a cabinet expansion or a re-shuffle, the CM said "you will get to know when they inform". Apart from the cabinet rejig, the CM said there were discussions also on the upcoming bypolls in the state for two Assembly and one parliamentary seats.

"They asked me to send the names of the candidates at the earliest for clearance," he said, adding the leadership also told him to ensure the party's victory on all three seats. The senior party leaders also expressed happiness over recent gram panchayat results, Mr Yediyurappa added. His son and state BJP vice-president B.Y. Vijayendra also stressed that the discussions on cabinet expansion were complete. —PTI

Pak violates ceasefire

A Bomb Disposal Squad member of the Indian Army destroys a 2.4kg Improvised Explosive Device (IED) along the Gohlad Mendhar road near LoC, in Mendhar area of Poonch district on Sunday. Pakistani troops violated ceasefire by resorting to unprovoked mortar shelling and firing on forward posts and villages in Rajouri, Poonch and Kathua districts of J&K. — PTI

Stop Covaxin trial in Bhopal, demand NGOs**Allege that gas tragedy survivors forced to volunteer****RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC Bhopal, Jan. 10**

Bhopal gas tragedy survivors on Sunday demanded Prime Minister Narendra Modi to halt the ongoing trial of Covaxin, the indigenously developed Covid-19 vaccine, in view of 'violation of laws and guidelines'.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, four NGOs, comprising Bhopal gas tragedy survivors, said, "We are writing to you to apprise you of the ground situation with regard to conduct of the trial. Evidence has emerged that the trial in Bhopal is being conducted in gross violation of laws and guidelines governing clinical trials in India."

"This is leading to exploitation and harm to a community of people that are not just economically and socially deprived, but whose health is compromised owing to the destructive impact and its consequences", they said.

The NGOs alleged that vulnerable people were being misguidedly and herded to participate in the trials and the consent procedure and other protocol of testing was being thrown to winds.

"The clinical trial (of the vaccine) should be stopped forthwith and an impartial probe be conducted", they said.

According to Rasheeda Bee, a gas tragedy survivor and social activist, at least 700 out of the 1,700 people on whom this vaccine was being tested,

Didi promises free Covid vaccine to all**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC Kolkata, Jan. 10**

With barely three months left for the West Bengal elections, Chief Minister Mamata Malviya on Sunday Tweeted, "Pishi was a disaster when it came to managing Covid. From doctors to policemen, everyone protested against Chief Minister's apathy. But now that the Centre has announced free priority vaccination for 3 crore frontline workers across the country, Pishi is rushing to take credit."

Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Chowdhury said, "Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has already announced to give Covid-19 vaccine free of cost to all. Now the Bengal CM has done the same but to get votes in exchange of what I say: poll bribe."

were those poisoned by the Union Carbide gas leak in 1984.

"One gas victim died within 10 days of getting the trial shot and many continue to have health complaints of a serious nature", she alleged. A Covaxin volunteer died nine days after he took the shot, she said.

Meanwhile, Bharat Biotech, a partner in the development of the

Accusing her of trying to claim credit for something that the Centre has already announced for the entire country, BJP national IT cell in-charge Amit Malviya on Sunday Tweeted, "Pishi was a disaster when it came to managing Covid. From doctors to policemen, everyone protested against Chief Minister's apathy. But now that the Centre has announced free priority vaccination for 3 crore frontline workers across the country, Pishi is rushing to take credit."

Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Chowdhury said, "Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has already announced to give Covid-19 vaccine free of cost to all. Now the Bengal CM has done the same but to get votes in exchange of what I say: poll bribe."

Covaxin, has issued a statement saying that the volunteer's death was not related to the vaccine.

In a statement issued here, People's College of Medical Science and Research Centre, said the post-mortem report conducted on the deceased by Medico Legal Institute cited that the cause of death was cardio-respiratory failure because of suspected poisoning.

INDIA GENERATED 33K TONNES OF COVID-19 WASTE

New Delhi, Jan. 10: India generated around 33,000 tonnes of Covid-19 biomedical waste in the last seven months, with Maharashtra contributing the maximum (3,587 tonnes) to it, according to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

Over 5,500 tonnes of Covid-19 waste was generated across the country in October — the maximum for a month so far. According to the data received from state pollution control boards, since June 2020, all states and Union Territories have generated 32,994 tonnes of Covid-19-related biomedical waste which is being collected, treated and disposed of by 198 common biomedical waste treatment facilities (CBWTFs).

Covid-19 biomedical waste could include PPE kits, masks, shoe covers, gloves, human tissues, items contaminated with blood, body fluids like dressings, etc.

According to the data, Maharashtra generated 5,367 tonnes of Covid-19 waste in seven months since June, followed by Kerala (3,300 tonnes), Gujarat (3,086 tonnes), Tamil Nadu (2,806 tonnes), Uttar Pradesh (2,502 tonnes), Delhi (2,471 tonnes), West Bengal (2,095 tonnes) and Karnataka (2,026 tonnes). —PTI

States to hold door-to-door survey to enrol students

New Delhi, Jan. 10: The education ministry has asked the states to conduct a door-to-door survey to identify out-of-school children and prepare an action plan for their enrolment as part of efforts to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, especially on migrants, according to officials.

The ministry has also recommended relaxing detention norms to prevent drop-outs this year as well as a slew of measures to address learning loss due to the Coronavirus-induced shutdown of schools.

The move is particularly aimed at identification, admission and continued education of migrant children who have been affected during the pandemic, they said.

"In order to mitigate the impact of challenges thrown by the Covid-19 pandemic for out of school children, it was felt necessary for every state and UT to devise a proper strategy for preventing increased dropouts, lower enrolments, loss of learning and deterioration in the gains made in providing universal access, quality and equity in the recent years," a senior ministry official said. "The states and UTs have been advised to carry out

● **EDUCATION MINISTRY** has also recommended relaxing detention norms to prevent drop-outs this year as well as a slew of measures to address learning loss due to the Coronavirus-induced shutdown of schools.

proper identification of Out-of-School Children (OoSC) for 6 to 18 years age group through a comprehensive door-to-door survey and prepare an action plan for their enrolment," the official added.

The ministry has also issued guidelines for offering support to students during the closure of schools and when they reopen.

"To ensure that school-going children have access to education with quality and equity and to minimise the impact of the pandemic on school education across the country, the ministry of education has prepared and issued detailed guidelines on steps to be taken by the states and UTs during school closure and when the schools reopen," the official said.

Exploring the option of classroom-on-wheels and classes in small groups at the village level, increasing the access of children to online and digital

resources, use of TV and radio to reduce learning losses and ensuring easy and timely access to the provisions of uniforms, textbooks and mid-day meals are among the recommendations made by the ministry for student support during the closure of schools.

Similarly, the guidelines for student support when schools reopen after prolonged closure include preparation and running of school readiness modules and bridge course for the initial period so that they can adjust to the school environment and do not feel stressed or left-out.

Identifying students across different grades based on their learning levels and relaxing detention norms to prevent drop out this year have also been recommended.

The ministry has also suggested encouraging children to read books beyond the syllabus and indulge in creative writing and problem solving for ensuring reading with comprehension and numeracy skills.

Large-scale remedial programmes and learning enhancement programmes should be held to mitigate learning loss and inequality, it recommended. —PTI

Spl panel to probe Maha fire mishap**DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, JAN. 10**

A day after 10 newborn babies died in fire at a Bhandara hospital in Maharashtra, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray visited the hospital and met the family members of the deceased. He said that Divisional Commissioner of Nagpur, Dr. Sanjeev Kumar and former chief fire officer of Mumbai, P.S. Rahangdale will also be a part of the committee, which is investigating the fire incident.

Thackeray said that he has ordered fire safety audit of all government hospitals across the state. Meanwhile, the BJP alleged that the police are pressuring victims' parents not to speak to the media. Many parents of deceased babies have blamed the hospital staff there for dereliction of duty. "The help of experts will be sought to find out the exact cause of this incident. I have directed to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the incident," Thackeray said.

He also said that necessary arrangements will be made in all government hospitals in the state after finding out the cause of the incident.

Thackeray said that the recommendations of the inquiry committee would be implemented in other

hospitals in the state as well.

Meanwhile, BJP spokesperson Ram Kadam alleged that the government is muzzling the voices of the victim's families in order to put the fire incident issue in cold storage. "The parents of the deceased were not allowed to speak to media. They are being threatened," Kadam alleged.

