



THE HANS INDIA



Forecast: Increasing cloudiness. Temp: Max.24°C. Min.11°C. Humidity: 33% Sunrise: 07:15 Sunset: 05:40

● Simultaneously published from Hyderabad | Warangal | Tirupati | Amaravati | Visakhapatnam | Khammam | Kurnool | Delhi: RNI No: DELENG/2017/74095 ●

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INSURRECTION

Trump incites supporters to storm US Capitol; 4 die in violence

WASHINGTON

IN an unprecedented assault on democracy in America, thousands of supporters of President Donald Trump stormed the US Capitol and clashed with police, resulting in at least four deaths and interrupting a constitutional process to affirm President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the election.

The police, outnumbered by the mask-less protesters, had a tough time in managing the mob, as hundreds of protesters breached security and entered the Capitol building on Wednesday, where members of the Congress were going through the process of counting and certifying the Electoral College votes. Both the House and Senate and the entire Capitol were placed under a lockdown. Vice President Mike Pence and lawmakers were evacuated to safe locations.

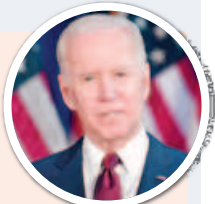
Four people died on Wednesday, including one woman who was shot by a police officer, amid protests and rioting on Capitol Hill that resulted in dozens of demonstrators being arrested, police said.

Metropolitan Police Department Chief Robert Contee called the rioting by pro-Trump demonstrators "shameful" during a news conference alongside Mayor Muriel Bowser. The protesters dispersed following the enforcement of curfew in the national capital. Mayor Bowser announced the curfew to prevent the situation from escalating. Officials said the Capitol was secured, putting an end to nearly four-hour violent occupation by Trump supporters. **Continued on P5**



Violent protesters, loyal to President Donald Trump, storm the Capitol in Washington on Wednesday

Let me be very clear. The scenes of chaos at the Capitol do not reflect a true America. Do not represent who we are. What we're seeing are a small number of extremists dedicated to lawlessness. This is not dissent. It's disorder. It's chaos. It borders on sedition. And it must end now **President-elect Joe Biden**



Trump finally gives up

WASHINGTON

FOR the first time since the November 2020 election, US President Donald Trump on Thursday conceded against President-elect Joe Biden, saying that there would be an "orderly transition of power" on January 20, shortly after Congress affirmed the Democrat's Electoral College victory.

"Even though I totally disagree with the outcome of the election, and the facts bear me out, nevertheless there will be an orderly transition on January 20th. I have always said we would continue our fight to ensure that only legal votes were

counted. While this represents the end of the greatest first term in presidential history, it's only the beginning of our fight to Make America Great Again," Trump said in a statement which was posted on the social media by senior White House aide Don Scavino since Twitter and Facebook temporarily blocked the President.

Trump statement came shortly after Vice President Mike Pence announced before a joint session of Congress at about 4 am on Thursday morning that Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris had won 306 votes over his and Trump's 232.



PM dedicates Rewari-Madar section of Freight Corridor

CHANDIGARH: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday dedicated the 306-km New Rewari-New Madar section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC) to the nation. Through video-conferencing, Modi also flagged off the world's first double-stack long-haul 1.5-km-long container train hauled by electric traction from New Ateli-New Kishangarh. On this occasion, Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot were also present.

Modi expresses distress over riots in US

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday expressed his distress at the rioting and violence by angry supporters of outgoing President Donald Trump in Washington DC, asserting that democratic process cannot be allowed to be subverted through unlawful protests.

Orderly and peaceful transfer of power must continue, he said in a



tweet. Modi tweeted, "Distressed to see news about rioting and violence in Washington DC. Orderly and peaceful transfer of power must continue. The democratic process cannot be allowed to be subverted through unlawful protests." Leaders around the world condemned the incident, expressing shock at the chaos unfolding in a country they once relied upon for global leadership.

States, UTs told to be ready to receive vaccine

PAYAL BANERJEE
NEW DELHI

THE Union Health Ministry has informed States and Union Territories that they are likely to receive the first supply of Covid-19 vaccine shortly and asked them to remain prepared to accept these consignments. In a communique, the ministry said vaccine will be supplied to the identified consignee points of 19 states and union territories -- Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya



Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Ben-

gal -- by the supplier. The vaccine for remaining 18 states and union territories -- Andaman and Nicobar Is-

lands, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Daman and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim, Tripura and Uttarakhand -- will be received from their respective government medical store depots. The further distribution of vaccine to the districts will be done as per the registered beneficiaries, for which a separate communication will be done shortly, the letter stated.

Continued on P5

Petrol price at all-time high, diesel crosses ₹81 mark

NEW DELHI

PETROL price on Thursday scaled to an all-time high of Rs 84.20 per litre in the national capital and Rs 87.59 in Hyderabad after state-owned fuel retailers hiked rates for the second day in a row. Petrol price on Thursday was hiked by 23 paise per litre and diesel by 26 paise a litre, according to a price notification from oil marketing companies. In Delhi, petrol now costs Rs 84.20 per litre and diesel is priced at Rs 74.38.

In Mumbai, petrol comes for Rs 90.83 a litre and diesel for Rs 81.07. This is the highest ever price of petrol in Delhi, while diesel is at record high in Mumbai. State-owned fuel retailers Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) had on Wednesday resumed daily price revision after nearly a month-long hiatus. Price had been raised by 26 paise per litre for petrol and 25 paise on diesel on Wednesday. The previous highest ever rate of Rs 84 a litre for petrol in Delhi was touched on October 4, 2018.

Continued on P5

Farmers hold a tractor rally during their ongoing protest against the new farm laws, at Kundli Border in Sonapat, on Thursday

Farmers hold tractor march, say it's 'rehearsal' for Republic Day

NEW DELHI

A DAY ahead of the next round of talks with the Union government, thousands of farmers protesting on the Delhi borders organised a 'tractor march' on Thursday amid tight security, describing the event as a "rehearsal" for a similar roadshow proposed on January 26 to oppose the three new central farm laws.

The march comprising both men and women sitting on hundreds of tractors was flagged off from the Singhu and Tikri entry points on the Delhi-Haryana borders and Ghazipur on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border at 11 am. Po-

lice was deployed on the Uttar Pradesh and Haryana borders with Delhi to accompany the farmers during the tractor march.

The sloganeering farmers drove their tractors towards Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways while demanding a repeal of the three farm laws and warned to intensify their protest if the government did not agree to their remaining demands.

A few farmers even performed stunts and danced to songs played on the music systems installed on their tractors on the Eastern Peripheral Highway, where they sat to eat 'langar' in the afternoon. **Continued on P5**






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Bedtime beauty hacks to look young



Shahnaz Husain

Quality sleep helps revitalise the body , mind and improves our mood. Sleep is key to feeling and looking youthful. Sleep does wonders to feel refreshed, protecting health, immune system to look gorgeous and rejuvenated



The wrinkles, dull complexion and fine lines on skin are formed due to innumerable array of things like harsh ultraviolet (UV) sunrays, dust, air pollution and harsh chemicals which comes in contact with skin during day time .But Sleep is the most powerful rejuvenating treatment and you can reverse this by taking care of skin by good night's sleep .Sleep keeps young, slim and sexy by strengthening mental and physical health of an adult. Beauty sleep is not just a myth but helps to stay young by lowering stress levels ,preventing weight gain and strengthening the immune system.

The skin goes through a renewal process at night which helps to remain radiant ,smooth and youthful skin. While you sleep, the skin repairs itself but adopting a few simple ayurvedic beauty tips can improve your skin tone,reduce blemishes and give radiant glow and you can wake up with soft glowing skin,bright eyes and shiny hair. A bedtime beauty care routine is of much importance, so that the skin is cleansed of make-up, pollutants, dirt and all the impurities that are deposited on it during the day. All the repair and restoration of the body take place when we sleep.

Night time care basically involves restoration and maintenance of the skin, as

well as preparing it for the night. It involves thorough cleansing, including the removal of make-up, care of the area around eyes,nourishing and massage of the skin. If the skin is oily,or if there is acne, night care may also involve the application of products to control the condition.

Here are some dos and don'ts of night care:

Dos

Products for cleansing should be selected according to skin type and

face and massage it with outward and slightly upward movements. Wipe off excess cream with moist cotton wool before bedtime. Apply the cream on the neck too and massage it with both hands, starting from the chin and going downwards. The pressure should not be applied when bringing the hands back to the chin, but only as you massage downwards. This helps to delay formation of lines on the neck and also reduces double chins.

For all skin types, an under-eye cream should be applied around the eyes and wiped off with moist cotton wool after 15 minutes.

The hands may be massaged with hand cream, especially around the nails, so that the cuticle remains soft.

If there are acne/ pimples, apply medicated lotion on the eruptions and leave on overnight. If there are pimple marks, apply an anti-blemish cream only on the marks and leave it on overnight.

Don'ts

Don't use oily cleansers and nourishing / night creams if the skin is oily. Don't leave the cream around your eyes at night, while you sleep. It can lead to puffiness around the eyes.

Rules of wearing anklet bracelets

Ankle bracelets are a stunning jewelry piece to own. Anklets can take just about any casual outfit and bring it up a few notches. If you have a few anklets already in your jewelry box to choose from, then you're in luck.

If you don't already have a few anklets on hand, then you're also in luck because this means you have even more of a reason to purchase a few for yourself. However, wearing an ankle bracelet does come with a few dos and don'ts. You can't throw an ankle bracelet on with any outfit or for any occasion.

Before you rock your beautiful ankle bracelets, be sure you know a few tips on how to wear them. Doing so is the best way to get the most out of these gorgeous jewelry pieces. Here are a few tips that you need to know about wearing ankle bracelets!

Choosing the right or left ankle One of the main questions people seem to have about wearing ankle bracelets is wondering which ankle to wear the anklet on. This is a common question people wonder about for several different jewelry pieces. There is some discussion about the anklet bracelet as well. Anklets were also once a gift given by the groom to the bride. Wearing the anklet on the right ankle symbolizes those girls being called girls.

However, in today's world, there

is no significance behind which ankle you wear yours on. The decision depends on which one you prefer.

Positioning the anklet

Once you decide which ankle you like better for your anklet bracelet, you should then pay attention to the positioning of the anklet. You never want to place your anklet on top of anything but your bare skin. This includes pantyhose as well. Choose to wear your anklet on bare legs only. You can, however, opt to wear your anklet under a pair of jeans or other pants. As long as you don't place the bracelet on top of the pants, you're doing it the right way.

Some people decide to wear the bracelet loosely on their ankles, letting it rest gently on the tops of their feet. Others choose to keep a more snug fit and have it placed tightly around their ankles. The choice is ultimately yours.

Gold anklets

Gold anklets are the perfect accessory for mature women. Golden anklets are most commonly worn for more formal settings and occasions. This is due to the fact that gold is commonly seen as a luxurious jewelry material. Add special stones, diamonds, or even rubies to make the anklet even more sophisticated.



Beaded anklets

Beaded anklets are another great option. Keep in mind that for each kind of anklet, there's a time and place or it. When choosing to wear a beaded anklet, you might consider throwing on a pair of casual flip flops to match it. Beaded anklets are the perfect accessory to match with your casual outfits or for a day at the beach or pool.

Silver anklets

Silver anklets are a good choice for a bit younger ladies. As the gold would be for a more sophisticated setting, silver is for a more laid back setting. This is the best choice for young girls or teenagers. You can

pair these easily with summer sandals. Decide on a cute pair of flat sandals or even a pair of heeled sandals.

Charm anklets

There's no specific way to wear charm anklets. You can wear these ankle bracelets with just about any outfit that you can imagine. Just keep in mind whether the bracelet itself is either gold or silver, as this might make the difference when selecting the right outfit and occasion for it. Charm bracelets on their own, however, are becoming more popular. You can find charm anklets with feathers, teardrop pendants, and so much more. Choose one that suits your style, and you're good to go!



PUJA GUPTA

Cocoa Butter helps moisturize your skin, manage your hair, and is an excellent source of antioxidants. It also helps in boosting your immunity and helps to maintain a healthy heart.

Dr Geeta Grewal, Cosmetic Surgeon and beauty and wellness expert, lists down some of the best uses of cocoa butter.

Solution to mouth sores

If you are prone to have painful mouth sores or your lips develop recurring blisters, use a bit of cocoa butter to keep them moisturized and it will also reduce the chances of recurring. Apply every day and soon you can overcome this problem.

Attractive brunettes

If you want to make your brunettes attractive by

adding some sheen and a tint of colour to the hair, a cocoa hair mask is something to try out. Mix a cup of pure aloe vera gel, 1/2 cup of pure cocoa powder and 1/4 cup of honey, 1 tablespoon of favorite conditioner (like Suave Coconut). Mix the ingredients in a bowl and you're left with a bouncy, shiny and great smelling chocolate treatment for brunettes.

