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CHENNAI | SUNDAY 25 | OCTOBER 2020

Vol. 16 No. 211 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES | ₹4.00

WEATHER



Max: 33°C
Min: 25°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aippasi 9
Tithi: Navami /Dashami
Star: Thiruvonam/ Avittam
Rahukalam:
4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm

DECCAN Chronicle

wishes its readers
Happy Ayudha Pooja.
The offices and press of
Deccan Chronicle will
remain closed on October
25 (Sunday) and there
will be no edition dated
October 26 (Monday).

COUNTER POINT



I promise to get a Covid vaccine manufacturing unit in your town and provide jobs!

BJP slams Cong on selective outrage over rape cases

New Delhi, Oct. 24: The BJP hit out at Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday for their “selective outrage” in cases of atrocities against women as it questioned their ‘silence’ over the alleged rape and killing of a six-year-old girl in Punjab.

Noting that the young girl belonged to a Dalit migrant family from Bihar, finance minister and senior BJP leader Nirmala Sitharaman also took a swipe at Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav, questioning if he had asked Rahul Gandhi about the issue while holding a joint poll campaign with him in the state.

Attacking Yadav, she referred to a news report of 2008 to talk about the “allegations of eve-teasing and misbehaviour with women against the RJD brothers”, a reference to him and his elder brother Tej Pratap.

“It (the Punjab incident) may not hurt the RJD because that is how things were when they were in power,” Sitharaman told reporters while flaying Lalu Prasad Yadav’s party for the “jungle raj” during its rule in Bihar during 1990-2005.

Hitting out at the

● **“Why is the brother-sister pair not going and voicing horror in Hoshiarpur? Why not in Rajasthan? The selective cry of outrage that the Congress wants to show when it is elsewhere but not in states governed by it is completely exposed,” Nirmala Sitharaman said**



Congress, she said, “The pretentious Congress has not said a word. The tweet-friendly Rahul Gandhi has not tweeted on the Hoshiarpur incident. There has been no outrage. And no picnic either.”

Her ‘picnic’ jibe was in reference to Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi’s visit to Hathras in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh following the alleged gangrape of a Dalit girl, who died in a Delhi hospital subsequently.

The BJP had accused Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi of practising “political tourism”.

“The Congress party should stand up and answer. Does this kind of selective outrage suit the stature of their party?”

“Why is the brother-sister pair not going and voicing horror in Hoshiarpur? Why not in Rajasthan? The selective cry of outrage that the Congress

wants to show when it is elsewhere but not in states governed by it is completely exposed,” Nirmala Sitharaman said.

Stating that crimes like rape should not be politicised, she said certain political parties are selective in voicing horror.

Another senior BJP leader and Union minister Prakash Javadekar also slammed the two Congress leaders and asked why had they not paid a visit to the family of the victim in Punjab yet.

He accused Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi of going on a “political tou” to Hathras, as he questioned the lack of a similar reaction from the two leaders to ghastly crimes against women in Punjab and Rajasthan, which are ruled by the Congress. They go to these places for “photo-op”, Javadekar said, referring to the Congress leaders’ visit to Hathras. — *PTI*

Govt waives interest on loans up to ₹2 crore

New Delhi, Oct. 24: In a relief to borrowers at the onset of the festive season, the government on late Friday night announced waiver of interest on interest for loans up to ₹2 crore irrespective of whether moratorium was availed or not.

The department of financial services came out with operational guidelines in the backdrop of Supreme

● **The department of financial services came out with operational guidelines in the backdrop of Supreme Court's direction to implement the interest waiver scheme, which is likely to cost the exchequer ₹6,500 crore**

Court’s direction to implement the interest waiver scheme, which is likely to cost the exchequer ₹6,500 crore.

The apex court on October 14 directed the Centre to implement “as soon as pos-

sible” interest waiver on loans of up to ₹2 crore under the RBI moratorium scheme in view of the Covid-19 pandemic saying the common man’s Deepavali is in the government’s hands.

As per the guidelines, the scheme can be availed by borrowers in specified loan accounts for a period from March 1 to August 31, 2020. “Borrowers who have loan accounts having sanctioned limits and outstanding amount of not exceeding ₹2 crore (aggregate of all facilities with lending institutions) as on February 29 shall be eligible for the scheme,” it said. — *PTI*

Last date for filing I-T returns Dec. 31 for individuals

New Delhi, Oct. 24: In a relief to taxpayers, the government on Saturday further extended the deadline for filing returns by individual taxpayers for FY 2019-20 by a month till December 31.

Also, the due date of furnishing Income Tax Returns (ITRs) for taxpayers whose accounts require to be audited has been extended till January 31, 2021. The government had earlier in May extended various due dates for filing ITRs for FY 2019-20 from July 31 to November 30, to give compliance relief to taxpayers due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In a statement, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said,

“The due date for furnishing of Income Tax Returns for the other taxpayers [for whom the due date (i.e. before the extension by the said notification) as per the Act was July 31, 2020] has been extended to December 31, 2020.” — *PTI*

Proposal to provide 7.5% quota is AIADMK’s brainchild: Jayakumar

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 24

The proposal to provide 7.5 per cent reservation for students from government schools in medical college admission was purely a brainchild of the AIADMK and the DMK had no role in its conceptualization, Fisheries Minister D Jayakumar said on Saturday. Taking potshots at the agitation organized by the DMK in front of Raj Bhavan, Jayakumar said that the opposition party had never spoken about giving exclusive reservation for students studying in government school anywhere, anytime.

It was the government, under Edappadi K Palaniswami Chief Minister that formulated the plan and also announced it in the Assembly. Even after passing the Bill to provide the reservation the government had been following it up with the Governor, seeking his approval for it. ■ **P3**



DMK president MK Stalin along with party cadres stages a protest against Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit over the delay in signing the Medical Admission Reservation Bill, in Chennai, on Saturday. — *DC*

More pressure on TN Governor to act on 7.5% medical seats quota

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT 24

“If upholding social justice and making efforts to ensure that poor students gain admission in medical colleges is playing politics, so be it. We are indeed happy to play politics,” said DMK President MK Stalin.

Addressing a massive crowd of protestors who had

gathered near the Raj Bhavan for the DMK’s agitation on Saturday to put pressure on Governor Banwarilal Purohit to give his nod for the Bill providing for 7.5 per cent reservation in medical college admissions to students from government schools, Stalin pointed out that it had been more than 40 days since the Bill was sent for approval. ■ **P3**

Kapil on road to recovery



Indian 1983 World Cup winning captain Kapil Dev gestures as he recovers after going through a surgery, in New Delhi. — *Twitter image*

India shoots down Pak quadcopter

Jammu, Oct. 24: Indian Army troops on Saturday (October 24) shot down a Pakistani Army quadcopter along the Line of Control (LoC) in Keran sector of Jammu and Kashmir.

The incident took place at around 8 am on Saturday. The Pakistani quadcopter made by Chinese company DJI Mavic 2 Pro model was shot down by the alert troops while it was flying over own position there.

Indian Army has been on a high alert against Pakistani

attempts to infiltrate terrorists or carry out Border Action Team (BAT) attacks by its special forces against Indian positions on the Line of Control.

Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane had recently said that Pakistan has been trying to continue with its nefarious designs of pushing terrorists into the Indian territory but such attempts are being foiled by the Indian troops deployed in the front.

— *Agencies*

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SHORT TAKES

Pondy registers 128 new Covid-19 cases, 2 more deaths

Puducherry, Oct. 24: Puducherry clocked 128 fresh cases of coronavirus infection on Saturday taking the overall tally to 34,112 while two people died of the disease, pushing the toll to 586.

While Puducherry region accounted for 103 fresh cases out of the total 128 new cases Karaikal had 8, Yanam eleven and Mahe had six cases.

The fresh cases were identified at the end of examination of 3865 samples, a release from Director of Health and Family Welfare services S Mohan Kumar said.

Of the overall 34,112 Covid cases in the Union Territory 3,912 were now active, 29,614 were treated and discharged.

He said the two people who died of the infection had complaints of Covid pneumonia.

The Director noted that 187 patients were discharged from hospitals during last 24 hours.

The fatality and recovery rates were 1.72 percent and 86.81 percent respectively.

The Director said 2.85 lakh samples were tested so far and it was found that 2.48 lakh samples out of them to be negative.

Result of examination of remaining samples was awaited.

While one of the two patients, who succumbed to infection was 38 year old, the other patient was 67 year old, he added.

— PTI

Women will be in the vanguard of governance: Bedi

Puducherry, Oct. 24: Striking

a note of optimism, Puducherry Lt Governor Kiran Bedi on Saturday said women would be in the vanguard of self governance in the union territory after civic polls are held, which are due for nearly a decade.

With the completion of delimitation of wards and related tasks, the local body elections are expected to be held for five municipalities, 10 commune panchayats and 98 village panchayats, which together have more than 800 wards.

Against this background, Bedi, in a video message to people said, "One third representation would be available for women in the civic bodies, women would therefore be in the vanguard of local self governance and Puducherry as a whole is in for an amazing change in the coming years."

Once representatives for civic bodies were elected by the people, there might be no need for public to visit 'Raj Nivas' to seek redress of grievances as these could be addressed at the local level, she said.

Women, elected to civic bodies have an opportunity to check alcoholism as well, the Lt Governor said adding she looked forward to them heralding a new era of progress when elections to local bodies are completed.

Management skills should also be augmented for women and the onus was now on Local Administration and Rural Development Departments to meet the requirement, she noted.

Bedi had appointed Roy P Thomas as State Election Commissioner, and measures to hold the civic polls has already been initiated by him.

The tenure (2006-11) of elected local bodies, including municipal councils ended in July 2011.

Subsequently, to hold civic polls, the State Election Commission had issued notifications which included aspects like allotment of reserved seats on the basis of delimitation of wards completed in 1995 and on the 1991 census.

The matter went to the court as well and the delimitation exercise has now been completed.