Kin of Geeta and Vishwanath Behere, whose two month-old daughter was among the 10 newborn babies who perished in the blaze, blamed the hospital authorities for dereliction of duty. They claimed that no doctor or nurse was present in the unit when fire broke out. They blamed the hospital administration for the tragedy and sought action against those responsible.

Vandana Sidam from Ravanwadi in Bhandara district gave birth to a girl at Pahela primary health centre on January 3. The baby was shifted to the district hospital unit as its weight was below normal. Family members of Vandana, whose husband was working in Pune when the tragedy happened, have blamed the hospital authorities for the fire and sought action against officials who they claim ignored safety norms.

MAHA REDUCES SECURITY OF BJP LEADERS, RAJ THACKERAY**BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 10**

In a major move, the Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government in Maharashtra has reduced the security of several opposition leaders, including former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and his family, union minister Ramdas Athawale and MNS chief Raj Thackeray. It has also withdrawn the security cover of state BJP chief Chandrakant Patil and former chief minister Narayan Rane.

The changes in security cover were based on 'prevailing threat perception', said government officials. According to the notification issue on January 8, Mr Fadnavis will now get 'Y-plus' security with escort, instead of the 'Z-plus' cover, as the bullet-proof vehicle has been withdrawn from this security cover. The security of his wife Amruta Fadnavis and daughter Divija has also been downgraded from 'Y-plus with escort' to 'X' category.

Raj Thackeray's security cover has been downgraded from 'Z' to 'Y-plus with escort,' whereas Athawale will get only 'wireless' instead of the 'Y-plus with escort.'

The security covers of BJP leaders Narayan Rane, Chandrakant Patil, Sudhir Mungantiwar and Union minister Raosaheb Danve have been withdrawn. Rane and Danve had 'Y-plus' security. The BJP has slammed the decision to reduce the security cover of its leaders with the party spokesperson Keshav Upadhye calling it a 'vendetta politics'.

Fadnavis said he had no complaints or worry. "I am a people's person and this doesn't impact my travel to meet people," he said.

Tests confirm bird flu in seven states

New Delhi, Jan. 10: The Centre on Sunday said bird flu outbreak has been confirmed in seven states — Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, while test results are still awaited for Delhi and Maharashtra samples.

No samples have been confirmed positive in wild birds from Balod district, Chhattisgarh which were tested earlier, the department of animal husbandry and sairing said in a statement.

After confirmation of avian influenza (bird flu) positive samples in poultry (two poultry farms) of Panchkula district of Haryana, the state government has deployed nine Rapid Response team, and containment operation is underway in both the epicentres.

Samples of crow/wild birds have been confirmed for avian influenza from Surat district of Gujarat and Sirohi district of Rajasthan.

"Further, reports of unusual deaths of 86

crows and 2 egrets were received from Kangra district (Himachal Pradesh)," the statement said.

"Reports of unusual mortality of wild birds have also been received from Nahan, Bilaspur and Mandi (Himachal Pradesh) and samples have been sent to the designated laboratory for testing," it added.

The department has issued advisories to the affected states to avoid further spread of disease. Control and containment have been completed in both the affected districts of Kerala. Post-operational surveillance programme guidelines have been issued to the state.

Meanwhile, the central teams formed for monitoring the situation in the affected areas of the country are visiting the affected sites.

One of the central teams reached Kerala on January 9 and is presently monitoring the epicentre sites and conducting epidemiological investigation. —PTI

Rumour triggers 'gold rush' in MP**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC Bhopal, Jan. 10**

Rumours that hidden wealth was buried in a river has triggered a treasure hunt by locals in some riparian villages in Madhya Pradesh, leading to deployment of police forces in the area. Thousands of people from around a dozen villages under Narasinghgarh sub-

division under Rajgarh district have been thronging the nearby Parvati river for five days in search of the 'treasure' buried under its bed, a senior district officer said on Sunday.

Young and old were seen busy digging the river bed round the clock in a stretch of around 500 metres to try out their luck. The 'treasure hunters' were even seen setting up tents on the river bank to spend the night.

"I have ordered the police to initiate action to maintain law and order after I received reports that people from some villages under Narasinghgarh subdivision have started digging the river in search of hidden treasure. Rumours that gold coins were buried in the river bed have triggered the treasure hunt by the villagers," local tahsildar Rajendra Sharma said.

According to the police, some people in the villages of Shivpura and Gudupara, located on the river bank recovered a few old coins from the river five days ago and the news spread like wildfire in the surrounding villages leading to the 'gold rush'.

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UN | RECOGNITION**Authorisation to be done by Switzerland-based INSARAG****NDRF to get global rescue force tag**

New Delhi, Jan. 10: India could soon be a part of the United Nations (UN) mandated international disaster rescue operations as the country's federal contingency force, NDRF, is expected to obtain a globally recognised standardisation later this year, a top ranking official has said. The authorisation will be done by the Switzerland-headquartered INSARAG (or the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group) which is a network of

more than 90 countries and organisations under the UN umbrella to deal with urban search and rescue related issues.

"Just like we have the Bureau of Indian Standards in the country, the UN agency INSARAG standardises disaster response teams across the world. It is an international gold standard," NDRF director general S.N. Pradhan said. "We are very much in thick of it and hopefully we will get the standardisation in

2021." He further explained the purpose of this categorisation that is possessed by some of India's neighbours like China and Pakistan.

"If there is a call from the UN to respond to some disaster you will be called upon...you will be an international response force," Pradhan said. "It is not that we have not been doing that (going for international rescue operations) but when NDRF went to Japan and Nepal in the past it was a bilateral deci-

sion between two countries but with this standardisation it will be a UN mandated task," he said.

It will be a matter of great prestige for India that its force is known as an international response force, the DG said. He said an INSARAG committee, comprising Australian and Singaporean experts, has conducted preliminary review of NDRF teams in September, 2019, but the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic put the process on a back burner

for a while. "Hopefully, in 2021 you will see at least two heavy teams of the NDRF notified as INSARAG teams," he said.

The NDRF was raised in 2006 to undertake specific tasks of relief and rescue during natural and man-made disasters or life threatening situations. It has 12 operational battalions comprising more than 15,000 personnel based across the country at present while four more battalions are taking shape. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

LANDSLIDES
IN INDONESIA
LEAVE 11 DEAD

Jakarta, Jan. 10: Two landslides triggered by heavy rain in Indonesia left at least 11 dead and 18 injured, officials said on Sunday.

The second landslide in Cihanjuang village in the Sumedang district of West Java province occurred as rescuers were still evacuating people following the first disaster on Saturday, said National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Raditya Jati. Rescuers were among the victims, he said.

The rain stopped on Saturday night. A bridge and roads were blocked by the landslides as authorities struggled to bring in heavy equipment to clear the debris. Seasonal rains and high tide in recent days have caused dozens of landslides and widespread flooding across much of Indonesia, a chain of 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near fertile flood plains close to rivers.

QATAR-SAUDI
REOPEN
LAND BORDERS

Abu Samrah, Jan. 10: Qatar and Saudi Arabia reopened their land border on Saturday as they restored ties following a landmark deal to end a three and a half year rift.

Saudi shut its side of Qatar's only land border in June 2017 as part of a package of sanctions it said was a response to Doha's backing radical Islamist groups and closeness to Iran.

Qatar always denied the charges. *AFP* correspondents saw cars making the crossing on Saturday. A Qatari source said traffic at the Abu Samrah crossing, 120 kilometres (75 miles) south of Doha, had resumed around 0700 GMT.

Saudi Arabia, along with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, all of which also imposed embargoes on travel and trade, had agreed to lift the restrictions at a Gulf Cooperation Council summit in the kingdom on Tuesday.

ROADSIDE BOMB
KILLS THREE IN
AFGHAN CAPITAL

Kabul, Jan. 10: A roadside bomb exploded in Afghanistan's capital on Sunday, killing at least three people in a vehicle, the latest attack to take place even as government negotiators are in Qatar to resume peace talks with the Taliban.

Tariq Arian, spokesman for the interior minister, said a spokesman for the ministry's public protection forces — a security force — was one of the three killed in the attack. One other person was wounded, he said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for multiple attacks in the capital in recent months, including on educational institutions that killed 50 people, most of them students. IS has claimed responsibility for rocket attacks in December targeting the major U.S. base in Afghanistan. There were no casualties.

