

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 17 | JANUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 30°C
Min: 17°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Thai 4
Tithi: Chaturthi/ Panchami
Star: Sathayam/ Puratathi
Rahukalam:
4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.20 am
Zohar: 12.23 pm
Asar: 3.35 pm
Maghrib: 6.01 pm
Isha: 7.17 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.03 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.36 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 9.49 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 9.52 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+13,986)	(+158)
1,05,57,646	1,52,288

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+610)
TN: 8,30,183 12,257

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

9,46,19,198

DEATHS

20,24,176

COUNTRIES,
AREAS WITH
CASES

219

worldometers.info

Use of regional languages in Rajya Sabha rises five-fold

New Delhi: The use of regional languages in the proceedings of Rajya Sabha has increased manifold times during 2018-2020 with Sanskrit emerging as the fifth widely used among the 22 scheduled languages after Hindi, Telugu, Urdu and Tamil. Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu has been regularly urging the members of the House on use of regional languages during the proceedings.

Jharkhand: Woman killed, 3 injured in landmine blast by Maoists

Latehar: A woman was killed and three people injured in a landmine blast by Maoists at a forest on the border between Latehar and Gumla districts in Jharkhand on Saturday, officials said. The blast happened at Pandara forest in the Garu police station area, they said.

COUNTER POINT



My WhatsApp chats were leaking to my wife!

Indian fan files complaint as racism row gets uglier

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 16

The controversy over allegations of racial abuse in the ongoing India-Australia Test series is getting uglier by the day. The authorities of the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) has received yet another complaint — this time from an Indian fan — even as the Cricket Australia (CA) is investigating reports from the Indian team that pacer Jasprit

Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj were subjected to racist comments at the same venue. A Sydney-based Indian fan, Krishna Kumar, has alleged he was racially profiled and abused at SCG by a mid-ranking security officer who told him to "go back to where you belong".

According to a report in the Sydney Morning Herald, Kumar was targeted after attempting to bring four banners into the ground. Written

on paper roll, the banners read: "Rivalry is good, racism is not", "No racism mate", "Brown inclusion matters" and "Cricket Australia - more diversity please". "The security official told me, 'If you need to address this matter, go back to where you belong,'" Kumar was quoted as saying.

The mid-ranking security officer who had confronted him at the gate was also patrolling close by, said Kumar, who filmed a 65-second video of

him "picking only on Indian fans". "I'm not looking for compensation, I'm not looking for free tickets, I'm not looking for a membership," Kumar said. "I want justice. I want accountability. I was feeling stripped, feeling watched and I went there to fight racism," he added.

A Channel Nine screengrab shows Krishna Kumar holding up his banner in the SCG car park. **>>>**

— Twitter



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1.91 lakh people inoculated on the first day ■ Continue to follow Covid protocol: PM India begins mega Covid-19 vaccination drive

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JAN. 16

India on Saturday launched the world's biggest vaccination drive with Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserting that the made-in-India vaccines being rolled out will ensure a "decisive victory" for the country over the coronavirus pandemic.

The Prime Minister who launched the programme reminded people that Covid-appropriate protocol, which includes wearing masks and social distancing should be observed even after getting the jabs. Two doses of vaccine are very important, he said after remote-launching the drive.

The two vaccines--Covishield developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca, and Covaxin produced by Bharat Biotech—are being used for the programme.

Manish Kumar, a machine operator at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, was the first to get the jab on the first day which ended with inoculating 1.91 lakh people at over 3,000 vaccination centres across the country. The government had aimed at vaccinating over 3 lakh people on the day. It is estimated that about 3 crore health and other frontline workers will be inoculated in the first phase.

India, which has the second highest number of coronavirus infections after the United States, plans to vaccinate around 30 crore people with two doses in the first phase.

The Prime Minister turned emotional as he spoke of the disruption the pandemic caused to people's lives, isolating victims of the coronavirus and denying the dead traditional last rites.

In a choked voice, the Prime Minister referred to the sacrifices made by healthcare and frontline workers, hundreds of whom lost their lives to the viral infection. He also urged the country to show patience during the vaccination drive as it had shown till now in fighting the pandemic.

Normally it takes years to make a vaccine but in such a short span of time, not one, but two 'Made in India' vaccines are ready,



Manish Kumar, a machine operator at AIIMS, is the first person in the country vaccinated against the Covid-19 in Delhi on Saturday.

— PTI

Covaxin is on trial mode, says consent form

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 16

The administration of 55 lakh doses of Covaxin, the Bharat Biotech vaccine ordered by the Centre as part of the Covid-19 vaccination drive, could well mean that a massive government mandated trial is underway for the vaccine is that is yet to officially complete its Phase III trials.

When its "emergency use" was approved by the government, it was done under "clinical trial mode". What this meant became evident on Saturday when those receiving the vaccine in several states according to media reports were asked to sign a consent form agreeing to be part of such a clinical trial.

In the consent form, Bharat Biotech says the vaccine is being offered in a clinical trial mode and that in Phase I and II of the trials the vaccine demonstrated ability to produce antibodies to Covid-19. "However, the clinical efficacy is yet to be established and it is still being studied in phase 3 clinical trial," the form read.

Telangana state Director of Health Services Dr G. Srinivasa Rao said that Covaxin was not used in the state on Saturday, and Serum Institute of India's Covishield was administered to frontline workers. **■ P4**



Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually launches pan-India rollout of Covid-19 vaccination drive, in New Delhi, on Saturday.

— PTI

Delhi docs insist on use of Oxford vaccine on them

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN 16

Dissent and controversies have started erupting with the first shot of the Covid-19 vaccines in India.

In Delhi, the resident doctors of government-run Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital (RML), demanded they be administered Covishield (by Oxford- AstraZeneca-SII) and not the Covaxin (by Bharat Biotech) saying the Oxford vaccine has completed all three stages of trials as required under protocol while by the Bharat Biotech vaccine is undergoing stage-III trials.

Apart from India, Covishield has also got emergency use authorization in the United Kingdom, Argentina and Mexico.

The union government, however, tried to underplay

apprehensions saying a lot of work had gone into the development of both products and both vaccines are safe.

The Prime Minister asked people stay away from rumours and propaganda as these made-in-India vaccines have been approved for emergency use only after the scientists and experts were fully convinced about their safety and efficacy.

"Indian vaccine scientists, medical system, Indian process and institutional mechanism in this regard is trusted globally and this trust is earned with a consistent track record," the PM said as he pointed out that 60 per cent of children world over receive life-saving vaccines which are made-in-India and pass through stringent Indian scientific tests. **■ P4**

Machinist volunteers as others get scared

New Delhi, Jan. 16: Manish Kumar, a 34-year-old machine operator at AIIMS who became the first person in Delhi to get the Covid-19 vaccine, said he had himself asked the hospital authorities to be vaccinated first as his colleagues chosen for the exercise were "scared" to get the jab.

Mr Kumar, whose mother Laxmi Rani also works at the hospital, said he was not at all nervous, had a good sleep and was "proud of getting the

vaccine".

He was administered a Covid-19 vaccine during the launch of the nationwide vaccination programme at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in the presence of Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Saturday.

"I did not know that I am the first person to receive the vaccine. I had a good sleep last night, came here (hospital) in the morning and talked to the other staff who were to get the shot," he said.

Vaccines are safe, all must get it, says EPS

DC CORRESPONDENT
MADURAI, JAN. 16

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Saturday launched the Covid-19 vaccination drive in the state at the Government Rajaji Hospital in Madurai. Over 2,700 people on priority list in 166 sites were vaccinated on the first day with no adverse reaction being reported from anywhere in the state.

The Chief Minister said the much-awaited vaccines - Covishield and Covaxin - have passed the clinical trials properly and were approved by the Drugs Controller General of India and hence safe.

Asked whether he would get himself vaccinated, the Chief Minister, said, "of course. Not only me and my family members but all in the state should take the shot to develop immunity against Covid-19." However, the priority is being given to the frontline health workers, who face the risk of getting the infection when handling the corona patients, he added. He also lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Covishield and Covaxin vaccines and the nationwide launch. "Today is a historic day," he said.

Indian Medical Association national president Dr J.A. Jayalal, IMA state president Dr P. Ramakrishnan, Tamil Nadu Government Doctors' Association president Dr K. Senthil, Madurai Government Rajaji Hospital dean Dr J. Sangamani and a hospital employee,

● Health minister C Vijayabaskar said not even a single adverse reaction was seen among the beneficiaries and it is an outcome that has given a big confidence. There was no hesitancy among the beneficiaries over being administered the vaccines, he said

Muthumari, volunteered to get vaccinated in the presence of the Chief Minister and the deputy chief minister.

For the first phase of vaccination, Tamil Nadu got 5,36,500 doses of Covishield and 20,000 doses of Covaxin. The Chief Minister said the vaccination drive has been launched in the state in 166 centres after successfully conducting the dry run in 226 centres.

State health minister C. Vijayabaskar along with state health secretary P. Radhakrishnan were also present at the programme.

Mr Vijayabaskar said not even a single adverse reaction was seen among the beneficiaries and it is an outcome that has given a big confidence. "There was no hesitancy among the beneficiaries over being administered the vaccines," the minister said. "There is no question of any target before us and the programme is voluntary. In total, about six lakh beneficiaries (including doctors and health workers) have registered for the vaccination."



CoWIN The Vaccination App

Covid Vaccine Intelligence Network (CoWIN)

Use: For planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Covid vaccination real time. It will also help track the listed beneficiaries for vaccination.

For whom: Mandatory for all users and vaccinators.

Not for public, for now: The Union health ministry has warned the people against downloading fake apps with similar names that may exist on different platforms. The self-registration module of Co-WIN App has not been released yet, it has said.

State receives 1,072% more rainfall this year

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 16

Tamil Nadu received 1,072 per cent more rainfall than what it usually receives during the month of January this time, according to data available with the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMO), Chennai.

The state, on an average, receives around 11.4 mm rainfall for the period January 1 to 15. However, based on the data of actual rainfall received across the

● According to private weather blogger Pradeep John, Tirunelveli's 317.5 mm till January 14 is the highest recorded rainfall in the district in January in 120 years

state, Tamil Nadu has received an average rainfall of 133.6 mm for the 15 days starting January 1.

According to private weather blogger Pradeep John, Tirunelveli's 317.5 mm till January 14 is the highest recorded rainfall in the district in January in 120 years.

Similarly, Thoothukudi's

123.7 mm rainfall till January 14 is the eighth highest recorded in the rainfall history of 120 years in the district. Cuddalore district's rainfall till January 14 is the second-highest January-rains in the last 120 years and Thiruvavur district, the amount of rainfall recorded in the period is second highest in the last 120

years. The Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai on Saturday predicted thunderstorms with light to moderate rain at a few places over South Coastal districts like R a m a n a t h a p u r a m, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Kanyakumari.

