

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | MONDAY 18 | JANUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 31°C
Min: 16°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Thai 5
Tithi: Panchami/ Sashti
Star: Puratathi/ Uthirathathi
Rahukalam:
7.30 am to 9 am
Yamagandam:
10.30 am to 12 noon
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.20 am
Zohar: 12.23 pm
Asar: 3.35 pm
Maghrib: 6.01 pm
Isha: 7.17 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.03 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.36 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 10.27 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 10.39 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+12,948)	(+136)
1,05,71,658	1,52,447

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+589)
TN: 8,30,772 12,264

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

9,51,90,015

DEATHS

20,35,297

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

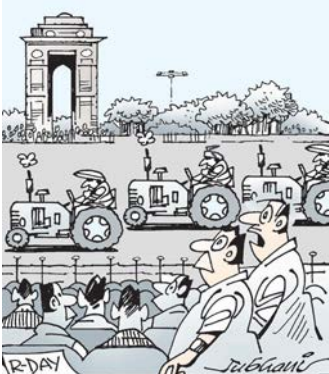
Condition of ex-CEO of BARC Partho Dasgupta stable: Doctors

Mumbai: The health condition of Partho Dasgupta, a former CEO of TV ratings agency BARC who was arrested in the Television Rating Points (TRP) rigging case, is stable but he is still in the ICU of JJ Hospital here, a senior official said on Sunday. Dasgupta, 55, a diabetic, was rushed to the state-run hospital in central Mumbai from the Taloja Central Prison in Navi Mumbai in the early hours of Saturday after his blood sugar levels shot up, a prison official had said.

Indonesian teams find more bodies, clear roads after quake

Mamuju (Indonesia): Indonesian rescuers on Sunday retrieved more bodies from the rubble of homes and buildings toppled by a strong earthquake, raising the death toll to 73, while military engineers managed to reopen ruptured roads to clear access for relief goods. More heavy

COUNTER POINT



Full dress rehearsal of farmers for the parade!

Washington, Jan. 17: Kolam, a traditional Indian art form of drawing geometric patterns on the floors as a sign of welcome, was part of the virtual kick-off ceremony of the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden and his deputy Kamala Harris, who traces her origin to Tamil Nadu where these auspicious designs

adorn almost every household.

In Tamil Nadu, where Ms Harris has roots, women draw 'kolams' on the ground to invite health and prosperity into houses where they are displayed. Pictures of thousands of 'kolam' tiles were on Saturday woven into a video to welcome Mr Biden

and Ms Harris in the spirit of 'Presidency for All' and to showcase the multi-cultural heritage of America. More than 1,800 individuals from across the US and many from India participated in the online initiative to create thousands of 'kolam' designs to celebrate the historic event. "Many believe 'kolam' symbolise positive



energy and new beginnings. People of all ages from various communities collaborated from their homes to create tiles with

eco-friendly materials. What started out as a local project spread way beyond our expectations," said Shanthi Chandrasekar, an award-winning multimedia and multidisciplinary artist from Maryland who took the initiative along with several others.

The initial idea was to

have these 'kolam' patterns from across the country in front of the White House as a symbol of good beginning to the new administration. The Washington DC police gave permission to the organisers to have it near the Capitol Hill around the inauguration venue. However, due to the unprecedented security

measures that have been enforced in Washington DC, the permission was cancelled. A date for the installation after the inauguration will be set up after a go-ahead from the local security, said Sowmya Somnath who is part of the Inauguration Kolam 2021 organising team in her volunteer capacity. —PTI



STATE | 3 Kamal Haasan to undergo sugery



NATION | 5 Missing Scindia at party function raises eyebrows

SPORT | 6 Magical stand between Shardul, Sundar keep India afloat



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‘Will hoist national flag on tractors, won’t disturb R-Day parade’

Farmers not to drop tractor parade

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 17

The farmers’ unions protesting against the Centre’s agricultural reform laws on Sunday decided to go ahead with their proposed tractor parade in the national capital on Republic Day.

At the Singhu border, where the farmers have been protesting for over 50 days, Swaraj India leader Yogendra Yadav said the farmers will hold the rally and hoist the tricolour on their tractors on Outer Ring Road on Republic Day. He said the rally will be “very peaceful” and there will be “no disruption” of the Republic Day parade.

Kisan Sangharsh Samiti (Haryana) convenor Mandip Nathwan, however, dispelled rumours that the protesters would unfurl the tricolour at Red Fort and that the tractors and tanks will roll together on Republic Day. “It’s being said farmers will unfurl tricolour at Red Fort and tractors and tanks will roll together (on January 26). No such programme has been finalised by the morcha. Such statements are not in the interests of farmers,” he said.

As Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar said most farmers are in favour of the new laws and the government will hold the next round of discussions with them on Tuesday, All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) general secretary Hannan Mollah accused the Central government of “dragging” things in a bid to tire out the farmers. He also called it a “con-



Farmers and their supporters during their ongoing agitation over the new farm laws in New Delhi on Sunday.

— PTI

spiracy” by the government. Mr Mollah said: “For almost two months, we are suffering and dying in cold weather. The government is giving us ‘tarikh pe tarik’ and are dragging things out so that we get tired and leave the place. This is their conspiracy.”

Farmers leader Darshan Pal Singh accused the National Investigation Agency (NIA) of filing cases against those who were part of the protest or supporting it. “All the farmers’ unions condemn this,” he said, referring to the NIA summons reportedly issued to a farmers’ union leader in a case related to the banned Sikhs For Justice outfit.

So far, the government

● **Farmers leader Darshan Pal Singh accused the National Investigation Agency (NIA) of filing cases against those who were part of the protest or supporting it. “All the farmers’ unions condemn this,” he said**

and the farmers’ unions have failed to resolve the impasse during their nine rounds of negotiations. The agriculture minister, however, claimed that most farmers and experts were in favour of the new farm laws. He said: “After the Supreme Court’s order, the laws can’t be implemented... Now we expect the farmers to discuss the laws clause-wise on January 19 and tell the government what they want other than the repeal of the laws.”

The government, Mr

Tomar said, had sent a proposal to the farmers “in which we agreed to address their apprehensions regarding mandis, traders’ registration and other things”. He added: “The government had also agreed to discuss the laws on stubble burning and electricity... but the farmers’ unions only want repeal of the laws.” The government had earlier agreed to withdraw the penal provisions in the stubble burning ordinance and the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2019.

SC TO HEAR TODAY CENTRE’S PLEA ON FARMERS’ RALLY ON JAN. 26

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 17

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India Sharad Arvind Bobde will hear the Centre’s application on Monday, along with pleas raising the issue of farmers protesting at Delhi’s borders.

The Central government, in an application filed through the Delhi police sought an injunction on the rally, saying any proposed rally or protest, which seeks to disrupt and disturb the Republic Day celebrations will cause an “embarrassment to the nation”.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court-appointed committee on the three new farm laws is scheduled to hold its first meeting on January 19 at Pusa campus here, its member Anil Ghanwat said on Sunday. The Supreme Court had on January 11 stayed the implementation of the three laws, till further orders and appointed a four-member panel to resolve the impasse.

Bhartiya Kisan Union president Bhopinder Singh Mann, however, recused himself from the committee, saying he stood with the farmers.

Covid-19 active cases fall below 2% in India

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 17

As the Covid-19 vaccination drive entered the second day, India for the first time reported Sunday that its share of active cases within the total number of infections has shrunk below two per cent. Of the 2,08,826 positive cases reported in the country, the number of active cases had now gone below 1.98 per cent. While over 1.91 lakh healthcare and frontline workers were vaccinated on the first day, only 17,072 received their jabs in six states on Sunday. The states and UTs have fixed specific days for vaccinations.

