

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 7 | FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 17°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Thai 25
Tithi: Ekadashi
Star: Kettai
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.22 am
Zohar: 12.28 pm
Asar: 3.43 pm
Maghrib: 6.12 pm
Isha: 7.25 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.12 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.34 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 2.22 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 2.03 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+11,924)	(+71)
1,08,27,170	1,55,028

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+477)
TN: 8,41,326 12,382

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

10,61,32,300

DEATHS

23,14,208

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

Over 1 lakh vaccinated for Covid-19 in Delhi till date

New Delhi: The total number of people vaccinated against Covid-19 till date in Delhi, majority of them being healthcare workers, has crossed the one lakh-mark, officials said on Saturday. On Saturday, over 9,500 beneficiaries were given the shots, including frontline workers. The turnout was about 53 per cent. "The target was 17,900 and 9,510 people got vaccinated, with AEPI (adverse events following immunisation) in nine persons," a senior official said.

Naga officials to face music for misuse of social media

Guwahati: Nagaland Governor R.N. Ravi has directed the state chief secretary to initiate criminal proceedings against the state government employees indulging in seditious and subversive writings challenging the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country and posting them on social media. Such activities were hampering the development activities of the state as well, security sources said. ■P4

COUNTER POINT



Price rise again? I am not aware... I always travel in government vehicles!

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Ready to face any number of cases: Stalin



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UN: Reverse Myanmar coup

SPORT | 8

Ishant's strikes lifted team morale: Nadeem



Road blockade peaceful; Tikait says govt has time till Oct. 2 to repeal laws

SUNIL THAPLIYAL | DC
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, FEB. 6

On a day farmers protesting against the Centre's three contentious agricultural laws staged an incident-free three-hour "chakka jam" across the country, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait said that the farmer leaders have given the Union government time till October 2 to withdraw the legislations. Farmers, he added, will return home only after the government repealed the contentious legislation and makes a law ensuring legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP). "There will be no compromise on this," Mr Tikait said and asserted that the agitation is for the whole country and not one state. Farmers' "chakka jam" protest drew massive response in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and there were scattered demonstrations in other states.

The three-hour long nationwide "chakka jam" (roadblock demonstrations) announced by around 40 protesting farmer unions ended peacefully. No untoward incident was reported in any part of the country during Saturday's protests though scores of people were detained in several states, including Telangana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and 50 at Shaheed Park in the national capital which was brought under a thick security blanket in light of the violence during the farmers' tractor parade on January 26. The Delhi Police also intensified security at all border points of the city as thousands of personnel, including paramilitary forces, were deployed to deal with any situation emerging out of the nationwide "chakka jam". ■P4



Farmers block a highway during three-hour nationwide "chakka jam" blockade of national and state highways, in support of their agitation against Centre's farm reform laws, in Palwal district, on Saturday. — PTI

EAM: 'Toolkit' revealed lot, prompted response

New Delhi, Feb. 6: External affairs minister S. Jaishankar said on Saturday that the tweet by Swedish teen activist Greta Thunburg on the use of 'toolkit' revealed a lot and prompted the government of India to respond to the espousal of the farmers strike by celebrities all over the world.

"It has revealed a lot," the minister told news

agency ANI.

"We've to wait & see what else comes out. There was a reason why the foreign ministry reacted to statements which some celebrities gave out on matters on which they obviously didn't know very much."

The ministry had urged the celebrities to ascertain the facts before rushing to comment on such matters.

TN farmers stage protests, support 'chakka jam'

Chennai, Feb. 6: Farmers staged protests here and in other parts of Tamil Nadu on Saturday demanding repeal of the farm laws in solidarity with the ryots' nationwide 'chakka jam'.

Leading an agitation here by raising slogans against the Centre and farm laws, president, coordination committee of Tamil Nadu All Farmers' Association,

P.R. Pandian said the protest was for seeking justice.

The protests in Tamil Nadu was part of the pan India stir and "this is for seeking justice for farmers, this is not for political purposes or to inconvenience the general public," Pandian told reporters.

Urging scrapping of farm laws, he alleged Prime Minister Narendra Modi

worked for the interests of corporates and his government barred farmers from entering Delhi.

"If PM Modi does not permit ryots to enter Delhi, farmers would not allow him to visit Tamil Nadu," he said.

Reportedly, PM Modi would visit the state later this month to inaugurate several projects and he is

also likely to address a poll rally. Pandian said the farmers protest including today's 'chakka jam' is for "fair reasons while the Centre only favoured corporates and not farmers."

In the national capital, the Centre 'disconnected' water and electricity supply to ryots and 'confined' them behind barbed wires, he alleged. — PTI



Judiciary safeguarded people's rights, upheld liberty, praises Modi

Ahmedabad, Feb. 6: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday hailed the country's judiciary, saying that it has performed its duty well in safeguarding people's rights, upholding personal liberty, and also in the situations when national interests need to be prioritised.

He also said that the Supreme Court has conducted the highest number of hearings via video-conferencing in the world during the coronavirus pandemic. Modi was speaking after virtually releasing a commemorative postage stamp on the completion of 60 years of the Gujarat high court. "Every countryman can say that our judiciary has worked with firmness to uphold our Constitution. Our judiciary has strengthened the Constitution by its positive interpretation," Modi said. — PTI

MP jail officials retain comedian Faruqui despite SC's bail order

Indore, Feb. 6: Stand-up comedian Munawar Faruqui failed to walk out of jail on Saturday despite the Supreme Court granting him bail as prison officials cited a warrant issued by a Prayagraj court against him.

Arrested for allegedly hurting religious sentiments, Mr Faruqui has been lodged in Indore jail since January 1.

On Friday, the Supreme

Court granted him interim bail after the Madhya Pradesh High Court had rejected his bail plea on January 28. The apex court also stayed the production warrant issued against Mr Faruqui by a court in Prayagraj in connection with an FIR lodged there.

Mr Faruqui's lawyers on Saturday submitted a copy of the SC order in the local court, which then directed that he be released on a

bond of ₹50,000 and same amount of security.

But he was not released. Asked for the reason, an official of the Indore Central Jail said a court in Prayagraj had ordered Mr Faruqui's production in a similar case on February 18. Citing the jail manual, he said an order from the Prayagraj court or a competent government officer was needed to release him. — PTI

Root scores double ton in his 100th Test



England skipper Joe Root continued to torment the Indian spinners with a majestic double century (218) that placed the visitors in a commanding position in the first Test at the M.A. Chidambaram on Saturday. England ended the day two at an intimidating 555 for eight. Root became the first cricketer to score a double hundred in his 100th Test. — BCCI

■ Report on P8

AP SEC orders confining of PR minister to his house

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 6

In an unprecedented move, the State Election Commission (SEC) has directed the Andhra Pradesh Director-General of Police to confine minister for panchayat raj and rural

development Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy to his house till the completion of gram panchayat elections on February 21.

The order prohibits the minister from having access to the media in order to prevent him from "making inciting utterances"

that could adversely impact the poll process and also the law and order situation in Chittoor district.

The SEC took serious note of the minister's recent warning to collectors and returning officers urging them to disobey instructions from SEC N.

Ramesh Kumar and to blacklist them if they followed his instructions especially with regard to prevention of forced unanimous elections.

The minister had allegedly said that the SEC would be in power till March 31 while the YSRC govern-

ment tenure would continue beyond it, and asked the returning officers to declare all unanimous elections.

The minister was quoted as saying that the SEC was trying to gain an MP or MLC nomination from the Telugu Desam.

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PLANS TO BLOCK ROAD

AIADMK to stop use of party flag by Sasikala

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

The AIADMK meeting of the party's district secretaries, attended by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam and other Ministers, on Saturday reportedly decided to stage a road blockade if the car of V K Sasikala or any vehicle in her convoy had the AIADMK flag on the bonnet when she returns to Chennai from Bengaluru on Monday.

District secretaries were advised to watch out for the flags after the convoy starts from Hosur, where a massive reception has been planned, and let it pass through if there was no AIADMK flag on the vehicles.

If the AIADMK cadre were to stage a road blockade, it could create a law and order problem, inviting police action, which actually could invoke police decisions favourable to the ruling dispensation, and lead to the flags being removed.

That the ruling party leaders were concerned about the plans of Sasikala supporters for a show of strength on Monday was evident when Ministers C . Ve. Shanmugham and D. Jayakumar met the Director General of Police on Saturday and complained about Sasikala having the AIADMK flag on her car bonnet.

On the other hand, former Minister and AMMK joint secretary G Senthamizhan sought police permission for a procession to J . Jayalathiaa's Samadhi, which was later denied. Also heavy police pickets were posted at the Samadhi and also her memorial at Poes Garden.

● The party leadership advised the district secretaries to watch out for the flags after the convoy starts from Hosur, where a massive reception has been planned and let it pass through if there was no AIADMK flag on the vehicles

Going by the various developments, there are enough indications that Sasikala, who had made herself the general secretary of AIADMK and even geared up to become the Chief Minister before being sent to the jail in Bengaluru in 2017, is keen on capturing the party now.

Though she might not like to bulldoze her way into the party immediately as such a move could only boomerang with the party losing the Assembly elections, her aides seem to have a lot of plans and want to implement them with a view to wresting control of the party ultimately.

One of them is Senthamizhan's request for permission to go in a procession of 5,000 persons to the mausoleum of Jayalalithaa, which has been incidentally closed for undertaking repair works in the premises.

Sasikala's nephew and AMMK founder T T V Dhinakaran has already said that she would be escorted to Chennai from the State border in Hosur by the convoy of vehicles. ■ P3

● AIADMK mins approach DGP

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OTHER STORIES

Andhra woman held for entering airport with forged air ticketDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

A 23-year-old woman was arrested by the Chennai Airport police on Saturday after she was found possessing a forged air ticket.

According to the police, the woman identified as Saama (23) a native of Nellore in Andhra Pradesh, forged an air ticket to enter the Chennai airport premises to drop off her husband. The woman's husband, Navas Sheikh (25), was on his way to Sharjah and had to board the Indigo airlines on Saturday morning. Saama accompanied him to the airport to see him off.

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel stopped her and saw her walking out of the airport after accompanying him till the check in area. When questioned, she gave contradictory answers. She initially told the officials that she did not want to travel to Sharjah and was trying to leave the airport. She reportedly told them that she had to cancel her trip but officials checked her ticket and found it to be a fake. On further questioning, she admitted to having forged an air ticket to enter the airport premises. Following this, she was handed over to the Airport police.

Election commission team to visit TN on February 10DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

A high-level team of officials from the Election Commission will visit the state from February 10 to 12 to access the preparedness for the upcoming assembly election. The team, led by Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and Election Commissioners Sushil Chandra and Rajiv Kumar, and comprising senior election officials will hold a series of meetings as part of their assessment process.

After landing in the state capital on the morning of February 10, the team will hold discussions with the representatives of various political parties at 12:15 pm. This will be followed by a meeting with the Chief Electoral Officer and Police nodal officers at 3:30 pm.

The EC team will hold discussions with district election officers and superintendents of police at 4 pm on the same day. The EC team will hold another round of discussions with the DEO's and Sp's at 6:30 pm.

On the next day on February 11, the EC team will interact with various agencies deployed for election duty at 10 am.

This will be followed by a meeting with the chief secretary, home secretary and state police chief at 11 am. After holding a press conference at 1 pm on the same day, the team will head to Pondicherry to assess the poll preparedness in the Union territory. On February 12, the Election commission team will leave for Kerala from Chennai Airport at 9 pm.

Netizens launch campaign against Kattupalli port

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

A day after the union government's reply came on the expansion of Kattupalli port in the ecologically-sensitive Ennore stretch, the netizens have launched an online campaign against the project. On Saturday, over 20,000 tweets on the hashtag #StopAdaniSaveChennai highlighted the concerns of the local people over the project.

The campaigners said the expansion with a capacity of three times more than the total capacity of all ports of Tamil Nadu is not in the interest of the people and called for immediate withdrawal of the project.

They also pointed out that the ₹53,000 crore project would destroy the

Campaigners said the expansion with a capacity of three times more than the total capacity of all ports of Tamil Nadu is not in the interest of the people and called for immediate withdrawal of the project

Pulicat Lake ecosystem that is connected to mangroves, estuaries, backwaters, salt pans and beaches. The online outrage came at a time when the public hearing on the project, which was slated to be held on January 22, was called off by the Thiruvallur district administration as a result of protest by local people.

However, in reply to the questions of the MPs from

Chennai, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar said the proposal submitted by Adani Ports was for expansion of the existing Kattupalli port, but construction of a new port and harbour projects in high-eroding stretches of the coast are prohibited under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification. "Environmental and CRZ clearance for the existing port was accorded by the ministry in 2009. The Pulicat Lake is situated approximately 13 km north of the project, the minister said.

A sub-committee appointed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) last year had stated that the wetland ecology of the Kosasthalaiyar linked the

Ennore creek, Karungali estuary and Pulicat lake together, and that this was "critical to the effective drainage of the massive volumes of flood waters received from inland." The committee underscored the necessity of protecting this unique ecological interconnectedness.

Dr Kalanidhi Veeraswamy, the Chennai North MP, said he sent the letter to the union minister because of the growing concerns among the people on the ground. "The reply we received from MoEF did not rule out the suspension of the project. But it says the ministry was monitoring the proposal. We are also studying the reply from the minister to understand the Centre's stance on the project," he said.

Frivolous litigations won't be tolerated: HC

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

Madras high court warned that frivolous litigations will not be tolerated. HC also said, "Courts are filled with dishonest petitions and untruthful defences in most cases. It is because of the frivolous litigations that are filed that the system has clogged up. It is time that appropriate costs are awarded to reward dishonest and luxury litigants so that they are warned of their course of action in future."

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthil Kumar Ramamoorthy have made the observations while upholding an order of a single judge, dismissing a petition with a cost of Rs 10,000 filed by a Trade Union activist.

Originally, M. Umapathy, working as a clerk in the Indian Overseas Bank, claiming himself to be active in Trade Union activities and stated to have held various posts in the All India Overseas Bank Employees' Union, challenged the show cause notice and charge sheet issued against him for misconduct, besides a circular issued by the IOB, which prohibits representation by the staff directly to the top management seeking their intervention and advising the staff that any representation should be routed through department/branch head. According to him, he had written a letter directly to the Chief Executive Officer/Managing Director (in-charge), IOB, seeking his intervention

HC quashes order restraining from using trademark 'Coronil'

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

The Madras high court has set aside an order of a single judge, which restrained M/s Pathanjali Ayurved Limited from infringing the trademark 'Coronil', used by it, for its tablet, an immunity booster to prevent Covid-19 infection.