BREXIT 'RULES
OF ORIGIN'
SPARK DOUBTS

London, Jan. 10: Many British businesses are swiftly discovering that they must now pay duties on exports bound for the European Union, despite the breakthrough Brexit free trade deal clinched over Christmas. The development, which has already helped spark sliding freight traffic to Ireland, is part of trade disruption that has become increasingly evident this year after Britain's Brexit divorce was finalised on December 31.

Trade has also been badly hampered by new Covid-19 border restrictions, with the rollout of testing for lorry drivers as Britain races to curb a rampant variant of the deadly virus. At the heart of the Brexit deal, which came into force on January 1, is the so-called "rules of origin" condition applied to all goods crossing the border.

The rules of origin, a key aspect of all major trade deals, can rapidly turn into a costly headache for businesses. Under the Brexit provision, any good will be subject to a customs levy if it arrives in Britain from abroad and is then exported back into the European Union.

Democrats ready for Trump's
second impeachment today

Move to impeach comes amid continued fury over the storming of US Capitol

Washington, Jan. 10: US Democrats on Saturday were readying for an unprecedented second impeachment of Donald Trump as the defiant president showed no signs of stepping down after the deadly violence at the Capitol.

Democrats said impeachment proceedings could begin as early as Monday — an extraordinary acceleration of a process that historically has taken weeks, but one that might not be completed before President-elect Joe Biden is sworn into office on January 20.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi warned that Democrats will launch the process unless Trump resigns or Vice President Mike Pence invokes the 25th Amendment, where the cabinet removes the president.

"He's deranged, unhinged and dangerous. He must go," Pelosi, referring to Trump, tweeted on Friday.

The move to impeach came amid continued fury over the storming of the Capitol on Wednesday by angry Trump supporters, which left five people dead, including a Capitol policeman.

Authorities announced new arrests and charges Saturday over the incursion, including a tattooed man in a horned headdress whose image was beamed around the world.

That man, Jacob Anthony Chansley, also known as Jake Angeli, and two others — one of them a newly elected state official from West Virginia — were charged in federal court in connection with the violence, according to the US attorney's office for the District of Columbia.

The impeachment text — signed by at least 180 members of Congress so far, according to Democratic congressman Ted Lieu — laid blame squarely at the president's feet.

"In all of this, President Trump gravely endangered the security of the United States and its institutions of government. He threatened the integrity of the democratic system, interfered with the peaceful transition of power, and imperiled a coordinate branch of government," it reads.

Trump, who had urged his supporters to come to Washington on Wednesday for a rally opposing his November election loss, has remained defiant, even after finally posting a video Thursday in which he belatedly promised an



Counter-protesters spray pepper spray as they clash with people during a 'Patriot March' demonstration in support of President Trump, in the Pacific Beach neighborhood of San Diego, California.

— *AFP*

Pence to attend Biden's inaugural

Washington, Jan. 10: Mike Pence will attend the upcoming inauguration of Joe Biden, multiple media reports said Saturday, the vice president becoming the latest longtime loyalist to abandon an increasingly isolated President Donald Trump.

Relations between Trump and Pence — previously one of the mercurial president's staunchest defenders — have nose-

dived since Wednesday, when the vice president formally announced Biden's victory in November's election.

A mob of far-right demonstrators stormed the US Capitol the same day in a failed bid to stop Congress from certifying Biden's win, in a riot blamed on Trump that left five dead.

Multiple media reports on Saturday cited senior administration officials as saying that Pence — who was forced to take shelter from the intruders during the riot — had decided to attend Biden's inauguration on January 20.

The president-elect earlier in the week said Pence would be welcome at his formal swearing-in, due to take place in a scaled-down format due to the Covid-19.

"I think it's important

that as much as we can stick to what have been the historical precedents of how an administration changes should be maintained," Biden told reporters.

"We'd be honored to have him there, and to move forward in the transition." In his final tweet before being removed from Twitter on Friday, Trump said he would not attend the inauguration. — *AFP*

Amazon pushes Parler offline
after violent US Capitol attack

San Francisco, Jan. 10: Amazon will suspend Parler, the tech giant confirmed Saturday, sending the social media network offline after it was banned by Apple and Google for allowing "threats of violence" in the wake of a deadly riot at the US Capitol.

The Parler social network has become a haven for conservatives who say they have been censored by other social media platforms. It had soared in popularity in recent months, becoming the No. 1 free app on Apple's App

Store on Saturday after the much larger Twitter decided to permanently ban US President Trump from its platform for his role in inciting violence at the Capitol.

Messages of support for the Wednesday's rioters along with calls for new demonstrations had flourished on the platform, leading Google to remove it from its app store on Friday, followed by Apple on Saturday.

Amazon then moved to wipe it from its cloud hosting Amazon Web Services, pushing it offline

entirely. In a letter to Parler first published by Buzzfeed, Amazon said the network was not acting quickly enough against violent content on the platform.

"We've seen a steady increase in this violent content on your website, all of which violates our terms of service," the letter, the contents of which were confirmed by Amazon. Given the riot at the Capitol this week, the letter continued, there was a "serious risk that this type of content will further incite violence." — *AFP*

Elizabeth, Philip get vaccine

Rome, Jan. 10: The pope and Britain's Queen Elizabeth became the latest high-profile figures to join the global vaccination campaign against the Coronavirus as Germany on Sunday reported 40,000 fatalities since the pandemic began a year ago.

And German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned that the worst was still to come.

More than 1.9 million people worldwide have now died from the virus, with new variants adding to soaring cases and prompting the re-intro-

duction of restrictions on movement across the globe — even as with mass inoculation drives underway.

Pope Francis urged people to get the vaccination saying he would be inoculated against the virus himself next week when the Vatican begins its campaign and denouncing opposition to the jab.

"There is a suicidal denial which I cannot explain, but today we have to get vaccinated," the pontiff tells Canale 5 in an interview to be broadcast Sunday.

Britain's Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip received their Covid-19 vaccinations on Saturday, said Buckingham Palace.

A source told that the queen, 94, and Philip, 99, were given the injections by a royal household doctor at Windsor Castle.

More than 1.5 million people in Britain have so far been inoculated, in the biggest immunisation programme in national history, with the elderly, their carers and health workers first in line.

Countries across the

world are following suit with coronavirus shots approved including those by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna and domestically made jabs from Russia and China.

Britain is racing to protect as many people as possible as a new variant believed to be more contagious pushes infections and deaths to unprecedented levels.

Health authorities announced more than three million coronavirus infections since the pandemic began last year.

— *AFP*

Witnesses heard
explosion before
Indonesia crash

Jakarta, Jan. 10: Indonesian rescuers pulled out body parts, pieces of clothing and scraps of metal from the Java Sea early Sunday morning, a day after a Boeing 737-500 with 62 people onboard crashed shortly after takeoff from Jakarta, officials said.

Officials were hopeful they were honing in on the wreckage of Sriwijaya Air Flight 182 after sonar equipment detected a signal from the aircraft. Transportation Minister Budi Karya Sumadi told reporters that authorities have launched massive search efforts after identifying "the possible location of the crash site." "These pieces were found by the SAR team between Lancang Island and Laki Island," National Search and Rescue Agency Bagus Puruhito in a statement.

Indonesian military chief Air Chief Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto said teams on the Rigel navy ship equipped with a remote-operated vehicle had detected a signal from the aircraft, which fit the coordinates from the last contact made by the pilots before the plane went missing. "We have immediately deployed our divers from navys elite unit to determine the finding to evacuate the victims," Tjahjanto said.

More than 12 hours since the Boeing plane operated by the Indonesian airline lost contact, little is known about what caused the crash. Fishermen in the area around Thousand Islands, a chain of islands

north of Jakartas coast, reported hearing an explosion around 2:30 pm Saturday. "We heard something explode, we thought it was a bomb or a tsunami since after that we saw the big splash from the water," fisherman Solihin, who goes by one name, told *The Associated Press* by phone.

"It was raining heavily and the weather was so bad. So it is difficult to see around clearly. But we can see the splash and a big wave after the sounds. We were very shocked and directly saw the plane debris and the fuel around our boat."

Authorities have yet to say why the Sriwijaya Air Boeing 737-500 went into a steep dive about four minutes after it left Soekarno-Hatta international airport on Saturday afternoon.

