

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | FRIDAY 17 | JANUARY 2020

WEATHER



Max: 31°C
Min: 18°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Vikari: Thai 3
Tithi: Saphthami
Star: Chithirai
Rahukalam:

10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam:

3.00 pm to 4.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.20 am
Zohar: 12.23 pm
Asar: 3.35 pm
Maghrib: 6.01 pm
Isha: 7.17 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.02 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.36 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 10.38 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 11.52 AM

IIT-M device to produce hydrogen fuel

Chennai: In an effort to combat vehicular pollution, researchers in country's premier Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras have developed a green tech to generate hydrogen fuel from waste and seawater. Abdul Malek, who completed PhD from Chemistry dept at IIT-M, has planned to launch a start up, 'Gen-Madzi Hydro Fuel', to develop hydrogen fuel for vehicles, missiles and rockets. ■ P2

SC dismisses telcos' plea seeking review of verdict

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Thursday dismissed review petitions of top telecom firms including Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea seeking review of its earlier order asking them to pay ₹1.47 lakh crore in past statutory dues by January 23 saying it did not find any "justifiable reason" to entertain them.

Putin cements power as Russian Duma votes for PM

Moscow: Russian lawmakers are set to quickly approve the appointment of a new prime minister Thursday, a day after President Vladimir Putin kicked off an unexpected reshuffle of his inner circle that could keep him in power well past the end of his term in 2024. Mikhail Mishustin, the chief of Russia's tax service, met with lawmakers from various factions in the State Duma ahead of the confirmation vote in the Kremlin-controlled lower house.

COUNTER POINT



Cook double the quantity. The MLAs are likely to have a lengthy discussion on drought!

Market report

GOLD
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SILVER
Bar (1 Kg): ₹50,200.00
INDICES
Sensex 41,932.56 pts
Nifty 12,355.50 pts
EXCHANGE
US\$: ₹71.01 Euro: 79.03

NATION | 7

Lalu in court for last fodder scam case



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SPORT | 14

India to take on Australia in 2nd ODI



TABLOID

Stun Siva bags award for his acting prowess



Vol. 15 No. 291 Established 1938 | 32 PAGES | ₹ 3.00

India slams China for going to UN on Kashmir

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
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Pakistan" and that "the informal closed-door meeting, therefore, concluded without any outcome".

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Pakistan that needs to be discussed, it should be discussed bilaterally", adding that "Pakistan can avoid this global embarrassment time and again by putting their energy in something constructive". The MEA said "it once again highlighted that Pakistan's desperate measures to peddle baseless

allegations and presenting an alarming scenario lacked any credibility".

Sources said no other country at the UNSC backed China which means that 14 out of the 15 UNSC members backed the Indian position. Sources also said Beijing seems to be under tremendous pressure from Islamabad to keep raising the issue informally at the UN. This is the third time China has attempted to raise the matter. The first was in August last year, soon after India revoked Article 370, when the UNSC informally discussed the situation in Kashmir. The second attempt was made in December, but China backed off.

BULL POWER



A bull jumps over a tamer at the jallikattu event in Palamedu, Madurai on Thursday. As many as 600 bulls and 400 bull tamers participated. ■ More on P2 — Kasi Manikandan

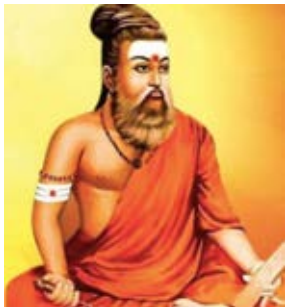
TIRUVALLUVAR DAY

V-P replaces saffron robes to avoid tension

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The state was rocked by a series of events last November relating to the dress of the cultural icon who gave Tamil one of its best literary treatises. It started with digitally dressing up Tiruvalluvar in saffron since in all earlier images he had been only in white. Then, a controversy raged. First, his statue at



Pillariaripatti near Thanjavur was smeared in cow dung, under cover of darkness, and later on draped in saffron by a leader of a Hindutva outfit. During those days, several BJP acolytes circulated visuals of the digitally dressed Tiruvalluvar, which was viewed as a cultural invasion as the official image of poet was constructed by scholars based on his explicit philosophy, evidenced from his writing, which is primarily secular. So the painting by Venugopal Sharma, in which Tiruvalluvar is draped in white with no sacred thread, was used in the postal stamp released in his memory and for the

portrait adorning the Assembly walls and hence accepted by all.

Though the image of Tiruvalluvar in saffron was first circulated when Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a Thai translation of Tirukural in Thailand, Friday's tweet of Modi had no images and just said: 'I bow to the great Thiruvalluvar on his Jayanti. His rich thoughts and literary works give strength to millions. He inspires us to work toward social equality, justice and compassion.' However, the tweets of Tamil Nadu BJP stalwarts, particularly H Raja and S Ve Sekar, had images of the poet in saffron robes.

BJP Tamil Nadu also put out a tweet that gave a religious twist to Jallikattu. It said, 'When Lord Shiva took the form of a hunter and wrestled with Arjuna with a view to testing his strength, Arjuna had the privilege of embracing God. Based on that episode, Hindus embrace the bull, which is a form of Nandhi that is Lord Shiva's vehicle.'

'Trump's poor knowledge of India, China geography left Modi stumped'

Washington, Jan. 16: Donald Trump once left Prime Minister Narendra Modi flabbergasted after he told him that India and China didn't share a border, revealing the US President's "woefully" poor knowledge of geography, according to a new book authored by two Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalists.

The 417-page book, 'A Very Stable Genius', written by Philip Rucker and Carol D Leonnig, detailed similar vivid incidents from Trump's tumultuous



first three years as President, the Washington Post reported on Wednesday. The businessman-turned-politician won the US presidential election in 2016 and assumed the position on January 20, 2017. ■ P13

Trump impeachment: US House sends historic case to Senate

Washington: The US House of Representatives passed a resolution and submitted the articles of impeachment against Donald Trump to the Senate for a historic trial to remove him from office, a move described by the unfazed President as "another con job" by the Opposition Democrats.

Nirbhaya convicts shifted to jail no. 3 for hanging

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Children being radicalised in Kashmir: Chief of Defence Staff

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Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen Bipin Rawat on Thursday suggested that highly radicalised young people in the country could be put in de-radicalisation camps as a way to deal with terrorism.

He said that to end terrorism, ideology, and radicalisation has to be addressed on priority. "Anything that has started can be put to an end. To say that radicalisation cannot be countered, I don't quiet agree with it. Radicalisation can be countered," said Gen Rawat. He said that one has to



start countering radicalisation by looking where it is happening and who are the people who are radicalising people. "It is happening from schools, universities, from religious places and sites and then there are group of people who are spreading it," said Gen Rawat. He said that one has to get to the nerve of the whole thing by identifying who is radicalising the people.

"You can start isolating these people gradually. And then start a counter-radicalisation programme by identifying people who have been radicalised to what degree. You got to segregate them in degrees and then look at those who have been completely radicalised, first target them," he said. "But then also start looking at the future like what we are seeing in Kashmir. We saw radicalisation happening. Today we are seeing radicalisation being undertaken even among the young people, girls and boys as young as 10 and 12, are now being radicalised," said Gen Rawat.

Dhoni may bat on but no BCCI contract

R. MOHAN | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 16

The Dhoni era may really have ended the day he was caught centimetres short when he stretched his bat but did not dive for the crease in the World Cup semi-final against New Zealand. He had not picked up a bat since that fateful day in England last July. On Thursday, BCCI ended his tenure on the A list in which contracted players are paid the highest annual amount of Rs 5 crore. The irrepressible, if enig-



matic, Dhoni carried on without a care of what plans others had for him. He came out to the Jharkhand Ranji team nets on Thursday. He has also invested in a bowling machine to hurl the quick stuff at him, with white

balls. Of course, he had stopped playing the red ball game long ago, mid-tour in Australia six years ago. Dhoni made his Test retirement public in an unusual manner in December 2014 when he was down under. His turning up in India colours in a T20i again is in the realm of speculation. But one thing is for sure - Chennai's favourite cricketering son will be at the helm of CSK in IPL season-13 and, perhaps, one more season. In playing IPL he would also be deflecting criticism

that he is not being judged on performance like everyone else. The selectors can gauge his form and fitness in the IPL too. And no one discounts the possibility of his being picked for the T20i Worlds that begin in Australia in October. The man who set alight the first T20i Worlds by leading India to a surprise victory in 2007 might fancy another shot at the title, as batsman and wicket-keeper, which his 38 years would still permit him. BCCI sources said there are several officials willing

to back a plan to fete Dhoni for his enormous contribution to Indian cricket by holding a T20i series in India, with a match also in Ranchi, as a farewell series for him so that the country could honour him in a proper way before he gives up the international game. Dhoni is just not eligible for an annual contract since he has not shown himself to be active in the game. This may not quite be the end of the Dhoni era but close enough to it if he isn't picked for T20 Team India again.



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NATION | 7

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SPORT | 14

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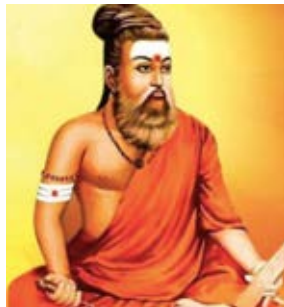
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'Brave' Davinder was an extortionist

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD, JAN. 16

Stories of his "ruthless" ways of interrogating suspected stone-pelters and terrorists inside dingy rooms across the Kashmir valley are well-known and police officials of all ranks of the UT police force have tales of their colleague DSP Davinder Singh's bravado, including one when terrorists opened fire and a bullet pierced his left leg during an operation a few years ago.

But behind his khaki uniform was a man, it turns out, who allegedly threatened dozens of Kashmiri families with "serious consequences" after randomly picking up their loved ones and torturing them, on the mere suspicion of their involvement in stone-pelting or links with terrorist groups - and later extorted money for their release.

If whispers in the police are true, Singh would not bother to withdraw his salary for months together, as he was already making lakhs of rupees.

The details of his extortion is tumbling out even

● Jammu and Kashmir administration has withdrawn the Sher-e-Kashmir Police Medal for Gallantry awarded to Deputy Superintendent of Police Davinder Singh who was arrested along with two Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) militants in southern Kulgam district earlier this month

as the National Investigation Agency (NIA) is interrogating Davinder Singh, the DSP who was posted in the anti-hijacking squad at Srinagar airport and was arrested ferrying two wanted Hizbul Mujahideen terrorists in Kulgam recently.

Sources associated with the investigation as well as some colleagues told the DC that under Singh's direct supervision, while he was at SOG (Special Operations Group) and positions like DSP, Pulwama, over the years, hundreds of youths were picked up after raids on their houses in different parts of the Valley. Kashmir witnessed cycles of stone-pelting incidents over the past decade, something that was an industry for terror groups.



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ED summons AirAsia CEO Tony Fernandes

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned senior executives of Air Asia including CEO Tony Fernandes next week for questioning in connection with a money laundering case, officials said.



Pongal gesture

DMK president M.K.Stalin and Durga Stalin distributed new clothes and sweets at a 'Pongal Vizha' at Vallakottai near Chennai

SHORT TAKES

Three kg gold seized

CHENNAI: Customs sleuths seized 3.4 kilograms gold worth ₹1.39 crore at the Chennai international airport. According to the sources, on Tuesday, based on information that the gold is likely to be smuggled by some passengers arriving from Colombo, a strict vigil was kept by AIU officers of customs at the arrival hall. Six Sri Lankan nationals, Mohammed Rishan (47), Althaf (51), Mohammed Rimaz (33), Mohammed Rafeek (39), Mohammed Lahir (36) and Smzul Wadeka Moulana (45) who arrived by Sri Lankan airlines flight were intercepted at the exit. On persistent questioning, all admitted having concealed gold in the paste form in rectum. Around 3.40 kg of 24-carat purity valued at ₹1.39 crore was recovered and seized under the customs act of 1962. Three passengers were arrested and further investigations are underway.

Rajnath to inaugurate induction of Su-30 fighter squadron

Thiruvananthapuram: Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh would inaugurate the induction ceremony of SU-30 fighter squadron at the Air Force Station in Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, Air Marshal Amit Tiwari said on Wednesday. At a press meet here, Tiwari said this would be the second frontline fighter squadron of the Indian Air Force (IAF) to be based in South. The induction ceremony would take place on January 20 and the fighters would have the most potent platform capable of long reach and multi-role capabilities, he said. The maritime strike squadron inducted in the IAF is also armed with the indigenous Brahmos missile, Tiwari said.—PTI

Quarrel between parents drives boy to suicide

14-yr-old hangs self, upset dad ends life

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN 16

In a sad event, a 14-year-old boy committed suicide on Wednesday night as he was reportedly upset with his parents quarreling in Chengalpet. Minutes after the boy's death, his 45-year-old father also committed suicide.

According to the police, Balakrishnan (45), a resident of Muthigainallan Kuppam village in Chengalpet district was a van driver who lived with his wife, Sundari (38) and two sons Vetrivel (14) and Deva (5).

Police said the couple used to quarrel often because of Balakrishnan's drinking problem and abusive nature. Meanwhile, on



Wednesday night, an argument broke out between them and Vetrivel intervened and tried to solve the issue. However, things got out of hand and Sundari left for her mother's house in the same area. Upset over this, Vetrivel allegedly committed suicide on Wednesday night after his father went to sleep. At midnight, Balakrishnan had woken up to find Vetri missing

● The couple used to quarrel often because of Balakrishnan's drinking problem and abusive nature. Upset over this, Vetrivel allegedly committed suicide on Wednesday

and when he went in search of him, found him hanging from the ceiling in another room. A shocked Balakrishnan informed his wife about the incident, but when she rushed to the house she found her husband next to his son.

On being alerted, Thirukazhukundram police recovered the bodies and sent them to the Chengalpet government hospital for post-mortem. A case has been registered and an investigation is underway.

Tribunal orders ₹86L for techie's kin, estranged wife

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 16

The Motor Accident Claims Tribunal, Chennai, has directed an insurance firm to pay a compensation of ₹86 lakh to the family of a 32-year old IT professional who was killed in a road accident. A share of the amount will be paid to the estranged wife of the victim, too, as per the order.

In his petition, P. Jayaraman had stated that his son Vijayaraghavan, 32, a senior

engineer with WIPRO drawing a monthly salary of ₹44,045, was fatally knocked down on April 25, 2012 by a truck when he was driving his two-wheeler on the Medavakkam - Perumbakkam main road. His discharge summary said he died due to injuries.

The Mount traffic investigation wing had filed a first information report against driver and hence the owner of the truck and the insurance company L&T General Insurance Company

Limited were mandated to pay the compensation to him and his daughter J. Premalatha, he said. He also sought compensation for Parameswari, the estranged wife of the victim though their divorce case has been pending before a Chennai court.

Judge at Vth Small Causes Court V. Sutha said negligence of the driver led to the accident and ordered the company to pay Jayaraman and Paramaswari ₹42,88,350 each and Premalatha ₹40,000 as compensation.

Actress' suicide attempt leaves her in critical condition

Chennai: TV actress Jayashree, who recently filed a domestic violence complaint against her husband and actor Ishwar Raghunathan because of which the actor was arrested, attempted to commit suicide on Wednesday. She has been admitted to a private hospital in the city.

Jayashree was in the news a few weeks back after her allegations of an affair between her husband and actor Ishwar Raghunathan and actress Mahalakshmi. She had also made child molestation complaints against Easwar, who was reportedly in a relationship with him in the television serial Devathayai Kanden. He was jailed and has come out on bail. According to the police, after taking the extreme step, Jayashree sent an audio message to her friend saying she was depressed and didn't wish to live anymore. She was found unconscious by her friend who rushed her to the hospital. A case has been registered. —DC

PUJAS FOR NANDI



The huge Nandi at Kapaleeswarar temple in Mylapore is decorated with a variety of sweets to mark Mattu Pongal on Thursday.

—DC

Five held for driver's murder

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN 16

A gang of five members was arrested for murdering a driver in full public view in Uthiramerur in Kanchipuram district on Wednesday evening. According to the police, the victim, N.Madan (26), a resident of Uthiramerur, was working as a car driver in Maraimalai Nagar and living in a rented room there.

Police said he visited his native Uthiramerur to celebrate Pongal and on Wednesday night when he

was walking to a theatre near his house around 7 p.m., an armed gang of five started following him. Apprehending trouble, Madan attempted to flee, but the gang pounced on him and attacked him with deadly weapons and fled the spot.

On information, a police team rushed to the spot where Madan was lying in a pool of blood. He was taken to a private hospital nearby, where he was pronounced dead. The body was shifted to Chengalpet government hospital for post-mortem.

Preliminary inquiries revealed that the deceased had developed illicit intimacy with a married woman, and that could have been the reason for his murder. The police officers suspected the hand of one Dhasarathan and his four other friends in the crime.

Based on information obtained during the interrogation of a few persons, the police arrested Dhasarathan, who admitted to having killed Madhan for having an affair with his wife Ashwini. Police said Dhasarathan

and Madan were relatives and Madhan used to visit his house when he developed an affair with Ashwini.

Knowing this, Dhasarathan had warned his wife and Madan, despite which they continued their relationship and that is when he decided to eliminate Madan.

Based on Dhasarathan's inputs, Police arrested, Kannariyam (24), Deva (30), Kanniappan (34) and Karthikeyan (35). They were remanded to judicial custody.

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Indecorous

Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy criticizes Lt Governor's office releasing a statement on corruption charges against him

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Politics

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SHORT TAKES

Pondy CM dares Bedi to prove land grab charges

Puducherry: Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy on Thursday challenged Lt Governor Kiran Bedi to prove the land-grabbing allegations made by a rebel Congress legislator against him. Slamming Bedi for making public the allegations against him and his son by suspended Congress MLA N. Dhanavelou, the Chief Minister told reporters here it was "shocking" that she came out with a press statement on the issue without ascertaining their veracity. He also said the Lt Governor should verify the genuineness of the charges before issuing the press release. Hitting back at the Chief Minister, Bedi said he should challenge MLA Dhanavelou for making the charges instead of wasting energy on her. The former IPS officer in a WhatsApp message to Narayanasamy said, "the Chief Minister needs to counter the allegations made by his own party man who according to media reports has been suspended temporarily today instead of challenging me." She advised Narayanasamy to challenge his own party MLA, who has been making the allegations against him. Bedi, who has been at loggerheads with the Chief Minister ever since she assumed office in 2016, also said she has advised Dhanavelou to hand over the evidences to the CBI exclusively dedicated to the Union Territory. She pointed out in no uncertain terms in her message that challenging her was only a "verbal tirade and is misdirected". Bedi also told Narayanasamy that he could as well counter the allegations before CBI if the investigating agency so probed the matter. Suggesting to the Chief Minister to convene a special session of the territorial Assembly, she said Narayanasamy could ask the MLA to make the allegation on the floor of the House and then make his statement. "DO not waste your energy on me. You should challenge the one who challenges you. I have already told your party MLA to go to CBI. We will await their investigation and facilitate their enquiry if they seek help. We are duty bound to assist the investigation agencies," she stated in her message.—PTI

Rebel Pondy Cong MLA suspended

Puducherry: Rebel Congress Legislator in Puducherry N. Dhanavelou was on Thursday suspended from the party on charges of indulging in 'anti-party activities.' Addressing a hurriedly convened press conference here, PWD Minister and PCC president A. Namassivayam said Dhanavelou had been indulging in 'anti-party activities' violating basic principles of party discipline. He said the suspension of the legislator came into 'immediate effect'. Namassivayam along with the Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy returned from Delhi on Wednesday after apprising Congress president Sonia Gandhi and senior leader Rahul Gandhi of "continued anti-party activities of Dhanavelou." The PCC leader said "on the recommendation of the high command Dhanavelou has been placed under suspension." Namassivayam said a show-cause notice would be served on Dhanavelou seeking his explanation which would enable the party's Disciplinary Committee to go in for next course of action. Dhanavelou elected from Bahoor constituency would be asked to submit his reply to the cause notice in a week's time. Namassivayam alleged Dhanavelou had been making attempts to topple the Congress government in collusion with the opposition AINRC and BJP. The PCC leader also accused the Bahoor MLA of meeting independent legislator from Mahe N Ramachandran at one stage to seek his support to dethrone the Narayanasamy-led Congress government here, which the latter rejected. Namassivayam also said that he and the Chief Minister had placed before the AICC leaders a detailed report about Dhanavelou's "anti-party activities" for some time now and now the high command had recommended his suspension.—PTI

Joint exercise to strengthen ties between two nations

ICG eyes 200 ships, 100 aircraft inventory by 2025

Chennai, Jan 16: The Indian Coast Guard has planned to acquire 16 advanced light helicopters apart from 50 vessels to its fleet as part of its vision to have 200 ships and 100 aircraft inventory by 2025. Speaking to reporters on Thursday, Coast Guard Director General Krishnaswamy Natarajan said, "Today we have 50 ships under construction in various Indian shipyards and apart from that we have 16 advanced light helicopter MKIII under production with HAL, Bengaluru."

The first of the twin engine helicopter was expected to be inducted by March 2020, he said after the 19th edition of Indo-Japan joint exercise "Sahyog-Kaijin," about 50 nautical miles off Chennai coast.

Natarajan noted that the Coast Guard has recorded significant progress and the present inventory was at 145 ships and 62 aircraft.

"The budget (of Coast Guard) which was about ₹1,000 crore has now grown to more than ₹5,000 crore in terms of both revenue and capital," he said.

"We are also in the process of acquiring 14 twin engine heavy helicopters and 6 multi-mission maritime aircraft



Indian Coast Guard and the Japanese Coast Guard undertake Joint Exercise code named "Sahyog-Kaijin" off Chennai coast on Wednesday.

which will have a capability of maintaining surveillance in our exclusive economic zone," he said.

