

SHORT TAKES

EMAAR LAND CASE COMES UP IN HIGH COURT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 29

As many as 80 persons have approached Telangana High Court contending that they had been cheated 15 years ago in land acquisition proceedings for Emaar and APIC to construct high-class villas at Nanakramguda in Hyderabad. The petitioners submitted that their plots and lands had been taken over under the Land Acquisition Act without entertaining their concerns or paying due compensation. They said their lands should be either returned or compensation paid to them under 2013 Land Acquisition Act. When the High Court asked what they had been doing since 15 years, petitioners maintained that they had made representations to officials and some of them had approached the court, which ordered the developers not to construct compound walls. However, the compound walls have been constructed in violation of the court orders, the petitioners submitted. The High Court then directed petitioners to place before it the earlier orders issued by the HC and adjourned the matter to January 4.

PANEL TO ADVISE GOVT ON SALARY REVISION

From Page 1

The committee will also look into the PRC and advise the government on revision of salary and also examine the Zonal system and related issues.

Recalling the role of employees in the Telangana movement and also of the TRS government extending 42 per cent financial benefit to them after coming in power, Rao said, "Under the united AP, every issue of the employees was riddled with protest. A controversy surrounded every issue and they were all at the mercy of court cases."

He maintained that due to the efforts of the TRS government, the way is clear for government employees to discharge their duties in a hassle-free manner. "Now, without any further delay all the issues of the employees should be solved. The entire process should be completed by January-February. By March, all the employees should be freed from their problems."

Due to bifurcation issues, promotions in revenue and police departments remained stalled. "Now, those disputes are resolved." Departmental promotion committees will be set up and posts falling vacant after the promotions should be filled up "immediately".

He said, "It is most unfortunate that there is a delay in the appointments on compassionate grounds. Family members who are in sorrow due to the death of their earning family member should not be made to run around government offices for such appointments." He instructed officials to complete such appointments in all departments.

HYD HEALTH STAFF YET TO ACKNOWLEDGE

From Page 1

Three persons who were in immediate and direct contact with this person have been identified by the Warangal health and district administration authorities. The authorities have since been isolated. When contacted, Warangal (Urban) District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) Dr. Lalitha Devi was not available for comment.

Of the two samples that tested positive for the new virus variant from UK, the other was from a person from Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh. However, the health authorities in Hyderabad did not acknowledge the presence of the new Covid-19 virus strain in the state. A press conference that was scheduled for Tuesday afternoon and was to be addressed by the Telangana state director of public health, was cancelled with an announcement that no release will be issued subsequently in the evening. But in the evening, the health department said the state will not be releasing any official comment on the discovery of the new virus strain in Telangana and any information that would have to come from the Centre. In all, 1,216 persons had come to the state from the UK this month and efforts were still on to trace over 250 of them who had ostensibly given wrong addresses and phone numbers.

New Covid-19 variant may spread faster

The new variant has shown 17 mutations in its genetic material, of which 8 is affecting the spike protein

Extend isolation to 24 days: Experts

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 29

A resort to tracing, tracking and following quarantine rules strictly is the only way to control spread of the new variant of SARS-Cov 2. Quarantine rules now enforced for 17 days must be stretched to 24 days so that the spread can be controlled, say experts.

Says Dr Sanjay Singh Yadav, senior member of TS Indian Medical Association, "Laxity will lead to further spread of the virus." While mutations are common in viruses, the challenge is in its ability to infect, transmit easily from person to person. The time taken for the virus to infect people will be less in the new strain. Dr Rahul Agarwal, senior consultant in internal medicine at Medivoc Hospitals says, "If the cough, sneeze or surface of the infected patient suf-

fering from the virus has increased viral load, then the chance of infecting others is high. The new strain has caused the virus to bind itself to the human lung cells more easily and tightly, resulting in easy spread." The exact picture will be clear in two weeks stated experts. If the cases begin to multiply, the pressure on healthcare systems will be

● One in 200 cases in the world strain according to GISAID, a consortium of genome sequencing data.

● 33,000 passengers have flown in from the United Kingdom to India in recent weeks.

● Those having landed in the country via cargo ships are not in this number. The new variant was observed from September in UK.

● The new UK strain has the most common mutation N501Y which was confirmed today.

● One of the mutations of the South African strain E484K has also been found in India on December 25 according to GISAID.

heavy, and even with the same mortality rate, the number of deaths will be more, stated experts. The norms laid down for the current pandemic are to avoid public gatherings and crowded places, do hand sanitizing, use masks, ensure physical distancing and be wary of places where the cases are more.

New variant puts break on New Year festivity

SANJAY SAMUEL
PAUL, DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 29

The new strain of Coronavirus recorded in Telangana has triggered panic, particularly at a time which is otherwise full of festivities. The new variant, christened "B.1.1.7", has put brakes on events that had been planned on December 31 as well as church services that welcome the New Year.

State government authorities have issued notices to pubs and bars to hold any events on the day and close before midnight. Resorts have also already announced that there will not be any events for New Year celebrations. Dheeraj Melwan, president, Hyderabad Resto Bar and Lounges Association, said, "We support the government's decision."

Musician and DJs have been particularly hurt as there is no demand for them this year. John Geiles, a pianist, and Nigel Geiles, guitarist and vocalist, for over 30 years said, "From the start of

our career, on all December 31 nights, we have been hired by five-star hotels. This time, there are no takers for our performances," Nigel said. Churches usually have their "Watch Night Services" from 11 pm on December 31 and end the same at 12.30 am of January 1 to welcome the New Year with prayers. After the news about "B.1.1.7" virus strain, even they have decided to suspend these services, said Rev Dubba Hrudaya Paul of John Wesley Methodist Church, Malkajgiri, adding that only the evening service on January 1 will be held.

Authorities have warned general public to be cautious saying, "It is better to stay safe and enter into a Brand New Year wishing and praying for a healthy world."

Heart patients, diabetics, obese are at a high risk

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 29

Treating the large numbers of youths and those suffering from co-morbid conditions of heart diseases, diabetes and obesity posed a major challenge to the current pandemic of the Covid-19 spread.

With the new strain having arrived here from the UK, doctors say these groups will be more vulnerable and pose a bigger challenge vis-a-vis treatment. Data from Telangana state so far showed that 46 per cent of those infected were in the age-group of 21-40.

Some 17 per cent of the infected was in the age group of 41-50 years. Among the middle-age groups, infection rates were high while those with co-morbid conditions registered a death rate of 56 per cent.

Dr Ramana Prasad, senior pulmonologist at

TELANGANA REGISTERS 397 FRESH COVID INFECTIONS, 2 MORE DEATHS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 29

Telangana state registered 397 new Covid-19 cases and two deaths in the state. Till date, the number of active cases stand at 5,898 and about 3,000 are at home and

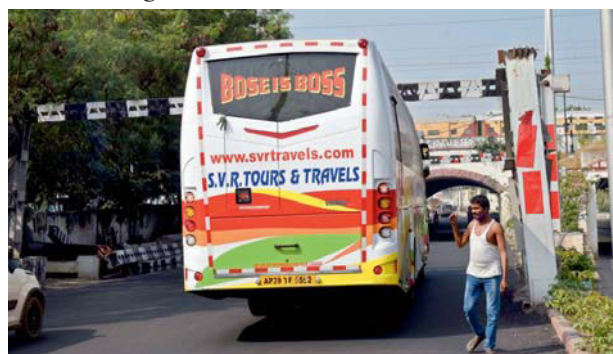
institutional isolation. There were 42,737 samples tested and the government has stated that it will continue to test more. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) limits have been raised as many as 92 new cases.

● WITH THE new strain having arrived here from the UK, doctors say these groups will be more vulnerable and pose a bigger challenge vis-a-vis treatment. Data from Telangana state so far showed that 46 per cent of those infected were in the age-group of 21-40.

KIMS Hospital says, "The behaviour of the virus depends on the human body and their immunity levels. There are those who have responded very well to high-end medications of anti-virals and steroids. They have recovered while another set of people have not. We do not know the exact reasons why, but the same medicines will have to be used again."

Experts say they keep observing how the virus behaves but till a conclusion is arrived at, the depends on the human body and their immunity

A road to high



A private bus which got stuck at the second height barrier at the busy Allugaddabai road underbridge reverses even as its roof gets scraped. The GHMC, during the recent road repairs, did not take the height barrier into consideration and put a thick layer of new road which is posing huge problems to buses and transport trucks. — GANDHI

Cyberabad police first to set up Covid control room

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC
HYDERABAD, DEC. 29

Cyberabad police was the first in the country to set up Covid-19 control room and the first in Telangana state to fight the battle against the virus as the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport at Shamshabad, and the IT sector fell under this commissionerate, said Cyberabad police commissioner V.C. Sajjanar.

The Cyberabad police witnessed an increase in overall crime of 6.65 per cent, while other bodily offences and property crimes saw a dip. Cyberabad police was the first in India to support business continuity during lockdown and work from home was enabled smoothly by shifting offices to home within a

span of a week, said the official.

"The end of the year is always a time for reflection where we look back to move ahead. The Cyberabad Commissionerate used the Covid crisis to redefine policing and explore new frontiers battling adverse circumstances much like an aircraft which takes off against the wind and not with it. During the lockdown, our police personnel became frontline warriors to battle the pandemic while continuing with active patrolling and dial 100 calls."

Beginning with screening and security related operations at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, we drew up a 'Mission Covid 19' action plan and implemented it meticulously. Our personnel worked in coordina-



Cyberabad police commissioner V. C. Sajjanar along with senior police officials during the annual press meet on Tuesday.

issuance of essential services passes, blood donation camps for the laesemia patients, transportation of migrant labour, supplying grocery kits and plasma donation camps were some humanitarian tasks handled by the cops.

The women and child safety wing has received 1,811 cases through various means such as social media, emails and twitter in 2020. Among the total 1,944 offenders booked this year, 160 were minors.

The women and children safety wing was formed in the month of July, 2018 by the Commissioner of Police, Cyberabad and was headed by C. Anasuya.