— PTI

RPF busts tatkal scam, techie held

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 24

The Railway Protection Force personnel have unearthed a tatkal ticketing scam and arrested an alumnus of IIT-Kharagpur in Tiruppur on Saturday. In a joint operation the RPF intelligence officials of Tiruppur and officers of RPF cyber cell at Southern Railway headquarters, Chennai, arrested S. Yuvarajaa of Pothiyapalayam, Kangeyam taluk, Tiruppur and seized a laptop and other gadgets from him.

According to sources,



The arrested IIT alumnus Yuvarajaa

Yuvarajaa completed BE (aeronautical) in Anna University and M.Tech (aerospace) from IIT-Kharagpur. He developed two android applications 'Super Tatkal' and 'Super Tatkal Pro' to run the racket. The fake apps had

enabled the customers to obtain confirmed tatkal e-tickets owing to the speed of the application.

According to the modus operandi, the users of both the fake mobile applications had to purchase pre-paid coins pack (10 coins worth ₹ 20). For each booking, 5 coins were deducted from their coins balance. The payment mode for both the android apps was "Instamojo" payment gateway through which Yuvarajaa got the payments credited to his savings bank account. He swindled nearly Rs 20 lakh from 2016 to 2020. Approximately one lakh

customers had downloaded the fake apps. The accused has been arrested and a case was registered against him under section 143 (2) of Railways Act.

Personnel at RPF Cyber Cell, Chennai played a key role in analysis of data and identification of the fake app developer's location and also collected digital evidence including server source code, application source code, end-users list and bank statements of the accused. Both the illegal apps - 'Super Tatkal' & 'Super Tatkal Pro' apps have been deactivated in the play store as well as in browser.

High court imposes cost of ₹50K on police constable

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, OCT. 24

Strongly deprecating the conduct of a grade-II police constable, working in District Armed Reserve in not appreciating the mercy shown by the authorities, modifying the punishment of dismissal from service for his unauthorised absence into a minor punishment, the Madras high court has dismissed with a cost of Rs 50,000, his petition challenging the order of punishment.

Dismissing the petition filed by S.Kumaresan, Justice V.Parthiban said in the considered opinion of this court, the petitioner deserved to be dealt with more severely, as he appears to be a self-absorbed person with no sense of correctional



behavior. Although this court was inclined to direct the authorities to impose a stringent penalty on the petitioner, refraining from issuing any such direction by giving the benefit of doubt to the petitioner that he may after all a foolhardy person. "In any event, the petitioner having chosen to approach this court in the above backdrop, need

to be shown as to how such ill-advised or self-assumed confidence of his to maintain the challenge before this court, would result in being imposed with deterrent cost. In the said circumstances, the petition is dismissed with an exemplary cost of Rs 50,000 payable by the petitioner within a period of two weeks from the date of receipt of copy of this order. The cost is to be paid to the Hon'ble Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund (Covid-19). In case, the petitioner has not paid the cost within the stipulated time, the respondents are directed to deduct the same from the monthly salary of the petitioner and remit the cost to the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund (Covid-19)", the judge added.

Traffic hit as truck flips on arterial road

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 26

Traffic on the Chennai-Tiruchy National Highway came to a standstill for more than four hours on Saturday after a tipper truck flipped. Traffic police barricaded the road but found it difficult to remove the vehicle and ease the traffic.

The truck, which started from Pulikoradu stone quarry near Tambaram, was carrying m-sand to a site in Medavakkam. At around 6 am, when the vehicle was crossing Chromepet on the Pallavaram-Thoraipakkam radial road, the back wheel of the vehicle developed a snag and the truck flipped.

"Luckily there was no motorist near the container while it flipped. Else there would have been casualties. But since it was the morning hour, most of the public were stuck in the traffic," said a police officer. Later, cranes and earth movers were pressed into service and the container was removed from the site. By around 10 am, the road was cleared. The Chromepet traffic investigation police registered a case.



Visitors enjoy the festival weekend at Mahabalipuram.

>>>>>>>

The remains of a ruined fort atop the Javadhu hills, Tiruvannamalai district was recently unearthed by historians and archaeologists. A team comprising the secretary, Tiruvannamalai district historical studies centre, C Balamurugan, Historical analyst Palaniswamy and three others — Tirupati, Kumar and Perumal — found the remains of a crumbled fort built in black stones, measuring 200 metres in length, reinforced by a brick moat-like structure to drain water. The team believes that the fort is the historical Naviram fort of chieftain Nannan portrayed in Sangam poem 'Malaipadukadam', and added that the finding is a milestone in their research work. — K. Senthil Nathan



Durga puja celebrated



A priest performs puja at Bengal Association in T Nagar. Visitors are not allowed for morning and evening pujas due to Covid precautionary norms. They can, however, watch the live web telecast of the puja.

— DC

Teacher gets double lifer in sex abuse case

DC CORRESPONDENT
NAGAPATTINAM, OCT. 24

A lower court awarded double life to a temporary teacher of a panchayat union primary school at Kondal village near Sirkazhi in the district for sexually assaulting two school girls of class 3 and class 5, in the class room on January 24, 2014.

According to the prosecution, the school teacher Moovendhan was arrested by the all women police, Sirkazhi, and a case filed against him before the special sessions court trying Pocso offences.

Judge Tamilarasi awarded double life sentence on a count and also convicted and sentenced the accused to undergo seven years imprisonment for another count, and also slapped a fine of ₹25,000 on the accused. The judge directed that the sentences run concurrently.

Cracker unit death toll touches 7

DC CORRESPONDENT
MADURAI, OCT. 25

The death toll in the fire accident at the cracker unit near Madurai touched seven, on Saturday.

The accident at Muruganeri at Peraivoor taluk in Madurai district on Friday claimed the life of five women workers right on the spot, and three more, Sundaramoorthy (39), P Lakshmi (45) and M Mahalakshmi (47), had sustained severe burns and were rushed to the Virudhunagar government hospital, from where they were referred to the Rajaji government medical college hospital, Madurai.

Among the three injured, P. Lakshmi died in hospital late on Friday night followed by another woman worker, Mahalakshmi, in the wee hours of Saturday.

Sundaramoorthy sustained 80 per cent burns, and is under treatment at the Madurai Rajaji hospital, and is said to be battling for life.

T Kallupatti police registered case against three including the license holder, Shanmugarajan, unit manager, Vairamuthu and the foreman of the unit, under Section 304 for culpable homicide not amounting to murder, and under provisions of the Explosives Act.

Police arrested the manager of the cracker unit and are on the lookout for two other accused.

The unit is said to have been manufacturing fancy crackers, without proper license.

3 houses burgled after snapping power

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 24

The police have launched a search for some burglars who looted locked houses in a village in Kanchipuram district after snapping the electricity connection.

According to the police, the burglars struck at three houses in Eadmachi village, Salavakkam, in Kanchipuram district at around 12:30 am on Saturday.

They broke into the house of one Damodaran, in Edamachi village's middle street, and looted ₹2 lakh in cash and seven sovereigns of gold. Similarly, the locked house of one Subramaniya Pillai in the village was burgled. However, the police are yet to ascertain the loss. Another house in the village was also burgled.

Preliminary investigation by the police revealed that unidentified gang cut the power to the village around midnight and burgled the locked houses.

The Salavakkam police registered a case and began an investigation.

Similarly, the locked house of Subramaniya Pillai in the village was burgled. However, the police are yet to ascertain the loss. Another house in the village was also burgled

The drama of news



Apsara Reddy

And the point is..

What's made us such a drama-obsessed lot who look everywhere else but within?

As India battles one of its worst economic downturns and unemployment, the emancipated voter seems to look outward. The US elections and Trump's many outlandish statements are the point of discussion in every drawing room. As India's third-largest state, Bihar goes to polls it's of little relevance to people. Even senior politicians of regional parties are excited to know about the US presidential elections as corona rages on in their respective states.

This is what ails India and its drama-loving populace. We care about the theatrics. We tune in, get involved in the thick of the emotion and with it let the most crucial things that affect us slide into oblivion. Sushant Singh Rajput took over our mind

space in the midst of the Indo-China spat. Then a supposed Bollywood drug scandal got us all talking sides as Hathras perpetrators became a blink and miss news. Deepika Padukone and blocking Alia Bhatt's next film became top priority for netizens. As unemployment touches a 45-year old high youth of this country are devising hashtags for the US elections, trashing Bollywood or better still creating memes on their favourite punching bags "Pappu" and "Feku".

There is a dwindling interest in what's happening within or how this moment is going to define how we will live and grow. Shrugging off hard news as "boring" and latching on to the tabloid news bandwagon has resulted in a country full of glamour and scandal obsessed news consumers.

The loud, eyeball grabbing news and theatrics is what is selling in India.



News anchors taking positions, celebrating influencers as opposed to the real doers and those with impact, not just influence. They are two different things. We live in a healthy democracy where there is a massive amount of content and choices for us to tune into. But why are we paying so little attention to our own civic issues, corruption, elections, policies and women and child welfare. Rape in our own backyard sparks at the most a Facebook status and we are onto channel surfing.

The point is ideological driven media moguls have exploited the media's political and commercial value. Our culture that is



all about purity and sanctity is also has a voracious appetite for voyeurism, and this the press has taken complete advantage of. We seem to celebrate someone's fall from grace, salacious affairs, motor-mouth politicians and indulge in media trials.

The point is we need to educate one another about the real value of news. It has the power to change our destiny. Mere entertainment and rabble rousing news outfits cannot shape our views. And before we predict Trumps victory or decry his clownish behaviour, remember the Kisan in our country deserves your attention.

Pit turns a menace on Kamarajar Salai

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, OCT. 24

Even two months after digging a big pit in the middle of Kamarajar Salai in Ramapuram, by metro water for laying a pipeline, the works remains unfinished, creating problems for pedestrians and traffic snarls for motorists.