Light rain is likely to occur at isolated places over South Interior districts like Sivagangai, Virudhunagar, Theni, Dindugal, Madurai and Tenkasi.

Third party methods to recover loans cannot be countenanced: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 16

The Madras High Court has observed that any third party methodology to recover the due, which is illegally liable to be paid by a borrower, cannot be countenanced in the eye of the law. It ordered issuance of notice to the

Union and Tamil Nadu government on a public interest litigation, which sought to restrain Google India Pvt Ltd and other websites from hosting online digital money lending apps lending money on exorbitant interest rates without prior permission from the Reserve Bank of India. **■ P2**

SHORT TAKES

Bring back natural farming: Sadhguru

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 16

Sadhguru has urged people to make Tamil Nadu Covid-free by continuing to follow the social protocols. In his first public sat-sang at Isha Yoga Center in more than a year at the famed Adiyogi following Pongal, Sadhguru spoke about the significance of the farmer's festival and said it was time to bring back natural farming practices and traditional crops.

"Rice was once considered the elixir of life, but now doctors are saying it is like poison, causing diabetes," Sadhguru said. He said earlier we used to have 2,000 indigenous varieties of rice, which has reduced to 4 to 5 lab-produced varieties, which don't give much nutrients.

Sadhguru also spoke about the role of yoga in enhancing physical and mental wellbeing and called on the people to commit to learning and teaching it to others. Sadhguru revealed that though 4,200 people lived at the Isha Yoga Center, not one of them contracted the Covid-19 virus during the entire year.

Responding to a question from the audience on whom to vote for in the upcoming Tamil Nadu assembly elections, Sadhguru stated emphatically, "I don't belong to any party. I won't advocate who you should vote for." He said his apolitical view would go to the party which puts the State on the fast track to development by addressing the crucial issues, i.e., revitalisation of river Cauvery, promotion of natural farming and establishment of high quality skill development centres for youth in all districts.



A jallikattu bull was treated for a broken rib at Vellore government veterinary hospital. The surgery lasted seven hours.

— K. Senthilnathan

No one was consulted, says PC on farm laws

New Delhi, Jan. 16:

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Saturday hit out at the Centre over the impasse on the farm laws, alleging that "no one" was consulted for the legislations, and asserted that the only way out for the government was to agree to start on a "clean slate".

His remarks came a day after the Centre asked protesting farmers to form an informal group to prepare a concrete proposal about their objections and suggestions on the farm laws for further discussion at their next meeting on January 19 to end the long-running protest at various Delhi borders. The protesting farmer unions, however, stuck to



their main demand of a complete repeal of the three legislations.

In a series of tweets, Chidambaram said that as expected, another round of talks between the farmers and government has failed. The fault lies with

the government because it will not agree to get rid of the disputed laws, the former Union minister said.

"RTI responses have exposed as a lie the government's claim that there were extensive consultations before the Farm Laws Ordinances were promulgated. The truth is that no one was consulted. In particular, state governments were not consulted," he alleged. The only way out of the impasse is for the government to admit its mistake and agree to start on a clean slate, Chidambaram said.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Haryana and Punjab, have been protesting at several border points of Delhi since November 28 last year,

demanding a repeal of the three laws and a legal guarantee to the minimum support price (MSP) system for their crops.

Enacted in September last year, the three laws have been projected by the Centre as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove middlemen and allow farmers to sell their produce anywhere in the country. However, the protesting farmers have expressed their apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of the MSP and do away with the "mandi" (wholesale market) system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates. PTI

Third party methods to recover loans cannot be countenanced: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 16

Any third party methodology to recover any due liable to be paid by a borrower cannot be countenanced in the eye of the law, the Madras high court said. It ordered notice to the Union and Tamil Nadu governments on a Public Interest Litigation seeking to restrain M/s Google India Pvt Ltd and other websites from hosting online digital money lending apps that were lending money at exorbitant interest rates without prior permission from RBI.

A division bench comprising Justices M.M.Sundresh and S.Ananthi, before whom the PIL filed by advocate S.Muthukumar came up, also ordered notice to RBI, M/s Google India and Paysense Jaivilla Dev Shakti, Mumbai and posted to February 3, 2021, further hearing of the case.

The bench said the petitioner had come forward with a petition seeking a direction to the authorities to take appropriate action to ban online instant loan apps of Paysense Jaivilla Dev Shakti and others as they

cause serious problems to numerous valuable prospective borrowers.

"Upon hearing the counsel for the petitioner, we prima facie found that such activities require to be regulated by the authorities concerned. The allegations are that using the unequal bargaining power, the lenders are publishing the pictures of the defaulting borrowers, while collecting exorbitant interest and sending the same to all the contact numbers recorded in their cell phones. As submitted by the counsel for the petitioner, there is a ramification on a national scale as well as international scale as there is a possibility of anti-social elements and anti-national elements getting into the system and exploiting gullible borrowers", the bench added.

The bench said there were two issues it was most concerned with. One was on the question of an unconscionable contract and the other was the unauthorised recovery made.

"Such activities can never be authorised by law. A right of the party can only be enforced through the legal means

and not otherwise. Any third party methodology to recover the due, which is illegally liable to be paid by the borrower, cannot be countenanced in the eye of law. Thus, considering all the issues involved, we call upon the respondents (authorities) to come out with the response", the bench added.

In his PIL, Muthukumar sought a direction to the authorities to take appropriate action to ban online instant loan apps of Paysense Jaivilla Dev Shakti and others operating with Google Play Store and other online loan websites and apps. A direction was also sought to be given to the authorities to frame appropriate law and rules to prohibit online loan apps and websites charging excessive interest rates and adopting high-handed methods for recovering debts. The PIL sought the constitution of a special team to investigate the shell companies NBFCs (Non-Banking Financial Companies) providing digital money lending where Indian nationals were appointed as directors but in fact were promoted by Chinese companies.

Jallikattu restored glory of Tamil people's power



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

It was indeed heartening to hear Congress scion Rahul Gandhi acknowledging that the safety of the bulls and tamers participating in Jallikattu has been ensured after he watched the sport live at Avaniyapuram in Madurai on Pongal Day. Udhayanidhi Stalin, the emerging young face of the DMK who was also with him, said that he was visiting Avaniyapuram for the first time, meaning he too had watched Jallikattu for the first time. Two days later, Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami and his deputy O Panneerselvam waved green flags for the bulls to start charging at Alanganallur, the most prestigious of all Jallikattu venues.

All the above vignettes and the voices heard in those venues have several meanings. One of them is that Jallikattu has, at last, earned its pride of place in the State's cultural scene. Another one is that it reminds us of the 'power of the people.' For, Jallikattu, which is quintessentially a subaltern Tamil tradition, was almost killed in 2015 by a self-styled urban task force. Continuously defamed, denigrated, maligned, mocked at and debased by the elite class for years, Jallikattu was finally banned by the Supreme Court. It led to a pall of

gloom descending on the villages where the bull taming sport was part of the people's life and local culture in the years 2015 and 2016. It was then on January 8, 2017 that the Marina Uprising happened. For two weeks, over 20 lakh people kept a round-the-clock vigil on the beach, forcing the State government, then led by Panneerselvam, to relent and bring in an ordinance that saved the centuries-old tradition.

That Rahul Gandhi himself mentioned about he being given to understand that the bulls were invariably subjected to torture in Jallikattu is just one proof of the dishonest manner in which a sustained campaign was carried out against the sport in the past. Any mention of the game being part of Tamil tradition was pooh-poohed with ridicule by the urban gang of self-professed animal lovers, who enjoyed the support of some national and international organisations like PETA. Of course, PETA did rear its head this year, too, by making an attempt to stop Jallikattu on the pretext of the pandemic. Luckily the government did not heed to that and of course PETA itself has lost its credibility after the Marina Uprising.

Banning of PETA was one of the demands of the crowds that spontaneously congregated on the beach in

2017. PETA began its 'work' in Chennai a long time ago by protesting against leather. One man and two girls would turn up during the annual leather festival and stage a protest. Slowly more protesters trooped in and on one occasion one of their activists jumped into the ramp and tried to disrupt a catwalk organised as part of the leather festival. Indian leather industry was catching up with the western market then and it was natural that animal rights were raised as an issue to stop their growth. But the same PETA also came for Jallikattu as there was already another campaign going on locally.

Other organisations that unleashed a vicious campaign against Jallikattu sometime in the first decade of the millennium were the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), whose headquarters was then in Chennai, and the Blue Cross of India. Individuals from those organisations who spearheaded the movement against Jallikattu were identified by some participants of the Marina protests and targeted for attack. When some activists went to the bungalow of one such animal-loving couple, hailing from a privileged background, there was a board outside the gates saying that they have nothing to do with the ban on Jallikattu. Yes, they developed cold feet and backed out, disowning the campaign they had carried out for years through the media and courts. That way, Marina Uprising not just retrieved the culture that was almost lost but also quelled those who worked towards killing

it.

So now, Jallikattu has regained its glory with personalities like Rahul Gandhi evincing interest in it. (Forget the fact that this is an election year and that politicians will do anything to get some votes.) He pointed fingers at those who tried to run roughshod over Tamil culture and stressed on the need to preserve it. Even Udhayanidhi Stalin went to watch it and gave away many prizes to the winners, reaffirming the DMK's commitment to protect the game. Above all the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister turned up to inaugurate the event. (Also do not interrupt by reminding that Panneerselvam was Chief Minister when the police unleashed violence on the last set of Marina protesters.) Going by oral history, Palaniswami is the first Chief Minister to watch a jallikattu – his maiden appearance was perhaps at an event in Viralmalai a couple of years back. Even though Jallikattu events have been held from time immemorial in various villages during the Pongal season and otherwise, mostly in connection with temple festivities, politicians did not find it a place to be spotted at. For, the tradition was taken for granted letting it to be run down by forces outside the subaltern culture with least understanding of rural lifestyle. Until Marina Uprising happened.

In the same spirit, the ongoing protest by farmers in Delhi may also go down in history by giving a wakeup call to the nation to conserve its secular and political traditions.

Vijay Sethupathi regrets cutting birthday cake with sword



DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 16

Actor Vijay Sethupathi has courted controversy by cutting his birthday cake with a sword at his office a few days back. A photo of the actor cutting the cake with a sword has gone viral, with several people criticising him for setting a bad example. The actor, however, expressed his regret in a statement

on Saturday, which was his birthday.

Vijay Sethupathi explained that the photo was taken three days back at his office amidst the crew of his upcoming film.

He cut the cake with a sword as it plays an important part in the movie and also expressed his regret. He said he will be more careful with these things in the future.

