



President Pranab Mukherjee being seen off by Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu at Hakempet Airport.

Cong's 3-phase protest on demonetisation to go on till Jan end

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /-/ The Congress today said it will stage month-long protests till the end of January to expose the "government's biggest scam" demonetisation, which it claimed had brought misery to the people, damaged the economy and destroyed jobs. The party would, in three phases, highlight the "failures" of demonetisation, the "big scam" in independent India, Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said. He added that the first phase has already begun and on January 2-3, all the state Congress leaders would go to the district headquarters and "expose the real face of demonetisation". On January 3-4, state-level meetings would be called, while on January 6, all the district collectates would be gheraoed by Congress leaders and workers, Surjewala said.

On January 9, the Mahila Congress cadre, along with the workers of the other wings of the party, will stage country wide protests, the theme of which would be 'Garib ki jeb khali, bajao thaan!', he added. The first phase of the protests would end on January 10, while the next two phases would be over by January end, Surjewala said. He alleged that demonetisation had given birth to "new black markets". "One market is to convert old notes into new notes for commissions ranging from 20 to 30 per cent which is happening with tacit and at times, active complicity of the government and its officials as various raids have exposed," the Congress spokesperson said. He alleged that "another black market was selling new currency notes" while the ordinary people struggled for cash. The Congress also launched a booklet on the occasion, titled 'Arth-quake: 8/11 Attack on India's Economy', in which the party has come down heavily on demonetisation (PTT)

Take pledge to make country clean, pollution free: Prez

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /-/ President Pranab Mukherjee today wished people a Happy New Year and asked them to take pledge to make the country clean and pollution free. Greeting the people on the eve of New Year, the President said "May the New Year bring progress and prosperity to our glorious nation. Let us unite to build an India of our dreams and pledge to make our country clean and pollution free," he said in a message while wishing all the countrymen here and in abroad. (PTT)

Dalit woman gives birth in govt hospital toilet

MANJERI (KER), DEC 31 /-/ A Dalit woman gave birth inside a toilet of a government hospital here following which the Kerala Health Minister sought a report regarding the incident from authorities today. The incident took place at the Manjeri Medical college hospital yesterday. Hospital sources said the woman's delivery was due on January 13. But following some complaints, she was admitted yesterday and the doctors had also examined her. She had not developed labour pains, the sources said. The woman delivered the child when she went to the toilet, they said. The woman's relatives alleged that it was due to sheer negligence of hospital authorities that the woman had given birth in the toilet. A relative said both the mother and child were safe. The woman's relatives have complained to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Health Minister K K Shylaja. Shylaja said she has sought a report on the incident from hospital authorities. If there was any lapse, action will be taken against those responsible, she said. (PTT)

AMU students block railway tracks protesting JNU student's disappearance

ALIGARH, DEC 31 /-/ AMU students today squatted on tracks at the Ramnagar station here protesting "failure" of Delhi Police to trace missing JNU student Najeb Ahmed, who has been missing for 76 days. A number of AMU students later courted arrest when police used mild force to foil their attempt to block movement of trains and vehicles on main roads. District Magistrate Rajmani Yadav said the exact number of those detained was being ascertained. AMU Students' Union has already demanded a CBI inquiry into Ahmed's mysterious disappearance. The students' union President Faizul Hasan has accused the Modi government of protecting BJPV leaders in this connection. The union in a memorandum sent to President Pranab Mukherjee alleged that instead of trying to trace Ahmed, police was harassing the family of the missing student and shielding criminals. Ahmed, an MSc Biotechnology student, went missing on October 15 after a scuffle allegedly with AVVP affiliated students at his hostel on the JNU campus. (PTT)

Proposal to add 15000 men to Delhi Police cleared by Home Ministry: Rajnath

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /-/ The Union home ministry has cleared a proposal to add 15,000 more personnel to the Delhi Police and it swears the finance ministry's nod, home minister Rajnath Singh said today. The Singh today said terminating its strength as "inadequate". Singh made the announcement at a mega police event here where rank promotions were awarded to 24 personnel out of the 27,000 promoted this year. The expansion, if effected, will make the force nearly one lakh strong. "I feel Delhi Police strength is not adequate. It has to increase. The proposal pertaining to recruitment of 15,000 personnel have been sent to the Finance Ministry by the Home Ministry. I hope the approval will be received soon," he said. The event also saw the presence of Ministers of State (Home) Kiren Rijiju, Hansraj Gangaram Ahr and Delhi Police Commissioner Anil Verma and a bevy of senior officers, inspectors, constables and their family members. Singh said it was "rain of promotions" in Delhi Police as "no where" have so many personnel been pro-