The Indian Coast Guard, fourth largest coastal security agency in the world, has installed 36 Coastal Surveillance Radar Network on the mainland and 10 on islands that can track suspicious vessels.

"We also plan to install 38 more Radar Stations apart from integrating the radar stations with Vessel Traffic Management System of the Ports. Our vision is to reach 200 ships and 100 aircraft by 2025," he said.

On the joint exercise, he said this year it was the turn of Japanese Coast Guard to visit India, fur-

ther strengthening ties between the two nations.

Natarajan said the Japanese Coast Guard has extended support to Indian Coast Guard by capacity building in the form of training.

"You all should know Japan Coast Guard is the second largest Coast Guard of the world, after the US. I can also proudly say Indian Coast Guard has acclaimed the stature of 4th largest with 145 ships in its inventory and 62 aircraft..." he said.

In 2019, the Coast Guard has apprehended ₹2,000 crore worth of drugs with most of them from the Western Coast.

Referring to the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC)

signed with his Japanese counterpart, the official said Coast Guard has signed similar agreements with South Korea, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Oman, Vietnam and Pakistan.

On the MoC, Japan Coast Guard commandant admiral Takahiro Okushima said the relationships between the two coast guards was getting stronger every year.

"So far we have conducted 18 such joint exercises. Through today's exercise we realise once again the partnerships steadily enhanced..." he said.

Earlier in the day, the exercise was conducted off the Chennai Coast as part of strengthening the bond between the two countries.

One ship of the Japanese Coast Guard and four ships and an aircraft of the Indian Coast Guard took part in the exercise.

Led by Commanding Officer Captain Kiyoshi Harada, the 'Echigo PLH08' and the four ships and a Dornier aircraft of Indian Coast Guard participated in the drill around 50 nautical miles off Chennai.

The exercise marked demonstrations of search and rescue, external firefighting and sharing of best practices.—PTI

SSI killing: Two suspects brought to TN for investigation

Kanyakumari(TN): Two suspects in the murder of a policeman at a check post in the district, were brought here for interrogation on Thursday, amid tight security.

The duo was medically examined at the Thakalai police station and interrogated in connection with the murder of Special Sub Inspector Wilson, police said.

The two men had shot at Wilson using a pistol and stabbed him when he was on duty at the Kaliyakavilai checkpoint on the border with Kerala on Jan 8.

They were picked up from Udipi Railway station in Karnataka on January 14. The suspects have been identified as Abdul Shameem (29) and Taufeq (27), both hailing from Thiruvithancode near Nagercoil.

According to police sources, the duo has confessed to having links with some IS activists from Kerala's Mallapuram and Kozhikode districts. They were said to be helping them recruit members for the terror outfit.

The police said they were trying to ascertain whether the duo conspired to carry out any attacks in Tamil Nadu.—PTI

Happy to celebrate Pongal as a farmer, says CM Edappadi

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC SALEM, JAN 16

"I am happy to celebrate the harvest festival of 'Pongal' as an ordinary farmer with all of you," said Edappadi Palaniswami without flaunting his Chief Ministerial tag as he joined the festivities in his native Siluvampalayam village in Edappadi union in Salem district on Wednesday and Thursday.

Interacting with local farmers, he said he was more happy to be with them as one amongst them rather than as Chief Minister. At the courtyard behind his house, 'Pongal' was cooked in the open by family members and friends.

Mr. Palaniswami offered prayers and then fed the cows with sweet rice. He also distributed 'sweet



Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami celebrates Pongal at his native village near Salem.

Pongal' to the people of his village. He also witnessed a display of folk arts, besides trying his hand with the tennis racquet and took potshots at the traditional game of 'Uriyadi'. In Edappadi he also launched the 'Tennis Club'.

Mr. Palaniswami said the festival reflected the best of Tamil traditions and conveyed his greetings to the people on the occasion. Several MPs and MLAs' were among the hundreds of people who participated in the function.

Prepare fresh provisional selection list: HC to TRB

J.STALIN | DC CHENNAI, JAN. 16

In a major relief to the candidates who were not selected to the post of PG Assistants in Chemistry, the Madras high court has directed the Teachers Recruitment Board to prepare a fresh provisional selection list for the posts of PG Assistants in Chemistry.

Justice N. Anand Venkatesh gave the directive while disposing of a batch of 10 petitions from K.Shobana and others.

According to M.R. Jothimani, counsel for the petitioners the TRB issued a notification on June 12, 2019, inviting applications through online from eligible candidates for direct recruitment to the posts of PG Assistants/Physical Education Directors, Grade I in school education and other departments for the year 2018-2019. Petitioners had applied online for the posts of PG Assistants in Chemistry. After written examination and certificate verification, the TRB published the provisional selection list and the petitioners did not find their names in the list. On going through the list, the petitioners found that the TRB had fitted meritorious candidates under MBC quota instead of general turn and thereby 34 vacancies which ought to have been considered under general turn were fitted in to MBC.DNC quota. Aggrieved over the same, they filed the present petitions, Jothimani said.

The judge said in the considered opinion of this court, the entire confusion has arisen due to the wrong reading of the provision under section 27 of the Tamil Nadu Government Servants (Conditions of Service) Act. The said pro-

vision provides for reservation of appointment. Section 27 (f) merely states that if the required number of candidates belonging to the communities which fall under reservation were not available, then, the vacancies for which selection could not be made in the current year, should be treated as backlog vacancies and, in the subsequent recruitment, the backlog vacancies and the current vacancies for the particular community must be separately announced and that the direct recruitment must first accommodate the backlog vacancies and thereafter only, the current vacancies can be accommodated.

This was very clear from a plain reading of the above said provision, the judge added.

The judge said in the present case, the TRB has read the provision as if the backlog vacancies must be fitted in MBC/DNC category irrespective of the merit of the candidate or the rank secured by him/her. "This wrong understanding of the provision has resulted in confusion in preparing the provisional selection list. Also, in the instant case, the highest mark that was secured was 109 and, up to 90 marks, the candidates were fitted in general turn. Where the candidates have secured high marks and come within the merit category, the candidates will have to be selected under general turn irrespective of their community. While undertaking this process, the community does not play any role and it is only merit that is taken into consideration. The candidates, who fell within the category of BC and who secured the marks between 109 and 90 have rightly been fitted in general turn. However, when it came to MBC/DNC category

instead of fitting the candidates thereof in general turn, they have been fitted in MBC/DNC category. This mistake is very apparent on the face of the impugned provisional selection list that has been made the subject matter of challenge in these petitions. The TRB went wrong in understanding the purpose of section 27 of the Act. The said provision merely provides that the backlog vacancies will have to be first accommodated and thereafter only, the regular vacancies should be accommodated. This does not mean that the backlog vacancies of a particular community will not be considered under general turn irrespective of the merits/rank", the judge added.

The judge said in view of the discussion, this court was of the considered opinion that the provisional selection list prepared by the TRB has to be reconsidered and in lieu thereof, a fresh provisional selection list prepared.

While preparing the fresh provisional selection list, the TRB was directed to fit in all the candidates under general turn, only based on their merit and ranks, irrespective of their community and when it comes to the selection of candidates belonging to a particular community, who do not fall within the merit/rank, they should be considered under the community quota, based on the marks fixed for that community.

While doing so, the backlog vacancies must be first accommodated and only thereafter, the current vacancies must be filled up. With the said clarity in mind, the TRB shall proceed to prepare the fresh provisional selection list for the posts of PG Assistants in Chemistry within two weeks, the judge added.

Is Congress-DMK alliance heading south?

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR | DC CHENNAI, JAN. 16

Will the simmering differences between the Congress and DMK in Tamil Nadu flare up into a conflagration and scorch the alliance? The question rangles in the minds of many even as the state's political class gears up for the 2021 elections to the Assembly and also for the next set of civic elections to the urban local bodies and the left-out rural local bodies, which are expected to happen soon.

But the speculation of a break raises more questions. One, will it lead to a realignment of forces in the state? Two, who will be the bigger loser if the DMK and Congress go their own way? The answers could be deduced from the utterances of leaders and cadre, who have been shooting their mouths in the last days.

There was a clear indication of a possible political realignment with State

Minister and AIADMK honcho D Jayakumar saying on Thursday, 'anything can happen in politics,' and even wondering why the Congress should remain with the DMK after it had been made to look like baggage by DMK Treasurer and former minister Durai Murugan.

Durai Murugan, in a press meet on Pongal Day, had said 'Let them go, they have no vote bank,' when he was asked about the peevish of the Congress over the lesser allocation of seats in the local bodies. But Durai Murugan's suggestion that it is the Congress that has to lose something by breaking free, however, was disputed by Congress leaders immediately and vehemently.

On Friday, Congress MP from Virudhunagar, Manicka Tagore, reacted to Durai Murugan's statement saying nobody is anybody's slave and one need not remain in an alliance by taking insults, exuding

the hope that his party was not at all dependent on the DMK for electoral gains.

He reminded the media that the Congress had supported the candidature of Kanimozhi when the DMK wanted to field her for a Rajya Sabha seat in 2013 though both the parties were not in an alliance then.

He also recalled the recent by-election to the Vellore Lok Sabha constituency, from where Durai Murugan's son Kathir Anand won with a majority of around 8,000 votes.

When former MLA Wallajabad Hassan filed his nomination from the constituency as an independent giving rise to fears that he might split the votes of the DMK-Congress alliance as he was a locally popular politician, it was TNCC president K S Alagairi who intervened, he said.

After exhausting all his endeavours to make the independent candidate

NEWS ANALYSIS

withdraw his nomination, Durai Murugan had to urge Alagiri to make a trip to Vellore to personally persuade Hassan, who had won as a rebel candidate in the past. It helped Kathir Anand win the elections.

Another top state level leader, TNCC Working President Mohan Kumaramangalam said the Congress party had given its full support to the DMK when it ruled the State without a majority in the House between 2006 and 2011, enabling Durai Murugan to complete his term as PWD Minister.

"Why you did not get this wisdom earlier?" asked Karti Chidambaram, Sivaganga MP, in a tweet tagging both Durai Murugan and his son Kathir Anand, triggering an exchange in Twitter.

The controversy was, however, started by TNCC president KS Alagiri and Congress Legislative Party

Leader KR Ramasamy by issuing an open statement on January 10 expressing pain over the DMK short-changing their party in the allocation of seats in the rural local body elections.

Though the statement, in which DMK's alliance dharma was questioned, created a storm at the grassroots level of the DMK but was justified by Congress workers and local leaders, the real fall-out happened only a couple of days later at New Delhi. Surprising many, the DMK boycotted the anti-CAA meeting, called by the Congress.

It was rumoured that Alagiri had made a bid to douse the fire by writing to the DMK, clarifying that he was only expressing the sentiments of the cadre, but the DMK wanted the letter to be made public in Delhi, to which the Congress was not game.

DMK MP from Sriperumbudur, TR Baalu, who was in Delhi on that day, skipped the meeting,

called by Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi, sending across the message that all was not well between the two parties. When he was asked about the fate of the alliance, he said 'time will give an answer'.

Reacting to that, Alagiri, who arrived in Chennai after a meeting with his party high command in Delhi on Friday, said, 'time will always give good answers,' which did not explain if the alliance would continue or not.

However, there is ample speculation in the political circles, some of them even preposterous.

Taking into account the DMK leadership's apparent anger against the Congress and the words of Durai Murugan, it is said that the party might take a final call at the party executive meeting, scheduled for January 21.

So if the DMK snaps ties, for which many second rung leaders in that party are not favourably

inclined, will the Congress gravitate towards the AIADMK, which is desperate to shed the 'anti-minority, pro-Hindutva' image? Minister Jayakumar has not ruled it out. It can happen, say some, adding that the combine may even rope in actor Rajinikanth, if he were to launch his party by then.

To give credence to the theory of Rajini holding the hands of Congress, they point to a recent remark by former Union Minister P Chidambaram, who welcomed Rajini's statement that there would be a political change in 2021.

When Chidambaram had broken away from the Congress along with the late G K Moopanar in 1996 to form the Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC), which subsequently had a tie up with DMK, Rajinikanth had played a vital role in ensuring the victory of DMK-TMC. As Jayakumar said, "anything can happen in politics."



Award for Ilayaraja

Music maestro Ilayaraja was conferred the 'Harivarasanam Award' jointly instituted by Kerala government and Travancore Devaswom Board

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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State

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SHORT TAKES

1 drowns in sea off Dhanushkodi

Rameswaram: In an unfortunate development, one person was drowned in the sea off Arichalmunai, the southeastern extreme point of Rameswaram island, police said on Thursday. The tragedy happened when S Mubarak, 22, of Madurai, was bathing in the sea and was submerged by strong waves. He was part of a group of 44 persons including 21 women who travelled by an omnibus from Madurai to Rameswaram Arichalmunai near Dhanushkodi. Mubarak was struggling for his life when police on information rushed to the spot and tried to rescue him with help of local fishermen. He was then rushed to the Rameswaram government hospital where doctors declared him brought dead. Coastal Security wing police are investigating.

Speeding car kills 4 women

Thanjavur: At least four women were killed, one on the spot and three others at Thanjavur Medical college hospital after admission, and four other persons were injured, when a car rammed into them as they were walking on a road near Vallam Puudur near here on Wednesday evening. The names of the deceased were given as Kavitha (25), wife of Manikandan of Nethaji Nagar, Bengaluru, Selvi (45) wife of Selvam of Nethaji Nagar, Keerthi daughter of Selvi, and Kanniyammal (48), wife of Devaraj. While Kavitha died on the spot, the other three women died at hospital. According to the police, the deceased and injured were walking on the road after taking bath in a tank at Vallampurudur and were going to a prayer hall where people gather on Pongal evening and offer prayers, when the car hit them. Among the injured Satyanarayanan, driver of the car, his parents-father and mother in the car and Balakrishnan of Thirukattupalli, were admitted to Thanjavur Medical College hospital.

3 killed in different mishaps

Tiruvarur: At least three persons including an engineering graduate were killed in three different road accidents in Tiruvarur, and Tiruchy districts on Wednesday night. In the first mishap, two persons including an engineering graduate were killed on the spot when a two-wheeler they were riding collided with a state-owned Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) bus proceeding to Coimbatore from Mannargudi, at Serumangalam village near Tiruvarur. Police said the deceased were identified as Rajkumar (24) and his friend Dinesh (24) hailing from Karakkottai village and they were on their way to Mannargudi when they met with this fate. Vaduvur police took into custody of the bus driver Durairaj and are investigating. A 65-year old woman was fatally knocked down by a speeding car when the deceased attempted to cross the Tiruchy-Thanjavur national highway near suburb Ariyamangalam on Wednesday night. The deceased was yet to be identified, police said. Police arrested the car driver Balasubramanian of Coimbatore and are investigating.

2 DPC staff suspended in Tiruvarur

Tiruvarur: Two employees of the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCS) attached to the paddy direct purchase centre (DPC) at Kudavasal near Tiruvarur were suspended for allegedly purchasing paddy without valid documents. Tiruvarur collector T. Anand said in a release here on Thursday that the relieved employees are Selvam and Sampath. The Collector told the farmers that if they noticed any irregularities in the DPCs' they should bring to his notice and based on that suitable action would be taken. He said that 210 DPCS are functioning in Tiruvarur district during the current 'Samba' season to purchase paddy directly from the farmers.

HOMAGE TO THYAGARAJA



Hundreds of musicians paid homage to Saint Thyagaraja by singing his pancharathna kritis in chorus at the aradhana for the saint at Thiruvaiyaru on his 'Panchami Tithi' on Wednesday.

— DC

'Yaanai Pongal' at MTR in Nilgiris

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, JAN. 16:

The hoary 'Mattu Pongal' in the countryside on Thursday turned out to be jungle Pongal at Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) on Thursday, wherein 'Kumki' elephants in the elephant camp there celebrated 'Yaanai-Pongal' that charmed an impressive turnout of tourists who thronged to the camp to witness this event.

While 'Mattu-Pongal' is being celebrated to honour cattle and livestock which are part of human life and do yeoman service in farming, at MTR jungles it was celebrated as 'Yaanai-pongali' to recognize the services being rendered by the kumki jumbos, especially, in managing the

man-animal conflict in challenging times and terrains. The occasion was also to underscore their role in jungle perambulation and safaris, which help to promote wildlife tourism.

Around seven 'Kumki' elephants at the elephant camp at Theppakadu limits, had been readied for the event with the bath in the nearby Moyar river and smearing of 'sandal paste' on their foreheads and ear lobes to pep up the festival mood.

These kumki jumbos walked up to the temple in the camp entrance and took part in the special 'puja' performed to mark the event. The jumbos were also fed with special food including sweet Pongal, jaggery and sugarcane.



A kumki jumbo at the special 'puja' in MTR. —DC

Ooty freezes as mercury level hits zero

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, JAN. 16

Frosting within the town limits here has intensified further as mercury level touched zero degrees Celsius on Thursday morning, even as frost-bite has now become a cause of concern for forest managers in the hills.

Though late, the frosting mode which has set in only in the first week of January this winter has been keeping the hills in shivers between dusk and dawn. The Government botanical garden (GBG) recorded Zero degree Celsius on Thursday morning, indicating the severity of winter mode that is catching up in the hills here.

While the cold wave is sweeping across the hills between dusk and dawn due to plummeting temperature in the night hours, it is the frost-bite which is becoming a cause of concern. Frost-bite, if continued for another couple of days would char the plants as it would take away the juices from the sap of the leaves and other parts of the plants. Likewise, the tea plantation fields too have begun to experience the impact of the frost bite.

● **Frost-bite, if continued for another couple of days would char the plants**

Sizeable sports sponsorship for Kovai girl

Coimbatore: Abinaya Raghupathy, a promising young roller skating champion from Coimbatore recently was awarded a sponsorship of Rs. two lakh to help fulfill her sport needs. The young prodigy has been actively pursuing the sport for the last six years. She has participated in over 40 national and international tournaments and has won over 120 medals in various categories. Abinaya holds the credit of being the first Quad Skater to win a National medal and the first player from Tamil Nadu to participate at an International competition in roller skating. Arjuna Awardee and celebrated badminton player Jwala Gutta and Eshwar N executive vice-president, marketing, Casagrand, handed over the sponsorship to the young champion as part of 'Casagrand Aspiring Stars Programme'. Abinaya is the only sportsperson from Coimbatore to receive this sponsorship.



Abinaya Raghupathy, the Roller Skating Champion.

National anthem is a protest song: Krishna

Kozhikode: The national anthem is a "protest song" and it is time all sing this song at least "100 times" a day to remind everyone what India is and what it is not, Carnatic singer and activist TM Krishna said on Thursday. The song, Krishna argued, protests "against everything the present government stands for" -- the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), NRC (National Register for Citizens) or National Population Register (NPR). The full song -- including the 'unsung part' -- is about the spirit of "incredible possibility, idea of India, human struggle" and much more, he opined. He was speaking here at the inaugural day of the fifth edition of the Kerala



TM Krishna.

Literature Festival (KLF) during a session titled, "Jana Gana Mana: Poetic Masterpiece, National Treasure". "At one level, the song is about India, the geography of India, at another level it is about the human struggle. It is also about the mind, the fear, the need to awaken, to remain together, inspite and despite, and with all diversity and differences,

and of possibilities," said Krishna. "I see it as a protest song. It protests against everything that our present government is establishing as India. It tells us that is not India again and again. And these are the reasons why I've started singing this song -- especially its unsung verses," he added. Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore wrote 'Jana Gana Mana' in 1911 in Bengali and it was adopted as the national anthem in 1950. However, the national anthem is only a part of the poem penned and composed by Tagore. Deconstructing the unsung portion, verse by verse, note by note, the 43-year-old said Tagore through the song, among other things, also answers

debated at length query of 'what makes a country?'. "The answer is: Jana Gana Mana," he told the audience. "We think of the song as geographical first, but the three words 'Jana Gana Mana' are cardinal. Jana means the people, Gana is the collective of the people and Mana is the heart and the mind of the people. "It is so beautiful and so relevant today when the whole country is protesting. That the individual transformation, the collective transformation, and the collective and individual minds and hearts of the people is what makes a country," he explained. According to Krishna, the song, which he said has been -- and will be -- interpreted in different ways by different people, tells us

that "India lies in every citizen, every individual who inhabits this land...It also lies in every individual who may or may not be its citizen but resides in this land." The vocalist also talked about the usage of 'Sindh' as a metaphor for those who are "not mentioned" in the song, its controversy and why Sindh in the anthem is so important "Sindh are all those people who don't have provinces in their names. Sindh are all those people who are not called Tamilians, Bengalis, Punjabis. Our India has so many million people who are Sindhs. "We need Sindh in our national anthem to remind us of all the people who are not mentioned. In the time when we're being forced

with CAA and all these things, we need many Sindhs in this country," he asserted. In 2005, a petition filed in the Supreme Court demanded the inclusion of the word Kashmir in the national anthem and the deletion of Sindh, which became part of Pakistan following the Partition. The Supreme Court had dismissed the petition. Historians such as Ramachandra Guha, William Dalrymple, novelists like Benyamin, Namita Gokhale, Chetan Bhagat and journalists Karan Thapar and Rajdeep Sardesai are among the many other writers who will be attending the four-day festival. The focus theme of KLF 2020 is environment and climate change. *PTI*

Liver taken from Madurai to Coimbatore in 30 minutes

DC CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE, JAN. 16

The liver from a deceased male youth was transported from Madurai to Coimbatore in 30-minutes on Thursday.