Crimes DCP of Cyberabad. The wing focuses on collection, collation and analyzing of information on crimes against women and children including human

Child safety wing held 1,544

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HYDERABAD, DEC. 29

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SHE TEAMS

PETTY CASES			DECOY OPERATIONS		
2019	2020	(upto Nov 30)	2019	2020	(upto Nov 30)
716	302		3,659	1,165	
FIRs			PETITIONS RECEIVED		
2019	2020	(upto Nov 30)	2019	2020	(upto Nov 30)
229	176		2,383	1,811	

trafficking and conduct trainings on laws related to women and children. The wing consists of She team, operation smile, aasara, barhara center, balaahtra, pending trial monitoring, women and

children missing cases monitoring, protection of children from sexual offences case monitoring, women help desk and domestic violence immediate response teams," said the police.

RECTIFICATION OF 124 BLACK SPOTS, STREAMLINING TRAFFIC PLANNED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 29

Rectification of 124 black spots, implementation of Integrated Traffic Monitoring System (ITMS) and construction of about 14 foot over bridges are planned for 2021 by the cops.

"For augmenting our capacity and for a better investigation for prevention of crime, we have trained 1,642 newly recruited constables who will be allotted to police stations and other wings based on their skill set in the year ahead. Women's safety remains our top priority with new initiatives like 'Sangamitra' being added to the existing provisions. Traffic in Cyberabad which is the

fastest growing and most happening place in the city is a challenge and we are ever gearing up to meet this with greater efficiency and innovation based on past learning. Identification of 124 traffic black spots, managing traffic through ITMS, installing traffic signals, installing traffic cameras, establishing a full-fledged Traffic Training Institute, installing more CCTV cameras and measures for traffic safety and awareness are initiatives to be taken up in 2021," said the police. Strengthening crime detection and investigation wings, including cyber crime and clues teams will bring discernible changes in our functioning, opined the commissioner.

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 29

Spike crimes witnessed a rise of 135 per cent in 1,119 cases were booked in 2020, as opposed to 477 in 2019. Cyberabad police officials said that they will be holding a meeting with the higher authorities to set up a cybercrime wing in all police stations in the commissionerate. Cybercrime is one area where the cases are increasing exponentially every year and 2020 has shown a phenomenal increase, officials said. "The percentage of detection and recovery in cyber crime cases are low

MOST REPORTED CYBER CRIMES

OLX frauds	- 173
KYC frauds	- 163
Customer care frauds	- 143
Job fraud	- 83
Loan fraud	- 69
Gift fraud	- 52

because of the pan India nature of the crimes and there is a huge need of men and material resources for every case. Out of which, several important cases of job

● CYBERCRIME IS one area where the cases are increasing exponentially every year and 2020 has shown a phenomenal increase, officials said.

frauds, SIM swap frauds, investment frauds and Paytm KYC frauds were detected. Out of the total cases, six of them were Nigerian frauds, four involved Nepalese and suspect sheets were opened against six accused who were habitual offenders hailing from Jamnara district of Jharkhand state and other neighbouring states," said the police.

ZERO TOLERANCE TOWARDS DRUNK DRIVING, WARNS TRAFFIC POLICE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, DEC. 29

Those who drive under the influence of alcohol are equivalent to terrorists as they pose a threat to the public, said Cyberabad Traffic Wing DCP M. Vijay Kumar, adding that there will be zero tolerance towards such offenders. As many as 8,399 cases were booked for drunk driving and 1,811 individuals were jailed in 2020. The official said that the wing is functioning with 10 traffic police and has a Training Institute. As the population and vehicular volume is increasing day by day in the Cyberabad Metropolitan area, the traffic management is

becoming challenging with every passing year, officials said, adding that they got rid of the 'big vehicle syndrome' as they are approaching accident scenes with more scientific method, with GC footage and technical intelligence. "At seven non-signalised intersections, the traffic signal lights were installed to ensure a streamlined traffic flow and 180 individuals were installed at Indiranagar in Gachibowli and at 10 traffic police and has a Training Institute. As the population and vehicular volume is increasing day by day in the Cyberabad Metropolitan area, the traffic management is



SHORT TAKES

GOA: NO APPROVAL GIVEN FOR GANJA CULTIVATION

Panaji, Dec. 29: Goa chief minister Pramod Sawant on Tuesday said a proposal has been moved before the state government to allow cultivation of marijuana, but no approval has been granted in the matter. His statement came a day after Goa Forward Party (GFP) president Vijai Sardesai claimed there was a proposal to cultivate marijuana (ganja or grass) in the state for medicinal purposes.

Talking to reporters here, Sawant said a file on marijuana cultivation in the state has been moved before the government, but it has not been approved. "There is a proposal, but that does not mean we have given approval. It is for the government to take a decision. That way there are many things which are proposed to the government, but are never approved," he said.

Sardesai, a former Goa deputy chief minister, on Monday asked how the government will ensure that cultivation of marijuana will be limited to medical purposes.

COURT GRANTS BAIL TO MAN IN DELHI RIOTS CASE

New Delhi, Dec. 29: A Delhi court has granted bail to a man in a north east Delhi riots case, saying there was no CCTV footage of the incident and the victim did not identify the accused when his statement was recorded the first time. Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat granted relief to Osama on furnishing a bail bond of ₹25,000 with one surety of like amount in the case related to gunshot injuries received by one Rohit Shukla during the riots at Mauipur Chowk.

The court said the victim did not identify Osama when his statement was recorded in March but in another statement recorded in April, he identified the accused as allegedly being a part of the unlawful assembly.

"Rohit had given a statement on March 9, 2020 but had not disclosed about the identification of the applicant. However, he had given another statement on April 1, 2020 and he stated that on February 24, 2020 at about 1.30 pm there were two groups of people, who were shouting slogans and protesting against CAA and NRC. In the crowd, one Sonu Chikna and his brother Atir and Osama and were shouting slogans. The crowd got violent and started stone pelting. Out of this crowd, one boy aged 24-25 years having red color hair wearing red color T-shirt and blue color pyjama and his mouth was tied with a cloth. The boy came out with pistol and tried to kill him. He also fired at the witness who received injuries in his head and blood started oozing out. Thereafter, the boy ran away. There is also no CCTV footage of the present incident. The court noted in its order passed on December 19.

4 ANMs HELD FOR ENTERING TEMPLE WITHOUT PERMIT

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 29

Four Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) workers were on Tuesday caught while entering Jagannath temple at Puri without having valid permit from the appropriate authorities. The four ANM workers were placed under arrest and taken by the chief district medical officer (CDMO) for allegedly entering the temple without any prior permission. They were reportedly deployed at the Singhadwar (Lion's Gate) to conduct thermal screening of the devotees visiting the 12th-century shrine.

In view of the risk posed by the Covid-19, the Jagannath temple (also known as Srimandir) which reopened on December 23 after a nine-month hiatus allowed phase-wise entry of public for darshan of Lord Jagannath. Family members of the temple priests and servants were allowed to have darshan from December 23-25.

The residents of Puri Municipality area have been allowed entry to the temple from December 26-31. After a hue and cry, working professionals, as well as students in the pilgrim town, were also given an opportunity to visit Srimandir. Those who have been allotted tickets can visit Srimandir from Tuesday (Dec. 29), informed Sri Jagannath Temple Administration officials. (development) Ajay Kumar Jena.

Control room set up to watch celebrations

Centre to coordinate with states to ensure norms are followed

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

Following the sharp increase in Corona cases during the Diwali festival, home ministry is clearly not taking any chances for the New Year celebrations. The Ministry has set up a centralised control room to co-ordinate with major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore among others to ensure that all necessary health protocols are strictly followed. Earlier on Monday, home ministry had extended the earlier issued Covid-19 containment guidelines till January 31.

Home ministry officials admitted that during the Diwali celebrations it was observed that people had become careless and it did not follow the health protocols which led to a sharp increase in number of cases particularly in big cities. Centre now clearly wants to avoid a repeat of the same and is thus closely co-ordinating with all metro cities and states to ensure all necessary "safety" and health protocols are in place.

"We have learnt from the experience of the Diwali festival season when people had become extremely careless which led to a sharp increase in Coronavirus cases. Now we have asked states and those cities which record high number of cases during the New Year's to strictly follow all health and Covid protocols," a senior home ministry official said.

Earlier in its advisory issued to states on late Monday evening, the ministry had said that, "while there has been a continuous decline in active cases in India, there is a need for surveillance, containment and caution due to the emergence of a new variant of the virus in the UK."

The ministry also asked the states and union territories to keep a strict vigil to prevent any rise in cases during the New Year celebrations and the winter season.



A medic demonstrates administration of Covaxin, an Indian government-backed experimental Covid-19 vaccine, to a health worker during their trials, at the Urban Primary Health Centre at Tezpur in Sontpur district of Assam on Tuesday.

It also asked the states and UTs to actively support central authorities in the preparations for an expected winter vaccination drive. "Accordingly, containment zones continue to be demarcated carefully prescribed containment measures strictly followed within these zones; Covid-appropriate behaviour promoted and strictly enforced, and the standard operating procedures (SOPs) prescribed in respect of various permitted activities followed scrupulously," the MHA said.

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MUMBAI AIRPORT INTRODUCES EXPRESS TESTING

Mumbai, Dec. 29: The city's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) on Tuesday said it has introduced a new 24x7 Covid-19 testing facility, which gives test results in flat 10 minutes at a cost of ₹4,500.

Since its launch on December 15, CSMIA has witnessed an average of 30-35 such tests per day. CSMIA said in a release.

A total of 400 express tests have been carried out at the airport till December 28, which include passengers who had connecting flights to destinations outside Maharashtra, it said.

In compliance with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) standards, CSMIA has the express test method by Abbott ID Now, which is aimed at providing quick and accurate diagnosis. CSMIA said in a release.

The round-the-clock testing facility option is available for all international arriving passengers at the airport at a cost of ₹4,500, CSMIA said.

JAWANS HURT IN SEPARATE J&K CLASHES DIE

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, DEC. 29

Two security forces officers injured in separate militancy-related incidents in Jammu and Kashmir last week succeeded in their injuries on Tuesday.

The officials said that Army's Havildar Anil Singh, a 30-year-old, was critically injured during a 20-hour long gunfight with militants in Kanigam village of southern Shopian on Saturday last his battle with life in a military hospital here.

Separately, an ASI of the CRPF identified as Netra Pal Singh who was injured in a grenade attack by militants in central Ganderbal district on December 24 died in Srinagar's Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences on Tuesday.