The incident had triggered a severe criticism against the actor as the police in the state have been coming down heavily on those cutting cakes with swords and machetes.

The trend of cutting cakes with swords caught on after gangster Choolaimedu Binny celebrated his birthday in 2018 by cutting a cake with a machete.

Two including murder accused held for selling ganja

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 16

The Madipakkam police have arrested two persons, including a history-sheeter, on charges of selling ganja to youngsters in Madipakkam and Moovarasampettai areas.

The accused has been identified as Ajith (31) of Madipakkam and Kumaran (24) of Keelkattalai. According to the police, Ajith is a notorious rowdy and a murder accused. Kumaran is a local ganja peddler.

The accused were nabbed by the patrolling team of the Madipakkam police on Friday with 1.1 kilograms of ganja. Police said the accused brought the contraband from Andhra Pradesh and sold it here.

Police seized the ganja and vehicles used by them. They were produced before the magistrate and remanded in judicial custody.

The accused were nabbed by the patrolling team of the Madipakkam police on Friday with 1.1 kilograms of ganja. Police said the accused brought the contraband from Andhra Pradesh and sold it here

Tells his life story in inspirational way

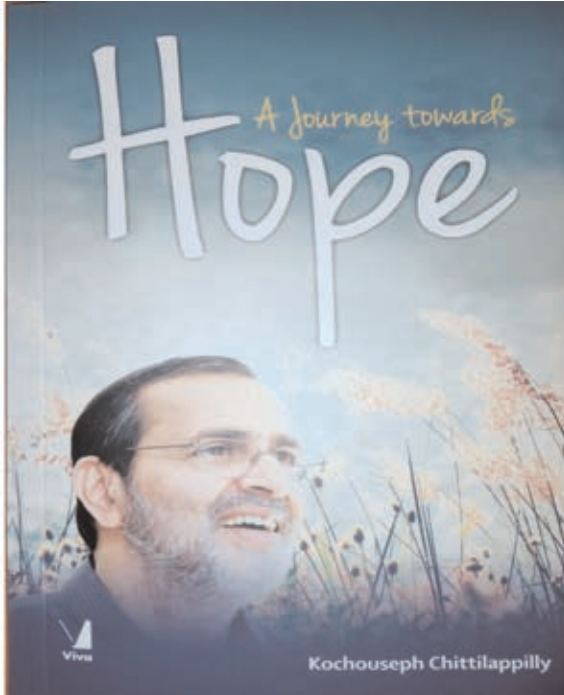
DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 16

It is not often that successful people can pen their own autobiography without the aid of a ghost writer and in a way that can inspire others to try and succeed in their chosen professions or trade or industry. Kochooseph Chittilappilly manages to do that in his new book 'A Journey towards Hope'.

We all have stories to tell but it is not everyone who can sit down and make the effort to put together personal experiences from events in a lifetime that became a driving force of thoughts, actions and philosophy of life. But this is Chittilappilly's sixth book and he has a considerable record in the matter of putting down his thoughts into books on management and life besides a memoir and published both in English and Malayalam.

'A Journey towards Hope' is an autobiographical work set in two parts. One begins with the author's journey in search of a job after college and the second a recollection of his childhood memories of growing up in an ordinary agricultural family.

The chapters paint vivid memories of starting out on his venture and the experiences and lessons



from the journey of life as a businessman to becoming a recognizable person as society knows him today. That he is a kidney donor lends a positive sentiment to what he has achieved and the fact that he donated a part to a total stranger makes it a compelling event to recall.

Born into an agricultural family in Kerala, Chittilappilly rose to become a recognised industrialist who is respected for his philanthropic work.

He holds a master's degree in physics and began his career as a supervisor in an electronic company. At the age of 27, he started a modest SSI Unit manufacturing and selling stabilisers with just two workers. Now V-Guard is a listed company with various electrical, electronic and electro-mechanical products. He also founded a chain of amusement parks named Wonderla.

Lack of depth too obvious

BHOOMI

ANUPAMA
SUBRAMANIAN

CAST: Jayam Ravi,
Nidhi Agarwal, Ronit
Roy

DIRECTION:
Lakshman

RATING: 2.25/5

Bhoomi is significant to Jayam Ravi as it is his milestone 25th film. It addresses the hot topic of farmers' issues, which of late is the favourite subject of many heroes. The release comes at a time when thousands of Indian farmers are protesting at the national capital against the new reforms, which are said to favour corporates over the heads of poor farmers. Does the film live up to expectations? The movie opens in the US with a group of international journalists who



hail Indian NASA scientist Bhoominathan (Jayam Ravi) for his invention of a pill that will help humans to breathe in Mars, which has otherwise only 4 percent oxygen and the rest is Carbon-dioxide and also his proving that land on the Red Planet is cultivable. Before embarking on his 3-year mission to

space, Bhoomi decides to go to his native place in Tirunelveli and spend some time with his beloved Sakhi (Nidhi Agarwal) and others.

After a romantic track, when Bhoomi is in a happy mood, a twist in the tale takes place, which totally shatters him. He realises soon that farmers in his own land are being expl-

oited by greedy corporates in connivance with scheming politicians. Now, the onus falls on Bhoomi to set things right and he decides to stay back in his hometown and quitting his prestigious job.

Jayam Ravi gives a spirited performance. But sadly, one cannot expect the actor to rise above a flawed script. Director Lakshman's ideas may be good, but there's hardly any compelling story and the presentation lacks depth. As a result, it becomes one more predictable fare where the protagonist Bhoomi takes on the antagonist Richard Child – a corporate monster played by Mumbai import Ronit Roy. Others including Nidhi, Saranya Ponvannan, Thambi Ramaiah and Satish have no scope to perform.

Imman's BGM and Dudley's cinematography try to elevate the film's mood. Overall, less engaging.

[illegible]

IN BRIEF

BIHAR ROPES IN 'BICYCLE GIRL' AS AMBASSADOR

Patna, Jan. 16: The Bihar government has chosen 'bicycle girl' Jyoti Kumari, who had pedalled 1,200 km from Gurugram to Darbhanga taking her injured father on the rear carrier during the nationwide lockdown, as the Brand Ambassador for an anti-drug abuse programme, an official said.

The state government has selected the 15-year-old "real life hero" to sharpen its campaign against the use of narcotic drugs and intoxicants by youths, Dayanidhan Pandey, Director of Social Security Directorate said on Saturday.

"We could not have got any better choice than the girl who displayed exemplary courage to fight the adversity. Youths are falling prey to drugs and she will inspire them against the practice," he said.

The official visited the girl's village in Darbhanga on Friday to appoint her as the brand ambassador of the programme and also gave a cheque of ₹50,000 to her.

Kumari will be propagating the central government's National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction for 2018-2025 in Bihar. The programme formulated by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment aims at reduction of adverse consequences of drug abuse through a multi-pronged strategy.

BJP NAMES SHAHNAWAZ ITS MLC CANDIDATE

New Delhi/Patna, Jan. 16: Former Union minister and BJP's national spokesperson Syed Shah Nawaz Hussain was named by the party on Saturday its MLC candidate from Bihar.

The announcement marks Hussain's return to electoral politics, albeit to the state level, for the first time since 2014 when he lost the Lok Sabha election from Bhagalpur. He was not given ticket in the 2019 polls.

In the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, he had held the civil aviation portfolio among other charges.

The party also named six more candidates for the legislative council polls in Uttar Pradesh.

They are Kunwar Manvendra Singh, Govind Narayan Shukla, Salil Bishnoi, Ashwini Tyagi, Dharmveer Prajapati and Surendra Chaudhary.

Polling for 12 legislative council seats in Uttar Pradesh and two in Bihar will be held on January 28.

The win of BJP candidates in these seats is all but certain owing to the party's strength in respective state assemblies.

Two MLC seats in Bihar have been vacated after the elections of former state minister Vinod Narayan Jha to the assembly from Benipatti seat in Madhubani district and of former deputy chief minister Sushil Kumar Modi to Rajya Sabha.

PLEA SEEKS FIR AGAINST MUNDE

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 16

A petition has been filed in Bombay High Court against the Maharashtra social justice minister and NCP leader Dhananjay Munde claiming he hid facts in affidavits before the election commission of India.

The petitioner has sought registration of an FIR against Mr Munde, who has been embroiled in controversy over allegations of rape of a woman.

In his petition, social activist and president of Rashtriya Bhrashtachar Virodhi Janshakti Hemant Patil sought an FIR should be registered under Section 420 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code against Mr Munde alleging that Munde suppressed material facts pertaining to his family in the election affidavit submitted along with his nomination paper for 2019 State Assembly Election.

The petition claimed that the minister has hid information pertaining to his two children in an affidavit filed during the assembly elections. Therefore, it should be directed to file an FIR against Munde.

Mr Patil has also claimed that in the affidavit in the year 2019, Mr Munde had mentioned that he has only two daughters. But he has hidden it from the Commission in an affidavit that he also has a son and a daughter from a live-in relationship partner.

THERE SHOULD BE NO POLITICS OVER VACCINE, SAYS UDDHAV

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 16

Differences within the MVA government in Maharashtra came to fore over the Covid vaccination drive in the state. While state health minister Rajesh Tope said the Centre has provided inadequate supply of vaccines to Maharashtra, chief minister Uddhav Thackeray said there should not be any politics over the vaccine.

Mr Thackeray kick-started the Covid vaccination drive at the BKC centre on Saturday. While speaking on the occasion, he allayed the talks of Maharashtra receiving step-motherly treatment from the Centre in the supply of Covid vaccine.

The quota of Covid vaccine has been fixed by the central health department, so it is not right to doubt their intention. Just as all people in Maharashtra are equal to me as a Chief Minister, it should be the same for the Prime Minister, he quipped.

Mr Thackeray expressed confidence that the supply of vaccines will increase after the rise in its production. The vaccines of couple of other companies are in the final stage. Once they are approved, the supply will increase, he added.

COVAXIN IS ON TRIAL MODE, SAYS FORM

FROM PAGE 1

He had said on Friday said that anyone receiving Covaxin will be monitored closely for seven days after vaccination.

When a reporter asked him if Covishield recipients too would be monitored like Covaxin recipients, he said as per the existing protocol, this was not required.

Elsewhere, managing director of Bharat Biotech International Ltd., Suchitra Ella Tweeted: "Covaxin & Bharat Biotech is truly humbled & honoured to be of service to the nation & the fraternity of all first responders of Covid who have served public health."

A PTI report from Delhi said health workers who got their first shots of Covaxin at AIIMS were made to sign the consent form that promised compensation in case of a "severe adverse event" related to the vaccine.

"The compensation for a serious adverse event will be paid by sponsor (Bharat Biotech) if the SAE is proven to be causally related to the vaccine, the form read.