Sarathkumar (21) of Ramanaathapuram, recently met with a road traffic accident in Ramanathapuram district. He was being treated at the Velammal Medical College Hospital and Research Institute at Madurai. Not responding to treatment, doctors at the hospital in Madurai declared him



The medical team who airlifted a liver organ from Ramnad. —DC

brain-dead. His parents then expressed their willingness to donate vital organs of their son. Meanwhile, a team of medical specialists from Coimbatore-based multi-

specialty Kovai Medical Center and Hospital (KMCH) rushed to the Madurai hospital and performed a surgery and retrieved the liver from the deceased youth.

Subsequently, the liver was airlifted by a helicopter and transported to KMCH Coimbatore after which it was successfully transplanted on a patient in dire need of liver. The surgery was performed by liver transplant team including Dr Paari Vijayaraghavan, Dr Maheswaran, Dr Arulraj and Dr Aravindh on Thursday, thus saving a life.

Plea to cut GST on goods transportation

COIMBATORE: At the state-level annual general body meeting of the Tamizhaga Hire Goods Owners' Association (THGOA) held here recently, new office-bearers were elected. At the meeting association members passed several resolutions including to bring down the Goods and Services Tax (GST) from the current 18 per cent to five per cent on goods transportation. They urged a separate welfare panel for THGOA workers and to permit two persons to travel in vehicles used for transporting infra goods. —DC



Visitors throng Chennai Book Fair at Nandanam on Thursday.

—DC



Chief rebuke

Hitting out at Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, CM Pinarayi Vijayan says that the British days when residents were appointed in princely states are gone

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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SHORT TAKES

AASU: NEW POLITICAL OUTFIT SOON

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, JAN. 16

Amidst the ongoing movement against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the All Assam Students Union (Aasu) on Thursday said that they would intensify the process of forming a new political party in the state after February.

Pointing out that there have been suggestions from various quarters to Aasu to explore the possibility of an alternative political force, Aasu president Dipanka Kumar Nath said, "People are talking about the need for a new political alternative and the process will be intensified after February."

Artists and intellectuals involved in the anti-CAA movement have already been advocating the need for exploring a new political alternative. Assam is going to polls in 2021.

On Wednesday, black flags were shown to Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal by protesters while he was en route to his home in Dibrugarh.

Asserting that their prime focus is to ensure the repeal of the CAA, Nath who was in Goalpara, said, "People of Assam feel that such an alternative force is definitely needed to protect their interests."

Meanwhile, people across the state burnt the copies of the CAA in the — Meiji — holy bonfire as part of Bihu on Wednesday.

NO TAKERS FOR DRESS CODE FIAT

M K ASHOKA | DC
BENGALURU, JAN. 16

Sruthi Institute of Art, Design and Technology which was in the thick of controversy over graffiti on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the college wall has decided to challenge the dress code diktat allegedly by the supporters of a local BJP MLA.

The BJP workers had stormed the institute campus, angry over the graffiti on the Prime Minister which ran the line "Sab Change Si" (All is well) across the bottom of the graphic with the PM's index finger pointed at his mouth.

The BJP workers who had walked into the campus peppered the authorities with questions on the dress code followed by the students while announcing that wearing shorts and skirts was not in keeping with Indian tradition. They also objected to students smoking on the streets in public.

However, the management of the institution has refused to buckle under pressure from the saffron groups, and said that they had given their students the freedom to wear any dress they wanted in spite of the alleged threat by associates of powerful local MLA from Yelahanka constituency S.R. Vishwanath, who is also the political secretary to the Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa.

BHIM ARMY CHIEF AZAD WALKS FREE

New Delhi, Jan 16: Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Azad, who was arrested in connection with the violence during an anti-CAA protest in Old Delhi's Daryaganj, was released from Tihar Jail on Thursday night, officials said.

Azad's outfit had organised a march from Jama Masjid to Jantar Mantar against the amended citizenship act on December 20, without police permission. He was sent to judicial custody on December 21. On Wednesday, a Delhi court had granted bail to Azad, who was accused of inciting people during the anti-CAA protest at Jama Masjid.

The court also restrained Azad from visiting Delhi for four weeks and directed him not to hold any dharna till the elections in the national capital. Additional Sessions Judge Kamini Lau had granted the relief to Azad on furnishing a bail bond of Rs 25,000. While granting bail to Azad on Wednesday, the judge recited Rabinranath Tagore's famous poem 'Where the Mind is Without Fear' and said citizens have a fundamental right to peaceful protest. *PTI*

I'm not a rubber stamp, says Kerala Governor

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN. 16

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan on Thursday said the case filed by CPM-led state government in Supreme Court against Citizenship Amendment Act without informing him, was a violation of protocol.

The Governor also refused to sign an ordinance seeking delimitation of local bodies' wards expressing reservations over the haste the government was showing in the matter.

Khan said he came to know about the suit filed in Supreme Court through the media. "I am the first citizen of the state and I should have been taken on board before challenging an Act passed in Parliament in the court," he said.

"I am not a rubber stamp, be clear in your mind. Constitution does not expect me to be a rubber stamp. I have to apply my mind. I have to take my time. The file is with me, I will take some time to make up my mind to think what to do about it. I don't want to argue with them. I have raised certain questions," he said.

The proposed ordinance is to amend Kerala Panchayat Raj Act and Kerala Municipality Act to facilitate increase of seats in the local bodies ahead of the polls to be held later this year.

Law minister A.K. Balan said if the Governor has any reservations these can be resolved. "In normal course, if the Governor has some Constitutional doubts he can seek clarification from the government. This is the practice followed by the Governors so far," he said. Khan has questioned the urgency being shown by the government in pushing through the ordinance since Assembly session is going to be convened soon.

Meanwhile, leader of

DHANKHAR TAKES DIG AT CU VC'S ABSENCE

Kolkata, Jan. 16: West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday took a dig at the absence of Calcutta University vice-chancellor Sonali Chakraborty Banerjee at the convocation of St Xavier's College here.

The Governor was the chief guest at the convocation of the St Xavier's college.

Turning to the vacant chair of the CU V-C at the convocation podium, Dhankhar said during his address that he has been informed that vice-chancellor (Chakraborty Banerjee) has fallen ill.

The Governor wished Chakraborty Banerjee "a very speedy recovery", and said, "I take the blame (of CU V-C's absence) partly for myself."

"Several places that I have gone to, some people take ill, I don't dispute as people may fall ill in the right sense..." he said.

West Bengal Minister Partha Chatterjee has said on Sunday if necessary, the upcoming Calcutta University convocation will be held without Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar as he has "consistently" made statements targeting the state government. *— PTI*

the opposition in Kerala Assembly. Ramesh Chennithala has written a letter to the Governor asking him not to sign the ordinance. The ordinance is being brought with a political motive to increase the party's seats in local bodies.

The ruling CPM-led Left Democratic Front accused the Governor of taking provocative positions on various issues.

NCM asks Kerala DGP to probe love jihad charge

DC CORRESPONDENT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN. 16

The National Commission of Minorities on Thursday directed Kerala state police chief to submit a detailed report within 21 days on the alleged rise in the number of cases of 'love jihad' in the state.

The commission in his directive to the police chief also enclosed with a representation from Synod of Syro Malabar Church. The Synod of the church on Wednesday passed a resolution expressing concern over the rising cases of love jihad. Half of the 21 youths recruited by IS from Kerala were converted from Christianity, it had said. The NCM said if the DGP failed to comply with its directive to submit detailed report within 21 days then the commission will be forced to take action and issue summons for hearing the matter.

India believes in dialogue: Modi

New Delhi, Jan. 16: In a world that is seeking to break free from mindless hate, violence, conflict and terrorism, the Indian way of life offers a ray of hope, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday.

He also said India's civilisation prospered because of peace and harmony, and the Indian way of conflict avoidance is not by brute force but

by the power of dialogue. Addressing a seminar on "Globalising Indian Thought" at IIM-Kozhikode via video, the Prime Minister said respect for different opinions and innovations comes naturally when there is openness. The innovative zeal of Indians is drawing the world to the country, he told the gathering.

Mr Modi said the world

is drawn towards India because of its virtues of peace, unity and brotherhood. Despite different languages, traditions, habits and faiths, "for centuries, we have lived in peace. For centuries, we have welcomed the world to our land. Our civilisation has prospered when many could not. Why? Because one finds peace and harmony here", he said. It has also

been India's strength that its thoughts have become living traditions, guided by simplified and relatable practices, which are not rigid, he added. Modi said India has been one of the biggest contributors to the UN peacekeeping operations for decades. "If some of the most conflict-prone zones could breathe the air of peace, our soldiers had a role to play in it," he said. *PTI*

CONGRESS POSERS TO PM, DEFENCE MIN ON SUB DEAL

New Delhi, Jan. 16: A day after alleging that the Narendra Modi government was 'favouring' a private entity in the Rs 45,000 crore 75-I Submarine project, the Congress on Thursday questioned the prime minister and defence minister's "silence" over the matter.

It also said the Prime Minister cannot be above accountability.

Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala tweeted, "PM's and RM's silence in the Rs 45,000 crore submarines project is intriguing and raises further suspicion as to What is BJP government hiding? Why are PM/RM 'mum'? Why did government violate DPP, 2016? Why was 'Empowered Committee' of Navy overruled? Is government batting for Adani Def?" Congress leader Anand Sharma said on Twitter, "The defence preparedness of India has been diluted and the Make in India made a platform of crony capitalism." *PTI*

Rally for CAA



BJP supporters attend an awareness rally on Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) that was addressed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah at Kharauna Pokhar near Vaishali, Thursday.

— PTI

JNU extends registration date for winter semester to Jan 17

New Delhi, Jan 16: Amid registration boycott by a section of students, the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) said on Thursday the deadline to register for the next semester has been again extended, this time till January 17 following requests from several students.

JNU Vice-Chancellor Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar said students had approached the administration to extend the last date for winter registration by another two days. "The deadline for registration for the ongoing winter session has been extended up to January 17 without late fees. However, by paying late fees of up to Rs 500 one can register till February 9," a senior

university official said. "After February 9, the VC may consider written requests for registration and if deemed fit, grant permission for the same with imposition of appropriate amount of fine at his discretion," the official said.

Out of the about 8,500 students in JNU, on-campus accommodation in different hostels is provided to about 6,450. The remaining students are day scholars, the VC said. Nearly 95 per cent of day scholars have cleared their semester dues, Kumar said, adding more than 65 per cent of students staying in the hostels on the campus have cleared their hostel dues by paying the new hostel charges.

Many of the remaining hostel residents are returning to the campus from their homes, he added. "Since January 15 was the last date for registering in the winter semester, there was a last-minute rush yesterday.

Several students approached us to extend the last date for winter registration by another two days," the VC said. Following this, the university decided to push the deadline by two days to January 17.

All the schools and centres have announced their time-tables and are working on conducting tests for those students who did not complete the last semester academic requirements, the vice chancellor said. *PTI*

TENDERS / NOTICES

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001
GURU HARGOBIND THERMAL PLANT, LEHRA MOHABBAT
DISTT. BATHINDA (PUNJAB) - 151 111
e-tendering website - <https://proc.punjab.gov.in>

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through E-tendering)

Tender Enquiry No.: 508/GHTP/EMC/GMMC-27/Vol-30
dated: 13/01/2020.

SHORT DESCRIPTION: Periodical, preventive, breakdown & shutdown maintenance and annual overhauling of 2x210MW & 2x250MW Turbogenerator (Electrical Works), HT & LT Motors in main plant area, 16.50 KV, 15.75 KV, 6.6 KV & 415 V Bus ducts, EOT Cranes/ Hoists (Electrical Works), etc and operation & general cleanliness of Lifts/ Elevators of Stage-I & II, GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat, District Bathinda, Punjab as per details given in the tender specifications for a period of one year on lump sum basis.

EMD: Rs. 3,00,000 (Fixed Rs. Three Lakhs)

Last Date & Time for bid submission : 05/02/2020 upto 11:30 hrs.
Date & Time of opening of Fee stage bid : 12/02/2020 at 12:00 hrs.

Detailed NIT and tender specification can be downloaded from PSPCL website <https://proc.punjab.gov.in> from dated 15/01/2020 onwards.

Note : 1. The prospective bidders can obtain clarification regarding tender specifications from this office. For registration of digital signatures and uploading of tender, information may be sought from M/s GePNIC contact No. 91-(120)-4001002/5.

2. It is informed that in case the tender process is not completed due to any reason, no corrigendum will be published in newspapers. Detail regarding corrigendum may be seen on PSPCL official website i.e. <https://pspcl.in>.

Superintending Engineer,
Electrical Mtc. Circle, O&M,
GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat - 151111,
District Bathinda (Punjab).

GHTP-01/2020
RD: C-8610



NOTICE

1. Approval under regulation-86 of CERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations'1999 and CERC (Terms and Conditions of Tariff) Regulations'2019 for a) Revision of Transmission Tariff for 2001-04 tariff block, 2004-09 tariff block, 2009-14 tariff block, ii) Truing up of Transmission tariff for 2014-19 tariff block and iii) Determination of Transmission tariff for 2019-24 tariff block for **Petition-1: Asset-1:** (a) 50MVA Reactor at Narendra S/S, (b) Narendra-Davanagere 400kV D/C TL and 50 MVA/ Bus Reactor at Mysore, (c) LIL of Kolar-Srippeembudur 400kV S/C line along with 50 MVA reactor at Kalivanthapattu, **Asset-II:** (d) 2nd Auto Transformer at Hiriyur Substation, **Asset-III:** (e) 1st 315 MVA Auto transformer at Kalivanthapattu SS and (f) 2nd Auto transformer at Kalivanthapattu SS along with associated bays and equipments and **Asset-IV:** Mysore-Kozhikode 400kV D/C TL along with new 400/220 kv Sub-Station with MX315 MVA ICTS and 2X50 MVA Switchable Line Rectors at Kozhikode Sub-Station and extension of Mysore Sub-Station under transmission system associated with Kaiga 3&4 (2X235 MW) Project in Southern Region, **Petition-2:** Madurai-Trivendrum 400kV D/C Transmission System in Southern Region.

2. The beneficiaries of the above mentioned Transmission system are: (a) KPTCL (b) APTRANSCO (c) KSEB (d) TNEB (e) Electricity Dept. of Goa (f) Electricity Dept. of Puducherry (g) APEDCL (h) APSPDCL (i) APCDCL (j) APNPDCL (k) BESCOM (l) GESCOM (m) HESCOM (n) MESCOM (o) Chamundeswari Electricity Supply Corporation Ltd. (p) Transmission Corporation of Telangana Limited (q) TANGEDCO (r) TINTC

3. Tariff details:

a) 2004-09, 2009-14 and 2014-19 block

Petition	Revised Transmission Tariff for 2004-09					Rs in Lakh
Petition 1	Asset No.	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	Asset-a				76.54	327.62
	Asset-b				411.69	2568.29
	Asset-c					995.72
	Asset-d					484.32
	Asset-e					482.24
	Asset-f					193.04

Petition 2	Asset-I		2402.86	3823.86	3931.21	4345.98
Revised Transmission Tariff for 2009-14						
Petition 1	Asset No.	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
	Asset-I	5427.37	5443.31	5349.95	5250.61	5174.53
	Asset-II	607.09	612.38	611.56	611.02	611.78
	Asset-III	1057.41	1064.85	1072.57	1080.95	1085.91
Petition 2	Asset-I	4542.30	4529.97	4492.09	4445.72	4413.86
True up Transmission Tariff for 2014-19						
Petition 1	Asset No.	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
	Asset-I	4987	4850.45	4766.02	4653.28	4545.87
	Asset-II	584.34	579.88	573.09	567.47	562.51
	Asset-III	1034.77	1027.90	1020.22	1013.06	1007.10
			673.75	13987.13	13849.32	13663.20
Petition 2	Asset I	4287.96	4306.25	4336.23	4312.06	3324.27

Petition	True up Transmission Tariff for 2014-19	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Petition 1						
Asset-I	4987	4890.45	4766.02	4653.28	4545.87	
Asset-II	584.34	578.88	573.09	567.47	562.51	
Asset-III	1034.77	1027.90	1020.22	1013.06	1007.10	
Asset-IV	-	6373.67	13997.13	13849.32	13633.20	
Petition 2	Asset I	4287.96	4306.25	4336.23	4312.06	3324.27

b) 2019-24 Block

5. The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application be filed by any person, including the beneficiary before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 3 & 4th floor, Chandrakar Building, Janpath, New Delhi-110001 (or other address where the office of the Commission is situated), with a copy to the applicant at the address of its corporate office within 30 days of publication of this notice.

4. A copy of the application made for determination of tariff is posted on the website of the applicant at www.powergridindia.com.

5. The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application to be filed by any person, including the beneficiary before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 3 & 4th floor, Chandrakak Building, Janpath, New Delhi-110001 (or other address where the office of the Commission is situated), with a copy to the applicant at the address of its corporate office within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Place : Gurgaon
Date : 14.01.2020
Deputy General Manager (Commercial)

POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED
(A Government of India Enterprise)
Registered Office: B-9, Qutab Institutional Area, Katwana Sarai, New Delhi 110 016
Corporate Office: Saudamini, Plot No. 2, Sector-29, Gurgaon, Haryana - 122 001
www.powergridindia.com, CIN : L40101DL1999G01038121

A Maharashtra PSU



New task

BJP names senior leader Samir Mohanty as the new president of its Odisha state unit

SHORT TAKES

RAUT TAKES BACK 'INDIRA COMMENT'

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, JAN. 16

Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut's comments about former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi created a furore in the state, leading to the Rajya Sabha MP finally retracting his statement. However, the incident has again exposed the cracks in the newly appointed Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi alliance government.

Raut, whose party is part of the ruling alliance with the Congress and the NCP, on Wednesday had claimed that Ms Gandhi used to meet Karim Lala, an underworld don active during the 1960s and 1970s in Mumbai. Lala was one of the three top underworld dons of Mumbai for over two decades, from the 60s to the early 80s, the other two being Mastan Mirza alias Haji Mastan and Varadarajan Mudaliar.

Following the widespread criticism from the Congress, Raut finally withdrew his comment saying, "If someone feels my statement hurt Indira Gandhi's image, or someone's feelings, I take it back."

However, several Congress leaders expressed outrage over his comments. Terming Raut's comment as 'wrong,' state Congress chief Balasaheb Thorat on Thursday said such remarks would not be tolerated.

The state revenue minister cautioned all leaders against making remarks criticising great leaders.

BIHAR POLLS UNDER NITISH: SHAH

NAYEAR AZAD PATNA, JAN 16

Ending speculations regarding the leadership crisis in Bihar, Union Home Minister and BJP President Amit Shah on Thursday said that the BJP and JD(U) will contest the 2020 Bihar assembly polls under the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

"Some political parties have been trying to create confusion about the unity of NDA in Bihar. I want to end all rumours today by declaring that the NDA will contest the assembly elections under the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. The NDA in Bihar is united and BJP - JD(U) alliance is unbreakable", BJP chief Amit Shah said while addressing a rally.

Sources said that Amit Shah's statement during a public rally in Vaishali on Thursday would silence those who have been raising questions about the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Crisis had deepened recently when Dalit leader and BJP MLC Sanjay Paswan said that "the party has the capability to contest and win elections in Bihar on its own. People want a BJP leader becoming the Chief Minister".

DILIP GHOSH RE-ELECTED WB BJP HEAD

Kolkata, Jan. 16: With an eye on the 2021 Assembly polls, the BJP on Thursday re-elected Dilip Ghosh, who is credited for the growth of the saffron party in West Bengal, as president of its state unit for the second consecutive term.

Ghosh, being the only nominee for the post, was elected unopposed as West Bengal BJP president for 2020-2023 at the state committee meeting.

Ghosh's re-election to the top post came just days after his controversial remark that anti-CAA protesters "were shot like dogs" in BJP-ruled states drew sharp criticism both from the opposition and his party men.

During Ghosh's tenure as state president, the BJP witnessed a meteoric rise in West Bengal bagging 18 out of the 42 parliamentary seats in the state.

"I will continue to fight and won't stop till BJP forms the next government in West Bengal," he said. Hitting out at the opposition, Ghosh said "There are a few people who are criticising me for my comments. I want to make myself clear that the time has come for BJP. Earlier, they (parties opposed to BJP) used to speak and we listened, now we will speak and they will listen."



Union defence minister Rajnath Singh in a K9 VAJRA-T gun during its flag off ceremony at L&T Armoured System Complex in Hazira, Gujarat on Thursday. — PTI

Centre calls meet on NPR, census today

New Delhi, Jan 16: The Union Home Ministry has convened a meeting on Friday to discuss the modalities for the 2020 Census and the National Population Register (NPR), officials said.

Union minister of state for home Nityanand Rai will chair the meeting which will be attended by Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla and chief secretaries and census directors of all states. The meeting will discuss the modalities for the house-listing phase of the census and the NPR, to be carried out from April 1 to September 30, a Home Ministry official said. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has already announced that representatives from her state will not attend the meeting. A few state governments, including West Bengal, have declared that they will not participate in the NPR exercise now as it is a prelude to a country-wide National Register of Citizens

Bengal officials not to attend Census, NPR meet in Delhi

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 16

In another issue that could snowball into a political controversy, West Bengal chief minister Mamta Banerjee has said that officials from her state will not attend the meeting of chief secretaries and census directors of states to be held on Friday to finalise the modalities for Census 2020 and the National Population Register (NPR). Minister of state for

home Nityanand Rai will chair the meeting which will also be attended by home secretary Ajay Bhalla.

Along with West Bengal, states like Kerala and some others are opposed to NPR on the grounds that it will form the basis for the nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC).

The meeting is being held to discuss the process for the house-listing phase for the next census along with the NPR. The exercise is to

be conducted from April 1 to September 30 this year across the country except in Assam.