Assam: Expelled Cong MLAs join BJP

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, DEC. 29

Two Congress legislators — Ajanta Neog and Rajdeep Gowaala and former MLA of the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) Banendra Mushahar — have on Tuesday joined the BJP at Assam BJP office.

Asserting that Neog was considered to be one of the tallest leaders in the Congress party, state finance minister Himanta

Biswa Sarma said that her joining the BJP will strengthen the saffron party.

While welcoming the two sitting legislators in the party, Sarma said, "Her vast administrative and political experience will definitely strengthen the party."

Just before their meeting with the Union home minister, the Congress party had expelled the duo from the party accusing them of

involvement in anti-party activities.

Neog while joining the BJP in presence of state BJP president Ranjeet Dass said that "the Congress has now become an undisciplined party."

"There is a communication gap between the party leadership and the grass-root workers," he said.

"There were some ideological differences between me and the Congress," Neog added.



Farmers shout slogans during their protest against the new farm laws at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Farmer unions firm on repeal of 3 laws

SANJAY KAWI | DC NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

A day before the next round of talks, protesting farmers' unions took a hard stand and wrote to the Centre tightly ring-fencing the discussion scheduled to take place on Wednesday in their letter to the government. On Tuesday, the farmers unions wrote that the discussion will only be on the modalities of repealing the three farm legislations, giving a legal guarantee to measures on Minimum Support Price, and on two other issues they proposed earlier this week.

The letter was sent on the day Union home minister Amit Shah chaired a high-level meeting with his Cabinet colleagues Narendra Singh Tomar and Piyush Goyal — to discuss the measures which could put an end to the farmers' month-long agitation at the Delhi border.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella organisation of 40 farmer unions, also wants a detailed discussion on the amendments which can be effective to get farmers excluded from the penal provisions of the Commission for the Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance, 2020.

The farmers unions have deferred till Thursday their proposed tractor march against the three agriculture laws, so that the rally does not clash with their talks with the government. Earlier this week, the farmers' union had announced a tractor march from the Singhu and Tika borders to the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) highway on December 30.

Shah's meeting on Tuesday with his Cabinet colleagues was the second one in two days. A meeting was held on Monday following which the Centre invited representatives of protesting farmers' unions for the next round of talks.

Maintaining that the government is always ready to talk to the farmers with an open mind, agriculture secretary Sanjay Agarwal reiterated the Centre's commitment to address all issues with an honest intent. So far, the Centre has stuck to its stand of not repealing the new farm laws. But it has expressed willingness that will help break the deadlock with the protesting farmers, including tweaking the laws or even setting up a committee as suggested by the Supreme Court.



Farmers prepare green colour Jalebis, symbolising green revolution, at Singhu border in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Farmers choose unique protests

New Delhi, Dec. 29: Serving 'green jalebi' to taking out a 'baraat' (wedding procession), farmers protesting at Singhu border here are using innovative ways to communicate their grievances and demands to the central government.

A group of farmers from Mohali in Punjab have been preparing special green jalebis (sweet), saying it symbolised the colour of their crops and the prosperity associated with it.

"We have been distributing green jalebis from the last few days. Nearly five quintals of the sweet are distributed everyday," Jasvir Chahal, a protesting farmer, said.

"The green colour of the sweet symbolises Green Revolution as well as peace and tranquillity," Chahal's companion Baldev Singh (65) said at the protest site. "We have been peacefully protesting against the three new farm laws of the central government for over a month. Although the government has not accepted our demands, we are determined to continue the protest peacefully," he said.

Notably, many curious people queued up to taste the 'green jalebi' which is usually available in golden colour. Meanwhile, some youths from Karnal

in Haryana took out a marriage procession at the protest venue to draw attention towards their agitation. "We thought a marriage procession will be an interesting way to communicate the people and the government our demands and issues with the farm laws," said 22-year-old Jagjit Singh from Dabri village in Karnal.

The procession with a tractor passed through the crowded highway attracting lot of merriment from the protesting farmers camping there for over a month.

Farmers mainly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have been camping at different border points of Delhi for over a month to demand repeal of the three agriculture laws, which were voted through in Parliament in September amid strong protests by opposition parties.

We are requesting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government to give legal status to MSP to empower the farmers. The government should also address our genuine concerns over the three farm laws," Chahal said.

Opposition parties for "misleading" the farmers on the new laws, Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait, who is at the forefront of the protests at Delhi border, said, "If the Opposition was lost by not responding to the repeated offers of home minister of India who had stated 'my doors are open for everyone'," she said.

J&K | POLITICS

PDP chief emphasises that dialogue is pivotal for restoration of lasting peace in J&K

I won't raise white flag give up fight, says Mufti

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, DEC. 29

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mehbooba Mufti, said on Tuesday that she won't raise a white flag but continue to fight against the "illegal occupation" of the people of the erstwhile state and BJP's "gunda rag" over the country.

While speaking at a function held here to felicitate the PDP's newly elected District Development Councils (DDCs) members, she said that their

"resounding success" has come as a shock to those who had sought to write political obituaries of the party. "In their arrogance they thought by not allowing me to campaign, intimidating us and arresting our leaders, the PDP will not perform. Ours is not just a party but a movement which will not compromise on its ideals and core political philosophy of dialogue and reconciliation," she said.

Emphasising that for the restoration of lasting peace in J&K dialogue was pivotal, she said, "We will not allow Kashmir to be a



PDP president Mehbooba Mufti addresses her supporters during a function organised to felicitate newly elected DDC Councilors, Sarpanchs and Panchs, at party HQ in Srinagar on Tuesday.

battle ground but we will act as a bridge of peace between India and Pakistan."

She renewed her and the

party's "pledge" to fight for the rights and dignity of the people of J&K and asserted "No amount of coercion can force the people into submission. We will fight for our rights. We are not the ones who will raise white flags despite fatal blows being dealt to our identity, economy and livelihoods."

She claimed that her refusal to endorse BJP's plan of not handing over the bodies of the slain militants to their families for performing their last rituals, massive police crackdown on the Jamaat-e-Islami and similar dis-

agreements became reasons for the fall of the PDP-BJP government led by her in June 2018.

However, justifying the PDP's decision to cobbles up alliance with the BJP in 2015, she asserted that her father, Mufti Muhammad Sayeed did it only to "cage a jin" in a bottle so that Article 370 was not "touched." "It was after an agreement between PDP and BJP that Article 370 was not touched, historic roads (with PoK) will be opened and a dialogue with Hurriyat Conference leaders and Pakistan would be

held that the PDP joined hands with the BJP. That was the Agenda of Alliance," she said.

Mufti also said that separatist Hurriyat Conference leaders' closing their doors to an All Parties Delegation who had come to Srinagar in September 2016 set a bad precedent. "Their refusal to meet the delegation was lost by not responding to the repeated offers of home minister of India who had stated 'my doors are open for everyone'," she said.

SHORT TAKES

EU DEMANDS
CHINA RELEASE
ZHANG ZHAN

Brussels, Dec. 29: The European Union on Tuesday demanded that China release citizen journalist Zhang Zhan and several other jailed reporters, lawyers and human rights champions.

The EU statement was issued just ahead of Brussels signing a major investment pact with Beijing, despite concerns about China's labour and civil rights record.

Zhang was jailed on Monday for four years over allegations of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" during her coverage of the early stages of the Covid-19 outbreak in epicentre Wuhan, her lawyer said.

Prior to her detention, Ms Zhang Zhan had been reporting about the coronavirus pandemic in Wuhan, EU foreign policy spokesman Peter Stano said in a statement.

EXPLOSIVE
KILLED 3 FRENCH
ARMY IN MALI

Paris, Dec. 29: The French presidency said three soldiers were killed in Mali when an improvised explosive device hit their armoured vehicle.

The soldiers were participating in a military operation in the Hombori area of Mali's central Mopti province, part of a larger mission aiming at fighting Islamist extremists in Africa's Sahel region, the French presidency said in a statement on Monday.

Defense Minister Florence Parly said the soldiers were working "in an area where terrorist groups and armed civilians and threatening the regional stability".

Parly said they were involved in a mission aimed at ensuring Mali to gradually be able to ensure its own security.

The defense minister did not provide further details on the explosion, which occurred near the town of Gao.

France has more than 5,000 troops deployed in West Africa to help fight extremist groups as part of Operation Barkhane.

GAZA MILITANTS
FIRE ROCKETS
OUT TO SEA

Gaza City, Dec. 29: Palestinian militants in Gaza fired a salvo of rockets into the Mediterranean Sea on Tuesday as part of a self-styled military drill aimed at preparing for a possible war with Israel.

The Islamic militant group Hamas has ruled Gaza since seizing power from rival Palestinian forces in 2007. It has fought three wars and numerous smaller skirmishes with Israel since then. A fragile, informal truce has mostly held in recent years, with only occasional exchanges of fire.

Authorities in Gaza restricted movement along the 21-km coastal road and barred fishing for the duration of the exercises, which were to continue for a period of 24 hours and included the use of aerial drones. The drill was held by the Joint Command Room, which brings together 12 militant factions but is dominated by Hamas.

A masked spokesman for the militants said the "defensive maneuvers" also demonstrated their rejection of the "agreements of shame" referring to the recent U.S. brokered normalization accords between Israel and a number of Arab states.

FRENCH FASHION
DESIGNER PIERRE
CARDIN DIES AT 98

PARIS, Dec. 29: French fashion designer Pierre Cardin, hailed for his victory in creating styles but also for bringing stylish clothes to the masses, died Tuesday aged 98, his family told AFP.

Cardin, who was born to a low-income family in northern Italy but became a France-based fashion super, died in a hospital in Neuilly in the west of Paris, his family said.

"It is a day of great sadness for all our family. Pierre Cardin is no more," the statement said.

It said after a lifetime spanning a century he had left France and the world a "great unique artistic heritage" and not only in fashion.

VP-elect takes the jab



Registered nurse Patricia Cummings administers the Covid-19 vaccine to Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris December 29, 2020 at the United Medical Center in Washington, DC.

More people hospitalised in UK
than peak of first virus outbreak

London, Dec. 29: Official figures show more people are currently hospitalised with Covid in England than at the first peak of the outbreak in the spring.

There were 20,426 patients in hospitals as of Monday morning — the last day for which figures are available — compared to the previous high of 18,974 on April 12.