A temporary fence encircling the pit near Arasaramam junction continues as an epitome of the apathy of officials. Every day thousands of vehicles and pedestrians pass through the road, but the highways department and metro water

officials are engaged in a blame game over the poor condition of the road which they created. With both sides of the congested roads encroached by shops and parked vehicles, commuters have no other option but to use the centre portion of the road resulting in traffic snarls and frequent accidents.

Making the condition worse, rain damaged the entire road. In addition to this, on Saturday truckloads of construction materials were off-loaded on the centre of the road, 100 metres away from the metro water pit, creating another traffic con-

gestion in the area.

A. Paul Dhas, president, Ramapuram Social Welfare Federation, requested officials to level the dug up portion of Thiruvalluvar Salai as the peak winter season is nearing. "We have informed all officials including the highways department and metro water. But they are simply passing the buck. The real victims are taxpayers. "In order to resolve the issue, we want to bifurcate Thiruvalluvar Salai; one stretch from the culvert to Arasaramam junction and other from Arasaramam junction towards Alwarthirunagar," he said.

When DC contacted the officials, they blamed each other for the situation. Prabhu, assistant engineer, highways department, said that they were waiting for the clearance certificate from the metro water authorities to repair the road. Until they do so, we can't do anything there," he says.

Meanwhile, Kannan, superintendent engineer, metro water, claimed that they completed the work weeks ago and gave a clearance certificate to the highways department. "We don't know why they deny the fact. We will take up matters with the higher authorities," he said.

IN BRIEF

Nabard launches sanitation literacy drive

G SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, OCT 24

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) hosted the first sanitation literacy campaign here recently at Kallaperambur village, said a press release issued here by district development manager, Nabard , K Balamurugan.

Balamurugan said Nabard has been part of the noble mission to support the government under the 'Swachh Bharat Mission - Gramin' with necessary funds for construction of toilets in households.

Nabard has so far sanctioned and disbursed Rs 15,000 crore and Rs 12,298 crore respectively, which has led to the construction of 3.29 crore toilets in households across India.

Chairman, Nabard , inaugurated the campaign on October 2 in Mumbai. The plan is to conduct 2,000 campaigns in India, 100 in Tamil Nadu and four in Thanjavur district.

In the first phase held at Kallaperambur, Dr Sarathambal, Thennankudi primary health centre (PHC), J Srinivasan, lead district manager, Indian Overseas Bank, Kamala Selvaraj, president, Kallaperambur panchayat, Meenakshi, regional co-ordinator, Dhan foundation, Balaji, AGM, RBI, Chennai, members of women self help groups and villagers participated.

Case against five AIADMK men for clash

DC CORRESPONDENT
ARIYALUR, OCT. 24

Police have registered a case against local AIADMK secretary and four other AIADMK functionaries for allegedly attacking a DMK functionary and his house here, on Saturday.

Police said a private satellite television in Perambalur gave an award to Government Chief Whip Thamarai S Rajendran on Friday, and Rajendran gave a rousing reception on his arrival at Ariyalur, under the leadership of party's town secretary, Senthil.

This was criticised by one Densi of DMK, and a quarrel began between the AIADMK men and Densi. Subsequently, the same night, Senthil and his supporters went to Densi's house and attacked him and also damaged his house. Densi was injured and the window panes of his house were damaged.

On information, Ariyalur district DMK secretary, SS Sivasankar, admitted Densi to the local government hospital. Meanwhile, a group of DMK men led by Sivasankar gave a complaint to DIG of Police, Tiruchy range, Annie Vijaya, who had visited Ariyalur on Saturday for an inspection.

The DIG ordered Ariyalur police to register a case against Senthil and others. Following this, police registered a case against five AIADMK men including Senthil, president, Eruthukaranpatti village panchayat, Siva, and three others. Police are investigating.

Dry day on October 30

Tiruvavur: Collector T Anand has ordered closure of all Tasmac retail outlets across the district on October 30, on account of Miladi Nabi. In a release here on Saturday, the collector also said the FL2/FL3 licensed shops cum bars have to be closed on that day. Violations would be sternly punished according to rules, added the release.

DMK alliance intact, will win 2021 polls: Mutharasan

ARULOLI M | DC
TIRUNELVELI, OCT. 24

The DMK-led alliance in the state is intact with no confusion, said CPI state secretary R. Mutharasan, and added that the DMK alliance would sweep the 2021 Assembly elections.

During a visit here on Saturday to participate in a party workers meet, Mutharasan condemned police for filing a case against VCK president Thol Thirumavalavan for his alleged comments against Hindu women.

Stating that Thirumavalavan had mentioned only what has been written in Manu Dharma about women, Mutharasan demanded the immediate withdrawal of the case against the VCK leader, who has high regard for women.

Responding to the governor's delay in approving the internal reservation of 7.5 percent for government school students in MBBS admissions, Mutharasan suspected that the Centre was behind the delay.

Reacting to the media on the number of seats the CPI planned to contest in the 2021 assembly election in the DMK alliance, Mutharasan said that it would be decided later. Mutharasan however was confident that the DMK alliance would sweep the 2021 assembly election.

Corona cases coming down in Tamil Nadu

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 24

State health secretary J. Radhakrishnan said coronavirus infection in the state had come down by half due to various efforts of the government, like aggressive testing, fever camps and door-to-door surveys.

Speaking to the media at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital where he congratulated doctors who performed double surgeries on two patients from Andhra Pradesh, he said despite

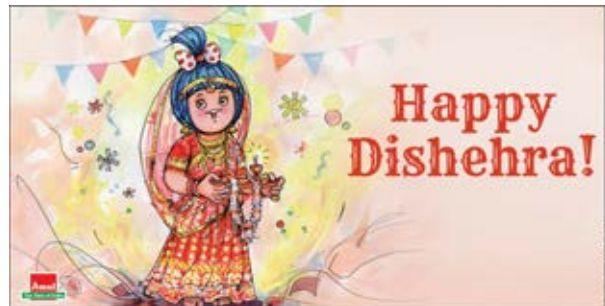
the increased attention given to care of Covid-19 patients, treatment for other diseases continued as usual. The two twin surgeries were an example for that, he said.

Speaking about coronavirus, he urged the public to cooperate and ensure that the infection rate was brought to zero. Since it was festival time, he urged the people to be extra careful and said that wearing facemasks was mandatory.

Signalling a further slide in daily fresh infections, Tamil Nadu on

Saturday recorded 2,886 new cases, pushing the tally to 7,06,136, the health department said. As many as 35 people succumbed to the virus, taking the death toll to 10,893. The state has been witnessing a steady decline in the number of new infections over the past few days. On October 18, Tamil Nadu saw the daily new cases dropping below the 4,000 mark, months after hovering around the 5,000 mark. Recoveries continued to remain significant with 4,024 people walking out of health

care facilities after getting cured, totalling to 6,63,456. Active cases as on Saturday stood at 31,787, the bulletin said. Testing of samples was at 80,237, aggregating to 94,36,817 specimens getting examined till date. Tamil Nadu does not use Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests (RADT) and all tests are RT-PCR (Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction based). Of the 7.06 lakh COVID-19 cases, Chennai's share mounted to 1,94,901 with 779 new infections reported on Saturday.



Oppn leaders support Thiruma

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 24

Political leaders of different hues and many common people expressed their opposition to the police filing six cases against VCK general secretary Thol Thirumavalavan on a complaint filed by Aswathaman of the BJP accusing him of degrading women, while fisheries minister D. Jayakumar supported the police action.

Speaking to the media on Saturday, Jayakumar said Thirumavalavan had insulted women, who should be honoured and respected, by quoting someone called Manu. It should be condemned but DMK president M K Stalin was playing second fiddle to him because the DMK did not respect women, he said.

Stalin accused the Edappadi K. Palaniswami's AIADMK government of being partial and vindictive in registering the case against Thirumavalavan and said that he had only spoken what Periyar E. V. Ramasamy and B. R. Ambedkar had been speaking in their lifetime to create awareness among the people.

The speech was twisted and modified with a view to launching a smear campaign by the BJP and RSS and it was supported by the AIADMK government, said TNCC president K. S. Alagiri.

Manusmriti had passages belittling many oppressed classes of people and speaking in favour of women's disempowerment, said G. Ramkrishnan, Politburo

The speech was twisted and modified with a view to launching a smear campaign by the BJP and RSS and it was supported by the AIADMK government: TNCC president K. S. Alagiri

member of the CPM. Accusing the police of dancing to the tunes of the Sangh Parivar, he recalled that the same police did not act when someone said that all women media persons made compromises in their career.

Demanding the withdrawal of all the cases against Thirumavalavan, MDMK general secretary Vaiko said the AIADMK government was continuing with its act of satisfying the Hindutva forces. Among the other political leaders who supported Thirumavalavan on the issue were: former Union Minister P. Chidambaram, Tamilaga Valvurimai Katchi founder Velmurugan, CPI State secretary R. Mutharasan and Naam Tamilar Katchi coordinator Seeman.

Meanwhile, the VCK organised protests demanding a ban on the book Manudharmam that denigrates women. Several political activists participated in the protests as Dravidar Kazhagam general Secretary K Veeramani had given a call to all to take part in the agitation against Manudharmam.

'Will do away with Neet when DMK comes to power'

From P1

The protest was also to condemn the lackadaisical attitude of the AIADMK government in getting the Governor's consent for the Bill, passed unanimously in the State Assembly.

The Governor was keeping the Bill on hold because he knew that Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami would give it up after some time, Stalin said.

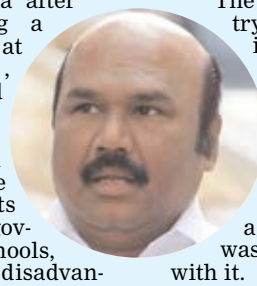
"But we would not give it up. This is the first phase of the agitation demanding approval for the Bill and it would go on till the Governor signs it," he said, wondering why the Governor needed so much time to check on the legality of the Bill when it was drafted only on the basis of the recommendations by the committee headed by former High Court judge Kalaia-rasan.