Helpful for removing stretch mark

If your skin is having stretch marks then cocoa butter is the best way to lighten its mark. Cocoa butter is a thick genuine fat that dissolves at body temperature. Clean the stretch mark part of your skin by soap and let them dry by way of a towel. Apply sufficient amounts of cocoa butter to wrap your stretch marks. Massage the co-

coa butter onto your skin in spherical movement until and unless it's soaked up. It's an easy and home treatment to overcome the stretch marks whether it is due to increasing fat or pregnancy.

Freedom from frizzy hair

You can use cocoa butter to style your hair and keep frizz away as well. Especially in winter one tends to have



rough hair, to make it shiny and overcome the frozenness just rub a small amount of cocoa butter in your palms, and smooth over. You can mix a bit of coconut oil or an essential oil with it to give it a scent as well.

Lighten the scars

You can get a smooth texture to your skin as cocoa butter enters the dermis of the skin and helps to fade the scars, marks or sun spots on the skin. It has rich anti-oxidizing properties and it is popular for effectiveness in skin care routine. It has calming properties which have nutritional value and can be easily absorbed. Cocoa butter contains vitamin E, and helps in repairing the skin.

Smooth shaves

Prefer cocoa butter for smooth and non-irritating shave. While

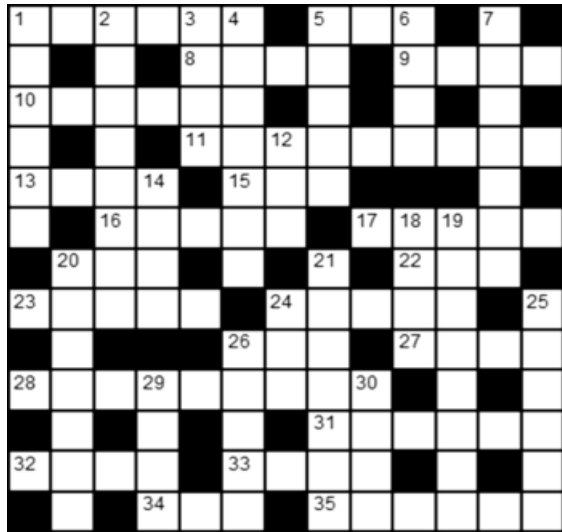
shaving, mix a bar form of cocoa butter with shave lotions that's absolutely according to your preference. Cocoa butter is good for skin especially when you are shaving in winter, skin becomes rough and dead. So, it will leave your skin incredibly smooth.

Heals cracked skin

If your skin is sensitive in winter then try cocoa to heal dead and peel skin. Especially the skin of hands and legs are sensitive and are cracked as it loses its moisture, apply some cocoa butter and nourish your cracked and dry skin within a week.

Relaxation

If you are so tired or want to unwind from a stressful day go for a long bath. Cocoa butter is an amazing addition to a warm bath. Not only will you enjoy the deep, rich scent of vanilla and chocolate, but your bath becomes a silky smooth haven from life's stress. Drop about 2 tablespoons of cocoa butter in the warm water or you can add and spice up your bath by adding your favorite oil and feel the stress melt away. Same thing can be done for foot soaking to heel the dry feet.



SOLUTION TO JANUARY 7

CROSSWORD

Across

- The warrior caste from Rajasthan (6)
- Bumped into (3)
- Mature (4)
- Burden (4)
- Overseas (6)
- A condition or state of being liable; obligation (9)
- Fail to contact (4)
- Letter "E" in Greek alphabet (3)
- Be aware of (5)
- Blacksmith item (5)
- US spy bureau (3)
- Be unwell (3)
- Cults, factions or tribes (5)
- Medals (slang) (5)
- Female pig (3)
- Breathe deeply (4)
- Spying (9)
- Resounds (6)
- Combustible material (4)
- Scorch (4)
- Tibetan animal (3)
- Hurried (6)

Down

- Domains or provinces (6)
- _____ Park : book and film about dinosaurs ? (8)
- Caspian Sea feeder (4)
- Neatest (7)
- Australian diva (5)
- Ring slowly (4)
- Shorten (7)
- Consumed (3)
- Bench or pew (4)
- Continually finds fault (4)
- Ancient German (8)
- A scale of temperature (7)
- First or second in a car? (3,4)
- Amitabh Bacchan's Bombay to ____ ? (3)
- Pursued (6)
- Snip (5)
- In a languid manner (4)
- Beige (4)

SUDOKU



NEWS ROUNDUP

Kangana Ranaut shares her life mantra

Actress Kangana Ranaut on Thursday shared her life mantra, which is never compromise on your health, stay away from unhealthy habits and pessimistic people.

The actress shared her mantra with a motivational workout video, where she is seen doing pilates, on Twitter.

"Early morning fitness routine. Remember one thing in life go fit hai woh hit hai, never compromise on your health, stay away from unhealthy habits and pessimistic people. Stay in the company of great beings if you don't find them physically find

their books or teachings," she wrote along with the video.

Meanwhile, Kangana has crossed three million followers on Twitter. She posted a special note to mark the occasion.

"Thank you everyone, I joined in last August this was my team handle with few thousand followers I never thought so soon we will be 3 million of us, Twitter is distracting at times but it's also fun, thank you," she wrote.

On the work front, Kangana has started prepping for her next film, "Dhaakad". She will also be seen in films such as "Thalaivi" and "Tejas".



Delhi riots: 'Govt must be shaken no matter how many Hindus killed'

NEW DELHI

“NO matter how many houses need to be set on fire or Hindus killed, the government must be shaken at any cost,” former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillor Tahir Hussain has said quoting Umar Khalid, in a disclosure statement in the supplementary charge sheet filed by Delhi Police against former Jawaharlal Nehru University student Khalid in the northeast Delhi riots case.

The disclosure statement forms part of a 55-page supplementary charge sheet filed against Khalid in the case related to communal violence in Khajuri Khas last February. The court had taken cognisance of

the charge sheet on January 5, noting that there was sufficient material to proceed against him.

In the disclosure statement dated March 11, Tahir Hussain said that he was introduced to Umar Khalid on January 8 at Shaheen Bagh and during the meeting, the latter told him that the government will not listen to them unless they create a ruckus.

“No matter how many houses need to be set on fire or Hindus killed, the government must be shaken at any cost. Umar Khalid asked me not to worry about the finances. Our friends and Delhi PFI are providing monetary help in the mission. With the help of the money, prepare people for riots and also buy impor-



tant material for it,” Hussain said in the statement, quoting

Umar Khalid. He added, “I called Gulfam,

who lives in my area, and asked him to prepare some boys for the riots and asked him to buy arsenal. He told me that he has a licenced pistol. I gave him Rs 15,000 to buy bullets. After a few days, Gulfam told me that he had bought 100 cartridges.”

In February, another Delhi-riots accused Khalid Saifi apprised Hussain that Umar Khalid had told him that US President Donald Trump was to visit India that month. “Accordingly, they will spark riots as per the plan. Due to which the world’s attention will be on India, which will bring shame to Modi government worldwide. From February 23, we commenced riots in Delhi.”

According to the Indian Evidence Act, such confessions

recorded by police officers are inadmissible as evidence. These statements can only be used to prove the contradictions and cannot be used against the accused in the criminal cases.

The Delhi Police had filed the supplementary charge sheet against Khalid in the case on December 26 last year. The main charge sheet was filed against 15 persons, including Hussain, in June. Khalid was arrested in the case in October.

While taking cognisance of the charge sheet on Tuesday, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Dinesh Kumar said that there was reasonable ground to prima facie show that former JNU student Khalid, suspended AAP councillor Hussain and others

conspired together during the northeast Delhi riots.

“It is alleged by the prosecution that he (Khalid) was an active participant in the criminal conspiracy to instigate communal riots in various parts of Delhi. Due to his instigation, a mob had gathered that robbed people and burnt down properties, including houses and shops. They also destroyed public property,” the judge noted.

Communal violence had broken out in northeast Delhi in February last year after clashes between protesters and supporters of the Citizenship Amendment Act spiralled out of control, leaving at least 53 people dead and around 200 injured.

AAP demands fresh MCD elections, hits out at BJP

NEW DELHI

THE Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Thursday sought fresh elections to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), levelling another round of allegation against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for its alleged failure in handling the civic body.

Alleging that the BJP has “miserably failed to run the MCD”, AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj demanded that the party should immediately dissolve the corporation and conduct fresh elections.

Citing the 2017 MCD election campaign, Bhardwaj hit out at the then BJP state president Manoj Tiwari for “misleading” the people of Delhi by making “false promises”.

“Manoj Tiwari had promised that there will be no scarcity of money in the MCD because the BJP will directly bring money or funds from the Central government. Tiwari misled the people of Delhi by making false



promises and did not bring a single penny from the Centre. He should resign from the post of MP,” Bhardwaj said.

The AAP leader said that the BJP has been exposed and its “lies and corruption have also got exposed, but it has no sense of accountability at all”.

He said the BJP ruled MCD is increasing the house tax and many other taxes despite getting

the full amount from the Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government.

“The employees of the BJP ruled MCD are protesting at the Civic Centre demanding immediate release of their pending salaries. The MCD employees have not received their salaries for the last several months. They are continuously demanding that the BJP and the officials of the MCD should immediately

release these pending salaries.

“Doctors, nurses, medical officials, teachers, sanitation workers and others who have worked in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic relentlessly have not received their salaries. The situation has become the same as it was five years back,” Bhardwaj said.

Five years back, there was a situation when sanitation workers of the BJP ruled MCD were not getting their salaries for several months and the whole of Delhi was filled with piles of garbage, he said.

“By this, the BJP ruled MCD defamed the capital of India in front of the entire world,” the AAP leader said.

Bhardwaj said the citizens of Delhi have understood one thing that the BJP is behind the “bankruptcy of the MCD”. “The BJP has miserably failed in running the MCD and due to its massive corruption, the MCD has become bankrupt now,” he said.



PUNJAB'S FREE SANITARY PADS FOR HIGH SCHOOL, COLLEGE GIRLS

AMRITSAR

PUNJAB Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Thursday announced free sanitary pads for high school and college girls.

Raveen Thukral, the media advisor to Punjab Chief Minister, tweeted: ‘Punjab CM @capt_amarinder announces free sanitary pads for girl students of high schools and colleges during the launch of a slew of welfare projects, including the dedication of January month to girl child through ‘Dheeiyen Di Lohri’ programme.’

Other initiatives announced by the Punjab government include metering facilities for power consumers and a registration portal for legal matters for the ease of consumers. ‘Other initiatives launched by Punjab CM @capt_amarinder include BASERA for slum dwellers, Smart Metering for power consumers, 2500 cricket kits for youth and E-Daakhil portal for ease of consumers,’ Thukral said in another tweet.

NCW team meets family of Badaun victim

BADAUN

A two-member team of the National Commission for Women (NCW) on Thursday met the family of the 50-year-old woman who was allegedly gang-raped and murdered in Badaun district on January 3. The NCW team also visited the crime site.

Chandramukhi Devi, one of the members of the team, said that she was not satisfied with the role of the police in the incident. “If the police would have shown swiftness in the matter, perhaps they could have saved the victim,” she said after her visit. Before paying a visit to the victim’s family, the team also had a meeting with the SSP of the area and went through the details of the incident.

Interestingly, even as the NCW team was at the house of the victim, the wife and daughter of one of the accused in the crime tried to meet the visiting delegation.

The wife and daughter of the accused, Jashpal, demanded justice for themselves and claimed that he was innocent. “My husband got a call that there is a patient and went to do his job. He came to know about the case later,” said Jashpal’s wife, claiming that he is being framed.

Kejriwal seeks extension of ban on UK flights till Jan 31

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

DELHI Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday requested the central government to extend the ban on UK flights till January 31 in the backdrop of new coronavirus strain.

Kejriwal’s appeal comes as the Centre earlier announced that the international flights from the UK will resume operations from January 8.

“The Centre has decided to lift the ban and restart UK flights. In view of the extremely serious COVID-19 situation in the UK, I would urge the Centre to extend the ban till January 31,” Kejriwal tweeted. In another tweet,



the Chief Minister said: “With great difficulty, people have brought the COVID-19 situation under control. The UK’s COVID-19 situation is very serious. Now, why lift the ban and expose our people to risk?”

The flights between India and the UK were suspended from December 23 to January 7 in the wake of detection of a more infectious coronavirus strain in UK population. A total of 73 persons have been detected with the new corona strain in India so

far. As per the fresh safety guideline issued on January 4, the Centre had said that those travelling between January 8 and 31 would be mandatorily subjected to self-paid RT-PCR tests on arrival at the Indian airports.

Taking to Twitter, Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on January 2 had said that flights from India to the UK will resume from January 6, while services from that country to India would resume from January 8.

Puri had announced that only 30 flights per week will operate between India and the UK when services resume from January 8 and that this arrangement will continue till January 23.