Authorities said in case of any adverse event, the affected person will be provided medic ally-recognised standard of care in the government-designated hospitals, according to PTI. The recipients were given a factsheet and a form to report adverse effects within seven days.

ANNUAL | EVENT



A medic administers the first dose of Covishield vaccine to 87-year-old Dr. Asha Singhal, after the virtual launch of Covid-19 vaccination drive by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at South Mumbai Nair Hospital in Mumbai, on Saturday.

Vaccines are safe: Vardhan

New Delhi, Jan. 16: Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan described the vaccines as 'Sanjivani' in the fight against the infectious disease as he urged people not to pay heed to hearsay and instead believe in experts and scientists.

"It's a historic day. We have been blessed by the Prime Minister all through our fight against Covid-19. It's the largest coronavirus vaccination programme in world," Dr Vardhan told reporters at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here.

"We have been able to put up a valiant fight against the disease during the last one year. Adopting a preemptive and proactive strategy has resulted in very good performance by India. We have probably the lowest fatality rate in the world," he said.

Thanking all, including doctors, nurses, healthcare staff, security personnel and journalists, who have been at the frontline in the fight against the pandemic, the minister said they

ensured India reaches the stage when vaccine gets delivered to the people.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) had earlier this month approved Oxford COVID-19 vaccine Covishield, manufactured by the Serum Institute, and indigenously developed Covaxin of Bharat Biotech for restricted emergency use in the country.

"These vaccines are 'sanjivani' in our fight against this pandemic. We have won the battles against polio and small pox. Now, we have reached the decisive phase of winning the war against coronavirus.

"I want to congratulate all frontline workers on this day. At times when rumours are being spread, I hope the media will spread the correct information and this move will help in the fight against the disease," the health minister said. Asserting that both the vaccines are safe and effective, Dr Vardhan urged people not to give in to hearsay and instead believe in experts. "They have put their heart and soul into it," he said.

—PTI

Farmers' union moves SC, seeks new panel

■ Plea seeks impartial committee to resolve farmers' issue

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 16

Two days ahead of the Supreme Court's hearing on the ongoing farmers' agitation, a farmers' union on Saturday urged the top court to withdraw the three members of the committee set up by it on January 12 to resolve the impasse over the three contentious farm laws and appoint members who are impartial, not aligned with any political party and have the trust and goodwill of the farmers.

The plea by Bhartiya Kisan Union (Lokshakti) also sought the presence of a former top court judge on the reconstituted committee.

The plea seeks the

removal of three members — Dr Parmod Kumar Joshi, Ashok Gulati, and Anil Ghanwat — in its reply to the Centre's application filed on January 11 seeking to stop the agitating farmers from taking out a tractor kisan rally at Delhi's Ramlila ground on Republic Day.

Bhupinder Singh Mann, national president of Bhartiya Kisan Union and All India Kisan Coordination Committee, has already recused himself from the committee stating that he cannot go against Punjab and its farmers agitating against the laws. The BKU (Lokshakti) is part of the Kisan Ekta Morcha heading 40 farmers unions holding protests at Delhi

borders for over 50 days.

Seeking the removal of three members, BKU (Lokshakti) has said in its petition that all three of them have in no uncertain terms supported the three farm laws saving that they have opened up opportunities for the farming sector and must be implemented. The court had on January 12 issued a notice on the Centre's application seeking to injunct the agitating farmers from taking out a rally on Republic Day. BKU (Lokshakti) has sought dismissal of the Centre's application.

Referring to the support to three farm laws by Dr Joshi, Mr Gulati and Mr Ghanwat, the reply filed by advocate A.P. Singh on behalf of BKU.

BIRD FLU CONFIRMED IN 9 MAHA DISTRICTS

New Delhi, Jan. 16: The Centre on Saturday said bird flu in poultry has been confirmed in nine districts of Maharashtra, while culling operation in poultry is underway in one district each in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

The viral disease has been confirmed in crow in Uttarakhand, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, while in pigeon, brown fish owl and Heron in Delhi. However, the Centre requested state governments to "rethink" their decisions to impose ban sale of poultry products and allow sale of poultry items sourced from the non-infected areas/states. In India, bird flu is spread mainly by migratory birds coming into India during winter months.

—PTI

'Pak pushing militants even during winter'

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 16

Intelligence agencies have cautioned security forces that Pakistan was trying to push militants from across the border even during the winter season.

According to intelligence reports, China was providing winter clothing and other heavy duty equipment to Pak Army which in turn was giving the same to militant groups to facilitate their infiltration into India even during winter.

According to the intelligence report, "it was extremely surprising that militants were trying hard for infiltration during the winter season also. This is unusual since during the winter season due to the heavy snow it becomes very difficult to move through mountain passes. But it seems this time the militants are well-equipped in terms of high altitude clothing, good quality equipment like glasses and other snow gadgets which is suspected to have been provided by the Chinese Army to Pak security agencies."

In view of the sustained operations launched by the Indian Army in the Kashmir Valley, militants are facing an acute shortage of both men and material.

With more than 250 militants killed last year terror outfit are in desperate need for further reinforcements.

Further due to harsh winter and heavy snow it becomes extremely difficult for security agencies to conduct patrolling in high altitude regions along the Indo-Pak border due to which more mili-

MP: SECURITY GUARD FIRST TO GET VACCINE

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JAN. 16

Hari Deb, a security guard of J P Hospital in Bhopal, on Saturday got the first shot of Covid-19 vaccine in Madhya Pradesh.

42-year-old old Deb was administered the vaccine in the J P Hospital Centre here immediately after Prime Minister Narendra Modi ended his vaccine address.

Mr Deb was presented a bouquet by senior officials of the state health department on the occasion.

"I feel good. I feel elated that I have been chosen to get the first shot in the state", Mr Deb told reporters.

Similarly, in Chhattisgarh, sanitary worker of Dr B R Ambedkar hospital in Raipur, Tulsi Tandi became the first recipient of Covid-19 vaccine in the state.

ODISHA: DRIVE STARTS WITH CLASS 4 STAFF

DC CORRESPONDENT BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 16

Biranchi Nayak, a 51-year-old Class 4 employee of Capital Hospital, Bhubaneswar, received the first shot of Covid-19 vaccine. After Biranchi, the director of the Capital Hospital, Dr Laxmidhar Sahoo, was administered the vaccine.

Odisha's Covid-19 vaccination drive was formally launched from Capital Hospital in the presence of senior officials of the state government.

"I'm feeling quite well now. I did not experience any adverse effects or uneasiness. This vaccine has given me newfound confidence to serve the patients coming to this hospital with more dedication," said Biranchi.

TWO J&K COPS RECEIVE AWARDS

Jammu, Jan. 16: Two policemen received 'Jeevan Raksha Padak' awards on Saturday for saving the lives of civilians during ceasefire violations by Pakistan along the Line of Control in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir in March 2018.

Selection Grade Constable Maqsood Ahmad in Poonch district police and Follower Zakir Hussain of sixth battalion J&K Armed Police (JKAP) were awarded 'Jeevan Raksha Padak 2019' by the Union Home Ministry last year.

Poonch Deputy Commissioner Rahul Yadav and Senior Superintendent of Police Ramesh Kumar Angral handed over the awards to the policemen in a function at Dak Bungalow, Poonch, the police official said.

—PTI

tants close to the border areas are trying to infiltrate into India.

"It is clear that China is now assisting and supporting both Pak Army an ISI by providing them resources in terms of arms, ammunition and equipment which in turn are being supplied to the militants. But we are extremely cautious in the border areas and even our security personnel are well equipped to ensure that no one takes advantage of the harsh weather to infiltrate across the border," a senior security official added.

SHORT TAKES

UN'S 1ST STEP
TO ELECT NEXT
CHIEF BY JAN. 31

United Nations, Jan. 16: The UN General Assembly and Security Council are expected to take the first step toward electing the next head of the global organisation this month. Assembly President Volkan Bozkir said Friday that he and Tunisia's UN Ambassador Tarek Ladeb, the current council president, hope to send a letter before January 31 asking the UN's 193 member nations to submit any candidates to challenge Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

The former Portuguese prime minister and UN refugee chief, whose five-year term at the helm of the United Nations ends on December 31, said in letters to Bozkir and Ladeb on Monday that he will seek a second term. The General Assembly elects the secretary-general on the recommendation of the 15-member Security Council where the five permanent members have veto power, so their support is crucial. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson immediately announced his support for Guterres, but there has been no word yet from The United States, Russia, China and France.

PALESTINIAN
POLLS: FIRST IN
15 YEARS

Gaza City, Jan. 16: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas issued a decree Friday, setting parliamentary and presidential elections for later this year in what would be the first vote of its kind since 2006, when the Islamic militant group Hamas won a landslide victory.

Elections would pose a major risk for Abbas' Fatah party and also for Hamas as both faced protests in recent years over their inability to reconcile with one another, advance Palestinian aspirations for statehood or meet the basic needs of those in the territories they govern.

Fatah and Hamas have been publicly calling for elections for more than a decade but have never been able to mend their rift or agree on a process for holding them, and despite Friday's decree, it remained far from clear whether the voting would actually be held.

Elections could also complicate President-elect Joe Biden's plans to restore aid to the Palestinians and to revive the peace process with Israel. The 2006 election victory by Hamas, which is considered a terrorist group by Israel and Western countries, led to heavy international pressure being placed on the Palestinian Authority.

LASCHET WILL
LEAD MERKEL'S
PARTY

Berlin, Jan. 16: Chancellor Angela Merkel's center-right party on Saturday chose Armin Laschet, the pragmatic governor of Germany's most populous state, as its new leader — sending a signal of continuity months before an election in which voters will decide who becomes the new chancellor.

Laschet defeated Friedrich Merz, a conservative and one-time Merkel rival, at an online convention of the Christian Democratic Union. Laschet won 521 votes to Merz's 466; a third candidate, prominent lawmaker Norbert Roettgen, was eliminated in a first round of voting. Saturday's vote isn't the final word on who will run as the center-right candidate for chancellor in Germany's Sept. 26 election, but Laschet will either run for chancellor or will have a big say in who does. Merkel, who has been chancellor since 2005, announced in late 2018 that she wouldn't seek a fifth term. She also stepped down from the CDU leadership.

The decision ends an 11-month leadership limbo in Germany's strongest party after outgoing leader Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, who had failed to impose her authority on the party, announced her resignation. A vote on her successor was delayed twice because of the Coronavirus pandemic. There had been no clear favorite going into Saturday's convention, but the election of Merz would have marked at least a symbolic break with the Merkel era.

Laschet will have to work to strengthen party unity — something Kramp-Karrenbauer struggled with. Laschet, 59, was elected in 2017 as governor of North Rhine-Westphalia state, a traditionally centre-left stronghold. He governs the region in a coalition with the pro-business Free Democrats.