'Chinamma' Sasikala takes over as AIADMK chief Says, will follow Jaya's political lessons like Vedas

CHENNAI, DEC 31 /-/ Amid chants of 'Chinamma Vazhagai', V K Sasikala today took charge as AIADMK general secretary, the top party post, and pledged to take forward the legacy of Jayalalitha, saying her "political lessons" will be followed like Vedas. 60-year-old Sasikala, also called 'Chinamma' and who remained Jayalalitha's shadow in public for nearly three decades and wielded considerable clout behind the scenes, also asserted that none other than party founder M G Ramachandran, Dravidian ideologue C N Annadurai and 'Amma' will be given prominence in the party. "Amma is always in my heart," an emotionally charged Sasikala said after assuming charge, adding she had been with Jayalalitha for party meetings for over 33 years and that the AIADMK will continue to remain Tamil Nadu for many years. The close aide of late Jayalalitha first garlanded the statue of party founder M G Ramachandran at the AIADMK headquarters here after she arrived amid tight security. She then proceeded to pay floral tributes to the portrait of Jayalalitha. Sasikala formally assumed charge by signing papers after which she proceeded to address the gathering outside. En route to the party office, she was given a rousing welcome by party leaders, functionaries and cadres who had gathered in large numbers. Party activists had lined up on both sides of the road from the Poes Garden residence to the party headquarters at Royapettah to welcome her. Sasikala, clad in a light green saree with a pink border, greeted them with folded hands. Party flags, banners and festoons sporting bright images of Jayalalitha and Sasikala were put up on roads, all along from Poes Garden to Royapettah. Ban-

ners and hoardings hailed Sasikala as 'Chinamma' everywhere. AIADMK presidium chairman M Madusudan, party treasurer and Chief Minister O Panneerselvam, veteran party leader and Lok Sabha deputy speaker M Thambidurai, received Sasikala and accompanied her to the party office. In her first formal address to functionaries after formally taking charge as party chief here, she said the AIADMK will continue to be run in the same way as during the time of Amma when it was administered with a level of "discipline as seen in the Army".

"I will continue to follow in the footsteps of these great leaders who looked beyond caste and religion, she said. Her assertion comes against the backdrop of some murmur of protests against her taking over the post. Heaping encomiums on Jayalalitha, she said, "let us follow like Vedas our Amma's political lessons and her footsteps," adding, "this movement (AIADMK) which was shaped up by Amma is a people's movement, this is people's government, our journey will be in the path laid by Amma. She said the "yardstick" followed by Jayalalitha for elevation of cadres in the party organisation will continue to be the same and "we will not deviate even an iota from it." Hailing Jayalalitha for her courage, she said the late leader had stormed the male bastion of politics that has given confidence to women. She said "no one can fill her (Jayalalitha) shoes in another thousand years. "I carry Amma in my soul,"

V K Sasikala greeting party functionaries (not picture) after assuming charge as the General Secretary of the AIADMK at Party headquarters, in Chennai

everything for me and for us all." Thanking party leaders for unanimously naming her as party general secretary, Sasikala said she humbly accepted it out of a sense of duty. For the first time she publicly spoke on the death of Jayalalitha amid demands for a probe by Opposition DMK. Sasikala said she had firmly believed that the former AIADMK chief would recover.

Although Amma's health improved that facilitated her shift from Critical Care Unit to a private room, she had unfortunately passed away. "It was not thought of even in my dream and it was like a thunderbolt falling on one's head (when she died)," Sasikala said, adding her only wish had been Jayalalitha's well-being. Party leaders earlier led her to the office of the general secretary where she held discussions with Panneerselvam, who is also party

treasurer, Madusudan, Thambidurai, and others. The AIADMK headquarters at Royapettah was spruced up for the occasion. A platform was set up

should continue to be so," she said adding "let us all take a vow to guard her dreams. Sasikala said she was associated with Jayalalitha since she was 28 years old and that the journey spanned 33 years. "Now I am 62. For the past 33 years, the days when I had not been with her were very few," Sasikala said as she dwelt into some personal details like how she was concerned about Jayalalitha and asked what she would have for lunch and said she stood behind the late leader during the ups and downs and conspiracies of rivals. "For our Amma, the party is her life."

For me, it was Amma who was my life. However, God has taken her loving daughter." "I will strive for the welfare of the party and growth of Tamil Nadu for the rest of my life," she said. As desired by Amma, the birth centenary of party founder M G Ramachandran will be celebrated through 2017-18, she said adding AIADMK will urge the Centre to release a special postal stamp and coin commemorating MGR. Sasikala greeted the party cadres with folded hands from the verandah of the party office on the first floor and addressed them as 'Chinamma' (brothers and sisters) as Jayalalitha used to do. Earlier, a small group of AIADMK cadres and supporters of former Chief Minister Jayalalitha's niece, Deepa Jayakumar, today staged a black flag protest here against appointment of V K Sasikala as party General Secretary.