Anti-CAA protesters in UP to form political party

LUCKNOW

THE anti-CAA and NRC protesters in Uttar Pradesh are now planning to form a political party that will raise their issues.

The proposed political party will be named Rashtriya Justice Party and efforts are on to bring protesters from every district on one platform. This campaign is being spearheaded by former Bahujan Samaj Party MP, Ilyas Azmi, and steps have been initiated to get the new party registered at the Election Commission with a request for ‘tarazu’ (scales) as the election symbol.

According to Azmi, the anti-CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) and NRC (National Register

of Citizens) protests last year had gained mass support and those who participated in it, did not work on basis of their political affiliations. “Our purpose is to ensure justice for the weaker and downtrodden sections of society, especially Dalits and Muslims. Several former legislators are also keen to join the new party. Several people who were a part of the protests, are now keen to contest elections,” he said.

These include Rajiv Yadav of Rihai Manch, Shah Nawaz Alam of Congress and Sumaiya Rana who recently joined Samajwadi Party. Azmi further said most of the political parties were concerned about vote bank politics but his new party would focus on issues.

Plea in HC to remove Amitabh's recorded message before calls

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court will hear on January 18 a plea to seek removal of Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan’s recorded message on precautions to be taken against Covid-19 before a phone call is put through.

The matter was listed before a Division Bench comprising Chief Justice DN Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh but the petitioner sought an adjournment since the bench was undertaking a physical hearing.

The court then posted the matter for January 18.

The plea filed by advocates AK Dubey and Pawan Kumar said that the PIL has been filed on behalf of all taxpayers who are disturbed by such caller tune.

Improving India’s air may prevent 7% of pregnancy losses: Lancet

NEW DELHI

IN a first, a Lancet study has indicated that meeting India’s air quality targets across south Asia may prevent 7 per cent of pregnancy losses. The modelling study suggested that pregnant women in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, who are exposed to poor air quality, may be at higher risk of stillbirths and miscarriages.

An estimated 349,681 pregnancy losses per year in south Asia were associated with exposure to PM2.5 concentrations that exceeded India’s air quality standard (more than 40 ig/m or micrograms per cubic meter air), accounting for 7 per cent of annual pregnancy loss in the region from 2000-2016.

In the study, the researchers included 34,197 women who had lost a pregnancy, including 27,480 miscarriages and 6,717 stillbirths, which were compared to livebirth controls.

Of the pregnancy loss cases, 77 per cent were from India, 12 per cent from Pakistan, and 11 per cent from Bangladesh.

Pregnancy loss associated with air



pollution was more common in the northern plains region in India and Pakistan.

Previous studies have suggested a link between air pollution and pregnancy loss in other regions, but this is the first study, published in Lancet Planetary Health, to quantify the burden in south Asia.

South Asia has the highest burden of pregnancy loss globally and is one of the most PM2.5 polluted regions in the world.

“Our findings suggest that poor air quality could be responsible for a considerable burden of pregnancy loss in the region, providing further justification for urgent action to

tackle dangerous levels of pollution,” said lead study author Dr Tao Xue from Peking University in China.

To carry out their analysis, the authors combined data from household surveys on health from 1998-2016 (from women who reported at least one pregnancy loss and one or more livebirths) and estimated exposure to PM2.5 during pregnancy through combining satellite with atmospheric modelling outputs.

They created a model to examine how exposure to PM2.5 increased women’s risk of pregnancy loss, calculating risk for each 10 ig/m increased in PM2.5 after adjusting for maternal age, temperature and hu-

midity, seasonal variation, and long-term trends in pregnancy loss.

Using this association, they calculated the number of pregnancy losses that may have been caused by PM2.5 in the whole region for the period 2000-16 and looked at how many pregnancy losses might have been prevented under India’s and WHO’s air quality standard (40 ig/m and 10 ig/m, respectively).

Losing a pregnancy can have knock-on mental, physical and economic effects on women, including increased risk of post-natal depressive disorders, infant mortality during subsequent pregnancy, and increase the costs related to pregnancy, such as loss of labour.

“Therefore, reducing pregnancy loss may also lead to knock-on improvements in gender equality,” explained Dr Tianjia Guan from the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences and Peking Union Medical College, Beijing, China.

Gestational exposure to PM2.5 was associated with an increased likelihood of pregnancy loss, and this remained significant after adjusting for other factors.

Criminal killed, 2 injured in shootout in Lucknow

LUCKNOW

A notorious criminal was killed and two others injured in a shootout between rival factions in the posh Gomti Nagar area of the Uttar Pradesh capital Wednesday night, police said.

Ajit Singh, 39, who was a notorious criminal of Mau district having 17 cases against him, was killed in the incident, the police said, adding he was a former block pramukh. Ajit Singh and his associate Mohar Singh were travelling in an SUV when three

motorcycle-borne assailants opened fire at them in the evening, Lucknow Police Commissioner D K Thakur said.

Ajit Singh and his associate retaliated the fire and in the ensuing gun battle he was fatally injured, the police officer said, adding he was taken to a hospital where he was declared brought dead. Mohar Singh and a passerby also suffered injuries and are undergoing treatment at the hospital but they are out of danger, Thakur said. Both the sides together fired 20-25 rounds, he said.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION: TIRUPATI			
The Commissioner, Municipal Corporation, Tirupati invites Tender on 'e' Procurement platform from the "Eligible Contractors" for the following works.			
IFB No.	Name of the work	No. of Works	ECV amount In Rupees in Lakhs
IFB No. 182 to 201, 216/GEN/ 20-21/ To, Date: -01-2021	BT Road, RCC Culverts, Slaughter House, Commercial Building, Commercial Complex, Compound wall, Stalls, CC & RCC Drains, UGD Pipeline, Approach Roads, Street Lighting, Major Drain, Community Hall and Central Median.	21 Works	1549.07
Total		21 Works	1549.07
* For particulars please contact Municipal Engineer during office working hours (or) see e-Procurement market place : https://tender.apecprocurement.gov.in			
Sd/- Commissioner Municipal Corporation, Tirupati			

Trump goes out kicking and screaming

CHEATING, fraud, conspiracy...and a hundred synonyms and many more. All those Donald Trump used to subvert the nation itself when he started losing the elections. Every contestant in any race would like to win. Everyone is entitled to win based on his performance. But, if you lose, you can not blame it on others and even worse, cannot discredit the winner and try to steal the trophy. Joe Biden has won the elections decisively whether Trump likes it or not. The Congress ultimately approved it despite the chaos. This is by no yardstick a smooth transition. Trump said "there will be an orderly transition on the 20th of January. Even though I totally disagree with the outcome of the election, and the facts bear me out, nevertheless

there will be an orderly transition on January 20th. I have always said we would continue our fight to ensure that only legal votes were counted. While this represents the end of the greatest first term in Presidential history, it is only the beginning of our fight to Make America Great Again!!" Thanks to Trump America has become great again. Never in the history of the US, did any President was so recalcitrant in stepping out of the White House. Trump has completely forgotten that there is something called grace. The way Washington erupted in chaos as Trump's supporters stormed the Capital during a joint session of Congress to certify the results was filmy, if any. It was shocking to watch but the riots were in-

evitable. Trump has been insisting the election was stolen from him. No one from the Republican Party would push back the argument. There was no one to reprimand him and ask him to shut up. Some persons of repute slammed him. The behaviour of at least 100 lawmakers of Republicans who tried to block the elections was equally disgusting. Trump has gone bonkers. Okay. How about the others? Is this the end of the world for Trump, the loser? Is this the end of the world for the Republicans, the losers? Americans should be grateful to Trump for he has not thought it fit to do it the hard western movie style - with his hat, horse and a blazing gun. The chaos was ignited in a carnival style with

people in strange costumes. What was also striking was the fact that the agitating crowd was not afraid of the cops. It just took the latter for granted. Trump himself was not really elected the President going by the popular vote. Yet, the Republicans believed in it and the people accepted it. The Democrats did not set the house on fire when they had every right to attempt overturning the election four years ago. But the Republicans thought it fit to do so. The US has to learn a lot about democracy. There seems to be no more a Republican Party in America. What is left of it is Trump's party. All those who support Trump are only bothered about their political careers. They hailed and worshipped him as their Superman-President and were ready to take to the skies with him. One can find them in a heap of disgrace now. Will the Republican heroes ever find redemption?

Brexit saga: Finale at last

ASAD MIRZA

THE British public will have to face the repercussions of the sordid Brexit saga, mostly based on lies, during the pandemic times.



- the curtains on the Brexit saga, finally came down, as the UK left the embrace of the European Union (EU) in a departure that was notably low key.

Most observers view the Brexit campaign, which claimed the job of two British prime ministers in its wake, as one built on lies and deceit. With public being misled and fed wrong and inflated information, the result was in favour of some politicians who acceded to the chair at No. 10, like Boris Johnson.

In his New Year message, British prime minister Boris Johnson largely ignored Brexit, an issue he arguably shaped more than any other politician. Instead he preferred to focus on the toll of Covid-19 and what he called "the grimness of 2020". It seemed a far cry from his 2019 message, when after his recent election victory, he had promised "a fantastic year and a remarkable decade for our United Kingdom". He described the moment as 'amazing', citing what he said were boundless possibilities with trade and innovation, and UK was now "free to do trade deals around the world, and free to turbocharge our ambition to be a science superpower". He added: "We have our freedom in our hands and it is up to us to make the most of it."

Politicians' reactions

Politicians in Britain and the EU expressed both triumph and bitter regret after the UK's Brexit transition period ended on New Year's Eve. Though most of the Conservative leaders and politicians like Nigel Farage exulted in their messages.

However, across the Channel, the French president Emmanuel Macron in his new year's address, expressed regret. "The United Kingdom remains our neighbour but also our friend and ally," he said. "This choice of leaving Europe, this Brexit, was the child of European malaise and lots of lies and false promises."

Nearer home in Scotland, which had voted 'Remain' strongly in the 2016 Brexit referendum, the pro-independence Scottish first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, promised to continue the Scottish independence drive, she tweeted: "Scotland will be back soon, Europe. Keep the light on." In a retort Johnson said the Scots could continue to dream, as this one will not be fulfilled during this generation.

Nigel Farage, who played a key role in the 2016 referendum, tweeted: "25 years ago they all laughed at me. Well, they're not laughing now." The UK's chief Brexit negotiator, Lord Frost, said the UK had a "great future before us" with the chance to "build a better country for us all". The Conservative MP Bill Cash, who has campaigned for Brexit for decades, said it was a "victory for democracy and sovereignty."

UK media coverage

Britain's Eurosceptic newspapers, after decades of bashing Brussels, celebrated victory in the year's first day editions after the Brexit transition period ended, but pro-EU outlets dwelt on a "day of sadness".

The Guardian's headline focused on Britain finally quitting the EU in the midst of a "crisis, without fanfare", an editorial called Brexit a "tragic national error". The Times splashed Johnson's "upbeat new year's message" celebrating an "amazing" future for the UK. The online Independent ran a satirical cartoon portraying leading Brexiters as various species of fish. The front page of the Daily Express showed a picture of the White Cliffs of Dover and the headline "Our future. Our Britain. Our destiny". The Sun relegated the Brexit story to a front-page box headlined "PM: Britain Brexpects", reporting Johnson's words that Brexit marked a moment for national renewal in which the country would "turbocharge" scientific innovation. "Welcome to 2021 -- and two reasons to hope for a much brighter future," ran the Daily Telegraph headline, where Johnson made his name as a Brussels-bashing Europe correspondent in the 1990s. The Daily Mail preferred to focus entirely on the pandemic-related news, coolly ignoring the Brexit.

View from Europe

Several European commentators weighed in on what Britain's departure from the EU means. Most viewed its reputation for pragmatism and probity shredded by a campaign which they saw as profoundly populist and dangerously dishonest, and predicted an uncertain future for the UK.

The Guardian reported Rem Korteweg, of the Clingendael Institute thinktank in the Netherlands, as saying "For us, the UK has always been seen as like-minded: economically progressive, politically stable, respect for the rule of law -- a beacon of western liberal democracy, -- which has been seriously hit by the past four years. Brexit is an exercise in emotion, not rationality; in choosing your own facts. And it's not clear how it will end."

Britain's long-polished pragmatic image had been "seriously tarnished", Nicolai von Ondarza, of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs told The Guardian. But trust in the UK, too, had taken a heavy battering on the Brexit rollercoaster, he added.

The "sovereignty" in whose name Brexit was done remained, essentially, a myth, Jean-Dominique Giuliani, of the Robert Schuman Foundation in France, told The Guardian. "Take back control" is a nationalist, populist slogan that ignores the reality of an interdependent world. Our maritime neighbour will be much weakened," he added.