Of all 2.24 lakh people who have been vaccinated, 447 developed minor complications. Only three persons who were hospitalised have now been discharged.

India is the only nation in the world, including the United States, Britain and France, to have vaccinated the highest number of people on the first day of the immunisation drive.

It is also the only country in the world which started a mass vaccination drive at a time when its infection rate is on the decline. In contrast, in European nations where the vaccination drive started before India, there has been a steep rise in the number of

Vaccination, a boost to curb Covid-19, says health secy

R. VALAYAPATHY & G. SRINIVASAN | DC
TIRUCHY/THANJAVUR, JAN. 17

Tamil Nadu health secretary J. Radhakrishnan who got inoculated here on Sunday said there have been no side-effects to the vaccine.

Mr Radhakrishnan said the government is ready to administer the vaccine to 16,600 people but only 3,126 frontline staff had taken it. “The government wants the vaccination drive not to be target-oriented, but a protective drive,” he said. “Vaccination is going on in 166 places across the state. There is a tremendous response among the medical education institutions to the drive.”

viral infections, posing a serious challenge to their medical facilities.

India has been reporting less than 20,000 daily cases in the past 10 days. Its total recovered cases — 10,196,885 — exceed the active cases by 99,88,059.



ITBP contingent practices during the rehearsals for Republic Day Parade 2021, at Rajpath in New Delhi, on Sunday.

— PTI

UK invites Modi for G7 summit in June

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 17

Currently battling a fresh wave of the raging coronavirus pandemic at home and hailing India as the “pharmacy of the world”, Britain on Sunday officially invited New Delhi to attend the G-7 summit to be hosted by it in Cornwall from June 11 to 13 this year. It had first been confirmed last month that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to “join the UK-hosted G-7”. Mr Johnson will also now visit India before the G-7 summit.

India is not a member of the G-7 bloc that comprises seven countries — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain and the United States —termed as seven of the “largest” advanced economies in the world, but the G-7 host nation can invite other nations as guests to the summit. Australia and South Korea have also been invited to attend it by Britain which launched a fresh condemnation on Sunday of “Russia’s annexation of Crimea”. This has made it clear that ties between the West and Russia will continue to remain strained, something

that will worry New Delhi since Moscow has been its time-tested friend for decades. The Cornwall summit is also likely to be the first in-person G-7 leaders’ meeting after Joe Biden takes charge as US President this week.

It may be recalled that Mr Modi had earlier attended the G-7 summit in Biarritz, France, in August 2019 at the French government’s invitation. Mr Modi had also been invited by US President Donald Trump to attend the G-7 meeting that was to have been held in the United States last year but was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the meantime, the girl’s family lodged a missing person’s complaint with police on January 11. The girl later managed to come home following which her mother lodged a police complaint on January 14 and the victim’s statement was recorded, she said. The police are conducting an investigation into the case and search for the other accused is underway, she said. The Kotwali police have registered a case. —PTI

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DECCAN
Chronicle

18 JANUARY 2021

Transparency the key to success of vaccine drive

India has a population of 136 crore people and the highest number of Covid-affected people after the United States, and hence a campaign to inoculate the entire population is critical to the success of humanity's fight against the pandemic. It ought to be an exercise without parallel in history for the sheer number of the target group and the logistical and economic challenges it would face. The Union government is working with the states and vaccine manufacturers to ensure that about three crore people, who are mainly Covid warriors, are inoculated in the first phase with two made-in-India vaccines in a drive that began on Saturday. Reports say 1.91 lakh people were vaccinated on the first day against a target of three lakh.

Everyone wants the campaign to be a success, but it is regrettable that the government has been less than transparent about it. Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes justifiable pride in the fact that both the vaccines are made in India and underlines the role of Indian scientists in making it happen. But the truth is that one of the two vaccines, Covaxin, which is developed jointly by the Indian Council of Medical Research and Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech International Limited, and manufactured by the latter, has been in a clinical trial mode. Those people who were given the Covaxin jab were made to sign a consent form, which says that they are participating in a trial. A section of doctors in the government-run Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital in Delhi insisted that they be given the vaccine developed by Oxford University and manufactured by Pune-based Serum Institute of India. They said they are a bit apprehensive about the lack of complete trial in the case of Covaxin.

This is unfair and unacceptable. If a vaccine is under trial and has not gone through the due process, then its administration should be called a clinical trial, and not vaccination. It should be given only to volunteers and its administration should not be part of the inoculation campaign. This is the minimum the government owes to the people. The Prime Minister's statement that Indian vaccine scientists, medical system, Indian process and institutional mechanism are trusted globally and that this trust is earned with a consistent track record is true, but it does not square with the present campaign. Also true is the fact that about 60 per cent of children the world over receive life-saving vaccines which are made in India and passed through stringent Indian scientific tests; but the only point is that Covaxin has not gone through those tests.

That the head of All India Institute of Medical Sciences and the member (health) of Niti Aayog took the Covaxin jab proves nothing; it can only be seen as a persuasive act. Even if the Prime Minister is administered the vaccine, it proves nothing except sending a message on vaccination, not on the vaccine. The government must be upfront about the whole programme and respect science and scientific processes. Tom-tomming national pride is not a great idea in the face of a pandemic.

Afghan: Get US to stay on

When he assumes charge as US President two days from now, it is not quite clear yet if Joe Biden can change tracks in significant ways from Donald Trump's policy of a complete withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan by May this year, but this is a matter that cannot but deeply concern the government of President Ashraf Ghani in Kabul. Among the regional powers, India is on the same wavelength as the Ghani government. It is to be hoped that the incoming Biden administration begins to seriously invest in counter-terrorism in the Afghanistan theatre.

This is in view of the monstrous proportions terrorist violence has assumed all through 2020 after the Trump administration signed a peace deal with the Taliban in February last year under which the US troops have been withdrawn almost entirely. In the last quarter of 2020, more than 500 civilians were killed in the country and more than 1,000 injured. There have been targeted assassinations of prominent politicians, social workers and journalists. Vice-president Amrullah Saleh, well known for his opposition to Pakistan's policy of promoting extremism and terrorism in Pakistan, barely escaped death. Places of worship and educational institutions have been bombed. Only last week, a plot to assassinate highly placed US diplomatic officials in Kabul is thought to have been mounted.

It is in this backdrop that national security advisor Ajit Doval was in Kabul last week. If the Taliban assume real control in Kabul as a result of the peace deal, whatever the appearances, we may expect a full-fledged renewal of terrorism-related pressure on India from the Pakistan side. On January 13, after Mr Doval called on President Ghani, the Afghanistan President's office said in a media release, "Both sides discussed counter-terrorism cooperation and efforts for building regional consensus on supporting peace in Afghanistan." The statement also quoted Dr Ghani as saying that "Afghanistan and India in joint efforts with Nato and the United States will be able to succeed in the fight against terrorism".

As a leading regional player invested in peace in Afghanistan, it redounds on India to persuade the new government in Washington to re-establish the focus on counter-terrorism, and to coordinate peace-oriented moves with Kabul and like-minded regional players.

Subhani

Bolstering corporates was intent of farm laws



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

The recent Supreme Court decision staying the farm laws, protecting the minimum support price regime and directing that no farmer would be dispossessed of his land is appropriate under the given circumstances. Perhaps if the committee appointed by the Supreme Court could also have also been constituted in consultation with the protesting farmer unions, it would have inspired far greater confidence.