Allowing an original side appeal filed by M/s Pathanjali Ayurved Limited, a division bench comprising Justices R. Subbiah and C. Saravanan set aside the order of the single judge, which also imposed a cost of ₹5 lakh on it.

Originally, Arudra Engineers Private Limited filed an application arising out of a suit seeking an injunction against infringement of its registered trademarks bearing

the name "Coronil" by restraining Pathanjali Ayurved Limited and its men from using the objectionable trademarks to their products. The company submitted that it was carrying on business of chemical cleaning and manufacturing of material handling system and polymeric epoxies for various factories in India and abroad. It was carrying on the business for over 20 years. It registered the mark "Coronil-213 SPL" and "Coronil-92B" in the year 1993. It has also renewed the registration of the trademark and it was valid till 2027. While so, during June 2020, it came to know that the defendants have been marketing their product as a cure for the Corona Virus using an identical mark as

that of the plaintiff's registered trademark 'Coronil', it added. A single judge had granted an interim injunction. Aggrieved, Pathanjali filed an application to vacate the interim order. However, the judge made the injunction absolute and imposed a cost of ₹5 lakh. Challenging the same, Pathanjali filed the present appeal.

The bench said in the instant case, registration has been obtained by the plaintiff over the label with the words and alpha numeral Coronil 92B and Coronil 213 SPL as a composite mark and not as a word for "Coronil". Therefore, for the purpose of section 29 (4) of the Trade Marks Act, the plaintiff cannot claim monopoly over the word "Coronil" as it was regis-

CoP inaugurates road safety rally



College students take out bike rally to create road safety awareness at Besant Nagar Beach. Police Commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal inaugurated the event. — DC

SHRC recommendation binding on govt: Court

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

In a significant judgment, which will have a far reaching effect, the Madras high court has held that the recommendation of the State Human Rights Commission made under section 18 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, is binding on the government or authority.

Answering the reference relating to the recommendations of State Human Rights Commission, made by a division bench in the year 2017, the full bench comprising Justices S. Vaidyanathan, V. Parthiban and M. Sundar further said the government is under a legal obligation to forward its comments on the report including the action taken or proposed to be taken to the commission in terms of Sub-Clause (e) of Section 18. Therefore, the recommendation of the HR commission under section 18 is an adjudicatory order which is legally and immediately enforceable. If the concerned government or authority fails to implement the recommendation of the Commission within the time stipulated under section 18 (e) of the Act, the Commission can approach the Constitutional Court under section 18 (b) of the Act for enforcement by seeking issuance of appropriate writ /order/direction. "We having held the recommendation to be binding, axiomatically, Sanctus and sacrosanct public duty is imposed on the concerned government or

authority to implement the recommendation. It is also clarified that if the Commission is the petitioner before the Constitutional Court under section 18 (b) of the Act, it shall not be open to the concerned government or authority to oppose the petition for implementation of its recommendation, unless the concerned government or authority files a petition seeking judicial review of the Commission's recommendation, provided that the concerned government or authority has expressed their intention to seek judicial review to the Commission's recommendation in terms of section 18 (e) of the Act", the bench added.

The Full bench said Commission can order recovery of the compensation from the State and payable to the victims of the violation of human rights under sub-clause (a) (i) of section 18 of the Act and the State in turn could recover the compensation paid, from the Officers of the State who have been found to be responsible for causing human rights violation. "However, we clarify that before effecting recovery from the Officer of the State, the Officer concerned shall be issued with a show cause notice seeking his explanation only on the aspect of quantum of compensation recoverable from him and not on the aspect whether he was responsible for causing human rights violation", the bench added.



State food safety officials seize around 14 tonnes of chemically ripened bananas at Koyambedu market in Chennai on Saturday. — DC

Customs busts new modus operandi of smugglers, seizes gold worth ₹1.14 cr

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

Chennai Air Customs has busted a new modus operandi in which the smugglers conceal the gold on the aircraft on the international run and use a domestic passenger on its domestic leg to retrieve the gold.

According to the official press release from the Department of Customs at the Chennai Airport, "based on intelligence that gold was likely to be smuggled from Dubai by concealing in aircraft, Indigo flight 6E-66 was taken up for special rummaging."

They found five rectangular heavy pieces wrapped with black adhesive tape and tied

with a thread in the hollow pipe portion of one of the seats. On opening the package, 10 gold bars of 10 tolas with foreign markings each weighing 1.16 kg and valued at ₹57.1 lakh were recovered.

This aircraft then operated on its domestic leg to Guwahati as Flight 6E627 and returned to Chennai as Flight 6E623. Mohabath Khan (56) of Kancheepuram who travelled from Guwahati to Chennai on the same seat from which the gold was recovered earlier, was intercepted.

He was subjected to a search and it resulted in the recovery of gold from a cloth pouch tied along his waist concealed under his shirt. On cut opening, 10 gold bars of 10 tolas

each with foreign markings weighing 1.16 kg and valued at Rs. 57.1 lakhs were recovered. On questioning, he informed that he had travelled from Chennai to Guwahati by a SpiceJet flight on the same day and he returned to Chennai by the same Indigo Flight. He further informed that he was supposed to retrieve gold items from two seats from this aircraft, however, he found gold from one seat only.

After he admitted to his involvement in both the cases, he was arrested. In Total 2.32 kg gold worth Rs. 1.14 crore was recovered and seized under the Customs Act. Further investigation is under progress.



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

Next Sunday is Valentine's Day. The day had hit headlines in the past when thugs had gone around attacking young couples spotted romancing in public places like parks, beaches and so on.

The moral policing, done in the name of protecting Indian traditions and culture, may not be there next Sunday, at least in Chennai, one hopes. Not because those lumpens have hopefully reformed but because Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to be in town. Before you connect the dots and jump to your own conclusion on why the hate brigade will not be out on the day Narendra Modi comes, let me make my point clear. That's the day the city will be awash with police pickets and hence the self-styled protectors of Indian culture might not have a free run in common places. Also lovers may not canoodle in their regular rendezvous as the police would be

peeking and sneering.

Whatever it is, Indian tradition and culture would be saved for romantic love will not be in the air this Valentine's Day. But then, as a popular axiom, 'all is fair in love, war and politics,' teaches us, politics is comparable to love. So, we will be substituting one for another and there will be a lot of politics in the air that day. And whatever happens in social media where politics actually unfolds - whether 'Go Back' or 'Welcome' trends on Twitter - the Prime Minister will go about his official engagements diligently, extending the Metro Rail line in North Chennai and also lay the foundation for some irrigation project. He will also be having a date with his party functionaries, who could be now in a quandary due to various reasons, and clarify their doubts.

The local BJP leaders often have doubts over their own functioning and

look forward to leaders from New Delhi to clear them. Like party president J P Nadda cracking a big conundrum during the recent visit. He made it clear that the AIADMK's Chief Ministerial candidate will be their Chief Ministerial candidate too as the party is contesting the elections in the alliance headed by the AIADMK. Even in the opposing political camp in the state, a similar doubt was clarified by Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi, during his earlier visit when the media had a doubt. He clarified that he was indeed campaigning in the State to make DMK president M. K. Stalin as the next Chief Minister.

The same Rahul Gandhi will also be back in the State on the same Valentine's Day that his beta noir Narendra Modi has chosen to visit the State. Of course, one does not envisage the two leaders bumping into each other at the airport lobby for Rahul will be going to the southern districts for a three-day tour starting from February 14. This will be Rahul's third visit this year. Perhaps taking note of the ancient Tamil saying, 'Thai piranthai vazhi pirakum' (the advent of the Tamil month Thai will open new avenues), Rahul Gandhi

visited Madurai for Pongal, the first day of Thai, and witnessed what not many north Indian politicians would have watched or even approved of - Jallikattu.

Then again he came to the western parts of the State when he landed at an 'en plein air' cooking site and posed for a video that went viral.

No one knows what Rahul Gandhi exactly has up his sleeves this time. But one can be sure that he will do something exciting enough to catch the people's attention as he has been doing since January - dining with the common people, talking to youth, posing for selfies with children, shaking hands with women and so on. The bonhomie that he exudes is something remarkable that ordinary people have started talking about, endearingly.

But then Rahul Gandhi is lucky as he does not seem to have a structured itinerary, packed with formal events and meetings unlike the BJP leaders who have been coming to the State in recent times. When Union Home Minister Amit Shah was in Chennai he had a long meeting with his party people and those closely associated with the party that went into the wee hours. Nadda too had to

meet the State Ministers to seemingly finalise alliance matters. Even Modi will not have time to go all out and meet people like Rahul Gandhi does.

Of course, Rahul Gandhi has the advantage of being young and carefree when compared to the BJP leaders who are not just older than him but also have the compulsion to follow too many protocols as men in power. Moreover their elegant sartorial appearances do not endear them to the masses, who feel more comfortable stretching their hands to a lithe man in T-shirts and jeans. Not only is he dressed like the boy next door, he also speaks to them in English which many of them could understand and even speak to some extent.

In fact, Rahul Gandhi's coming visit could throw up more videos on his close encounters with common people for the districts have more Congress supporters and they may all come out to see him.

But the irony is that though so many leaders keep coming from New Delhi, the national parties have no scope for forming a government in the state and have to necessarily ride piggyback on the two major regional parties even for contesting elections.

This Valentine's Day it's politics

OTHER STORY

CM, Dy CM thanked by beneficiaries

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

The two major announcements made by the State government in the Assembly on Friday have evoked a profusion of gratitude from the stakeholders that some of them even called on the Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam on Saturday to thank them.

Palaniswami received praise and thanks from the various leaders of farmers' organizations in the State for writing of agricultural loans to the tune of ₹12,110 crore, benefiting 16.43 lakh farmers and Panneerselvam was showered with gratitude by various organizations for the protection of jallikattu.

The government had announced that all cases filed against those who protested in January 2017 demanding the restoration of the Tamil people's traditional sport, jallikattu. The game that was then banned was restored after protests broke out all over the State but many participants of the agitation were facing court cases.

Jallikattu held at Thanjavur

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, FEB. 6

A jallikattu event was held at Mathakkottai near Thanjavur on Saturday. A total of 562 bulls participated and nearly 350 youth tried to tame them. At least 25 persons were injured and people who tamed the bulls got prizes.

M. Govinda Rao, district collector, inaugurated the jallikattu at 8 am. Rupesh Kumar Meena, DIG of police, Thanjavur range, and Deshmukh Sekar Sanjay, SP, Thanjavur were present. Hundreds of people witnessed the event from rooftops, perched on trees and standing on sideways.

■ 'Sasikala and TTV will try to disrupt law and order on Feb 8'

AIADMK ministers approach DGP

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

AIADMK party leaders including ministers on Saturday filed a second complaint with the Director General of Police in a week's time. The party leaders met the DGP J.K. Tripathy to give a complaint against TTV Dinakaran and VK Sasikala and urged the police to ensure law and order on Monday, when they were scheduled to return to Chennai.

This is the second complaint lodged by the ruling party leaders this week. They met the DGP regarding Sasikala sporting the AIADMK Party flag on her car. On Saturday, party leaders including Minister for Law C Ve Shanmugam, Fisheries Minister Jayakumar, Electricity Minister Thangamani and the party's presidium chairman Madusudhanan visited the DGP.

Meeting the press after giving a complaint, C ve Shanmugam said, "Dhinakaran has said that DGP or even armed forces cannot stop Sasikala from using the flag of AIADMK. Dhinakaran has given such a threatening statement to create a conflict in peaceful Tamil Nadu. They have plotted a plan and that's why TTV Dinakaran has given such a statement. We lodged a complaint against them and

Posters welcoming Sasikala appear on Chennai walls

From P1

The plan is for a massive roadshow that includes the hoisting of the AIADMK flag along the route at flag masts. One case has already been filed in court against the erection of a flag mast on the pavement outside MGRs' house.

The idea is to create an impression that most of the functionaries of the AIADMK, other than the top leaders who are now Ministers, MLAs and district secretaries, were with Sasikala through various means. One of them is the putting up of wall posters, welcoming her.

Even on Saturday, at least two posters appeared on Chennai walls. One of them has an image of Sasikala taking the vow at Jayalalithaa's resting place by beating on it thrice with her palms and the legend reading 'will complete the vow.' It says 'two leaves

urged the DGP to ensure law and order maintained in the state'.

The law minister further pointed out that the EC has given a final judgment that the two leaves symbol



ours and tomorrow is ours,' which means the party would legally stake claim for the 'two leaves' symbol of MGR. 'Tomorrow is ours' is the title of an MGR blockbuster, a remake of the Hindi 'Yaadon Ki Baaraat'.

Another poster hails Sasikala as 'Rajmata' and says that her word was the law. That these posters keep coming up despite the AIADMK leadership cracking down on such supporters openly displaying their loyalty through posters has become a matter of concern for the party that the meeting was called for Saturday.

belongs to the AIADMK Party. However, Sasikala, who just completed her four-year jail term in the disproportionate assets case, is using the flag, disobeying the ruling.

Though the Sasikala camp is aware of the limited scope for triumph in taking on the present leadership now as they are in power in the State, they might wait for the elections to be over to take the legal recourse to get the party symbol, flag and such things back, sources say.

However, in between they would like to be a thorn in the flesh of the government by organizing the road shows like a vehicular parade to Chennai from Hosur, a procession to Jayalalitha Samadhi and try to use the AIADMK flag wherever possible.

Sasikala and TTV have plotted to disrupt the law and order and have decided to put the blame on AIADMK. So we have requested DGP to take action into the matter.

Small parties piqued over both alliances

G.BABU JAYAKUMAR & D.SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

Small parties, aligned to the two Dravidian majors, are said to be piqued over the small number of seats that are being offered in the preliminary level talks that have already begun between second rung leaders of the organisations concerned.

Since both the AIADMK and DMK, heading their own coalitions, are thinking on similar lines, perhaps in view of the fact that they have engaged professional election strategists, they are keen on contesting a high number of seats.

It is said the DMK wants to fight in at least 180 constituencies, after scaling down from the initial 200 they had set their eyes on, and the AIADMK in 164. So they could earmark only a limited number of seats for the allies, 70 by the

AIADMK and 54 by the DMK.