The German historian Helene von Bismarck doubted whether Brexit would end what she described as a very British brand of populism. "British populism is a political method, not an ideology, and it does not become redundant with Brexit," she said. She identified two key elements in this method: an emotionalisation and over-simplification of highly complex issues, such as Brexit, the Covid pandemic or migration, and a reliance on bogeymen or enemies at home and abroad. "Populists depend on enemies, real or imagined, to legitimise their actions and deflect from their own shortcomings," she said. If the EU has been the "enemy abroad" since 2016, it will steadily be replaced by "enemies within".

Elvire Fabry, of France's Institut Jacques Delors, told The Guardian that the past four years had shown Europeans and Britons "just how little we really knew each other". They had also revealed, she said, the fragility of a parliamentary system seen by many on the continent as a point of reference.

In Der Spiegel, Nikolaus Blome opined that there was "absolutely nothing good about Brexit -- which would never have happened had Conservative politicians not, to a quite unprecedented degree, deceived and lied to their people".

Meanwhile, the UK has now signed trade agreements with 62 countries, the latest one with Turkey, after agreements with Japan, Canada, Switzerland and Norway were secured earlier.

Also the news of the British prime minister's father Stanley confirming that he is applying for a French passport came as a shot in the arm of anti-Brexit lobby. Stanley Johnson described himself as a French not a British, he was one of the first UK civil servants to work in Brussels after Britain joined the European Economic Community in 1973.

The critics are also warning of how the individuals and businesses both in the UK and beyond may face a dizzying new array of red tape, a good deal of it still to be worked out. In addition, the parting of ways could also have major constitutional repercussions for the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland, which shares a border with EU member the Republic of Ireland, remains more closely tied to the bloc's economy under the divorce terms, a status some fear could pull it away from the rest of the UK, just like Scotland, which is clamouring for independence, and if any of them succeed, then the United may fall like a house made of play cards.

National Family Health Survey - 5

Birth, death registration on rise across States

DEVIKRISHNA NB,
BISHWAJEET BESRA,
NAND LAL MISHRA

THE Government of India had enacted the Registration of Births and Deaths Act in 1969 to promote the compulsory registration of births and deaths. The Act made registration of births, deaths and still births mandatory in India.

The accomplishment of the objectives of this Act was, however, poor in India. Nevertheless, efforts have been made by the Union government to fill in the gaps.

India is also a signatory to the United Nations Convention of Child Rights, the article 7 of which authorises birth registration mandatory for obtaining a nationality. India's vision was to achieve Universal Civil Registration by 2020.

The data from the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) showed a majority of the surveyed states failed to achieve that by 2020, but are moving in the right direction, shortening the length to the vision of universal civil registration.

Death registration The fourth round of NFHS (2015-16) did not collect information on the registration of deaths among the states and Union territories. However, Kumar et al. (2017) uses the CRS reports from the year 2005-2015 and presented a holistic picture on the longitudinal trends in completeness of registration of deaths (CoRD).

It was observed that the CoRD of India increased to 77 per cent in 2015 from 55 percent in 2005. By 2015, almost all states and UTs except Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland had achieved a registration rate of 50 per cent or above, according to the data.

The results from NFHS-5 also present a wide range figures: The rate of registration of deaths was 37 per cent in Bihar; it was 100 per cent in Goa among 22 surveyed states and UTs. The data is based on the percentage of deaths registered with the civil authority in last three years.

All other surveyed states and UTs, except for Bihar, Nagaland and Manipur, had 50 per cent or more deaths registered under their authorities. Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Assam showed comparatively low levels of death registration whereas Tripura and Mizoram registered rate of registration at 80 per cent and 88 per cent respectively. Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Goa re-

ported 90 per cent or above registered deaths.

The rural-urban divide was considerably wide in Bihar and Nagaland; rest of the states and UTs showed compatible levels of death registration in urban and rural areas. It is observable from the graph that the death registration was invariably high among the urban areas in comparison to their rural opposites.

The case of Sikkim and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu was contrary to others, where the death registration was higher in rural areas than their urban counterparts. Goa achieved universal coverage in both rural and urban areas.

Most districts of south Indian states exhibited higher levels of death registration in the past three years. All districts of Kerala and majority of Gujarat and Maharashtra recorded 90 per cent or above registration of deaths. Internal discrepancy was evident in Bihar: Munger

Rate of registration of births was higher among surveyed States, UTs. The lowest was in Nagaland at 73%



Death registration by places of residence and states/UTs of India, 2019-20			
Deaths in the last 3 years registered with the civil authority (%)			
	Urban	Rural	Total
Bihar	47.7	35.5	37.1
Nagaland	59.3	33.8	40.3
Manipur	42.5	41.8	42.1
Meghalaya	60.9	52.8	54.4
Assam	80.5	62.8	65.5
Telangana	79	71.3	73.5
Ladakh	82.9	72.4	74.9
Sikkim	64.6	79.7	75.5
Jammu & Kashmir	83.4	73.9	76.2
West Bengal	88	74.6	78.6
Tripura	86	77.1	79.5
Andhra Pradesh	89.4	76.6	80.2
Karnataka	88.7	85.5	86.6
Mizoram	90.4	85.2	88.4
Maharashtra	92.9	87.6	89.7
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	94.8	88.8	90.9
Gujarat	95.7	91.6	93
Himachal Pradesh	95.8	93.7	94
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	91.5	99.6	95.4
Lakshadweep	98.4	96.6	
Kerala	98	96.9	97.4
Goa	100	100	100

district recorded 51 per cent registration, whereas the northern district of Madhubani only 23 per cent.

The lowest levels of registration of deaths were found among the districts of Nagaland -- in Peren (19 per cent) and Longleng (13 per cent).

Birth registration

Rate of registration of births was exemplarily high among the surveyed states and UTs when compared to death registrations. The lowest was in Nagaland, and that too at 73 per cent. It can be observed that some of the surveyed areas saw a steep increase in the birth registration over the period of five years.

The most spectacular improvement was seen in Jammu

and Kashmir, Telangana and Bihar. Universal registration of births was found in Lakshadweep and Goa; Kerala and Mizoram recorded 99 per cent registration.

The district data showed high levels of birth registration of children less than five years with the civil authority in the districts of Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Mizoram and Tripura.

Almost all districts of Bihar and some districts of Meghalaya and Nagaland showed comparatively low levels of birth registration with respect to other parts of the country.

disturbs the peace in a family life. It remains shrouded in mystery whether the new political party MNM (Makkal Needhi Maiam) led by film actor, Kamal Haasan, at the outset, made sure that the home maker is in no way, or not compensated at all for her household work. The family life has firm foundations of mutual understanding and co-operation in all times and it is mean that either's services, leave alone home maker, are measured in just monetary units only.

Seshagiri Row Karry, Hyderabad

US power politics

JANUARY 6 would go as a black day for Americans when its temple of democracy, the Capitol Hill was attacked and vandalised. It is hoped that the team of Biden and Harris takes severe action against the culprits and ensure prevention of recurrence of such incidents.

Mike Pence himself opposing provocative Trump is certainly a breather. We need such statesman who call a spade a spade.

However, the expertise of trained professionals at the grass root levels, transparent and smooth registration systems, less complicated processes and awareness campaign need to be ensured for improvement.

(Views expressed are the author's own and don't necessarily reflect those of Down To Earth)

This is also a lesson to the leaders of other democratic countries to realise that power when misused can boomerang with the double the force.

D Nagarjuna, Hyderabad

Communal disharmony

IN the wake of series of dastardly acts of vandalism of idols in places of worship in AP, the novel idea of community policing to protect the places of worship and to promote secular values in the state is highly commendable. (Village defence squads step up vigil to places of worship,7 Jan 2021).All the opposition political parties, like TDP, CPI, CPI (M), and BJP should give up their narrow political interests, and come forward to support the government in containing this pernicious virus of vandalism, which has invaded a well administered secular state

PH Hema Sagar, Secunderabad

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LETTERS

Set up cooperative marketing societies

THE disagreement between the government and farmers on the new laws are fanning the flames continually. Increasingly angered and anguished farmers in Maharashtra and Punjab have burnt their products for not getting the money invested on the product. The latest illustration of Om Prakash of Bihar speaks of voluminous disparity between the cost of production by the farmer and price dictated by the big buyer in the mandi. Pulled down, he preferred to destroy the product than selling it at a price par below the cost of production.

MSP being the main demand of the farmers, the government should contemplate the idea of forming 'Cooperative Marketing Societies' at village level or cluster of villages to sell the products through it at mutually agreeable price between sellers and buyers.

Seetharam Basani, Hanamkonda

II

THE government is trying to come to terms with striking farmer unions, but pressing hard implementing the three laws. Thus, a stalemate continues and both the unions and the government is stubborn and the manpower and agriculture produce during the harvest season is hampered and the people watch the proceedings in a dejected way.

There is no teacher like adversity. To strive, to seek, to find, and never to yield! This is the motto which, though centuries, has driven people and nations forward to success. Better counsel should prevail. It is now or never situation.

MR Jayanthi, Muringatherry, Kerala

A controversial move

THE promise to directly pay women, who are full-time homemakers a monthly amount, is ill-conceived and making undesirable and unwarranted inroads into the family life of a house-holder and

AP CM wants speedy execution of two mega road projects

AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy directed the officials to ensure that the construction of roads under two mega projects worth Rs 6,400 crore is completed fast without compromising on the quality.

The state government has embarked on the largest EAP (externally-aided project) in roads sector by collaborating with the New Development Bank at an estimated cost of Rs 6,400 crore to improve rural and mandal connectivity. Under AP Mandal and Rural Connectivity Improvement Project (APMCRIP) and AP Roads and Bridges Reconstruction Project (APRBRP), roads will be extended from district centres to mandal centres and from mandal centres to neighbouring mandal in two lanes, where a total of 3104 km roads (highways) will be widened and constructed and 479 bridges will be rebuilt.

During a review meeting on these two mega projects on

- Reviews the Rs 6,400 cr projects for which New Development Bank is providing loan
- The objective is to connect district headquarters to mandal headquarters and from mandal centres to adjoining mandals
- As part of the projects, a total of 3,104 km roads (highways) will be widened and constructed and 479 bridges will be rebuilt



Thursday, the Chief Minister congratulated the R&B officials for executing the tender process in a transparent manner. These two mega projects would play a key role in the development of the state by enhancing the connectivity between industrial hubs and rural areas, he said adding that the projects would also create employment on a large scale.

The Chief Minister instructed the officials to take further steps for developing the state with the help of the New Development Bank for the EAP. So far, in the first phase of this project, admin-

istrative clearances for 1,243 km road works have been accorded at a cost of Rs 2,978 crore, and a letter of agreement has been completed for 13 packages where the works shall take off from next month. The officials said that through reverse tendering Rs 85.43 crore has been saved and the DPRs for the second phase of works were under process.

Minister for Roads and Buildings M Shankar Narayana, chief secretary Adityanath Das, principal secretary of transport M T Krishna Babu and other officials were present at the meeting.

No bird flu scare so far in AP

- Animal Husbandry director asserts no case of avian disease has been reported in AP
- As the disease is likely to spread through migratory birds, Forest officials have been monitoring migratory bird sanctuaries like Pulicat, Kolleru
- Poultry industry and retail chicken meat sellers too claim there is no impact of bird flu



HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THERE is no trace of bird flu cases in Andhra Pradesh, according to director of animal husbandry Amarendra Kumar. The AHD director said the bird flu cases were present in Rajasthan, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh but none was reported in AP. He said that the officials are monitoring the situation with the poultry farmers.

He said in a statement on Thursday that more than one lakh migratory birds visit Kolleru, Pulicat, Nelapattu and Korangi regions every year and there was a possibility of spread of bird flu through them. In view of this, the forest department officials were asked to closely monitor the

health of migratory birds and alert the animal husbandry officials if there was any sign of deaths of birds with bird flu symptoms. The poultry farmers were also alerted and directed to report immediately if there were any such incidents. Amarendra Kumar said if any case of bird flu was noticed they have to send the samples to Bhopal for lab test. If necessary, a task force will be formed under the chairmanship of district collector in each district.

National Egg Coordination Committee Vijayawada zonal chairman T Kutumba Rao said as of now there was no bird flu panic in Andhra Pradesh. He said the population of layer birds stands at 5.4 crore and 60 lakh birds in backyard farms. Alert will be continued in poultry sector through-

'829 TEAMS FORMED TO MEET ANY EVENTUALITY'

AMARAVATI

MINISTER for animal husbandry Seediri Appalaraju said 829 teams were formed to meet the challenge, if any, from bird flu. He said teams will closely monitor incidents of bird flu to take immediate action to prevent spread of the disease.

In a statement on Thursday, the minister said as per the requirement 40 to 140 district level teams will be formed especially in Nellore, Guntur, West Godavari and East Godavari districts where the migratory birds arrive in more numbers. He said a five-member doctors team trained at regional testing laboratory in Bangalore will be pressed into service to conduct tests at regional animal diseases testing centre in Vijayawada.

Referring to death of crows at Kollipara mandal in Guntur district and at Srikakulam districts the doctors tested the samples and made it clear that there were no bird flu symptoms.