A demonstrator holds a QAnon flag and a poster reading Freedom during a protest against virus restrictions at the Maria Theresien Platz in Vienna, on Saturday. — AFP

Defamation suit: Nix
Trump, court told

New York, Jan. 16: Justice Department lawyers asked a federal appeals court Friday to replace President Donald Trump with the United States as the defendant in a defamation lawsuit brought by a woman who says he raped her in the 1990s.

The lawyers filed papers in an appeal of a lower-court Manhattan judge's ruling denying the substitution in a lawsuit brought by E. Jean Carroll, a columnist who in a June 2019 book described her encounter with Trump at an upscale Manhattan department store. The book excerpt prompted Trump to deny the allegations and question Carroll's credibility and motivations in a statement from his White House press office, comments in an Oval Office interview and statements to the media as he boarded a helicopter for Camp David, the lawyers said.

Carroll subsequently sued Trump, alleging defamation. They said the statements fell within the scope of his employment as president because Carroll was, in effect, questioning his fitness to hold public office and thus statement had to be made, even if they were later deemed to be defamatory.

If the substitution was allowed, US taxpayers would be responsible for any payout that might result in the litigation.

Carroll's attorney did not immediately comment on the government filing. Carroll has alleged that she and Trump recognized one another when they randomly spotted each other at the luxury store.

— AP

Biden names PIO
to key WH post

Washington, Jan. 16: US President-elect Joe Biden has appointed Indian-American community and economic development expert Sameera Fazili to a key White House position. Fazili has been named as Deputy Director, National Economic Council at the White House, the Biden-Harris Transition announced on Friday.

The National Economic Council coordinates the economic policy making process and provide economic policy advice to the US president. Fazili is currently the Economic Agency lead on the Biden-Harris Transition.

She was earlier posted at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta where she served as the Director of

Engagement for Community and Economic Development. Fazili is the second Kashmiri-origin Indian-American appointed to a key position in the incoming Biden administration. In December, Aisha Shah was named as Partnerships Manager at the White House Office of Digital Strategy. In the Obama-Biden administration, Fazili served as a senior policy advisor on the White House's National Economic Council and as a senior advisor at the US Treasury Department in both Domestic Finance and International Affairs. Prior to that, she was a clinical lecturer of law at Yale Law School. Originally from Buffalo, she now lives in Georgia. — PTI

PENCE CONGRATULATES HARRIS,
OFFERS FULL CO-OPERATION

Washington, Jan. 16: Outgoing US Vice President Mike Pence has called his soon-to-be successor Kamala Harris to congratulate her and offer his full co-operation in the transition of power, according to multiple media reports said. However, there has been no communication between outgoing President Donald Trump and president-elect Joe Biden, which is unprecedented in recent memory.

"Vice President Mike Pence telephoned Vice

President-elect Kamala Harris Thursday to congratulate her and offer his belated assistance — filling a leadership role all but abdicated by President Trump, who is planning to fly out of the capital shortly before Joseph R Biden Jr is sworn in next week," *The New York Times* reported. Friday's call was the first time Pence, 61, and Harris, 56, had an one-to-one conversation since their vice presidential debate in October last year. — PTI

After vaccine, 23 die in
Norway, 10 in Germany

Probe finds fever, nausea, diarrhoea caused fatalities

London, Jan. 16: Norway has launched a probe after 23 elderly patients died following their immunization with the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine against Covid-19.

"It may be a coincidence, but we aren't sure," Steinar Madsen, medical director of the Norwegian Medicines Agency (NOMA), told the British Medical Journal (BMJ). "There is no certain connection between these deaths and the vaccine."

Two Covid-19 vaccines, Comirnaty, from BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna, are being used in Norway.

The agency has investigated 13 of the deaths so far and concluded that common adverse reactions of mRNA vaccines, such as fever, nausea, and diarrhoea, may have contributed to fatal outcomes in some of the patients.

"There is a possibility that these common adverse reactions, that are not dangerous in fitter, younger patients and are not unusual with vaccines, may aggravate underlying disease in the elderly," Madsen was quoted as saying.

"We are now asking for doctors to continue with the vaccination, but to carry out extra evaluation of very sick people whose underlying condition might be aggravated by it."

The Paul Ehrlich Institute in Germany is also investigating 10 deaths shortly after Covid-19 vaccination in that country.

In a statement, Pfizer said: "Pfizer and BioNTech are aware of reported deaths following administration of BNT162b2. We are working with NOMA to gather all the relevant information."

"All reported deaths will be thoroughly evaluated by NOMA to determine if these incidents are related to the vaccine. The Norwegian government will also consider adjusting their vaccination instructions to take the patients' health into more

Travel corridors
closed in the UK

London, Jan. 16: All travel corridors in place between the UK and some regions will be temporarily closed from Monday as part of efforts to curb the spread of new Coronavirus variants from countries such as Brazil and South America. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced on Friday evening that passengers coming to the UK from anywhere must now have proof of a mandatory pre-departure Covid-19 test taken at least 72 hours earlier and self-isolate for at least 10 days on arrival.

All passengers will continue to be required to fill in locator forms, with the fines in place for a breach in any of the lockdown conditions starting at 200 pounds. "To protect us against the risk of as yet unidentified new strains, we will also temporarily close all travel corridors from 0400 hrs on Monday. Following conversations with the devolved administrations, we will act together so that this applies across the whole of UK," said Johnson.

"This means that if you come to this country, you must have proof of a negative Covid test that you have taken in the 72 hours before leaving and you must have filled in your Passenger Locator Form,

consideration."

More than 20,000 doses of the vaccine have been administered over the past few weeks in Norway and around 400 deaths normally occur among care home residents every week, reports the BMJ.

Chinese publication Global Times first broke the story, saying that health experts in the country have called on Norway

10 days of self-isolation on arrival

72 hours earlier: Time when passengers coming to the UK must have taken the Covid test.

15 of Feb., the date till when the measures will be in place until being reviewed

and your airline will ask for proof of both before you take off. You may also be checked when you land and face substantial fines for refusing to comply," he said. "And, upon arrival, you must then quarantine for 10 days — not leaving your home for any reason at all, or take another test on day 5 and wait for proof of another negative result. And we will be stepping up our enforcement — both at the border and in-country," he added.

The latest measures will be in place for at least a month until being reviewed on February 15. — PTI

CHINA COVERING
UP COVID ORIGIN,
CLAIMS POMPEO

Washington, Jan. 16: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo alleged Friday there were Covid-like illnesses among staff at a Chinese virology institute in autumn 2019, casting further blame on Beijing as health experts arrived in the country to probe the pandemic's origins.

The top US diplomat in a statement urged the World Health Organisation team that landed Thursday in Wuhan, where Covid-19 was first detected, to "press the government of China" on the "new information." "The United States government has reason to believe that several researchers inside the (Wuhan Institute of Virology) became sick in autumn 2019, before the first identified case of the outbreak, with symptoms consistent with both Covid-19 and common seasonal illnesses," Pompeo said.

He said this contradicted reports that none of the staff at the institute had contracted Covid-19 or related viruses.

"Beijing continues today to withhold vital information that scientists need to protect the world from this deadly virus, and the next one," Pompeo said.

Covid-19 was first detected in Wuhan in late 2019 and has since killed more than two million people so far.

— AFP

2 insider attackers kill 12
Afghan militia: Official

Kabul, Jan. 16: At least two members of an Afghan militia opened fire on their fellow militiamen in the western Herat province, killing 12, in what provincial police on Saturday described as an insider attack. Herat police spokesman Abdul Ahad Walizada said the attackers fled with the slain militiamen's weapons and ammunition, adding that Afghan government forces had regained control of the area.

A Taliban spokesman Yousaf Ahmadi in a tweet claimed responsibility for the insider attack, which took place late Friday. Meanwhile, a sticky bomb attached to an armoured police Land Cruiser SUV exploded Saturday in the western part of the capital, Kabul, killing two policemen and wounding another, Kabul police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz said. Faramarz did not specify the identities of the casualties.

However, two members of the Afghan police force,

BOMB KILLS TWO
COPS IN KABUL

Kabul, Jan. 16: A roadside bomb targeting a police vehicle in the Afghan capital killed two policemen Saturday, officials said, as violence continues unabated in Afghanistan despite peace talks between the Taliban and government.

The vehicle carrying the policemen was struck by the bomb in the centre of the capital on the road to the prestigious Kabul University, police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz said. Two policemen were killed and one wounded, Faramarz said. — AFP

speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief the media, said Kabul's deputy police chief Mawlana Bayan was wounded in the attack.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for

the bombing in Kabul. In the southern Helmand province, a suicide car bomber targeted a police compound late Friday, killing one policeman and wounding two others, provincial police spokesman Zaman Hamdard said. The attack took place in Lashkar Gah district on the highway between southern Helmand province and the city of Kandahar. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack in Helmand. The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for multiple attacks in the capital in recent months, including on educational institutions that killed 50 people, most of them students.

IS has claimed responsibility for rocket attacks in December targeting the major US base in Afghanistan. There were no casualties. The violence comes as the representatives of the Taliban and the Afghan government earlier this month resumed peace talks in Qatar. — AP

U.S. RETAINS
Let'S ULTRA
DESIGNATION

Washington, Jan. 16: The United States has reviewed and maintained the terrorist designations of Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) and Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ), along with ISIL Sinai Peninsula (ISIL-SP) and several other organisations. Days ahead of the transition of power, the US Department of State said that it has amended the terrorist designations of LJ and ISIL Sinai Peninsula (ISIL-SP) to include additional aliases.

Additionally, the Department of State has reviewed and maintained the Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) designations of LJ, ISIL-SP, LeT, Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al-Naqshabandi, Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis-Sudan (Ansaru), al-Nusra Front, Continuity Irish Republican Army, and the National Liberation Army, a media note said.

"Based upon a review of the Administrative Records ... I conclude that the circumstances that were the bases for the designations of the aforementioned organisations as Foreign Terrorist Organisations have not changed in such a manner as to warrant revocation of the designations and that the national security of the US does not warrant a revocation of the designations," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a federal register notification published on January 14.

These organisations included Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al-Naqshabandi, Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis-Sudan, Harakat ul-Mujahidin, al-Nusra Front, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Continuity Irish Republican Army, and the National Liberation Army. — PTI

LIVING | OUTSIDE

The UAE, the US and Saudi Arabia host the largest numbers of Indian migrants

At 18 mn, India has world's largest diaspora

United Nations, Jan. 16: The Indian diaspora, one of the most "vibrant and dynamic", is the largest in the world, with 18 million people from the country living outside their homeland in 2020, the UN has said. The United Arab Emirates, the US and Saudi Arabia host the largest numbers of migrants from India, it said.