When the Supreme Court finally does decide to hear the farm laws matter, for many petitions that deal with equally contentious decisions taken by the current government continue hanging fire in the apex court, it must keep in mind that agriculture, with its allied sectors, are the largest source of livelihoods in India.

A total of 70 per cent of our rural households still depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood. Of them, 82 per cent of farmers are small and marginal. On the whole, about 60 per cent of the Indian population, i.e. 81 crore people, are agriculture-dependent.

They can be called small entrepreneurs, for they mostly own the land they till and it is their labour on that small patch, varying from one to five acres, that keeps the home fires burning. The average size of a land holding in India is 1.16 hectares. This is roughly 2.8 acres. Moreover, these farm laws also have the added potential of making us import-dependent bringing back the spectre of ship-to-mouth that the green revolution finally surmounted in the early 1970s.

These farm laws are actually intended to give Corporate India a legal licence to muscle in on these small guys who have unequal or no bargaining power.

Look at what has happened to the Indian economy over the past 80 months. The chairperson

of the Competition Commission Of India in a recent interview stated, "The Commission has now decided to undertake market studies in pharmaceutical sector, telecom sector and digital market sector..."

The Commission has received cases with allegations of anti-competitive conduct by market players in these sectors as well as reviewed various combination notices in these sectors..." The goal is to ensure that competition remains "vibrant" and "there are enough players who are able to participate in the award of concessions".

A classical example of this is the aviation sector where the government despite opposition from both the department of economic affairs (DEA) ministry of finance and the Niti Aayog allowed the Adani Group of companies to take six key airports and also acquire a controlling stake in both the Mumbai and the upcoming greenfield Navi Mumbai Airport.

These seven airports, namely Ahmedabad, Mangalore, Lucknow, Jaipur, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram and Mumbai, roughly handled 80 million passengers during the last fiscal (2019-20). This converts into nearly one-fourth of the 340 million odd domestic air passenger traffic.

On the 11th of December 2018 when the NDA/BJP government's public private partnership appraisal committee (PPPAC) considered the civil aviation ministry's privatisation pitch, the DEA in a note ostensibly red-flagged it, stating, "These six airports projects are highly capital-intensive projects, hence it is suggested to incorporate the clause that not more than two airports will be awarded to the same bidder duly factoring the high financial risk and performance issues. Awarding them to different companies would also facilitate yardstick competition."

Niti Aayog also surprisingly demonstrated spine and, in a note, opined, "A

bidder lacking sufficient technical capacity can well jeopardise the project and compromise the quality of services that the government is committed to provide."

Brushing aside these concerns, the government still went ahead and allowed one company with no previous experience in airport management to take control of all these airports albeit through a public auction.

However, therein lies the problem. Even if it is through the bidding route allowing monopolies to develop in sector after sector of the economy tantamount to creating economic oligarchies and chaebols.

An oligarchy is a country or industry that is controlled by a small group of powerful people while a chaebol denotes a "wealth clique" in Korean. They are popularly assumed to have been influenced by the Japanese zaibatsu — both sharing the same Chinese characters and meaning. Like chaebols, zaibatsus were also family controlled conglomerates that dominated the Japanese economy until they were finally extinguished by the United States during its occupation of Japan post World War II.

Country after country has had to deal with these oligarchies and chaebols for ultimately they start influencing the politics of nation in the most pernicious manner possible. The US had to bring the Sherman Anti-Trust Act way back in 1890 to curb concentrations of power that interfere with trade and reduce economic competition. The unsaid part of it was that do not allow corporations to become so powerful so that they start "controlling by influence" the policy frameworks and governance of the state. However, where the government is itself engaged in facilitating the development of these oligarchic chaebol-like structures

it becomes even more sinister to put it mildly.

The US has used its anti-trust laws to reign in various entities, including Standard Oil, AT&T, Kodak and Microsoft in the twentieth century, to name a few.

Way back in 1909, the Department of Justice of the US government filed a federal anti-trust lawsuit against Standard Oil arguing that the company restrained trade through its preferential deals with railroads, its control of pipelines and by engaging in unfair practices like price-cutting to drive smaller competitors out of business.

On May 15, 1911, the Supreme Court ordered the dissolution of Standard Oil Company, ruling it was in violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. The court's decision forced Standard to break into 34 independent companies spread across the country and abroad. Many of these companies have since split, folded or merged today. The primary descendants of Standard include ExxonMobil, Chevron and ConocoPhillips. Recently, the US government has gone after Big Tech companies with a wave of anti-trust law suits for it considers their market dominance among other things as dangerous for democracy.

Similarly, South Korea has for long grappled with the malevolent influence of chaebols on their politics. Russia is a typical example where a noxious combination of big business and entrenched political interest are controlling that country since the exit of Boris Yeltsin at the turn of the millennium.

The Supreme Court, therefore, must be mindful of the true intent of these farm laws. It is to further the agenda of further consolidating these oligarchies and chaebols that control a significant part of the Indian economy already and, therefore, are, through their financial, media and other muscle, disproportionately significant players in our democratic and governance ethos.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

COMMENDABLE ACT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi deserves praise for being instrumental in the administration of two vaccines across many states in India on Saturday. The beneficiaries of the Covid inoculation drive should be thankful to him and the doctors/scientists for developing the vaccines — Covaxin and Covishield — so swiftly that the whole world is stupefied. A great step in the annals of medical history, which is indeed commendable.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

HATS OFF to NDA government for arranging Covid-19 vaccination across the country from Saturday. Of course, there is a lot of criticism by Opposition leaders, who were critical of our Prime Minister for the delay in getting the vaccination to protect the people of our country. Still our Prime Minister has ensured that the vaccine reaches our people early and on Saturday itself and about 1.91 lakh people have been vaccinated, which is a feather in his cap.

N. Mahadevan, Chennai

BRING AMMK INTO AIADMK FOLD

APROPOS REPORT *Gurumurthy's 'gutter' has AIADMK fuming* (Jan. 16). Mr Gurumurthy, the mediator and a bridge between the AIADMK and BJP, may have feared that there will be desertions from the ruling party when madam Sasikala is released. After all those who are fickle-minded since being denied loaves and fish may gravitate towards the AMMK. If that happens, the AIADMK will be shaky and may end up with infighting and a few may even quit. As the AIADMK and BJP have vowed to prevent the DMK from coming to power perhaps Mr Gurumurthy might have thought it is better to bury the hatchet, admit Sasikala into the party, thwart any break-up or fence-sitters from quitting. Instead of the ruling party netas fuming at Mr Gurumurthy, could it not be wise to conduct parleys, admit AMMK into the AIADMK fold and proportionately share ministerial berths. Otherwise, she will play spoilsport, induce hiccups to the ruling combine and end up helping the DMK while leaving the BJP strategists agast.

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

MATCH-SAVING STAND

KUDOS TO Washington Sundar and Shardul Takkur for posting their maiden test 50s and adding 123 runs in 36 overs for the seventh wicket in the Brisbane test denying the Aussies a handsome lead. The match is poised for an exciting finish as the Aussies will definitely go hammer and tongs to set a near 400 total which India would have to score on the final day. Of course even an honourable draw could see Team India to retain the coveted Border-Gavaskar trophy.