Referring to the statement issued by the Chief Minister that the Opposition leader was playing politics with the issue on the Governor not approving the Bill, Stalin asked what else did Palaniswami expected the

Min: Needless protest by DMK

From P1

Jayakumar was speaking to the media after inaugurating a fish expo at Saidapet, when he said it was the AIADMK that wanted to encourage the students studying in government schools, who were disadvan-



tagged in many ways, to pursue higher education, particularly medicine. The DMK was now trying to take credit for the entire idea by launching a needless agitation, he said and pointed out that Stalin himself had agreed that he was playing politics with it.

Opposition party to do.

Reiterating the DMK stand that Neet should be abolished, he said that the entrance examination for medical courses did not enter Tamil Nadu till M. Karunanidhi was in power and Palaniswami had let it in with a view to safeguarding his Chief Ministers' post.

Once the DMK came to power, effort would be ini-

tiated to do away with Neet, Stalin averred, describing Neet as an altar on which aspirations of poor children were sacrificed.

Neet was brought in to enable corporate companies to mint money by running coaching centres, he said, adding that even the examination results had thrown up a spate of errors, goof ups and confusions.



Water-logging in Broadway on Saturday.

— DC

Elephant electrocuted in revenue land, finds probe

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, OCT. 24

The electrocution of a wild jumbo in a farm land in Benthoor hamlet near here along Segur additional reserve forest area last Monday, and the way in which the three accused buried the animal's carcass, raised several eyebrows.

Investigations revealed that the land in which the jumbo was electrocuted was a revenue land which had been encroached by the

accused.

Sources said that initially it was thought that the accused trio had taken the piece of private farm land for lease from someone for farming activities. Only later it came to be known that it was a revenue land, categorized as 'village grazing ground' along the Segur additional reserve forest, located in a remote area far away from Benthoor hamlet.

"The three accused were identified as S Vigneshwaran, S K Gopalakrishnan

and Ajithkumar, all hailing from Benthoor hamlet and raising vegetables in a private land adjacent to the revenue land, which over the years they had encroached. Since their encroaching of the revenue land had gone unnoticed, they developed the courage to fence the area and pass electricity at night hours to check the entry of wild animals from the forest. The wild jumbo had sneaked into this land and was electrocuted. The trio burnt the elephant's carcass

to a certain extent, dug a pit in a remote corner of the land and buried it. Now, revenue officials are taking steps to retrieve the encroached land," sources added.

Meanwhile, wildlife activists here wanted the district administration to order a survey of village grazing grounds and other government lands along the forest fringes across the Nilgiris to know the present status of these lands, and to check encroachments on them.

around 1:30 am early on Saturday.

A postmortem was performed on Saturday noon, and the report revealed that the animal had been sick for a long time due to age. Its teeth were completely damaged and the animal had remained unable to chew its food. Wounds on the animal's rear part of the body were infected with worms.

The normal life span of sloth bears is said to be around 15 to 18 years, added the DFO.

ANANTH MATHIVANAN | DC
COIMBATORE, OCT 24

A 15-year-old male sick sloth bear died without responding to treatment in the Coimbatore forest division during the early hours of Saturday.

DFO D Venkatesh, said the bear was found lying inside a bush in a private farmland near Mangalapalayam about 1.5 kms behind Karunya Nagar police station, inside the

Sick sloth bear dies

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT CHENNAI-KANYAKUMARI CORRIDOR PROJECT, KANCHEEPURAM											
Roc.No.R4/946/2019						Dated : 19.10.2020					
The following amendment is issued to the Public notice for the acquisition of lands in 70. Pudupakkam Village, Kanchipuram Taluk, Kanchipuram District for widening the State Highways Road SH-58 (Part - II) Kanchipuram - Arakkonam - Tiruthani Road as published in English Daily "Deccan Chronicle" dated 10.01.2020						District : Kanchipuram Taluk : Kanchipuram Village: No.70.Pudupakkam					
AMENDMENT "FOR"						"READ AS"					
15(2) Publication Sl. No.	Survey No.	Total Extent (Hect)	Extent required Acquired In Sq.Mts.	Immovable assets such as Structures, Wells, Trees, etc., lying on the acquisition a extent	Owner / Interested Person	15(2) Publication Sl. No.	Survey No.	Total Extent (Hect)	Extent required Acquired In Sq.Mts.	Immovable assets such as Structures, Wells, Trees, etc., lying on the acquisition a extent	Owner / Interested Person
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(3)	(4)	(4)
1	224/ 1A1A	0.37.43	1381	Vacant	1001.G.Rajamanickam S/o. Govinda Swamy	1	224/ 1A1A1	0.35.20	1381	Vacant	1001.G.Rajamanickam S/o. Govinda Swamy
2	224/2A	0.06.50	284	Vacant	1001.G.Rajamanickam S/o. Govindasamy 1241.Ramavaidiyanathan S/o.Ramakrishnan 1180. S.Sasikala W/o.P.Sivakumar 1181.S.Vijayanirmala W/o. D.Sivaraaj	2	224/ 2A1	0.05.20	140	Vacant	1001.G.Rajamanickam S/o.Govindasamy 1241.Ramavaidiyanathan S/o.Ramakrishnan
							224/ 2A2	0.01.10	64	Vacant	1180.S.Sasikala W/o.P.Sivakumar
							224/ 2A3	0.00.20	11	Vacant	1181.S.Vijayanirmala W/o.D.Sivaraaj
3	224/ 2D	0.04.50	272	Vacant	1001.G.Rajamanickam S/o. Govindasamy 1241.Ramavaidiyanathan S/o. Ramakrishnan 1181.S.Vijayanirmala W/o. D.Sivaraaj	3	224/ 2D1A	0.03.40	219	Vacant	1001.G.Rajamanickam S/o.Govindasamy 1241.Ramavaidiyanathan S/o. Ramakrishnan
							224/ 2D2	0.01.10	55	Vacant	1181.S.Vijayanirmala W/o.D.Sivaraaj
4	224/4A	0.19.50	334	Vacant	212.Seenuvasa Naicker S/o.Raj Naicker 1552.Kumar S/o.Thanikachalam 1553.Kumar S/o.Thanikachalam	4	224/ 4A1	0.19.50	334	Vacant	212.Seenuvasa Naicker S/o.Raj Naicker 1552.Kumar S/o.Thanikachalam 1553.Kumar S/o.Thanikachalam
5	224/4B1	0.55.80	755	Vacant	1493.N.Selvaraj S/o.A.Narayanan	5	224/ 4B1	0.55.80	650	Vacant	1493.N.Selvaraj S/o.A.Narayanan
10	225/2	1.49.50	637	Compound wall and Iron Gate	1653.Moovendan S/o.Balasubramaniam	10	225/2	1.49.50	637	Compound wall and Gate	1653.Moovendan S/o.Balasubramaniam
15	231/8B	0.33.24	228	Vacant	678.Subramaniam S/o.Kannayiram-1 Chokku S/o. Kannayiram -2 Munusamy S/o. Gengan - 3 Muruvammal W/o.Ekambaram-4 Vadivel S/o.Perumal - 5 Dhanasekaran S/o.Palayathan-6 Kiliyammal W/o.Parasuraman-7 794.Uma W/o.Madiyazhagan 999.D.Jayaprakash S/o.Durairaj	15	231/ 8B1A1	0.30.24	228	Vacant	678.Subramaniam S/o.Kannayiram-1 Chokku S/o. Kannayiram -2 Munusamy S/o. Gengan - 3 Muruvammal W/o.Ekambaram-4 Vadivel S/o.Perumal - 5 Dhanasekaran S/o.Palayathan-6 Kiliyammal W/o.Parasuraman-7
17	231/10	0.63.84	208	Vacant	260.Dhanabakkiam W/o.Paramanandam 1421.Parimala W/o.Selvakumar 1411.Suresh prem Kumar S/o.Paramanandam 926.Kasthuri W/o. Selvam 1152.A. Ramesh S/o. Ellapillai	17	231/ 10A 1A1A1	0.63.84	208	Vacant	260.Dhanabakkiam W/o.Paramanandam 1421.Parimala W/o.Selvakumar 1411.Suresh prem Kumar S/o.Paramanandam 926.Kasthuri W/o. Selvam 1152.A. Ramesh S/o. Ellapillai
DIPR/567/LAND/2020						District Revenue Officer (LA), Tamilnadu Road Sector Project-II, Chennai					

SHORT TAKES

CORRECTION

The headline for the report on *INS Kavaratti* published in these columns on Friday, October 23, should read as 'INS Kavaratti commissioned into Indian Navy' and not as rendered. The error is regretted.

— Editor

MUMBAI WOMAN SLAPS TRAFFIC COP, ARRESTED

SAURABH JOSHI | DC MUMBAI, OCT. 24

A woman rained slaps on a traffic policeman alleging that he abused her, soon after he had intercepted their two-wheeler for riding without a helmet in south Mumbai's Kalbadevi area on Saturday. The video of a woman beating up the policeman went viral following which the 30-year-old woman and her 26-year-old friend were taken into custody. The officials stated that the policeman had not abused them and had asked for a penalty to be paid for riding without a helmet.

The officials said that the policeman Eknath Parte who was posted at the busy Kalbadevi Naka when he intercepted the two-wheeler being driven by Mohsin Khan on which Sadhavika Tiwari was pillion. When Eknath stopped them and confronted the rider not wearing a helmet, he picked up a fight with the official. Sadhavika got violent and manhandled Ekanth alleging he had hurled abuses at her. Soon after she began slapping him with people witnessing the same.

Meanwhile, the traffic police in an official statement, said that Ekanth had not used foul language and had addressed both the accused in a polite manner. Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Yashasvi Yadav praised the constable for not losing his temper and being patient while being thrashed.

MAN BEHEADS MOTHER AFTER DENIED MONEY FOR LIQUOR

Hyderabad, Oct. 24: A man allegedly beheaded his 65-year-old mother and ran away with the severed head after she refused to give him money to buy liquor, police said on Saturday.

The incident was reported from a village in Nagarkurnool district of Telangana in the wee hours of the day, the police said.