But, on Sunday, they said that they had pinpointed the location of its black boxes — cockpit voice and flight data recorders — that could be key to explaining why the plane slammed into the Java Sea off the sprawling city's coast.

The search and rescue agency said it had collected body bags filled with human remains, as well as debris from the wreckage, in waters about 23 metres (75 feet) deep.

Passengers Ihsan Adhlan Hakim and his new bride Putri were headed to Pontianak, the city on Indonesia's section of Borneo island which had been flight SJ182's destination, about 90 minutes away.

— *AFP, AP*

US lifts curbs on
Taiwan relations

Washington, Jan. 10: The United States is ending decades-old restrictions governing official contacts with Taiwan, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement Saturday.

He said the "complex internal restrictions" on contacts with Taipei by diplomats, service members and others had been imposed "in an attempt to appease the Communist regime in Beijing."

Pompeo added, "No more." The declaration may be more symbolic than substantive in effect, but it nonetheless appears certain to anger China, which sees Taiwan as its own territory.

It comes in the final weeks of the Donald Trump administration, and at a time of already heightened tensions between Beijing and both Washington and Taipei.

It was not clear what the change means in practice, with Pompeo saying executive branch communications with Taiwan will be handled by the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), which is owned by the US government and serves as the de facto embassy.

The shift comes after a year of mounting US-Chinese tensions.

Trump has sent multiple senior officials to Taipei over the last year, even as he clashed with China on a host of issues, ranging from its handling of the coronavirus pandemic to disputes over trade, security and human rights.

The complex internal restrictions" on contacts with Taipei by diplomats, service members and others had been imposed "in an attempt to appease the Communist regime in Beijing."

— **MIKE POMPEO**
Secretary of State

Pompeo's statement also came just two days after China warned the United States it would pay a "heavy price" if its United Nations ambassador, Kelly Craft, made good on plans to travel to Taiwan on Wednesday.

Beijing opposes any diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. Craft's scheduled three-day visit will come just a week before Joe Biden's inauguration as US president, adding to a string of diplomatic headaches facing the incoming administration.

"The United States will pay a heavy price for its wrong action," the Chinese mission to the UN said in a statement responding to Craft's planned trip. "China strongly urges the United States to stop its crazy provocation, stop creating new difficulties for China-US relations... and stop going further on the wrong path."

An American statement said Craft's visit, which Taiwan has officially welcomed, would "reinforce the US government's strong and ongoing support for Taiwan's international space." — *AFP*

WEATHER | TROUBLE

Deadly snowstorm Filomena killed three, causing chaos across Spain

Spain races to clear snow before cold snap

Madrid, Jan. 10: After the worst snowstorm in decades, Spanish officials were racing on Sunday to clear the roads of snow before a cold snap transforms them into icy death traps.

Storm Filomena killed three people during its passage through Spain and kept emergency services workers and army snow ploughs busy through Saturday freeing 2,500 drivers trapped in their vehicles.

The storm also brought

● **A FLEET** of snow-ploughs and gritters were out on the streets of Madrid on Sunday where the city's mayor, Jose Luis Martinez-Almeida, said on Sunday there was not a minute to be lost.

heavy rains before moving through eastern Spain into southern France.

Spain's weather forecasters AEMET predicted heavy frost overnight Sunday to Monday in large parts of Spain. In moun-

tainous areas temperatures would drop below -10 celsius (14 Fahrenheit), conditions that could last until Thursday, the agency added.

Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska said Sunday that the danger was that the piles of snow could transform into ice because of the unprecedented low temperatures expected.

But despite the conditions, he said, the country's vaccination campaign against the coron-

avirus would go ahead as scheduled, with 350,000 doses due to be delivered on Monday.

A fleet of snow-ploughs and gritters were out on the streets of Madrid on Sunday where the city's mayor, Jose Luis Martinez-Almeida, said on Sunday there was not a minute to be lost. "Our aim is to make the most of every minute before Monday when the drop in temperature happens," Martinez-Almeida told Sexta television late Saturday. — *AFP*



A snowplough removes snow after a heavy snowfall in Madrid on Sunday.

— *AFP*

DECCAN
Chronicle

11 JANUARY 2021

How moving court over
agri row may go wrong

The latest round of talks between farmers’ unions and the Union government has produced little more than déjā vu: Both sides stuck to their positions and decided on the date on which the next round of talks would be held. However, there are reports about the government suggesting to the farmers unions that the issue be settled in the court of law. As per them, the government has said if the court pronounces them unconstitutional or illegal, then it will repeal the laws and if the court sustains them, then the farmers should withdraw their agitation. Representatives of the farmers unions have made it public that they have no plans to go by the suggestion. Leaving such an important issue to the court is not the way to settle it. This is so for several reasons. The farmers have consistently made it clear that they are not questioning the constitutionality or legality of the issue. For them, it’s a policy decision by the government to withdraw from supporting agriculture and leave it to the whims and fancies of the corporate sector. This will undermine whatever sense of security the farming community enjoys at present, they say. They have opposed the proposed amendment to the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which, they feared, will cut power subsidies for the farming sector. Their grouse has been that all the bills together reflect the policy of the government — it is plotting to eliminate the agriculture market system in the garb of giving farmers more options, as the laws allow corporates unbridled freedom to monopolise procurement of agriculture produce and make farmers their captive producers. They warn the government to abandon it, legal or not.

Courts, especially the Supreme Court, show no enthusiasm to wield that constitutional power when it is required, and required urgently

There is a section of legal experts who hold the view that the Centre has legislated on agriculture which is a state subject and hence moving the court makes sense. And the courts are expected to make use of the all-powerful tool of judicial review to test pieces of legislations against the Constitution. They have done it in the past and held several of the laws unconstitutional. However, courts, especially the Supreme Court, show no enthusiasm to wield that constitutional power when it is required, and required urgently. The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and the virtual annulment of Article 370 are two legislative steps this government has taken which many perceive to be questioning the very idea of India as reflected in the Constitution. They have moved the apex court but the court has not found it compelling enough to take up. The petitions have been pending with the court for more than a year now. There is no guarantee that the courts will treat this issue differently.

Democratic governments have the right to legislate and the government has exercised that power, though in a questionable way — that the bills were rushed through Parliament is a fact even the government would not oppose. Now, the affected people are exercising their right, the right to protest, to compel the government to go back on its move. It is a matter to be decided in the spirit of democracy; calling upon an even-otherwise-reticent judiciary to decide on policy is hardly an option.

No room for racism

The India-Australia Test series was hit by complaints of racist abuse from spectators at the Sydney Cricket Ground. The touring Indian team was right to bring it to call it at once and the host board, too, reacted with alacrity not only in expelling at least six spectators but also profusely apologising for the despicable racist behaviour of some Australians in the crowd on two successive days of the third Test. There is just no place for racism in sport, whether such overt acts of discrimination come from within the game and its players or from a source beyond like spectators who come to watch games.

We are often reminded that cricket is a gentleman’s game that prides itself on having been a constant metaphor for fair play. But sport also mirrors the society it is played in. Stray elements like rowdy or drunken spectators cannot be expected to eternally preserve a safe and inclusive environment. The only thing cricket can do is to keep such elements out of the arena. It must be seen acting with an iron fist at every instance of racially coloured comments. Cricket Australia has also promised to pursue the Sydney Test matter with law enforcement and in the courts.

Given its racial history as the country that had a “White Australia Policy” starting in 1901 and in place for decades, Australian society might be facing a real problem in racism even as it works hard on achieving equality amid diversity and to promote inclusivity. Soccer may have a much larger problem in tackling racism as well as hooliganism but it has firm policies that leave no room for racism anywhere — “in the stands, not at home, not on the streets”. The universally popular sport of football has built a track record of acting against racist elements with sanctions against match-staging authorities too. Cricket must do, too, and not only in Australia but in India as well where racist abuse from the stands is common enough a phenomenon but doesn’t get as much attention due to the language barrier.

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Subhani



Sitharaman’s Third Act:
What’ll be her Big Idea?