However, case figures do not include Scotland and Northern Ireland, which did not report over the Christmas period.

"Many of us have lost family friends, colleagues and friends at a time when we would normally be celebrating — a lot of people are understandably exhausted, frustrated and tired," said NHS England chief executive Simon Stevens.

"This pandemic... has spread around the world extremely quickly and it has affected every corner of this planet, but this is not necessarily the big one," Ryan added.

"We need to get ready for something that may even be more severe in the future." While huge scientific progress was made to study the virus and develop vaccines at record speed, WHO senior adviser Bruce Aylward cautioned that the world was far from ready for the next pandemic.

"We are into the second and third waves of this virus and we are still not prepared to deal with those," he said.

"While we are better prepared... we are not fully prepared for this one, let alone the next one," Good riddance, 2020!

Meanwhile, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa banned alcohol sales and made masks mandatory in public from Tuesday after a surge in Coronavirus cases.

Monday to have died, driving the UK total to 71,109, the second worst toll in Europe.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been under fire for his government's handling of the pandemic.

— AFP

WHO: Be ready for
worse pandemics

Johannesburg, Dec. 29: The Coronavirus has devastated lives and economies across the globe, but the World Health Organization (WHO) warned that worse pandemics could like ahead, urging the world to get serious about preparing for them.

"This is a wakeup call," WHO emergencies chief Michael Ryan told reporters at a briefing marking a year since the UN agency first learned of the new virus spreading in China.

"This pandemic... has spread around the world extremely quickly and it has affected every corner of this planet, but this is not necessarily the big one," Ryan added.

"We need to get ready for something that may even be more severe in the future." While huge scientific progress was made to study the virus and develop vaccines at record speed, WHO senior adviser Bruce Aylward cautioned that the world was far from ready for the next pandemic.

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Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been under fire for his government's handling of the pandemic.

— AFP

TOURISM REOPENS
IN SRI LANKA
AFTER 9 MONTHS

Colombo, Dec. 29: Sri Lanka has reopened to tourists after more than nine months.

The Indian Ocean island nation closed to tourists in March, amid the first wave of the coronavirus. Authorities also closed the two main international airports.

The government says a pilot program to restrict tourists to 1,000 is being implemented. The first tourists arrived on a special flight from Ukraine on Monday. The 186 tourists are expected to stay in Sri Lanka for 10 days.

Under the pilot program, which will run to Jan. 24, 2,580 tourists are expected to arrive in Sri Lanka, mostly from CIS countries.

Covid-19 has dealt a severe blow to tourism, a vital economic sector for Sri Lanka, accounting for about 5% of its GDP and employing 250,000 people directly and up to 2 million indirectly.

Previously, the government announced that the country would reopen to tourists on Aug. 1, but the date was pushed back after new clusters of Covid patients emerged.

He said authorities at the island received 433 men, 323 women and 848 children. Authorities insist all were willing to be relocated and no pressure was placed on them.

But several human rights and activist groups say some were forced to go.

It was the second group of Rohingya refugees transferred from crowded, squalid camps in Cox's Bazar district to the island. Authorities sent a second group of 1,642 on Dec. 4 despite calls for a halt by human rights groups.

Rear Admiral Md Masud Hossain, commander of the local navy, said the number of refugees willing to join the second phase of relocation "exceeded their expectations."

He said the authorities were initially expecting to relocate around 1,200 refugees, but 1,804 chose to go.

— AP

Biden sees risk in
transition starting

Trump's Pentagon appointees giving hard time

Wilmington, Dec. 29: President-elect Joe Biden said that Donald Trump's appointees at the Pentagon were stalling on the transition, warning that the US faces security risks as a result.

After he and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris were briefed by their transition teams on national security, Biden said that political appointees at the Pentagon as well as the Office of Management and Budget had put up "roadblocks."

"Right now, we just aren't getting all the information that we need from the outgoing administration in key national security areas," Biden said after the meeting.

"It is nothing short, in my view, of irresponsibility," Biden said he was seeking a "clear picture" from the outgoing administration on the force posture of US troops around the world.

"We need full visibility into the budget planning underway at the Defense Department and other agencies in order to avoid any window of confusion or catch-up that our adversaries may try to exploit," Biden said.

Trump has refused to concede the November election, which Biden won by some seven million votes and by 306-232 in the states by state. Biden's College. The president has made unsubstantiated claims of widespread fraud.

The Trump administration has drawn concern by shaking up the leadership of the Pentagon since the election including firing defence secretary Mark Esper who had distanced himself from the president's use of force against unarmed anti-racism demonstrators earlier this year.

1,804 ROHINGYA
RELOCATED TO
ISOLATED ISLAND

Bangladesh, Dec. 29: Seven Bangladesh navy ships carrying more than 1,800 Rohingya refugees have arrived at an isolated island where they will be relocated despite concerns among human rights groups about their safety.

They reached Bhashan Char island, 21 miles (34 kilometers) from the mainland, after a four-hour naval journey from the port city of Chittagong, government official Mohammed Khurshid Alam Khan said.

He said authorities at the island received 433 men, 323 women and 848 children. Authorities insist all were willing to be relocated and no pressure was placed on them.

But several human rights and activist groups say some were forced to go.

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He said the authorities were initially expecting to relocate around 1,200 refugees, but 1,804 chose to go.

— AP

Mike Pence sued to
overturn Biden win

Washington, Dec. 29: Several Republicans have sued US Vice-President Mike Pence in an improbable bid to overturn President-elect Joe Biden's victory, according to media reports.

The last-ditch legal effort, filed on Sunday, came from Representative Louie Gohmert, an eight-term congressman from Texas, along with 11 Arizona residents who had been nominated by that state's Republican Party to serve as electors.

The Hill reported. It comes over a week before Pence is scheduled to preside over a joint session of Congress where the Electoral College votes for Biden and President Donald Trump will be tallied.

Electors have already cast their votes two weeks earlier. Biden received 306 electoral votes, 6 more than he needed to win while Trump

received 232. The lawsuit focuses on Pence's role in the January 6 meeting of Congress to count the electoral votes and finalise Biden's victory over President Trump.

The lawsuit challenges the 1887 Electoral Count Act, which dictates the vice president's role in counting the results as a ceremonial one, 'The Dallas Morning News reported. The Republican lawsuit, which was filed against Pence in his official capacity as vice president, asks a federal judge in Texas to strike down the law as unconstitutional.

The Republican plaintiffs go further. They ask the court to grant Pence the authority on January 6 to effectively overturn Trump's defeat in key battleground states.

Election law experts have dismissed the lawsuit as "prospectless," saying it is "a PTI success."

Trump's new acting defence secretary, Chris Miller, has said that the outgoing administration has agreed with Biden's people to pause briefings for the holiday season, an assertion that the incoming team called untrue.

— AFP

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RUSSIA, TURKEY
TO DEVELOP
MILITARY TIES

Moscow, Dec. 29: Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said Tuesday that Moscow and Ankara's military cooperation would not be deterred by US sanctions on Turkey for acquiring a Russian missile defence system.

Washington this month punished Turkey for buying Russia's S-400 air defence system, imposing rare sanctions against a NATO ally.

— AFP

Pak fights for Basmati in
EU without locus standi

Islamabad, Dec. 29: While Pakistan is fighting a case in the European Union against the Indian move to get Basmati rice registered as its product, the commodity is still not registered as a local product in the country, according to a media report.

Laws require that before applying for registration of any product in the international market it has to be protected under the geographical indication

(GI) laws of that country. The Dawn reported that there are no rules of the Geographical Indications (Registration and Protection) Act, 2020 enacted in March this year and as a result, Basmati is not yet a protected product in Pakistan.

A rice exporter told the Dawn that exporters, particularly the Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan, had been urging the government since early 2000

to formulate the GI laws. "The laws were finally made in March this year, but the authorities have not yet framed the rules of GI law. As a result many local exportable products cannot be registered anywhere in the world with Pakistani GI tagging," the exporter said. "Even now the pressure of the case at the WTO is driving the authorities to finalise the rules for GI law at the earliest," he added. — PTI

UK to ban 'Buy 1, get 1' in fatty foods

London, Dec. 29: The UK government has set out plans to ban unhealthy promotions on food and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar from April 2022 as part of a wider anti-obesity drive.

The new rules, confirmed on Monday, will prohibit retailers from offering multibuy promotions such as buy one get one free or 3 for 2 offers on these products.

Unhealthy promotions will also no longer be featured in key locations, such as at checkouts, store entrances, aisle ends and

their online equivalents. We know families want to be presented with healthier choices, this is why we are restricting promotions and introducing a range of measures to make sure the healthy choice is the easy choice, said UK Public Health Minister Jo Churchill.

Creating an environment which helps everyone eat healthier foods more regularly is crucial to improving the health of the nation, she said.

The Department of Health and Social Care

support people to maintain a healthy weight, the DHSC said.

However, data shows that these deals actually increase purchases of promoted products by almost 20 per cent. They encourage people to buy more than they need or intend to eat.

Free refills of sugary soft drinks will also be prohibited in the eating-out sector.

In the New Year, Public Health England's Better Health Campaign will also run new adverts on TV and online to inspire and

other retailers place healthy choices for everyone and support people to lead healthier lives.

The location of products within stores can lead to "pesting power" from children and can also significantly affect people's choices.

For example, end-of-aisle displays have been shown to increase soft drink sales by over 50 per cent.

The latest annual government forms a key part of the UK government's strategy to tackle obesity and "get the nation fit and healthy."

— AFP

TOP TURKISH COURT RULES JAILING
OF RIGHTS DEFENDER KAVALA LEGAL

ISTANBUL, Dec. 29: Turkey's Constitutional Court on Tuesday rejected rights defender Osman Kavala's appeal for an immediate release pending trial, narrowly ruling that his detention immediately after acquittal was lawful.

A respected figure in international human rights, Kavala, 63, has been in prison for over three years despite being acquitted in February in connection with 2013 anti-

government protests.

He was immediately re-arrested and jailed on charges of espionage and involvement in a failed 2016 coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The next hearing is scheduled for Feb 5.

The official Anadolu news agency said the Constitutional Court ruled by an 8-7 margin that Kavala's ongoing detention did not violate his rights to liberty and security.

— AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

30 DECEMBER 2020

New strain demands a relook at measures

Reports of six returnees from United Kingdom testing positive for the new coronavirus strain are reason enough for the government and the people to be alert against the threat of the pandemic. Covid-19 marking another deadly wave across the nation. Experts are of the opinion that the new strain spreads at a faster pace than the original variant, and hence the government must put in place stringent measures to stop its spread.

The government has already decided that the guidelines for surveillance, which were to be effective till December 31, will continue to be in force till January 31. This is welcome, but it must consider if this is enough. Schools and colleges across the country, as well as entertainment centres, are in the process of opening, though under strict controls. Mass transport systems, such as railways are also easing the controls, albeit slowly. The government must examine the option of pressing the pause button on the 'unlock' process in view of the discovery of the new strain, taking, of course, the nation's economic interests, also into account.

The government must examine the option of pressing the pause button on the 'unlock' process in view of the discovery of the new strain, taking, of course, the nation's economic interests, also into account

That the reports come at a time when India has been showing a regular decline in the number of new coronavirus cases offers no solace and no reason to us for lowering the guard. There is no case to be careless until scientists and manufacturers are ready with the vaccine and the government has put in place a proper policy and mechanism to inoculate all the susceptible groups of people. It is reassuring that the government is now rolling out a dry run for the vaccination drive. But the real issue will be the availability of the vaccine in the required quantity in time, meeting the logistical challenges such as cold chain and the financial wherewithal to carry out the operation.

Vaccination is going to be a massive process given that the government is considering vaccinating about 30 crores of the population. There are reports that a sizeable section of the global population is rejecting the idea. That must be true for India, too, and it will necessitate another major public awareness campaign. There are already exaggerated reports about the after-effects of the vaccination flying thick and fast in mainstream, alternate and social media. The government must take extra steps to ensure that such propagandists face the legal music. All its actions must be guided by the fact that the virus has not gone away and that it is making an attempt to make a virulent return. A stitch in time can save nine, so goes the saying.

Just not cricket

Naming a cricket stadium after a politician-administrator is not new to India. But to have his statue erected with his name the late sportsman Teror Shah Khan after him appears a bit of a stretch even if the personality honoured thus was Arun Jaitley, who was a leading BJP figure in his lifetime. In a country known to relish the celebration of death and birth anniversaries, it may have been possible for the government to remember the memory of a leader. In this case, encomiums for a departed soul comes at the cost of the traditions of the great game of cricket, which has principally recognised sporting talent on the field.

Sports lovers grow up worshipping the heroes and, as they age they learn to respect athletes for their skills and for sweat and blood they shed to perform in a competitive environment. The administrator is a different breed. In India, most of them are attracted to the so-called honorary posts in sports admin because of perquisites and privileges. Furthermore, cricket is not only a social entre but also a key to the powerful inhabiting spaces in the corridors of politics and bureaucracy.

Politicians have been drawn to Indian cricket like moths to a flame. Many made sport their lifeline, ruling like martians while basking in reflected glory as champions have to interact with them. This is one reason why Bishan Bedi, a cricketer famous for calling a spade a shovel, found his hackles rising with the decision to erect a 800-kg statue for Jaitley who made himself a fixture at the Delhi & District Cricket Association.

An incensed Bedi has threatened to sue if his name is not removed from the stand honouring him and feting his achievements. He is a game as a bowler of spin in a seductive arc with a graceful action that was poetry in motion. Jaitley, for all his intellectual attainments as a forceful lawyer with a gifted gab and the country's finance minister, had no claim to mastery of an art form. So why should his name adorn a sporting arena?

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KARIMNAGAR
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-34, Fax: 040-27805256

Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patnam, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555244, 2555227, Telex: 0866-255524

Vizagapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailashgiri Ropeway, Sector-9/MVP Colony, Vizagapatnam - 530 011 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-2552333, 2552334, Fax: 0891-2552325

Rajahmundry: Vengal Rao, Chintamani Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-247618/247208, Telex: 0883-241728

Anantapur: Thapuvu colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903, Fax: 08554-276904

Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vaidhaly Colony, Jagtilla Colony, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-225808, Telex: 0878-225803

Nellore: Survey No.2772, Banaganapalle Village, Venkateswaram (M), Chennamangalam Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-234581/82, Telex: 0861-234580

Chennai: SPS Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-2254747/48/50/51, Ado Fax: 2254755/2254756/44/230125

Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Karimnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422-231255

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Subhani

After DDC: Will Centre further alienate J&K?

Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

Propaganda apart, the result of the recent District Development Council elections in Jammu and Kashmir cannot be said to have pleased the Narendra Modi government. This was the first proper test of people's endorsement in J&K after the willful destruction by the Centre of the erstwhile state's constitutional autonomy in August 1919, imbuing the elections with more than ordinary significance.

While the Hindutva party won the majority of seats (with no linking thread, or political meaning) in the Kashmir Valley, it did not quite heavily even in Hindu-dominant parts of the Jammu division. In these, the Valley-centric parties picked up seats.

Indeed, the BJP fared a lot worse here than it did in the Assembly election of 2014, which is a kind of comment on its all-round militaristic control of J&K since it scuttled its coalition government with Mehbooba Mufti's People's Democratic Party in 2018, possibly with the ulterior motive of playing games to install a Hindu chief minister, if feasible, for the first time in Muslim-majority J&K, or at least a BJP CM by roping in a Muslim.

Since the end of the rule of Maharaja Hari Singh — a Hindu ruler of mostly Muslim subjects — after he signed the Instrument of Accession in October 1947, the Hindu Right has been at odds with the CMs of Kashmir on account of their religion. There was a sense of loss of a "Hindu kingdom" in their narrative.

Breaking up the erstwhile state and making J&K a Union territory under "Hindu nationalism" control from the Centre might produce a

sense of catharsis. But that's as far as it goes. Much sought success in the BJP's bid to seek to stamp its political authority in J&K through the DDC polls, but the BJP has failed to materialise. How the Modi government negotiates the terrain here on will therefore be keenly watched. Hindu nationalists are dealing with Muslim citizens in a sensitive region.

The BJP's outsize celebration of the three Valley seats appears misplaced and pointless in the circumstances. Its chief purpose would appear to be to shore up the morale of the faithful when the picture is one of setback. Although the BJP government held a tight grip over Kashmir from the Centre, the electoral submission of Kashmir has not come to pass.

Obstacles were placed in the way of campaigning of the Kashmir parties. Kashmir's best-known leaders were maligned as corrupt and their properties sought to be confiscated. Their key cadres were detained. To prevent voting in South Kashmir, cordon and search operation were mounted on polling day in certain constituencies to assist candidates of the BJP or the Aam Party — the quiescent party. The BJP's opponents were detained yet again before the counting of ballots and one except the Prime Minister? And yet, it was BJP's opponents who won the election through the ballot box.

Even in the Hindu-majority area of Jammu, the BJP's opponents won only about half the seats, facing defeat in the constituencies of some of its key leaders. A below par showing in the Jammu division should be a matter of strategic

concern for the saffron party.

At first glance it suggests that the Hindu populace is no longer gung-ho about the abrogation of Article 370, as appeared to be the case initially. As in some other hill states and remote regions, in J&K too special constitutional protection was given to land rights and government employment for the local population. That has now gone in J&K and the Jammu-Hindu is as aggrieved as the Kashmir valley Muslim (or the Pandit).

The story was the reverse in the Valley. The BJP's bete noire, the People's Alliance for the Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), a conglomerate of regional parties — the National Conference, PDP, People's Conference and some smaller parties, although traditional rivals, have coalesced together. Their larger aim is to work for the restoration of J&K's autonomy. They have swept the polls in the Valley and made inroads in Jammu.

The formation of the PAGD is the result of a lesson learned. The mainline parties of Kashmir have boycotted the panchayat election two years ago to protest against the Centre's overbearing attitude after it had imposed Governor's Rule. The result was that the BJP and Congress or Independents backed by it won everywhere since there was no competition — in places by as few as six votes. The Narendra Modi government's publicised aim was to put the mainstream parties out of business, accusing their leaders of corruption and dynastic rule, and to grow a fresh crop

The method honed in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and the Northeast could well make an entry in J&K. But the more New Delhi alienates Kashmir, the harder it would be to deal with the Pakistan-China axis.

of politicians in the Valley. To prevent a repeat of the face of the panchayat polls, the mainstream parties came together as the PAGD. They decided to contest the DDC polls as well as to prevent a division of the anti-BJP vote. But more, it is the people of Kashmir, including those who have no love lost for the mainstream parties, who expressed their determination to keep the BJP and its proxies out of the reckoning.

The reason was straightforward. The saffron party's government in New Delhi had snatched away Kashmir's even largely technical autonomy, with which was linked its people's identity and sense of dignity. The Centre was also impervious to Kashmir's every need as a society. The Narendra Modi government had reversed the approach of late PM Atal Behari Vajpayee for whom showing respect to Kashmir's sentiments was bound with India's strategic imperatives.

In the DDC election it might have served the BJP's cause best if the Hurriyat Conference (which doesn't take part in elections) had given a boycott call, as it usually does. The Centre would have had a field day. But the Hurriyat did not oblige. The militants who have been in the Valley since August 5 last year.

However, the Centre can take revenge if better sense does not prevail. Fifty Independent candidates have been elected to the DDCs. The Moscow Power Institute is taking part in this work. The school will enroll Bachelor of Engineering students. It is planned to train them within two years, as Masters of Science in the specialities of automation, computer engineering and electronics. Staff members of the laboratory of automation and computer engineering of the Moscow Power Institute have even a detailed curriculum, taking into account the latest achievements of science and technology. A list of laboratory and research equipment have been compiled. Twenty-five Soviet scientists and engineers (led by Igor Gratskiy and Guran Chikharashvili) are to go to Bangalore in time for the beginning of the academic year.

LETTERS

CRIMES ON WOMEN

The fact that crimes against women have increased in a global pandemic shows how blatantly disrespectful the people are towards women

(Crimes against women rise in Rachakonda, DC, Dec. 29). Even though the SHE Teams are doing their best, the police's incompetence should be dealt with and women should be protected at all costs.

Zoha Fatima
Hyderabad

During the pandemic, staying indoors also didn't help women. It shows how wrongly people are getting educated. Government closed its eyes on justice and the negligence is showing up. Even after introducing SHE Teams the rise in crime is high. Laws, rules and education needs to be amended.