Though these numbers are not final, the talks have begun unofficially based on such calculations. So the allies are feeling short-changed. Some of the national parties like the CPI and CPM have reportedly told the alliance leaders that they would get back to them after consulting their party heads at the national level.

Other local parties are also peeved as they find the offer to be too small in both the alliances. PMK leader Dr S Ramadoss is too distressed over the failure of three rounds of talks on the alliance as his demand for an assurance on providing 20 per cent reservation for Vanniyaars has been totally rejected by the AIADMK.

Even the PMK asking for at least an assurance for 7.5 per cent internal quota within the 20 per cent reservation for MBC candidates

in education and jobs has not been acceded to, driving the talks to a cul de sac. Besides that the offer of just 25 seats, too, has put the PMK in a piquant situation.

The DMKD, too, finds itself in a similar situation as far as the number of seats go. It has been reportedly offered nothing more than 15, it is said. Other parties like those headed by film actors Kaurnas and Sharath Kumar too have been told not to expect more than two seats each.

National parties like the BJP and Congress too are reportedly not happy with the seat allocation. However, they all hope that the situation might change in their favour after the elections are called for.

Meanwhile, actor Kamal Haasan is said to be waiting for the disgruntled parties to join hands with him and form a third front.



Minister for Municipal Administration and Rural Development S P Velumani inaugurates new community hall at ward 31 in Saravanampatti, Coimbatore on Saturday. —DC



Wild jumbo christened as Shanker (DC File Photo)

Foresters in Nilgiris fight grim battle over man-elephant conflict

B.RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, FEB. 6

The man-elephant conflict has started escalating in the Nilgiris. While residents in Pandalur here staged a stir to urge the forest department to capture a killer wild jumbo, foresters at Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) are still sweating it out to relocate the physically-challenged wild jumbo 'Rivaldo' otherwise known as 'idli' jumbo.

It may be recalled that a wild jumbo named 'Shanker', aged about 50 years, killed a father and son in Pandalur limits in early December last, and escaped to the nearby Kerala jungles.

Subsequently, forest guards had shot tranquilizer darts at the animal, but it vanished into the jungles along with a herd to Kerala. Now, this jumbo was spotted again within Pandalur limits for the past two days.

Hence, panic-stricken residents organized a demonstration in Pandalur on Saturday afternoon, urging foresters to act fast to capture and relocate the animal.

Forest sources said they had spotted the animal on Saturday, and operations to capture him would begin from Sunday.

Meanwhile, foresters in the MTR buffer zone are taking efforts to guide the physically-challenged tusker 'Rivaldo' to the elephant camp at Theppakadu in MTR core zone, but in a setback, the elephant suddenly returned to Vazhithottam area, though the forest teams had managed to drive the animal close to the elephant camp over the past three days.

Now, foresters are evolving new plans to relocate this jumbo. Sources said that they may set up a kraal in Vazhithottam limits to house this jumbo and tame it and shift it later to the MTR elephant camp.

Farmers stage novel protest

DC CORRESPONDENT
PERAMBALUR, FEB. 6

Members of the Perambalur district unit of the Tamilaga Vivasayegal Sangam staged a novel demonstration by clapping their hands to celebrate the 97th birth anniversary of late farmer leader and founder of the sangam, Narayanaswami Naidu. This was to draw the central and state governments' attention to the farmers' just and reasonable demands.

R. Raja Chidambaram, state secretary of the sangam, who presided over the demonstration, demanded the Union Government to withdraw the three farm laws immediately.

They appealed to the Tamil Nadu government to insist upon the union government to write off the farm dues of the farmers, not to privatise the electricity boards, to ensure free power supply to farmers, and to arrange full compensation for the crop loss due to abnormal rains and other calamities.

Among others including Swamimalai Vimalnathan, president of Kaveri Padukappu Vivasayegal Sangam, and others spoke.

TN govt must urge Centre to drop farm laws: Thanjai ryots

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR FEB. 6

Farmers staged a road roko agitation near Irwin Bridge here on Saturday demanding repeal of the three legislations brought by the central government on agricultural reforms and condemning the alleged repressive measures let loose on farmers who have been agitating peacefully at Delhi borders for the past two months.

Protest against farm laws in Tiruchy

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, FEB. 6

Police took into custody members of the Desiya Then Indiya Nathigal Inaippu Vivasayegal Sangam, including its state president P. Ayyakannu, Tiruchy district president Megarajan and state spokesper-

Sami Nadarajan and N.V. Kannan, office-bearers of the Akhila Indiya Vivasayegal Poratta Orunginaippu Kuzhu, led the agitation. Nadarajan said Chief Minister Edappadi K.Palaniswami is playing a dual role by supporting the legislations of the central government on the one hand and waiving the co-operative crop loans on the other.

"Farmers cannot be cheated. Tamil Nadu government should urge the Centre to repeal the three legislations", he said.

Farmers are not responsible for the violence on Republic Day in Delhi.

RSS and BJP members intruded into the rally and indulged in violence, Nadarajan alleged. Cases have been filed against 122 farmers.

"In Tamil Nadu also cases are registered against farmers. All these cases should be withdrawn", he said.

son Premkumar.

They organised road roko carrying farm equipments at the Karur bypass road signal in Tiruchy city on Saturday, urging the union government to withdraw its farm laws immediately. Police said all of them were released in the evening.

Ready to face any number of cases: Stalin

ARULOLI M | DC
TIRUNELVELI, FEB. 6

DMK president M.K. Stalin challenged Information and publicity minister, Kadambur C Raju, to file a case against him, adding that it has become a routine for the chief minister and his cabinet colleagues to threaten him so.

Stalin in his election campaign meeting 'Ungal Thoguthiyil Stalin' in Thoothukudi district, charged Raju with demanding commissions from theatre owners. Reacting to this charge, Raju accused Stalin of making baseless allegations against him to personally malign his reputation, and hence, would file a defamation suit against him.

Responding to Raju's allegations at the Veervanallur meeting in Tirunelveli district on Saturday, Stalin said, "Let him file any number cases against me, I am ready to face it." It has become routine for the Chief minister and his cabinet colleagues to threaten him so, he added.

Earlier in his election campaign meeting at Nagercoil in Kanyakumari district, Stalin said that Edappadi K. Palaniswami continued to remain in the chief minister's post as he (Stalin) did not attempt to destabilise the state government, though several AIADMK MLAs were ready to come with him against the Palaniswami administration.

A wholesome family entertainer This trip gives a mediocre experience

Movie review

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANAIAN

Set in Karaikudi, Ashok (Jiiva) and Anand (Arulnithi) are thick friends who work in a finance company run by Appachi Chettiyar (Radha Ravi). They are Kabaddi players too - while Anand is aggressive and an offensive player, Ashok is a cool guy and a defensive player. That sums up their character arc. And they hang around in a group along with their subordinates (Robo Shankar and Bala Saravanan).

The families of the duo want them to get hitched and are looking out for suitable brides. Anand's mom (Renuka) is keen to get him married to his 'murai ponnai' Kavya (Manjima Mohan), although he is least interested. However, on the day of their betrothal, a funny prank played by Ashok becomes spoilsport and the

KALATHIL SANDHIPOM

CAST: Jiiva, Arulnithi, Manjima Mohan, Priya Bhavani Shankar

Direction: Rajasekar

RATING: 3.25/5

event goes for kaput. Ashok's efforts to unite Anand and Kavya turn futile. The entry of Sofia (Priya Bhavani Shankar) further complicates things. A mild twist opens up.

Both Jiiva and Arulnithi are in top form and deliver their best. Their crackling chemistry is fun to watch. Jiiva's comical one-liners and counters work superbly. Interestingly, Jiiva allows Arulnithi to score in action scenes and the latter is also convincing. Robo Shankar and Bala Saravanan also manage to tickle the funny bones. Manjima who has more screen space is convincing. Priya who has limited scope to perform is adequate.



Host of supporting actors like Radha Ravi, Vela Ramamoorthy, Ilavarasu, Renuka, Marimuthu etc. act as effective foils.

Though Rajasekar has travelled in a tried and tested for-

mula filled with clichés, the overall presentation is really convincing. The director should be lauded for steering clear of double entendre and easy-sleazy humour.

Technically, Yuvan Shankar

Raja's BGM compliments the proceedings, but songs are just okay. Cinematography by Abinandhan Ramanujam is good. Overall, a fun-filled family entertainer worth your money!

Movie review

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANAIAN

Touted to be the first in Tamil cinema on the theme of Cannibalism, Trip by Dennis Manjunath is a mediocre version of Hollywood films in the same genre.

A group of friends including Lidi (Sunaina), Vikram (Praveen) goes on a jolly trip to a forest near Kodakanal. They chance upon two men Azhagan (Yogi Babu) and Amudhan (Karunakaran) and mistake them as psycho killers.

Actually, they are a painter and a carpenter who have come to repair an old house in the forest. Lidi once again comes across the duo and faints at once. They take her away to their place to help her. However, one of the



TRIP

CAST: Yogi Babu, Karunakaran, Sunaina

Direction: Dennis Manjunath

RATING: 2/5

friends Rizwan gets killed the same night and the ghastly murders continue. The friends are completely oblivious to the dangers that lie within the woods. That the forest is host to a

group of cannibals is lost on them.

The mundane comedy of Yogi Babu and Karunakaran works to some extent. However, it would have been effective had the director infused dark comedy. Barring Sunaina, the bunch of actors is functional. Because of the inconsistency in the screenplay and the tonal shift, the real thrill is missing. There's a back sci-fi story as to why and how the forest became a refuge to cannibals.

IN BRIEF

CENTRE HAS TIME
TILL OCTOBER,
SAYS TIKAIT

From Page 1

Farmers in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan blocked highways with tractor-trolleys and squatted on key roads. Raising slogans against the Centre, farmers parked their tractor-trolleys or squatted in the middle of roads with posters, flags and banners in Punjab and Haryana, blocking several highways, including the Chandigarh-Zirakpur, Amritsar-Pathankot, Tarn Taran-Kapurthala, Ferozepur-Fazilka, Muktsar-Kotkapura, Bathinda-Chandigarh, Ludhiana-Jalandhar, Panchkula-Pinjore and Ambala Chandigarh highway, leading to traffic snarls.

Women also took part in the stir in a sizable number at several places. Folk songs blared from speakers and people perched atop truck-tractors hoisted the tricolour on the KMP Expressway. In Rajasthan, farmers at many places including Ganganagar, Hanumangarh, Dholpur and Jhalawar stalled traffic on highways and main roads and held demonstrations, police said.

Farmers in Uttar Pradesh handed over a memorandum to respective district authorities, demanding the withdrawal of the laws. Several farmer groups and the Congress held a protest in Mumbai.

"Rasta roko" protests were held in Karad and Kolhapur, Maharashtra. At least 40 protesters, including senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan's wife Satvasheela Chavan, were detained for holding a protest on a busy road at Kolhapur Naka in Karad on Saturday afternoon, a police official said.

Meanwhile, Mr Tikait claimed inputs had been received regarding some miscreants trying to disrupt peace during the "chakka jam". "This (protest) is for the whole country. They will try to divide us saying it's a movement of one state. But it is not. It's a pan-India movement," he added.

4 GIRLS
SENTENCED
FOR RAGGINGRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOVAL, FEB 6

A local court here sentenced 4 girls for ragging a junior in their college and driving her to commit suicide 8 years ago.

The District and Sessions court here on Friday evening delivered the judgement in the case relating to death of Anita Sharma (18), second year student of a pharmacy college here by suicide in 2013, convicting her 4 seniors of ragging her and abetting her to take the extreme step, according additional district prosecution officer Rajendra Upadhyaya. The court, however, acquitted the faculty member of the college Manish R in the case.

Those convicted in the case are Nidhi Magre, Dipti Solanki, Divyanshi Sharma and Kriti Gaur. The deceased hanged her in the bedroom of her residence here in 2013.

In the suicide note recovered in her room, she had blamed her 4 seniors and a faculty member of the college for driving her to commit suicide.

According to the suicide note, she was subjected to ragging by them ever since she took admission in the college. She was forced to write their mid-semester copies.

INDIA DEVELOPING
7 MORE COVID
VACCINES

Kolkata, Feb 6: Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Saturday said that the country is developing seven more Covid-19 vaccines and also working on further vaccine development to inoculate every citizen of India.

He said the Centre does not have any immediate plan to make the vaccines available in the open market and a decision will be taken as the situation demands. The inoculation process for people aged above 50 will start in March, he told reporters. "We are not dependent only on the two vaccines as the country is working on seven more indigenous vaccines." "Simultaneously, we are also working on the development of more vaccines because India is a huge country and we need more players and research to reach out to everyone," he said.

Nadda: People have decided
to bid adieu to dynastic rule

Nadda flags off BJP's rath yatra in Bengal; takes on Mamata, nephew

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
WOLKATHA, FEB. 6

Flagging off the Bharatiya Janata Party's first ever Rath Yatra calling for 'Parivartan' (change) in poll bound West Bengal a day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, BJP president J.P. Nadda on Saturday predicted that the people of the state have already decided to "bid adieu" to the dynastic rule of chief minister and Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee and her MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee to welcome the saffron party in the ensuing Assembly Election.

Mr Nadda led the first of the five Rath Yatras from Chotir Math Ground at Nabadwip in Nadia after he participated in a massive BJP roadshow from Foara More to Rabindranath Tagore statue and also had lunch with the farmers in Malda.

Nadda ate the humble khichdi seated on the floor with farmers as he reached out to peasants on Saturday.

On a day when farmer unions have called a 'chakka jam' against three contentious agricultural laws, Nadda reaffirmed the BJP and the Narendra Modi government's commitment to the welfare of the farming community.

Nadda was addressing a rally of farmers during the last phase of the month-long 'Krishak Suraksha Abhiyan' and 'Ek Mutthi Chawal' campaign which he had flagged off in order to mobilise the farming community in the state in favour of the BJP.

Mr Nadda told the farmers at Krishak Suraksha Saha-Bhoj at Sahapur of Malda, "I have an appeal to you all. Now the polls



BJP national president J.P. Nadda addresses a rally in Malda on Saturday.

- PTI

will be held. Say 'Ta Ta' and 'Namaste' to Mamataji. Wherever I go on a visit nowadays, I find big cut-outs of only two Pishi (aunt) and Bhaipo (nephew). Both are seen standing with folded hands. Mamataji, people of Bengal have decided to bid adieu to you and Bhaipo. You need to understand this."