Sanjaya Baru
Sanjayovacha

Despite her best efforts, Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has not yet secured her place in the history books. It may not be fair to expect ministers in the Narendra Modi government to aspire for a place in history given the towering and overshadowing personality of the Prime Minister. But then, some finance ministers have been able to carve out a place for themselves with their proposals or at least their speeches. Dr Manmohan Singh’s 1991 Budget gave him a place in the history books long before he earned it again as Prime Minister with the India-United States civil nuclear deal. Palaniappan Chidambaram will be remembered for his “dream budget” that slashed income tax rates. Arun Jaitley will always be remembered for launching the Goods and Services Tax. Ms Sitharaman should also aim to leave her imprimatur on some idea.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown economics of 2020 have, without doubt, intervened to queer the FM’s pitch. We now know from official data that the economy has shrunk by close to 8.0 per cent, and that India is among the worst performing economies this year in terms of growth and employment generation. While all this has spurred the government into action, the fruits of much of this action will take time to ripen. The FM can spend money and secure early results and Ms Sitharaman has promised to spend a trillion rupees on infrastructure investment. Her fiscal management, praised and criticised in equal measure, can nur-

ture the green shoots of economic revival, but with some inflationary consequences.

Opinion on such revival is sharply divided among the economy-watchers. While the finance ministry insists that the economy is on the rising arm of a V-shaped recovery, the government’s critics believe that the shape of the recovery is at best a W, with the spike in the middle a mere bump rather than pyramidal in shape. The real alphabet to worry about is K — a mix of a V on top for some and an inverse-V at the bottom for others. Rising inequality, high levels of unemployment and the still hesitant improvement in investment suggest that some sections of society may well be experiencing a V-shaped improvement in their fortunes, but others are living through the downside of an inverse-V.

What ought to be the central message of this year’s Budget speech? Clearly, it will have to boost the confidence of all sections of society that the economy can return to the medium-term trajectory of 7.6 per cent growth experienced through much of the Manmohan Singh era (2004-2014). During Dr Singh’s first term (2004-09), the average annual growth rate was a record 8.0 per cent — the highest in recorded history for a five-year period — and in his second term (2009-14), it slipped to 7.0 per cent. The decline began in 2012.

While the Narendra Modi government has claimed that its growth record is no worse than its predecessor’s the fact remains that after six years in office it has not been able to turn the investment rate up. The percentage share of

gross investment in national income (gross domestic product) fell to a low of 28.0 per cent, having climbed all the way up from below 30.0 per cent at the turn of the century to nearly 37.0 per cent in 2010. The government may have succeeded in getting consumers to consume, but getting investors to invest and savers to save remains a challenge.

In an essay written for a book I have recently edited on the post-Covid economy (*Beyond Covid’s Shadow: Mapping India’s Economic Resurgence*, Rupa, 2021), Dr C. Rangarajan, a former chairman of the Prime Minister’s Economic Advisory Council, among other things, underscores the fact that the lockdown has weakened an already weak pre-Covid economy and the Budget has to kickstart economic growth by stimulating investment, savings, demand and employment generation. Kickstarting the trillion rupee infrastructure programme, along with the privatisation of public enterprises, increased spending on education, health, research and development and encouraging the growth of employment-generating sectors can restore momentum to the economy.

In his essay in my book, economist and Parliament member Subramanian Swamy bemoans the lack of strategic thinking on economic policy and recommends a balanced mix of incentives for savings and investment with a more open and competitive economy that increases productivity of capital. He believes that Prime Minister Modi has so far not been able to

give a clear direction to the economic growth process. Rather than promise too many things to too many constituencies, this year’s Budget should define the roadmap to make India a \$5 trillion economy by 2025. All policy must aim to serve that end. In their essays, both Bibek Debroy, currently chairman of the PM’s Economic Advisory Council, and Rajiv Kumar, vice-chairman of the Niti Aayog, assure us that the government is aware of the nature of the challenge and that it would address it convincingly to ensure the revival of growth.

However, not everyone within the so-called Sangh Parivar seems to be equally aware of the negative impact that the politics of the ruling party is having on the economics of its government. Experience around the world through the past century shows that sustained high economic growth is a function of domestic political stability and moderation. Even China’s growth acceleration began only after its domestic politics became more moderate and stable. The biggest challenge for economic policy today is not just to end the post-Covid and post-lockdown uncertainty but also for the Bharatiya Janata Party to re-establish its credentials in offering a development-oriented administration rather than one that is obsessed with divisive religious and communal issues.

Finally, a friendly word of advice for Ms Sitharaman. Get a good speechwriter. At least this year one prays that the FM’s mouth will not go dry and she runs out of breath reading a long, boring speech. Budget speeches are remembered both for content and style. A smart finance minister should get both right at least to earn good editorials if not a footnote in the history books.

The writer is a public policy analyst, a former newspaper editor and adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

LETTERS

BLAZE AFTER BLAZE

Fires at various hospitals due to electric short circuits have been taking place with unfailing regularity, the latest one being at the Bhandara district general hospital in Maharashtra where 10 toddlers perished. “Strict action will be taken against the guilty” is the stock answer the authorities trot out after every tragedy, but they do precious little to avoid a recurrence. They close the mouths of the victims’ kin by doling out some monetary compensation. Pity, human life has become so cheap in our country!

P.G. Menon,
Chennai

CAPITOL RIOT

January 6, 2021 will go down as one of the darkest days in the history of US democracy as the supporters of Trump, culminating in a giant act of domestic terrorism, led to the riotous takeover of the Capitol building and disturbed any hopes for a peaceful transition of power. Trump men storm Capitol. Over the past many weeks Trump has endeavoured to overturn the election results, asserting fraud despite his inability to substantiate even a single instance. Stoking fire, Trump fuelled baseless conspiracy theories and incited his supporters to indulge in vandalism. By thinking only of himself and not the good of the nation, he trampled on the values of the US constitution. It remains to be seen what consequences Trump and his proxies will face. The assault on American democracy was the clear effort of a single man, who is a notorious demagogue.

R. Sivakumar,
Chennai

STREAK OF RUN OUTS

It’s disheartening to note that there were three run-outs in India’s first innings of the Third Test against Australia in Sydney. Test batting is all about playing steady and long innings. On a placid and flat track in Sydney, one expected that India would gain a substantial lead in the first innings. But that did not happen, thanks to the hosts’ disciplined bowling and fielding and India’s dismal batting performance. India conceded a lead of 94 runs which tilted the scales in Australia’s favour. Run-outs are unpardonable in the longer version of the game, to say the least.

S. Ramakrishnasayee,
Chennai

A.G. Noorani



When Shaheen
Bagh sit-in won
global respect,
exposed govt

Recent events in India have brought to the fore the dimensions of the right to protest, which is itself absolute except in cases of extreme necessity. The problem arises, as it does in all cases of human rights, where the fundamental rights of other citizens and also the legitimate, recognised rights and duties of the state are involved. Protest can be expressed through the media, public meetings, or processions marching through public streets. Mammoth processions and sit-ins pose the greatest challenge.

One was the famous Shaheen Bagh meeting comprising mostly women, Muslim women at that. It predictably polarised society, with the BJP pouring scorn on the protesters. The law and administrative measures Modi’s extremist government proposed affected mostly, if not only, Muslims. The sit-in was spontaneous and efficient. They prayed and protested, and aroused international admiration. A petition was filed in the Supreme Court challenging their

right to do a ‘sit-in’ similar to those of the 1960s US civil rights movement. The court delivered a brief judgment, noting that “the grievance... was that the persons opposing the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens had adopted a method of protest which resulted in the closure of the Kalindi Kunj — Shaheen Bagh stretch, including the Okhla underpass. It was submitted that the public roads could not be permitted to be encroached upon in this manner...”

In their pursuit of an out-of-the-box solution, the court considered it appropriate to appoint two interlocutors to meet the protesters and submit a report. The court noted, “In what manner the administration should act is their responsibility and they should not hide behind the court orders or seek support therefrom for carrying out their administrative functions. The courts adjudicate the legality of the actions and are not meant to give shoulder to the administration to fire their guns from. Unfortunately,

despite a lapse of a considerable period of time, there was neither any negotiations nor any action by the administration, thus warranting our intervention.”

That is a tall order to the police; for involved are complex issues of law that troubled in Indian, British and US courts in the past. India’s apex court tried to come to grips with them years ago. A century ago, Justice Benson of the Madras high court said, “No doubt a highway is primarily intended for the use of individuals passing and re-passing along it in pursuit of their ordinary avocations, but in every country, and especially in India, highways have, from time immemorial, been used for the passing and re-passing of processions as well as of individuals and there is nothing illegal in a procession or assembly engaging in worship while passing along a highway, any more than in an individual doing so.”