Home ministry officials clarified that the NPR would merely be a database for "usual residents of the country" and have some demographic as well as biometric particulars. Notification for the NPR and house enumeration was issued in the wake of largescale protests across the country against the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).



as biometric particulars, they said. The notification for the houselisting and NPR exercise came amid furore over the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The ministry officials said

most states have notified provisions related to the NPR, which is a register of usual residents of the country. It is being prepared at the local sub-district, district, state and national levels. — PTI

India slams China for going to UN on Kashmir

FROM PG 1

On why China was repeatedly insisting on raising the Kashmir issue for informal consultations at the UNSC, external affairs ministry spokesman Raveesh Kumar said: "I suggest that this question should be posed to the Chinese side

as well. China should seriously reflect on this global consensus, draw the proper lessons and refrain from taking such action in future."

Commenting on the issue, the MEA said: "An effort was made by Pakistan through a member of the UNSC to once

again misuse the platform of UNSC for discussing a bilateral matter. The overwhelming majority of UNSC members were of the view that the UNSC was not the right forum for such issues, and this should be discussed bilaterally between India and Pakistan. The informal

closed-door meeting, therefore, concluded without any outcome. It once again highlighted that Pakistan's desperate measures to peddle baseless allegations and presenting an alarming scenario lacked any credibility. We sincerely hope that the message has gone across loud and clear

to Pakistan that if at all there is any matter between India and Pakistan that needs to be discussed, it should be discussed bilaterally. Pakistan can avoid this global embarrassment time and again by putting their energy in something constructive."

J&K police strip Davinder Singh of gallantry award

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, JAN. 16

The Jammu and Kashmir administration has withdrawn the Sher-e-Kashmir Police Medal for Gallantry awarded to deputy superintendent of police Davinder Singh who was arrested along with two Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militants in southern Kulgam district earlier this month.

The award instituted after J&K's legendary leader Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah who is also known as 'Sher-e-Kashmir' or the 'Lion of Kashmir' to his supporters, is given annually to

police personnel in recognition of their meritorious work and gallantry. Authorities said Singh's act "amounted to disloyalty which also brought the J&K police organisation into disrepute."

An order signed by J&K's principal secretary (Home) Shaleen Kabra said, "Consequent upon the arrest of Davinder Singh, Dy. SP while trying to assist terrorists to travel outside J&K and recovery of arms and ammunition, which amounts to disloyalty and conduct that has brought the force into disrepute, the Sher-e-Kashmir Police Medal for Gallantry, awarded to him is hereby forfeit-

DAVINDER BOUGHT PROPERTIES IN SRINAGAR WITH ILL-GOTTEN MONEY

From Page 1

Besides releasing innocent persons, Singh also allegedly set free some people who were actually involved — all for financial consideration.

Davinder, from Tral in Pulwama district, a hotbed of Hizbul Mujahideen, was recruited as sub-inspector in 1994

and soon after was moved to the SOG. "His successful anti-terror operations always came in for praise from the top brass and therefore his corruption was ignored for too long," sources said. He invested most of his ill-gotten wealth in high-end properties in Srinagar. He also bought expensive watches among other things.

ed." Singh, posted as DySP at the Srinagar International Airport, has been placed under suspen-

sion and the authorities have recommended that he may be dismissed from service.



Media persons at the residence of J&K police officer Davinder Singh in Srinagar on Thursday. — PTI

SHOCKING | RECORD 29-year-old's bank account shows transactions of ₹134 cr in 2011-12

Youth claims he got faulty I-T notice for ₹3.5 cr

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JAN. 16

A youth from Madhya Pradesh has received the shock of his life when he got an income-tax (I-T) notice seeking to explain transactions of ₹134 crore made in his purported bank account in 2011-12.

Ravi Gupta, 29, a resident of Mohana in Bhind district, has received the I-T notice seeking payment of I-T of ₹3.49 crore on the transaction made in 'his' account during the period. "I could not believe my

eyes when I went through the I-T notice sent to me in March 2019. I had then ignored it since my salary at the time was barely ₹7,000 per month and I did fall under the tax payer category.

I took it seriously when I got another I-T notice reminding me to pay the tax in July 2019. I had then rushed to Mumbai to probe into the matter with the I-T office", Mr Gupta told reporters on Thursday.

According to him, the IT notice had sought queries on transactions of ₹134



crore made on a business account opened with his PAN number in a private bank's in Mumbai in 2011-12. The transactions were made between September 9, 2011 and February 13, 2012. "I have never opened such an account. I was

The registration of the firm which has made the transactions in the account was done on August 25, 2011 in Surat in Gujarat, while I was in Indore on the same day

— RAVI GUPTA Bhind, Madhya Pradesh

barely 21 then. I was working in a private firm for a salary of 7000 per month. In fact, I have not visited Mumbai during the period", he said.

A senior officer in the I-T department said Mr Gupta can lodge a complaint with

the department seeking a probe into the matter.

Mr Gupta has written to the Madhya Pradesh Cyber cell, Maharashtra police, PMO and I-T office seeking a probe into the matter to clear him of the charges.

On January 17, 2020, he received another notice informing him of extension of date of tax payment. He was earlier summoned by I-T department asking him to bring account details, account opening form, PAN card, service tax registration, TIN registration and firm

registration in Gujarat. "The IT department has now threatened me to attach my properties to recover dues", he said.

The transactions were purportedly made by a diamond company based in Gujarat, according to him.

"The registration of the firm which has made the transactions in the account was done on August 25, 2011 in Surat in Gujarat, while I was in Indore on the same day. This can be verified with my actual bank statement of SBI, Indore", he told this newspaper.

R-Day terror module busted

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, JAN. 16

The Jammu and Kashmir police on Thursday claimed that it has busted a Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) module which was planning a major terror strike ahead of the Republic Day by arresting five of its members.

Deputy inspector general of police (Central Kashmir), V.K. Birdi, while addressing a hurriedly-called press conference here, said that, following the investigations into a grenade attack in Srinagar's Habak area on January 8, the police arrested five persons involved in the incident.

"During the course of investigation, these persons confessed their involvement in executing a terror attack (a grenade blast) near Sir Syed Gate of University of Kashmir's main campus at nearby Hazratbal on November 26 last," he said.

The police officer identified the arrested as Ajaz Ahmad Sheikh, Umar Hamid, Imtiyaz Chikla alias Imran and Naseer Mir — all residents of Hazratbal — and Sahil Gojri of Soura area of Srinagar.

Birdi said that "incriminating material including arms and other explosive substance were recovered during the course of investigations" and that "further investigation in the matter is in progress".

He added, "The police is

also investigating their complicity in other terror crime incidents."

Later, the J&K police tweeted, "In a major success the Srinagar police busts Jaish module. Two grenade blasts in Hazratbal area worked out. Major attack averted ahead of Republic Day. Five terror operatives arrested. Huge explosive material recovered." (sic) A police statement said, "The investigation so far has revealed their motives to enforce shut-downs and paralyse normal life in Srinagar city and further plan to execute sensational incidents like terror attacks and causing improvised explosive device (IED) explosions."

The J&K police has also claimed arresting an "associate" of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) in Awantipora area of southern Pulwama district. It identified the accused as Ishfaq Ahmad Dar alias Maheed, a resident of Pulwama's Dangerpora-Padgampora village.

"He has been assisting active terrorists of LeT in Padgampora, Sonrigund, Gulzarpora, Beighpora, Reshipora and Dangerpora areas of Awantipora," the police said adding that "he was involved in threatening and intimidating civilians residing in the area and also in providing logistic support and assistance to LeT terrorists operating in the areas of Awantipora."

Rawat for hardline against radicalism

FROM PG 1

He said that these people can still be isolated from radicalisation in a gradual way. "But there are people who have been completely been radicalised these people need to be taken out separately, possibly taken into some de-radicalisation camps," said the CDS.

He said that we have got de-radicalisation camps going on in our country. "Let me tell you that even Pakistan is doing the same. Pakistan also has got de-radicalisation camps. They have understood that some of the terrorism they have been sponsoring is actually hitting back at them," said Gen Rawat.

Gen Rawat also said



there is a need to take a hard-line approach in dealing with terrorism, the way the US went after terror groups after the 9/11 terror attacks.

"As long as there are states which sponsor terrorism, we will have to live with the menace. We need to take the bull by its horns and strike at the root cause," he said in an oblique reference to Pakistan.

LALU IN COURT IN LAST FODDER SCAM CASE

Ranchi, Jan 16: Jailed RJD president Lalu Prasad appeared before a special CBI court here on Thursday and recorded his statement in connection with a case pertaining to fraudulent withdrawal of Rs 139.35 crore from Doranda Treasury when he was the Bihar chief minister in the 1990s.

Prasad's advocate Prabhat Kumar said his client will produce witnesses and other pieces of evidence in the court on January 20.

This is the fifth and last fodder scam case against the RJD president in Ranchi.

There is a sixth case against him in Bhagalpur in his native state Bihar related to the multi-crore fodder scam.

Accompanied by close aide and senior RJD leader Bhola Yadav, Prasad entered the courtroom around 11 am and left around 2 pm.

The RJD supremo, who wore a blue half-sleeved sweater, shawl and woollen cap, appeared unperturbed when he returned after recording his statement.

An ailing 71-year-old Prasad, who is lodged in the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), was taken to the special CBI court, about four km away, under heavy security. — PTI

**Mail your letters to
editor@deccanmail.com**

The line behind which darts players stand when throwing

A super-spicy chili pepper cultivated in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and Nepal

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Soleimani: Lavrov-Zarif duet, Trump solo in offing



Saeed Naqvi

The presence in New Delhi of Iran foreign minister Javad Zarif and Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov provides just the sort of balance required to cope with the imminent Donald Trump visitation in the near future. Who knows, he may turn up with CEOs of Lockheed Martin and General Atomics whose dazzling Hellfire Missiles and MQ-9 Reaper Drones were employed in the murder of Iran's Gen. Qasem Soleimani and deputy head of Hashd al Shaabi or Iraq's Popular Mobilization Front, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

It is unlikely that reverberations from Gen. Soleimani's assassination were not felt at the Raisina dialogue, which the two foreign ministers attended. Like Banquo's ghost, Soleimani will be present during the Trump visit, too. It is, therefore, important to understand the sequence leading to the ghastly murder in Baghdad.

As the post-Cold War world transited to the post 9/11 Islamophobia, New Delhi, by choice and circumstance, held firmly onto American coat tails, even putting up with an insult or two. Pakistan, and not India, was first incorporated into the global war on terror. US Ambassador Robert Blackwill was terse: "Yours is an old regional quarrel with Pakistan; that country is partnering us in our global war on terror." Only after the December 13, 2001, attack on Indian Parliament, did New Delhi become a bonafide "victim of terror". It was a strange triangle: New Delhi and Islamabad were not on talking terms, but both were yoked in the US-led war on terror.

This was the state of play when in April 2003, George W. Bush was pushed into occupying Iraq by his neo-con drum beaters sketching designs of "full spectrum dominance" in the New American century. It was all very tempting when the Americans invited New Delhi to be their partners in Iraq which was now "theirs". Troops were readied but Atal Behari Vajpayee as the Prime Minister put his foot down: it was a foolish idea.

The real author of the Iraq expedition, vice-president Dick Cheney, choreographed his victory speech on April 9, 2003, to synchronise with the pulling down of Saddam Hussain's statue at Baghdad's Firdos Square. The celebrating Iraqis did not appear.

In desperation, Americans contacted Shia clerics like Muqtada Sadr. The cleric was an iconic figure in a Shia ghetto north of Baghdad named Saddam city. Muqtada Sadr it was who mobilised Shias to come out in celebration, beating Saddam's photographs with *chappals* even as the marines pulled down the statue with cranes. In deference to this act, the occupying power renamed Saddam city as Sadr city.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi was someone defence secretary Mark Esper consulted half an hour before the assassination. "I advised him against the decision" Mahdi revealed. He could have alerted Soleimani's convoy.

The deputy head of Hashd al Shaabi, or Iraq's popular mobilization, also in the convoy was a key player in a group which has the sanction of Grand Ayatullah Ali Sistani in Najaf. It reflects on American caprice that in 2005 Sistani was a figure of adoration in the US establishment. In March of that year Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* had proposed the Nobel Peace Prize for Sistani in his column titled "A Nobel for Sistani".

Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis was clearly Soleimani's eyes and ears in Iraq. But he was only the second in command of the Hashd. Where was the leader of the Hashd, Fali al Fayyadh? Last month he had made a surprise visit to Washington to meet defence secretary Esper, the very same person who alerted Prime Minister Mahdi about the action which killed Soleimani, Muhandis and a host of others.

The information obtained by Esper directly may have encouraged him to believe that the anti-American line up in Iraq was a divided house. Even Muqtada Sadr's visit to Riyadh some months ago would have

been taken into this calculus. The consequence is that the assassination-in-a hurry has united even disparate forces in Iran, Iraq and the larger West Asia. It left Europe dazed, Britain embarrassed and the rest of the world wondering as to what would happen next. The only country to have expressed support for the action is Israel. And Israel is on notice by the leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah. Incidentally, New Delhi has been in interaction with Fali al Fayyadh. He arranged for the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis to be affiliated with al Nahran Centre for Strategic Studies in Baghdad. Studies by IDSA will surely augment the pool South Block will require for the Trump visit.

Soleimani caused extreme discomfort to the US, Israel, Saudi combine not because he was plotting military actions. He was hated because by knitting together powerful proxies on the periphery of Israel and Saudi Arabia he had defeated an idea: the strategic faultline invented by US-Israeli strategists. Palestinian issue had lost

Why are thermal power plants still being encouraged by the state of Telangana?



Hema Vaishnavi

The climate crisis is slated to have a drastic effect on the economy. Although the Government of India and subsequently the state governments have made policies to address the problem, either by switching to renewables or thwarting fossil fuel power production, we are far from combating climate change and switching to renewables.

The states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are home to five of the top ten districts which are expected to face severe environmental consequences if the causes of climate change are not addressed. These states are gearing towards a climate catastrophe and the state policies aren't exactly helping. The national and state plans start off by emphasising on the current abundance of CO2 in the atmosphere as compared to the year 1750, which now stands at 395.5 ppm. The document stresses that greenhouse gases (GHGs) need to be cut by 40-70 per cent by 2050, from the level in the year 2010, and that fossil fuels should be phased out completely by 2100. As part of its National Action Plan for the 11th Plan period, the Government of India announced a domestic goal of reducing the volume of carbon emissions released per unit of the country's GDP. The government has outlined how "low carbon strategies will particularly require enhanced deployment of renewable and clean energy technologies, and capital finance for improvements in technology". But, when it comes to Telangana, no such state emission targets have been set yet. It seems rather puzzling to know how the state's policies are laid out without an emission count

and target. Especially considering how the state of Telangana has been experiencing extreme weather events in the past few years in the form of climate variability, affecting its agricultural output, and leading to intense droughts, heatwaves and floods. In the year 2018, the state of Telangana lost "1,682 hectares of forest cover as negative changes in forest cover were observed in 410 forest compartments." With increasing emissions from the upcoming thermal power plants and decreasing forest area in the state, how will the state sequester the forthcoming emissions?

Currently, the state of Telangana is at an installed capacity of 4,422 MW from thermal coal-based power generation. If you look back, in the year 2009, the Government of India directed all the state governments to draft a State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC), in keeping with the approach laid out by the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). So far, 28 states, including the state of Telangana, are known to have rolled out state action plans. EPTRI (Environment Protection Training and Research Institute) prepared the SAPCC for combined Andhra Pradesh, which was endorsed by the National Steering Committee on Climate Change, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in 2013. After the bifurcation of the state, a state action plan was prepared for the state of Telangana in 2015. The state action plan lays out the importance of how the state is being sourced by a mere 20 per cent of the total energy supply from hydropower projects, and outlines the importance of finding "renewable and non-coal based sources". The state action plan also outlines how the use of fossil fuel is the principal contributor to climate change. Over "81 per cent of the emissions from fuel production can be attributed to six states where coal, oil and natural gas

are produced"; leading among them is the erstwhile combined state of Andhra Pradesh. This month, the state government of Telangana exempted TS Genco from conducting a social impact study for acquiring 234 acres for the ₹20,000-crore 4,000 MW thermal power plant at Veerlapalem village in Nalgonda's Damaracharla mandal. Just last month, the Singareni Collieries Company Ltd (SCCL) in Telangana got the green signal for expanding its ₹5,879.62 crore thermal power project in the state, from the existing 1,200 MW to 2,000 MW capacity in Mancherial. With these projects, the state will be increasing its power generation capacity from 4,422 MW to 10,222 MW from thermal power plants alone. The state action plan also lays out an estimated budget of ₹3,425 crore from 2017-2022 for electricity generation using non-conventional sources. Despite this, the renewable transition is suffering, and the state is actively gearing towards investment in coal-based power generation. With this active coal-based power generation, the state will experience a setback in its carbon emissions target, which is yet to be decided or even outlined in the State Action Plan documents. Studies have found that for every fossil fuel burned in India "at least three quarters of a ton of carbon is released as CO2. It has been found that 0.8-0.9 kg/kWh CO2 is emitted in Indian power plants". Moreover, emissions from combustion of coal are currently responsible for over 60 per cent of the enhanced greenhouse effect. Although Telangana's action plan has an estimated ₹312 crores for the promotion of affordable alternative energy sources i.e. solar home systems,

solar street lights, solar thermal systems, the renewable energy industry is slowly and gradually failing to make it in the market because of de-incentivisation from state governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. For instance, the state of Andhra Pradesh has either lowered the energy tariffs for renewable energy or has stopped its generation altogether because of mounting dues. While all this is linked to the slump in economic growth, the effect, nonetheless, is on energy transition.

So, the bigger question here is, why is the state still pursuing thermal power generation instead of divesting the money towards renewables? While the state of Andhra Pradesh is still drafting its State Action Plan, the Telangana documents do not mention or suggest that there will be divestment from fossil fuel energy to renewable energy. Cutting down of fossil fuels energy production is not even a priority, and neither is replacement.

The writer is an MPhil scholar from IIT Hyderabad working on climate activism



The Roaring Twenties vs the Boring Twenties

Total surrender needed for peace



Swami Tejomayananda

The Vaishnava sampradaya describes six factors of surrender. First is to entertain favourable thoughts of wanting the Lord and be willing to do everything conducive for reaching Him. One must create an appropriate environment, attend *satsang*, follow the instructions of the teacher, cultivate the qualities for gaining His vision and become a fitting recipient for His grace.

Secondly, in order to attain the Lord, one has to reject the unfavourable and the non-con-

ductive. Effortlessly give up all pleasures, name, fame, power, relationships, wealth, objects and attachments if they obstruct spiritual progress. Willingly renounce all false notions and prejudice and work tirelessly to remove negative sentiments like anger, jealousy, pride, hypocrisy. Vibhisana had an intense longing for the Lord and continued his spiritual practices, but remained a passive witness to the evil around him until Hanumanji inspired and trans-



formed him. Only then was he able to courageously resist his unrighteous brother, stand up to him and forever leave the adverse atmosphere of Lanka. Tulsidas advised Meera to forsake her persecuting relatives. Dashrath repelled his wife and Bharat his mother, when Kaikeyi sent Sri Ram to the forest. The third aspect is firm faith in the Lord's protection, at all times and under all circumstances. He is kind and compassionate and His love is unconditional. The devotee knows that despite all shortcomings he/she is sheltered by the Lord's abundant blessings. The fourth is to actually seek refuge in the Lord. Pray for protection, blessings and grace: "I have come this far, take me fur-

ther, hold me, and guide me to the truth." The fifth factor is to throw oneself totally at the mercy of the Lord: "I am yours to do what you wish. I am a flute in your hands; play whatever tune you wish to play." There are no reservations. Bali not only gave his entire kingdom to Lord Vamana but also finally gave himself to the Lord. He surrendered both his possessions, the sense of "my-ness", and his ego, the sense of "I-ness".

The last aspect is expressing one's total helplessness. As long as we think we can do things by our own effort, independent of the Lord, He does not interfere. As soon as we seek refuge, surrender and reveal our helplessness, He responds and comes forward to uplift us.

Vibhisana left Lanka with the firm conviction that the Lord would protect and shelter him. His surrender was complete when he saw the Lord and was totally captivated by His beauty, love and compassion. The last two steps happened in a flash. He fell at the Lord's feet and an expression of total helplessness burst forth in him. Instantly, he was blessed with unwavering devotion. The Lord's vision bestows both worldly and spiritual wealth and he was blessed with both.

Swami Tejomayananda is from Chinmaya Mission. To find out more about Chinmaya Mission and Swamiji, visit www.chinmayamission.com. © Central Chinmaya Mission Trust.



David Frum

Meghan as 'Queen of Canada'? How a joke went viral

On January 8, I tweeted about the Sussex-Markles: "Obviously the plan is to return to Canada, lead a revolt against British rule, and establish an independent Canadian monarchy." Two days later, the *New York Times* opened a story about the Canada-bound Duke and Duchess of Sussex: "Some have suggested they could become king and queen of Canada." IT WAS A JOKE! Otherwise, I'm going to have Canadian security surveilling my cottage in Ontario as a node of Sussexite sedition. Yet maybe I had glimpsed something. A poll has suggested that 60 per cent of Canadians would support the appointment of Prince Harry as governor general. When the Sussexes announced their intention to spend last Christmas in Canada, Justin Trudeau tweeted: "You are always welcome here." He may not have intended "always" to mean "permanently"... but the invitation is in writing.