The minister said besides the staff of animal husbandry department, forest and panchayat raj department staff as well as poultry farmers will be trained to prevent spread of the disease. He said that the state government had been mapping the villages having backyard poultry farms to prevent bird flu. Control rooms will be set up in all the districts to monitor the situation.

The minister clarified that there were no incidents of bird flu in the state and people can consume chicken and eggs without fear.

out the year and there was no special alert from officials. He said the poultry sector was functioning normally and there was no need for panic.

Some of the poultry owners including Sneha and Radhakrishna poultries said that there were no cases of bird flu in the state. They

said that the production in poultry farms is normal.

A chicken retailer, Basha at Durgapuram in Vijayawada, said that there was no drop in chicken sales and prices as there is no bird flu scare in the state. He said that he is selling nearly 100 live chicks daily at a price of Rs 200 a Kg.

WHAT DOCTORS WANT FROM UNION BUDGET?

We the doctors expect the government to extend all specialities on par with corporate hospitals in all the government general hospitals. The Centre should ensure medical infrastructure is improved in public hospitals and update of doctors at government's cost. Even doctors in primary health centres should be provided with residential facilities in all mandals. Government should follow the model of Christian Missionary hospitals who extend all facilities to resident doctors. Emphasis should be laid on research in every medical college hospital.



Dr M D Naveed,
head of ENT department, In-charge superintendent, Government General Hospital, Anantapur

Central and the state governments must apply their mind on providing decent payments on par with any corporate hospital in the country to the doctors in public sector. Many are not opting for government service because of poor amenities and emoluments. Decent staff quarters, insurance coverage of medical officers families. Infrastructure should be given a major boost in all district headquarters government hospitals and also area hospitals. Those who are in rural service in primary health centres and sub-centres should be given decent salaries and facilities. State of the art facilities must be created in all government hospitals.



Dr Arnakulam Emima Bhushan,
MBBS, house surgeon, Anantapur

As Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is preparing the Union Budget-2021 amid the crisis sparked by pandemic and resultant financial slowdown, *The Hans India* spoke to members of medical community on their expectation from the Budget. Most of the doctors have called for increase in allocation for health to 3% to 5% in the Budget as against the 1.2% so that nation can take care of any emergency like Covid.

I appeal to the Union government to provide maximum subsidy on surgical appliances and life saving drugs in the Budget-2021. I also request allocate Rs 500 crore in the Budget for providing loans to private doctors for setting up their clinics both in urban and rural centres. Regarding Income Tax, doctors and health professional need to be provided separate rates.



Dr R V Jagannadha Reddy,
DCh, S V Clinic, K R Palli, Chittoor.

More funds should be allocated for prevention of diseases related to oral and general health since prevention is cheaper than cure. Better impetus to be given to oral health as it is an integral part of the general health and it can affect the overall health. The government can subsidise the charges of dental treatment for people above 60 years and involve professional institutions for the same considering needy population. Subsidies and tax benefits can be provided to the medical and dental professionals who choose practice and serve in rural areas..



Dr Nuvvula Siva Kumar,
Narayana Dental College, Nellore

There is a need to reduce Income Tax slabs for professionals as well as all sectors as lion's share of salaries is consumed by the tax leaving little in the hands of people. It is necessary to raise savings ceiling also. Like one country, one election, uniform pay scales and retirement ages with benefits are also needed.



Dr MVR Murthi,
Rajamahendravaram

Ayushman Bharat should be extended even to the senior citizens and for the cancer survivors irrespective of their financial status as it is very difficult to get insurance for them. The government should fix a minimum premium and provide insurance cover under the scheme to all the population for protection from diseases irrespective of their income.



Dr C V Subrahmanyam,
physician, Nellore

Raise central budge from 1.2 to at least 3 pc: Allocation for health in our Budget is only 1.2 per cent as against the WHO recommendation of at least 5 per cent. It's about time to raise this to at least 3 per cent. The scope of Ayushman Bharat health scheme should be increased so that it reached all the needy people. AP needs extra allocations from Centre to develop its health infrastructure after the bifurcation. The recent Eluru incident highlighted the need for advanced labs and research centres in the state. Village health clinics is a good concept but they should have adequate staff and infrastructure.



D N V Ramanaiah,
Praja Arogya Vedika, Nellore

Allotments and accountability should be improved in health sector, particularly in rural and agency areas where people are not able to avail quality health services. Union Budget should address all these issues. Fund allocations need to increase at least up to Rs 50,000 for National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) from previous allocations of Rs 27,039 crore. Accountability is also fixed for use of funds in a proper way to improve health conditions of the people in rural and agency areas.



Dr Dannana Praveen Kumar,
RMO at private medical college cum hospital GEMS, Srikakulam.

The Centre should allocate adequate amount of funds for Homoeo research projects in the ensuing Budget, as many people are taking to Homoeo medicine in the country and the cure percentage is also high. Research in Homoeo gives good results in terms of ensuring more affordable treatment to various ailments and more sections of people. Measures should also be taken to bring AYUSH closer to wider population at ground level as the government is allocating funds to it.



Dr Saladi Sai Kumar,
Rajamahendravaram

The Central government should give priority for free vaccination for coronavirus in the Budget. It should also take steps to reduce the prices of drugs for diabetes, hypertension and insulin because crores of people are suffering from these chronic ailments. Besides, the government should also strengthen the medical care system for safe delivery of babies in the government hospitals and provide nutritious diet to the poor pregnant woman. Iron deficiency is one of the major problems faced by women in the country which needs to be addressed.



Dr Shaik Mahaboob, member,
Dental Council of India, Vijayawada.

The Central government should address institutional backlogs in health sector in the upcoming Budget like ensuring at least two beds for 1,000 population and increase the number of beds to meet the population ratio. At least 2.2 per cent funds should be allocated for health sector in the Budget. Jana Aushadhi stores need to be set up in every village to provide medicine to people at cheaper price.



Dr Ponnada Jogi Naidu, president,
IMA, Srikakulam chapter.

Union government must allocate more than 3 per cent of the budget for medical and health sector.. The government should take steps to appoint one MBBS doctor for every village which has sizeable population and must give priority for public health care like increasing vaccination programmes, supply vitamins to those who need medical care and strengthening the hospitals and PHCs. Besides, priority should be given for preventive health care like supply of pure drinking water, safe food and create good hygienic conditions.



Dr Ch Srinivasa Raju,
IMA president, Andhra Pradesh) Eluru

Compared to other countries, the budget allocated to the healthcare in India is pretty low. It has to be revised at least from the ensuing budget. In times of the pandemic, lapses in the health sector have been identified and steps should be taken to plug them. This apart, the rural health care system has to be strengthened to bring down the mortality rate. Facilitating quality drinking water and a clean environment will go a long way in maintaining people's health rather than spending lakhs on treatment. Government should work towards it.



Dr E Peda Veeraj,
Retired Professor, AMC, Visakhapatnam

In a step to transform 'Make in India' a successful endeavour, medical equipment manufacturing units have to be encouraged. With this, health care becomes more accessible and affordable for the poor. A suitable platform should be created for such manufacturing units. In addition, pharmaceutical companies need a push in the form of subsidies and tax exemptions.



G Raghu Rama Rao,
dermatologist,
Visakhapatnam

States, UTs told to be ready to receive vaccine

Continued from P1

The country's drugs regulator on Sunday approved Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield and indigenously developed Covaxin of Bharat Biotech for restricted emergency use in the country. The Health Ministry on Tuesday said it is prepared for COVID-19 vaccine roll-out within ten days of the vaccines getting approved for restricted emergency use on January 3, but a final decision on the launch date would be taken by the government. (PTI)

Farmers hold tractor march, say it's 'rehearsal' for Republic Day

Continued from P1

The tractors in the convoy sported the tricolour and farmer union flags, apart from banners proclaiming their opposition to the farm laws even as policemen and bystanders looked on with curiosity. After the meeting on the peripheral highway, the farmers returned to the protest spots on the Delhi borders, from where they had started in the morning. Speaking to the media, Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan) chief Joginder Singh Ugrahan said that over 3,500 tractor-trolleys were driven during the march. Later in the day, the farmers converged on the highway and discussed their future strategy.

"The government should listen to the farmers. We are just demanding the repeal of the contentious farm laws," said

Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait.

The tractor march was organised by Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella of 40 farmer unions, to demand the repeal of the three new farm laws and procurement of crops at Minimum Support Price. The march was scheduled for Wednesday but was cancelled due to inclement weather. In view of the tractor march, authorities had ordered the diversion of traffic at several points on the Eastern Peripheral Expressway. "The tractor march passed through the Eastern Peripheral Road and returned through the Expressway," a police officer said. The seventh round of talks between the Centre and farm leaders on their remaining demands ended in a stalemate on Monday. Both sides will now meet here again on January 8. (IANS)

Petrol price at all-time high, diesel crosses ₹81 mark

Continued from P1

On that day, diesel too had scaled to an all-time high of Rs 75.45 a litre. The government had responded to that situation by cutting excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 1.50 per litre in a bid to ease inflationary pressure and boost consumer confidence.

Alongside, state-owned fuel retailers cut prices by another Re 1 a litre, which they recouped later. However, no tax cut is under consideration as of present, a senior government official had said on Wednesday. Though petrol and diesel rates are to be revised daily in line with benchmark international price and foreign exchange, government-controlled fuel retailers have been moderating rates since the pandemic broke out. They first did not pass on to the customers a reduction in price warranted from the slump in international oil rates witnessed due to demand erosion beginning March 2020.



US Capitol police with guns drawn stand near a barricaded door as protesters try to break into the House Chamber

'Nothing will stop us,' woman before she was shot dead

LOS ANGELES

The woman who was fatally shot as Donald Trump's backers stormed the US Capitol Wednesday was Ashli Babbitt, a "strong supporter" of the president who had served in the United States Air Force, according to press reports. "The woman is Ashli Babbitt, a 14-year veteran, who served four tours with the US Air Force," San Diego TV station KUSI reported, citing the woman's husband. "She was a strong supporter of President Trump," the report added, saying the woman was from the San Diego area in southern California. Washington police confirmed a death, but have not identified the deceased nor offered details on the circumstances of the shooting, which is now under investigation. She was shot amid chaotic and violent scenes inside the Capitol building, where some security personnel drew their guns as protesters advanced. Babbitt identified herself as a veteran on her Twitter account and noted her love for the US. She had recently retweeted messages in support of Trump and from those coming to Washington for Wednesday's rally. "Nothing will stop us....they can try and try and try but the storm is here and it is descending upon DC in less than 24 hours....dark to light!", she wrote in a tweet on Tuesday.

Indian flag spotted

AN Indian tricolour was spotted among a sea of American flags during Wednesday's Capitol Hill attack. BJP MP Varun Gandhi also took to the microblogging platform to wonder how the Indian flag appeared at the Capitol. "Why is there an Indian flag there??? This is one fight we definitely don't need to participate in..." he wrote. Rajya Sabha member Priyanka Chaturvedi also criticised the presence of the Indian flag and wrote, "Don't use our tricolour to participate in such violent & criminal acts in another country."



Capitol police detain protesters outside the House Chamber

BLOODY 'TRANSITION'

Mike Pence hits breaking point with Trump in blessing Joe Biden's win Social media giants Twitter, Facebook, Instagram block President Trump

WASHINGTON/LOS ANGELES

Donald Trump's relationship with his most loyal lieutenant, Mike Pence, splintered after the vice president defied the President's call to overturn his loss in the November election. Trump attacked Pence on Twitter after the vice president announced he lacked the power to throw out Electoral College votes cast for President-elect Joe Biden. Pence, the president tweeted, "didn't have the courage to do what should have been done." Desperate to cling to power, Trump turned what is normally a drama-free joint session of Congress to ratify the election results into a loyalty test for Pence. The gambit had catastrophic results, not just for the relationship between the president and vice president but also for the peaceful transition of power. Former Presidents Jimmy Carter, George W. Bush

and Bill Clinton denounced the insurrection at the US Capitol. Carter said in a statement he was "troubled by the violence," calling it a "national tragedy" that "is not who we are as a nation." Bush condemned the "reckless behavior of some political leaders since the election" as he slammed the "sickening and heartbreaking sight" of rioters storming the U.S. Capitol. Clinton said in a statement that "we faced an unprecedented assault on our Capitol, our Constitution, and our country." Stephanie Grisham, the former White House communications director and press secretary and current chief of staff for first lady Melania Trump, submitted her resignation Wednesday afternoon, effective immediately, in the wake of the violent protests, a White House official says. Social media giants Twitter, Facebook and Instagram have blocked US President Donald Trump from posting on their platforms as rioters attacked the US

Capitol and violent protests broke out in Washington DC. While Twitter said Trump's account will be locked until he deletes three tweets. Facebook and Instagram said Trump won't be able to post for 24 hours. Facebook also removed posts, including a video that Trump posted on the platform in support of the mob descending on the US Capitol. "This is an emergency situation and we are taking appropriate emergency measures, including removing President Trump's video. We removed it because on balance we believe it contributes to rather than diminishes the risk of ongoing violence," Guy Rosen, Facebook vice president of integrity said in a tweet. Facebook also removed a text by Trump asking his supporters to "remember this day forever!" Twitter has restricted Trump on its platform, locking his account for 12 hours after removing three tweets that the company said were "severe violations" of its policies.