S. Vaithianathan, Madurai

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Karimnagar: Survey No. 1341, Vavilapally Colony, Jagitayala Road, Karimnagar 505 001. Phone: (0878) 2228908; Telefax: (0878) 2220433

Kochi: No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408

Kozhikode: No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001
 Fax : 0495 4019018

Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph Press Thycad post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/67, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-0885

Kishwar
Desai
London Diary

Long UK lockdown defeats Britons; Spurs' 'shot in arm' for soccer fans

So not only is it very cold but the forecast is also bleak. And the worst is that another lockdown has been announced! As of 2 am on Monday, all travel corridors to the UK will be shut. As they used to say 'Fog in the Channel. Continent isolated. Lockdown in UK. The World isolated!'

Those were the days! But now the tables have turned. It is the UK that has become even more of an island!

Theatres were pleased last November they could open but now they are shut again as are pubs and restaurants. We have vaccinations slowly covering the population but as of now it will be Easter before the over 50s will be covered. That leaves the younger half of the 70 million to come.

However, what is astonishing is that the latest photos show that the stoic Briton is completely fed up and would rather party than live in isolation. So where will this lead — except for more infections and more deaths? One despairs! This was once a disciplined

and well-regulated country. But now as Covid continues to rampage through lives — I am worried about the consequences. With at least 1,000 deaths everyday, in a small nation like this... what terrible impact will Covid have on households, on the economy?

The British may have been great at finding a vaccine that work — coming second, though not first — with AstraZeneca. But technology does not seem to be a strong point. Despite the tough stance of home secretary Priti Patel about fighting crime and immigrants, it turns out the Home Office has managed to wipe out 150,000 (or could be 400,000 no one knows for sure) people's arrest records and with it much sensitive information — their fingerprints, DNA and arrest history. At least that makes those 150,000 happy. No so long ago, a National Health computer lost thousands of names of people who had been infected. We need an abacus urgently.

Meanwhile... Brexit is still causing problems. Now the Atlantic storm

Filomena has ruined the Spanish lettuce crop and we have a serious lettuce shortage.

A cheerful event did happen the other day. It was rather like a battle between the elephant and the mouse. The mouse did not win but it did get to ride on the elephant's back for a bit. The FA Cup is a contest where all the football teams — the best ones from Premier League down to local village teams playing in a small league — can contest with each other. Rather like the Mumbai Indians of the IPL playing with a team from a village in Bihar. This year Marine, a village team established back in 1884, and playing in the Northern Premier League Division One, North West, was drawn against the mighty Premier League North London side, Tottenham Hotspurs, in the Third Round. This was on the Marine's home grounds rather than in London on Spurs' home turf. Anyway no spectators are allowed due to Covid. Anyone would expect the mighty

Spurs to send their third reserve side to play the minnows 160 places below them in national ranking. But Jose Mourinho, the Spurs Spanish manager, selected their regular top side with a few stars and promising youngsters hoping to show he took the fixture seriously.

The result, alas, was not the unexpected victory of the mouse. The elephant won. But Marines were able to sell 30,000 tickets for watching on Zoom at £10 each. Their ground facility only accommodates 3,185 in all with 389 seats and rest standing. But thanks to Covid and the Big team bringing all the stars, the Marines cleaned up. Their game was shown on BBC. They lost 5-0 but who is counting the goals. Their good luck continued. After a match, players often exchange their shirts as a gesture of friendship. In Covid Times, this is forbidden. But the Spurs promised to send the Marine team a freshly washed set of shirts which then the entire team wore on the day. It is the gesture that made the day.

Good news at last about Noor Inayat Khan. This famous daughter of a Sufi music master fought in the Second World War with the spy code name Madeleine on the British side. She was sent to France where she worked as a radio operator. She was captured but refused to say anything about her associates because, being a Sufi, she would not tell a lie. She was sent to the Dachau concentration camp where she died. Now there will at last be a TV series for me as well. Long ago, my husband and I had spotted this as excellent story to make a film, and bought the rights for a book on it and even lobbied for it for a long time. But we found the process of filmmaking very daunting, and so am thrilled that 15 years later — something is happening on the OTT platform.

Kishwar Desai is an award-winning author. The Longest Kiss: The Life and Times of Devika Rani is her new book.

SHORT TAKES

INDIGO FLIGHT
MAKES EMERGENCY
LANDING IN BHOPAL

Bhopal, Jan. 17: An IndiGo Airlines flight going to Kolkata from Surat with 172 passengers on board made an emergency landing at Bhopal's Raja Bhoj Airport on Sunday due to a technical glitch, said an official.

Raja Bhoj Airport Director Anil Vikram said that the flight made an emergency landing just after 12 noon. "The IndiGo Airlines flight from Surat to Kolkata carrying 172 passengers made an emergency landing at 12.04 pm on Sunday. The landing was safe. The pilot informed the ATC (Air Traffic Controller) about the technical glitch and made an emergency landing safely," he said. Of the 172 passengers, 19 have to go further to Guwahati and Amritsar from Kolkata, and these passengers were sent to Bengaluru by flight to help them get connecting flights to their destinations, he said.

TANDAV: CENTRE
SEEKS AMAZON'S
EXPLANATION

Mumbai, Jan. 17: Union ministry of information and broadcasting is reported to have sought an explanation from Amazon Prime on the allegation that the video series *Tandav* aired on it ridiculed Hindu deities.

Earlier in the day, BJP's Mumbai North-East MP Manoj Kotak said he had written to I&B minister Prakash Javadekar seeking a ban on the series.

Tandav, starring Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia, Sunil Grover, Tigmanshu Dhulia, Dino Morea, Kumud Mishra, Mohd Zeeshan Ayyub, Gauhar Khan and Kritika Kamra, premiered on the streaming platform on Friday. Ali Abbas Zafar has created, directed and produced the political drama with Himanshu Kishan Mehra and it is written by Gaurav Solanki, best known for Article 15. Different organisations have complained that Hindu Gods and Goddesses have been ridiculed in the web series, Mr Kotak said.

Missing Scindia at party
function raises eyebrows

Opposition Congress described the development as a 'sign of rift'

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY I DC
BHOPAL, JAN. 17

Senior BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia's absence at a party function here on Sunday, organised to felicitate new office-bearers of the state unit, has raised many eyebrows here with the Opposition Congress describing the development as a "sign of rift" between him and state BJP leadership.

Madhya Pradesh Congress unit vice-president Raja Pateria said Scindia's absence was significant considering the inadequate representation given to his camp in the recent reorganisation of the party. "Only one leader from Scindia's camp has been accommodated. This indicates all is not well in the BJP in MP", Pateria said.

Madan Kushwaha, a leader from Gwalior considered Scindia's loyalist, has been appointed state secretary. The BJP dismissed the charges, describing it a "conspiracy theory manufactured by the Congress."

"It is not necessary for Scindia to attend all party events. He has expressed his best wishes to all the newly-appointed office-bearers individually. Many senior leaders such as Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar were also not present at the function. It is the Congress which promotes the 'my men, his men' culture. The BJP shuns such culture," state BJP secretary Rajneesh Agrawal said.

State party president V.D. Sharma and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan were among the senior party leaders who were present on the occasion.

Cong seeks to fight 130 seats
in WB, Left rejects demand

RAJIB CHOWDHURI I DC
KOLKATA, JAN. 17

Bargaining for the main face of its alliance with the Left Front in the coming West Bengal Assembly elections, the Congress has sought to contest in as many as 130 out of 294 seats with a plan to finalise their joint candidates list within this month. But the Left parties have clearly rejected the Congress' demand, leading to an argument over the seat-sharing formula between the two partners at a meeting on their alliance in Kolkata on Sunday.

Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who placed his party's demand for 130 seats, became so angry at the Left's response that he almost stormed out of the meeting. Chowdhury, who is also the state Congress chief, was stopped by Rajya Sabha MP Pradip Bhattacharya, who was present along with the party's Assembly leader Abdul Mannan.

At the meeting, Chowdhury named six districts— Malda, Murshidabad, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Bankura and Purulia — where the Congress would field a majority of its 130 candidates, party insiders said. Left Front chairman Biman Bose and other leaders, including CPI(M) state secretary Suryakanta Mishra, reminded the

Hailing Sharma for giving an opportunity to the next generation leaders in his team, the Chief

SHIV SENA TO CONTEST IN UPCOMING
WEST BENGAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

SONU
SHRIVASTAVA I DC
MUMBAI, JAN. 17

In a bid to damage the prospects of the BJP, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena on Sunday formally announced that it would contest the upcoming West Bengal Assembly elections. The elections which are expected to witness a high-octane fight may be scheduled in April-May this year.

Shiv Sena spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut said, "So, here is the much awaited

Berhampore MP that Left candidates should be fielded in these districts in view of their votebank.

Ironically, the Congress, which won 44 seats in the 2016 Assembly polls, has been reduced to 24 in the House after 19 of its MLAs defected to the ruling Trinamul Congress and one to the BJP. The Left, which had 33 MLAs five years ago, has been reduced to 25. With no outcome from Sunday's meeting, the two partners will sit again on January 25 before an announcement on their seat-sharing formula and candidates' list, possibly on January 28.

Silent on the Congress' demand of 130 seats,

Minister said BJP always promoted young people unlike the Congress which never dared to

update. After discussions with Party Chief Shri Uddhav Thackeray, Shivsena has decided to contest the West Bengal Assembly Elections. We are reaching Kolkata soon." Raut also 'Tweeted this decision in Bangla.

In 2019, the Sena had contested the Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal. Last year, it had contested the Bihar elections. However, all its candidates had failed to save even their deposits. The Sena polled 0.05 per cent of the total votes in the Bihar elections.

Chowdhury later said: "The Congress and the Left have to fight the Assembly polls unitedly as a secular democratic alliance to defeat a communal BJP and an autocratic Trinamul Congress. We are heading in that direction. Our meeting, held in a cordial environment, was not only peaceful but also a friendly discussion through exchange of opinions. None of us wants to put anything onto each other. We want to finalise our seat-sharing within this month. It is a process and cannot be finalised overnight. As the Left will discuss it among its constituents, we will do the same."

look beyond its old guard. In the reconstituted BJP in MP, there are 12 new vice-presidents,

SHIV SENA, CONG
IN SLUGFEST OVER
RENAMING OF
AURANGABAD

BHAGWAN PARAB I DC
MUMBAI, JAN. 17

The political slugfest over the renaming of Aurangabad city as Sambhaji-nagar has continued as the Shiv Sena and the Congress – the alliance partners in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra – have accused each other of indulging in vote bank politics over the issue.

The Shiv Sena has said that the renaming might affect the vote bank of 'secular parties' as it will upset the Muslim community. However, calling its alliance partner a 'hypocrite,' the Congress said Sena is raising the renaming issue for the fear of losing its voters.

Writing for 'Rokhthok', the weekly column in Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana', party MP Sanjay Raut said, "Secular parties like the Congress are of the view that Aurangabad should not be renamed as Sambhajnagar. They feel that minority communities like Muslims will not be happy if Aurangabad is renamed and it will affect their vote bank."

"However, Aurangzeb was never secular. He was religiously blind and harboured hatred towards other religions. He considered Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj as his enemy and killed Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj brutally

12 state secretaries, a treasurer, an assistant treasurer, an office secretary and a media in-charge.

Two Chinese
held in money
laundering case

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 17

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested two Chinese nationals in a money laundering case. Charlie Peng and Carter Lee were arrested in connection with a probe linked to an alleged hawala racket worth an estimated ₹1,000 crore that involved shell or dubious firms. They were produced before a local court here on Saturday that sent them to 14 days custody.

The ED case against Peng stems from an income-tax department (ITD) investigation of last year and an FIR filed by the Delhi Police special cell against him in 2018. Peng's name had cropped up last year in connection with the detention of two persons in Himachal Pradesh who were allegedly tracking Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama's movements

on his directions. The Chinese national and some of his alleged associates, including bankers, were raided by the Income Tax Department in August.

Peng, sources had alleged, had a fake Indian passport. Tax officials had claimed that he created a web of sham companies to launder hawala funds to and from China in the past two-three years. Sources had said his front or showcase business was import and export of medical and electronic goods and some other items.

Peng was arrested by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police in September 2018 on charges of fraud and forgery and was allegedly running an illegal money changer.

Both ED and I-T department, sources had said, are also probing allegations if Peng was "bribing" some Tibetans living in Delhi.

Covid study: Smokers,
vegans face less risk

New Delhi, Jan. 17: Smokers and vegetarians were found to have lower seropositivity indicating that they may be at a lesser risk of getting infected by coronavirus, according to a pan-India serosurvey conducted by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in its nearly 40 institutes.

The survey also found that those with blood group 'O' may be less susceptible to the infection, while people with 'B' and 'AB' blood groups were at a higher risk. For its study, the CSIR took samples of 10,427 adult indi-

viduals working in its laboratories or institutions and their family members, based on voluntary participation, to assess the presence of antibodies to SARS-CoV-2.

The study which was piloted by CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB), Delhi said of the 10,427 individuals, 1,058 (10.14 per cent) had antibodies against SARS-CoV-2. A follow up on 346 seropositive individuals among the samples after three months revealed 'stable' to 'higher' antibody levels against SARS-CoV-2. *PTI*

WORLD

National Guards
in Washington

Step taken to keep eye on possible protests

Washington, Jan. 17: By the busload and planeoal, National Guard troops were pouring into the US capital on Saturday, as governors answered the urgent pleas of defence officials for more troops to help safeguard Washington even as they keep anxious eyes on possible violent protests in their own states.

Military leaders spent chunks of Thursday evening and Friday calling states in an unprecedented appeal for more National Guard troops to help lock down much of the city in the days before President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration. In drabs and drabs, governors responded, some agreeing to send an extra dozen, 100 or even 1,000, while others said no.

The calls reflect fears that violent extremist groups are targeting the city in the wake of the deadly insurrection at the US Capitol on Jan. 6. The threats range from armed insurgents to possible attempts to plant explosive devices at so-called soft targets. But as Washington begins to resemble an armed camp, with more than 25,000 Guards due in the city by early next week, concerns about violence at state capitals has grown. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said she turned down the federal request to send at least 100 more National Guard troops to D.C. "I didn't think that we could safely fill that commitment," Brown said.

Oregon has already agreed to send 30 to Washington, but state leaders are worried about violence at the state capitol in Salem.

Man arrested with
gun at checkpoint

Washington, Jan. 17: A man with a loaded handgun and more than 500 rounds of ammunition has been arrested in Washington at a security checkpoint near the US Capitol, authorities said.

Wesley Allen Beeler, of Virginia, had driven to a checkpoint on Friday evening and tried to use a phony credential to access the restricted area where President-elect Joe Biden will be inaugurated next week, according to a document filed in Washington, DC Superior Court.