He added, “The practice of using the public highways for religious processions has existed in India for thousands of years. ... That alone is

sufficient to raise a presumption that it is lawful and to throw on those who allege it to be unlawful the onus of showing that it is forbidden by law, but this it admittedly is not. The law recognises the use of the highway by processions as lawful, and gives the magistrate and superior officers of police powers to direct the conduct of assemblies and processions through the public streets and to regulate the use of music in connection with them.”

In 1973, the apex court ruled that processions may be regulated to a reasonable degree but that conferment of absolute discretion in the police was violative of the fundamental right to assemble peaceably without arms.

The best statement of law was made by Justice K.K. Mathew: “Public meeting in open spaces and public streets forms part of the tradition of our national life. ... [T]he people have come to regard it as a part of their privileges and immunities. The state and local authority have a virtual monopoly of every open space... [I]f the state or

municipality can constitutionally close both its streets and its parks... the practical result would be that it would be impossible to hold any open-air meetings in any large city. The real problem is that of reconciling the city’s function of providing for the exigencies of traffic [and] recreation... with its other obligations, of providing adequate places for public discussion in order to safeguard the guaranteed right of public assembly.”

Politics has marched ahead of the law. Unresponsive regimes create public dissatisfaction. The Supreme Court appointed ‘interlocutors’ in the Shaheen Bagh case. For over a month, Punjab’s farmers have assembled in huge numbers on the borders of Delhi. Their organisation inspires respect. Old and young women and the youth set up a virtual city, sleeping in the bitter cold. Try and teach the law to them. It is sincere conciliation that is called for. This concept is alien to Narendra Modi.

By arrangement with Dawn

quick
BITES

INDICATORS

%

Sensex	48,782.51	1.43
Nifty 50	14,347.25	1.48
S&P 500*	3,811.72	0.21
Dollar (₹)	73.24	0.10
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.61	0.06
Euro (₹)	89.64	0.36
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,763*614	1.23
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.52	2.10
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.892	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.088	0.017

* As of Friday/Saturday

Currency in
circulation rises
by ₹3.23 lakh cr

The currency in circulation (CiC) grew by around 13 per cent in the first nine months of the current fiscal as people preferred holding on to cash as a precautionary measure amid the pandemic. CiC grew by Rs 3,23,003 crore, or 13.2 per cent, to Rs 27,70,315 crore as on January 1, 2021 from Rs 24,47,312 crore as on March 31, 2020, according to RBI data. In the April-Dec. period of FY2020, it had grown by nearly 6 per cent.

Gold ETFs attract
₹6,657 crore
inflow in 2020

Economic downturn due to the pandemic and weakness in the US dollar encouraged investors to infuse Rs 6,657 crore in gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs) in 2020 compared to just Rs 16 crore in 2019. The inflow came after witnessing a net pullout from safe-haven assets for six consecutive years. Meanwhile, a Crisil report said the mutual fund industry's AUM has gone past the Rs 31 lakh crore mark for the first time in December.

Foreign investors
put ₹4,819 cr in
equities in Jan.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have pumped Rs 5,156 crore into Indian capital markets in the first six trading sessions this year amid expectations of strong third-quarter earnings and a reformist budget. As per depositories data, FPIs invested a net Rs 4,819 crore in equities and Rs 337 crore in the debt segment between January 1 and 8. This took the total net investment to Rs 5,156 crore.

Special unit in I-T
dept. to probe
foreign assets

A special unit has been created by the government in the countrywide investigation wings of the Income Tax department for focussed probe in cases of undisclosed assets held by Indians abroad and possession of black money in foreign shores, officials said. The Foreign Asset Investigation Units (FAIUs) have been recently created in all the 14 investigation directorates of the tax department.

■ Minister has taken up issue with Prime Minister
FMCG firms could raise
prices as inflation bites

New Delhi, Jan. 10: Consumers may have to shell out more for their daily use products as FMCG firms, which are facing inflationary pressure on their key raw material inputs, are considering raising their product prices.

Some fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies like Marico and others have already gone for price hike, while some which include Dabur, Parle and Patanjali are closely monitoring the situation.

FMCG players have been trying to absorb the price increase of raw material inputs such as coconut oil, edible oil and palm oil, but they are unlikely to hold the prices of their commodities for a long time as that will impact their gross margins.

"We have seen a significant rise in input cost and especially edible oil in the last three to four months and that is putting pressures on our margins and costs. As of now, we have not taken any price hike but we are closely monitoring it and if it goes like this then probably, we may go for a price hike," Parle products senior category head Mayank Shah told PTI.

According to him, these commodities are cyclic in nature.

When asked about the price hike, Shah said: "It will be across products as edible oil is being used in all products. It would be at least 4 to 5 per cent."

Dabur India CFO Lalit



Malik said the recent months have seen inflation inching up for some key raw materials like amla and gold.

"Going forward too, we expect some inflationary pressure in key commodities. Our efforts will be to absorb the raw material price increase through our synergies and cost efficiencies, and undertake only selective and judicious price hikes, which will also depend on the competitive scenario in the market, said Malik.

While for Haridwar-based Patanjali Ayurveda, it's still a 'wait and watch' situation and yet to take a final call on this but hinting that it is also moving in that directions.

"We always try to absorb the market oscillation but if compelled by the market factors, we would take a final decision on that," said the Patanjali spokesperson.

Marico, which owns brands as Saffola and Parachute, has faced inflationary pressure and had to go for an effective price hike.

"The quarter (October-December) was also characterised by inflationary pressure in key raw materials necessitating cutting back on some promotions and taking effective price increases across both Parachute and Saffola edible oil portfolios," said Marico in its quarterly updates for third quarter last week.

Edelweiss Financial Services executive vice president Abneesh Roy said many key raw materials are up sharply such as palm oil, tea, copra and edible oils.

"Price growth will come back in 2021 for the consumer companies after raw material pressure starts impacting their gross margins," he said.

However, Roy also added that the consumer companies have other cost levers to cushion this impact at Ebitda margin level.

"FMCG companies have very high pricing power. They normally take a price hike in a gradual staggered manner but eventually pass on the entire price hike. We expect the same to continue, given the demand is robust and most of the FMCG products have the advantage of low unit packs of Rs one, two, five and ten price points," Roy said.

EY partner and national leader (consumer products and retail) Pinakiranjan Mishra said: "While FMCG companies have seen a rise in cost especially of agri inputs, they will try and limit price increases through cost control measures to support consumer offtake in the current environment." —PTI

Life insurance sector to
grow 12-15%: LIC chief

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, JAN. 10

Despite having a de-growth in life insurance businesses during lockdown periods last year, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), India's largest public sector insurer, believes that the life insurance industry is likely to grow by up to 15 per cent in coming years.

"Life insurance business, being done by 24 players in the country, is expected to grow by 12 to 15 per cent in the coming years. The industry has added 1,06,035 agents to the force by the end of November last year," LIC chairman M.R. Kumar said while addressing an event.

"We can expect the number of agents will grow steadily in the coming years, too. Keeping in mind the unlimited opportunity of life insurance business in India, life insurers will continue to play a vital role in the job market under this new normal as well," Kumar added.

Due to the lockdown and related restrictions, which impacted the mobility of the marketing force, the life insurance industry, at the end of May 31, 2020, recorded a de-growth of 27.92 per cent in first year premium (FYP) to Rs 20,466.75 crore as com-



M.R. Kumar

pared to Rs 28,395.89 crore and a de-growth of 51.02 per cent in policies—14,24,373 policies compared to 29,08,093 in the previous year, he said.

"However, the phased unlock process started from June 2020 resulted in increased economic activities, and our industry adopted innovative digital business processes in meeting the expectation of the market. As on November 30, the life insurers clocked a FYP of Rs 16,6662.96 crore compared to Rs 1,69,251.19 crore. The de-growth was brought down to 1.53 per cent," he said.

"The Ulip policies are giving an opportunity to market savvy customers to reap higher benefits in the new normal," Kumar said.

He said the rural market holds promise for insurers to expand their business. Irdai data for 2018-2019 shows out of the 286.48 lakh new policies sold, the share of the rural sector was just 66.37 lakh.

VEDANTA PARENT
LAUNCHES
OPEN OFFER
FOR 10% STAKE

BIJOU GEORGE
JAN. 10

Vedanta Resources launched an open offer for a 10 per cent stake in its India unit, two months after a failed delisting attempt for Vedanta Ltd.