A congressional member of staff holds his hands up as police teams sweep the Capitol to clear it of rioters

American patriots: Ivanka

Ivanka Trump, daughter of US President Donald Trump, apparently termed rioters at the US Capitol building as "patriots", but deleted her tweet soon after being called out to clarify it. As Trump supporters gathered outside the Capitol building and reports of violence started emerging, Donald Trump tweeted, "Please support out Capitol Police and law enforcement. They are truly on the side of our country. Stay peaceful." Retweeting her father's tweet, Ivanka Trump used the words "American patriots" for the rioters. However, she added that the Trump supporters must remain peaceful.

Dishonour, shame: Obama

FORMER President of the United States Barack Obama has described the unprecedented chaos at the Capitol as "a moment of great dishonour" and "shame" for the nation. "History will rightly remember today's violence at the Capitol, incited by a sitting president who has continued to baselessly lie about the outcome of a lawful election, as a moment of great dishonour and shame for our nation. But we'd be kidding ourselves if we treated it as a total surprise," Obama said in a statement posted on Twitter. The Ex-US President blasted the Republican Party and "its accompanying media ecosystem" for refusing to acknowledge "this was not a particularly close election and that President-elect (Joe) Biden will be inaugurated on January 20."



Anarchy reigned at the US Capitol after thousands of Donald Trump supporters, urged on by the President himself, marched on the building to try and stop Congress certifying Joe Biden's election win, on Wednesday

How did pro Trump mob waltz into US Capitol?

NEW YORK

THEY smashed windows, they climbed walls, they took down the American flag and replaced it with a Trump flag they brought along, they sat in the Speaker's chair and left a quarter on her desk. After these scenes of violent protest played out at the US Capitol on January 6, a single question now hangs over it all: How did the pro-Trump mob simply waltz in? In the two decades since the 9/11 attacks, the US Congress campus has been encircled by consecutive rings of security. Protests are routine in the US Capitol but January 6 was something else. At around noon, a crowd waving flags and wearing red baseball hats crashed into police barricades, ran up the steps to the heavy iron doors of the US Capitol and were soon marching inside the building and posing in their outlandish costumes. Even for regulars at the US Congress, access has a certain process and somehow, Trump's mob did not seem to have much trouble gaining access. Washington DC knew that protests were coming but officials here were careful not to give the place an over-militarized look on a day when Congress was to vote to confirm the US election re-

sults. In public comments after the bedlam subsided, lawyers are saying the pro-Trump mob has provided documentation of "many criminal" acts to the whole world, in real time. Online video clips of the actual violence are "very legal evidence" that could be used in future prosecutions that involve trespassing on federal property, intentional plot to disrupt government business, grievous bodily harm or death. Some of this carries substantial jail time. It involves not just the people who might be caught with firearms but people who were involved in conspiring with them as part of a group action. "Treason", is how Harvard Law professor Laurence H. Tribe described the chaos. "These people are 'levying war on the United States. That is the Constitution's definition of TREASON. Trump bears responsibility for what's going on now," he posted on Twitter. Everybody agrees that what happened on the grounds of the US Capitol on January 6 was a tremendous and total law enforcement failure to secure the premises for a high security event. Was the Capitol Police infiltrated and compromised? How was it so easy? The investigations are coming.



A Trump supporter receives medical treatment after apparently being hit in the mouth with a rubber bullet



A protester is seen hanging from the balcony in the Senate Chamber

Disgraceful, distressing, horrible

WASHINGTON

World leaders and governments expressed shock, disbelief, and horror as unprecedented scenes unfolded in the heart of America. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson condemned the violence. "Disgraceful scenes in US Congress. The United States stands for democracy around the world and it is now vital that there should be a peaceful and orderly transfer of power," he tweeted. "The US rightly takes great pride in its democracy, and there can be no justification for these violent attempts to frustrate the lawful and proper transition of power," UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said in a tweet. French President Emmanuel Macron in a video posted on his official Twitter account said: "We will not give in to the violence of a few who want to question democracy. We believe in democracy. What happened today in Washington is not American". UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "is saddened by the events at the U.S. Capitol," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, adding that "In such circumstances, it is important that political leaders impress on their followers the need to refrain from violence, as well as to respect democratic processes and the rule of law." Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted that the scenes at the US Capitol were an "attack on democracy." "Canadians are deeply disturbed and saddened by the attack on democracy in the United States, our closest ally and neighbour. Violence will never succeed in overruling the will of the people. Democracy in the US must be upheld - and it will be," he said. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas called on Trump supporters to "stop trampling on democracy". "The enemies of democracy will be happy to see these incredible pictures from Washington DC. Inflammatory words turn into violent acts," he tweeted. "Shocking scenes in Washington, DC. The outcome of this democratic election must be respected," NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg tweeted. The EU's foreign policy chief condemned the "assault on US democracy, its institutions and the rule of law". "In the eyes of the world, American democracy tonight appears under siege. This is not America. The election results of 3 November must be fully respected," Joseph Borrell tweeted. Turkey also warned its citizens in the US. "We are following with concern the internal developments happening in the US. We call on all parties in the US to maintain restraint and prudence. We believe the US will overcome this domestic political crisis in maturity. We recommend that our citizens in the US stay away from crowded places and places where shows are held," the Turkish foreign ministry said in a statement. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison condemned the "very distressing scenes" in the US. "We condemn these acts of violence and look forward to a peaceful transfer of Government to the newly elected administration in the great American democratic tradition," he tweeted. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said her country's thoughts were with everyone "devastated" by Wednesday's events. "What is happening is wrong. Democracy - the right of people to exercise a vote, have their voice heard and then have that decision upheld peacefully should never be undone by a mob. I have no doubt democracy will prevail," she tweeted.

Are farmers protesting at border protected against Covid? SC

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Thursday asked the Centre whether the farmers protesting against the new farm laws at Delhi borders are "protected" against the spread of COVID-19 and said that the guidelines to contain the virus should be followed. The apex court was hearing a plea seeking various reliefs including CBI probe into the matter related to assembly of people at Anand Vihar Bus Terminal and the Tablighi Jamaat congregation at Nizamuddin Markaz in the national capital after the nationwide lockdown was announced last year to contain the pandemic. "You must tell us what is happening. The same problem is going to arise in farmers' agitation. I do not know if farmers are protected from COVID. So, the same problem is going to arise. It is not that everything is over," said Chief Justice S A Bobde, who was heading the bench which also comprised Justices A S

Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian. The top court asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, whether protesting farmers are protected from COVID-19. Mehta replied, "Certainly not". Mehta said that he will file a report within two weeks on what has been done and what needs to be done. The plea, filed by advocate Supriya Pandita, has alleged that Delhi police had failed to control the gathering of people at Anand Vihar Bus Terminal last year during the lockdown. Advocate Om Prakash Parihar, appearing for the petitioner, Thursday told the bench that the police has not said anything about the whereabouts of Nizamuddin Markaz chief Maulana Saad. The bench told Parihar, "Why are you interested in one person? We are on the issue of COVID. Why do you want controversy? We are interested that COVID guidelines should be followed". The apex court said it is trying to ensure that COVID-19 does not spread and the guidelines are followed. "Issue notice."



50 docs, PETA sound alert on Jallikattu

CHENNAI

Over 50 doctors and people for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India appealed to the Tamil Nadu government to immediately withdraw the permission for the annual bull taming event -- 'Jallikattu'. Jallikattu is typically celebrated in the southern state of Tamil Nadu as part of the Pongal celebrations, on the Mattu Pongal day, which occurs annually during this month. Over 50 doctors have signed a letter to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Edappadi Palaniswami and Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar urging them to immediately withdraw the permission, which the doctors warn poses a grave risk to the general public because of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Over 1 crore recovered

India has leaped across a significant milestone in its fight against COVID-19 with the cumulative recoveries crossing the 1 crore-mark, the Union Health Ministry said on Thursday. A total 19,587 patients have recuperated and discharged in a span of 24 hours, taking the total recoveries to 10,016,859. India's recoveries are the highest in the world. The gap between active cases and recovered cases is continuously increasing and stands at 97,88,776, the ministry highlighted. "The recovered cases are 44 times the number of active cases," it said. The active caseload presently stands at 2,28,083 and comprises merely 2.19 per cent of the total infections. The ministry said that 51 per cent of the total recovered cases are concentrated in five states.

TODAY'S QUOTE

Nalco will invest ₹30,000 cr by 2027-28

“The National Aluminium Company Limited (Nalco) will invest around Rs 30,000 crore by 2027-28 in capacity expansion and diversification plans. The PSU will invest over Rs 7,000 crore for the 5th stream of its Damanjodi refinery, development of Potangi bauxite mines, and exploration.


— **Pralhad Joshi, Coal Minister**



RECORD

BSE-listed cos' mcap zooms to ₹193L cr

The market capitalisation of all BSE-listed companies zoomed to a fresh lifetime high of over Rs 193.18 lakh crore on Thursday. At close of trade, the total market valuation of all listed firms on the BSE stood at Rs 1,93,18,126.74 crore (\$2.6 trillion).

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	77.65	South	
Euro	94.49	African Rand	5.56
UAE Dirham	21.93	Hong Kong Dollar	10.87
Thai Baht	2.81	Japanese Yen	0.81
British Pound	103.65	New Zealand Dollar	55.9
Australian Dollar	59.75	Saudi Riyal	21.47
Canadian Dollar	60.6	Swedish Krona	10.27
Swiss Franc	86.34	Singapore Dollar	58.25

DELHI FRIDAY 8 JANUARY 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

Ather Energy expands ops

Ather Energy expanded its operations by launching its Ather 450X bike in 16 new cities including Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam. The overwhelming demand for Ather Energy's products, dealership requests has led the company to launch its sales in these new markets in Phase 2 of its expansion. The Ather 450X is an upgrade from its predecessor Ather 450 and is the quickest and one of the smartest scooters in India. Ravneet Singh Phokela, Chief Business Officer, Ather Energy, said: "We are really excited about adding 16 new markets and we look forward to establishing ourselves in these cities in the coming months. This expansion is the result of the strong demand from the consumers, dealerships and also, the test ride requests that we have received since the launch of Ather 450X".

Spencer's festive offers

Spencer's Retail launched festival discounts and great offers on grocery, household, electronics & festive fashion collection from January 6 to 15 for Sankranti Sambaralu. This year, Spencer's shoppers can save on festive products much higher than any other retailers. Also customers can avail 10 per cent cashback on Paytm. Devendra Chawla, CEO, Spencer's Retail and Nature Basket, said: "At Spencer's, our constant endeavour has been to ensure savings for our customers every time they shop with us. With Sankranti Sambaralu sales, our customers can avail one of the lowest price drops of the year across online, phone delivery and in-store channels."

Itel's customer base at 7 cr

Mobile handset maker itel said its customer base had crossed seven crore in less than five years of its operations in India. In over six months, itel has reached six to seven crores with a testimony of customers' trust, acceptance and reliability on the brand. Customer-centricity, robust distribution network backed with strong service support and localised marketing communication approach are the four key pillars for itel's success story in India. Arijet Talapatra, CEO, Transsion India, said, "Over the last five years, itel has seen robust growth and has successfully secured its position amongst the top three industry leaders in its segment. itel will catalyse this transition enabling vast majority to reap the benefits of digitalization providing comfort and convenience catering to their needs across entertainment, education, financial inclusion and business."

SBI launches new card

IndianOil has now teamed up with SBI to launch the SBI-IndianOil co-branded RuPay debit card. A customer, anywhere in India, can get the card by visiting the SBI's home branch. Customer can avail offers like reward points for every Rs 200 spent at IndianOil fuel stations. Cardholder earns loyalty points worth 0.75 per cent against purchase of fuel and no monthly limit for purchasing fuel. Dinesh Kumar Khara, Chairman, SBI said, "We are pleased to launch the 'SBI - IndianOil' contactless Rupay Debit Card" through our strategic partnership with IndianOil Corporation Ltd. We believe this co-branded card, with 'Tap and Pay' technology, several attractive benefits and associated offers."

Covid-hit GDP may shrink 7.7% in FY21

Contraction will not be steep as projected by IMF, WB: NSO

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S GDP is estimated to contract by a record 7.7 per cent during 2020-21 as the Covid-19 pandemic severely hit the key manufacturing and services segments, as per government projections released on Thursday. Amid overall decline in economic activities, some respite was provided by the agriculture sector and utility services like power and gas supply, which have been projected to post positive growth during the current fiscal ending March 2021. "Real GDP or GDP at Constant Prices (2011-12) in the year 2020-21 is likely to attain a level of Rs 134.40 lakh crore, as against the Provisional Estimate of GDP for the year 2019-20 of Rs 145.66 lakh crore..." "The growth in real GDP during 2020-21 is estimated at -7.7 per cent as compared to the growth rate of 4.2 per cent in 2019-20," said the first advanced estimates of national income released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).