Attacking the ruling TMC, he then sarcastically asked the crowd, "Tell me who is rice thief, who is the tarpaulin thief and who extorts money? You will bloom lotus here to usher development led by the Prime Minister in Bengal."

Mr Nadda, silent on the nationwide farmers' protests against the three farm laws, also alleged, "Mamataji meted out a very big injustice to the farmers. PM through his Kishan Samman Nidhi scheme allotted ₹6,000 per year to each farmer for welfare. But Mamataji, only to satisfy her arrogance and ego, did not

allow the implementation of the central scheme, leaving more than 70 lakh farmers deprived here. However when 25 lakhs among the affected farmers sent their applications for the scheme on their own, only then she talked of implementing it."

He argued, "Mamataji, the election has come. So what is the point in trying to take advantage of what has already been lost! The way farmers and labourers have been deprived, Bengal, under her rule, has slipped to 24th position among the states in the list of 29."

Mocking Ms Banerjee for her allergy to 'Jai Shree Ram' slogan, the BJP chief wondered, "When I talk, 'Jai Shree Ram' slogan is raised in front of me. Same happened on my way here from the helipad. As I waved my hands at the crowd, I was greeted with 'Jai Shree Ram.' But why does Mamataji feel so angry about it? Why does she have so much hatred for 'Jai Shree Ram' slogan? What is the problem? Is it wrong to be associated with the Indian culture? Is it wrong to remember the legend? If someone chants the slogan, her face turns red in so much anger. This reflects politics of these people is above the culture. They will not protect culture rather bring it down to serve their political interests."

It may be recalled that Banerjee had declined to speak at the event to celebrate Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary where "Jai Shri Ram" slogans were raised in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

SOUMEN MITRA
NAMED NEW
KOLKATA POLICE
COMMISSIONERDC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, FEB. 6

The Mamata Banerjee government on Saturday transferred Anuj Sharma from the post of the Kolkata Police Commissioner and replaced him with Soumen Mitra, a Bengali face having previous experience in handling polls with iron hands, in a list of major reshuffle of 24 senior IPS officers, for their completion of a term of three years at the same post or unit, ahead of the Assembly Election.

Incidentally, this is also the second stint for Mr Mitra, who was posted as the additional director general (ADG) for training in the state police in his last assignment, as the Kolkata Police Commissioner. He earlier served the post on the orders of the Election Commission after it removed Rajeev Kumar as the city police chief before the Assembly Election in 2016 following allegations by the BJP of partiality.

While Mr Mitra earned a distinction for ensuring one of the most peaceful elections in the city with a strict police deployment, the Trinamul Congress supremo, after returning to power for the second consecutive time, however transferred him from the Kolkata Police Commissioner's post as ADG (Training) and replaced him with Mr Kumar, also her favourite cop.

N'land govt staff
to face action for
'seditious' postsMANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, FEB. 6

Nagaland Governor R N Ravi has directed the state chief secretary to initiate criminal proceedings against the state government employees indulging in seditious and subversive writings challenging the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country and posting them on social media.

Referring to one such instance of Dr H Inato Jimomi Naga, serving under the department of animal husbandry and veterinary department, Government of Nagaland, the commissioner and secretary to the Governor Mr T Mahabemo Yanthan said, "Such act of government servant constitutes serious offences under the penal laws and also gross misconduct under the service conduct rules inviting criminal prosecution and disciplinary action including dismissal from service."

Pointing out that Mr Jimomi's social media post justifying the demand of sovereign Nagaland was still in circulation on media platforms, security sources said that there have been numerous instances in

which state government employees are found to have been voicing separatist sentiment on various platforms.

Asserting that it was not only harming the national interest, security sources said that such activities of a section of government employees was hampering the development activities of the state as well.

Directing all the heads of the departments to sensitize the state government employees in the regard, the commissioner and secretary to governor in his letter to the state chief secretary said, "I have been directed to request the state government to take serious cognizance of such misconducts and initiate appropriate legal and disciplinary action against the delinquent government servants."

The letter of the governor has also been marked to union home secretary Mr Ajay Kumar Bhalla for necessary action and to check such seditious and subversive acts of state government employees.

State government sources told this newspaper that departmental proceedings have been initiated against the particular officer.

BE CAREFUL WHEN COMMENTING ON
RYOTS' STIR, PAWAR TELLS TENDULKAR

Pune, Feb. 6: NCP president Sharad Pawar on Saturday said cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar should be more careful while speaking on farmers' issues.

When asked about celebrities reacting to the ongoing agitation by farmers against the three new farm laws at the borders of Delhi, the NCP

chief said that people had responded strongly.

"I would suggest to Sachin (Tendulkar) that he should be careful while speaking on the issues related to other fields," Pawar said.

He alleged the Union government was defaming the agitation by calling them "Khalistanis" or terrorists.

- PTI

2 PROFESSORS
CLASH IN MP
UNIVERSITYDC CORRESPONDENT
BHOVAL, FEB 6

Two professors of Vikram University in Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh on Friday evening indulged in a violent clash, leaving other faculty members and students shell-shocked.

The incident went viral on Saturday forcing state higher education minister Mohan Yadav to order a probe into it.

Head of the Department of MBA stream in the university D D Bedia had heated arguments with his colleague in the department, professor Kamran Sultan in the office room of university registrar U N Shukla over the latter's plea to allow him to pursue LL.M in the university.

The argument flared up leading to exchange of blows between them.



Workers sanitize a classroom ahead of reopening of schools for 6 to 8 standard students in Prayagraj on Saturday. Schools were closed due to Covid-19 pandemic.

- PTI

NEW | SPEAKER

Prithviraj Chavan, Sangram Thopte are contenders for the post

Patole's resignation: Sena, NCP upset with Cong

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, FEB. 6

After the resignation of Nana Patole as Maharashtra Assembly speaker, the Congress party is contemplating on two names, Prithviraj Chavan and Sangram Thopte, for the post. Former chief minister Prithviraj Chavan is the top contender for the assembly speaker's post, in case the Congress keeps the post with them.

However, the possibility of former CM's appointment to the post has made the NCP nervous. Mr Chavan has a long history with the Sharad Pawar-led party, which accuses him of making every effort to undermine the NCP when he was the CM.

Therefore, Mr Pawar on Thursday had said that there would be afresh negotiations among all the

constituents of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress to decide a new nominee for the vacant post of Maharashtra Assembly speaker.

"Mr Pawar's statement is a pressure tactic to prevent Mr Chavan from taking over the Speaker's post. But if there are fresh talks, that also gives opportunity to the Congress to negotiate for deputy chief minister's post," a senior state Congress leader said.

"Once Mr. Patole took charge of state Congress chief's office from Balasaheb Thorat on February 11, he would have a meeting with the Sena and NCP to hold a discussion whether the Speaker's post would be exchanged for DCM post or not. If that is accepted, the Congress will give up its claim on the Speaker's

post," he added.

The Shiv Sena on Saturday appeared to disavow ally Congress' decision to replace state Congress chief Balasaheb Thorat with Nana Patole and the latter's resignation as Maharashtra Assembly Speaker.

An editorial in the Sena mouthpiece *Saamana* also said there was substance in NCP chief Sharad Pawar's reported view that the three coalition

partners will take decision on the Speaker's post through negotiations now.

The *Saamana* editorial said the Congress had been given the post of Speaker for five years, and not for forcing an election for the post midway through which should have been avoided. "NCP chief Sharad Pawar said the three parties will sit together and decide what is to be done about the Speaker's post. One thing is certain, there is substance in Pawar's view," the Sena said.

Though organisational changes was an internal matter of the Congress, extra caution is required to ensure the decision does not impact the government, it said. "Two years ago, the situation was such that no leader was ready to take the mantle of the state Congress chief. Thorat took up the

responsibility and the party got more seats than expected in Assembly polls," the Sena said.

Apart from Mr Chavan, Sangram Thopte is also a contender for the Speaker's post. Earlier, Mr Thopte, who is representing Bhor Assembly Constituency, was promised to be accommodated in the MVA cabinet, but the party did not give him a berth in the cabinet. "In a case, Prithviraj Chavan does not take this post, Mr. Thopte would be a preferable choice for the speaker's post," the Congress leader said.

Mr Thopte is a senior Congress leader and has been elected four times to Maharashtra Assembly. The budget session of Maharashtra legislature is slated to begin from March 1 before which the new Speaker will be elected.

Rane rules out
BJP's alliance
with Shiv SenaBHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, FEB. 6

Senior BJP leader Narayan Rane has said that there will be no truce with the Shiv Sena in future by his party. The BJP will come to power on its own in Maharashtra, he said.

With the differences among the coalition partners of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government being in open over several issues, there are speculations that the former estranged allies - BJP and Shiv Sena - might bury their hatchet and join hands again to rule the state. The possibility has been fueled by the meetings of some of the Send-BJP leaders of late.

However, Mr Rane, the former Sena man and now BJP Rajya Sabha MP, scoffed off the possibility. "Some BJP leaders earlier might have talked about coming together with the Shiv Sena. But those are things of the past. Nobody in the BJP now wants to go with the Sena. Henceforth there will be no patch up with them," he said.

With the all-important B r i h a n m u m b a i Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections due next year, Mr Rane vowed that the next mayor will be from the BJP. "Mumbai needs the BJP for its development. We will provide infrastructure of international standard to the city," he said.

SHORT TAKES

TWO SUMATRAN TIGERS ESCAPE INDONESIAN ZOO

Pontianak, Indonesia, Feb. 6: A critically endangered Sumatran tiger was shot dead on Saturday while another is still on the loose after they escaped from a zoo on Borneo island, leaving a zookeeper dead, an official said.

The tigers, both female and about 18 months old, escaped from Sinka Zoo in the town of Singkawang, West Kalimantan late Friday after days of torrential rain caused a landslide and opened a tunnel allowing their exit. A 47-year-old zookeeper was found dead with scratches and bite wounds on his body. Authorities also found dead a cassowary, ostrich and monkey near the tiger cage. Police and conservation officials were immediately dispatched to search for the tigers. Nearby tourism attractions were ordered to close and locals were told to stay at home while police searched for the animals.

CHINA PROBE SENDS FIRST IMAGE OF MARS

Beijing, Feb. 6: China's Tianwen-1 probe has sent back its first image of Mars, the national space agency said, as the mission prepares to touch down on the Red Planet later this year. The spacecraft, launched in July around the same time as a rival US mission, is expected to enter Mars orbit around February 10.

The black-and-white photo released late Friday by the China National Space Administration showed geological features including the Schiaparelli crater and the Valles Marineris, a vast stretch of canyons on the Martian surface.

The photo was taken about 2.2 million kilometres from Mars, according to CNSA, which said the spacecraft was now 1.1 million kilometres from the planet.

The robotic craft ignited one of its engines to "make an orbital correction".

THREE CLIMBERS MISSING ON K2 MOUNTAIN

Islamabad, Feb. 6: Three climbers have gone missing attempting to summit the world's second-highest mountain, K2, their expedition manager and the Alpine Club of Pakistan said Saturday.

Climbers John Snorri from Iceland, Juan Pablo Mohr from Chile and Muhammad Ali Sadpara from Pakistan reportedly lost contact with base camp on Friday.

"It's already been more than 30 hours, we (at base camp) have received no news of John Snorri, Ali Sadpara, and Juan Pablo Mohr, since none of the GPS trackers seem to be working", Chhang Dawa Sherpa, expedition manager, said.

An army helicopter has conducted a search flight for the missing climbers, Sherpa said in a separate statement.

"Unfortunately, they cannot trace anything and the condition up in the mountain and even at the base camp is getting poor", he said. News of the missing men came a day after a Bulgarian mountaineer was confirmed to have died on K2.

WORLD'S TINIEST REPTILE FOUND IN MADAGASCAR

Paris, Feb. 6: Scientists have identified Earth's smallest known reptile, warning at the same time that sustained destruction of forests in northern Madagascar threatens its survival. Tiny enough to perch comfortably on a fingertip, the ultra-compact chameleon — dubbed *Brookesia nana* — has the same proportions and world-weary expression as its larger cousins around the world.

"We discovered it in the mountains of northern of Madagascar," Frank Glaw, curator of herpetology at the Bavarian State Collection of Zoology, said in an interview.

A joint expedition in 2012 of German and Malagasy scientists did not know whether the two specimens collected — one female and one male — were adults until much later, he explained.

"We found out that the female had eggs in her body, and that the male had large genitals, so it was clear that they were adults."

Exceptionally large genitals, it turned out, accounting for nearly 20 percent of its body size, Glaw and colleagues reported in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

Rana attorney: No hint India let go Headley extradition

Washington, Feb. 6: There is no indication that India has given up on the extradition of David Coleman Headley, the Mumbai terror attack accused, attorney of his co-accused Tahawwur Hussain Rana has told a US court. Rana, 59, a childhood friend of Headley, is facing extradition request by India for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack in which 166 people, including six Americans, were killed.

Rana, who has been declared a fugitive by India, is opposing his extradition. In a submission early this week before the US District Court Judge in Los Angeles Jacqueline Chelomian, opposing his extradition, the attorney of Rana claimed that as of now there is no indication in the record that India has agreed to forgo Headley's extradition to India. "India presumably could have agreed to forgo Headley's extradition in return for his assistance to the US, but there is no indication in the record that it did so," the court submission said.

"In fact, the opinion of the Indian prosecutor serving as the government's expert states: 'The present opinion is specific to the extradition request in respect of fugitive Tahawwur Hussain Rana. This opinion may not be construed in any manner to indicate that the various extradition requests pending with different sovereign nations in respect of the above-mentioned case which includes the case in respect of Accused No. 1, David Coleman Headley, is either being given up or not being pursued vigorously," said the motion filed by his attorneys.

Pakistani-American Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist Headley was in-

● **PAKISTANI-AMERICAN Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist Headley was involved in plotting the 2008 Mumbai terror attack.**

volved in plotting the 2008 Mumbai terror attack. He was made an approver in the case, and is currently serving a 35-year prison term in the US for his role in the attack.

Rana's attorneys said that the Court should not lightly assume (as the government appears to suggest) that the government circumvented its treaty obligation to India through "a sham interpretation" of Article 6 of the India-US Extradition Treaty as part of its deal with Headley.