The 45-year-old man was caught near a tank in the afternoon with the chopped-off head found hurled into bushes, they said.

A case has been registered and a complaint lodged by the man's older brother, they added.

— PTI



MLA PUTS UP SIGNBOARD IN TULU LANGUAGE

GURURAJ A PANIYADI | DC MANGALURU, OCT. 24

While people and elected representatives from coastal Karnataka have been pressing to add the Tulu language in the 8th Schedule and holding various types of campaign, Belthangady MLA Harish Poonja has gone a step ahead by putting up his office signboard in Tulu language.

Though there are scriptures and inscriptions of Tulu script, it has been almost forgotten during recent years. For the last few years, Tulu activists have been toiling to familiarise the script and many have shown interest in learning and writing in Tulu script. Techies too have developed fonts for computers. Though Tulu is a spoken language, people use Kannada and English script to write in Tulu language also. However, the unique move of Harish Poonja has now gone viral on social media and received appreciation from the people.

Tulu is the language of the Dravidian family, spoken in Dakshina Kannada, Southern part of Udupi district, and Northern part of Kerala's Kasargod district. People from this region are settled in various parts of the country and abroad.

Unfazed by threats, Nusrat lights up Durga Puja



Actress and Trinamul MP Nusrat Jahan (2nd from right) along with other women takes part in Maha Ashtami celebrations at a community Durga Puja pandal in Kolkata on Saturday. Last month she had received death threats on social media for dressing up as Goddess Durga for advertisements for a clothing line that she posted on Instagram on September 17. Dismissing criticism she was quoted as saying: 'I'm God's special child. I celebrate all festivals. I respect humanity and love more than anything.'

— PTI

J&K PARTIES FORM ALLIANCE, ELECT FAROOQ AS ITS PRESIDENT

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, OCT. 24

Jammu and Kashmir's half-a-dozen mainstream regional political parties along with the CPM's local unit on Saturday formally structured their alliance and unanimously elected former chief minister Farooq Abdullah as its president.

Abdullah who heads the erstwhile state's oldest political party National Conference told reporters, "Ours isn't an anti-national group. Our aim is to ensure that the rights of people of J&K and Ladakh are restored."

He alleged that attempts are being made to drive a wedge between various communities in what are now known as twin Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh and said that the new alliance would defeat such designs as well. He said, "Attempts of dividing us in the name of religion will fail. It's not a religious fight."

The signatories of 'Gupkar Declaration' met at the residence of former chief minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti here earlier to discuss the political situation and other important issues faced by J&K and Ladakh. A spokesman of the group said that during the meeting the participants put forth their valuable suggestions.

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, OCT. 24

The BJP has demanded arrest of former chief minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti after she said that she wouldn't hold any other flag unless and until Jammu and Kashmir's state flag is restored.

The Congress also criticised her for showing disrespect to the national flag. She has been trolled widely also on social media platforms for her

remarks.

On Friday, Ms Mufti had while addressing her maiden press conference after her release from a 14-month-long detention said that she wouldn't raise any flag other than that of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir till its special status is restored.

"I won't hold any other flag until our state flag is returned," she said when asked about her statement that there would be no one left in J&K to raise the

Indian national flag if Article 370 was abrogated that she gave days before the erstwhile state was stripped of its special status and split up into two Union Territories on August 5 last year.

Narinder Raina, president of BJP's J&K unit, termed Ms Mufti's remarks as "seditious" and said that she should be booked for the same and arrested immediately.

Asserted that "no power on earth can either hoist the state flag again or

restore Article 370", he told reporters in winter capital Jammu, "I request lieutenant governor Manoj Sinha to take cognisance of the seditious remarks of Mehbooba Mufti, book her for the seditious act and put her behind bars."

Mr Raina pledged to "shed every drop of our blood for our flag, country and motherland" and said that J&K is an integral part of the country and, therefore, only one flag can be hoisted here.

BJP wants Mufti arrested over her tricolour remark

AYODHYA RAMLILA

Organisers claim over 10 crore viewers

Ayodhya, Oct 24: Organisers of the Ayodhya Ramlila being shown on different media platforms claimed that the number of their viewers has crossed the 10-crore mark.

The nine-day Ramlila is being telecast from the Laxman Qila, a temple situated on the banks of the Saryu river here. It is being performed by Bollywood stars and actor-turned politicians.

It is being shown in 14 languages, including Urdu.

Subhash Malik, director of the Ram Lila, said Ayodhya has now another

record in its name as the viewership of the Ramlila being shown on Doordarshan, YouTube and other social media platforms has crossed 10 crore. "We hope that it will double up by the time we finish the telecast," he added. Due to the coronavirus protocol, people are not allowed to watch the performance at the venue.

LED screens have been installed at different places and mobile vans have been sent to remote areas in villages to make watch the enactment of the epic.

— PTI

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, OCT. 24

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav reiterated his commitment for 10 lakh jobs to state's youth and promised overall development of Bihar while releasing his party's separate manifesto for Bihar elections on Saturday.

Major points included in the RJD manifesto titled 'Hamara Pran' (our pledge) is employment, scrapping of farm laws enacted by the central government, better education and health system, smart villages and infrastructure development for the growth of industries and agriculture.

"This is our pledge, not a manifesto. Our party's resolution is to bring overall

development in Bihar," RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said while releasing his party's manifesto in Patna.

Using the occasion to lash out at the BJP for promising 19 lakh jobs in its manifesto which was released a week earlier, Tejashwi Yadav said that "the BJP is trying to fool people by its fake commitment".

He said, "There is a difference between employment and earning. Providing 10 lakh jobs to state's youth is our top priority which we will sanction immediately after the grand alliance is elected to power. We could have promised more than 50 lakh or one crore jobs but our party doesn't make false commitments."

RJD manifesto is Hamara Pran

RJD anarchy drove away Nitish: Nadda

Bihar Sharif/ Lakhisarai, Oct. 24: The RJD is "predisposed towards anarchy" and the realisation had led Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to snap ties with the party and return to the NDA, BJP national president Jagat Prakash Nadda asserted on Saturday.

Nadda also alleged that the state had remained deprived of many medical facilities during the period of the RJD shared power with Kumar on account of the "indolence" of Tej Pratap Yadav, elder son of party supremo Lalu

Prasad, who then held the health portfolio in Bihar.

"The RJD is predisposed towards anarchy and lawlessness. And they remain unrepentant. It is the very reason why Nitish Kumar had to dump them and return to the BJP after which the state resumed its march towards progress", the BJP said in Lakhisarai district.

Kumar, the JD(U) president, had resigned in July, 2017 after his then deputy and Prasad's younger son Tejashwi Yadav's name cropped up in a money laundering case.

— PTI

UNITY IN DIVERSITY Fellow villagers from all faiths cooperate to make puja a grand success, says Kohinoor Islam

Muslim leads Dasara festivities in Odisha's village

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BARIPADA, OCT. 24

A 65-year-old Muslim man has been at the forefront of the Dasara festivities for decades at Tentulidinda village near Baripada in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district. Kohinoor Islam diligently supervises each and every detail of the Durga Puja, from the selection and making of idols to their immersion.

While the Sarbajanina Saradiya Durga Puja Pandal or community puja pandal at Tentulidinda village epitomises the communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims in the region, Kohinoor appears to be the torchbearer.

It all started in 1984 when Kohinoor evinced his interest in organising the puja at his village.

With the support from elders, he went ahead in promoting communal harmony with this unique idea.

Since then Kohinoor has been initiating special measures for the conduct of puja in the village.

"On the request of villagers, I took the responsibility of conducting the Dasara festival at the Sarbajanina Saradiya Durga Puja Pandal. None has ever any issues with me leading the arrangements as people from both the communities live together peacefully. I get full cooperation from all my fellow villagers to



Kohinoor Islam at the Durga Puja pandal in Odisha's Tentulidinda village.

make this puja a grand success," Kohinoor said. He is not only known for his organisational skills, but he can also recite several Vedic slokas (hymns)

and mantras at ease.

"Kohinoor Islam has been doing a great job in promoting communal harmony. Despite being a Muslim, he has acquired

lot of knowledge about Hindu rituals and even the Bhagwad Gita. He is no different from anyone of us in the village," said Anil Nayak, a resident.

During the festival people of all communities visit the pandal and offer prayers. They also share together the bhoga or offering given to Goddess Durga.

"The uniqueness of our Dasara festival here has given us a different identity. Not only people from our neighbouring villages come here, but also curious devotees from West Bengal also arrive here to see for themselves how two communities are celebrating this festival with equal zeal and fervor," said the locals.

India sees 53,370 Covid-19 cases, 650 deaths in a day

DC CORRESPONDENT New Delhi, Oct. 24

India's national recovery rate has reached close to 90 per cent after 70.16 lakh persons have recovered from Covid-19 out of the total positive cases detected so far. On Saturday, India's total Covid-19 tally reached 78.15 lakh with detection of 53,370 fresh cases. In comparison to fresh cases, 67, 549 persons were discharged from medical supervision taking the national recovery rate to 89.78 per cent.

The total deaths due to the virus has reached 1.18 lakh out of which 650 fatalities took place in the

last 24 hours. The Covid-19 case fatality rate has further declined to 1.51 per cent.

According to the Union health ministry, the active cases are less than seven lakh for the second consecutive day and stand at 6.81 lakh and active cases comprise only 8.71 per cent of the total positive cases of the country. Sixty-one per cent of the total recovered cases are from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. Maharashtra has contributed the maximum with more than 13,000 single day recovery.

FADNAVIS TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, OCT. 24

Leader of Opposition in Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis who is also the BJP's in-charge in Bihar assembly election campaign, has tested positive for Covid-19. Keeping his promise that he will not go to a private hospital for Covid treatment, Mr Fadnavis got himself admitted to state-run St George hospital.