The contraction in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), however, would not be as steep as projected by certain international agencies like the IMF and World Bank. NSO also estimates the Real Gross Value Added (GVA) at basic prices at Rs 123.39 lakh crore in 2020-21, as against Rs 133.01 lakh



crore in 2019-20, showing a contraction of 7.2 per cent.

GVA does not factor in net taxes. GVA in the key manufacturing sector is likely to see a contraction of 9.4 per cent during 2020-21 as compared to a flat growth of 0.03 per cent in the year ago period. "Mining and quarrying", and 'trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting' GVAs are likely to contract by 12.4 per cent and 21.4 per cent, respectively.

Construction sector contracts

The construction sector too is projected to contract by 12.6 per cent, 'public administration, defence and other services' by 3.7 per cent, and 'financial, real estate, and professional services' by 0.8 per cent, as per the data. On the other hand, 'agriculture, forestry and fishing' sector has been projected to grow at 3.4 per cent during the fiscal. The sector had

posted a growth of 4 per cent in 2019-20. Similarly, 'electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services' are likely to post a growth of 2.7 per cent during the year ending March 2021. This compares with 4.1 per cent expansion during 2019-20. The economy contracted by a massive 23.9 per cent in the first quarter and 7.5 per cent in the second quarter on account of the Covid-19 pandemic. The government has been stressing that economic activities are picking up post gradual unlocking of the economy and stimulus packages, and the country would witness a V-shaped growth.

The RBI had said that second half of the fiscal is expected to show some positive growth. RBI has forecasted real GDP growth at (-) 7.5 per cent in 2020-21, which is an improvement over its previous projection of 9.5 per cent contraction.

LIC launches scheme to revive lapsed policies

HYDERABAD

TO encourage individuals to continue their risk cover amid the coronavirus pandemic, LIC on Thursday launched a campaign where lapsed policies can be revived.

The insurance behemoth has launched a Special Revival Campaign starting from January 7 till March 6 for its customers to revive their lapsed individual policies subject to certain conditions. It has also authorised its 1,526 satellite offices to revive policies where special medical tests are not required. "Under this Special Revival Campaign, policies of specific eligible plans can be revived within five years from the date of the first unpaid premium subject to terms and conditions," LIC said in a statement. Certain concession in health requirements is also being offered subject to eligibility, it said, adding that most policies can be revived only on the basis of a declaration of good health and a Covid-19 questionnaire to be submitted by the proposer/ life assured. Policyholders will get 20 per cent late fee concession or Rs 2,000 for revival while 25 per cent concession for annual premiums between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 3 lakh, it said. Policies in lapsed condition during the premium paying term and not completed policy term as on the date of revival are eligible to be revived in this campaign.

Minimal competition likely for spectrum

Telecom operators may pick up spectrum that provides best value for money

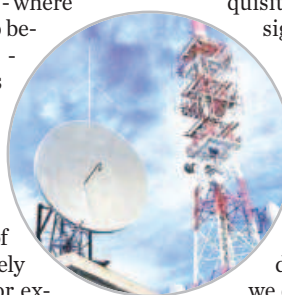
NEW DELHI

SPECTRUM auction in India has turned into a buyer's market, and may see 'minimal competition' with operators going after airwaves that yield best value for money instead of focusing on renewing all expiring spectrum, BNP Paribas said on Thursday.

With countdown now for spectrum auctions - where bidding is slated to begin on March 1 - ICICI Securities said it expects the final prices across spectrums to be equal to the reserve prices due to significant supply of radiowaves, and likely limited demand for expiring spectrums. While Credit Suisse expected 'limited participation', BNP Paribas was of the view that spectrum auction in India has turned into a buyer's market and may see 'minimal competition' with operators picking up spectrum that provides best value for money instead of focusing on renewing all their expiring spectrum. The price of 700 MHz spectrum remains expensive and is unlikely to receive much response in the coming auctions, concurred most industry analysts. Operators are likely to skip 700 MHz band again, BNP Paribas said in its report. "700MHz band prices remain

significantly high to find any bidders," ICICI Securities said. It expects Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) to renew their expiring spectrum only partially due to excess spectrum holding. Bharti, it observed, has 57 MHz in 1800 MHz band and 6.2 MHz in 900 MHz band coming up for renewal in 2021, but has amassed huge spectrum via merger and acquisitions, which should significantly lower its renewal requirement in the upcoming auction.

"Vodafone Idea has 46 MHz spectrum in 1800 MHz band and 6.2 MHz in 900 MHz due for renewal, we expect very little renewal requirement for VIL as well," ICICI Securities said. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has released a notice inviting applications for the spectrum auctions in seven bands - 700, 800, 900, 1800, 2100, 2300 and 2500MHz bands, and the bidding is scheduled to begin March 1. The key date to watch for is February 5, 2021, the deadline for interested operators to submit their applications, ICICI Securities said. Morgan Stanley said it does not expect much activity in the 700 MHz auction "Unless Jio decides to build some capacity for potential 5G roll-out this year". (PTI)



Markets tumble for 2nd day as IT scrips skid

MUMBAI

EQUITY indices Sensex and Nifty nursed losses for the second straight session on Thursday, dragged by IT, banks and consumption stocks, despite a firm trend in global markets.

A sharp drop in the rupee and reversal in foreign fund inflows also weighed on the bourses, traders said. The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 80.74 points or 0.17 per cent lower at 48,093.32. The broader NSE Nifty slipped 8.90 points or 0.06 per cent to 14,137.35. Titan was the top loser among the Sensex constituents, shedding 2.03 per cent, followed by Nestle India, HUL, Infosys, HCL Tech, ITC, ICICI Bank and Kotak Bank. On the other hand, Bharti Airtel, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv and L&T were among the gainers, jumping up to 3.75 per cent. The BSE midcap and smallcap indices put up a good show, rising up to 1.05 per cent. Global equi-



ties largely shrugged off unprecedented political unrest in Washington after supporters of outgoing President Donald Trump stormed the US Capitol. Wall Street soared to record highs after Democrats won the Georgia Senate elections, giving them majority in the Congress and paving the way for President-elect Joe Biden to implement his policies of more stimulus and increased infrastructure spending.

"It was midcap and smallcap stocks which stole the show once again and investors continued to chase this space owing to wider valuations gap and improved prospects of earnings recovery. An increased possibility of higher fiscal stimulus in the US after Democrats taking control of both houses in the Congress bodes well for emerging markets including India in the medium term... Q3 corporate earnings and Union Budget are crucial for the

markets," said Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities.

COVID-19 VACCINE INOCULATION

Pvt sector ready to partner with government: Ficci

NEW DELHI

THE private sector is willing to support and augment government's capacity across the value chain of Covid-19 vaccine distribution and administration, industry body Ficci on Thursday said.

In this regard, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) has submitted a detailed plan outlining what support private sector, including healthcare, can provide, through the Ficci-EY Strategy paper on 'Protecting India - Public Private Partnership for vaccinating against Covid-19'.

The strategy paper was submitted to the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC) last month. "Given that we are on the verge of launching the largest ever and a complex vaccination programme, effective partnerships and seamless collaborations will be pivotal



for its success. We hope that the government has taken note of the intent and commitment from private sector players for accelerating the process of targeted vaccination across the country," Ficci Chair Health Services Committee and Chairman Medica Group of Hospitals Alok Roy said in a statement. The Ficci-EY paper, that was developed in consultation with various stakeholders from healthcare, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, logistics, cold chain and allied sectors, states that India would need 1.3-1.4 lakh vaccination centres, 1 lakh health-

care professionals and 2.0 lakh support staff/ volunteers to support government's mass-inoculation programme.

Private healthcare sector, responsible for almost 70 per cent of healthcare delivery in the country, can adequately supplement the physical and human infrastructure supply in key capacity constrained regions, specifically in urban and semi-urban areas, Ficci noted.

A Ficci survey conducted in collaboration with EY and NABH, showed that 81 per cent of survey respondents from private healthcare industry are willing to inoculate front-line workers in local areas and 75 per cent are willing to inoculate their local communities, 70 per cent are willing to allocate manpower in semi-urban/rural areas for vaccination and 94 per cent are willing to impart training for inoculation, it added.

Ramky Enviro opens plastic recycling plant

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

RAMKY Enviro Engineers Limited (REEL), a Hyderabad-based environment management services company, inaugurated its plastic recycling facility at JN Pharmacy in Vishakhapatnam on Thursday.

Spanning over three acres with a capacity to handle 1 MT/hour of plastics waste, this new recycling facility at Vishakhapatnam hosts sophisticated infrastructure for recycling industrial and domestic plastic wastes. Equipped with the best technology in the recycling industry, the facility performs de-dusting, shredding, two-stage washing, squeezing and granulation.

It also houses blown-film bag-making and bag-printing machinery to produce high-quality multi-purpose plastic bags such as grocery bags, biomedical bags and garbage bags, which are above 51 microns and comply with SPCB/CPCB norms.

SAP invests ₹500 cr to accelerate multi-cloud strategy

NEW DELHI

ENTERPRISE software major SAP on Thursday announced to invest Rs 500 crore in India to offer customers a multi-cloud choice. With one of the largest and most diverse business-to-business cloud portfolios, SAP India is a leading cloud company that is aggressively working toward addressing local customer demands. "SAP intends to advance the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat by leveraging an agile and scalable cloud technology that is co-developed in India and now made available in local data centres to help Indian enterprises recalibrate their businesses to run better," said Kulmeet Bawa, SAP India President and MD.

The software solutions major last year launched SAP Commerce Cloud and S/4 HANA Cloud on their India data centre to help Indian enterprises meet end-to-end customer demands, make commerce frictionless while ensuring compliance with the Personal Data Protection Bill.

Youth expect new health schemes

72% of participants surveyed say that they expect cost reduction on two and four-wheeler vehicles

ARCHANA RAO

WITH the upcoming Union Budget FY 2021-22 due in three weeks, *Bizz Buzz* interviewed youngsters from different walks of life across the country to understand what does the annual Union Budget means to them and what are their expectations from it? The Union Budget, which will be presented by the Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, on February 1, 2021, will be the first such major Parliamentary address post the tumultuous year of 2020, which witnessed economic slowdown due to Covid-19 lockdown. *Bizz Buzz* interviewed 60 youngsters between the age group of 21 and 35, who hail from different major cities including New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Thiruvananthapuram, as well as from different States like Assam. They are working / associated with sectors like IT, education, media, government and NGOs.

The surveyed participants expressed concern over subjects such as health, tax (benefits) for women



and entrepreneurs, electronics such as tablets and computers, home loans, imported goods, four-wheelers and electric vehicles.

Of the 60 people in the survey, 38 men and 22 women, 45 participants expressed concerns over the upcoming Budget, whereas 15 participants cited lack of interest owing to the factor that they do not understand financial Budget at a deeper level. Over 15 per cent of those who were interviewed said that they

would welcome tax relief for women, whereas an overwhelming section, 72 per cent of the participants, said that they expect cost reduction on vehicles (two-wheelers and four-wheelers). Less than 12 per cent of the participants said that they would expect a reduction on bank interest on loans and increase in interest rates for fixed deposit. Over 78 per cent of the people expressed greater interest on health sector in the form of telemedicine, new health scheme or health

insurance coverage. Santosh CK, who has been a part of solar (renewable energy) industry for over half a decade, told *Bizz Buzz* that while health is going to be bigger priority for the government this year, owing to the on-going global pandemic, renewable energy sector too needs equal attention from the Centre. His expectations from the Union Budget are more futuristic for developing the economy while considering the environmental factors.

Dr Ashwathi Muraleedharan, a PhD scholar in education, told *Bizz Buzz* that this would be a crucial year for the education sector, as the pandemic has affected scholars throughout the country.

"As a student and a working professional in the field of education, for me, Union Budget is to understand how much education is valued. Unfortunately, till date it is not given much priority. The investment in education has always been dismal and things have only marginally improved with a few changes here and there," she said.

Biocon Biologics gets ₹555 cr investment

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

BIOCON on Thursday said Abu Dhabi-based ADQ will invest Rs 555 crore in its subsidiary Biocon Biologics.

The board of Biocon Biologics has approved a primary equity investment by ADQ. Biocon Ltd said in a statement. As per the terms of the proposed agreement, ADQ will invest Rs 555 crore for a 1.8 per cent minority stake in the biosimilar business, valuing Biocon Biologics at a post money valuation of \$4.17 billion, it added.