Sindhu
Hyderabad

DEFEATING COVID

If people are vigilant about their surroundings, the number of Covid cases will decrease daily (TS record 265 fresh Covid-19 infections, two deaths, DC, Dec. 29). We all can flatten the curve together and step into a healthier and safe nation if we wear masks, wash our hands and avoid public places when not needed.

Rucha V. Kayal
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

School of automation in Bangalore

MADRAS, Dec. 29 A school of automation is being set up at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, in accordance with Soviet-Indian inter-governmental agreement on economic and technical cooperation. The Moscow Power Institute is taking part in this work.

The school will enroll Bachelor of Engineering students. It is planned to train them within two years, as Masters of Science in the specialities of automation, computer engineering and electronics. Staff members of the laboratory of automation and computer engineering of the Moscow Power Institute have even a detailed curriculum, taking into account the latest achievements of science and technology. A list of laboratory and research equipment have been compiled. Twenty-five Soviet scientists and engineers (led by Igor Gratskiy and Guran Chikharashvili) are to go to Bangalore in time for the beginning of the academic year.

Raj Mohan Tella

In 2020, did smart words keep you company?

Words have an awesome power. We all know that words can help us express our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, likes and dislikes. Words also help us describe situations — how about slightly touchy or demographically explosive? Arm them and you can stand both positive or negative energy — You mean the world to me, I hate you. The same word can take on a completely different meaning given the context. Some examples are "fine", "sound", "kill it". What do you think this sentence means? "Dude, Raja killed the biryani!" A favourite word grouping of millennials, but if you are unaware, to "kill" actually means "to do something exceedingly well". Words have many ways of actually reflecting our current preoccupations and trends. I believe that words are also lessons from humankind.

So what have we learnt about ourselves from words in 2020? "Lockdown" is the Collins Dictionary's word of the year. For

Merriam Webster it is "pandemic". The lexicographers at Oxford University Press could not find a winner for 2020. A report explained, "Given the phenomenal breadth of language change and development in 2020, Oxford Languages concluded that this is a year which cannot be neatly accommodated in one single word." Some of the words they found ubiquitous were "bushfire", "impeachment", "acquittal", "coronavirus", "Covid-19", "lockdown", "social distancing" and "reopening".

So we were largely a worried, panic-stricken lot. Coping with the virus and our lives. Searching for light at the end of the tunnel in the form of a vaccine! But if you were a brand or a business that was interacting on a daily basis with audiences, would you not worry about the words that are getting associated with your activities and presence? Especially during the pandemic where the messaging loud and anxieties are already high. The difference

between being noticed, staying relevant and getting lost was a matter of choice. So if food brands did not talk about safety, hygiene and extra care in the manufacturing process and the supply chain, they have lost an opportunity. If a bank hasn't emotionally packaged its digital banking services, then it, too, was on the wrong side. Another example is salon care where proximity is a given and tensions of touch are high. So we had F&B brands talking about that taste you could trust and serving happiness with extra care. A salon chain stated its range of safety measures and its "Touchology" principle that would be at play when customers walked in with prior appointments.

Words, narratives and the meanings associated with them — all are important to brand messaging. Words to describe your brand, words that express the sense of loyalty and belonging. The key for a business has how well the audience is grasping the intent of the brand.

Because beyond semantics lie emotions, feelings and attitudes. You ought to possess a way of keeping track of the words and the associated sentiment around them. Certainly, you could take the aid of search words and keywords to reflect your brand and business but these have the limitation of not bringing out the concepts associated with the words. To me, it makes business sense to start out on a plan of getting the most appropriate and relevant set of words associated with your business and brand narratives.

Three quick examples here: 1. For a producer of organic brown rice, the words that need to be given up as concepts could be *has all parts of the grain, healthy nutrients, keeps you fuelled and fit*. 2. For a cloud migration company, the words could be *technology that grows with your business, pay as you use, unifying the data, securing the cloud* and so on. 3. For a chocolate company the words

could be *happy moments and memories*.

So, if you would like to build relevant narratives here's a short framework first thoroughly understand the needs of your audience; then brainstorm for the word concepts associated with them; don't try to create big words, keep them simple and sometimes an uncommon combination works well too (remember, genius is what you want to be). Antoine de Saint-Exupery said, "The meaning of things lies not in the things themselves, but in our attitude towards them." This applies to words, too...

Raj Mohan Tella is the founder of Brandlogues, a global brand consulting firm. He can be reached at rajmohan@brandlogues.com.

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	46,973.54 1.14
Nifty 50	13,748.25 1.09
S&P 500*	3,703.06 0.35
Dollar (₹)	73.42 0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.92 0.70
Euro (₹)	89.95 0.08
Gold (10gm) (₹)	49,965+28 0.06
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	51.29 0.00
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.929 -0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield	0.926 0.00

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Steel makers demand ban on iron ore exports

A steel producers' body has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, explaining that the metal price hike was due to surging raw material costs, and demanding a ban on iron ore export for six months, an official said on Tuesday. Hot-rolled coil prices have increased by 46 per cent to Rs 52,000 per tonne in November as compared to Rs 37,400 per tonne in July this year, industry sources said.

ICICI Bank buys 9.09% stake in edtech firm



ICICI Bank on Tuesday said it will acquire 9.09 per cent stake in educational technology platform Myclassboard Educational Solutions Pvt Ltd for cash consideration of Rs 4.5 crore. "ICICI Bank has entered into an agreement... in relation to an investment in Myclassboard Educational Solutions Pvt Ltd (MESPL)," ICICI Bank said. MESPL offers an online school management platform.

Godrej Consumer forays into home cleaning products

Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) on Tuesday said it has forayed into home cleaning products, a segment which is witnessing fast growth after the pandemic. The Godrej group firm would provide surface cleaning and disinfecting solution under its newly-launched brand Godrej ProClean, the company said. The home cleaning products segment is estimated to have Rs 2,600-crore market.

Dhanlaxmi Bank plans to appoint Shivan JK as MD



Debt-ridden Dhanlaxmi Bank has proposed Shivan J.K. as its new managing director and chief executive officer and has sought shareholders' approval for the same. Shivan retired as chief general manager of State Bank of India and handled various roles, including foreign operations. It has sought the approval from its shareholders to authorise the board to appoint Shivan as MD and CEO of the bank.

Auto parts biz revenue to grow 16% in FY22

Mumbai, Dec. 29: Ratings agency ICRA on Tuesday said that it has revised its outlook on the auto component industry from negative to stable, on the back of demand revival across original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), replacements and exports. ICRA expects the domestic auto component industry's revenue to grow 16-18 per cent in the financial year starting April 2021, supported by factors such as increasing content per vehicle, low base effect, and higher realisation.

Long-term demand drivers include increased focus on localised supply chains by Indian OEMs. Diversification of supply chain risk by global OEMs is also expected to lead to increased sourcing from India in the coming years, ICRA said in a statement. OEMs, which account for over 90 per cent of the auto component demand, have recorded a sharp increase in demand since September across all segments, barring the medium and heavy commercial vehicle industry, it added.

Volumes of the automotive industry will take 2-3 years to revert to the pre-Covid-19 highs. Schemes such as production-linked incentives could encourage OEMs and large auto component vendors to advance their investment plans, targeted at exports. It said the M&TICV demand has also bottomed out and increased in the December quarter of the current financial year. Thriving demand from the rural markets across the country has supported demand for two-wheelers and tractors, the rating agency added. ICRA has a stable credit outlook on the tractors, two-wheelers and passenger vehicle industries, it said. —PTI

Fall in ATMs stopped in 2020: RBI

FC BANKING BUREAU MUMBAI, DEC. 29

The declaration in the total number of ATMs (on-site and off-site) operated by banks has reversed during the year 2020, aided by all categories of banks, except public sector and foreign banks, according to an RBI report.

In a report titled *Trend and progress of banking in India*, released on Tuesday, the RBI said the total number of ATMs increased to 2,34,100 during 2020 compared to 2.21 lakh ATMs in 2019, a rise of six per cent. The small finance banks (SFBs) operated more than twice the number of ATMs operated by foreign banks as at end-March 2020, despite their smaller balance sheet size, said the RBI. Ten scheduled SFBs operated 1,996 ATMs compared to 963 ATMs by foreign banks. The number of ATMs with public sector banks fell to 1.34 lakh in the country compared to 1.36 lakh last year.

On the other hand, private sector banks increased their share by operating 73,652 ATMs compared to 63,940 ATMs in the previous year. The high growth of white label ATMs (WLAs) for the second consecutive year was fuelled by regulatory support such as permission to source cash directly from the Reserve Bank and permission to offer non-bank services.

More than 82 per cent of the WLAs are located in rural and semi-urban areas with high unmet demand for ATMs. Data available for 2020-21 so far indicate that the growth in WLAs continued as the rural economy was impacted as severely as the urban areas due to the lockdown associated with Covid-19 pandemic.

Airbags may become a must for front seats

Centre proposes to implement new policy from April 1, 2021

MICHAEL GONSALES PUNE, DEC. 29

In a bid to increase safety in cars, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways on Tuesday proposed to make airbags for front passengers mandatory in India's third biggest car market. The move is aimed at improving passenger safety in case of accidents.

According to a draft notification prepared by the Transport Ministry, the Centre plans to implement this safety norm for all new models of cars which are manufactured from April 1, 2021, onwards.

And, for already existing units, the date for complying with the new rule is proposed to be June 1, 2021.

In this regard, the



Centre has invited stakeholders to comment on its proposed new rule in the next one month. Earlier, the Centre had made having an airbag mandatory for the driver's seat in all cars. This had come into effect on July 1, 2019.

"Vehicles manufactured on and after 1st day of April, 2021, in the case of new models, and 1st

day of June 2021, in the case of existing models, shall be fitted with airbags for the person occupying the front seat, other than the driver. The requirement for such airbags shall be as per AIS 145... under the Bureau of Indian Standards act, 2016," the draft notification issued by the Transport Ministry stated.

For now, only the driver's seat, airbag is mandatory for all cars.

However, this leaves the passenger in the front seat completely vulnerable to severe injury or even death in case of accidents as the passengers in the front seat are not protected by the airbag.

Low-cost inclusions such as speed alert, reverse parking sensors and seat-belt reminders are some of the standard features in most cars but life-saving airbags are still not mandatory in India. The government has invited the concerned stakeholders to give suggestions on the matter in the next one month. Airbags for drivers were made mandatory by the Union government from July 2019.