The government's conclusion in Headley's plea agreement that Article 6 defines offences in terms of conduct rather than elements and thus bars Headley's extradition must be taken as its good-faith interpretation of the Treaty's terms, it said. Rana, in the court filing, described his childhood friend Headley as a liar. Headley lied to federal agents, judges, and presumably prosecutors in relation to these cases.

After his first heroin sentence (reduced because of his cooperation), he went back to dealing heroin despite promising that he would not. "He disregarded the agents' instructions regarding his dealings with targets and travelled to Pakistan without permission.

After his second heroin conviction, he used his status as a DEA cooperator to deflect government scrutiny of his activities with Lashkar and his statements supporting jihad," his lawyers alleged. —PTI

Turkish Prez pulls up varsity

Istanbul, Feb. 6: Turkey's president has ordered the establishment of two new departments in the country's most prestigious university, which has been rocked by weeks of demonstrations protesting his appointment of a new rector with government links.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decision, published in the Official Gazette Saturday, says law and communications faculties are to be launched in Bogazici University. Critics say the establishment of new departments would allow the presidentially appointed rector to staff them with government loyalists. For over a month, students and faculty have led mostly peaceful protests against the new rector, Melih Bulu, who has links to Erdogan's ruling party.

They are calling for Bulu's resignation and for the university to be allowed to elect its own president. In an open letter to Erdogan, protesting Bogazici students called the decision to open new departments intimidation and "petty tricks."

"Your attempts to pack our university with your own political militants is the symptom of the political crisis you have fallen into," the letter said.

Police have detained

hundreds of demonstrators at the university and in solidarity protests elsewhere, some taken away following raids of their homes. Most were later released.

Top government officials have said terrorist groups are provoking the protests, and Erdogan has called the protesting students terrorists.

Istanbul governor's office press statements have listed detention numbers with alleged links to outlawed leftist and Kurdish militant groups.

Officials from the United States, the United Nations and the European Union have criticized Turkey's handling of the protests as well as a series of homophobic comments that were made by Erdogan and other officials while denouncing the demonstrations. With the same order, the president opened new faculties in several universities, closed down some others and appointed 11 rectors elsewhere.

The students in their letter said they knew its publication would likely result in criminal complaints, including for insulting the president, but they vowed to continue speaking out and protesting. —AP

PRIME | PROPERTY

Haji Lal Muhammad said he would demand Rs 25 crore from the provincial government

Dilip Kumar's Pak house owner won't sell at govt rate

Peshawar, Feb. 6: The owner of legendary actor Dilip Kumar's ancestral house in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has refused to sell it at a rate fixed by the government, saying he would demand Rs 25 crore for the prime location property which is severely undervalued by the authorities.

The provincial government last month fixed the price of the four marla (101 square metre) house, declared as a national heritage, in Peshawar at Rs 80.56 lakh. Marla, a tradi-

tional unit of area used in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, is considered as equal to 272.25 square feet or 25.2929 square metres.

However, the owner, Haji Lal Muhammad, said he would demand Rs 25 crore from the provincial government for the property as and when approached by the Peshawar administration.

Muhammad said he had purchased the property in 2005 for Rs 51 lakh after completing all formalities required for transfer of the land and possesses all the

documents of the house. He said it is unjust on part of the government to fix the rate at Rs 80.56 lakh for the property after 16 years.

The property is very expensive in Mohallah Khudadad qissa Khwani bazar where the rate of one Marla land is above Rs 5 crore, he said, adding that he would demand Rs 25 crore through his lawyer from the authorities for the house.

"How can a four marla property be sold in the said area for Rs 80 lakh?" he asked.

Earlier, the owner of the ancestral house of Bollywood actor Raj Kapoor demanded Rs 200 crore for the six marla (151.75 square metre) property in Peshawar. The government had fixed the rate of the property at Rs 1.50 crore.

Raj Kapoor's ancestral home, known as Kapoor Haveli, is situated in the fabled Qissa Khwani Bazar. It was built between 1918 and 1922 by the legendary actor's grandfather Dewan Basheswarnath Kapoor. —PTI

UN: Reverse Myanmar coup

‘Essential’ to carry out UNSC’s calls for return to democracy: Guterres

United Nations, Feb. 6: Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pledged Friday that the United Nations will do everything it can to unite the international community and create conditions for the military coup in Myanmar to be reversed.

The UN chief told a news conference it is "absolutely essential" to carry out the Security Council's calls for a return to democracy, respect for the results of the November parliamentary elections, and release of all people detained by the military, "which means the reversal of the coup that took place." "It is absolutely essential that that moves forward, and for that, I believe, we need to have all possible areas of pressure to make it happen," Guterres said.

Myanmar's military announced Monday on the eve of the meeting of new Parliament that it will take power for one year, accusing leader Aung San Suu Kyi's government of not investigating allegations of voter fraud in the November elections, where its party did poorly. It detained Suu Kyi, whose party swept that vote, and other lawmakers, activists, journalists and members of civil society.

The election commission had refuted the military's allegations. In its first statement following the military's takeover on Thursday, the Security Council "stressed the need to uphold democratic institutions and processes, refrain from violence, and fully respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law."

It also "emphasised the need for the continued support of the democratic transition in Myanmar." Guterres said Christine Schraner Burgener, the UN special envoy for Myanmar, had a first contact Friday with the military since the coup and expressed the UN's strong opposition to the takeover.

According to UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric, she reiterated to Deputy Commander-in-Chief Vice Gen. Soe Win "the secretary-general's strong condemnation of the military's action that disrupted



A protester gives bouquets of flowers to a line of riot police during a demonstration against the military coup in Yangon on Saturday. — AFP

the democratic reforms that were taking place in the country."

Schraner Burgener also reiterated her call for the immediate release of all detainees and emphasised the need for progress on the safe and voluntary repatriation of the Rohingya refugees, Dujarric said, calling it "an important conversation." More than 700,000 Rohingya have fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh since August 2017, when the military launched a clearance operation in response to attacks by a rebel group. The security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and the burning of thousands of homes.

A year ago, the UN's top court, the International Court of Justice, ordered Myanmar to do all it can to prevent genocide against the Rohingya, a Muslim minority. Guterres said Schraner Burgener is also in contact with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Brunei, which chairs the 10-nation regional group, including Myanmar, with connectivity fal-

Myanmar junta blocks net access

Yangon, Feb. 6: Myanmar's new military authorities appeared to have cut most access to the Internet on Saturday as they faced a rising tide of protest over their coup that toppled Aung San Suu Kyi's elected civilian government. Numerous internet users noted a slow disappearance of services, especially from mobile service providers, that accelerated sharply late Saturday morning. Broadband connection also later failed, while there were mixed reports on whether land-line telephone service was still working.

Netblocks, a London-based service that tracks internet disruptions and shutdowns, said Saturday afternoon that "a near-total internet shutdown is now in effect" in Myanmar, with connectivity fal-

ling to just 16% of normal levels. The broad outage followed Friday's government order to block Twitter and Instagram that said some people were trying to use the platforms to spread what it deemed fake news. Facebook had already been blocked earlier in the week — though not completely effectively.

The communication blockages are a stark reminder of the progress Myanmar is in danger of losing after Monday's coup plunged the nation back under direct military rule after a nearly decade-long move toward greater openness and democracy. During Myanmar's previous five decades of military rule, the country was internationally isolated and communication with the outside world strictly controlled. —AP

POLITICIANS DEFY COUP, SAY ARE TRUE GOVT

Yangon, Feb. 6: Hundreds of members of Myanmar's deposed ruling party declared themselves Friday to be the sole legitimate representatives of the people and asked for international recognition as the country's government, as protests against the military takeover swelled.

Nearly 300 politicians from ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party announced they had named a committee to carry out the functions of Parliament, according to a National League for Democracy party Facebook page.

In a letter to the United Nations and the international community posted on social media, the party also asked for targeted sanctions and for businesses to cut ties with the military, which has vast lucrative holdings. —AP

Blinken presses China on Uighurs, HK Biden revokes terrorist designation for Houthis

Washington, Feb. 6: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken pressed Beijing on its treatment of Uighurs, Tibetans and Hong Kong while China defended its policies in the first conversation between top officials of the two powers since President Joe Biden took office.

"I made clear the US will defend our national interests, stand up for our democratic values, and hold Beijing accountable for its abuses of the international system," Blinken said on Twitter of his call with senior Chinese official Yang Jiechi.

Blinken told Yang that the United States "will continue to stand up for human rights and democratic values, including in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong," a State Department statement said of the call, which took place on Friday Washington time.

Blinken also "pressed China to join the international community in condemning the military coup in Burma," it said, using the former name of Myanmar.

The top US diplomat said the United States would hold Beijing "accountable

for its efforts to threaten stability in the Indo-Pacific, including across the Taiwan Strait, and its undermining of the rules-based international system." The tough tone comes after Blinken in his

Congress were notified of the administration's plans. The official, who wasn't authorised to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, said the removal changed nothing about the Biden administration's views of the Houthis, who have targeted civilians and kidnapped Americans.

"Our action is due entirely to the humanitarian consequences of this last-minute designation from the prior administration, which the United Nations and humanitarian organisations have since made clear would accelerate the world's worst humanitarian crisis," the official said. The move comes a day after Biden announced an end to offensive support to Saudi Arabia's campaign against the Houthi. The Obama administration in 2015 gave its approval to Saudi Arabia leading a cross-border air campaign targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels, who were seizing ever more territory, including Sanaa.

The Houthis have launched multiple drone and missile strikes deep into Saudi Arabia. The US says the Saudi-led campaign has entrenched Iran's role in the conflict, on the side of the Houthis. —AP

confirmation hearing said he would continue former president Donald Trump's approach to China in a rare point of agreement between the two administrations. Yang however warned on the call that Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet were "China's internal affairs" and "no external forces are allowed to interfere," urging the US to "correct mistakes" made in recent years. —AFP

BIDEN'S SON PENS MEMOIR OF SURVIVAL

New York, Feb. 6: US President Joe Biden's son Hunter will come out with his memoir of addiction, loss and survival on April 6.

"Beautiful Things" will be published by Gallery Books, an imprint of Simon & Schuster. "I come from a family forged by tragedies and bound by a remarkable, unbreakable love," Hunter, a lawyer, writes. The book details his descent into substance abuse and his tortuous path to sobriety. Holly Harris, publishing director (non-fiction) at Simon & Schuster UK, acquired UK and Commonwealth rights from Caspian Dennis at Abner Stein on behalf of Laura Nolan and David Granger at Aevitas Creative.

"This book is an extraordinary accomplishment — as gripping as it is courageous. I cannot wait to publish it," says Harris. —PTI

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU - PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT				
Building Organisation - Form of Contract : Lumpsum				
Tender Notice No.41 / VLR - CLE / 2020 - 2021 / Dated:05.02.2021				
For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu Sealed Tenders are invited by the Superintending Engineer, PWD, Buildings (Construction and Maintenance) Circle, Vellore - 1 for the following works from Private Contractors registered in Public works Department of Govt. of Tamil Nadu upto 3.00 PM as per office clock on 02.03.2021. The tenders will be opened on 02.03.2021 at 3.30 PM by the Superintending Engineer in presence of the Tenderers or their authorised agents				
Sl No	Name of Work	Approximate value of work (including GST)(Rs in lakhs)	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit (in Rupees)	Period of Completion (including monsoon period)
1.	Construction of Own building for Regional Joint Director of Training Offices at Villupuram in Villupuram District	99.51	60,000/-	5 Months
2	Construction of Building for the Field Monitoring and Farmers Information Centre at Thirukottur in Kallakurichi District.	98.20	59,500/-	7 Months
The E.M.D. tenders and other details can also be available from the Govt. designated website (http://www.tenders.in.gov.in) and Office of the Superintending Eng near PWD, Building (C&M) Circle, Vellore - 632 031. The tender schedule can be downloaded at free of cost from the above website. upto 01.03.2021 - 5.45 PM.				
Superintending Engineer, PWD., Buildings (C&M) Circle, Vellore-1.				
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DECCAN Chronicle

7 FEBRUARY 2021



Shashi Warriar

Off the beaten track

The WhatsApp riddle: What's the big secret?

When I first saw the notice saying that the terms of WhatsApp's privacy agreement were going to change, I panicked. In my mind, at least, there was some reason for that panic. I sometimes share my writings with friends and publishers on WhatsApp, and I was afraid that Mark Zuckerberg would simply claim copyright on whatever I shared thus. Then came TV interviews with technology experts and lawyers saying that WhatsApp was going to swallow up everything you put on it, and let Zuckerberg do with it whatever he likes, which they said was against Indian law. And then Elon Musk came up with something about Signal, an app that allows you to do much the same things that WhatsApp does without gobbling up your data.

This was towards the middle of January, a couple of weeks late, because I see these things only when people point them out to me. I was stewing in my panic, unable to decide whether to change from WhatsApp to some other app, and people were giving me conflicting bits of advice: stay with WhatsApp, switch to Signal, switch to Telegram, get off social media, wait a little and go with the herd, and so on.

So when my professor friend came visiting, I was genuinely glad to see him. "What do you make of this WhatsApp trouble?" I asked him when he was seated comfortably with a cup of tea in his hand and a plate of snacks on the table in front of him.

"Nothing," he replied, taking a large bite from a hot samosa. The insides of the samosa were much hotter than the outside, and it took him a few seconds to regain control of his scalded mouth.

"Nothing?" I asked.

"Nothing," he repeated.

"I don't understand," I said. "What about all those invasions of privacy and so on?"

"The invasions started when you began to enjoy what you thought were the free benefits of the Internet," he replied.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Take email, for instance," he said. "You've been using it for decades without paying a paisa for it. But did you ever read the details of your agreement with the service provider?"

"No," I said. "Everyone I knew agreed, and so did I. I never knew there was anything untoward about the agreement."

"Ah!" he said. "How do you think all the companies that provide the service pay all their employees, and for the software and the servers and everything?"

"Advertising," I said, hopefully.

"Of course," he replied. "Business is like politics, like most human activity. Everyone tries to take his work one step past the competition. No one wants to be remembered as the person who let something stagnate and die. Right?"

"Right," I said, a bit tentatively. I hadn't really thought about it but he being a professor must have.

"So they're always looking for opportunities to expand their reach," he said, "and, with social media the way they are, the simplest way they can expand is by getting to know you better. And do you know why they're spending so much on machine learning and artificial intelligence?"

"No," I said. "I was hoping you'd tell me."