As officers checked against an authorised access list, one of them noticed decals on the back of Beeler's pick-up truck that said "Assault Life," with an image of a rifle, and another with the message: "If they come for your guns, give 'em your bullets first." Under questioning, Beeler told officers he had a Glock handgun

Others agreed, setting off a dizzying torrent of military flights and convoys into the region. "The peaceful transfer of power is a central tenet of American democracy, and Connecticut stands ready to aid in the protection of our country," said Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont, who had initially approved sending 100 Guard and on Friday agreed to send 200 more. All told, more than 130 US Air Guard flights in the past 72 hours have carried at least 7,000 Guard troops to Joint Base Andrews in Maryland,

in the vehicle.

A search uncovered a loaded handgun, more than 500 rounds of ammunition, shotgun shells and a magazine for the gun, the court document said. Beeler was arrested on charges including possession of an unregistered firearm and unlawful possession of ammunition, a police report said.

Following his arrest, Beeler said it was "an honest mistake" and that he was a private security guard who got lost on his way to work near the Capitol.

Washington is under a high state of alert ahead of Biden's Wednesday inauguration, after a mob of President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol on January 6.

Five people died in the assault, including a police officer. *—AFP*

according to US officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal numbers.

Thousands more are in buses and military trucks, thundering up highways toward Washington. Army Gen. Dan Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau, called adjutants general around the country, and others, such as Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy, called governors to seek help. *—AP*

Pfizer tries to ease Europe's
worries on vaccine delivery

Paris, Jan. 17: Pharma giant Pfizer tried to ease concerns in Europe about deliveries of its Coronavirus vaccine as nations across the world doubled down on restrictions to fight the rampaging pandemic. The Coronavirus pandemic is showing no signs of slowing down, with infections surging past 94 million and more than two million deaths, and Europe among the hardest-hit parts of the world.

Worries have grown that delays in the delivery of Pfizer-BioNTech shots could hamper a European vaccine rollout which has already faced heavy criticism across the continent.

Work is ongoing at the Pfizer plant in Belgium to increase capacity, and the firm and its German partner BioNTech said Saturday it would allow them to "significantly" scale up vaccine production in the second quarter.

Deliveries would be back to the original schedule to the EU from January 25, they pledged. Several Nordic and Baltic countries have described the situation as "unacceptable", while Belgium's vaccination strategy task force condemned a lack of consultation by Pfizer over the deliveries as "incomprehensible". France, which crossed 70,000 Covid-19 deaths on the weekend, is set to begin a campaign to inoculate people over 75 from Monday. Russia plans to begin mass vaccinations the same day.

Despite the rollout of vaccines, countries still have few options but to rely on movement and distancing restrictions to control the spread of the virus. Curbs will be tight-

Mexico sees 2nd straight day
of 20,000 Covid-19 infections

Mexico City, Jan. 17: Mexico posted its second straight day of more than 20,000 Coronavirus cases Saturday, suggesting a surge in a country already struggling in many areas with overflowing hospitals. There were 20,523 newly confirmed cases Saturday, after 21,366 infections were reported Friday.

That was about double the daily rate of increase just a week ago. Reporting normally declines on weekends, suggesting next week may bring even higher numbers. The country also recorded 1,219 more deaths, a new record. The country has now seen almost 1.63 million total infections and has registered over 140,000 deaths so far in the pandemic. The country's

ened in Italy and Switzerland from Monday, while Britain will require testing of all international arrivals.

The number of infections in the United States — the worst-hit country — soared to more than 23.7 million on Saturday, with close to 400,000 deaths, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally.

The pandemic has battered the American economy, with millions left jobless, and President-elect Joe Biden has vowed to step up efforts to end the pandemic.

Biden will sign executive

FB PUTS WARNING ON CARDINAL VIDEO

Mexico City, Jan. 17: Facebook has placed a warning screen over a rambling chat by retired Mexican Cardinal Juan Sandoval Iniguez in which he claims Coronavirus vaccines contain a satanic microchip.

The Facebook screen warns viewers, "This post repeats information about Covid-19 that independent fact checkers say is false." However, viewers on Saturday could still see

extremely low testing rate means that is an undercount, and official estimates suggest the real death toll is closer to 195,000.

Teams vaccinating frontline health care workers administered about 25,000 shots on

orders on the day he is inaugurated next week, including action on the coronavirus crisis.

The incoming administration has pledged to set up thousands of immunisation sites, deploy mobile clinics and expand the public health workforce in a bid to revive the stuttering rollout of vaccines.

In some nations, that resentment has sparked protests.

Roughly 10,000 people marched in Austria's capital Vienna against coronavirus restrictions on Saturday, calling on the government to resign.

DAY 1: BIDEN TO SIGN
EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Washington, Jan. 17: Joe Biden's top aide said Saturday the incoming president would sign about a dozen executive orders on his first day in office, as police fearing violence from Trump supporters staged a nationwide security operation ahead of the inauguration. Incoming Biden chief of staff Ron Klain said in a memo to new White House senior staff that the executive orders would address the pandemic, the ailing US economy, climate change and racial justice in America.

"All of these crises demand urgent action," Klain said in the memo.

"In his first 10 days in office, President-elect Biden will take decisive action to address these four crises, prevent other urgent and irreversible harms, and restore America's place in the world,"

Klain added. As he inherits the White House from Donald Trump, Biden's plate is overflowing with acute challenges.

The US is fast approaching 400,000 dead from the Covid-19 crisis and logging well over a million new cases a week as the Coronavirus spreads out of control.

The economy is ailing, with 10 million fewer jobs available compared to the start of the pandemic. And millions of Americans who back Trump refuse to recognise Biden as the legitimate president.

Biden this week unveiled plans to seek \$1.9 trillion to revive the economy through new stimulus payments and other aid, and plans a blitz to accelerate America's stumbling Covid vaccine rollout effort. *—AFP*

**KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LTD.**
(A Government of India Undertaking)

OPEN E-TENDER (SINGLE PACKET SYSTEM)
INVITATION NOTICE

(1) **Name of Work:** Provision of Power Supply & Lighting Arrangement for OHE Depot, Tower Wagon Shed & Traction Sub-station (TSS) between Roha to Verna on Konkan Railway Route in the State of Maharashtra and Goa. **Tender Notice No.: KR/RN-RE/EL/7/1/2021 dt. 18/01/2021. Estimated Cost: ₹ 76,07,839/- excluding GST. EMD: ₹ 1,52,200/-.**

(2) **Name of Work:** Electrification of OHE Depot cum AEE/TRD Office and Power Supply Arrangement for Sectioning and Paralleling Post (SP) / Sub-Sectioning and Paralleling Post (SSP) / Traction Sub-Station (TSS) under Karwar Region in the State of Karnataka. **Tender Notice No.: KR/KW-RE/EL/7/2021 dt. 18/01/2021. Estimated Cost: ₹ 79,31,985/- excluding GST. EMD: ₹ 1,58,700/-.**

Completion Period: Three Months. **Last Date & Time for Online Submission of Tender:** 02/02/2021 up to 15.00 Hrs. **Opening of Tender:** On 02/02/2021 at 15.30 Hrs. Amendments / Corrigendum if any, would be uploaded on IREPS website only. **Submission of Tender Documents:** Through IREPS. Manual Tender Documents shall not be accepted.

SHORT TAKES

More players in Oz Open lockdown

Melbourne: An additional 25 players will have to spend two weeks in quarantine before the Australian Open, organisers said Sunday, as Covid-19 continues to disrupt preparations for the Grand Slam tournament. The players were on a flight from Doha to Melbourne on which one passenger, who is not one of the players, tested positive for coronavirus having tested negative before the flight.