The transaction is subject to customary condition precedents and approvals and if it goes through, Biocon's stake would come down to 89.89 per cent in Biocon Biologics on a fully diluted basis. "The current investment has put post money valuation of Biocon Biologics at \$4.17 billion," Biocon's Executive Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said.

Labuschagne, Pucovski take Oz to 166/2 on rain-hit Day 1

SYDNEY

GRITTY half centuries from Marnus Labuschagne and debutant opener Will Pucovski on Thursday put Australia ahead on the rain-hit opening day of the third Test against India at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Australia ended Day One at 166/2 in 55 overs that could be bowled because of rain. At Stumps, Labuschagne and Steve Smith remained unbeaten on 67 and 31.

Earlier, after winning the toss, the hosts didn't have a great start as they lost opener David Warner early in the innings. Warner, who is coming back from groin injury after having missed the first two Tests, was caught in slips by Cheteshwar Pujara off the bowling of right-arm Mohammed Siraj in the fourth over. Warner scored five runs of the eight balls he faced.

Australia had reached 21/1 when rain came pouring in the seventh over and players left the field. Umpires called for early Lunch and the play resumed only after a lengthy break in the second session.

Indian bowlers -- Jasprit Bumrah, Siraj and Ravichandran Ashwin -- all bowled on tight lines and lengths and made sure the hosts didn't score freely after the break. However, in the last 45 minutes of the session, the visitors were a bit sloppy in the field as wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant dropped two catches of Pucovski -- one against Ashwin and other against Siraj -- and allowed the debutant to score his maiden half century as Australia reached 93/1 at Tea.

In the final session of the day, Australia lost Pucovski who became the first Test scalp of debutant Navdeep Saini. The 22-year-old got out lbw after scoring 62 runs in the 110 deliveries he faced during the course of his innings.

Smith, who had struggled in the first two Tests, came out with a positive intent this time around and scored

SCOREBOARD

Australia first innings

Pucovski lbw Navdeep Saini ----62

D Warner c Pujara b Siraj -----5

M Labuschagne batting -----67

S Smith batting -----31

Extras (nb1) -----1

Total (for 2 wickets, 55 overs) 166

Fall of Wickets 6-1, 106-2

Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 14-3-30-0,

Mohammed Siraj 14-3-46-1,

Ravichandran Ashwin 17-1-56-0,

Navdeep Saini 7-0-32-1, Ravindra

Jadeja 3-2-2-0.

quite a few boundaries and didn't let the Indian bowlers, particularly Ashwin, dictate terms.

Along with Labuschagne, the duo added 60 runs for third wicket and laid a solid platform for the hosts to set a huge first-innings total.

(IANS)

Polosak becomes 1st female match official in men's Test match

SYDNEY



AUSTRALIA'S Claire Polosak scripted history by becoming the first female match official to officiate a men's Test match when she took up the fourth umpire's role in the third Test between Australia and India which began Thursday at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Polosak has joined fellow Australian match officials Paul Reiffel, Paul Wilson, Bruce Oxenford and David Boon in the playing control team for the third Test of the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

The 32-year-old already has the distinction of being the first woman on-field umpire in a men's ODI match in ICC's Division 2 league between Namibia and Oman played at the Windhoek in 2019.

Polosak's international umpiring career began in 2015 with appointment to the ICC Women's T20 Qualifying tournament in Thailand. This led to appointment to the Women's T20 World Cup in India.

In November the following year, Polosak made her Women's ODI debut when Australia played South Africa in Canberra. Polosak was then appointed to the 50-over Women's World Cup in 2017 held in the UK. Polosak was then appointed to the Women's World T20 Cup in the West Indies throughout November 2018 which included the semi-final between England and India at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua.

In addition to her men's ODI match, Polosak has stood 17 women's ODIs with an additional three as third umpire, and 33 women's T20Is with an additional five as third umpire. Polosak has been on the ICC Development Panel of Umpires since 2018 and the CA Supplementary Umpire Panel since 2014/15.

On the domestic front, Polosak has officiated in three Domestic One-Day Cup matches and has fulfilled the third umpire duties on 13 occasions in the Big Bash to date.

The ongoing four-match series is currently tied at 1-1 with Australia winning the first Test in Adelaide while India registering a win in the second in Melbourne. (IANS)



India's Mohammed Siraj fields the ball from his own bowling

Siraj gets emotional while singing national anthem at SCG

SYDNEY

INDIAN pacer Mohammed Siraj has revealed that his late father's memory brought tears to his eyes while the national anthem was being played ahead of the third Test against Australia which began Thursday at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Video and images of Siraj fighting back tears went viral on social media before the start of the play.

The 26-year-old had made a dream Test debut in the Boxing Day Test and scalped five wickets as India won the match by eight wickets at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

Siraj had lost his father on November 20, about a week after the Indian team landed in Australia and were in quarantine ahead of the limited-overs series.

The pace bowler, who was part of the squad for the Tests that were to begin only on December 17, was given the option of returning home to attend the burial of his father but decided to stay back as the entire process of going back and returning would have involved quarantine periods.

"During the national anthem, I just remembered my father. That is why I felt a bit emotional. Dad always wanted to see me play Test cricket. If he would have been alive, he would have seen me," said Siraj after the end of the first day's play which saw Australia score 166/2.

Former India batsmen Wasim Jaffer and Mohammad Kaif both appreciated Siraj.

"Even if there's little or no crowd to cheer you on, no better motivation than playing for India. As a legend once said 'You don't play for the crowd, you play for the country'," tweeted Jaffer.

"I just want certain people to remember this picture. He is #SirajMohammed and this is what the national anthem means to him," said Kaif.

Siraj, who is yet to see his family after his father's death, will return home only after January 19, two months after his father passed away in Hyderabad.

Knew India would come hard with bouncers: Pucovski

SYDNEY

RETURNING to Australia squad for the third time and finally getting to play after overcoming concussion-related issues, Australia's debutant opener Will Pucovski says he was prepared for a barrage of short balls from the Indian bowlers.

Pucovski, who took the strike ahead of David Warner, was tested with a bouncer in the first over of the match bowled by Jasprit Bumrah but instead ducking under it, he took it on. Although he missed it, the intentions seemed clear. Pucovski got his first boundary off a short ball too, a Siraj delivery taking the edge of his bat and going to boundary in the deep. He also ducked under some of them later.

"I have been bounced in all forms of cricket. I have played with the history of concussions having been part of it. Knew India would come hard with it," said Pucovski at close of play.

The batsman added that he handled it well though at times the excitement got the better of him. "I felt I handled it well at times but went out of the bubble at other times and a lot of times it gets down to the excitement of your first game... just making sure you get the first one out of the way and roll on," he said.

India pace bowler Mohammed Siraj admitted that Pucovski was taking on the short ball and not leaving them despite having a history of concussions.

"We were trying to bowl short balls to him. Like in the warm-up, here also we targeted him with the short ball. But he was playing the short ball, not leaving," said Siraj.

Pucovski's latest of the nine hits on his head came during last month's warm-up against India A in Sydney when a delivery from Kartik Tyagi forced him to retire. It ruled him out of the first two Tests at Adelaide and Melbourne even though he had initially been picked. Back in 2019 also, he was picked in the Australia Test squad to play Sri Lanka but had to leave the squad due to mental health issues.



Hyderabad, NorthEast aim at top four slots in final game of first leg

PANAJI (GOA)

HAVING kicked off 2021 with a resounding victory over Chennaiyin, Hyderabad FC are back in action this Friday. They face Gerard Nus' NorthEast United at the Tilak Maidan in Vasco, in the last game of the first round of Indian Super League fixtures. HFC are currently sixth in the league table, with 12 points from nine games and have a chance to make it into the top-4 with a win, halfway through the league campaign.

NorthEast United are in seventh, just a point below Hyderabad and also have a chance to rise up the points table, making this game a crucial one for both sides.

"This is not a normal season and I think it is almost impossible to predict who will end in the top-4 places. But for us, we will have to take

TODAY'S MATCH

NorthEast United FC vs Hyderabad FC
at Tilak Maidan Stadium 7.30pm



MATCH RESULT

Kerala Blasters FC lose to Odisha FC
2-4

it step by step, and focus on our game against NorthEast", said HFC's Head Coach, speaking about his side's chances of qualification.

The Highlanders have a strong squad at their disposal. The likes of Benjamin Lambot, Dylan Fox, Khassa Camara and Kwesi Appiah have all been consistent this season. Indian stars like Ninthoi, Lalengmawia, Gurjinder Kumar and

Ashutosh Mehta have also been impressive, adding some balance to the squad.

"NorthEast are a well-organized side. They are a team with a lot of young players and a smart coach. Not just Appiah, Lambot, Apuia and Ninthoi, they have a lot of quality in their squad and are a dangerous side to face," said Manolo.

Eric, Maruri emerge AITA U-18 champions

BENGALURU

TOP seeds Nithilan Eric and Reshma Maruri were crowned champions in the boys and girls U-18 categories respectively in the AITA Under-18 Championship Series tennis tournament which concluded here on Thursday.

In the boys final of the tournament hosted by the Rohan Bopanna The Sports School Tennis Academy (RBSSTA) under the aegis of Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association (KSLTA), Eric overcame his compatriot Arunava Majumder 6-4, 6-2 while Reshma defeated her sister Suhitha



6-2, 6-1 in the girls final.

The first set of the boys final was a closely contested affair with Eric achieving an early break to go 4-1 up. However, Majumder rallied hard to get close and trailed 4-5 before a determined Eric held serve to take the first set 6-4.

In the second set, Eric broke to go 2-0 up but Majumder was quick to break back and restored parity at 2-2. That was the best he could do as Eric stepped up his game and didn't give a semblance

of a chance for his opponent to make a comeback and took the set without losing a game.

The girls final was almost a one-sided affair with elder sister Reshma looking the strongest amongst the two siblings. The winner didn't drop a single serve throughout the match and was home and dry in the final clash that was delayed by a day owing to unprecedented rains in the city.

RBSSTA will host AITA men's and women's championship next week. (IANS)

Ganguly discharged from hospital

KOLKATA

FORMER Indian skipper and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly was discharged from Kolkata's Woodlands Hospital on Thursday morning, following six days of hospitalisation.

"I am absolutely fine now. I thank all the doctors and nurses at the hospital for the treatment and care," Ganguly said after getting discharged from the hospital. He, however, refused to answer any question from the media.

The 48-year-old had suffered a sudden blackout following mild chest pain during a workout session at his Behala residence on January 2. He was moved to the Woodlands Hospital that day itself where he underwent angioplasty.

Meanwhile, Ganguly's fans gathered in front of the hospital as well as in front of his Biren



BCCI President Sourav Ganguly waves to his fans after he got discharged from a private hospital, in Kolkata on Thursday

Roy Road residence at Behala this morning to catch a glimpse of their favourite cricketer.

"I'm keeping fine. I have come back to life," said Ganguly towards his followers after reaching his residence.

Earlier, noted cardiac surgeon Devi Shetty, who came to the West Bengal capital on Tuesday morning, had examined the BCCI chief and said the former batting great was stable and could be discharged. (IANS)

Atletico Madrid crashes out of Copa del Rey

MADRID: LaLiga leader Atletico Madrid became the highest profile victim of a giant-killing act when it was knocked out of the Copa del Rey by third-tier side Cornella.

A seventh-minute goal from Cornella defender Adrian Jimenez on Wednesday knocked Atletico out of the tournament at an early stage for the second year in succession, reports Xinhua news agency.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone fielded a strong side which included B-team defender Ricard Sanchez, who blotted his copybook when he was sent off for two yellow cards in the 63rd minute.

Granada needed extra-time and a 116th minute winner from Darwin Machis to get past Cultural Leon, who, like Cornella, also play in Segunda B.

Marc Roviola put Cultural ahead after three minutes, and it looked as Atletico's conquerors from last season were set to produce another upset, but Jorge Molina equalised in the 19th minute.

The remaining 70 minutes of regulation time failed to produce any further goals, and Machis scored his winner after an error from home keeper Andoni Zubiaurre.

HI introduces open application, registration system for players

NEW DELHI



Hockey India Member Unit Portal, similar to the open application and registration process for coaches and technical officials.

Any hockey player across the country can submit their application for further approval of Hockey India registered member unit to register as a player through the link -- <https://muportal.hockeyindia.org/player-registration-form>.

Once a candidate submits one's application, he or she would need the approval of the concerned Hockey India registered member unit under which a player is submitting the application.

Once the application is approved by the Hockey India member unit, the application would require the final approval of the national federation prior to the confirmation of registration of a player.

The open application and registration system will make the process of registration of players more transparent and accessible to every hockey player around the country, stated Hockey India in a media release.

Hockey India has further introduced a section for information about the hockey facilities available with various member units on the portal. Each member unit would need to update the details of various types of hockey facilities available with each of them.

Hockey India has also introduced a section on disciplinary Actions. The details regarding the disciplinary actions could now be viewed by Hockey India member units on the portal. (IANS)