"Well," he said, "they've always had trouble finding people to analyse the data they've grabbed. You know, when people go out for a meal, they post photos of what they eat before they eat it. If I post a photo of my samosa on Facebook before I eat it, do you know how much they get to know? From my GPS they know that this is your home, and in a corner of the photo they see a Brand X sofa or a Brand Y TV, so they know about your tastes. But then, can you imagine anything more boring than going through millions and million of photos of samosas or cakes? So, artificial intelligence and machine learning."

"But I thought machine learning and artificial intelligence were meant to relieve people of the drudgery of things like housework and taking care of old people and so on," I said.

"That's what they say," he replied. "The truth is that they've developed all these algorithms to recognise, say, the brand of a sofa in a corner of a photo of a black forest pastry. And they've been following you using the GPS chip in your phone. So now they can figure out what you'll eat next and where, and, besides, your taste in furniture and appliances. Business."

"Right," I said.

"And then there are selfies," he continued, a samosa later. "Social media sites use them to figure out where you're going for your next holiday, and what you'll do there, whether you're stupid enough to try to get yourself in a selfie with a crocodile or at the edge of a thousand-foot cliff."

"Then someone realised that the programs that could analyze all this could also do other things. So there were spinoffs. Those same programs, with small modifications, can also recognise dirt on a floor, or chart a path in a room that'll get a robot to sweep the floor with the minimum of effort, in the least possible time. That's dead easy. So is something like facial recognition, or thumbprint identification."

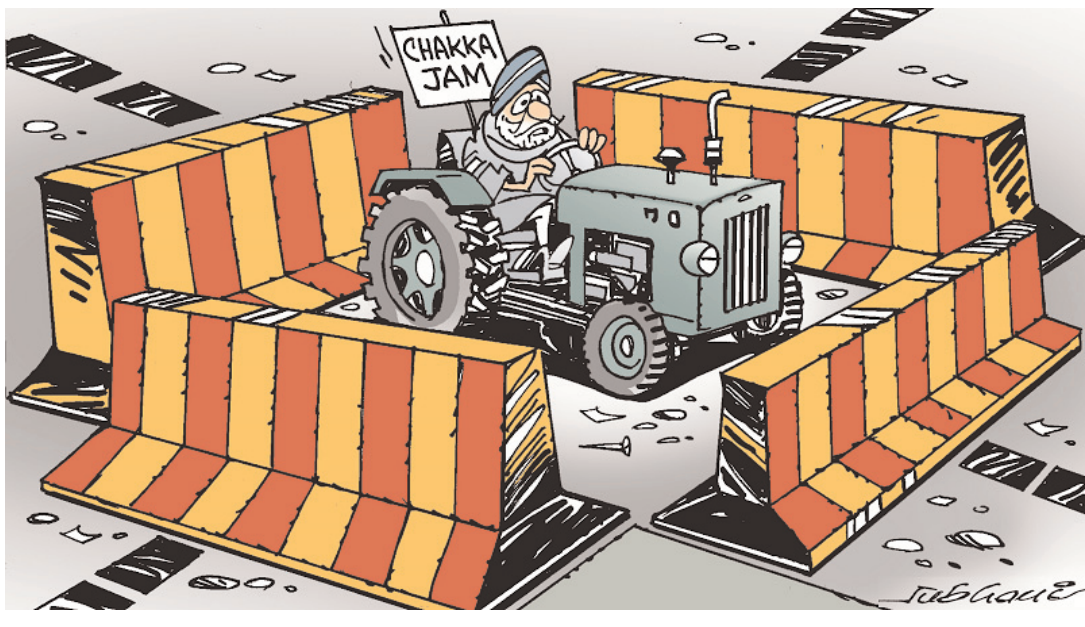
"So, you see, all the good things that they claim, all that wonderful security stuff about recognising faces and thumbprints and explosives and everything, it's all secondary. It's a sort of side effect of having to make programs to analyse the largest and most boring collections of photos and videos and GPS locations that people have taken in the entire history of the mankind."

"So what's all the protest about?" I asked.

"Umm," he said, picking up the last samosa. "That's just misdirection. You know, almost all of us lead such dreary, boring lives. The protesters, they're afraid people will figure out that their biggest secret is that they have no worthwhile secrets!"

Shashi Warriar has written fairy tales, thrillers, a semi-fictional biography, satires, and a love story. Besides writing, he teaches strategic communication at a business school.

Subhani



Maligning the messenger pays diminishing returns



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

In the days leading to the infamous declaration of the Emergency in 1975, PM Indira Gandhi, flush from her victory over Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, was showing signs of becoming increasingly autocratic. She was impatient about dissent, convinced of her own invincibility, and adamant about pursuing what she thought was good for the country irrespective of what the Opposition was saying. It was then that the theory of the "foreign hand" gained currency. She resorted to the not-unfamiliar stratagem of conflating all internal dissent as the manifestation of a conspiracy against her regime from abroad; "CIA agents", began to proliferate, and Opposition leaders, and those who had the temerity to oppose her, were seen as puppets playing to a conspiracy orchestrated by international powers.

A similar stratagem seems to be at play today. Undoubtedly, the sovereignty of our country is paramount, and we must ceaselessly be vigilant against outside powers that seek to destabilise it. But do Rihaana and Greta Thunberg qualify to pose such a threat? Greta is a Swedish environmentalist activist not yet out of her teens; Rihaana is a celebrity singer-actor, who has sales of 250 million records worldwide, and is considered one of the most successful music artistes of all time. Both of them have been involved in social activism. Greta's environmental evangelism has won her global recognition. Rihaana is known for her involvement in humanitarian causes, and has been vocal against police brutality in America against the blacks.

Since the "foreign hand" of Indira Gandhi's days, the world has changed. Social media, and the global footprint of media and especially television, has interconnected people in a way never seen before. News in any part of the world becomes instantaneously news everywhere. Our government appears to be making the cardinal mistake of using the paranoia of the "foreign hand" in today's world when so much has irrevocably changed. Social media celebrities, with hundreds of millions of followers on Twitter and Instagram, post comments on anything and everything as a matter of routine. Social media platforms are full of posts against the arrest of Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny by Vladimir Putin's dictatorial regime; against the attack on Capitol Hill by Donald Trump's hooligans; against China's undemocratic clampdown on dissidents; and against Saudi Arabia's intolerant Wahabi state — to name but a few subjects.

We are proud of India's democratic credentials, but if a farmers' protest on the borders of the capital of our country continues for over two months, with some 150

In a democracy there will be protests. Such protests, if they are allowed to linger on for so long, will attract global attention. Filing FIRs against those who comment is a highly immature and insecure way of responding.

First, the protesting farmers were called by over-zealous supporters of the government as Khalistanis, Maoists, Urban Naxals and Pakistanis. Then the Opposition parties supporting the farmers were called anti-national.

farmers dying in the bitter cold, it is bound to attract media attention worldwide. The government may be right in believing in agrarian reforms, but there is little doubt that the manner in which the bills were passed was undemocratic, and was unprecedented by the mandatory process of consultations with stakeholders. Equally, the manner in which the protests were handled leaves much to be desired. A certain arrogance informed the government's approach from the very beginning. What prevented the agricultural minister, if not the PM himself, in going to the protest site, and talking to the farm leaders over a glass of lassi? The offer to keep the laws in abeyance for some time could have been made much earlier, with the government assuring the farmers that there would be full discussions with them before the laws are implemented.

Reforms are desirable, but in a democracy, opposition to them — some of it very valid — must be taken on board. Besides, a large number of the protestors are from the sensitive border state of Punjab, which has seen radicalisation in the past, with the fullest support of Pakistan. It serves nobody's purpose to see Punjab radicalised again. Such factors should have weighed in with the government. After the condemnable violence on January 26, the protest movement was demoralised, and farmers were leaving for home on their own volition. But Yogi Adityanath's police gratuitously rekindled the

protest again. The visual footage of a government using nails and ditches to barricade itself from its own people made for dramatic watching, and it is futile to believe that its audience was restricted only to India.

Now, the government has made a laughing stock of the nation by filing an FIR against unnamed "foreign" conspirators, citing Greta's tool-kit tweet as evidence. Earlier, the government thought it fit to respond to Rihaana's tweet. The correct response would have been to ignore such tweets. If, however, the government felt that such "global influencers" should be replied to, the appropriate way would have been for a letter from a bureaucrat to be delivered to these commentators through the agency of our embassies explaining the government's point of view and saying that India as a democratic nation is well equipped to resolve such disputes. As the PM never tires of saying, we are a nation of "sawa karod" — 1.25 billion people. We are the world's largest democracy, an emerging global super power. In a democracy there will be protests. Such protests, if they are allowed to linger on for so long, will attract global attention. Filing FIRs against those who comment is a highly immature and insecure way of responding.

The game of tarnishing the messenger has diminishing returns. First, the protesting farmers were called by some over-zealous supporters of the government as Khalistanis, Maoists, Urban Naxals and Pakistanis. Then the Opposition parties supporting the farmers were called anti-national. Now, foreign commentators are being accused of being part of an international conspiracy against India. All of this, when the real priority is to sensibly resolve the impasse with the farmers.

The writer, an author and a diplomat, is in politics

LETTERS

FARM LOAN WAIVER

Chief Minister Edappadi K.

Palaniswami has to be congratulated for having announced the waiver of agricultural loans worth of ₹12,100 crore availed from cooperative banks by 16.43 lakh farmers who had been distressed due to calamities such as the pandemic, cyclones and unseasonal rains. As farmers are the fulcrum of society and people of other vocations too are dependent on farmers, the chief minister has taken this wise decision and his timely waiver would help farmers continue cultivation without hassles.

R. Balasubramanian, Sakkingudi

THE TAMIL Nadu government decision has come at a time when the state is going for general election slated for this summer. Really this has been done with an eye on elections. Farm reforms are overdue. Simply waiving the loans do not mitigate the sufferings of the farmers. Modernisation of agricultural utilities like fertilisers and seeds is also needed as also rotational farming and use of modern equipment.

Sravana Ramachandran, Chennai

RAJIV KILLERS

APROPOS YOUR editorial *Don't pardon Rajiv killers* (Feb. 6). It is true that no mercy should be shown to the killers of Rajiv Gandhi who was assassinated in the most heinous way by the LTTE headed by a sadist and murderous head Velupillai Prabhakaran. He rightly met his end due to his arrogance and bossy nature and did not spare even a rival leader of any other Eelam party. As rightly pointed out in the editorial Rajiv Gandhi could have made a mistake in sending the IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force) to Sri Lanka which involved in war excesses. But this does not and cannot be a reason for killing a country's Prime Minister.

M.C. Vijay Shankar, Chennai

A QUIXOTIC RULE

IT DEFIES defies common sense and comprehension of people all over the country on the peculiar condition imposed by the Madhya Pradesh government for submission of a conduct certificate for issuance of a Driving Licence. I can't imagine how the issuance of a driving licence is connected or relevant to one's good conduct. The driving licence has been so far issued in all countries including India on the basis of the applicant's driving ability only with complete understanding of traffic rules and subject to the condition of certain age restrictions. If driving licence is to be issued only on the basis of an applicant's good conduct then a major percentage of the new applicants and existing driving licence holders will lose their licence. There are so many laws to deal with delinquent drivers and reckless driving and it will be wise on the part of the MP government to dispense with such quixotic conditions for granting driving licences to escape the widespread mockery of people.

S. Nagarajan Iyer, Coimbatore

Mail your letters to editor@deccanmail.com

Anita Katyal

Political Gup-Shup



Farm stir: Snap ties, says JJP to chief; Yogi gags his ministers

Haryana deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala of the Jannayak Janata Party is under immense pressure from his colleagues to walk out of the BJP-led ruling coalition in solidarity with the protesting farmers. The JJP's Karnal district president Inderjit Singh Goraya recently resigned from the party to support the farmers demand for the repeal of the three contentious farm laws. In addition, two JJP legislators have spoken in favour of the agitating farmers and have warned Mr Chautala that the party will pay a heavy price if he does not come out openly against the farm laws. Though JJP cadres are undoubtedly agitated about their party's wishy-washy stand on the farmers' agitation, Dushyant Chautala's unwillingness to share power with his colleagues has also contributed to the rumblings in the JJP. Mr Chautala is heading as many as 10 ministries, which include high-profile portfolios like excise and taxation, industry and commerce and food and civil supplies. There is only one more JJP minister in the Haryana Cabinet,

Anoop Dhanak who holds the inconsequential archeology and museums portfolio. Given the power he wields, it is not surprising that Mr Chautala is in no hurry to snap ties with the BJP.

Faced with a revolt by farmers in western Uttar Pradesh, the Yogi Adityanath government has ordered a virtual gag order on its ministers and MLAs. It has been informally conveyed to them that no one other than those authorised by the government should make any public statements or give interviews to the media regarding the farmers' protests. Any MLA or minister violating this "code of conduct" immediately receives a phone call seeking an explanation for his or her transgression. These instructions were issued after several legislators from western Uttar Pradesh failed to come out strongly against the ongoing farmers' agitation, especially BKU leader Rakesh Tikait, and have instead sounded apologetic and conciliatory when questioned by the media about their views on the stir. In fact, an MLA from this region even sidestepped ques-

tions on Mr Tikait's aggressive stand, saying the agitating farmers were like members of his extended family.

Though Congress members have become accustomed to Rahul Gandhi's habit of disappearing for long breaks abroad, there was panic in the party recently when word went round that the Nehru-Gandhi scion had left for Germany. After all, this was in the midst of the Budget Session of Parliament and at the peak of the farmers' protests. Party MPs and other leaders made frantic calls to ascertain the veracity of these reports. Many called up Rahul Gandhi's close aides and one leader even tapped into his contacts at the airport to find out if he had boarded an international flight. There was all-round relief when Rahul Gandhi's office confirmed that he was very much in town and that he would be attending Parliament. It is, however, difficult to understand the panic over the Congress leader's disappearance during a Parliament session given the fact that his contributions in the Lok Sabha have been minimal. On the plus side,

Rahul Gandhi has addressed the media several times in recent weeks both in Delhi and outside.

The security arrangements inside the Parliament House building have been beefed up to such an extent that it is being compared to barricading at the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders. In an unprecedented and unusual move, Delhi police personnel have been deployed inside the building along with the Parliament's watch and ward staff. The presence of the police personnel, who have been stationed all along the corridors, is inescapable. As it is, the number of media persons allowed inside has been restricted and even those who have been issued passes are finding it difficult to move around freely. Reporters, who could earlier linger outside the offices of ministers in the hope of getting a tiny bit of news, are now shooed away if they dawdle in the corridors for longer than five minutes. The police personnel randomly stop reporters and demand to see their passes when it is

known that only passholders can enter the building. Several media-persons have lodged a protest but apologetic security officers maintain they have instructions "from the top" to keep a vigil on them.