In a series of tweets, Mr Fadnavis said, "I have been working every single day since the lockdown but now it seems that God wants me to stop for a while and take a break! I have tested #COVID19 positive and in isolation. Taking all medication & treatment as per the advice of the doctors. Those who have come in contact with me are advised to get covid19 tests done. Take care, everyone! (sic)."

Dr T.P. Lahane, director and nodal officer (COVID-19), Directorate of Medical Education and Research (DMER) said, "Mr Fadnavis is admitted at St. George. He is symptomatic and his oxygen levels are normal."

On Friday, Fadnavis got himself tested after returning from Bihar poll campaigning.

DELHI SCHOOLS NOT TO OPEN FOR NOW: KEJRIWAL

New Delhi, Oct. 24: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday ruled out reopening of schools in the national capital for now.

"Schools are not reopening for now," Kejriwal told reporters on sidelines of an event.

The government had earlier announced that schools will continue to remain closed till October 31 in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Universities and schools across the country have been closed since March 16, when the Centre announced a nationwide classroom shutdown as part of the measures to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.

A nationwide lockdown was imposed on March 25.

While several restrictions have been eased in different phases of "unlock", educational institutions continue to remain closed. However, as per "unlock" phase guidelines, states can take a call about reopening schools in phases.

Earlier, schools were allowed to call students from class 9 to 12 to school on voluntary basis from September 21. However, the Delhi government decided against it.

— PTI

IN BRIEF

Actor Arnold feels 'fantastic' after op

Los Angeles: Veteran Hollywood star Arnold Schwarzenegger has revealed that he underwent a second heart operation and is now feeling absolutely fine. In a post on Instagram, the 73-year-old actor said he had been given a new aortic valve. "Thanks to the team at the Cleveland Clinic, I have a new aortic valve to go along with my new pulmonary valve from my last surgery," Schwarzenegger said. "I feel fantastic and have already been walking the streets of Cleveland enjoying your amazing statues. Thank you to every doc and nurse on my team!" he added. The actor also shared photos that showed him giving a thumbs-up from his hospital bed and exploring Cleveland.

Cameroon arrests ivory smugglers

Yaounde: Cameroon authorities arrested four ivory smugglers attempting to transport nearly 120 elephant tusks through the country's south, officials said on Friday. The group had trafficked nearly 675 kilograms (1,500 pounds) of the illicit cargo from neighbouring Gabon, which is home to more than half of Africa's remaining forest elephants. They hid their haul in the bottom of a van with a false compartment, state television reported. It was the biggest ivory seizure in the West African nation for five years, customs officer Jean-Claude Ekoube said. Ivory trafficking is fuelled by strong demand in Asia and the Middle East, where elephant tusks are used in traditional medicine.

Roadside bomb kills 9 in Afghan

Kabul: A roadside bomb killed nine people in eastern Afghanistan on Saturday, after it struck a minivan full of civilians, a local official said. Ghazni province police spokesman Ahmad Khan Sirat said that a second roadside bomb killed two policemen, after it struck their vehicle that was making its way to the victims of the first explosion. Sirat added that the bombings had wounded several others, and that the attacks were under investigation. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks. The provincial police spokesman claimed the Taliban had placed the bomb. The upsurge in violence between Taliban and Afghan forces comes as representatives of the two warring sides are beginning peace talks in Doha to end the decades-long war in Afghanistan.

INDIAN BOY'S EASY SOLUTION TO HANG HEAVY OBJECTS

Dubai, Oct. 24: A sixteen-year-old Indian boy based in the UAE has come up with an innovative solution to hang weighted items from the wall without drilling holes, as part of a school assignment, which has now become a business idea for his family, according to a media report.

Ishir, a student of GEMS World Academy in Dubai, had to submit an innovative project for his Grade 10 International Baccalaureate (IB) course when he noticed how walls get damaged when nails are drilled into them, the *Khaleej Times* reported. "While screw and nails have been in use since time immemorial, they pose problems for people on a daily basis such as damage to walls, outsourcing labour, dust pollution and other dangers of drilling," Ishir told the daily, adding that he wanted a non-intrusive solution to this issue.

Though Ishir had a fair idea as to how he wanted to execute the project, he reached out to his elder brother Avik, an engineering student at Purdue University in the US, for further guidance. "When we put our minds together, the solution, like all great ideas, was elegantly simple," Ishir told the *Khaleej Times*. The solution included two steel tapes and a strong magnet which holds the entire assembly together. "The steel tape that adheres to the wall is known as the 'alpha steel tape' and the one on the object to be hung as the 'beta steel tape'." "The neodymium magnet holds the entire assembly together, including the object being mounted," Ishir elaborated. This non-intrusive method to hang weighted objects from the wall has been named 'KLAPIT' based on the 'clap' sound produced when the two magnets click.

Biden promises free vaccine for everyone in US if elected

Biden slams Trump for his policies to combat Covid pandemic

Washington, Oct. 24: Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has pledged that if elected as president in the November 3 election, he will ensure free Covid-19 vaccination for all Americans, laying out his pandemic response plan just days before the US presidential polls.

In a major policy speech on the Coronavirus in his home state of Delaware, Biden on Friday flayed US President Donald Trump for his policies to combat the Coronavirus pandemic that has killed over 223,995 people and has had a devastating impact on the country's economy. "President Trump said we're rounding the corner, it's going away, we're learning to live with it. They are quotes. But as I told him last night, we're not learning to live with it. We're learning to die with it. This is a dark winter ahead," Biden, 77, said.

Already more than 2,20,000 people in the US have lost their lives to this virus. Worse yet, a new study from Columbia University suggests that anywhere between 1,30,000 and 2,10,000 of those deaths were avoidable, he said.

"Once we have a safe and effective vaccine, it has to be free to everyone, whether or not you're insured," the former vice president said. He said that if elected, he would direct the federal government to "bulk-purchase as many doses as necessary of the Covid-19 vaccine so we can provide it free to those who are uninsured, under-insured or Medicaid-eligible."

"Covid-19 dwarfs anything we've faced in recent history and it isn't showing any signs of slowing down. The virus is surging in almost every state. We passed 4.8 million cases. And when Trump was asked this week what he'd do differently to get the pandemic response right from the start his answer was and I quote, 'Not much. Not much.'," he



Jeremy Bines, choir director of the Deutsche Oper, and singers from the choirs of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the choir soloists of the Komische Oper Berlin and the RIAS Kammerchor Berlin sing with protective face masks during an acappella demo concert #KulturVerbindetAlle (Culture brings all together) at the Gendarmenmarkt on Saturday.

— AFP

US sets infection record as fatalities near 2,24,000

Boise (US), Oct. 24: The US Coronavirus caseload has reached record heights with more than 83,000 infections reported in a single day, the latest ominous sign of the disease's grip on the nation, as states from Connecticut to the Rocky Mountain West reel under the surge. The US death toll, meanwhile, has grown to 2,23,995, according to the Covid-19 Dashboard published by Johns Hopkins University. The total US

caseload reported on the site Friday was 83,757, topping the 77,362 cases reported on July 16.

The impact is being felt in every section of the country — a lockdown starting on Friday at the Oglala Sioux Tribe's reservation in South Dakota, a plea by a Florida health official for a halt to children's birthday parties, dire warnings from Utah's governor, and an increasingly desperate situation at a hospital in northern

said. Alleging that Trump does not have a plan to fight the coronavirus, Biden said the longer he is the president, the "more reckless" he gets.

"We don't have to be held prisoner by this administration's failures. We can choose a different path. We can do what

Americans have always done: come together and meet the challenge with grit, compassion, and determination," he said.

Revealing his plan, Biden said he would immediately put in place a national strategy that will position the country to finally get ahead of this

virus and get back the lives. Biden said he will ask the new Congress to put a bill on his desk by the end of January with all the resources necessary to see how both the public health and economic response can be seen through the end what is needed.

— PTI

EU, W.H.O. SOUND ALARM AS VIRUS CASES SURGE

Stockholm, Oct. 24: The European Union's disease control agency has joined frantic health workers to sound the alarm over a Coronavirus surge across the continent, as the World Health Organisation warned of an "exponential" rise in infections.

Even countries that avoided severe outbreaks during Europe's first wave of contagion in the spring have watched their case numbers surge, with Germany's death toll passing 10,000 on Saturday.

Governments have reintroduced containment measures to slow the renewed spread of the virus in nations that only weeks earlier believed they had triumphed over the crisis.

— AFP

POLAND'S PREZ TESTS COVID POSITIVE: AIDE

Warsaw, Oct. 24: Poland's President Andrzej Duda has tested positive for Coronavirus, an aide said on Saturday, as the EU country faces a record rise in cases and mass protests despite a ban on public gatherings intended to stem infections.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, as recommended President @AndrzejDuda was tested yesterday for the presence of Coronavirus. The result turned out to be positive. The president is fine," Blazej Spychalski, secretary of state in the president's office, said on Twitter.

While it was unclear when the Duda was infected, he attended an investment forum in Tallinn on Monday where he met Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid and Bulgarian President Rumen Radev.

— AFP

Ethiopia says will not 'cave in' after Trump slams dam

Addis Ababa, Oct. 24: Ethiopia vowed on Saturday not to "cave in to aggressions of any kind" after US President Donald Trump lashed out over the country's Nile River mega-dam and suggested Egypt might destroy it.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's office defended the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, set to become Africa's largest hydropower plant, and said Ethiopia was working to resolve longstanding issues over the project with downstream neighbours Sudan and Egypt.

"Nonetheless, occasional statements of belligerent threats to have Ethiopia succumb to unfair terms still abound. These threats and affronts to Ethiopian sovereignty are misguided, unproductive, and clear violations of international law," his office said in a statement.

"Ethiopia will not cave in to aggressions of any kind," the statement added. A separate version of the statement issued in Amharic featured more muscular language.

"There are two facts that the world has certified. The first is that there has been no one who has lived in peace after provoking Ethiopia. The second is if Ethiopians stand united for one purpose, it's inevitable, they will triumph," it said.

Abiy's office did not explicitly mention Trump, but its statement came the morning after the US president weighed in on the dam dispute in support of Egypt.