Two-wheeler, car sales to see double-digit growth in Dec

MICHAEL GONSALES PUNE, DEC. 29

Wholesale growth would be in double digits for tractors, two-wheelers and passenger vehicles in December 2020, the latest research note from Emkay Global Financial Services said.

"In two-wheelers and passenger vehicles, there is favorable base effect due to inventory destocking last year," Raghunandan NL, analyst at Emkay Global Financial Services, said. He pointed out that the channel checks in the

market indicated retail sales were better year-on-year in tractors, while it is lower in passenger vehicles and two-wheelers. The tractor wholesales should be robust due to healthy retailing and channel checks in the

ndhan said, adding that dealer checks indicated an increase in inventory levels by up to one week.

He said Escorts domestic vehicle industry volumes should grow by 21 per cent while M&M, the market leader, should see 19 per cent growth. Raghunandan said the domestic two-wheeler volumes should grow year-on-year in the country, pointed out that TVS by 21 per cent, Royal Enfield by 16 per cent, Bajaj Auto by 13 per cent and Honda Motorcycle & Scooter by 10 per cent.

The dealer inventory levels stood at 46 weeks for mass-market OEMs, while it stood at below 1 week for Royal Enfield motorcycles.

He said the passenger vehicle industry volumes are likely to grow by 12 per cent compared to last year. Domestic volumes should grow 60 per cent at the beginning of the year. This is India's biggest automaker by revenues, 7 per cent for Maruti Suzuki and 6 per cent for Mahindra and Mahindra, utility vehicle specialist. Retail sales in December are likely to be notably higher than the wholesales due to inventory clearing.

GDP can be rebuilt in 3 ways, says ex-gov

Hyderabad, Dec. 29: Though Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown left a trail of economic devastation on most countries, India can potentially build upon three positive aspects, says an ex-governor of the state.

In the foreword on a book titled *Maandhyam Mantra Desam* (Nation in Recession) authored by Tummalala Krishnamoorthy, the former RBI Governor, said the challenge for the government in the months and years ahead is clear: to put the economy back on a healthy growth trajectory and ensure that growth is inclusive, with lower income households too enjoying the benefits of rapid growth.

"The expanded MNREGA provided a lifeline when most needed, and the flood of transfers and payments to women, pensioners and farmers have put money in the hands of households and have helped revive demand. The



brisk procurement by Food Corporation of India has buttressed farmers' incomes while it helped the government extend the fiscal deficit programme until end November," he said.

Subbarao said the second and positive aspect he sees is India's federalism, which, "warrants and all," has withstood the test of vigorous democracy. He said the third positivity is the country's huge consumption base with 1.35 billion people and a per capita income of just over \$2,000. "In a setting like this, any increase in income of the bottom half will quickly turn into consumption, which in turn will help production," he explained. —PTI

Gold gives 2nd highest return in 10 yrs

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, DEC. 29

Gold prices have provided 27 per cent returns in 2020 — the highest since 2011. With economic uncertainties and lower stock market returns prevailing, the gold prices are expected to move past \$2,000 during the first half of next year. Moving up from \$39,280 per 10 gm in the Indian market at the beginning of the year, gold prices have almost ended the year around \$50,000, providing handsome returns of 27 per cent. This is the highest return the yellow metal has provided after 2011 when it had appreciated 27 per cent.

In the international market, gold moved up 19 per cent from \$1,574 per ounce at the beginning of the year to \$1,878. In between, gold prices had made fresh highs by moving past \$2,000 per ounce in August. Silver provided spectacular returns of 45 per cent in the domestic market as well as the international market. Lower interest rates across economies, bond-buying programmes and



dollar weakness supported gold prices throughout the year. In addition, Covid-19 fears and the impact it had on the economies further accelerated gold's bull run. "Equity markets were overbought and the valuations

remained high. This also favoured gold's movement," said Ajay Kedia, MD, Kedia Commodities.

Investors flocking towards safe havens saw gold ETF inflows touching record high in 2020.

In the Indian market too, gold ETF AUMs saw fresh highs and sovereign gold bonds saw a rise of much higher than the previous years.

However, expectations about the release of a vaccine and stronger dollar in the second half of the year kept gold prices under control.

BDB lifts ban on lab-grown diamond trade

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, DEC. 29

In a move that will streamline lab-grown diamond processing in the country and help it grow as a separate segment, Bharat Diamond Bourse (BDB) has revoked an earlier ban on its trading.

By revoking the ban, Bharat Diamond Bourse has accepted the expansion of lab-grown processing happening in India. BDB had passed a resolution to ban the trading of lab-grown diamonds in 2015.

Increasing processing activity, De Beers launching its Lightbox jewellery brand of lab-grown, detection becoming cheaper and quicker, advent of blockchain technology for tracing diamonds through the supply chain and consumer acceptance are some of the reasons that led to the decision.

"Five years" back, machines to detect lab-grown diamonds were not readily available and were expensive. But now we have advanced machines available at reasonable rates. Further, enough awareness has been created around the world and across the full pipeline and the demand for lab-grown diamonds has increased across the globe," said Vipul Shah, the vice-chairman of BDB.

Import of rough lab-

China aims to sell vaccines for influence, but people refuse to trust Sinovac

China struggles to get word to trust its vaccines

Hong Kong/Karachi, Dec. 29: Of all the developing countries testing China's Covid-19 vaccine, few are friendlier to Beijing than Pakistan.

In the years leading up to the pandemic, China financed nearly \$70 billion across the South Asian region. Yet interviews with people in Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city — as well as in other developing nations from Indonesia to Brazil, together with surveys and official comments — show that China has failed to assure the millions of people who may have to rely on its vaccines.

"I won't take it," said Farman Ali Shiekh, a motorcycle driver in Karachi for local ride-hailing app Bykea, as local shops closed early ahead of an 8 p.m. virus-induced curfew. "I don't trust it."

That mistrust, and the reliance of dozens of poorer nations on China to inoculate their populations, could set the stage for a major global political headache if citizens offered the Chinese vaccine feel they are being

with dozens of poorer nations amid an anticipated shortage of Western-developed shots. But there has been little information about how the Chinese versions have fared in final-stage clinical trials, with just the United Arab Emirates and China itself endorsing the vaccines for emergency use so far.

That uncertainty presents another roadblock in China's efforts to extend its political influence across Asia, Africa and South America. Bolstered by its virus success, Beijing sparred with the US, UK and Australia over everything from the origins of the virus to crackdowns in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. The pain of the pandemic also hardened the stance of the US and China in wider economic disputes, including American efforts to stop countries from adopting the technology of China's Huawei Technologies Co.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said in a tweet on Monday that Chinese-made vac-

cines may be the "only choice" for governments that haven't secured supplies from wealthy countries" had booked three quarters of the estimated 12 billion vaccines set for production next year.

If Chinese vaccines aren't available, developing nations will turn to other suppliers, "and China will lose leverage," Huang said. "We're not sure how the economic loss — diplomatic and strategic gains will also be undermined."

— Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Former NZ Test player Reid dead

Wellington John F. Reid, who scored six centuries in 19 Tests for New Zealand including 108 in a famous win over Australia, has died. He was 64. His death after a long illness was confirmed on Tuesday by New Zealand Cricket. Reid's century against Australia at Brisbane's Gabba ground in November, 1985 was instrumental in New Zealand's win by an innings of 41 runs. He shared a then-record 225-run partnership with Martin Crowe (188) for the third wicket which helped New Zealand to 553-7 in their only innings. Richard Hadlee took 9-52 in Australia's first innings and 6-71 in the second to secure the win. Reid was an elegant left-hander known for his skill against spin bowling and the Brisbane innings, on a fast, bouncy pitch, proved his ability against pace. — AP

Sydney confirmed as third Test host

Sydney: Cricket Australia on Tuesday decided to retain Sydney as the venue for the third Test against India, ending speculation that the game could move to Melbourne because of stringent Covid-19 border restrictions that would have affected the players' movement for the fourth match in Brisbane. The third Test is to be held from January 7. The series is currently locked 1-1 after India won the second Test in Melbourne, which was played on standby in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak in Sydney's northern beaches before Christmas. "Despite the many challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, I am delighted to say Cricket Australia remains on track to deliver the men's international series as scheduled," Cricket Australia's Interim CEO Nick Hockley was quoted as saying by 'cricket.com.au'. — AP

Australia fined 40% of match fee

Melbourne: The Australian cricket team was fined 40 per cent of their match fee and penalised four ICC World Test Championship points for maintaining a slow over-rate against India in the second Test, which concluded here on Tuesday. ICC match referee David Boon imposed the sanction after Tim Paine's side was ruled to be two overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration during the second Test, which the hosts lost by eight wickets. "In accordance with Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to minimum over-rate offences, players are fined 20 per cent of their match fees for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time," the ICC said in a statement. — AP

S. Africa hammer injury-hit Lanka

Centurion, South Africa: South Africa wrapped up victory by an innings and 45 runs shortly after lunch on the fourth day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at SuperSport Park in Centurion on Tuesday. Sri Lanka, needing 225 runs to avoid an innings defeat, were bowled out for 180. Kusal Perera hit a spirited 64 off 87 balls for the tourists and debutant Wanindu Hasaranga slammed 59 off 53 balls. — AP
Brief scores: Sri Lanka 396 and 180 (K. Perera 64, W. Hasaranga 59, L. Nigdi 2-38) vs South Africa 621.

Live on TV

CRICKET
Big Bash League: Hobart Hurricanes vs Brisbane Heat from 1.45 pm on Sony Six

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

English Premier League: Tottenham Hotspur vs Fulham from 1.30 pm
Newcastle United vs Liverpool from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Star Sports Select 1

WWE
NXT: Bout from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, 10

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"S AKKICKO!"

India floor Aussies on Day Four of Boxing Day Test

Melbourne, Dec. 29: Hungry for redemption, India recorded a win for the ages under an inspirational Ajinkya Rahane, beating Australia by eight wickets in the second Test to level the four-match series 1-1 here on Tuesday. The target of 70 was never a big one but for a team that was bowled out for its all-time lowest score of 36 only 10 days back, one can't fault them if that played at the back of their minds.