It is close to a year since he brought down the Kamal Nath government in Madhya Pradesh but former Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, now with the BJP, is out to take revenge against his former colleagues for humiliating him. When ministers were given duties in different constituencies for the Republic Day celebrations, Mr Scindia made sure that his loyalist Govind Rajput was sent to Chhindwara, Kamal Nath's fiefdom. According to the buzz in Bhopal, this was meant to be a message for the veteran Congress leader and his son, who represents the constituency now, that they are on Mr Scindia's radar and that his next target is to uproot them from their stronghold.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

NON-FICTION

1 **GHALIB: A WILDERNESS AT MY DOORSTEP: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY**
Mehr Afshan Farooqi
Allen Lane, ₹799

2 **THE BATTLE OF BELONGING**
Shashi Tharoor
Aleph, ₹799

3 **A PROMISED LAND**
Barack Obama
Penguin Viking, ₹1,999

4 **BY MANY A HAPPY ACCIDENT: RECOLLECTIONS OF A LIFE**
M. Hamid Ansari
Rupa, ₹795

5 **THE PRESIDENTIAL YEARS 2012-2017**
Pranab Mukherjee
Rupa, ₹695

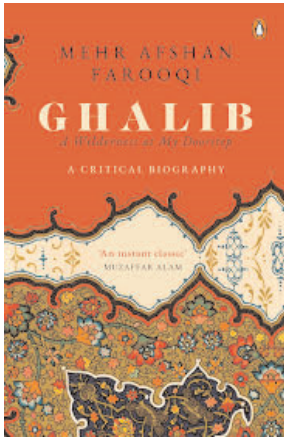
6 **THE TALE OF THE HORSE: A HISTORY OF INDIA ON HORSEBACK**
Yashaswini Chandra
Pan Macmillan, ₹699

7 **REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins
₹599

8 **THE LANGUAGE OF HISTORY: SANSKRIT NARRATIVES OF MUSLIM POETS**
Audrey Truschke
Penguin Allen Lane, ₹699

9 **JUGALBANDI: THE BJP BEFORE MODI**
Vinay Sitapati
Penguin Viking, ₹799

10 **VAJPAYEE: THE YEARS THAT CHANGED INDIA**
Shakti Sinha
Penguin Vintage, ₹599



FICTION

1 **SHUGGIE BAIN**
Douglas Stuart
Picador, ₹499

2 **THE DISCOMFORT OF EVENING**
Marieke Lucas Rijneveld
Faber & Faber, ₹499

3 **THE LAST QUEEN**
Chitra Banerjee
Divakaruni
HarperCollins, ₹599

4 **A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham
Hodder & Stoughton
₹699

5 **WRITERS & LOVERS**
Lily King
Picador, ₹699

6 **HOMELAND ELEGIES**
Ayad Akhtar,
Tinder Press, ₹1,050

7 **THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY**
Matt Haig
Canongate UK, ₹699

8 **HAMNET**
Maggie O' Farrell
Tinder Press, ₹599

9 **WHAT THE BODY REMEMBERS**
Shauna Singh Baldwin
Tara- India Research
Press, ₹599

10 **DAYLIGHT**
David Baldacci
Pan Macmillan
₹650



Bahrison, New Delhi

‘India’s diversity fact of life that can’t be wished away’

Career diplomat **HAMID ANSARI**, who rose to become Vice-President of India, in which capacity he served from 2007 to 2017, in a conversation with **ASHHAR KHAN** over his just-released book *By Many A Happy Accident*, and the many controversies surrounding it



What was the idea or inspiration behind writing your autobiography?
Well, it was nothing, actually. I was not too keen but my children and my friends said that I should write as I had a diverse life. So, one fine day, I started writing and kept on writing. I had sent it to the publisher in last March but due to Covid-19 it will be formally launched only now. The book is a recollection from memory.

You have had run-ins with the Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi? Could you explain?
There was no run-in. Everybody has got it wrong. I had met Mr Modi for the first time when he was the Gujarat chief minister in 2007 and he came to congratulate me on my election. I asked him a question about the post-Godhra issue. I recorded his reply. As PM he came to my room unannounced. Though meetings between the PM and the VP are not abnormal, they are rarely unannounced. He spoke about bills getting stuck and I replied that Mr Jaitley had been a witness to that during UPA times. I did not agree to pass the bills in the din. Even the UPA was

not happy with that. Then Mr Modi asked about Rajya Sabha TV. I said I have no role in it and there is a committee that takes care of it. On my retirement, he said something in the morning and I replied to him, and in the evening he spoke differently. Now, why he changed his tone I do not know, but neither did I try and find out. I have normal relations with him. He has his own views and I have my own; that's all.

You have been a diplomat in important places like Australia, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan. Would it be correct to say that the prestige of India has increased post 2014?
No. That is actually not correct. I have been around in the 1980s and the 1990s, mostly as an ambassador of India. The image of India was always high in political terms. India was an important country as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement and it also played an important role in the councils of the world. Post economic reforms in 1992, India's economic capacities were being looked at afresh. When I was Ambassador in Saudi Arabia around 1996, I noticed that India was being looked upon

as a market where investments can be made. One day, two senior officers of the oil company, Aramco, came to me for seeking visas. They wanted to establish a product experimental centre in India. The other centre was in Houston. Finally, they set up the centre in Vadodra. This hugely changed the perception of political relations. Since 2000, perceptions have changed and India is viewed as a political, economical and military force.

Do you feel that, diplomatically, we have handled China well, considering all the action at the LAC?
A structure was put in place in 1993-94 and during the UPA government's tenure, which had a two-pronged

approach. One that we have to keep talking to find a solution to the boundary problem, as there existed different perceptions. This made sure that there was no active conflict or blow-up. That worked very well. We exchanged visits. A great deal of trade was taking place. The full story of Doklam or Galwan will not be known. Probably, someone will write it someday. But there was a skirmish and, in Galwan, it went out of hand. In spite of that the perception on both sides is to keep talking. Talking will yield results. I don't think both are interested in starting a war. But, yes, something did go wrong in Galwan. Both states realise that we are big neighbours, and that cannot be wished away.

In the last couple of years, do you think that there is a concerted effort to attack minorities under the garb of legal sanction, like love jihad, anti-conversion law, etc.?
It's all there. It is true, but my thing is that you cannot travel on that path in this country. That is my firm belief. The diversity of this country is a fact of life that you just cannot undo. Identity is a very important factor in any society. And it's multiple identities in this case. Yes, all that you asked in your question is true as a political agenda that is being spread in a crass manner. It may trouble people for the time being, but it just cannot go on.

One of the predominant themes in your book is equality before law, justice. Do you think this is happening in present-day India?

Yes, I see everything. The simple thing is, one should read the copy of the preamble. One should read it. It says equality, justice and fraternity. I have hinted in my book that we should take lessons from the experiences of other diverse societies in our own times. Accommodation and fraternity is very important for the well-being of the country, and the foundation of this country is based on this.

Do you think governments that have brute majorities use Parliament as a post office?

That is very unfortunate thing because the system of government of a parliamentary democracy rests on four pillars, and the Parliament or legislature is one of them. The Parliament has to do its work. Thirty years ago, the House would meet for 100 days, and now it is barely 60 days. This means, the Parliament is not doing enough work. The question is why this should be allowed. It is within the rights of members to say that they want more sittings. But they just want to sign on the attendance register and leave. State legislatures are even worse. The Standing Committee is a very good system as all parties are represented. The money bill technique of passing laws is also an aberration, which has

Privilege-bound but absorbing portrait of rural Sri Lanka

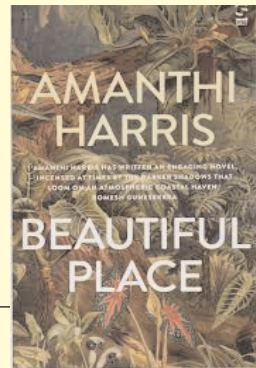


Devapriya Roy

review

Nilwatte Beach, somewhere off the coast of southern Sri Lanka, is a beautiful place. The sea, “with its yearning rising green-blue swell and the deep-blue simmering stillness of horizon” crashes upon a languorous beach that is dotted with shacks selling beer and fish, peopled with a few foreign (mostly white) tourists or posh Sri Lankans — the sort who favour scrappy holidays over five-star comfort that they can certainly afford — lounging on beach chairs, gazing at the sunset. Around them hover a smattering of local villagers, selling “marijuana, magic mushrooms, lottery tickets, trips to turtle conservation beaches”. The economy — and as a consequence, the culture — of the village has been permanently disrupted by the rise of tourism, and the villagers cannot decide if their longing for the outsiders' money outstrips their loathing of the same people, who bring their peculiar morals, tastes, and the stench of their unimaginable wealth to the area.

Barely a few minutes from the beach and close enough to the village stands Hibiscus Villa, the site of most of the action. The beating heart of **A m a n t h i** Harris's debut novel *Beautiful Place*, Hibiscus Villa is reminiscent of the regal mansions in coconut estates of yore. With its white pillars, clay-tiled roofs and profusion of trees, it is now an upper crust guest house run by Padma, the beguiling protagonist.



BEAUTIFUL PLACE
By **AMANTHI HARRIS**
Salt, £12.99

A daughter of that very village, Padma had been brought to the villa by her greedy father, Sunny, a hustler with criminal tendencies, when she was still a child, as an offering to Gerhardt, the brilliant Austrian architect who had designed it. Sunny had no compunctions about what the foreigner might demand of the child as long as he made a quick buck off it, but horrified at the future that awaited a child with such a parent, Gerhardt adopted Padma, and subsequently brought her up in the villa as a single parent. Content with regular pay outs, Sunny and his family did not bother them further. However, now that Padma has returned to Nilwatte again, to run this business — she hated her time at university in Colombo and failed the exams — Sunny, now the henchman of a powerful politician, tries his best to reclaim her.

A deeply absorbing novel of the old school, *Beautiful Place* is strongest when it portrays the worlds that the author is familiar with: the people who come to the guest house (handsome Rohan, who has emerged from the wreckage of a messy divorce; sassy Ria, looking to reclaim a childhood home she was nostalgic about; runaway lovers Anjali and Dan; and later, in pursuit, Anjali's conservative parents), the architect and single parent Gerhardt, the dancer-turned-yoga guru-turned-controversial-writer Jarryd — both expats who have made Sri Lanka their home — and Ruth, Gerhardt's old flame and doyenne of Colombo high society. They are all competently crafted characters, interesting, alive, their lives and worlds rich with detail. As Padma's story intersects with that of her guests, the point of view shifts from one character to the other, introducing a delicious sense of variety as we see people from different perspectives.

Where the novel enters a somewhat sinister space is when it steps out of the villa, as it naturally must. Around the idyll of Villa Hibiscus — helping the guests heal and come to terms with their own burdens — is the shadowy space of the village, now firmly overshadowed by a vicious strain of politics. Like in other parts of the world, the tide of chauvinistic identity politics is on the rise in Sri Lanka too, and as Jarryd falls into the sinister crosshairs of right-wing Sinhalese extremists, the lives of Padma and Gerhardt are set to change forever too.

However, the author's depiction of the slippery world of the village, where nothing as it at seems and no one speaks the truth, standing in the darkening twilight of the sea, leaves us with a sense of complex unease. Part of it must be deliberate on the author's part, given that her main characters all — except for the cook, Soma — occupy a liberal upper-class ecosystem that is invariably a rift or three apart from the world of the village, and would be exhausted by the seeing servility and hostility of the people. But as Sunny's web darkens, he assumes almost comic book villain proportions. While we understand the author's deeper critique of rural Sri Lanka, we also feel our inability to truly access the inner life of the village as we do the Villa, as a failure of sorts, not of imagination but of the proclivities that tie us so deeply to the world of the Villa.

Devapriya Roy is the author of five books, most recently Friends from College



FAST FACT: The later Sherlock Holmes stories by Arthur Conan Doyle (the last one published in 1927) remain under copyright in the US. When Netflix's *Enola Holmes* based on the YA series written by Nancy Springer was released last year, the estate

argued that the film had infringed copyright by depicting a warmer and more emotional version of Holmes. The case was eventually dismissed.

‘Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam is the story of our lives’



Yasser Usman

excerpt

1 January 1961, the shooting of *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam* began with an auspicious *muhurat* ceremony. The first shot was being canned. Writer Bimal Mitra was invited again from Calcutta to grace the momentous occasion. Guru Dutt had shaved his trademark moustache to play Bhootnath. He appeared super excited. Then there was Waheeda Rehman who was playing the character of the Bengali girl, Jaba. Waheeda was wearing a traditional Bengali sari. But there was another big surprise in store for everyone during the lunch. The crew at the Guru Dutt studios saw Guru Dutt, Geeta Dutt and Waheeda Rehman eating together.

A curious Bimal Mitra asked Geeta, ‘Hello! Good to see you. Never seen you in the studio before?’

‘The film was being launched today, so I came,’ replied Geeta.

Guru Dutt interrupted, ‘No, I have called Geeta.’

Waheeda didn't know how to tie a Bengali style sari, so I asked Geeta to tell her. ‘How am I looking?’ asked Waheeda.

‘Very good.’

‘Am I looking like a Bengali girl?’

‘Hundred per cent!’ replied Bimal Mitra.

The women were referring to each other as Geeta Ji and Waheeda Ji. Post lunch, Guru Dutt and Waheeda left for the shot. Bimal Mitra and Geeta were left alone at the table.

Mitra asked Geeta, ‘How did you like the shooting?’

Geeta replied, ‘It was good! There was a time when I had asked him not to make this film.’

‘Why?’
‘Because, *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam* is the story of our lives.’

The accounts of most of Guru Dutt's close friends suggest that during the making of *Sahib, Bibi aur Ghulam*, Guru Dutt and Geeta had grown further apart. They had realised that their marriage was not working. Geeta Dutt too had taken to alcohol and sleeping pills majorly and left the Pali Hill bungalow to live in his mother's house.