"It's a very dangerous situation because Egypt is not going to be able to live that way," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office Friday during a

TRUMP CALLS 'BORAT' STAR AN UNFUNNY 'CREEP'

Washington, Oct. 24: President Donald Trump says he thinks Sacha Baron Cohen, the comedian behind the "*Borat*" films, is "a creep." Baron Cohen's new movie, "*Borat Subsequent Movie-film*," shows Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani in a compromising position in a hotel room with a young woman acting as a journalist.

Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One on Friday night that he didn't know what happened with Giuliani.

"But, you know, years ago he tried to scam me," Trump said of Baron Cohen. "And I was the only one that said, 'No way. This guy is a phony guy.'" "I don't find him funny," Trump said, adding, "To me, he's a creep."

Trump appeared briefly on HBO's "*Da Ali G Show*" in 2003, but walked away from an interview with Baron Cohen's Ali G character after just a minute.

One scene in Baron Cohen's new movie scene shows Giuliani on a bed, tucking in his shirt with his hand down his pants after the woman helps him remove recording equipment. Giuliani called the scene "a hit job" and said he realised he was being set up.

— AP

ceremony marking a breakthrough normalisation deal between Israel and Sudan.

— AFP

UK's famous Diwali event turns virtual

London, Oct. 24: They are referred to as the biggest Diwali celebrations outside of India but this year the city of Leicester in the UK will be marking the festival of lights virtually, in keeping with the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Leicester City Council said that with strict measures in place to stop the spread of Coronavirus, crowds will not be gathering on Belgrave Road this year for the traditional entertainment and fireworks.

But instead Leicester residents and others are being invited to be part of the city's first virtual "Diwali Day" celebration from the "safety of their homes".

"We all need to find different ways to celebrate important festivals like Diwali and Christmas this year. Although we can't meet up with our extended families in person this year, our virtual Diwali celebration will help bring people together for an experience they can share with a family member or a friend — wherever they are in the world," said Leicester's Indian-origin Deputy City Mayor, Councillor

Piara Singh Clair. As part of the celebrations for Diwali Day on November 14, people can send in their personal video messages, which could feature in an hour-long package of entertainment that will be streamed on the Visit Leicester portal. People are being encouraged to use their video to wish a friend, or a family member, a Happy Diwali — or they could share their tips for a socially-distanced, yet joyful, Diwali celebration with people around the world.

— PTI

Indian-Americans stand with Biden, call Trump 'foe'

Washington, Oct. 24: Joe Biden and his running mate Senator Kamala Harris have the best understanding of the Indian-American community, the diaspora leaders supporting the two Democratic candidates have said, describing US President Donald Trump as a "foe" who criticises India on the world stage.

With less than a fortnight to go for the November 3 presidential election, Indian-Americans on Friday asserted that Biden, first as a US Senator and thereafter as the vice president, has a strong track record of helping the community.

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DECCAN Chronicle

25 OCTOBER 2020



Kushalrani Gulab

Off the beaten track

A woke Navratri, and a happy Dussehra!

As a responsible citizen aiming to be a non-participant in the pandemic (I suffer absolutely no FOMO or fear of missing out, particularly when it comes to Covid-19, thank you very much), you will not be surprised to learn that I have set not so much as the tip of a toe anywhere near a puja pandal this Navratri / Durga Puja.

To be fair to the SARS-CoV-2 virus — which has had bad press since the moment it was born and needs to be shown by us woke people that circumstances of birth alone is no reason to be cast out of society — I also have not been near any puja pandal in the last 30 years if not longer, because I am the Indian version of Scrooge. From the moment we hit August every year, which, depending on what the lunar calendars are up to at the time, marks the beginning of the festive season, you hear me bah, humbugging all over the place, with emphasis on the ‘bah’.

I do not enjoy crowds. I especially do not enjoy crowds in a hot and sweaty climate punctuated by distinctly uncooling monsoon showers that set my sinuses aflame and cause me to sneeze like a machine gun on speed. I do not enjoy amplified *aartis* by priests so *besura* that even Cacofonix the bard would be dashing about with gags and ropes to tie them to trees while Asterix and Obelix stuff their ears with broccoli and tuck into roast boar. I do not enjoy the ‘talent shows’ organised by cooperative housing societies in which uncles attempt stand-up comedy so bad that the YouTube shows look good in comparison, aunts explore their inner item girl and give themselves displaced vertebrae for life and children run even more amuck than they normally do, only this time on a stage with amplifiers.

Finally, I absolutely do not enjoy my eardrums being shattered day after day by the techno-Bollywood remixes that our gods and goddesses are apparently fond of, according to puja and dandiya organisers, with *Sheila ki jawani* at No. 1 on the pandal charts, *Lungi dance* at No. 2 and *Chammak challo* at No. 3, all at ear-splitting volume.

So I was delighted when I read the rules for Navratri in Mumbai this year. Keep it low key, urged the state government. Do not do anything that involves mass gatherings; there will be no garba and no dandiya; discuss viruses and dengue-bearing mosquitoes whenever it appears that a crowd is gathering — that will send everyone home.

Meanwhile, in Kolkata, the high court demanded barricades outside the pandals and a maximum of only 45 people inside at any point depending on the size of the pandal, thus ensuring that 90 per cent of the population of the city would push and shove their way to the barricade, thus maintaining what we might now name ‘antisocial distance’ just to add another virus-related phrase to the Oxford English Dictionary.

“Aha,” said my Scrooge, rubbing its hands with glee as it read these rules in the newspapers. “Maybe I’ll get through this year with my eardrums and sanity intact.”

And so far, dear reader, this whole puja season I have not had to use my ear plugs at all. Instead, there is a blessed silence every day — or at least what passes for silence in urban India with its daily aural mix of shattering power drills, blaring car horns, screaming food processors, piercing pressure cooker whistles and the occasional cawing crow.

And I have to admit it: I am bored witless.

Where are the social media posts about divine *bhogs* that I look forward to every year with my tongue hanging out? *Bhog* is not permitted, say the state governments. It might contain a certain virus.

How will I know if *Sheila ki jawani* is still No. 1 on the pandal charts 10 years after it first released or if *Chammak challo* has finally climbed to the top, pulling the lungi down and revealing its underwear and banian, all modesty damned?

How can I perfect my sneer at the residents of my cooperative housing society when it’s time for them to display their untalents on Navratri nights? (Note for grammar Nazis: if you can unfriend people on social media, you can certainly display an untalent.) I usually get a refresher course during the festive season, but not this year.

I feel so bereft without everything I hate about Navratri and the pujas, that I might actually do the unthinkable today: 30 years or more after I told my parents that if I was old enough to vote, I was old enough to stop participating in the annual family pandal hop, I might just step out of the house and visit a puja pandal. Since it’s the last day of the puja, I doubt if there will be a crowd.

And with a little bit of luck, I will not be hit by an unseasonable monsoon shower, find my sinuses inflamed, sneeze like machine gun on speed, and be arrested for spreading a certain virus.

Kushalrani Gulab is a freelance editor and writer who dreams of being a *sanyasi* by the sea

Subhani



Will the BJP use Nitish to get own CM in Patna?



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

There are two somewhat related perspectives to keep in mind with regard to the coming Bihar Assembly elections, where the first votes are to be cast on Wednesday, October 28. These have been largely overlooked in the media and in the facile opinion polls, which appear to have partly relied on the 2015 polling data on caste arithmetic as if this was the sacred *gayatri mantra* itself, besides strongly hinting that the presumed magic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi could safely take the ruling alliance home.

As we’ll see below, at least some crystal-gazers may be rather hoping that it will be just one part of the NDA — namely the BJP — that will reach the dry shores, no matter what the overt optics.

The first consideration stares us in the face, though we have been oblivious. It is quite simply the fact that the failure of the three-time chief minister Nitish Kumar’s government in coping with the dreaded Covid-19 pandemic, besides the mass return home of the poor from the country’s major cities regarded by Bihar’s massive pool of the labour force as the nation’s employment capitals in the absence of any worthwhile prospects at home, and the recent floods that played havoc with people’s already wretched lives, are stark truths that frame the real narrative for this election. Without ambiguity

these point to the Nitish government’s casual disregard of the suffering of some of the poorest people that there are in the country. This can be seen in leaders of the ruling alliance speaking without pause about roads repaired or built more than 10 years ago, and their breathlessly recalling the serious uptick in crime that was relevant two decades ago, before the new generation of voters was born.

Parroting pre-history is part of an untidy and scarcely convincing strategem of the JD(U) and BJP to hide policy failures and executive inaction, and meant to help them smoothly glide over the wretchedness they have presided over for most of their 15 years in office — in other words, to trick voters.

Does the trick work? Among some sections, yes — defined in the main by class. The bulk of these are the state’s upper caste and upper crust, not that anyone’s vote can still be thought of as being immutable.

But ordinary folk have not forgotten the humiliation and the hurt caused by the CM urging them not to come trudging back to the state though, with the national lockdown suddenly announced by the Prime Minister in March, it was clear that they had no money to pay rents in metropolitan cities and no money to eat. They also calculated that, if the disease took them, it was better to die in their unpretentious homes in

the village than on the uncaring roads of the big cities. Mr Kumar’s self-serving statements are being recalled at election time.

With the aim of building a strong caste support base of the poorest sections in his favour, Mr Kumar’s self-serving administrative decisions divided and sub-divided the big chunks of the OBCs and the SCs into super-fine strips till they could not be sliced up any further and gave them some benefits in the early part of his tenure to secure their undying loyalty.

However, if the wildly cheering, pressing, crowds at the poll rallies of young RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, the CM candidate of the Mahagathbandhan — the alliance of the RJD, Congress, and all shades of the Left in Bihar, which are ranged against the ruling NDA — are any indication, then attempts to chisel the caste arithmetic may prove to be of little avail for the chief minister.