Seventeen years ago, I was part of a presidential administration that chose war with Iraq. We had with us a broad international coalition, an authorising vote in Congress, majority support in public opinion. We were acting at the zenith of US power, at a time when Russia had ceased to be a factor in international politics and China had only barely become one. And still we failed to leave behind a stable, Western-oriented Iraq. In the weeks since Christmas, President Trump has been driving to a similar conflict with Iran. But Trump can claim none of the advantages behind George W. Bush in 2003: no support from Congress, massive public opposition, no international coalition, and a much less favourable international situation. Unlike the Iraq hawks of 2003, today's Iran hawks deny they intend a war. They say the plan is to squeeze Iran to the point where the Iranian people arise in democratic revolution. The Iranians themselves will change their regime. But violent revolutions seldom lead to liberal outcomes, in the Middle East least of all. The peace of the region may depend on Trump's impulsiveness. Last month, he unpredictably picked the harshest measure on a menu of options, a targeted killing of the terrorist-general, Qassem Soleimani. Back in June, Trump equally impulsively vetoed at the last minute a military response to the shooting down of a US drone. Who knows what he will do next? Certainly not him.

Meanwhile, the peace of my house has been hugely improved by the completion of the last revisions of a new book about US politics after Trump (it is released on 5 May). I spent my first post-book weekend starting a long-awaited project to digitise our family photos. It's been very moving to scan my way through 30-plus years of marriage and the raising of three children. Every phase has been different; all have been sweet. Yesterday's task was the period 1993-95: the double toddler years. Almost every image of my wife's beautiful face is shaded by an expression of faint worry. Even when smiling on a beach, the worry appears in her eyes. As Danielle now says: "The most beautiful sentence in the English language is, "The bathroom is over there.""

My youngest daughter Beatrice is completing applications to university this fall. The looming departure casts gloom upon a house that has grown larger as the resident population has dwindled smaller. But at least we'll have tuition bills for company. A year at a prestigious private college such as Stanford and Princeton costs more than twice as much, after inflation, as it did in 1980. At a state school like the University of North Carolina or the campuses of the University of California system, tuition costs as much as 15 times what it did a generation ago. If young Americans seem in a Bolshie mood, it may be because so many of them are subject to Tsarist-style predation and exploitation.

The next weeks of the US political calendar will be crowded. Trump delivers the 2020 State of the Union on 4 February. If the impeachment trial is still pending, be prepared for an outburst of world-historical insanity. The British election of 2019 offers an obvious warning to Republicans as well as Democrats: unpopular candidates tend to lose. Trump is the most unpopular first-term president in the history of polling, the only president never to attain 50 per cent approval in any reputable poll. A plurality of Americans want him impeached and removed. Trump's fluke success in the 2016 College startled many pundits into doubting the usual rules of politics. Yet as former Romney campaign manager Stuart Stevens memorably reminds: "The casino does not always win. Still, that's the way to bet."

By arrangement with the Spectator



Court approached

Musharraf approaches Pak SC to suspend death sentence ruling by special court in high treason case

IN BRIEF

Lebanon holds 100 after protests

Beirut: Lebanon's security forces were holding at least 100 anti-government protesters Thursday, lawyers told AFP, after two nights of demonstrations that turned violent in Beirut. An unprecedented nationwide movement of protests demanding an end to endemic corruption and the wholesale removal of Lebanon's political elite broke out nearly three months ago. With little change in sight, protesters, also angered by a financial crisis they blame on Lebanon's oligarchs resumed their rallies with renewed determination Tuesday after a holiday lull. According to documents put together by a committee of lawyers defending the protesters, 101 protesters are currently being detained over the violence.

Haftar ready to join Berlin summit



Berlin: Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar has agreed to abide by a ceasefire and said he was ready to participate in an international conference in Berlin on Sunday, Germany's foreign minister said. Libya's UN-recognised government in Tripoli has been under attack since April from Haftar's forces, with clashes killing more than 280 civilians and 2,000 fighters and displacing tens of thousands. The leaders of the North African state's warring factions were in Moscow early this week at talks aimed at finalising a ceasefire orchestrated by Russia and Turkey. "During my visit to Libya today, General Haftar made clear: He wants to contribute to the success of the Libyan conference in Berlin and is in principle ready to participate in it. He has agreed to abide by the ongoing ceasefire," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas tweeted.

Iraq: US resumes joint military ops

Washington: The United States on Wednesday resumed joint military operations with Iraq, that had been put on pause after the US drone strike that killed a top Iranian general in Baghdad, the *New York Times* reported. Two US military officials quoted by the paper said the Pentagon wanted to resume these operations in order to pick up the fight against the Islamic State group. Washington began the pause on January 5 two days after the strike that killed Iranian general Qasem Soleimani at the Baghdad airport. The same day of the suspension furious Iraqi lawmakers voted to expel the more than 5,000 US troops that are in Iraq. It was not immediately clear if anyone in the Iraqi government had approved the resumption of the joint military operations, the *Times* reported.

SURVEY SAYS MILLENNIALS FEAR N-ATTACK

Geneva, Jan 16: More than half of millennials fear there will be a nuclear attack somewhere in the world within the next decade, according to a survey by the Red Cross released on Thursday. Of the 16,000 respondents, aged between 20 and 25, from 16 countries, some 47 percent believed it was more likely than not that there would be a third world war in their lifetime. "Millennials appear to see cataclysmic war as a real likelihood," Peter Maurer, president, International Committee of the Red Cross, said in his foreword. The ICRC took note of "worrying trends", such as around 41 percent saying they would support torture of enemy combatants in some circumstances. Only 54 per cent had heard of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, to protect prisoners of war and civilians in war time. Maurer said the results also revealed "a worrying acceptance of dehumanising language or actions towards perceived or real enemies that is prevailing in an era of fake news, disinformation and polarised viewpoints". There was some optimism — 60 percent of Syrians polled believe the current civil conflict would end in the next five years. Syrians also had the highest support among respondents for showing humanity in war, with 85 per cent saying captured combatants should be allowed to contact relatives.

Trump impeachment trial set to begin

Speaker Pelosi names managers for 'historic' trial as House submits Articles to Senate

Washington, Jan. 16: The US House of Representatives passed a resolution and submitted the articles of impeachment against Donald Trump to the Senate for a historic trial to remove him from office, a move described by the unfazed President as "another con job" by the Opposition Democrats.

The House, controlled by the Democratic Party, on Wednesday voted to send articles of impeachment against President Trump to the Senate, in a major development to remove him from office for his alleged abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

In a 228-193 vote, which was mainly on party lines, the House appointed seven impeachment managers who will argue the Democrats' case for removing Trump from the office of the US President. The managers were named by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. "We are here today to cross a very important threshold in American history," Pelosi said, addressing the House before the vote. "This is what an impeachment is about," she said earlier, announcing the seven-member prosecution team led by Congressman Adam Schiff, chairman of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

"So sad, so tragic for our country, that the actions taken by the president to undermine our national security, to violate his oath of office and to jeopardize the security of our elections, has taken us to this place," Pelosi remarked, before using several ceremonial pens to sign the articles.

While Pelosi's press conference was in progress, Trump weighed in on Twitter: "Here we go again, another Con Job by the Do Nothing Democrats. All of this work was supposed to be done by the House, not the Senate!"

The seven managers, after Pelosi's signature, then walked the articles across the Capitol Rotunda in a procession to the Senate, where majority leader Mitch McConnell received the documents. The impeachment process now moves to the Senate where Trump's Republican Party has majority of 53-47 in the 100-member Upper House. The trial — likely to begin on January 21 — would be presided by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts.

So sad, so tragic for our country, that the actions taken by the president to undermine our national security, to violate his oath of office and to jeopardize the security of our elections, has taken us to this place.

— NANCY PELOSI
House Speaker

Here we go again, another Con Job by the Do Nothing Democrats. All of this work was supposed to be done by the House, not the Senate!

— DONALD TRUMP
US President

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US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi signs the resolution to transmit the two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump to the Senate for trial on Capitol Hill in Washington on Thursday.

SIKHS TO BE A SEPARATE ETHNIC GROUP IN U.S.

Washington, Jan. 16: For the first time, Sikhs in the US will be counted as a separate ethnic group in the 2020 census, an organisation of the minority community said describing it as a milestone moment. Sikh Society of San Diego chief Baljeet Singh said their efforts have come to fruition.

"This has paved the way forward nationally not only for the Sikh community but also for other ethnicities in the US," he said. Describing this as a milestone, the United Sikhs said that this will be the first time the minority group will be counted and coded in the decennial US Census. According to the United Sikhs, an estimate of Sikhs living in the US is 10 lakhs.

Giuliani associate implicates Trump

Washington, Jan. 16: US President Donald Trump "knew exactly what was going on" with an alleged campaign to pressure Ukrainian officials to investigate political rival Joe Biden, an indicted member in his inner circle told US media.

Trump has strongly denied allegations he ordered a campaign pressuring Ukrainian officials to investigate the business dealings of former vice-

president Biden and his son, part of the impeachment inquiry that will formally read out charges facing the president in the Senate.

Lev Parnas, an associate of Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, told MSNBC on Wednesday that "President Trump knew exactly what was going on".

"He was aware of all my movements. I wouldn't do anything without the con-

sent of Rudy Giuliani or the president."

On Tuesday Democrats released newly acquired files that showed Giuliani working with Parnas early last year to pressure Kiev to investigate Biden.

They also showed the two, working with Ukrainian officials, trying to force out the US ambassador to the country, Marie Yovanovitch, who was eventually removed by Trump.

Parnas, a Soviet-born American, was arrested on charges of campaign finance violations in October as he attempted to flee the country, and was ordered to turn over key documents to House investigators.

The president has denied all wrongdoing, and sought to distance himself from Parnas when he was arrested in October — along with his business partner.

■ THE WHITE House violated federal law in withholding security assistance to Ukraine, which Congress passed less than a year ago, a federal watchdog agency said Thursday, adding that "the President is not vested with the power to ignore or amend any such duly enacted law".

Iran: No limit to N-enrichment

Tehran, Jan. 16: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani on Thursday said that there is "no limit" to the country's enrichment of uranium following its decision to abandon its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal in response to the killing of its top general in a US airstrike.

In a speech before the heads of banks, Rouhani said the nuclear programme is in a "better situation" than it was before the nuclear agreement with world powers.

He said dialogue with the world was "possible" despite high tensions with the United States, and stressed that Tehran was working daily "to prevent military confrontation or war".

"The government is working daily to prevent military confrontation or



Hassan Rouhani

war," Rouhani said in a televised speech, adding that "for me this is a daily concern".

He said that the Iranian retaliation — which caused significant material damage but no casualties according to the US military — had strengthened Iranian deterrence against the "threats" of

■ THE IRANIAN president also defended the 2015 international agreement designed to limit Iran's nuclear programme which has been in tatters since US President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled out of it in 2018.

President Donald Trump.

Rouhani, a moderate on his country's political spectrum, also defended the policy of openness to the world that he has pursued since his first election in 2013, and which has come under fire from Iran's ultra-conservatives.

The Iranian president

also defended the 2015 international agreement designed to limit Iran's nuclear programme which has been in tatters since Trump unilaterally pulled out of it in 2018.

Rouhani said that with the nuclear deal "we have proven in practice that it is possible for us to interact with the world".

"Of course, it's difficult," he acknowledged. "They tell us: there are people you should not trust," he said, referring to the rhetoric of Iranian ultra-conservatives about Europe and the United States.

"It's true," the Iranian president said, adding that "if there were trustworthy people ... it would be simple and easy" while also referring to Trump as "an unpredictable man".

— AFP

Gen Bajwa orders military reshuffle

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, JAN. 16

Pakistan army chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa on Thursday ordered a major reshuffle in the military.

Major General Babar Iftikhar replaced Major General Asif Ghafoor as the new Director General Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), or the chief spokesperson of the military.

Major Gen Ghafoor has been appointed as the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Pakistan Army's 40th Infantry Division in Okara.

Major General Babar Iftikhar was commissioned in Pakistan Army in 1990. He is a graduate of Command and Staff College Quetta.

General Iftikhar performed duties in Pakistan Military Academy and National Defence University. He was commanding Armed Division before assuming the position of DG-ISPR. The new DG ISPR is also a graduate from Royal Command and Staff College Jordan.

The ISPR said Major General Iftikhar has vast experience in command, staff and instruction. He also served as a brigade major and brigade staff for an infantry division in North Waziristan.

In operation Zarb-e-Azb, General Iftikhar also



Qamar Javed Bajwa

commanded the armoured and infantry brigades. Apart from teaching at the NDU, the Major General also taught at the Pakistan Military Academy.

General Ghafoor was appointed as the DG ISPR in December 2016. He had replaced Lt. General Asim Bajwa.

Major General Asif Ghafoor was commissioned on 9 Sep 1988 in 87 Medium Regiment. He is graduate of Command and Staff College Quetta, Command and Staff College Bandung (Indonesia) and NDU Islamabad. He holds master's degree in strategic studies.

Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa called on Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday and discussed the national security along with various professional affairs of the Armed Forces.

The meeting discussed the security situation across the Line of Control (LoC) along with other regional security matters.

Syrian, Russian jets pound Idlib



An aerial view of a destroyed building following a regime air strike on Ariha town in Idlib.

Beirut, Jan. 16: Dozens of fighters and civilians were killed in Syria's Idlib province as the government pressed a deadly offensive Thursday towards a key town in the country's last rebel bastion. The latest violence, which followed air strikes that killed 18 civilians on Wednesday, buried a ceasefire deal announced by Russia and rebel backer Turkey that never really took hold.

"Clashes broke out around midnight on

Wednesday south of the city of Maaret al-Numan, together with heavy bombardment despite the Russian-Turkish truce," Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said.

Twenty-two anti-government fighters were killed, most of them members of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a group that includes fighters from the former Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria. Seventeen government troops and allied militia were also killed.

— AFP

HK may keep spl status beyond '47

Hong Kong, Jan. 16: Hong Kong may be allowed to keep its unique freedoms beyond their 2047 expiry date, its leader said Thursday, but only if inhabitants remain loyal to Beijing's vision of how the city should be run.

Chief executive Carrie Lam, a pro-Beijing appointee, made the comments during a fiery session in the city's legislature, where she was frequently interrupted by opposition lawmakers — many of whom were ejected. Hong Kong has been battered by seven

months of pro-democracy protests, which Lam and Beijing have taken a hard line against. The protests are fuelled by fears that the city is losing freedoms under an increasingly authoritarian Beijing. Lam said the city's continued freedoms were contingent on the city not challenging Beijing. Security officials had to be called in multiple times to force out pro-democracy lawmakers who shouted slogans and held placards, including one that portrayed Lam as a vampire with bat wings.

— AFP

POWER | SHIFT New premier says priority is to increase citizens' real incomes

Duma approves Putin's pick for PM

Moscow, Jan 16: Russian President Vladimir Putin's new prime minister promised "real changes" on Thursday as he was approved by lawmakers after the Kremlin announced sweeping reform plans.

The lower house State Duma voted overwhelmingly to approve Mikhail Mishustin as premier, less than 24 hours after Russia's political order was shaken by Putin's announcement of constitutional reforms and the resignation of the government.

No MP voted against his

candidacy, although Communist lawmakers abstained.

Speaking before his approval, Mishustin called on parliament to work with him to urgently enact Putin's programme. "People should already now be feeling real changes for the better," Mishustin said.

The naming of a new premier was one in a series of bombshell announcements that rocked Russia on Wednesday, when Putin said constitutional reform would change the country's balance of power and



Mikhail Mishustin

his longtime prime minister Dmitry Medvedev resigned along with the cabinet.

Putin's current term ends in 2024 and observers say the 67-year-old could

be laying the groundwork to assume a new position or remain in a powerful behind-the-scenes role.

Mishustin said his priority would be to "increase citizens' real incomes" but also said the government must "restore trust" with the business community and drive innovation, echoing the state-of-the-nation speech on Wednesday when Putin announced the reforms.

In his state of the nation speech, Putin said he wanted more authority transferred to parliament from the president. He also called for the power of

the State Council, an advisory body, to be expanded and enshrined in the constitution — adding to conjecture that Putin could take it over after 2024 to preserve power.

Outlining the proposals, which would be the first significant changes to the country's constitution since it was adopted in 1993, Putin said there was a "demand for change" among Russians.

Independent political analyst Maria Lipman said the announcements indicated that Putin wanted to "stay on as number one".

— AFP



Climate action

German Chancellor Angela Merkel sealed a pact that could end electricity generation from coal in 2035, three years earlier than planned

IN BRIEF

Pope appoints woman to Vatican

Vatican City: Pope Francis has appointed a female Italian lawyer to a high-ranking role in the Vatican's diplomatic division, further cementing his credentials as one of the most progressive Holy Fathers in history. Francesca Di Giovanni will serve as the under-secretary in the Section for Relations with States, the arm of the Catholic church that handles the Holy See's political and diplomatic activity, according to a story published in the church's official media *Vatican News*. The story notes that Di Giovanni is the first woman to hold a position at that level in the secretariat of state, the department which includes the Section for Relations with States. The Roman Catholic Church currently only permits men to be ordained as priests.

SARS-like virus spreads to Japan

Tokyo: Japan has confirmed a case of a mystery virus that first emerged in China and is from the same family as the deadly SARS pathogen, authorities said. It appears to be only the second time the novel coronavirus has been detected outside China, after the World Health Organization confirmed a case in Thailand. Japan's health ministry said a man who had visited Wuhan, the apparent epicentre of the outbreak, was hospitalised on January 10, four days after his return to Japan. He reported a persistent fever. Tests on the patient, who was released from hospital, confirmed he was infected with the new virus. "This is the first domestic discovery of a pneumonia case related to the new coronavirus," the ministry said in a statement.



20,000 apply to be Yusaku's girlfriend

Tokyo: Applications to become Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa's girlfriend have topped 20,000, streaming service *AbemaTV* said on Thursday, ahead of its documentary on his search for a "life partner" to take on his moon voyage. Maezawa, who will be the first private passenger on Elon Musk's SpaceX, has already generated huge social media buzz with a \$9 million giveaway to his followers that secured his position as Japan's foremost Twitter celebrity. The show's application site now includes a "love diagnostic test" where potential entrants can test their compatibility with the entrepreneur. Multiple-choice questions include "If you rode in a private jet where would you go?" and "If Maezawa farted in front of you what would you say?".

TWITTER CEO EATS ONLY 7 MEALS A WEEK



Washington, Jan. 16: Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey answered many questions from Twitter users during a Q&A session with Wired. While most questions were related to tech support like the introduction of the edit button, spell-check, etc, an interesting question pertained to Dorsey's personal lifestyle habits. A user asked the Twitter head if a CNBC article based on Dorsey's eating and wellness habits was a satire piece. Peter Frank's question highlighted three key points, namely, Dorsey meditates two hours a day, spends 52 minutes every day doing sauna and ice bath, and that he eats five meals a week. Dorsey did accept that he meditates two hours each day and eats seven meals a week, two more than his previous quota of five meals a week. "Some of it is real. I try to meditate for two hours every day. I definitely do not do a sauna and ice bath every day. And I eat seven meals a week. Just dinner," he said. In March last year, Dorsey had revealed that he eats one meal a day, and sometimes doesn't eat at all during the weekends.

UN warns of more extreme weather

Pollution needs to be cut into half, 1/3rd of Earth needs to be protected by 2030 to save biodiversity: UN

Geneva, Jan. 16: The past decade has been the hottest on record, the UN said, warning that the higher temperatures were expected to fuel numerous extreme weather events in 2020 and beyond. The World Meteorological Organisation, which based its findings on analysis of leading international datasets, said it also confirmed data released by the European Union's climate monitor last week showing that last year was the second hottest on record, after 2016.

"The year 2020 has started out where 2019 left off - with high-impact weather and climate-related events," WMO chief Petteri Taalas said in a statement, pointing in particular to the devastating bushfires in Australia. "Unfortunately, we

The moment of crisis has come in efforts to tackle climate change. We have been putting things off for year after year. As I speak, south east Australia is on fire. Why? Because the temperatures of the Earth are increasing.

— SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH, Naturalist and broadcaster



Extreme weather throughout 2020 and the coming decades are expected.

expect to see much extreme weather throughout 2020 and the coming decades, fuelled by record levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere," he said. The UN agency said that average global temperatures during both the past

five-year (2015-2019) and 10-year (2010-2019) periods were the highest ever recorded.

Pollution needs to be cut into half and approximately one-third of the Earth needs to be protected by 2030 to save our biodiversity according to the

UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

A draft plan was released by the UN agency this week, according to which the wildlife needs to be saved from mass extinction in the coming decades. Similar targets were set by the convention

■ **ECONOMIC SHOCKS** stemming from rising sea levels pose a long-term risk to the sovereign credit ratings of dozens of countries which have large areas at risk of submersion, including Vietnam, Egypt, Suriname and the Bahamas, Moody's said on Thursday.

in 2010, at a summit in Japan. But almost all of the countries failed to meet these goals due to which they are now facing unparalleled extinction rates, the imperilled ecosystems and the deplorable condition of human survival. — *Agencies*

45M need urgent food aid in S. Africa

Johannesburg, Jan. 16: Roughly 45 million people in southern Africa are in urgent need of food aid as a result of drought, flooding and economic hardship, the UN said Thursday.

"This hunger crisis is on a scale we've not seen before and the evidence shows it's going to get worse," World Food Programme (WFP) regional director Lola Castro said in a statement.

The agency warned that it had secured only \$205 million of the \$489 million it requires, saying families across the region were already skipping meals, taking children out of

school, selling off precious assets and falling into debt to stave off agricultural losses.

In southern Africa as a whole - where temperatures are rising twice as fast as the rest of the world - people are experiencing the worst drought in 35 years, according to the UN.

Low growth, rising population, drought and floods have combined to worsen food insecurity in the region.

"If we don't receive the necessary funding, we'll have no choice but to assist fewer of those most in need, and with less," Castro said. — *AFP*

PoK avalanches death toll 100

Muzaffarabad, Jan. 16: A 12-year-old girl was found alive on Tuesday after being buried in snow for 18 hours when an avalanche in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir engulfed the family house, her mother said on Wednesday.