"India has the largest transnational population in the world. It has the most migrants abroad — 18 million, which is a significant number and another

feature which is very interesting about the Indian migrant population is that they're really distributed all over the globe," Population Affairs Officer in the Population Division at UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) Clare Menozzi said.

Menozzi said while some transnational populations are really clustered in one country or region, the Indian diaspora is present in all continents and regions — from the Gulf to Northern America to

Others with a large diaspora included Mexico and Russia (11 million each), China (10 million) and Syria (8 million).

Other countries hosting large numbers of migrants from India included Australia, Canada, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar and the UK.

Australia, UK. "It's a very vibrant" and dynamic diaspora in the world, she said. The report, 'International Migration 2020 Highlights', by the Population Division of UN DESA, released on Friday said in 2020, 18 million persons from India were living outside of their country of birth. Other countries with a large diaspora included Mexico and Russia (11 million each), China (10 million) and Syria (8 million). The report said India's large diaspora is distributed across a number of major countries of destination, with the UAE (3.5 million), the US (2.7 million) and Saudi Arabia

(2.5 million) hosting the largest numbers of migrants from India.

Other countries hosting large numbers of migrants from India included Australia, Canada, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar and the UK. Between 2000 and 2020, the size of the migrant population abroad grew for nearly all countries and areas of the world. India experienced the largest gain during that period at nearly 10 million, followed in order of magnitude by Syria, Venezuela, China and the

Philippines. Migration from India is largely motivated by labour and family reasons, Director of Population Division at UN DESA John Wilmoth told reporters at the launch of the report here, adding that forced displacement is a much smaller category (about 10 per cent) in the total.

Menozzi said the Indian diaspora is comprised predominantly of persons who are working, but also students and people who moved for family reasons. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

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Ranjona Banerji

Off the beaten track

How life got in the way of my one true calling

An autorickshaw driver in Jaipur a couple of years ago asked me, “Hope you don’t mind my asking but are you a writer?” A shop salesperson looked at my execrable handwriting and commented, “You must either be a writer or a doctor”.

So, clearly, something gives me away. The problem is that I’m not THAT sort of a writer. Not the sort that everyone around me wants me to be. I’m not the sort of writer who spent the Pandemic lockdown carefully crafting my creative skills and honing my “talent” so I could write that exemplar novel, that series of high philosophy essays to understand humanity, that definitive book on the state of the nation.

Maybe I do want to be that writer. As an adolescent, like most others, I wrote those poems. Emotions crystallized in show-off nonsense from studying literature. The ones you really should find and burn before you burn so no unsuspecting young relative clearing your remains gets traumatised. I do confess then that I did have those dreams (have? had?), that so many have of being a “writer”. Of giving voice to that mandatory (what do you mean you don’t have one) book inside me. But is that really me, babe?

Okay I lie and exaggerate. I do have one book to my name. A definitive experience of researching and exploring India’s contemporary history, a labour of love for this country of ours and our journey as a nation. But that was in 1997. It was a co-authored and co-edited experience with Ayaz Memon, plus some 50 illustrious contributors. And today, it is out of print.

Also, at the turn of this century, I did sit down to write that novel. I made a space that was my own, surrounded by other people’s books. I rejigged my computer to give it more juice, I bought lots of A4 paper. Whatever the equivalent of lots of sharpened pencils in this digital age. Or as digital as it was then.

And I wrote, some 80,000 words. I greatly enjoyed myself. I laughed uproariously at my own jokes in case no one else would. I made up some characters and I based others on real-life people with I hoped enough tweaks just to make them unrecognisable. In some cases, I was quite happy to be vindictive assuming people I had forgotten to stay in touch with had also forgotten me. I did not follow all those publisher’s rules about flow charts and Autocad drawings to make an architectural model for my novel with as much work in the fake structure as in the real thing just to satisfy some management-brained “editor”. Did Jane Austen do that? Pah! Who on earth was anyone to tell me what to do?

Aah, arrogance. Because by then my characters got lives of their own and became uncooperative, as a well-known writer had warned me would happen. They just hared off in their own directions, far away from even my deliberately free-flowing structure. I contemplated murder of a few as my only option. I asked for advice from writer friends and writer critics and got plenty, both good and bad. The whole thing was on the verge when it was no longer fun...

And just then, life dropped a massive distraction into my life. Boy did I jump to it! I still have the files, Manuscript 1, 2, 3 et cetera. I last looked through them 10 years ago. They seemed increasingly childish every time I took a re-look. Frankly, homicide of all the characters seemed like the only option. To spare myself the guilt, I did nothing. Which maybe is the same thing.

So that’s my career as a “writer”. I mean I am a writer. But not that kind of a writer. My admiration and respect for real writers has grown manifold. For their dedication and doggedness. For talent and their deep reserves. I salute them, the writers and their books, those I have read for ages, those I still do. Isn’t the human imagination fascinating? I read some. I review some. I collect some.

And then I stick to my type of writing. Short commentaries where 1,000 words seem like an imposition and 500 are about perfect. That’s me. The hack writer.

I take solace in this T.S. Eliot story. “Don’t you think most critics are failed writers?” asked a fan-friend. Yes, said Eliot: “And so are most writers”.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on media affairs, politics and social trends. She tweets at @ranjona.

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com, Else, send to Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110002.

Subhani



Why Akali Dal’s voice is missing in farmers’ stir



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

It was on the day the farm bills were passed in the Lok Sabha that the Akali Dal’s Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Union minister for food processing, announced her resignation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Cabinet in September 2020. She said her party was opposed to the bills, and that the government went ahead without heeding the protest of her party. But the Akali Dal then, and in the past three months since, did not state the specific reasons for their opposition to the farm legislation. The resignation of Ms Badal seemed to be an expression of despair rather than defiance. After leaving the government and the ruling National Democratic Alliance, neither the BJP nor the Akalis have attacked each other.

The BJP had attacked the Congress, and the Congress government of Amarinder Singh in Punjab, for opposing the farm laws as an act of hypocrisy. Home minister Amit Shah initially blamed the “Khalistanis” for fomenting the agitation, but later both Mr Shah and his party have refrained from targeting “Khalistanis” fearing the trouble it may unleash. But television news channels supporting the Narendra Modi government have tried to build a counter-narrative that the Congress was using the “Khalistanis” to subvert the farmers’ agitation as it once did in the late 1970s and early 1980s to outflank the Akalis in Punjab’s politics. It is a line of argument that the Modi government and the BJP would still be wary of using because of the uncertain fallout and the stance of the Sikh diaspora’s political leadership in places like Britain and Canada.

The information and broadcasting ministry had recently issued a 188-page booklet, enumerating the many things that Prime Minister Modi and his government have done for the Sikhs, indicating as it were that the government sees the ongoing agitation as that of Punjabi Sikhs and not as that of farmers per se. But it appears the Sikh outreach through the booklet did not evoke any positive response. The Akalis, who have been the major political voice of the Sikhs, have not been in the forefront of the agitation now that they walked out of the government and the NDA on the very same issue. It is not clear what the equation is between the Akalis and the leaders of the farmers’ unions.

The farmers’ spokespersons told a Hindi television news channel that the farmers were not opposed to Mr Modi nor to the BJP, and that as a matter of fact they (farmers) had voted for the BJP. So, it has been made clear that if the Centre repeals the laws, the farmers will remain with the government. It is this stand of the farmers that might be

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holding the Akalis back from entering the fray and declaring their opposition to the Modi government. They may still be looking to return to the NDA and to the government once the standoff between it and the farmers ends.

It is of course standard practice that political parties do not usually spearhead the agitation of a section of society though they would support it from the outside. The farmers too need to keep political parties out to keep the legitimacy of their cause and avoid being accused of being pawns in the hands of the Opposition political parties.

It is indeed the case that both Akalis and the Congress in Punjab would like to support the farmers’ agitation and expect in return the vote of the farmers at election time.

If the impasse is over, and the Modi government manages to reach an agreement with the farmers, the Akalis might stand to gain. If, however, the impasse continues, there is the possibility that the Akalis might want to join hands with the Congress, as the Shiv Sena and the Congress did in Maharashtra, to oppose the BJP. At the moment, despite the silence and invisibility of the Akalis, there might be an active back channel between the Akalis and the BJP.

There is also the danger, as far as the Akalis are concerned, that if the BJP makes a peace deal

with the Punjab Sikh farmers, Mr Modi and Mr Shah, who are forever on the lookout to expand the BJP’s footprint, may absorb the Sikh constituency and the Akalis may be left high and dry. This was this strategy that backfired for the BJP in Maharashtra when it tried to undermine the Shiv Sena.

It looks like the farmers are confident that they can argue their own case, fight their own cause, and don’t need to depend on political parties. It is the parties who need to woo the farmers. That even ostensibly farmers’ parties like the Rashtriya Lok Dal and Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh, and Indian National Lok Dal and the Jannayak Janta Party in Haryana, can’t take the farmers for granted is evident in their unflattering electoral performance in the past few years. It is then reasonable to infer that the BJP would want to carve out its own farmers’ constituency.

Akali Dal leaders have held on to their belief that they represent the Punjabi constituency, taking advantage of the Sikh identity of Punjab’s farmers. The Sikh element in Punjab’s politics simply cannot be wished away. The BJP, on its part, will have a problem in balancing its Hindutva politics with that of the Sikh minorityism of the Akalis.

The farmers themselves have kept the protest as a farmers’ issue, pure and simple. They kept the ideologies of all stripes at bay. They are pressing on the simple issue of seeking repeal of the three farm laws. Economic experts explain the protest as anti-rational. The farmers, however, believe that their demand is rational too. The Akalis’ obligation at this point is to argue the case of the farmers so that the entire country knows that the farmers are not being obtuse and obdurate.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

LETTERS

VACCINE ROLLS OUT

In a homogeneously complex logistics operation, the Government of India has ensured that the first batch of vaccines reached the farthest corners of the country. Kudos to the government and all the agencies which made this possible. And the Prime Minister made it very clear that politicians and other so-called VIPs would not get a first shot at the vaccine. The digital platform will assist programme managers across national, State, and district levels while conducting vaccination sessions. It will help them track beneficiary coverage, beneficiary dropouts, sessions planned v/s sessions held and vaccine utilisation. Fortunately, we have a Prime Minister who has been able to turn a deaf ear to all the cacophony. India’s exercise to vaccinate its population against Covid-19 shall be the largest immunisation drive of the world.

