



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

Cong's 3-phase protest against demotisation 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" demotisation, 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 demotisation, 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 demotisation". 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 countrywide 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 demotisation 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 demotisation (PTT)

Take pledge to make country clean, pollution free: Prez

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /-/ President Pranab Mukherjee today wished people of the 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. Singh today said the proposal is "adequate". 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 Kumar 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 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 AIADMK 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 hit up on roads, all along from Poes Garden to Royapettah. Ban-



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

ners and hoardings hailed Sasikala as 'Chinamma' everywhere. AIADMK presidium chairman E Madusudanam, 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".

It 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,"

she said adding "we have assembled here to guard the confidence of Amma that it will be the AIADMK which will rule the State even for 100 more years...she was treasurer, Madusudanam, 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 "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)

Mamata should shed her narrow interests: Goyal



NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /-/ Hitting back at West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee for criticising the new BHIM app launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday, Power Minister Piyush Goyal today said she should think beyond her own narrow in-

terests. Banerjee described the new Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) as a lottery app, named after B R Ambedkar by the Centre. Goyal urged the West Bengal Chief Minister to understand that this is for the benefit of the poor and the deprived section of the society.

"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 he was of the view that the app will strengthen the digital

payments infrastructure in the country. The UPI & USSD modes of payment for transacting business, and for paying for goods and services, will be made simple, robust and secure through this app, he said. "We are delighted that Bharat Ratna Dr Bham Rao 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 sensitualising things. (PTT)

he will put his best efforts in improving law-and-order situation, women's safety, traffic congestion besides strengthening infrastructure and civic amenities in the city. "Delhi is a megapolis which has several problems like women safety, law and order, huge population, infrastructure, civic agencies and congestion. We will work with elected government to solve them," he told reporters. (PTT)

Bajaj takes over as L-G, non-committal on mending ties with AAP govt

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /-/ Former bureaucrat Anil Bajaj today took over as Delhi Lt Governor of Delhi and struck a cautious note on where the LG's office will stand in repairing the fractured relationship between the Centre and AAP government which had hit rock bottom under his predecessor. 70-year-old Bajaj, who had served in a number of key positions at the Centre including Union Home Secretary, was administered the oath of office and secrecy

by Chief Justice of Delhi High Court G Rohini, 10 days after Najeb's abrupt resignation as the L.G. Bajaj said addressing key challenges like women's safety, pollution, traffic congestion and strengthening of infrastructure will be his priority areas.

The oath ceremony was attended by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, Delhi Chief Secretary MM Kukti

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 level 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 detained 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.



Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Katraj Mishra addressing the press conference regarding the achievement of Ministry of MSME, in New Delhi.

motated together. He lauded Verma's efforts toward removing the stagnation in promotion. "Promotions are in short supply in Police as well as in paramilitary forces and when it happens the person is on the last leg of his career. I had told the police commissioner to promote personnel when it is due without any hesitation," Singh said. According to official data, Delhi Police at present has a total sanctioned strength of around 245,000 of which 77,000 are filled. Singh said policing the national capital was a difficult and challenging task as it has large floating population and a character quite different from other cities. He said there are many who do not acknowledge these difficulties. The home minister said there will be no political pressure on police to release any criminal and that police should not succumb to any such pressure. "I had told former police commissioner BS Bassi to ensure that no person has to go back from a police station without filing FIR if he wants to. I told him to go ahead knowing well

that it paints a bad picture of law and order situation," Singh said. He asked police to develop rapport with the public which he said would help it get crucial leads and inspire confidence instead of a "sense of fear". "During the demotisation drive, people acted as whistle blowers and enabled police to track down those indulging in unfair means. Police should ensure that these whistle blowers are not troubled," he said. Referring to his Shanghai trip and stating of his trip, Singh said, "I discussed the need to develop

a strong command control centre and the necessity to install CCTV cameras. In his speech, Verma claimed that crime, including against women, has "come down" in the city mainly due to strengthening of basic policing. Underlining the role of constables and head constables in maintaining law and order, he said the promotions would boost their morale and inspire them to do more. "The promotion scene was not good. In many cases, people were stuck even after serving for 28 years," he said. (PTT)

Akhilesh may return to party but won't to power: BJP

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /-/ Mocking the Samajwadi Party's decision to revoke the resignation of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, BJP today said he may have returned to the party but will not be able to power after the assembly polls as his five-year report card is rife with "failures". "Whatever attempts and drama" SP chief Mulayam Singh Yadav and his son Akhilesh do, they won't cut any ice with people, it said, claiming that voters have made up their mind to vote BJP to power after a gap of 15 years for the state's development.

"There can be a comeback by the Chief Minister to his party 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)

Citing incidents like Jawahar Bagh violence in Mathura in which close to 100 people died in Bulandshahr gang rape, he alleged people remember Akhilesh Yadav's rule for such incidents besides SP government's corruption and crime, and did nothing for the common man." BJP National Secretary Shrikant Sharma said. Faced with an imminent split which could have drastically reduced his clout, Samajwadi Party Chief Mulayam Singh Yadav today revoked the expulsion of Akhilesh and his uncle Ramgopal, just a day after they were sacked for 'indiscipline'.

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)