The London-based parent of Mumbai-listed Vedanta Ltd will buy as many as 371.75 million shares, comprising 10 per cent of the outstanding equity of the Indian unit, according to an exchange filing on Saturday.

The open offer, which will be managed by JPMorgan Chase & Co's India unit, will be a voluntary open offer, with no minimum level of acceptance by Vedanta, according to the filing. If Vedanta Ltd holders were to accept share tenders for the entire 10 per cent, the consideration for the deal would be Rs 5,948 crore (\$812 million).

—Bloomberg

US revenues, cost savings
to bolster pharma results

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 10

Brokerages expect a good third quarter performance from pharmaceutical companies, driven by good growth in the US market, recovery in branded markets, continued cost savings and low bases for select companies, such as Lupin.

ICICI Securities expects moderate top line growth of around 8 per cent, led by India business and marginal growth in US business with 130 basis points year-on-year (YoY) improvement in Ebitda margin to 22 per cent.

Emkay Global expects top pharma companies YoY revenue, Ebitda and earnings growth of 9 per cent, 21 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively.

"Cipla and Dr Reddy's have the potential to beat our and consensus estimates," Emkay Global said.

"We expect easing of lockdown to support some recovery in acute portfolio and injectable products. US revenues may witness marginal growth sequentially, led by improvement in volumes of injectables, specialty portfolio and new launches. We estimate

5G rollout to create
more job opportunities

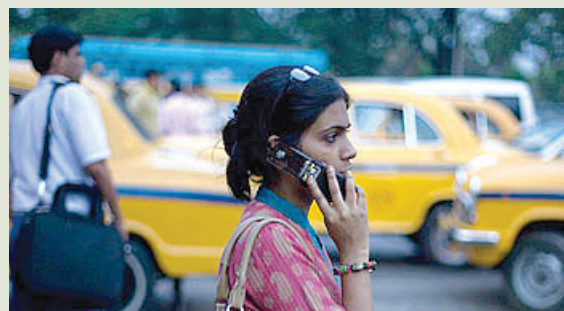
SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 10

Hiring activity for the rollout of 5G services has started in a modest way. Industry expects numbers to swell multi-fold as the rollout begins.

While uncertainties still prevail and telecom service providers are seeking clarity on 5G auctions, the job opportunities would be huge once the rollout happens.

"The application of 5G is across domains and hence the impact will be witnessed across sectors from manufacturing to telecom to e-commerce to agriculture. With advantages such as increased range to low latency, and more importantly less energy intensive, this tech will connect more users than before. Overall, the opportunity for 5G and its ecosystem is limitless...Hiring for this domain will continue for at least the next two to three years," said Vijay Sivaram, CEO of Quess IT Staffing.

According to Aditya Narayan Mishra, director and CEO of CIEL HR Services, "Currently, some of the IT service providers like Tech Mahindra, HCL,



Accenture and smaller IT companies have started hiring professionals for software architecting, development and testing in 5G. The positions open for the next three months would be somewhere around 5,000. These jobs are mostly in cities like Bengaluru and Gurgaon,

However, the telecom service providers have not yet started hiring people in a big way. "Telecom companies have been operating in a subdued environment for some time. In the backdrop of the pandemic, they will not be initially aggressive about investing heavily," says Rituparna Chakraborty, co-founder and executive vice president, TeamLease Services.

However, once the rollout happens, for the next

six months we would see increased hiring activity. The positions open could be more than 50,000 in the future," said Mishra.

Telecom service providers also might train their existing staff for the new technology as the number of people who have the required skills is also limited. 5G being a new technology, not many people with more than five years of experience are available globally.

"While the demand is high, the overall availability of talent is yet to catch up, hence models such as 'train and hire' are becoming more common. Telecom service providers will hire a mix of freshers and experienced candidates as global services firms are also hiring in big numbers," said Sivaram.

NEW ZEALAND CENTRAL BANK HIT BY CYBER ATTACK

Wellington, Jan. 10: New Zealand's central bank said it was responding with urgency to a "malicious" breach of one of its data systems, a third-party file sharing service that stored "sensitive information". Reserve Bank of New

Zealand governor Adrian Orr said the breach had been contained and the system was taken offline but it would take time to determine what information had been accessed. "We are working closely with domestic and interna-

tional cyber security experts," Orr said. "The nature and extent of information that has been potentially accessed is still being determined, but it may include commercially and personally sensitive information." —AFP

ANNUAL OIL
USAGE FALLS
BY 11%

DEBJIT
CHAKRABORTY
JAN. 10

India's petroleum consumption fell for the first time in more than two decades in 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic shuttered businesses and factories, hurting demand from one of the world's largest users of the fuel.

Total petroleum demand declined 10.8 per cent last year from 2019, and was at a five-year low of 193.4 million tonnes, according to Bloomberg calculations of provisional data published by the oil ministry's Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell. The annual contraction was the first on record, going back as far as 1999.

Consumption of petroleum fuels by Asia's second-biggest oil importer collapsed by as much as 70 per cent after it embarked on one of the world's most stringent nationwide quarantines in March. The drop resulted in a sharp cutback in crude processing and operations at petrochemical plants.

The strict restrictions ravaged the Indian economy, which is set for its biggest contraction in annual gross domestic product in records going back to 1952. The government has relaxed most of the curbs to pull Asia's third-biggest economy out of the slump.

Demand is picking up as restrictions are eased. Monthly consumption of petroleum fuels, a proxy of crude oil demand, was about 1.8 per cent short of previous year's levels in December, and touched an 11-month high.

Petrol consumption last month rose 9.3 per cent year-on-year, the highest since May 2019, on increased use of personal vehicles. Diesel demand was 2.8 per cent lower from a year earlier. —Bloomberg

NOWHERE TO GO

Ship leaves China after more than six months' wait at port

GE Shipping caught in China-Oz spat

RAJESH KUMAR SINGH
JAN. 10

An Indian ship with 23 crew members on board has been allowed to leave China's Jingtang port after unsuccessfully waiting for more than six months for clearance to offload its cargo, Great Eastern Shipping Company Ltd, which operates the ship, said.

The bulk carrier was set to leave for Japan's Chiba port later on Saturday, where Mumbai-based Great Eastern's back-up



crew has been waiting to take over, the company's spokeswoman Anjali

Kumar said by phone. Arrangements had been made for the stranded sea-

farers to fly back to India, she said.

Indian-flagged Jag Anand, loaded with Australian coal, arrived at Jingtang in mid-June. By November, at least 21 bulk carriers with almost 400 crew members were queuing up at the Chinese port, roughly 230 kilometers east of Beijing.

The deadlock played in the backdrop of a diplomatic spat between China and Australia that was escalating into a trade war, China blacklisting a range of Australian com-

modities from coal to lobster for imports. While the vessels remained anchored, a humanitarian crisis was unfolding, as the port authorities restricted movement of the crew members, citing Covid rules.

"We are still waiting for instructions from the charterer about the cargo," Great Eastern's Kumar said on Saturday. "Right now, our top priority is to help our crew members reach home. We have all the permissions needed for that." —Bloomberg

AUSSIES IN COMMAND

Sydney, Jan. 10: Cheteshwar Pujara was left to summon his trademark doggedness with skipper Ajinkya Rahane after India lost their openers in pursuit of an improbable 407, setting the stage for an intriguing final day of the third Test against Australia in which the visitors will primarily try to bat out three sessions here.

Having drawn flak for his 50 off 176 balls in the first innings, none would mind such an effort from India's Test specialist after the visitors finished the fourth day on 98 for 2 largely due to a 71-run opening stand between Rohit Sharma (52) and Shubman Gill (31).

Rohit's untimely dismissal at the fag end, trying to pull Pat Cummins, did hurt India but it's two best defensive players Pujara (9 batting off 29 balls) and skipper Ajinkya Rahane (4 off 14 balls) were at the crease when stumps were drawn.

The pitch, with variable bounce and the dark patches acting like snake pits for Nathan Lyon, would pose its own set of challenges for

a team with two injured batsmen in their line-up.

Both Rohit (52 off 98 balls) and Gill (31 off 64 balls) showed admirable application under pressure but most importantly didn't let the bad deliveries go unpunished.

The three cover drives off Rohit's blade and a cross-batted straight drive of Gill were out of top drawer.

Rohit, for good measure, pulled Cameron Green over mid-wicket for a six and they both looked comfortable while negotiating the Australian attack.