C.K. Subramaniam, Chennai

END STRIKE FAST

THE PROLONGED stiffness and belligerence exhibited by the farmers of Punjab even after the issue has been handed over to Supreme Court appointed experts panel to analyse the problems threadbare for finding out an amicable solution, their continued ferocity in words and deeds shows that the strikers have some secret and sinister agenda against the Union government for which their grievances with regard to farm laws are used as a cloak. There is absolutely no need for them to be so adamant and obstinate over an issue which is purely economic in nature that can be solved if the farm panel recommends further concessions in the laws. The strikers are duty bound to put an end to their illegal acts of road blocking at least until the SC appointed panel submits its report and recommendations. If they go ahead with the strike action without any let up and particularly till the Republic Day with their proposed tractor rally then they will also have to face the consequences of legal measures taken by the government.

B.S. Jayaraman Iyer, Coimbatore

TN PLAYERS’ DEBUT

IT IS heartening to note that after a gap of 10 years, two cricketers from Tamil Nadu made their debut in a Test, and impressively too. Though, both T. Natarajan and Washington Sundar were drafted in the playing XI in the fourth Test against Australia at Gabba, Brisbane only because of injuries to some key Indian bowlers, these two TN bowlers straightaway pulled their weight with a haul of 3 wickets apiece in the first innings and look very promising. Considered specialists in ODIs and T20s, both these bowlers have proved a point or two of their worth in the traditional format too. As for Natarajan, ever since Irfan Pathan fizzled out at the international level after a meteoric rise, India has been desperately searching for a quality left-arm pacer, and this unassuming bowler from Tamil Nadu appears to have filled the vacuum well.

R. Sivakumar, Chennai

Mail your letters to editor@deccanmail.com

Mohan Guruswamy



An important lesson from India’s history for PM Modi

The fortunes of India had irrevocably changed on May 29, 1658 when two Indian armies clashed on the dusty fields of Samugarh, near Agra. India’s history changed forever. Aurangzeb’s victory over his brother Dara Shikoh marked the beginning of Islamic bigotry in India that not only alienated the Hindus but also the much more moderate Sufis and Shias as well. Aurangzeb’s narrow Sunni beliefs were to make India the hotbed of Muslim fundamentalists, long before the Wahabis of Saudi Arabia sponsored the fanatics of the Taliban and the Islamic State. It was not only a battle for the Mughal throne, but also a battle for the very soul of India.

Aurangzeb’s victory here and other successful campaigns resulted in the creation of the greatest and biggest imperial India till then. But the seeds of India’s collapse were sowed.

In 1620 India had the world’s greatest national income, over a third of it, and was its greatest military power as well. It was the envy of Europe. The European traders came to seek Indian

goods for their markets. But no sooner was the iron hand of Aurangzeb no more that his imperial India began to disintegrate. The iron hand that ruled by dividing rather than uniting and that sought to impose a hierarchy by theological preferences gave rise to much discordance. But for Aurangzeb, Shivaji Bhonsle might have remained a minor western Indian feudatory? There are important lessons to be learnt from all this for those who rule and seek to rule India.

The weakening central rule and profit seeking peripheral kingdoms allowed European trading posts to be established. Weakening regimes led to the trading posts raising armed guards. Soon the overseas trading companies began warring each other and with so many minor states now free to make their destinies joining hands with one or the other it was the Europeans who got gradually got established. The Anglo-French wars of the Carnatic were fought by Indian armies beefed up by trading company levies. The East India Company of the British ultimately prevailed and the

French, Dutch, Portuguese and Danish got reduced to pockets.

A hundred years later, in 1757, the era of total foreign supremacy over India began when the East India Company’s troops drawn from South India and officered by English company executives defeated the army of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah at Plassey (Palashi) in Bengal, with the now usual mix of superior drilling, resolute leadership and a bit of treachery. At a crucial time, Mir Jafar and his troops crossed over. India lay prostrate before Robert Clive.

Within a decade, on August 12, 1765, Clive obtained a firman from the then Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam, granting the dewan of Bengal, Bihar and Odisha to the Company. A Muslim contemporary indignantly exclaims that so great a “transaction was done and finished in less time than would have been taken up in the sale of a jackass”. By this deed the Company became the real sovereign ruler of 30 million people, yielding a revenue of four million sterling. The John Company grew from strength to

strength, and by 1857 the Grand Mughal was reduced to his fort conducting poetry soirées. It was the golden age of Urdu poetry.

The events of 1857 led to the formal establishment of India as a directly ruled colony of the British empire. It was yet another epochal event. India changed, for the better and for the worse. Once again India absorbed from outsiders, as it absorbed from the Dravidians, Aryans, Greeks, Persians, Kushans, Afghans, Uzbeks and all those who came to seek their fortunes here. The British were the only ones who came to take away its vast wealth in a systematic manner. The wealth taken from India to a great extent financed the Industrial Revolution in England.

From then to another epochal year ending with seven took ninety years. In 1947, India became independent. Its GDP is now the world’s third biggest. In a few decades it could conceivably become its biggest. But have we learned any lessons from history?

Given its abject failures on the economic front, the BJP/RSS regime in

New Delhi is now pushing India towards a Hindutva nationhood, by seeking to victimise a minority for the perceived wrongs and slights of the past. An intolerant religion can never be the basis of nationhood and national unity in India. The legacy of Aurangzeb tells us that. Aurangzeb had created the greatest empire that India had seen since Ashoka the Great. But it didn’t take very long for it to dissipate. In the hundred years that followed, a foreign mercantile company gained control over all of India.

The BJP under Narendra Modi might keep gaining electoral dominion over all or most of India. But has he learned any lessons from history? Does he want to become the Hindu Aurangzeb? What is worrisome is that we know well that history is not Narendra Modi’s forte.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

SHORT TAKES

Covid clouds over Oz Open

Melbourne: Three coronavirus cases have been detected among charter flights carrying tennis players, coaches and officials to Melbourne ahead of the Australian Open, health authorities and tournament organizers said on Saturday. A total of 47 players from the two affected flights arriving from Los Angeles and Abu Dhabi are now in a strictly enforced 14-day quarantine without the ability to leave their hotel rooms even to practice. The Australian Open is scheduled to start February 8. Health authorities said two positive Covid-19 cases emerged from a charter flight from Los Angeles and Tennis Australia said there was a third positive case from a flight from Abu Dhabi. The cases from Los Angeles involved an aircrew member and a passenger who was not a player. — AP

Pandya brothers' father no more

Vadodara: India cricketers Hardik and Krunal Pandya lost their father Himanshu, who died on Saturday after suffering a heart attack. He was 71. "Krunal, who was leading Baroda in the Syed Mushtaq Ali trophy, left the bio-bubble created for the tournament to be with his family," association secretary Ajit Lele said. Hardik is not playing the national T20 tournament as he is preparing for the white-ball series against England. He has also left Mumbai, where he was training, for Vadodara. Himanshu had played a key role in the success of his cricketer sons. India skipper Virat Kohli and legendary Sachin Tendulkar, led the cricketing fraternity in condoling Himanshu's demise. — PTI

Lanka dig in after Root double ton

Galle, Sri Lanka: Joe Root completed his fourth double century for England on Saturday but insisted it will mean nothing if his side cannot overcome a defiant Sri Lanka in the first Test. The England captain made 228 of his team's 421 all out — 26 runs short of his brilliant 254 career best against Pakistan at Old Trafford in 2016. But Lahiru Thirimanne led Sri Lanka's stubborn resistance, hitting an unbeaten 75 while Kusal Perera made 62 as the home team reached 156-2 in their second innings. After their disappointing 135 in the first innings, they need another 130 to reach England's total. Root's 321 ball innings with a six and 18 fours dominated the day. — AFP

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 135 & 156/2 in 61 overs (Thirimanne 76*, Perera 62) vs **England 421 in 117.1 overs** (Root 228, Lawrence 73).

Man U face acid test at Liverpool

London: Liverpool and Manchester United face off on Sunday as the Premier League's top two teams for the first time since 1997 — with the rivalry between England's most successful clubs rekindled by a fascinating title race. — AFP

Live on TV

BADMINTON

Thailand Open: Finals from 7.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

CRICKET

Sri Lanka vs England: First Test, Day 4 from 10 am on Sony Ten 2

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament: Mumbai vs Puducherry from 11.55 am; Haryana vs Delhi from 6.55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

Australia vs India: Fourth Test Day 4 from 5.30 am (Monday) on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Sheffield United vs Tottenham Hotspur from 7.30 pm; **Liverpool vs Manchester United** from 10 pm; Manchester City vs Crystal Palace from 1.30 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

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OPENING WOES

Rohit, Shubman fail to give India strong start on Day Two

Brisbane, Jan. 16: Rohit Sharma's indiscreet shot selection pegged India back after rookie bowling attack restricted Australia to 369 on a rain-curtailed second day of the fourth Test on Saturday.

With heavy thunder-showers preventing any play in the post tea session, India ended the day at 62 for 2.

Rohit was elegant as ever in his 44 off 74 balls before Nathan Lyon in his 100th Test enticed him to come down the track but the half-chip-half-loft was safely pounced by Mitchell Starc in the deep.

India also lost Shubman Gill (7) who edged one off Pat Cummins to Steve Smith. Cheteshwar Pujara (8) and Ajinkya Rahane (2) added only two runs in the 6.1 overs before the break.

There were six boundaries from Rohit but he did not fiddle at deliveries in and around the off-stump channel even as Cummins and Josh Hazlewood bowled a testing spell under overcast conditions.

The shot of the session was an on-drive off Cummins which came after a streaky boundary through the slips in the same over. Another delightful stroke was an off-drive off Cameron Green as 49 runs were added for the second wicket.

There wasn't much swing on offer but the pace off the track has increased compared to the first day and it only helped that the Australian pace attack is a more well built one with average speed being at least 6-7 kmph more than their Indian counterparts.

Pujara, at the other end was playing his usual 'grinding out' game but it didn't look too arduous till Rohit kept the scoreboard ticking at the other end. It wouldn't be an over statement to say that among all top order batsman across both sides, Rohit looked the most comfortable and till his dismissal never looked like being troubled by the four-pronged attack. — PTI



Rohit Sharma and Cheteshwar Pujara.



Washington Sundar (centre) is congratulated by teammates after taking the wicket of Australia's Nathan Lyon on the second day of the fourth Test at the Gabba in Brisbane on Saturday.

— AP

SCORECARD

Australia first innings (overnight 274/5): David Warner c R. Sharma b M. Siraj 1, Marcus Harris c W. Sundar b S. Thakur 5, Marnus Labuschagne c R. Pant b T. Natarajan 108, Steven Smith c R. Sharma b W. Sundar 36, Matthew Wade c S. Thakur b T. Natarajan 45, Cameron Green b W. Sundar 47, Tim Paine c R. Sharma b S. Thakur 50, Pat Cummins lbw b S. Thakur 2, Mitchell Starc not out 20, Nathan Lyon b W. Sundar 24, Josh Hazlewood b T. Natarajan 11. Extras (b-4, lb-5, nb-6, wd-5) 20. **Total (all out in 115.2 overs) 369.**

FoW: 1-4, 2-17, 3-87, 4-200, 5-213, 6-311, 7-313, 8-315, 9-354.