The protesters alleged that Sasikala was chosen to the post against the party's rules and regulations. No arrests were made, police said. Sasikala formally assumed charge as the AIADMK general secretary today. (PTT)

near the MGR statue, to facilitate Sasikala to pay tributes to the party founder before taking charge. Ministers, party MPs, MLAs also participated. On December 29, a meeting of AIADMK's top decision making body, the general council, which was attended by all top leaders including Chief Minister O Panneerselvam, took the decision to appoint her as part general secretary by adopting a resolution unanimously.

In her 22-minute speech, Sasikala, who intermittently broke down, made it clear that the party will not swerve from the path set by Jayalalitha. She was cheered by several functionaries who raised slogans, saying the party stood behind her. "Amma only expected performance and loyalty and created opportunities for cadres and that was our driving force and it

payments infrastructure in the country. The UPI & USSD modes of payment for transacting business, and for paying for goods and services, will be made simpler, more robust and secure through this app, he said. "We are delighted that Bharat Ratna Dr Bham Raj Ambedkar's name has been associated with this app," he added. Elaborating further, Goyal said: I do hope that Mamataji will get out of her phobia of attacking everything that Prime Minister does for sensationalising things." (PTT)

"There can be a combination of the Chief Minister to his job which has expelled him but not to power as his government's report card is full of failures. People have problems. We will work with elected government to solve them," he told reporters. (PTT)

"The day-long meeting was co-chaired by secretaries for animal husbandry and fisheries department of the respective countries. Members of External Affairs Ministry, Coast Guard, Indian Navy and officials of Tamil Nadu government were also present at the JWG meeting. "The issues related to release of detainees on fishing vessels, modalities for handing over of apprehended fishermen, mutual cooperation in fishery sector among others were discussed in detail," according to official sources. The outcome of the JWG meeting will be discussed at the ministerial talks to be held on January 2 in Colombo. Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh will be attending the meeting.

India, Lanka discuss fishermen issue in first JWG meeting

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /-/ The first meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries between India and Sri Lanka took place here today ahead of the second round of ministerial talks to be held on Monday. The day-long meeting was co-chaired by secretaries for animal husbandry and fisheries department of the respective countries. Members of External Affairs Ministry, Coast Guard, Indian Navy and officials of Tamil Nadu government were also present at the JWG meeting. "The issues related to release of detainees on fishing vessels, modalities for handing over of apprehended fishermen, mutual cooperation in fishery sector among others were discussed in detail," according to official sources. The outcome of the JWG meeting will be discussed at the ministerial talks to be held on January 2 in Colombo. Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh will be attending the meeting.

The state government could not buy rice and wheat from farmers, causing them a lot of distress. The JWG meeting will be followed by the JWG meeting. Akhilesh Yadav has insisted that the state has seen unprecedented development under his government and he will lead his party to victory. (PTT)

Mamata should shed her narrow interests: Goyal



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Union Minister Piyush Goyal today said she should think beyond her own narrow interests. He added, "The Minister said the app has nothing to do with the Lucky Grabak or Digidhan Vyapar Yojanas and explained that BHIM app, which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday, is for digital payments. Banerjee had said that the app is a rip-off of the Centre and it insults the backward classes. "This app has nothing to do with the Lucky Grabak or Digidhan Vyapar Yojanas. Mamataji is so engrossed and involved with lotteries and chit funds that she cannot see beyond lotteries," Goyal said. The Minister said the app will strengthen the digital

governance in the national capital will see new momentum overcoming the past hurdles. "I am very hopeful that in the future, we all MLAs, Delhi government, people of Delhi, will work with the Governor for overall development of Delhi. "In the last few months, some works of Delhi government have come to a standstill. I hope that these works will be expedited," Kejriwal said at an event at Delhi Assembly complex. Bajaj said

leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Vijender Gupta among others. On being asked about tussle between previous JWG and the city government on a range of issues including administrative control over the structure will be his priority areas. "This is speculative. I don't know why and how the relationship will improve. We will sit and talk and then you will get to know," Welcoming Bajaj's appointment, Kejriwal said he was hopeful that under the new LG,

governance in the national capital will see new momentum overcoming the past hurdles. "I am very hopeful that in the future, we all MLAs, Delhi government, people of Delhi, will work with the Governor for overall development of Delhi. "In the last few months, some works of Delhi government have come to a standstill. I hope that these works will be expedited," Kejriwal said at an event at Delhi Assembly complex. Bajaj said

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