It was after 53 years that an Indian opening pair had struck two 50 plus partnerships in the same Test Down Under.

Last time also it was in Sydney where Farokh Engineer and Syed Abid Ali had a decent outing albeit in a lost cause.

It took a peach of a delivery from Josh Hazlewood (1/11 in 8 overs), coming for his second spell, which straightened after pitching and the resultant nick, ended an impressive 71-run stand.

Pujara, just after coming

in, successfully asked for a DRS review after being adjudged leg before.

A delectable chip shot coming down the track off Lyon helped Rohit bring up his half-century but his dismissal in the next over left fans yearning for more.

As far as Australia are concerned, they hardly put a foot wrong during the two sessions that they batted.

Steve Smith (81 off 167 balls) missed out on a second hundred but rookie Cameron Green played a hapless Indian attack with a well-made 84 off 132 balls that had four sixes. They declared at the stroke of tea, having scored 312 for 6.

Marnus Labuschagne (73 off 118 balls) once again batted positively during his second century partnership of the match (103 runs) with mentor Smith, who employed a more cautious approach.

The butter-fingered Indian fielders also didn't help the bowlers' cause as Hanuma Vihari, vice-captain Rohit and Rahane missed regulation catches at square leg, slip and gully respectively.

—PTI

JADEJA MIGHT BAT WITH INJECTIONS IF REQUIRED

Sydney, Jan. 10: Senior India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who dislocated his left thumb on day three of the third Test against Australia on Saturday, has been ruled out of the first two games in the upcoming series against England.

Jadeja was not able to bowl in Australia's second innings after a short ball from Mitchell Starc hit him on the gloves, requiring immediate medical attention.

"Ravindra Jadeja is out of first two Tests against England. He will need 4-6 weeks minimum to recuperate and complete rehab which rules him out of first two tests," a BCCI source said.

The four-Test series against England starts with a double header in Chennai from February 5. The left-handed cricketer, who made a valuable 28

and took four wickets in the first innings might take a painkiller injection and come out to bat on the final day of the game at SCG as India seek to save the Test.

"He might bat if needed with injection to save the Test," the source added.

Rishabh Pant, who suffered an elbow bruise will bat, confirmed senior player Ravichandran Ashwin.

India have been hit by a slew of injuries in the ongoing series with senior pacers Umesh Yadav and Mohammad Shami already flown back home. Batsman K L Rahul too was ruled out after injuring his left wrist while batting in the nets in Melbourne.

Wriddhiman Saha kept for Rishabh Pant in Australia's second innings after the latter was hit on the elbow by Pat Cummins while batting on day three.

—PTI

Ashwin reveals he faced abuses in SCG earlier too

Sydney, Jan. 10: Seasoned off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on Sunday said racist abuse from the crowd at the Sydney Cricket Ground is not new and needs to be dealt with an iron fist after some spectators were asked to leave for targeting Indian players during the ongoing third Test against Australia here.

Speaking at the end of the fourth day's play, Ashwin said the Indian players have faced racism in Sydney earlier too and "disappointment" will be a "mild word" to describe how they are feeling after the young pacer Mohammed Siraj was subjected to racial slurs on two consecutive days.

"Look, I would like to point out something. This is my fourth tour to Australia. Sydney, especially here, we have had a few experiences even in the past," Ashwin said at the virtual press conference to a query as to how the team is looking at the unsavoury incident.

In fact, without naming

skipper Virat Kohli, Ashwin also referred to an incident where he was photographed showing his middle finger to the crowd during the of 2011 after being constantly abused by a section of the crowd.

"One or two times, even the players have reacted and have got into trouble in the past and not because of players but actually the way the crowd has been speaking, especially the lower tier of the stands."

Local media reported that six people were expelled from the ground by the security during the nearly 10-minute halt in the on-ground proceedings during the fourth day of the ongoing Test. On Saturday, the BCCI lodged a complaint with the ICC after Siraj and Jasprit Bumrah were abused.

"They have been quite nasty and have been hurling abuses as well. But this is the time when they have gone one step ahead and used racial abuses," the senior member of the team said.

Ashwin said that both umpires Paul Reiffel and Paul Wilson have told them to report any incident of racism immediately.

"Like we already mentioned, we have lodged an official complaint yesterday and umpires also mentioned we must bring it to their notice as and when it happens.

"It is not acceptable in this day and age when we have seen a lot," said Ashwin.

He said in no unequivocal terms that this needs to be dealt with an iron fist.

"This roots back to upbringing and the way one sees, this needs to be definitely dealt with iron fists. We must make sure it doesn't happen again."

Ashwin said that the team didn't face any racism in the earlier Test venues like Adelaide and Melbourne. "Personally, I think Adelaide and Melbourne weren't as bad but like I said this has been a continuous thing at Sydney."

—PTI

SCORECARD

Australia 1st Innings 338

India 1st Innings: 244

Australia 2nd Innings (overnight 103/2): David Warner lbw b Ashwin 13, Will Pucovskic Saha b Siraj 10, Marnus Labuschagne c W Saha b Navdeep Saini 73, Steven Smith lbw b Ashwin 81, Matthew Wade c Saha b Navdeep Saini 4, Cameron Green c Saha b Bumrah 84, Tim Paine not out 39. Extras (b-1, lb-4, nb-3) 8. **Total (for 6 wkts, in 87 overs) 312 decl.**

FoW: 16-1, 35-2, 138-3, 148-4, 208-5, 312-6.

Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 21-4-68-1, Mohammed Siraj 25-5-90-1, Navdeep Saini 16-2-54-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 25-1-95-2.

India 2nd Innings: Rohit Sharma c Starc b Cummins 52, Shubman Gill c Paine b Hazlewood 31, Cheteshwar Pujara batting 9, Ajinkya Rahane batting 4. Extras (lb-1, nb-1) 2. **Total (for 2 wkts, in 34 overs) 98.**

FoW: 71-1, 92-2.

Bowling: Mitchell Starc 6-0-27-0, Josh Hazlewood 8-3-11-1, Pat Cummins 9-1-25-1, Nathan Lyon 9-3-22-0, Cameron Green 2-0-12-0.



Aussie skipper Tim Paine (left) and Steve Smith.

Paine joins India huddle, Langer calls him class act

Sydney, Jan. 10: The iconic Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday witnessed the good, bad and ugly in varying degrees for sure if not in equal measure.

While the cricket community exploded after Indian players were subjected to racial abuse during the fourth day of the third Test at the SCG, Australian skipper Tim Paine won hearts by joining the visiting team's huddle.

Play was halted for a few minutes after India pacer Mohammed Siraj complained of racial abuse from a section of the crowd, leading to expulsion of some spectators and an unreserved apology from Cricket Australia.

Australian coach Justin Langer called Paine a "class act".

"It was nice to have Tim out there when that incident happened today. He's a class act as we know. The game of Test cricket is always going to be played tough but there's been a really good feeling amongst both teams and let's hope that continues," Langer said.

Paine was batting at the time. The former Australia Test opener was disappointed that incidents like these are threatening to tarnish a hard-fought series played in the right spirit between the two teams.

"We saw it throughout the white-ball series, both series. And we've seen it through this Test series. I was interviewed before the summer started (and was asked) what would be the perfect outcome and I mentioned that this series, with everything that's happening around the world, would be played with great sportsman-

ship and with that great spirit that I'm talking about.

"I think we've seen that, haven't we? It's been great to watch," Langer said.

The unsavoury incident took place a day after a drunk spectator at the SCG allegedly directed racial abuse at Jasprit Bumrah and Siraj. The BCCI had lodged a complaint with the ICC.

Speaking further about Paine's gesture, Langer said, "We talked at tea about what was going on. As hosts, we never want to see our visitors being treated poorly do we? And there's different levels of that.

"We were in England last year and some of our guys have felt it before, there's nothing pleasant about it.

"I'm not exactly sure what was said out there between Tim and the Indians, I think it was just a show of support that we don't condone any of that really, really bad behaviour," Langer said.

During the second session of the fourth day, India players huddled in the centre after Siraj, standing at the square leg boundary, complained of abuse after being hit for two consecutive sixes by Cameron Green in his over.

This prompted the security personnel to enter the stands and look for the mischief monger before a group of people was asked to leave the stands.

Local media reported that six people were expelled from the ground by the security during the nearly 10-minute halt in the on-ground proceedings even as the ICC joined the cricketers in condemning the incident.

—PTI



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