Bowlers: Mohammed Siraj 25-10-66-1, T Natarajan 24-2-378-3, Shardul Thakur 24-6-93-3, Navdeep Saini 7.5-2-21-0, Washington Sundar 31-6-89-3, Rohit Sharma 0.1-0-1-0.

India 1st Innings: Rohit Sharma c M. Starc b N. Lyon 44, Shubman Gill c Smith b Cummins 7, Cheteshwar Pujara batting 8, Ajinkya Rahane batting 2. Extras (nb-1) 1. **Total (For 2 wks, in 26 overs) 62.**

FoW: 1-11, 2-60. **Bowling:** Mitchell Starc 3-1-8-0, Josh Hazlewood 8-4-11-0, Pat Cummins 6-1-22-1, Cameron Green 3-0-11-0, Nathan Lyon 6-2-10-1.

Indian bowlers impress McDonald

Brisbane, Jan. 16: Australia's assistant coach Andrew McDonald on Saturday praised the highly inexperienced Indian bowling attack for the final Test and singled out Washington Sundar, saying the young off-spinner filled the shoes of Ravichandran Ashwin "quite well".

Hit by a barrage of injuries through the series, India picked debutants Washington (3/89) and medium pacer T. Natarajan (3/78) in the

playing eleven on Friday.

The duo was travelling with the squad as net bowlers.

"I thought they (the Indian bowlers) were very consistent. I thought Washington Sundar in particular was disciplined and fill that role of Ravi Ashwin quite well and kept it tight and was able to take some key wickets on the way," McDonald said at the virtual post-day press conference after Day Two.

"So, for me I suppose, he

is a bowler who controlled well the tempo of the game and I think it stood out for me."

McDonald, who also coaches in the IPL, was also impressed by Natarajan.

"...Natarajan shaped the ball early, there is lot (to like) about him, left-arm swing bowler, no doubt he is inexperienced but has enough played first-class games to play his first Test on this tour, (that) is a great achievement, so I think they held their

own," the 39-year-old said.

The left-arm pacer had impressed in the limited overs leg of the tour after making the Indian team at the back of a stellar IPL.

"They (Indian bowlers) applied pressure throughout the innings and they made (it) difficult for ourselves. Times when we felt we would get on the top, they were able to bounce back and get key wickets at crucial times. It was great arm-wrestle, so full credit to their attack." — PTI

Rohit speaks highly of debutant Natarajan

Brisbane, Jan. 16: India's vice-captain Rohit Sharma is extremely impressed with Thangarasu Natarajan's "solid character" and believes that the Tamil Nadu left-arm seamer is here to stay with his insatiable hunger to succeed at the top level.

Natarajan, who came in as a net bowler, joined fellow rookies Mohammed Siraj, Washington Sundar and Shardul Thakur to restrict Australia to 369, which according to Rohit is no mean feat.

"Natarajan bowled pretty well, to be honest. Playing outside the country (internationals) for the first time

From ball one, Natarajan was right up there. He showed a lot of composure, is a strong character, who doesn't speak much but we all know he has a solid personality

— **ROHIT SHARMA**
Indian batsman

and bowling to such batsmen, it wasn't going to be easy and he was not under any pressure," Rohit said about the debutant, who was the pick of the bowlers with 3/78 in 24.2 overs.

"From ball one, he was right up there. He showed a lot of composure, is a

strong character who doesn't speak much but we all know he has a solid personality. He wants to do well for the team and also for himself. He is here to stay."

For Rohit, considering that cumulative experience of the bowling attack was four Test matches, they need to be lauded for keeping Australia under check on a good batting wicket.

"They showed a lot of discipline and overall if I had to analyse the performance of these bowlers, I would say they bowled pretty well. This is a great experience for them bowling against the best batters, and test themselves," he said. — PTI

SYED MUSHTAQ ALI T20

Fourth victory on trot for TN

Kolkata, Jan. 16: Skipper Dinesh Karthik (40 not out) and N. Jagadeesan (78 not out) saw Tamil Nadu home against Hyderabad after a brief stutter in the middle of the innings in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

TN lead the group with 16 points after four consecutive wins followed by Bengal (12 points from 4 matches).

In Vadodara, Baroda continued their winning run in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy by claiming a 60-run victory over Maharashtra in an Elite C Group game here on Saturday.

This is Baroda's fourth win on the trot in the league stage after having defeated Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in their first three outings.

Put in to bat, Baroda rode on stand-in skipper Kedar Devdhar's stroke-filled unbeaten 99 off 71 balls to post a competitive 158 for four.

Right-arm medium pacer Atit Sheth (4/17) then wreaked havoc to scuttle out Maharashtra for a meagre 98 and give his team four full points.

In Kolkata, Assam pulled off an upset 13-run win over Bengal in a Elite Group B match while Tamil Nadu won their fourth straight match to go top of the points table.

Bengal opted to field and saw the talented Riyan Parag (77) help Assam put up a fighting 157 for 5 in 20 overs. The visiting team restricted Bengal to 144 for 8.

BRIEF SCORES

■ Baroda 158/4 in 20 overs (Kedar Devdhar 99 not out, 28; Taranjitsingh Dhillon 2/30) lost to Maharashtra 98 in 16.5 overs (Naushad Shaikh 32; Atit Sheth 4/17, Ninal Rathwa 3/21).

■ Hyderabad 152/7 in 20 overs (B. Sandeep 41, Pragmay Reddy 30, B. Aparajith 2/22) lost to Tamil Nadu 155/3 in 19.3 overs (N. Jagadeesan 78 not out, Dinesh Karthik 40 not out).



Tamil Nadu's N. Jagadeesan is in fine form.

Team MRF get off to fine start

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 16

Team MRF Tyres have started the 2021 rally season in style at the Arctic Lapland Rally, as part of the Finnish Rally Championship this weekend. Emil Lindholm and Mikael Korhonen, in their Skoda Fabia evo Rally2 are fighting for the lead in the Finnish Championship, having taken the stage win on SS4 — Jyväskylä/Finland / Lapin Safarit.

Lindholm and Korhonen are involved in a tight battle at the top with 11 seconds covering the top three. The MRF Tyres crew sit in second just 4.6 seconds off three-time Finnish champions Teemu A s u n n a / M a r k o Salminen.

Over the three stages that ran that totalled 85km of

competitive action, Lindholm/Korhonen were never outside the top three in the Finnish Championship, taking third on SS2, second on SS3 and the stage win on SS4.

Lindholm said: "The MRF Tyres felt great. There was a lot of snow in some places which presented a new challenge but there was incredible performance in general. It was definitely great to take the first stage win of the year today. I felt we weren't pushing particularly but anyhow the profile of the road suits us well and the time was good. The strategy for tomorrow is to drive our own rally and to post good stagetimes. Conditions should be better for us and I am looking forward to testing these MRF snow and winter tyres more."

Board should look into India's alarming rate of injuries



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

What an extraordinary Test series this is turning out to be! After India lost the first match from a potentially winning position in a 'freak' hour's batting that saw them being bowled out for an abysmal 36, a white-wash by Australia looked the likely outcome, more so with Virat Kohli and Mohamed Shami (for different reasons) no longer available.

What's transpired since has been straight out of Ripley's Believe It Or Not.

Shrugging off the trauma of the sensational col-

lapse at Adelaide, India went on to win the second Test in a remarkable turnaround. Perhaps even more amazing was the manner in which the third was saved, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant, Hanuma Vihari and Ravichandran Ashwin batting out the last day against all odds.

By the time the fourth match started, India's squad was severely depleted, resembling a battalion of the 'walking wounded' in a war zone.

Eight key players were out of commission, Kohli was on paternity leave.

Shami, and K.L. Rahul too were already back in India because of injury Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah, Vihari, Ravindra Jadeja and Umesh Yadav were still in Australia, but all *hors de combat*.

This made picking the playing XI excruciating easy at one level, excruciating at another: few players to choose from, yet how to assemble the best combination to fight the Aussies?

The batting, despite Kohli not being there, was not as badly dented as the bowling. Having rightly decided be on the attack rather than defend (difficult, given the players available), the big question was whether to play two spinners and three pacers, or four pacers and a spinner.

The history of matches at the Gabba, where fast

bowlers have been more successful, swung the mandate in favour of Thakur and Natarajan to join Siraj and Saini. For the spinner's slot, Washington Sundar was preferred over Kuldeep Yadav to shore up the batting.

This meant India's bowling attack had a collective experience of four Tests (Siraj 2, Saini 1, Thakur 1) and two debutants (Sundar and Natarajan) when they took the field at Brisbane! I can't think of a less experienced bowling attack since representing Independent India.

India's performance so far at Brisbane has been admirable. The rookie bowling attack has handled the pressure well, shown fine skill and restricted Australia to 369. It's not a small score, but nowhere near 450 that Tim Paine was expecting after

choosing to bat first.

Had Rohit Sharma, after a sparkling 44, not been seduced into indiscretion by a delivery that Lyon held back cleverly seeing the batsman jump out of the crease, India would have been on equal terms with Australia going into the third day. Now Australia are a nudge ahead.

However, with Pujara and Rahane at the crease, Pant, Agarwal and Sundar to follow, there is quite a lot of batting to come. If India survive the first session without too much damage, this Test could be heading for a tantalising finish too.

Where grit, tenacity, commitment and character are concerned, India's performance in this tour has been outstanding. Nevertheless, the number of players that have been

injured is aalarming. It is abnormal, and in many ways have hurt the team's prospects.

Kohli's unavailability after the first Test was known in advance, as was Rohit's unavailability for the first two Tests. There is not much that could be done with Shami and Jadeja suffering fractures either. But what of the others?

Umesh and Vihari have done in their hamstringings, Bumrah has an abdominal strain, Ashwin a sore back, and Saini limped off the field on the first day at Brisbane with an ankle problem that may see him not take any further part in the match.

Remember, Ishant Sharma and Bhuvaneshwar Kumar, two seasoned fast bowlers, could not make the cut after getting similarly

injured during the IPL. What are the factors causing so many Indian players — compared to those from any other country — to suffer such injuries?

Is it work overload, training regimens that don't match individual physique, players not being attentive about their own fitness, poor assessment and treatment of niggles (by sports medicine experts attached to the Board) which then flare up into serious problems? Or are there other reasons?

This situation needs to be inquired into. The BCCI would do well to have a committee of experts study the issue and come out with a white paper on how to lick it. There are long term implications of the problem which must not be lost in the acclaim over the heroic performances in Australia.