Samina Bibi recalled shouting for help as she lay trapped in a room under the snow.

The death toll from Monday's avalanches in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir's Neelum Valley, rose to 74, according to Pakistani officials, as rescuers continued to recover bodies.

Samina was one of the lucky ones. "I thought I would die there," she told from a hospital bed in Muzaffarabad, where she and dozens of other injured people were receiving treatment after being airlifted out of the avalanche-hit area. For Samina's mother,

Shahnaz Bibi, who lost a son and another daughter, the rescue was nothing short of a miracle.

After being pulled out of the snow earlier, Shahnaz said she and her brother, Irshad Ahmad, had given up hope of finding Samina alive.

Samina said she could not sleep while she waited to be rescued. Her leg was fractured and blood was oozing from her mouth.

For the family, the disaster happened very fast. "We didn't hear a rumble," Shahnaz said, recalling the moments before the avalanche buried the three-storey house where she and her family were sheltering with others from the village. At least 18 of them died.

Samina and her family were huddled round a fire when the avalanche hit. "It happened in the blink of an eye," said Shahnaz. — *Reuters*



Residents search for avalanche victims in the snow in Neelum Valley, in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir.

— *AFP*

Rain brings relief from Oz bushfires

Melbourne, Jan. 16: Thunderstorms and rain across parts of bushfire-devastated eastern Australia brought some relief to the harried people and firefighters but posed a new challenge of flash floods.

The raging Australian bushfires, one of the worst in its history, burned over 10 million hectares of land, destroyed over 2,000 homes and pushed many species towards extinction, apart from claiming the lives of 28 people.

The air quality in Melbourne deteriorated to the "worst in the world" on Tuesday due to the smoke from the massive bushfires.

While 16 fires are still burning across Australia's Victoria state, thunderstorms on Wednesday night brought some relief from the dense smoke haze.

In the state of New South Wales, where many of the worst fires have

burnt, there were "good falls" on some blazes early Thursday, the local meteorology bureau reported.

"Relief is here for a number of firefighters working across NSW" the state's Rural Fire Service said.

Change in cooler weather conditions that hit the state came with new warnings for flash flooding and dumping hailstones.

The rain is offering some relief for fire crews battling blazes, but there are concerns the wet weather could cause landslides, flash flooding and contaminate water, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) reported.

Cool, wet conditions are good news for firefighters, who have been battling hundreds of blazes across the state since September, it said. A huge volume of rain from Wednesday has caused a sinkhole in Melbourne's north-west. — *PTI*



Fewer than 200 of Wollemi Pines exist in Australia.

Secret mission saves Australia's 'dinosaur trees' from bushfires

Sydney, Jan. 16: A secret operation by specialist firefighters has saved the world's last stand of Wollemi Pines, a prehistoric species known as "dinosaur trees", from Australia's unprecedented bushfires, officials said. Fewer than 200 of the trees exist in the wild, hidden in a gorge in the

World Heritage Blue Mountains, northwest of Sydney, an area hit by one of the biggest bushfires that have ravaged much of Australia for months.

With flames approaching the area late last year, air tankers dropped fire retardant in a protective ring around the trees. — *AFP*

SEARCH DOG TAYLOR KOALA'S BEST FRIEND

Sydney, Jan. 16: Taylor, a 4-year-old English springer spaniel, has been among the hard working rescuers during Australia's bushfire crisis. When told: "Koala, Find!", Taylor ventures out into burnt-out bushland, finding injured marsupials by sniffing out the scent of their fur or their faeces, also known as scat.

Each time she finds a koala, she is rewarded with a tennis ball or culinary treat.

Australia's koala population has also been severely affected. In New South Wales state alone, officials estimate 30% of koala habitat - eucalypt woodlands, may have been lost. — *Reuters*

Volcano threat in Philippines high

Tagaytay, Jan. 16: The threat of the Philippines' Taal volcano unleashing a potentially catastrophic eruption remains high, authorities warned Thursday, saying it was showing dangerous signs despite a "lull" in spewing ash. Scores of earthquakes rattle the region daily and large fissures are opening up in the ground, which means the magma that would fuel a major eruption is still flowing beneath.

Authorities are struggling to keep evacuees, some 50,000 of whom fled to shelters after Taal burst to life on Sunday, away from the danger zone around the volcano.

People are trying to get back to homes they left in a hurry to get a change of clothes, feed livestock and pets and check on properties

■ **DISASTER RESPONSE** teams were on standby in Fiji on Thursday as the Pacific island nation faced a second cyclone threat in less than three weeks. Gale and heavy rain warnings were in place on northern Rotuma island.

damaged by the fissures or covered with a thick layer of ash. "Please allow us to observe the lull period for now. We are studying what that means," Maria Antonia Bornas, a scientist from the Philippines' seismology agency said. "A long lull could be just a break from volcanic activity," she said. "The danger remains." — *AFP*

POST | BOMBHELL

Prince Harry to host 2021 Rugby League World Cup draw at Buckingham Palace

Meghan appears in public since shock announcement

Vancouver, Jan. 16: Meghan Markle has made her first public appearance since she and Prince Harry sensationally decided to quit as full-time royals, visiting two women's charities in Vancouver as British media reported she could face her father in court.

Harry and Meghan are in the middle of a storm after making their bombshell announcement last week - before they had discussed the plans with Queen Elizabeth II.

That followed Meghan launching legal action against The Mail on Sunday's publishers in October after the tabloid

printed a handwritten letter it had been shown by Thomas Markle.

The weekly newspaper has now issued its defence, leading to the possibility that Meghan and her father could be called to testify against each other.

A crisis summit at Queen Elizabeth's Sandringham country residence on Monday was missed by Meghan, who was in Canada - where she and Harry plan to live part-time.

The Duchess of Sussex on Tuesday visited the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, a non-profit organization that provides support to



Prince Harry's wife Meghan Markle (3rd R) during a visit to Justice for Girls, an NGO, in Vancouver.

— *AFP*

women who are fleeing violence, dealing with homelessness or living in poverty. Meghan met with the director and a handful

of frontline staff to discuss the challenges women in the neighbourhood are facing.

"She was very interested

in what goes on for women in this community, who we all know are marginalised women who've faced many challenges and barriers to their wellbeing," said Kate Gibson, the acting executive director of the centre.

The Vancouver-based non-profit Justice for Girls also said Meghan had stopped by, tweeting photos on Wednesday of the duchess during her visit.

"Yesterday, The Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle visited to discuss climate justice for girls and the rights of Indigenous peoples," said the group, which helps teenage girls who live in poverty. Britain's Prince Harry

was to make his first public appearance on Thursday.

The Duke of Sussex was to host the 2021 Rugby League World Cup draw at Buckingham Palace - with all eyes on whether he will address the still-unresolved royal crisis.

Harry, 35, is patron of the Rugby Football League, the sport's governing body in England, and his participation in the draw was planned long before last week's shock announcement.

The couple want to step back as senior royals, split their time between Britain and Canada, become financially independent

from official royal funding and pull out of the palace's media arrangements.

They made the announcement unilaterally on a new website - without first squaring their wishes with Queen Elizabeth II.

Harry was summoned to a hastily-arranged family meeting on Monday with his grandmother, father Prince Charles and brother Prince William to thrash out a way forward.

The final outcome is set to be determined in the coming days. Harry will now face the tricky decision of whether to say anything about the rolling storm as he hosts the draw from 12.00 GMT. — *AFP*

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	41,932.56	0.14
Nifty 50	12,355.50	0.10
S&P 500*	3,305.09	0.48
Dollar (₹)	70.91	0.14
Pound Sterling (₹)	92.61	0.43
Euro (₹)	79.14	0.23
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	40,458.43	0.10
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	64.79	1.23
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.598	-0.394
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.800	0.671

* As of 9:30 pm IST

Mandatory gold hallmarking notified

The government has notified the mandatory hallmarking of gold jewellery and artefacts, which will come into force from Jan. 15, 2021. Till then, jewellers have been given time for implementation of this notification. As per the notification, only a registered jewellers will be allowed to sell the hallmark gold articles through certified sales outlets.

GMR to sell 49% stake in airport biz to Tatas



GMR Infrastructure said it will sell 49% stake, instead of 44.44% in its airport business to Tata Group subsidiary TRIL Urban Transport, as the group continues with efforts to trim its debt. GMR has decided to increase the quantum of stake sale nearly 10 months after announcing the deal, which also received green signal from the Competition Commission.

China: Phase-1 deal addressed mutual concerns

China said the phase-1 trade deal, signed with the US on Wednesday, "considerably addressed" mutual concerns and is "good" for both. Liu said the accord has "considerably addressed the concerns" of both sides. Liu said China's commitments under the deal on IPR protection, tech transfer and financial market would be applied to its other partners.

Cyient Q3 net profit up 17.6%, revenue down

IT firm Cyient reported a 17.6% rise in net profit at Rs 108.3 crore for the December 2019 quarter against Rs 92.1 crore in the year-ago quarter. Revenue fell 6.9% to Rs 1,106 crore from Rs 1,187.6 crore. "PAT increased by about 10 per cent quarter-on-quarter, primarily on account of higher other income," it said. In dollar terms, net profit rose 18.6% to \$15.2 mn while revenue was lower by 6% at \$155.2 mn.

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■ Court dismisses plea to reconsider order

Telcos get no relief from SC

PRAMOD KUMAR
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JAN. 16

The Supreme Court on Thursday rejected a plea by the telecom service providers (TSPs) for a reconsideration of the court's 2019 verdict that directed them to pay Rs 92,000 crore of past dues over sharing of adjusted gross revenue (AGR).

The TSPs that had sought a reconsideration of the order included Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and many now defunct telecom companies.

Dismissing the TSPs' plea, a bench of Justice Arun Mishra, Justice S. Abdul Nazeer and Justice M.R.Shah said, "Having perused the review petitions and the connected papers with meticulous care, we do not find any justifiable reason to entertain the review petitions. The review petitions are, accordingly, dismissed."

With this, the court also rejected the plea for an open court hearing of the review petitions. Bharti Airtel said it was disappointed with the Supreme Court's decision and it would evaluate filing another petition.



"The industry continues to face severe financial stress and the outcome could further erode the viability of the sector as a whole," Bharti said in a statement.

The internet service providers (ISPs) supported the TSPs and exhorted the government to step in immediately to review the definition AGR for the survival of the telecom sector.

"It is going to be a disaster for the telecom industry. Dismissal of review petition will lead to a duopoly situation, which is not good for consumers. Small ISPs will not be able to survive unless government steps in to review AGR definition," Internet Service Providers Association of India president Rajesh Chharia said.

Analysts were also worried about the develop-

ment. "We wonder how weaker operators like Vodafone Idea will make this payment, and not that Bharti Airtel is getting any respite as the amount has to be paid up," said Gaurang Shah, vice president at Geojit Financial Services Ltd. "It isn't easy to raise tariffs and retain customers. It remains to be seen how companies now respond to this decision because the court has twice spelled it out for them."

For two decades, the TSPs had challenged the way authorities calculated their AGR, a share of which is paid as licence and spectrum fees. But in October, the court upheld the government's method while rejecting the companies' plea to exclude revenue from non-telecommunications businesses.

The top court by its October 24, 2019 verdict had directed the cash-strapped TSPs to pay up Rs 90,000 crore—around 3 per cent of AGR as spectrum charges and 8 per cent as licence fees.

The court had said that except for termination fee and roaming charges, all revenues coming to telecom service provider would be counted in AGR.

Goyal says Amazon not doing India a favour by investing

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JAN. 16

A day after visiting Amazon boss Jeff Bezos announcing \$1 billion investment in India, Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said the company was not doing any favour to the country by the investment and wondered how the giant online retailer from America could incur such 'big losses' in India but its predatory pricing.

The rare snub to a visiting dignitary by the government follows the virtual boycott of his signature event in New Delhi on Wednesday by government officials, apparently over the ongoing antitrust probe against the company.

The world's richest person, Bezos is the founder, president and CEO of Amazon.

Goyal said investors in e-commerce platforms should not try and look for loopholes in the existing framework of laws that regulate business in the country. "A probe into Amazon's activities has already been initiated and the company is not doing India any favours by investing \$1 billion in the country," Goyal said at the Raisina Dialogue here.

The Goyal's statements



comes at a time when the fair trade regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI) opened an investigation into Amazon's business practices, which came under the radar after several small traders complained about the e-commerce behemoth's excessive sway over the market. Besides Amazon, another major e-commerce player, Walmart-owned Flipkart, is also being investigated by the watchdog.

On Wednesday, Bezos announced his plan to invest \$1 billion into digitising India's small and medium-sized business enterprises, with the company setting an aim of exporting \$10 billion worth of goods from India.

The company does not allow foreign investment beyond 49 per cent in multi-brand retailing and has not yet approved any application of overseas retailers. "The company

CBI books Adani Enterprises, NCCF ex-honchos over tender

Says coal supply bids details leaked to the firm

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JAN. 16

The CBI has registered a case of corruption, cheating and criminal misconduct against Adani Enterprises and a former chairman and an ex-managing director of the National Cooperative Consumers Federation of India Ltd (NCCF) for the alleged irregularities in selecting a company for a tender to ferry coal from ports to power stations in Andhra Pradesh.

According to sources, the CBI has booked Adani Enterprises (Ahmedabad) and NCCF's former chairman Virender Singh, former MD G P Gupta and its senior advisor S.C. Singhal under IPC sections related to alleged criminal conspiracy and cheating and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act for allegedly favouring the Ahmedabad-based company in the tender and violation of guidelines.

Andhra Pradesh Power Generation Corporation (APGenco) had floated a limited tender enquiry for the supply of six lakh MTs of imported coal from sea ports to the Nara Tata Rao Thermal Power Plant in Vijayawada and the Rayalaseema Thermal Power Plant (RTTP) in Kadapa on



June 29, 2010, sources said. The tender enquiry was forwarded to seven public sector undertakings, including NCCF, a cooperative under the Union consumer affairs ministry. The CBI FIR alleged that the NCCF officers "committed irregularities by way of manipulation in the selection of the bidders, thereby giving undue favour to Adani Enterprises Ltd in award of work for supply of imported coal to APGenco despite its disqualification."

The CBI, sources said, alleged that NCCF's Hyderabad unit, which had received the APGenco tender enquiry on June 29, had forwarded it to its headquarters in Delhi to Singhal. "The same day the head office selected a single party, Maharishi Brothers Coal Limited (MBCL), to transport the coal at a margin of 2.25 per cent, instead of floating an



Audi, the German luxury car maker, has introduced its flagship crossover SUV in India, the Audi Q8, priced at Rs 1.33 crore onward at pan-India showroom. Audi has allotted only 200 units of the Q8 model for the Indian market. Rivals for the Audi Q8 include the Range Rover Sport, Porsche Cayenne Coupe and the BMW X6 which is also expected to be launched in 2020. The Q8 combines the luxury quotient of a four-door coupe and an SUV.

NSE case: Sebi lets off Ravi Narain, 8 others

New Delhi, Jan. 16: In the high profile NSE colocation case, regulator Sebi on Thursday exonerated nine current and former officials of the exchange, including ex-MD and CEO Ravi Narain, saying they cannot be held responsible for any misconduct or non-compliance in the 'dark-fibre issue'.

The former officials who have been absolved from the charges are the exchange's senior VP (operations) R Nandakumar, colocation head Jagdish Joshi, chief technology officers N Muralidharan and Ravi Apte.

The current officials of the exchange, who have been exonerated are its chief operating officer (trading) Mayur Sindhawad, CTO-projects Sankarson Banerjee, CTO-operations G Shenoay and VP-Regulations Supra-bhat Lala.

The order came after an investigation by the Securities and Exchange Board of India against several former and current NSE employees and stock brokers in the co-location matter.

It was alleged that certain stock brokers were permitted to avail of point-to-point (P2P) dark fibre connectivity from Sampark Infotainment Pvt Ltd, a non-empanelled service provider, and the connectivity provided by this company conferred a latency advantage to a few brokers which resulted in substantial increase in their turnover during the period from April-August, 2015.

While granting permission to stock brokers for establishing P2P connectivity from its colocation facility with the help of Sampark, NSE has been alleged to have adopted a discriminatory approach towards a large number of other stock brokers, by allowing Sampark's services to be availed of by a few selected stock brokers.

Sebi, in its order, said that none of the nine officials was occupying a post of director and/or key managerial position at the exchange during the relevant period—April-July 2015.

"Further, the materials available on record also don't indicate even remotely, the role of any of the noticees as an employee of NSEIL (National Stock Exchange of India Ltd) in facilitating Sampark to establish the P2P connectivity at NSEIL," it added.

With regard to the allegations of irregularities in allowing Sampark to continue to provide the services, the regulator said it did not find any evidence worthwhile to proceed against these officials.

—PTI

Citi Singapore adjusts pay for women paid less than men

WES GOODMAN & CHANYAPORN CHANJAROEN
SINGAPORE, JAN. 16

Citigroup Inc has adjusted the pay in Singapore of women who earned less than their male peers for doing the same work, the latest action in a growing trend of companies and countries seeking to close the gender pay gap.

"Since 2018, we made an assessment of where we are and what we need to do to close the gender pay gap and have announced base salary adjustments to

individuals where necessary," Jorge Osorio, head of HR at Citi Singapore, said in a statement.

The move follows a global pay review earlier this year from Citi, which found on average the company's female employees earn 29 per cent less than the men there, a reflection of how few women occupy the most lucrative jobs.

In addition to pay adjustments, the bank is accelerating the pace of promotions for women. A majority of the bank's full-time hires from universities in Asia were women, and the company in November



launched a program targeting mothers who stepped back from their careers and are now inter-

ested in returning to the workforce. Companies and countries have struggled to

narrow a persistent pay difference between men and women, though advanced economies have reported progress in recent years. Men remain over-represented in top positions and the highest-earning careers, and even though gaps narrow when adjusting for things like job titles, education levels and age, men and women globally on average aren't paid equally for equal work.

Singapore's gender pay differential was 6 per cent in 2018 when adjusted for age and education level, according to a recent

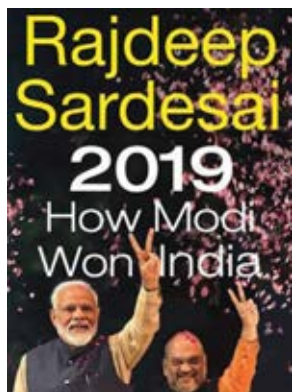
study by the city-state's Ministry of Manpower and the National University of Singapore. Similar analyses in other countries showed gaps of 8 per cent in the US, 7.7-8.3 per cent in Canada and 18.3 per cent in China, the study showed.

The UK, which requires firms with at least 250 workers to report how much women are paid compared with men, saw its gender pay gap shrink to a record low last year, even as men continued to out-earn women in the vast majority of occupations.

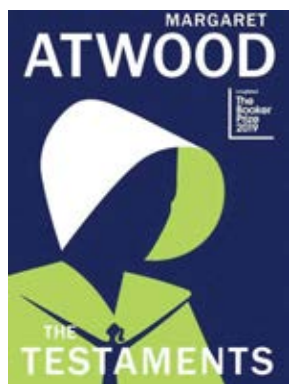
—Bloomberg

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

NON-FICTION



- 2019 HOW MODI WON INDIA**
Rajdeep Sardesai,
Harper Collins, ₹699
- THE EMPEROR WHO NEVER WAS- DARA SHUKOH IN MUGHAL INDIA**
Supriya Gandhi
Bellknapp Harvard, ₹699
- INDIA'S FOUNDING MOMENT**
Madhav Khosla,
Harvard, ₹599
- REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins, ₹599
- THE ANARCHY**
William Dalrymple
Bloomsbury, ₹699
- GANDHI'S HINDUISM: THE STRUGGLE AGAINST JINNAH'S ISLAM**
M.J. Akbar
Bloomsbury, ₹699
- A CHEQUERED BRILLIANCE**
Jairam Ramesh
Penguin Viking, ₹999
- GOOD ECONOMICS FOR HARD TIMES**
Abhijit V. Banerjee,
Esther Duflo
Juggernaut, ₹699
- THE NEW WORLD DISORDER AND THE INDIAN IMPERATIVE**
Shashi Tharoor and
Samir Saran, Aleph, ₹799
- 1971: A PEOPLE'S HISTORY FROM BANGLADESH, PAKISTAN AND INDIA**
Anam Zakaria
Penguin Vintage, ₹699



- THE TESTAMENTS (BOOKER PRIZE 2019 WINNER)**
Margaret Atwood
Chatto & Windus, ₹799
- THE CARPET WEAVER**
Nemat Sadat
Penguin Viking, ₹599
- GIRL, WOMAN, OTHER (BOOKER PRIZE 2019 WINNER)**
Bernardine Evaristo
Hamish Hamilton, ₹799
- HASSAN'S STATE OF AFFAIRS**
Mirza Athar Baig,
Translated by Haider
Shahbaz, Harper
Perennial, ₹699
- THE FAR FIELD**
Amitav Ghosh
Madhuri Vijay,
4th Estate, ₹599
- KISS THE GIRLS AND MAKE THEM CRY**
Mary Higgins Clark
Simon & Schuster, ₹599
- GENESIS**
Robin Cook
Pan Macmillan, ₹650
- RAAVANPUTR MEGHNAD-PRINCE OF LANKA**
Kevin Missal
Simon & Schuster, ₹250
- JAIPUR JOURNALS**
Namita Gokhale
Penguin Viking, ₹499
- LOST**
James Patterson &
James O. Born,
Century, ₹599

Bahrisons, New Delhi

Asiatic Society's 2019 Reprints: Looking back at a glorious past



Indranil Banerjee

review

Indians are fond of mentioning their glorious past without knowing too much about it. Mythology generally is equated with historical knowledge. Curiously, this mindset was what the first Europeans encountered when they started setting up trading, and later ruling, establishments here.