They will join 47 players already confined to their rooms for 14 days in Melbourne, meaning a total of 72 players are now unable to leave their hotel rooms for two weeks.

"There were 58 passengers on the flight, including 25 players. All are already in quarantine hotels," tournament organisers said in a statement on Twitter.

— AFP

England smell win against SL

Galle: Sri Lanka rattled England with three quick wickets late on the fourth day of the first Test in Galle on Sunday, but the visitors remained favourites to win the match with just 36 more runs needed and seven wickets in hand. England were expected to comfortably close in on a victory after Jack Leach took 5-122 with Sri Lanka all out for 359 in their second innings, leaving the visitors needing only 74 to win.

But Sri Lanka struck early, with Dom Sibley (2) and Zak Crawley (8) falling to left-arm spinner Lasith Embuldeniya. Captain Joe Root was run-out for one after a mix-up with Jonny Bairstow. Bairstow and Dan Lawrence, who was making his debut, took a nervous England to 38-3 as bad light brought an early end to proceedings at Galle International Stadium. Earlier, left-arm Jack Leach tighten the noose around the hosts with a five-wicket haul while off-spinner Dom Bess claimed three wickets. Sri Lanka were bundled out for 135 runs in their first innings.

— AFP

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FAIRY TAIL

Magical stand between tailenders Shardul, Sundar keep India afloat

Brisbane, Jan. 17: Debutant Washington Sundar and Shardul Thakur punched above their weight with splendid half-centuries to keep Australia at bay and India bullish after an engrossing third day's play in the series-deciding fourth Test here on Sunday.

Australia's openers — David Warner (20) and Marcus Harris (1) — saw out six overs, and extended the home team's lead to 54 by stumps after India's first innings ended at 336.

However, Australia's lead could have been much more had it not been for a delightful 123-run partnership for the seventh wicket between Washington (62) and Shardul (67), who defied and then attacked the rival bowling attack with gusto.

"We knew their bowlers were tiring out a bit so it was a matter of hanging in there for one hour. We knew we probably would be on top if we hung in," said Shardul at the post-play press conference.

Pacer Josh Hazlewood finished with a well-deserved 5/57 for Australia, a reward for consistently bowling with an impeccable line and length at a brisk pace.

Symbolising the courage shown by the visitors, now rendered almost second-string owing to a plethora of injuries suffered by their top players through the four-match series, Washington and Shardul mixed caution with aggression to bail their team out of a precarious 186 for six. First, they turned unlikely saviours after three soft dismissals pushed India on the back foot, and in the final session, the two opened up and went after the world-class Australian attack.

If his nine fours were not enough, Shardul bludgeoned off-spinner Nathan Lyon, holder of 397 wickets, for a maximum over long-on to reach his maiden Test fifty in style in only his second match.

In fact, Shardul opened his account with a hooked six off the world's number one bowler, Pat Cummins.



Washington Sundar (right) is congratulated by Shardul Thakur after reaching his half century against Australia on Day Three of the fourth Test at the Gabba in Brisbane on Saturday.

— AFP

Playing in his first Test, Washington too soon got to his maiden fifty in the traditional format while finding the fence seven times and clearing it once.

He became the first visiting cricketer in Australia in 74 years to grab three wickets and smash a half-century on debut. The one before him was also an Indian, Dattu Phadkar, who made 51 while batting at No.8 and took three wickets during a 1947/48 tour.

— PTI

INDIA'S FOURTH HIGHEST SEVENTH WICKET STAND AGAINST AUSTRALIA

- Shardul Thakur and Washington Sundar added 123 runs for the seventh wicket in India's first innings on the third day.
- It was India's fourth best stand for this wicket position against Australia. Ravindra Jadeja and Rishabh Pant are the only Indian pair to add more than 200 runs for the seventh wicket against Australia. They added 204 at Sydney in 2018-19.
- Overall, it was eighth century stand for the seventh wicket for India against Australia.
- Washington Sundar became only the sixth Indian batsman to score a fifty on debut against Australia.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

SCORECARD

Australia 1st Innings: 369
India 1st Innings (overnight 62/2): Rohit Sharma c Starc b N. Lyon 44, Shubman Gill c Smith b P. Cummins 7, Cheteshwar Pujara c Paine b J. Hazlewood 25, Ajinkya Rahane c Wade b M. Starc 37, Mayank Agarwal c Smith b J. Hazlewood 38, Rishabh Pant c Green b J. Hazlewood 23, Washington Sundar c Green b M. Starc 62, Shardul Thakur b P. Cummins 67, Navdeep Saini c Smith b J. Hazlewood 5, Mohammed Siraj b J. Hazlewood 13, T. Natarajan not out 1. Extras (b-5, lb-7 nb-2) 14.

Total (all out in 111.4 overs) 336.
FOW: 1-11, 2-60, 3-105, 4-144, 5-161, 6-186, 7-309, 8-320, 9-328.
Bowling: Mitchell Starc 23-3-88-2, Josh Hazlewood 24.4-6-57-5, Pat Cummins 27-5-94-2, Cameron Green 8-1-20-0, Nathan Lyon 28-9-65-1, Marnus Labuschagne 1-1-0-0.
Australia 2nd Innings: Marcus Harris (batting) 1, David Warner (batting) 20. **Total (For no loss in 6 overs) 21.**
Bowling: Mohammed Siraj 2-1-12-0, T. Natarajan 3-0-6-0, Washington Sundar 1-0-3-0.

ISL SEASON 7

Laszlo looks to add more wins

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 17

Chennaiyin FC coach Csaba Laszlo will look to add some wins to his team's tally when they take on SC East Bengal in the Indian Super League at the Fatorda Stadium, on Monday.

Chennaiyin have lost just one of their last seven matches. That seems quite impressive, but the two-time champs have had five draws in their last 11 games, on par with their opponents SC East Bengal. Only NorthEast United have played more draws this season than the two teams.

Coach Laszlo hoped his team would do better. "We had a lot of draws where we could have won games but I think we will get stronger in the second part of the season and I hope that the team will show not just their fighting spirit but also that we can score more goals and win games," he said.

SCEB's new signing Bright Enobarkhare has made a huge impact for the Kolkata side, who have managed to crawl their way higher after spending most of the first part of the league at the bottom.

However, the Chennaiyin coach is ready for the challenge which awaits his side

on Monday. "SC East Bengal got some good new players in. They try hard in the offense but I also have some good defensive players. We are strong in the midfield and we are also a team that stays compact. If we stay compact, I think we have enough quality to win the game against SCEB," said Laszlo.

Chennaiyin has had to endure many injuries this season, but the coach sounded optimistic and positive. "We have players waiting to show their talent and the atmosphere and chemistry in the team is good," he said.

SCEB are unbeaten in their last six games, and coach Robbie Fowler's team is now just five points below the playoffs position. Fowler believes his side can make it through and said, "There are plenty of positives we can gather. There are a lot of points to play for and we'll continue to try and get those points. So until it's mathematically impossible, we will go on believing that we can do it."

"Morale is absolutely fantastic. We are taking baby steps to get to where we believe we should and want to be. We got to keep going and keep doing what we got to do. Let's not lose games and that's what we are trying to do," added Fowler.

TEAM MRF FINISH ON PODIUM AT ARCTIC LAPLAND RALLY

Chennai, Jan. 17: Team MRF Tyres secured a podium position at the Arctic Lapland Rally, a round of the Finnish National Championship with Emil Lindholm and Mikael Korhonen taking third position.