Shubman Gill (35 not out) and skipper Rahane (27 not out) knocked off the runs in 15.5 overs to complete the victory. This was after the quartet comprising Jasprit Bumrah (2/54 in 27 overs), debutant Mohammed Siraj (3/37 in 21.3 overs), Ravichandran Ashwin (2/71 in 37.1 overs) and Ravindra Jadeja (2/28 in 14 overs) showed maniacal consistency over a period of 100 overs on the hottest of decks, with Siraj extra bounce became their go-to weapon.

"The talk was all about showing attitude, intent and character. One hour took the game away from us in Adelaide, but we still have a lot to learn," Rahane said in the post-match presentation.

Indian teams, since the turn of the new millennium, have had some memorable overseas victories but when the backdrop and context of this Test at the iconic MCG is recorded for posterity, Rahane and his magnificent bowling unit will find more than an honourable mention in the pages of history.

"Really proud of all the players credit to our debutants Gill and Siraj. The way they showed character was amazing," Rahane said.

Australia captain Tim Paine had nothing to offer as an explanation for why his side could not capitalise on the big absences. — PTI



Captain Ajinkya Rahane (right) and opener Shubman Gill embrace to celebrate India's victory in the second Test against Australia at the MCG in Melbourne. — AP

SCORECARD

Australia 1st Innings 195
India bat Innings 326
Australia 2nd Innings (overnight 133 for 6): Matthew Wade lbw b Ravindra Jadeja 40, Joe Burns c Pant b Umesh Yadav 3.3-0-51, Mohammed Siraj 21.3-4-37-3, Ravichandran Ashwin 37.1-6-71-2, Ravindra Jadeja 14-5-28-2.
India 2nd Innings: Mayank Agarwal c Paine b Starc 5, Shubman Gill (not out) 35, Cheteshwar Pujara c Green b Cummins 3, Ajinkya Rahane (not out) 27. Total (For 2 wickets, in 15.5 overs) 70.
For: 1-6, 2-19.
Bowling: Mitchell Starc 4-0-20-1, Pat Cummins 5-0-22-1, Josh Hazlewood 3-14-0, Nathan Lyon 2.5-0-5-0, Marcus Labuschagne 1-0-9-0.
8-177, 9-185.
Bumrah 27-6-54-2, Umesh Yadav 3.3-0-51, Mohammed Siraj 21.3-4-37-3, Ravichandran Ashwin 37.1-6-71-2, Ravindra Jadeja 14-5-28-2.
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1-4, 2-42, 3-71, 4-98, 5-98, 6-99, 7-156, 8-177, 9-185.

Shastri lauds India's 'comeback' victory

Melbourne, Dec. 29: India's head coach Ravi Shastri termed his team's eight-wicket win against Australia on Tuesday as one of the greatest comebacks in the history of the game after the visitors were "blown away" in the series-opener in Adelaide.

Shastri lauded the entire team with special praise for resilient debutants Shubman Gill and Mohammed Siraj after the 36 all out nightmare in the opening Test in Adelaide.

"I think it will go down in the annals of not only Indian cricket but world cricket as one of the greatest comebacks in the history of the game. To be rolled over for 36 in three days and then get up and ready to punch back was outstanding. Boys deserve all credit for the character they showed. It's real character." — RAVI SHASTRI, India coach

ent from the team for the millions of fans around the world to have a happy new year, bringing some smiles on the faces going into the New Year," he said.

Fearless cricket has been the mantra of a Virat Kohli-led unit for long and the team led by Ajinkya Rahane didn't deviate from the script.

"That's the brand of cricket we have been playing for the last three or four years." He was effusive in his praise for Shubman Gill, who scored 45 and 35 not out and Siraj, who had a debut haul of five wickets.

"When you play in the last Test at the MCG, you want to show that kind of fear, discipline and maturity, it was great. Today Siraj's numbers were outstanding." — PTI



Ravichandran Ashwin (right) celebrates after bowling out Josh Hazlewood during the fourth day of the second Test at the MCG in Melbourne on Tuesday. — AP

Ashwin says Rahane brought calmness in dressing room

Melbourne, Dec. 29: Ajinkya Rahane brought calmness in the dressing room in the absence of regular captain Virat Kohli, spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said on Tuesday after India recorded an epic series-leveling win in the second Test here. Shot out for a record low score of 36 in their second innings in the last Test at Adelaide, India came into the blockbuster MCG Test with Kohli who is on paternity leave.

But the team under Rahane showed resilience to bounce back, effecting an extraordinary turn-around to level the four-match series 1-1.

"Getting bowled out for 36 was never going to be easy. We are quite a proud cricketing country and losing Virat was a bit of a setback," the star-off-spinner told 7 cricket.

"...but we stuck on really well. Jinks' calmness in the dressing room really provided us that stability to go out there

PRAISE APLENTY

To win a Test match without Virat, Rohit, Ishant & Shami is a terrific achievement. Loved the resilience and character shown by the team to put behind the loss in the 1st Test and level the series. Brilliant win. Well done TEAM INDIA.

— SACHIN TENDULKAR, India great

What a win this is, absolutely amazing effort by the whole team. Couldn't be happier for the boys and specially Jinks who led the team to victory amazingly. Onwards and upwards from here.

— VIRAT KOHLI, India captain

Hats off to Indian cricket team, what a fantastic game after playing poor cricket in Adelaide, you made us proud. Ajinkya Rahane, you and your team, proud of you, you didn't have your captain but you showed the way... carry on doing that, well done.

— KAPIL DEV, Ex-India captain

Stunning response from India after the 1st Test, Australia's top order have been horribly exposed. Some tough decisions required.

— TOM MOODY, Former Australia player

Cricket fraternity hail Rahane & Co

New Delhi, Dec. 29: The Indian cricket fraternity on Tuesday hailed the national team for the resilience and character it showed to redeem itself after the Adelaide debacle to win the second Test in Melbourne.

India, led by Ajinkya Rahane, levelled the four-match Test series 1-1 after defeating Australia by eight wickets in the second match at the MCG. Rahane led from the front with a match-winning 112 in India's first innings.

Star batsman Rohit Sharma, who will join the side in Melbourne on Wednesday after completing his mandatory quarantine, praised the team for showing composure in difficult times.

"Fantastic win for the Team India at the MCG. Character and composure shown throughout the game was excellent to watch @bcci," Rohit tweeted.

However, former India captain Bishan Singh Bedi had a word of caution for the 'Men in Blue' and advised them to stay calm. "(The) 36 all out was terribly 'freakish' but an 8wk

win is not... I hope Indus can forget both... one as a nightmare & the other as nothing to float on cloud nine... Still 2 more Tests to go... plenty of work to do, stay calm Fellas as yur Capt @ajinkya rahane88 & 'think' how to outwit OZ!" tweeted Bedi.

Former India batsman VVS Laxman singled out debutants Shubman Gill and Mohammed Siraj for special praise.

"Lot of positives from this win. Rahane led the side brilliantly. Bowlers were relentless but the biggest positive is the performance of two debutants. Both of them were confident and not overawed by the big occasion. Strength of Indian cricket is their strong bench strength," he tweeted.

Former India opener Virender Sehwag also took to Twitter to praise the performance of Rahane and his team.

"A really special win at the MCG. Great Determination and great character. Rahane led from the front, the bowlers were terrific and Gill is chill," tweeted Sehwag. — PTI



Mohammed Siraj (second from left) is congratulated by teammates after dismissing Nathan Lyon on the fourth day of the second Test at the MCG on Tuesday. — AP

Newbies Gill, Siraj impress Ajinkya

Melbourne, Dec. 29: India skipper Ajinkya Rahane on Tuesday singled out the debutant duo of Shubman Gill and Mohammed Siraj while commending the tremendous character shown by his side to turn it around in the second Test here for a series-leveling triumph.

Gill scored 45 and 35 not out in the game while Siraj returned with five wickets, including three in Australia's second innings.

"I am really proud of all the players. I want to give credit to the debutants Siraj and Gill, the character they showed after the Adelaide loss was great to see," Rahane said after the match.

"Character was important for us, especially after losing Umesh in the second innings," he added, referring to the mid-match injury suffered by pacer Umesh Yadav.

Rahane said it is never easy for debutants to be consistently disciplined in their game but Gill and Siraj showed how it is done.

"Shubman, we all know his first-class career and in this game, he has shown the intent to play shots at this level, has shown composure."

"Siraj has shown that he can bowl with discipline. It's really difficult for debutants to bowl with disci-

pline but that's where I think the First-class experience comes in handy." "I am really proud of all the players. I want to give credit to the debutants Siraj and Gill, the character they showed after the Adelaide loss was great to see," Rahane said after the match.

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"Siraj has shown that he can bowl with discipline. It's really difficult for debutants to bowl with disci-

MELBOURNE, INDIA'S MOST SUCCESSFUL VENUE AWAY FROM HOME

■ With fourth victory in 14 Tests at Melbourne Cricket Ground, it became India's most successful venue away from home.

■ Previously they had won three Tests each at Queen's Park Oval (Trinidad), Sabina Park (Jamaica) and at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground in Colombo. No other team apart from England has won more than three matches at the MCG.

■ It was only third instance of teams coming back from 0-1

down to win the second Test in Australia in the last 50 years. The West Indies came back from 0-1 to win at the WACA, Perth in 1975-76. After that, it was New Zealand in 2011 in Hobart.

■ The last team that won back-to-back Tests at the MCG were Pakistan in 1975 and 1981, and before that India in 1977 and 1980.

■ No Australian batsmen scored fifty in this match. It is first time in 32 years when no Australian

batsman scored a fifty in a Test match at home. Incidentally, that was also at the MCG against the West Indies.

■ In the last thirty years, away from home, this has happened to Australia only three times.

■ Mohammed Siraj took 5/77 runs in the Test. It was second best match figures for overseas debutants in Australia.

■ Sri Lanka's Lasith Malinga (6/92) is the only bowler to have taken more than Siraj's five wick-

ets in such a scenario. Only four Indian pacers have taken more wickets on debut away from home than Siraj.

■ Marcus Harris' 70 in Sydney last year was the highest score for an Australian batsman in last six Test matches between India and Australia. Since the start of 2016 there have been just two batsmen who have scored Test centuries for Australia against India - Steven Smith (three) and Glenn Maxwell (one). — S. PERVEZ QASIR