The Hindus, the initial Europeans wrongly believed, belonged to an old pagan race, whose beliefs and past were nothing more than a motley collection of superstitions and folk tales. It was only with the coming of the first Orientalists, such as the famous William Jones who established the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1784, that the dust began to be cleared over India's truly remarkable past, its histories, philosophies and body of forgotten scientific knowledge.

Men like William Jones who came as part of the English ruling contingent to India where men of the Enlightenment and were intensely curious about antiquities, new worlds and new discoveries. India proved to be an unparalleled treasure trove. The East India Company's first governor-general, Warren Hastings, was himself an Enlightenment man, an associate of men like Benjamin Franklin, Joseph Priestly and others, and a great patron of literate men in Bengal.

It was the patronage of Hastings and the vision of Jones that led to the creation of the Asiatic Society. Both men sought out Indian savants, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and more, to learn from them about India's past and true beliefs. These men commissioned maulanias and pundits to translate important historical, religious and juridical works into English. Among the first books to be translated was the Bhagavad

Gita, the laws of the Gentoos, Muslim law and so on.

The meticulous translations of Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu, Bengali, Tibetan and other works opened up India's past to the rest of the world. It also proved that India has heir to an astonishing, ancient and highly sophisticated culture, far from the pagan, superstitious worldview suggested by the average Hindu.

The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, as it was called during British times, was the single most important institution for the identification, translation, collection and annotation of Indian historical treatises. More than two centuries of hard work, patronage and perseverance has produced one of the largest repositories of ancient texts in the

world consisting of over 130,000 volumes, all of which are housed within the Asiatic Society in Kolkata's Park Street.

For many years, the society had endured neglect and a sad decline in academic interest. It is of great significance that the society is now showing signs of revival. Most notable is the new 2019 catalogue which shows evidence of several reprints and lists more than 300 classic works.

A large number of rare books long gone out of print have been reprinted after a gap of several decades. This is a great relief for scholars, book lovers and those interested in our exceedingly interesting past.

There is also a handful of new publications including "Persian Studies under the Sultans of Bengal", by Gholam Sarwar, which contains several essays on the Persian language, administrators, Sufis and sultans in medieval Bengal.

But the catalogue's real gems are the classical translations handed down to us over the decades by scholars long departed and usually

forgotten. Many of these have been classified by the Asiatic Society under its "Bibliotheca Indica" series which is composed of oriental works translated into English.

From this collection, I picked up a strange little book called the *Qanun-i-Humayuni* of Khwandamir, written originally in Persian in 1535 during the reign of the Mughal emperor Humayun. This work was translated into English by the Indian scholar Baini Prashad, and printed by the society in 1940. The account provides a fascinating view of life during Humayun's times and his strange inventions including palaces of barges of the river Yamuna, his division of his administration into those looking after jurisprudence and theological matters, military and administrative matters and, of all things, a ministry of mirth.

Among other classics written in Persian would include the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* of Aby Umar Usman, the *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Ma'Asir-i-Alamgiri, Abu Fazl's famous *Ain-i-Akbari* and the Ma'athir-ul-Umara. Many of these works are today available in reprints by various publishers, but the society's catalogue reminds us how they came into common circulation.

The Ma'athir-ul-Umara which lists the names and titles of important Mughal officials during the period 1556-1780, was originally composed in Persian by Nawab Samsam ud Daula Shah Nawaz Khan and his son Abdul Hai Khan. This voluminous work was painstakingly translated by the scholar H. Beveridge, and then later revised, annotated and completed by the redoubtable Baini Prashad in 1941.

Another classic is the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, written by the Afghan from Ghori, Minhaj-i-Siraj. This happens to be the oldest history of Muslim Bengal covering the first century and a half following the conquest of Bengal by Bhakhtiyar Uddin Khilji. It was translated into English by Henry George Raverty and published in 1864.

The men and women behind these priceless

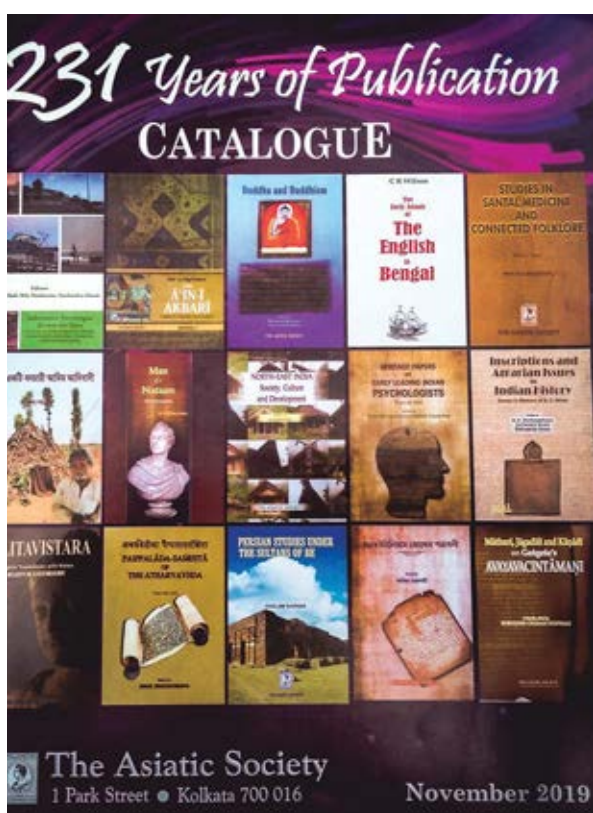
translations have largely been forgotten but need to be resurrected. For they were not just remarkable scholars of the past but also fascinating individuals in their own right. For instance, Henry George Raverty (1825-1906) came to India as an infantry officer and fought in a number of campaigns, including the ones in Punjab (1848-49) and Swat (1850). During his stay in Peshawar, he learnt Pushto and later Persian. This began a long and illustrious career in Orientalist studies. He translated over a dozen significant works into English and kept up his passion all his life after retiring to his native England.

Similarly, there is the little-known Scotsman who first translated the *Ain-i-Akbari* into English, signing his works under the name of H. Beveridge. He was actually a senior British administrator and later judge, Henry Beveridge (1837-1929). His major works include "The Trial of Maharaja Nanda Kumar, A Narrative of a Judicial Murder (1886)", and he is best known for his superb translation of the *Akbarnamah* and Ma'athir-ul-Umara.

Baini Prashad (1894-1969) was an unlikely scholar of ancient manuscripts that he helped translate, rectify and annotate. He was primarily a zoologist more interested in the mating habits of fish and the behaviour of molluscs and the like. He was the first Indian director of the Zoological Survey of India. His fertile interests, which included knowledge of the Persian language, at some point led him to take up the job of correcting and revising the English translation of the Ma'athir-ul-Umara of Beveridge.

To peruse the catalogue of the Asiatic Society therefore is also to travel back to the time of outstanding scholars and an age of rediscovery of India's splendid past. The new catalogue is a treasure, and one can only hopes that the Asiatic Society restores and reprints more of its many critical works.

The writer is an independent commentator on political and security issues



The Asiatic Society's 2019 catalogue

Rail tracks, objects, memory, history



Sudeep Sen

Polyphony

My heart is warm with the friends I make, / And better friends I'll not be knowing, / Yet there isn't a train I wouldn't take, / No matter where it's going." — Edna St. Vincent Millay

One of my walking routes recently in the rural south of France was a disused rail-track that once connected Carnoules, Brignoles and Aix-en-Provence. A tourist train occasionally plies on this route in peak summer season, otherwise the tracks are overgrown with auburn weeds and wild flowers that glow golden and ochre in the late evening light.

The track is maintained intermittently by the military because of its strategic importance — and if it weren't for them, the shrubbery and adjoining forestry would have completely covered the rail-lines (as it already has over many stretches) — and unless you had prior historical knowledge of their existence, you would not even know that the lines were there.

There is something otherworldly about walking on abandoned tracks, something that reminds you of your childhood reading of Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* or *Secret Seven* or similar adventure-mystery stories of the time.

My walking point started at the outer limit of Carnoules village, at times towards Aix, and on other

days towards the lake village of Besse. It was also the point where the electrification abruptly ended, as if suddenly arrested, without any apparent reason. Perhaps this was the dividing line of the axes of power during the Wars — a sign of technological advancement stalled due to political histories or commercial needs of the time.

The track went through several twists and turns — its perspectival disappearance, its languid curvature and the relics of abandonment most interested me. As I walked on the cracked wooden sleepers, I noticed a variety of nails, rivets, bolts, fishplates and other fasteners that held the rails down. They were individually etched in robust industrial fonts with letters and numbers — RM, PM, CS, 53, 55, 58, 72 — part of a very complex and intricate analogue of railway-codes.

Many of these metal and wooden bits had come loose over time and with disuse. I collected some of these little remnants — the errant pieces stained my bare hands with a strong aroma unique only to the locomotive world. The metal possessed a fresh, pungent, engine-oil smell typical of the steam or diesel engines of the past. Even rust and time had not been able to erase this sharp scent. A few miles on, I found a disengaged, dagger-shaped

splinter of a sleeper — its gnarled backbone embedded with its own stories.

For decades now, the railway-signal lights here have been permanently red, the green and amber blackened out by dirt, cobweb and lack of electrical power. The single, semaphore, outstretched paddle-arm has not moved its limb-position for years, or even witnessed the once-regular drills — a balletic, coordinated series of shunting exercises that engine and wagons engage in to keep movement fit on tracks.

What does one do with memory and objects that accompany them? Either you leave them where they are and let them slowly erode and vanish with time; or if you are nostalgic, collect the relics as talisman. So my collection includes a wooden sleeper-shard, some crooked nails, rivets and other metallurgy — and many photographic images recording the track's length. These are the only tactile elements left to preserve the history, albeit a fractional and personal one. But at least the abandoned steel felt the touch of life again, a human hand that found it worthwhile to resurrect their narratives.

When I put my ear to the metal of the rail tracks, I can still hear the rumbling roar of a distant defunct train and the shrill tweet of the whistle of a steam engine that pulls the coach-wagons. Whether it is in my imagination or reality, it does not matter — what matters is memory itself. Tom Waits wrote, "Their memory's like a train: you can see it getting smaller as it pulls away."

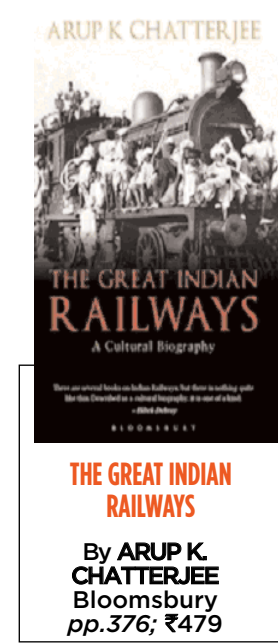
Closer at home on a recent train journey here, coincidentally

and rather appropriately, I carried Arup K Chatterjee's *The Great Indian Railways* (Bloomsbury) as my reading companion. There are several books written on the Indian Railways, but *The Great Indian Railways* is a unique "cultural biography". "Following an experimental railway track at Chintadripet, in 1835, the battle for India's first railroad was fought bitterly between John Chapman's Great Indian Peninsular Railway and Rowland MacDonald Stephenson's East India Railway Company, which was merged with Dwarkanauth Tagore's Great Western of Bengal Railway. Even at the height of the Mutiny of 1857, Bahadur Shah Zafar promised Indian owned railway tracks for native merchants if Badshahi rule was restored in Delhi.

From Jules Verne to Rudyard Kipling to Mark Twain to Rabindranath

Tagore to Nirad C. Chaudhuri to R.K. Narayan and Ruskin Bond the aura of Indian trains and railway stations have enchanted many writers and poets. With iconic cinematography from *The Apu Trilogy*, *Aradhana*, *Sonar Kella*, *Sholay*, *Gandhi*, *Dil Se*, *Parineeta*, *Barfi*, *Gangs of Wasypur*; and numerous others, Indian cinema has paved the way for mythical railroads in the national psyche.

The Great Indian Railways takes us on a historic adventure through many junctions of India's hidden railway legends, for the first time in a book replete with anecdotes from imperial politics, European and Indian accounts, the battlefronts of the Indian nationalist movement, Indian cinema, songs, advertisements, and much more, in an ever-expanding cultural biography of the Great Indian Railways."

THE GREAT INDIAN
RAILWAYSBy ARUP K.
CHATTERJEE
Bloomsbury
pp.376; ₹479

Siraj-ud-daulah at Plassey: A critical review



Sudeep Chakravarti

excerpt

It isn't as if people haven't tried justifying British colonial steps in India, and it isn't as if people haven't responded. If I may illustrate with a few examples here (several more appear in appropriate contexts throughout the book).

Take George Bruce Malleson's *The Decisive Battles of India from 1746 to 1849*, which is considered required reading for Plassey.

Malleson, an officer and civil servant in India who transitioned from Company to Crown after 1857, offered a paean to the British treatment of its colonial subjects in India as compared to the injustices Russian despots practised on their subjects:

Not in this way did the British behave towards the races of India. In all their onward progresses they had the assent and support of the populations who desired to maintain law and order. The decadence of the Mughal rule was proceeding rapidly when Clive first landed in Bengal. Then the buffalo was to the man who held the bludgeon. These pages show how, under English rule, the buffalo is the property of the man, woman or child who has the legal right to possess it. We have shed no blood except on the battle-field, and the blood we have shed there has been the blood of the oppressors of the people.

While it isn't difficult to disprove this astonishing declaration in these relatively unblinkered post-colonial times, aided by greater access to information and saturation research, Indian historians and chroniclers active in the late-Raj era of the twentieth century did so too. But they, and their colleagues who followed, both in India and overseas, also readily grasp at a certificate to Siraj that Malleson provides in the same work:

Whatever may have been his faults, Siraj-ud-daulah had neither betrayed his master nor sold his country. Nay more, no unbiased Englishman, sitting in judgement on the events which passed in the interval between the 9th February and the 23rd June [1757], can deny that the name of Siraj-ud-daulah stands higher in the scale of honour than does the name of Clive. He was the only one of the principal actors in that tragic drama who did not attempt to deceive!

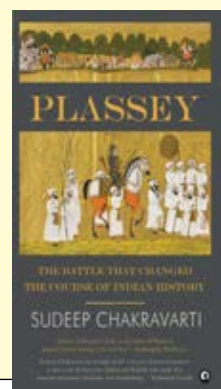
Nobel laureate for literature Rabindranath Tagore actually referenced this assertion of Malleson in a critique of a book, *Sirajuddaula*, by the historian Akshaykumar Maitreya in 1897. Both the book and the critique were in Bengali. Maitreya's tone is often sarcastic when remarking on the post-Plassey era (*'Ekhon amra shobho hotachhi'* — we are now civilized — when discussing life in rural Bengal, for instance), and his work was arguably the first that

offered a structured defence of 'the unfortunate Sirajuddaula, riven by calumny and perennially held by history as guilty'. This quote from a translation of Tagore's critique by the scholar Rosinka Chaudhuri concludes the comment: 'Sirajuddaula may not have been a person of the highest character and greatness, but his bravery and simplicity...and humility...sparkles in the low falsehoods this dispute has brought to the fore. That is why Malleson highlighted it...'

Tagore conceded that Maitreya had gone somewhat overboard in his defence of Siraj. 'In only one department has he [Maitreya] broken the laws of history. Although he has not tried to conceal any of the flaws in Siraj's character; nevertheless, he has taken his side with a shade too much of enthusiasm. Instead of presenting his material calmly with the sole aid of historical witness, he has revealed his own opinion at the same time with a little too much impatience and ardour. Fighting a rigid and hostile prejudice and facing blind and unfair opinion at every step, he naturally becomes extremely agitated. But the peace that resides in truth has been destroyed in the process, and the reader has occasionally been a little troubled by the thought, quite without foundation, of favouritism.'

But Tagore also had a word in his critique, written in 1898, on an Anglo-Indian paper being livid about the book: '...as long as we are weak and the English strong, our criticism of the English is nearly harmless to them, their criticism of us is deadly. Our newspapers may only cause a bit of ear ache to them and their memsahibs, but their newspapers spray bullets into our heart...'

Excerpted from Plassey — The Battle that Changed the Course of Indian History with permission the publisher

PLASSEY — THE BATTLE
THAT CHANGED THE
COURSE OF INDIAN
HISTORYBy SUDEEP
CHAKRAVARTI
Aleph
pp.695; ₹799

TRUMP'S IGNORANCE ABOUT INDIA, CHINA STUMPS MODI

FROM PG 1

The book claimed during one of his meetings with Modi, Trump told him, "It's not like you've got China on your border." However, the Washington Post report did not mention the year in which President Trump made this gaffe. After Trump bumbles his India-China geography, the authors, both Post reporters, claimed that "Modi's eyes bulged out in surprise" and his "expression gradually shifted, from shock and concern to resigna-

tion". The two reporters were part of the team that won a 2018 Pulitzer Prize for its reporting on Trump and Russia. The book quoted a Trump aide as saying that Modi probably "left that meeting and said, 'This is not a serious man. I cannot count on this man as a partner'". "After the meeting", the aide told the authors, "the Indians took a step back in their diplomatic relations with the United States." India and China have an unresolved border dispute that covers the 3,488 km Line of Actual Control (LAC).



In rehab

Injury-plagued Indian pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar has undergone a sports hernia surgery in London and will begin his rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) after returning to the country

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SHORT TAKES

Ashwin signs up with Yorkshire

London: Senior India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin will play for Yorkshire during this year's English County Championship, the club said on Thursday. Ashwin, 33, who will play for Delhi Capitals in the upcoming Indian Premier League, will be Yorkshire's main overseas spinner following South African Keshav Maharaj's stint in 2019. Ashwin is scheduled to feature in a minimum of eight County Championship fixtures for the White Rose next season after the conclusion of his IPL commitments followed by a short period of rest at the BCCI's request. "I'm thrilled to be joining Yorkshire, a club with a wonderful history and a fantastic fan base. I think our team looks extremely talented with some superb pace bowlers and exciting batsmen," Ashwin told the club's website. — PTI



Charulata Patel

India's superfan Charulata dies

New Delhi: Charulata Patel, the octogenarian "Superfan" of the Indian cricket team whose exuberant support prompted skipper Virat Kohli and his deputy Rohit Sharma to seek her blessings during the World Cup in England, has died due to age-related ailments. Patel, 87, passed away on Monday, a post on her official Instagram page, "Cricket Daadi", stated. "With a heavy heart, I inform you that our beautiful grandmother took her last breath on January 13th at 5:30 pm," the post read. "She was such a cute little lady, it is true that small things come in small packages. Our dadi was a pleasure, it was/is really exceptional. It was our world. I want to thank you all for making you feel special last year. She loved the attention." The BCCI took to twitter to offer condolences. "#TeamIndia's Superfan Charulata Patel ji will always remain in our hearts and her passion for the game will keep motivating us." — PTI

Ireland stun West Indies

St. George's (Grenada): Ireland rode a career-best 95 from opener Paul Stirling before keeping their nerve in a nail-biting final over to pull off a four-run win over world champions West Indies in the first of a three-match Twenty20 series on Wednesday. The burly Stirling steered Ireland to 208-7 in their 20 overs. However, the home side appeared comfortably on course for victory — bringing up their hundred inside 10 overs with just two wickets down — until the game was decided in the last over. Needing 15 to win, all-rounder Josh Little got rid of the dangerous Dwayne Bravo, one of two wickets to fall in the last over. — AFP

Brief scores: Ireland 208/7 (Stirling 95, O'Brien 48, Bravo 2/28, Cottrell 2/37) bt West Indies 204/7 (Lewis 53, Little 3/29, Young 2/31).

BOOKIE CHAWLA TO BE BROUGHT BACK TO INDIA

London: Alleged cricket bookie Sanjeev Chawla is set to be extradited to India to face charges of match-fixing after he lost a last-ditch appeal attempt Thursday in the UK High Court. At the end of a half-day hearing at the Royal Courts of Justice in London, Lord Justice David Bean and Justice Clive Lewis concluded that they were "satisfied that permission to appeal should be refused". Under the India-UK Extradition Treaty, the UK Home Office is now expected to formally certify the court order for Chawla to be extradited to India within 28 days. Under exceptional circumstances, there is a possibility of moving the UK Supreme Court on a point of law but barrister Mark Summers, representing the Indian government in the case, said that as a matter of law that avenue is not possible after permission has been denied by the High Court. Chawla's lawyers had tried to establish that their client has a statutory right to appeal against the District Judge's order sent to the UK Home Secretary for a sign off. — Agencies

India face heat

Kohli to be back at No.3 as India out to salvage series in Rajkot

Rajkot, Jan. 16: Skipper Virat Kohli is set to be back at his regular number three position after the strategy of coming two-down boomeranged in the lung-opener as India take on a resolute Australia in the must-win second ODI here on Friday.

India go into the game 0-1 down after Australia registered a 10-wicket win in the lung-opener at Mumbai, courtesy David Warner and Aaron Finch, who hit unbeaten hundreds. In a bid to field all three in-form players — Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan and KL Rahul — Kohli dropped himself down the order but the plan backfired spectacularly as he was unable to convert his start.

Opener Dhawan later said he was ready to bat at number three if asked to by the team management, but since Kohli has been successful at that position, the skipper would be more than willing to walk in one-down. Kohli batting at three also provides stability to the middle-order.