The final day of the rally started with a monster 42km test with temperatures dipping to -8 degrees and loose snow making the conditions quite tough. Both the Team MRF Tyres crews tamed the conditions with Lindholm/Korhonen finishing second on stage, five seconds off the stage winner Juha Salo/Mikko Markkula. The average pace of the MRF Tyres duo was 132kmph. The final

three stages saw tough conditions on stage with loose snow making the conditions unpredictable. Despite this, Lindholm/Korhonen took a second and two fourth places on stage to cement their podium place.

Lindholm said, "This is one of the great rallies in Europe. The Arctic Lapland Rally is one of the most traditional winter rallies in the rally world, and to achieve a podium place an amazing achievement. The MRF snow and ice tyres worked perfectly in on the long freezing stages which featured a lot of snow and ice. The weather on the route continued to change and it was hard to predict."

FINANCIAL Chronicle

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	49,034.67 -1.11
Nifty 50	14,433.70 -1.11
\$&P 500*	3,768.25 -0.72
Dollar (₹)	73.04 0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.71 0.01
Euro (₹)	88.70 0.17
Gold (10gm) (₹)	48,690.286 0.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.10 -2.34
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.988 1.08
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.087 -0.92

* As of 8:30 PM IST

FPIs invest close to ₹18,500 cr in stocks this month



Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) put in ₹14,866 crore in Indian capital markets in the first half of January with participants expecting strong third-quarter results by companies. As per depositors' data, FPIs invested a net ₹18,490 crore into equities but pulled out ₹3,624 crore from debt segment between January 1 and January 15. This translated into a total net investment of ₹14,866 crore.

■ May propose SLR, CRR requirements for big players

RBI mulls stricter norms for NBFCs

AFTAB AHMED, SWATI BHAT & NUPUR ANAND
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, JAN. 17

India's central bank is likely to propose tightening rules on "shadow banks" in a bid to strengthen solvency and sustainability of a sector that has been showing signs of stress in recent years, two sources said.

The Reserve Bank of India has been trying to tighten regulatory norms on the sector since Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services, the largest non-bank financial company, went bankrupt in 2018 and Dewan Housing Finance Corp and Altico Capital defaulted on payments in 2019.

The RBI is expected to set out proposals in a discussion paper this week, recommending that bigger shadow banks maintain a statutory liquidity ratio, the sources said.

India's banks must maintain at least 18 per cent worth of deposits that they must hold in cash, gold or government securities.

The RBI could also suggest large non-banks be required to maintain a cash reserve ratio. For banks this ratio is 3 per cent, reduced from 4 per cent in a measure the central bank imposed that is to be reversed after March 31.

The move could be a huge cash drain for the sector which is currently free from maintaining these reserve ratios, allowing them to lend to subprime lenders as well.

CUTTING SYSTEMIC RISKS

- ▶ RBI is expected to recommend phased implementation of reserve ratios
- ▶ Currently banks must maintain at least 18% of deposits as statutory liquidity ratio
- ▶ They must also set aside 3% of deposits as cash reserve ratio
- ▶ Mandating the ratios could proved to be a huge cash drain for the sector

FINMIN LOOKS AT BANK INVESTMENT COMPANY

New Delhi, Jan. 17: The finance ministry is looking at other avenues for affordable capital infusion, including setting up of a Bank Investment Company (BIC), as the RBI has raised concern over the issuance of zero coupon bonds for recapitalisation of public sector banks (PSBs), sources said.

Setting up BIC as a holding company or a core investment company was suggested by the P. J. Nayak committee. The report recommend-

ed transferring shares of the government in the banks to the BIC, which would become the parent holding company of all these banks, as a result of this, all the PSBs would become 'limited' banks. BIC will be autonomous and it will have the power to appoint the board of directors and make other policy decisions about subsidiaries.

BIC will serve as a super holding company and reduce the dependence of PSBs on government support.

— PTI

The proposal is expected to recommend a phased implementation of the reserve ratios, giving non-banks time to comply, one official said.

"Cost of compliance to rules and regulations should be perceived as an investment, as any inadequacy in this regard will

prove to be detrimental," RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said in a speech on Saturday, referring to increased regulation in recent years for banks and shadow banks.

One official said that move is to avoid failures of big shadow banks that could pose systemic risks

and is expected to encourage some of the larger ones to move towards becoming full-time banks.

But shadow banks believe the new norms will hurt their operations.

Shadow banks enjoy "certain flexibilities which allow them to do last-mile financing which banks can't do," said an executive at a non-bank. "Blurring the lines" between banks and non-banks would "be detrimental for India, where financial inclusion is still low."

At its last monetary policy meeting last month Das said regulations of shadow banks need review and that a discussion paper would be issued by mid-January.

There are nearly 10,000 shadow banks in India but just over two dozens are thought to be large enough to pose systemic risks, sources said.

Raising liquidity ratios "or other liquidity buffers could pose a drag on their earnings" said A.M. Karthik, head of financial sector ratings at Icra. Lenders will also have to manage their treasuries more effectively, which would entail additional operating costs, he said.

The RBI will also recommend stricter checks on thousands of smaller non-banks, one official said. The central bank may not propose norms such as statutory lending or cash-reserve ratios, but it will recommend more scrutiny of their books, the official said.

— Reuters

WFH bares wage disparity for industrial homeworkers

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 17

While the pandemic has brought 'work from home' to the limelight as a strategy to prevent mass unemployment, traditional homeworkers in India earn 60 per cent less than their counterparts who do not work from home, finds a study by the International Labour Organisation.

In India home work is dominated by industrial homeworkers, who are employees working from their home premises. The Periodic Labour Force Survey in 2018 has identified 31 lakh as homeworkers. When 2.35 million home-based beedi rollers and almost 8,00,000 home-based embroiderers were recast as probable homeworkers, the total homeworkers in India stood at 62,41,333, says ILO.

Around 66 per cent of these homeworkers are women. Most of them are in the age group of 35-59 years of age. Further, 58 per cent are into craft and related trades.

The industrial homeworkers of India are paid by piece and their earnings are just 41 per cent that of workers who do not work from home. The monthly earnings of garment workers in India are 11 per cent of the average Indian wage.

The earnings gap is 18 per cent due to fewer hours and 82 per cent due to very low hourly wages as they are paid per piece. In India homeworkers in all occupational categories are paid less.



The gender wage gap is higher among homeworkers in low or middle income countries like India, Mexico and Argentina. However, average weekly working hours for women homeworkers were higher at 36 hours, while it was 28 hours for non-home-based women workers.

At one end of the category of homeworkers are some of the poorest workers in the world of work, such as the 2.5 million women rolling beedi in India, while at the other end are the well-educated and highly paid employees of leading corporations working remotely from their home. In India, the Department of Telecommunications has given IT workers an exemption that allows them to work from home. This has led to 90 per cent of India's 4.3 million strong IT workforce shift-

ing to full-time telework, says ILO.

"Given the possibility of other labour market disruptions in the future, homeworking may well feature as a key method of operation adopted by firms and their workers," says ILO. Hence, the governments have the responsibility of establishing comprehensive home work policies. Key policy areas include improving the visibility of homeworkers, raising awareness of their rights and responsibilities, setting fair wages and limiting working hours, ensuring safe and healthy workplaces, eliminating child labour, applying a strategic compliance model of enforcement, ensuring social protection coverage, ensuring access to quality childcare and promoting training and career development.