Johnny Walker used to say, ‘Studio *ke darwaaze aur ghar ke darwaaze mein jitna faasla rukhoge, sukhi rahogey. Nahii to ghar mein kaam ki baatein hongii aur studio mein ghar ki baatein hongii. Tum confuse ho jaoge ki tum aa rahe ho ya ja rahe ho. And you'll pay a price for it and it's very very costly. Nobody can afford it.*’

Then one night, Guru Dutt swallowed thirty-eight sleeping pills. It was his second attempt at suicide.

It was an overdose of sleeping pills. We rushed him to Nanavati Hospital but his condition was very serious. His body had gone completely cold. He was unconscious for three days. Then on the fourth day we heard his scream. My brother was shouting. The first person he asked for was Geeta. It was strange because their relationship was going through hell. They were thinking of separation but in those moments, he wanted Geeta to be near him. I think they deeply loved each other despite their major differences,’ Lalitha Lajmi told this author.

But she says Guru Dutt never talked about the reason why he tried to end his life. ‘Sometimes if there was an altercation with Geeta he used to call me. I would rush to him even in the middle of the night. But he would sit quietly, not say anything. I felt he wanted to say something. But he never did. Never.’

A person who attempted suicide twice yet never talked about it with his family. It was as if through these suicide attempts, Guru Dutt was crying for help. On the doctor's suggestion, the family called a psychiatrist for counselling. ‘I was much younger than him and in those days no one really talked about such things. We also called a psychiatrist but he charged Rs 500 for a visit. My brother Atma laughed

that he was just talking with Guru and he is so expensive. We never called him again,’ said Lalitha, adding that sometimes she blames herself for not doing enough for her brother.

But apparently there were numerous other times that Guru Dutt experimented with sleeping pills. Screenwriter Nabendu Ghosh recounts, ‘Let me tell you about a doctor whose name was A.J. Ribero, a very stubborn man. He was an MBBS, and a sweet-spoken doctor, who had [his] clinic in Santa Cruz. Ribero was a general physician. Because of Ribero's goodwill, all affluent people of Santa Cruz, Khar and Bandra would visit him. Especially all those who were associated with films. Famous film personalities like Filmistiaan's Shashadhar Mukherjee, director Aurobindo Sen, Shakti Samanta, etc. Guru Dutt was



GURU DUTT: AN UNFINISHED STORY
By **YASSER USMAN**
S&S India, ₹599

no exception. I have already said how I often visited Guru Dutt's Pali Hill home for discussions. One morning, I reached his house and found out that the situation was tense. I saw Dr Ribero, going inside the bedroom and coming out every two or three minutes with a tense look on his face. I asked, ‘What's up, doctor?’ Dr Ribero said, ‘Guru took sleeping pills, he's still not coming back to his senses, I have been trying for half an hour; Geeta is crying.’ But about five minutes later, Dr Ribero came out of the room, sat down on the chair and said, ‘Thank god, he's now conscious.’

Then again one day, about three months later, I saw a similar situation at their house. I asked Dr Ribero, ‘Now what has happened?’ Ribero said, ‘Today Debi [Geeta] is unconscious. She took a lot of sleeping pills. Guru is sitting quietly. I will wait for another ten minutes. If she doesn't recover, I'll be forced to call the police.’ But five minutes later, Geeta came back to her senses.’

Lalitha Lajmi says, ‘Later he went into depression then slowly his entire personality went down. He kept to himself and became very lonely.’

Guru Dutt just wanted to run away from Bombay. An escape from the city, studio, family life. To anywhere. He couldn't sleep in Bombay. His constant refrain was: ‘I think I will go crazy.’

Excerpted from Guru Dutt: An Unfinished Story (2020, Simon & Schuster India) with permission from the author

A CLEVER & FUNNY TALE OF A MONK IN PLAGUE-STRUCK ENGLAND

Anthony Cummins

review

In an essay for *Prospect* a few years back the writer Leo Benedictus noticed how many contemporary novels used what he called a “hindered” narrator: that is, a protagonist (often a child) whose partial understanding of their world forces us to read between the lines. Unreliable narrators set out to deceive. By contrast, hindered narrators — such as the trapped five-year-old in Emma Donoghue's *Room* — genuinely believe what they tell you: it's all they know.

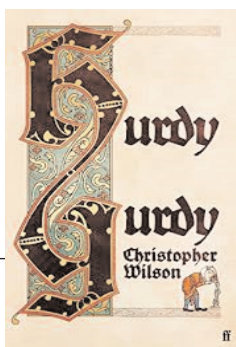
As in *Room*, a hindered narrator can supply drama and pathos, but

it's handy for farce, too, as Christopher Wilson knows well. He likes to write about science biting off more than it can chew (literally, in 1987's *Baa*, about a fin-de-siecle biologist who gets into cannibalism), and he's especially interested in the interface between naivety and pretension; with Wilson, a little learning goes a catastrophically long way.

It's a theme he revisits in his latest novel, a scatological comedy of errors narrated by young Brother Diggory, of the Order of Odo,

who is desperate to get laid during the Black Death. As the sole survivor of an outbreak at his monastery, he super-spreads his way through a ragtag bunch of bandits, bailiffs, pilgrims and prostitutes on a picaresque road trip that brings unadmitted liberation to this meat-avoiding celibate, previously permitted to laugh only on feast days.

The effect is a little like Chaucer as told by Adrian Mole. Much of the humour resembles the amputation scene in *Madame Bovary*, in which the stable boy with a clubfoot gets his leg clumsily sawn off after bungled advice by puffed-up professionals.



HURDY GURDY
By **CHRISTOPHER WILSON**
Faber, £14.99

Diggory, once schooled by an older monk in the ways of “piss-prophecy” (drinking a patient's urine), finds himself in demand as a medic, recounting his ensuing adventures in gynaecology and neurosurgery with alarming deadpan.

This boisterous, bubo-busting muckfest would probably have felt more of an oddity were it not for the timeliness conferred by — well, don't make me type it. A strangely dangling sub-thread involves the ability of the founder of Diggory's monastery to foretell the rise of an ‘orange-faced king, Small Hands, with straw-yellow hair wound round his head like a helmet’. Cheap, no doubt; but I guess it's true that, 700 years hence, if there's even anyone around, our own notions may come to seem as laughably outlandish as anything Diggory gets up to here.

By arrangement with the Spectator

SHORT TAKES

Russia, Italy in ATP Cup final

Melbourne: Alexander Zverev tweaked his back in the second set of his must-win ATP Cup match against Daniil Medvedev here on Saturday. He left the court for treatment and returned, taking the match to three sets before Medvedev finally converted to secure Russia's win over Germany and a spot in the final. No.4-ranked Medvedev lifted when Zverev started to struggle but he got tight in the end, twice double-faulting on match point before serving out for 3-6, 6-3, 7-5. Andrey Rublev had earlier beaten Jan-Lennard Struff 3-6, 6-1, 6-2. Russia will meet Italy in the final after Fabio Fognini beat Pablo Carreno 6-2, 1-6, 6-4 and Matteo Berrettini swept Roberto Bautista 6-3, 7-5 to account for 2020 runners-up Spain. — AP

Osaka, Azarenka out of warm-ups

Melbourne: World number three Naomi Osaka and two-time major winner Victoria Azarenka pulled out of Australian Open warm-up tournaments Saturday, joining Serena Williams and Simona Halep with injury concerns.

Japan's Osaka, the 2019 Australian Open winner, was set to play Elise Mertens in the Gipsland Trophy semifinal but withdrew. "Sorry to Tennis Australia and the fans to have to withdraw today," she said. "I have a niggling injury and in light of the AO on the horizon I need to be cautious."

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DOUBLE ROOT

Joe slams double ton as England make India toil

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

Joe Root has an insatiable appetite for scoring runs. And it goes up a notch when the England skipper takes guard in India and Sri Lanka where he averages in the mid 60s. Close on the heels of notching up a double hundred and a 186 in Sri Lanka, Root feasted on Indian bowlers for another big knock on Saturday.

His stroke-filled 218 that steered England to 555/8 (180 overs) in the first innings of the opening Test here at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium has put him on a high pedestal. Of the many firsts he achieved on Saturday, he would definitely cherish the feat of becoming the highest individual scorer in a 100th Test.

Continuing from where he left off on the opening day, Root found another able ally in Ben Stokes (82) and forged a century stand to give impetus to a huge total. England have made it clear that they will bat, at least, for one more hour on day three.

Having made a quiet start, Stokes pulled off a surprise when he popped his 16th ball back over R. Ashwin's head for a six. That shot sparked the day's play into life. Stokes also enjoyed some luck. He was dropped twice in the next two overs — once by Ashwin, off his own bowling, and then by Cheteshwar Pujara, off Shahbaz Nadeem. The dangerous Stokes eventually fell to left-arm spinner Nadeem after mistiming a slog sweep. This time,

Pujara, stationed at deep backward square leg, held on to the ball after a fumble.

Exhibiting great technique and temperament, Root brought up his double ton in style by charging down and launching Ashwin over long on for a six. He became the first England player to do it with a big hit.

India heaved a huge sigh of relief when Nadeem's quicker delivery crashed into Root's pads. The England skipper reviewed instantly, but the third umpire upheld the on-field decision, ending Root's marathon 377-ball vigil.

As he walked back, drenched in sweat, Kohli was the first to applaud his effort with a pat on his back.

Playing a long innings in Chennai's humid conditions is not easy. Root has left a lasting impression by making the highest individual score for a visiting batsman at Chepauk, surpassing Aussie Dean Jones' 210.

Indian bowlers who slogged through the day found some solace in the final session by taking four wickets. Ishant Sharma bowled his heart out.

The pacer's persistent line and length finally earned him rewards. He castled Jos Buttler (30) and Jofra Archer (0) off consecutive balls.

The fact that Washington Sundar and Nadeem, who shared 70 overs between them, could manage only six maidens highlighted their lack of control. As many as 19 no-balls and a few dropped catches — Rohit Sharma dropped a dolly — didn't help India's cause either.



England's Joe Root celebrates his double ton. — BCCI

SCORECARD

England 1st innings (overnight 128/3): Rory Burns c Pant b Ashwin 33, Dominic Sibley lbw b Bumrah 87, Daniel Lawrence lbw b Bumrah 0, Joe Root lbw b Nadeem 218, Ben Stokes c Pujara b Nadeem 82, Ollie Pope lbw b Ashwin 34, Jos Buttler b Ishant 30, Dominic Bess batting 28, Jofra Archer b Ishant 0, Jack Leach batting 6. Extras (b-2, lb-16, nb-19) 37. **Total (for 8 wkts, in 180 overs) 555.**
FoW: 63-1, 63-2, 263-3, 387-4, 473-5, 477-6, 525-7, 525-8.
Bowling: Ishant Sharma 27-7-52-2, Jasprit Bumrah 31-4-81-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 50-5-132-2, Shahbaz Nadeem 44-4-167-2, Washington Sundar 26-2-98-0, Rohit Sharma 2-0-7-0.

NUMBERS GAME

JOE ROOT FIRST TO SCORE DOUBLE TON IN 100TH TEST
● Joe Root became the first batsman to score a double century in his 100th Test match. He achieved this feat by making 218 on the second day of the first Test against India in Chennai on Saturday.

● Pakistan's Inzamam-ul-Haq, who had posted 184 against India at Bangalore in 2004-05 in his 100th Test match, held the previous record.

● Root's 218 was his fifth double century in 182 innings of 100 Test matches. With this double hundreds he became England's third and 16th batsman overall to score five or more double hundreds in Tests.

● Root also became the first captain after 84 years to register a hat-trick of 150-plus scores in Test cricket. The England captain became only second skipper after legendary Don Bradman to achieve the feat. Australia's Bradman was the first captain to notch up three successive 150-plus scores in Test way back in 1937.

— S. PERVEZ GAISER

Ishant's strikes lifted team morale: Nadeem

NEHA SURANA
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

Shahbaz Nadeem is no stranger to conditions in Chennai. He has played Tamil Nadu Cricket Association's first division league here and taken plenty of wickets. The left-arm spinner, however, had to toil against England before picking two wickets — both big fish, Ben Stokes and Joe Root.

"I felt really happy to pick those wickets, especially on such a track. Root was sweeping well, you really have to plan well for him," he said.

Nadeem had a different plan for Stokes. "I was trying to bowl in the rough outside the off-stump. But he (Stokes) was trying to counter attack me by playing reverse sweep and different attacking shots. I tried to change my line and length and was thinking to bowl from around the wicket and maybe try and get him out," said Nadeem. Nadeem said India's bowling plan was simple as the pitch didn't have to

India managed to find some success in the final session with Ishant Sharma's double strike. Nadeem said those wickets lifted the team morale.

offer. "Basically, the plan was to bowl in the right areas. If you go for wickets, you will end up giving more runs. The plan was always to bowl the right line and length and if the batsmen played a wrong shot, you could end up getting a wicket."

India managed to find some success in the final session with Ishant Sharma's double strike. Nadeem said those wickets lifted the team morale. "Had we not got those, there would have been a batsman on the crease rather than tailenders. Now, two England bowlers are on the crease, so we can say we have got an upper hand."

STOKES REVEALS ENGLAND HAD NO INTENTION OF DECLARING

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

England all-rounder Ben Stokes said in-form skipper Joe Root made him "feel rubbish" during their stand of 124 runs against India on Saturday. "That's pretty much where he is at the moment. He makes everyone around him not look very good. He is an amazing player and I am not sure we have ever had an England player play spin so well, with such control, such ease," said Stokes.

Stokes said Root makes it look easy against spinners. "He is so consistent. He has a game plan for all types of spin," he added.

Having lost their previous Test that was played in Chennai in 2016 despite scoring 477 in the first innings, Stokes knows the importance of scoring big in the subcontinent. He said England had no intention of declaring their innings on day two here. "We are in a strong position. You can't really complain when you are 500-plus and it would be lovely if we could bat for another hour on day three."

Stokes who will be playing the role of a third seamer behind James Anderson and Jofra Archer said the job is only half done and the England bowling unit have a lot of work to do.

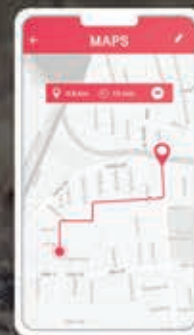
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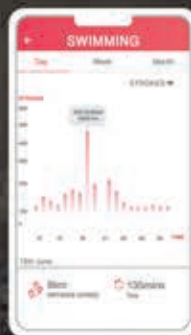
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