With a concussed Rishabh Pant out of the second game, Rahul is a certainty as he will keep wickets. So, like in the last game, Rohit and Dhawan, who made a dogged 74 off 91 balls in

Wankhede, could open, and there could be a toss-up between Rahul and young Shreyas Iyer at number four.

Iyer had a rare failure on Tuesday. Pant's absence could pave the way for the inclusion of Karnataka batsman Manish Pandey, who made optimum use of the opportunity that he got in the third T20 against Sri Lanka in Pune. It would also be interesting to see which among the experienced Kedar Jadhav and rookie Shivam Dube makes the squad.

Rohit, who had a phenomenal 2019, failed in the first game, but given the form he is in, the opener is expected to bounce back strongly here. Ditto for Kohli, who is just one hundred short of equalling cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar's record of most hundreds on home soil for India.

The bowlers led by Jasprit Bumrah had a forgettable outing at the Wankhede and they would be more than

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eager to make a strong comeback and prove their mettle. Bumrah, since his comeback, has not been as effective

as earlier and he would like to change the perception.

It would be interesting to see whether India play Delhi speedster Navdeep Saini or persist with Shardul Thakur, who gave away 43 runs in Mumbai. Ravindra Jadeja looks a certainty and so the choice would be between chinaman Kuldeep Yadav, who conceded 55 runs in the first ODI and Chahal as the lead spinner.

On the other hand, a high on confidence Australia will be looking to seal the issue to register back to back series wins in India, a rare feat for any visiting team. — PTI



In this situation, you should be ready to bat at any number because it is

really important to play in the team, (considering) the competition which we have now right now.

— SHREYAS IYER, Indian batsman



It's going to be an attacking approach. I think if you're on the back-foot and have a defensive mindset then that's when he (Kohli)

can get on top of you. The most important thing playing in places like India against these guys is to have a little bit of character.

— ADAM ZAMPA, Australian leg-spinner



Virat Kohli during a training session ahead of the second ODI against Australia in Rajkot on Thursday. — AP

MSD dropped from BCCI contracts list

New Delhi, Jan. 16: Mahendra Singh Dhoni's omission from the central contracts list was imminent and he was duly informed before the national selection committee finalised the names, a top BCCI official said on Thursday. If the former skipper makes it to the T20 squad sometime this year, he might be re-inducted on a pro-rata basis even though chances of that are remote.

The 38-year-old double World Cup-winning former India captain's omission from the list was not unexpected as he has not played any international cricket for over six months now. "Let me clarify that one of the top-most BCCI office-bearers spoke to MS and told him about how they are going about in the central contracts. He was clearly told that since he hasn't played any game in the said period (September 2019 till date), he cannot be included for the time being," the official said on conditions of anonymity.

Asked who among BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, secretary Jay Shah and CEO Rahul Johri spoke to Dhoni, the official refused to divulge. "Let's not get into who spoke. The fact is that a player of his stature needs to be told that he is not being awarded a central contract for the time being and it was done in an appropriate manner," he said.

However, the official said that if Dhoni makes it to the World T20 team



MS Dhoni

BCCI Central Contracts for October 2019 to September 2020

Grade A+ (₹7 crore): Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah

Grade A (₹5 crore): Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, K L Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan, Mohammed Shami, Ishant Sharma, Kuldeep Yadav, Rishabh Pant.

Grade B (₹3 crore): Wriddhiman Saha, Umesh Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Hardik Pandya, Mayank Agarwal.

Grade C (₹1 crore): Kedar Jadhav, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Manish Pandey, Hanuma Vihari, Shardul Thakur, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar

(October 2020, after current contracts' duration ends) or even before that, he can be included on a pro-rata basis. — PTI

Dhoni starts training with state side, gets new bowling machine

New Delhi, Jan. 16: Dropped from BCCI's central contracts list, former India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni began practising with the Jharkhand Ranji Trophy squad on Thursday amid fresh speculation on his future.

The 38-year-old showed up at his home team's net practice in Ranchi, indicating that he is gearing himself for the upcoming

Indian Premier League. This was on a day when BCCI axed him from the list of centrally contracted players.

"Even we did not know that he was going to come and train with us. It was a pleasant surprise. He batted for a while and did the usual training routine," a source close to the Jharkhand team management said.

— PTI

Stokes, Pope give hope for England in third Test

South Africa, Jan. 16: World cricketer of the year Ben Stokes survived three reviews by South Africa as he and Ollie Pope regained the initiative for England on the first day of the third Test at St George's Park on Thursday.

England were 224 for four at the end of an attritional day during which South Africa had briefly claimed the advantage.

England were 148 for four when Stokes and Pope came together, in danger of failing to capitalise on batting first on a placid pitch on a hot, sunny day.

But the pair added 76 without being parted

and were able to lift a slow scoring rate after England were able to score only 117 for two in 58 overs before tea. Stokes was unbeaten on 38 at the close while Pope made 39 not out.

Stokes came into the match a day after being named player of the year by the International Cricket Council and on the back of a man-of-the-match performance when England levelled the four-match series by winning the second Test in Cape Town by 189 runs.

Stokes made a shaky start, surviving a leg before wicket review on umpire's call against left-arm spinner Keshav

Maharaj and an appeal for a catch at slip off what South Africa thought was an inside edge off the pad.

South Africa wasted their last review when Stokes played no shot against Vernon Philander with the second new ball but the ball was well outside the off stump.

Rabada took two wickets for South Africa but the home team's most impressive bowler was Maharaj who took one for 55.

Brief scores: England 224/4 (Z. Crawley 44, B. Stokes (batting) 38, O. Pope (batting) 39; K. Rabada 2/48) vs South Africa.

A kangaroo challenge for India



R. Mohan

Line & Length

It's not seldom that teams from Down Under have been on top in India. They called it the Final Frontier but that didn't stop the Australians from striving to conquer it. They did so primarily by mentally preparing themselves for the culture shock of India. There was a time long ago when Bob Simpson said the bottle of Bisleri had changed the fundamentals of an Indian tour. The availability of a bottle of clean water had helped the Aussie cricketers take on India better, a process that began in 1987 with the Reliance Cup.

The depth of their mental preparation was seen in the way the Aussies dismantled India in Mumbai, a rare feat of upending India in a first game because teams usually take a while acclimatising to India. Of course, this is the IPL era in which touring India is no more an exotic adventure and playing cricket on its pitches not experiments in futility. The Aussies know Indian conditions well and they had proved it last time too when they came from 2-0 down to win 3-2 in ODIs last year.

The margin of the Mumbai defeat might have seemingly shamed Team India. But its chances of coming back strongly to even win the series are not to be discounted. The one missing factor was a sense of adventure in the batting, which Shikhar Dhawan alone was able to bring in, even if he played a disproportionate number of dot balls. Dhawan's prowess in the white ball is not to be doubted again, particularly against an oppo-

nent like Australia who can put pace to the ball off the pitch. Dhawan might not be a sensation in T20 cricket, but he must be given his due in the 50-overs game.

There was just a feeling that Dhawan's return would muddle up India's plans in the white ball game as he seemed not have become a bit of a laggard.

However, there should be a place for him as an anchoring opener in an ODI and

don't blame India for putting three openers at the top of the order. This is well established strategy against pace attacks that put the new ball to very good use, employing the three-quarter length well in the white ball game. If Kohli has a numbers problem with batting two drop in ODIs, he can switch back to no. 3 and still keep three openers in the top four. That is worth trying in this contest against this full-strength Australian team in this series.

A 10-wicket victory is rare, even rarer in a romp that the chase was made to appear as Finch and Warner displayed the extent of their knowledge of batting in India. No more crass swipes at the spinners, which displaying the understanding that if you watch the ball all the way you can wait and still

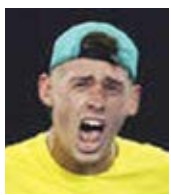
push the ball to milk the single. Ponting's Australian team had showed the final frontier could be taken in the middle of the last decade. Team India would have to bring its A game against the Aussies to assume again that seeming invincibility at home.

The Aussies trotting to victory at a venue where Team India won a World Cup is a 2020 wake-up call for Virat Kohli's men. This team has no claim to a birthright in ICC events and hence has to work that much harder to break the jinx. How they play Australia in the remaining ODIs, particularly in the dodgy second encounter in Rajkot would help determine the future because the T20 Worlds is not far away, but there is time to reshape the batting strategy. What we lacked in Mumbai was the ability to take off after surviving the new ball, which the team had not managed in the world Cup semi-final against New Zealand.

In sport at least it's sometimes good to know you are not as good as you think you are. Again, sportsmen are defined not by what they achieve when they are in top form but how they bounce back after hitting the floor. Serena Williams' quote on this is always worth repeating — "I really think a champion is defined not by their wins but by how they can recover when they fall." Fallen Team India has from the pedestal it climbed on to again after the World Cup fiasco. The West Indies stretched Team India on occasion but do not have the power to sustain levels of intensity. The Australians have it, which is why they are India's biggest challengers.



Shikhar Dhawan



Alex withdraws

Australia's Number.1 player Alex de Minaur withdraws from the Australian Open owing to a "really serious" abdominal tear

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SHORT TAKES

Broady slams Oz Open officials

Melbourne: Britain's Liam Broady Thursday lashed out at Australian Open officials for insisting qualifying take place this week despite toxic smoke from bushfires, telling fellow players: "We can't let this go." Air quality in Melbourne was among the worst on the planet on Tuesday and described as "hazardous" by city authorities following months of blazes that have devastated huge swathes of the country. Slovenian Dalila Jakupovic was forced to retire while leading in her match after a distressing coughing fit, saying she was "really scared that I would collapse". Other qualifiers also suffered, with world number 234 Broady taking to Twitter to claim "multiple" players needed asthma medication, despite never having suffered from the ailment before. — AFP

Qualifier Humbert beats Shapovalov

Auckland: World number 13 Denis Shapovalov crashed out of the ATP Auckland Classic on Thursday, beaten in straight sets by French qualifier Ugo Humbert. There was only one break in each set of the evenly contested clash with Humbert winning 7-5, 6-4, clinching the victory with the Canadian's sixth double fault. The 57th-ranked Humbert advanced to a semifinal showdown big-serving American John Isner. Isner survived on his thunderous serve with an impressive 25 aces to overcome Kyle Edmund in the opening quarterfinal. While Edmund had the better of the fourth seed for much of the match, Isner served his way out of trouble when it mattered and the Briton was unable to convert any of his nine break points. — AFP

Boxer Garcia eyes Pacquiao bout

New York: Former world welterweight champion Danny Garcia is looking at Manny Pacquiao and Errol Spence in a bid to reclaim the throne, provided he gets past Ukrainian Ivan Redkach next week. If Garcia defeats Redkach on January 25 at the Barclays Centre, he would be in line to fight World Boxing Council and International Boxing Federation champion Spence (26-0 with 21 knockouts). But Garcia has also been mentioned as a possible next foe for Filipino icon Manny Pacquiao (62-7 with two drawn and 39 knockouts), the World Boxing Association champion at 147 pounds (66.7kg), and the 31-year-old US fighter fancies his odds against either reigning champion. "I feel like my style is dangerous for both Spence and Pacquiao," Garcia said. "For Errol, I see he likes to stand in front of his opponents and he isn't the hardest guy to hit. With Manny, I feel like my counter punching and style would also be hard for him." — AFP

PRAJNESH'S FINE FORM CONTINUES

Melbourne: India's top-ranked singles player Prajnesh Gunneswaran is one win away from sealing a place in the Australian Open main draw after progressing to the final round of the qualifiers but it was curtains for compatriot Sumit Nagal here on Thursday. Prajnesh, ranked 122 in the world, had to battle it out for one hour and 22 minutes to get past Yannick Hanfmann of Germany 1-6 6-2 6-1. Prajnesh, seeded 17th in the qualifiers, will take on either Federico Coria of Argentina or Ernests Gulbis of Latvia in the final round. The Indian defeated local wild card Harry Bourchier 6-2 6-4 in the opening round. Earlier in the day, Nagal suffered a straight-set loss in the first round to crash out of the men's singles qualifiers. Nagal, seeded 21st in the qualifiers, was shown the door by Mohamed Safwat of Egypt 7-6 (7/2) 6-2 after a one hour and 28 minute contest. Ramkumar Ramanathan on Tuesday made an early exit along with lone Indian contender in women's singles qualifier, Anikta Raina. — PTI

Awesome Ashleigh

Barty beats Vondrousova to make Adelaide last-4

Adelaide, Jan. 16: Ashleigh Barty won a rematch of last year's French Open final Thursday as the Australian reached the semifinals of the ATP-WTA Adelaide International. The top seed dominated Czech tournament number eight Marketa Vondrousova 6-3, 6-3, to thrill home fans at Memorial Drive in the inaugural edition of the event. The top seed dominated Czech tournament number eight Marketa Vondrousova 6-3, 6-3, to thrill home fans at Memorial Drive in the inaugural edition of the event. Vondrousova was playing her first tournament in six months after injuring her left wrist. Barty advanced to a Friday semi against American Danielle Collins, a 6-3, 6-1 winner over Swiss fourth seed Belinda Bencic. She won the opening set with just one break, but was made to work in the second, saving four break points to hold on for 5-3 before putting away the win. "I feel my game is getting better and better," Barty said. Barty, who also beat Collins on the way to her Paris trophy is expecting a battle in the semi-final. There was a quarter-final shock for two-time Grand Slam winner Simona Halep, who heads into the Australian Open with room for improvement after being upset 6-4, 6-2 by Aryna Sabalenka.

SABALENKA LEAVES HALEP GASPING

The reigning Wimbledon champion and former World No.1 dropped serve five times and was flattened in the second set by her opponent from Belarus. The 71-minute rout leaves Halep standing 1-1 for the season with the first Grand Slam of the year starting on Monday in Melbourne. Sabalenka will battle Dayana Yastremska on Friday for a place in the final after the Ukrainian 19-year-old beat a second top 20 opponent this week when she put out Croat Donna Vekic 6-4, 6-3. Sabalenka, ranked 12th to Halep's fourth, won her first match after two losses to the Romanian, coached by Australian Darren Cahill. "It feels great, we had a tough match and she played well. I tried to stay focused on each point. I don't care about the Grand Slam, I'm just playing each match. I didn't care about the past, I stayed in the moment, that helped me to win," Sabalenka said. — AFP



It feels great, we had a tough match and she played well. I didn't care about the past, I stayed in the moment, that helped me to win. It's nice to be in the semifinal.

— ARYNA SABALENKA after defeating Simona Halep



Aryna Sabalenka returns to Simona Halep during their women's singles quarterfinal match at the Adelaide International tennis tournament in Adelaide on Thursday. Aryna won the match 6-4, 6-2. — AFP



LEFT: Caroline Wozniacki returns during the charity match between Team Wozniacki and Team Williams in the Rally for Relief, to support those impacted by bushfires at the Lod Laver Arena. The event raised almost AUD \$5M for the Victorian Bushfire Appeal. RIGHT: Serena Williams and Novak Djokovic share a light moment. — ATP



Nadal, Serena get easy openers

Melbourne, Jan. 16: World No.1 Rafael Nadal will take on Bolivian Hugo Dellien in the Australian Open first round next week while Serena Williams faces Anastasia Potapova in her quest for a 24th Grand Slam title.

The Spaniard is attempting to match Roger Federer's record of 20 Grand Slam singles titles on his least favourite surface, having won in Melbourne just once, back in 2009. Australian Nick Kyrgios could be waiting for him in the fourth round, the draw revealed Thursday. Defending champion Novak Djokovic will start his bid to lift a record eighth Australian Open title against Jan-Lennard Struff. The Serb had a fine 2019, winning five titles including at Melbourne Park and Wimbledon on the way to ending the year as number two, behind only Nadal. He will start his drive to extend his incredible Melbourne run — he holds a 68-8 record — against a German who crashed at the first hurdle last year. Djokovic could meet Greek young gun Stefanos Tsitsipas in the last eight. The ageless Federer, 38, is up against American Steve Johnson in the third quarter of the men's draw. Serena Williams, who is seeking to match Australian Margaret Court's record 24 major singles titles, gets underway against 90th ranked Russian Potapova with a potential quarterfinal against defending champion Naomi Osaka. — AFP



SRM IST, winners of the South India inter-university volleyball tournament held at Trivandrum. They beat MG University in the final (25-14, 25-21, 25-23).

SANIA CRUISES INTO HOBART SEMIFINAL

Hobart, Jan. 16: Indian tennis ace Sania Mirza's comeback from maternity leave continued to be a success as she entered the women's doubles semifinals of the Hobart International with Ukrainian partner Nadiia Kichenok here on Thursday. Sania and Kichenok defeated the American duo of Vania King and Christina McHale 6-2, 4-6, 10-4 in a contest that lasted one hour and 24 minutes. The fifth-seeded Indo-Ukrainian combination will now lock horns with the Slovenian-Czech pair of Tamara Zidansek and Marie Bouzkova. Zidansek and Bouzkova got the better of Canada's Sharon Fichman and Ukraine's Kateryna Bondarenko 6-3, 3-6, 10-4 in their last-eight stage clash. Sania Mirza and Nadiia Kichenok made a strong start and broke their opponents twice to take the lead. They also did well to save four break points in the opening set. The second set went on serve till the eighth game before King and McHale broke Sania and Kichenok to draw level in the contest. However, the third set was a stroll in the park for Sania and her partner Kichenok. Sania is returning to WTA circuit after two years. During her two-year break, she battled injury breakdowns before taking a formal break in April 2018 to give birth to her son Izhaan. — PTI

Mithali, Jhulan get downgraded

New Delhi, Jan. 16: Veteran cricketer Mithali Raj was on Thursday demoted to Grade 'B' from 'A' in the BCCI central contracts while Radha Yadav and Taniya Bhatia were elevated to the middle bracket. Mithali not being kept in the ₹ 50 lakh category was expected as the 37-year-old retired from T20s in September last year. However, she remains the ODI captain and plans to carry on till the 2021 World Cup. T20 skipper Harmanpreet Kaur retained his 'A' category contract alongside Smriti Mandhana and Poonam Yadav. Radha and Taniya, who both had a Grade 'C' contract worth Rs 10 lakh last year, have now entered Grade 'B' (₹ 30 lakh). Players getting a central contract for the first time are 15-year-old opener Shafali Verma and Harleen Deol, who like the teenager is an attacking batter. Shafali has attracted a lot of attention ever since making her India debut last year. She recently made 124 against Australia 'A' in Brisbane. The opener will be expected to deliver in the upcoming T20 World Cup Down Under. Dropped from the list is Mona Meshram, who was in Grade 'C' last year and hasn't played a single game in recent times. The latest contracts run from October 2019 to September 2020. — PTI

CONTRACT LIST

■ **Grade 'A' (₹ 50 lakh):** Harmanpreet Kaur, Smriti Mandhana, Poonam Yadav.
■ **Grade 'B' (₹ 30 lakh):** Mithali Raj, Jhulan Goswami, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav, Taniya Bhatia, Shikha Pandey, Jemimah Rodrigues, Deepti Sharma.
■ **Grade 'C' (₹ 10 lakh):** Veda Krishnamurthy, Punam Raut, Anuja Patil, Mansi Joshi, D Hemlatha, Arundhati Reddy, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Pooja Vastrakar, Harleen Deol, Priya Punia, Shafali Verma.

Russian GM top seed at Chennai Open chess

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JAN. 16

Russian Grandmaster Ponkratov Pavel (Elo 2622) leads the challenge in the 12th Chennai Open International Chess Tournament 2020 for the Sakthi Group Dr. N Mahalingam Trophy. Following Ponkratov Pavel is the second seed Martinez Alcantara Jose Eduardo (Peru) and defending champion Pantsulaia Levan (Georgia). This time around, Chennai Open has attracted 267 entries consisting of 37 foreign players from 20 countries. The titled players number 65 which includes 29 Grandmasters, 25 International Masters and three Women Grandmasters. Indian challenge will be led by Grandmasters Visakh NR, Venkatesh MR, Karthik Venkataraman, Vishnu Prasanna V, Saptarshi Roy, Neelotpal

Das, Karthikeyan P and Sundararajan Kidambi among others. This prestigious annual event, organised by Tamil Nadu State Chess Association, is scheduled to be held at Hotel Novotel & Ibis OMR from January 18 to 25. The tournament carries total prize money of ₹15 lakh. The winner gets the glittering Chennai Open trophy and a cash award of ₹3 lakh, while the runner-up is awarded ₹2 lakh. This 10-round Swiss tournament offers Grandmaster Norm and International Master Norm chances for title aspirants, along with an opportunity to improve their International rating. For the past eleven years, the Chennai Open has provided ample opportunities to Indian and especially Tamil Nadu youngsters to attain GM, IM, WGM and WIM Norms. Top 20 games are scheduled to be web-cast Live.



Another jr billiards title for Srikrishna

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JAN. 16

Chennai boy S. Srikrishna won the junior billiards title in the national championship at PYC Hindu Gymkhana in Pune on Thursday. After potting the highest break of the tournament (211 points) against Rayaan Razmi of Maharashtra on Wednesday, Srikrishna got the better of Sparsh Pherwani 989-338 in the last round robin match. Srikrishna managed

breaks of 130 and 126 points which took the game away from Pherwani. "Right now I won the junior billiards. Next I will be playing junior snooker, after that senior billiards main draw," said Srikrishna who practices at the Mylapore Club in Chennai. "While playing the seniors we juniors will have an advantage since we are playing here for the last ten days," added Srikrishna who trains under his father N Suryanarayanan.

Lathika wins gold

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JAN. 16

M. Lathika of M.C.T.M Chidambaram Chettiyar Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Mylapore, has bagged gold medal in silambam event of the 65th School Games Federation of India championship in New Delhi. She has been learning silambam at the age of nine. She is coached by Pandian.



M. Lathika