And the reason for this is plain enough. Mr Yadav speaks only of the crushing burden of unemployment, which has made even the upper castes reel, as he promises a million jobs on arrival (as CM — replacing Mr Kumar). It is this which makes the sentiment for “*badlao*” (change) in Bihar palpable, although elections

Ordinary folk have not forgotten the humiliation and the hurt caused by the CM urging them not to come trudging back to the state after the national lockdown was suddenly announced by the Prime Minister

are notoriously hard to call. The media, except in the past few days, and the opinion polls, missed this, though it was out there, large as a football.

So gobsmecked is the ruling alliance that the BJP is now promising the Covid vaccine free (only) for Bihar, such is the desperation. In the event of an anti-climax, it is the EVM factor that is likely to be blamed, and people are watching keenly. The political timbre and mak-eup of Bihar is different from next-door Uttar Pradesh, although both are Hindi-speaking. Bihar can be volatile across the board. This is where Jayaprakash Narayan’s all-encompassing movement was bred, and also Communists of every hue.

The second factor to watch out for, mentioned above — relating to JD(U) leader and CM Nitish Kumar’s unravelling — is the ambition nursed in the BJP’s bosom to have its own chief minister in Bihar for the first time, even if as part of an alliance. Other than Punjab and J&K (now, alas, only a UT), Bihar is the only state in North India where there has never been a CM from the BJP. That is Bihar’s uniqueness among the Hindi-speaking states.

If this is understood, then the side-court play — the Chirag Paswan phenomenon and the rushing of key RSS people to get the election nomination of Mr Paswan’s LJP, otherwise no great shakes as a political force — does not remain obscure. It is not clear how it will pan out, but one thing is clear — Mr Kumar may get to rue that he let the BJP ride the waves stepping on his shoulders even as he fooled himself that he stood for secular politics and secular values while canoodling with the BJP-RSS.

LETTERS

PMK’S THREAT

With reference to *A resolution for a New Year protest* (Oct. 24), the raking up of the demand for 20 per cent exclusive reservation for the Vanniyar community by the PMK leader, particularly at a time when elections to the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections are around the corner, is aimed at seeking more number of seats than any avowed purpose. That a few have responded to the call made in the Facebook page of the party does not mean anything. The party many have created a stir demanding reservation for its community earlier, but the times are changing, and the party cannot wag its tail anymore. Its call for reservation is just a scare and it needs to be treated with the contempt it deserves.

V.S. Jayaraman, Chennai

OLD ORDER CHANGES

“OLD ORDER changes yielding way to new”, goes Tennyson and Pope Francis endorses it to the hilt hitting upon the idea of rescuing the LGBT members, even as it has become a hot-button issue, since the suppressed LGBT community wants justice to co-habit with the rest of the society. The timely resonance of the editorial *Pope and the family values*, Oct.24) so biblically is a stamp of class trying to demystify the myth of society’s negation of the oppressed community. As opined by the Pope, after all, they are also the children of God and any departure from respecting them would be tantamount to barbarity, leave alone sexual preferences vesting in the hands of individuals. As the editorial states, “let us wait for the yoke to lighten and the burden to ease at the end of all”.

E.S.Chandrasekaran, Chennai

BJP’S POLL MANIFESTO

AT A time when the entire country is facing the cruel onslaught on them by the corona pandemic, it is quite uncharitable and highly condemnable that finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has promised the free vaccine to contain the killer epidemic for Bihar in BJP’s election manifesto. If the BJP-ruled government at the Centre is interested in the welfare and well-being of all the citizens of India, they should have announced the free vaccine for every citizen of the country. Of late we find that such benefits are conceded only to the BJP ruled states and they look at non-BJP ruled states with a Nelson’s eye. How can the ta payers’ money be given as an election bonanza only to a particular state with an intent to harvest the votes?

Tharcus S. Fernando, Chennai

CSK’S END IN SIGHT

DHONI-LED CHENNAI Super Kings going through a lean patch and it is almost out of IPL 13 this season due to insipid performances with both and ball. In the match against Mumbai Indians they were a shadow of the past and succumbed to a score of 114 and out of which 52 runs were scored by S. Curran. After winning the inaugural match against Mumbai Indians, the going has not been good. Dhoni’s batting is not up to the mark and the bowling of Jadeja is well below par for international standards. Overall, the batting appears brittle and the bowling substandard. Team selection was pathetic and the captaincy part was not astute at any stage of the tournament. Now the end is in sight and the CSK team is not going to qualify for the play offs for the first time in IPL history.

M.R. Jayanthi, via e-mail

Rana Mitter



Xi’s world: How Covid accelerated China’s rise

Back in February, the Chinese State appeared in trouble. A terrifying virus had infected thousands of people and the country’s social media exploded in anger against the authorities faster than Chinese censors could scrub away the critical comments. Like governments elsewhere, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) turned to the emergency analogy of choice, the Second World War. Channelling Mao Zedong’s guerrilla campaign against the Japanese in the 1930s, state media declared that China was fighting a “people’s war” against the virus.

As in that earlier war, China’s conflict with the virus has shifted from a defiant retreat to a declaration of victory. Nor is this just bluster. The latest economic figures suggest its economy is the only one in the world that will make a full recovery from the virus — growing by two per cent while America’s falls by five per cent, the Eurozone by eight per cent and Britain by 10 per cent. Justin Yifu Lin, former chief economist of the World Bank, thinks China is on track to become the world’s biggest economy by 2030. Beijing can now look forward, while other major economies are

still working out how to manage the damage while racking up staggering amounts of debt.

None of this could have happened had China not dealt so swiftly (often brutally) with Covid-19. This week, the Chinese media has been full of images of people queuing for the new anti-viral vaccine — it feels there that the crisis is genuinely over.

Yet when I call friends in Shanghai, they point out that after the institution of an efficient (and highly intrusive) track-and-trace system and harsh lockdowns, life is pretty much back to normal.

Back in the spring, observers queried whether China’s high figures for suppression of the virus could possibly be real. Xi Jinping, China’s President and CCP secretary-general, can survey the state of his country and reflect that it is far better off than anyone might have expected when the pandemic started. The regime will have been further encouraged by opinion polling that suggests positive ratings for the government’s performance among Chinese citizens, with one survey suggesting 80 per cent satisfaction rates. The CCP has used this to justify doubling down on surveillance of its citizens, and the

pandemic will almost certainly be taken as a pretext to clamp down on dissidence.

Not so long ago, it seemed as if Xi’s grand Belt and Road Initiative — designed to bring billions of dollars of infrastructure investment to a swath of territory from Western Europe to Southeast Asia by way of East Africa — might not live up to his grand ambitions. Had he overreached? But the pandemic has changed the balance of global trade in ways that might now make China seem like an attractive partner for developing nations.

China’s opportunity is clear. Previously, the Western world could dangle the prospect of generous investment to countries such as Pakistan or Myanmar through institutions such as the World Bank, tied as they are to norms of good governance and democracy. In a post-Covid world, in which there will be less trade, less travel, less globalism, how can the West continue to influence such countries?

Xi’s China has ended up in a strange position: expecting a lower growth rate than was predicted at the end of 2019, yet relatively stronger than many of its global rivals in terms of capacity to act. Still, there is no clear path from

here to the next “people’s victory”. The impressive economic figures conceal a longer-term problem, as the economist George Magnus has argued, of an unbalanced economy marked by under-consumption, a rising trade surplus, and debt still rapidly rising.

The “dual circulation” idea that China can simply separate its domestic and international economies is unsustainable in the long term; major structural reforms will still be needed. And there are other issues, such as pollution, climate change, and demographic decline — from 2029, there will be five million fewer Chinese per year, and the population will be rapidly ageing.

China’s higher global status creates new vulnerabilities too. Beijing is having to come to terms with the reality that the oppression of the Uighurs and the constraining of freedoms in Hong Kong are not simply internal matters for a country that wants to achieve global influence through “a community of common destiny”, because the result is that Chinese businesses and investment become negatively associated with the authoritarian values of their homeland.

The single greatest obstacle to the

CCP’s power, however, lies not in Beijing but in Washington. A second Donald Trump term, more virus-driven economic panic, and more chaos in the liberal global order, could end up further boosting Beijing’s message of economic success and authoritarian government. A Joe Biden administration may find it easier to bring China-sceptic forces together.

The fear of a new US administration may be behind the latest war metaphors coming out of Beijing. On VJ day in August, China stressed internationalism when it commemorated its founding role in the UN in 1945. This autumn, however, the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 has dominated China’s official media channels. In Chinese, that conflict is known as Kangmei — the “Resist America” war. In Beijing’s mind, the US is down, not out. America remains the only real challenge to China’s global future.

Rana Mitter is a professor of history professor at Oxford University and the author of China’s Good War: How World War II is Shaping a New Nationalism. By arrangement with the Spectator.

OUR CRITIC'S RATING Outstanding ★★★★★ | Great ★★★★ | Good ★★★ | Okay ★★ | Poor ★ | Truly Terrible TT

Suitably nostalgic, suitably Bollywood

A Suitable Boy

CAST: Tanya Maniktala, Ishaan Khattar, Tabu, Mahira Kakkar, Ram Kapoor, Danesh Razvi, Gagandeep Riar, Shubham Saraf, Rasika Dugal, Vivek Gomber, Aamir Bashir, Geeta Agarwal Sharma, Shahana Goswami, Namit Das, Vivaan Shah, Mikhail Sen, Vinay Pathak, Joyeeta Dutta, Vijay Varma, Vijay Raaz, Manoj Pahwa, Ranvir Shorey, Namit Das

DIRECTOR: Mira Nair

RATING: ★★★★★

Streaming on Netflix in English and Hindi



SUPARNA SHARMA

Can time, as in a particular period, a few years in the life of a nation and its people, one that is not too distant and whose inhabitants are still alive, turn into an artefact?

In Mira Nair's rendition of Vikram Seth's 1,488-page book, two years — 1951 and 52 — in a newly Independent India feel like an artefact, an endearing oddity. One that she dusted and cleaned, added colour to its fraying, fading bits, and then swirled around it waving her magical Bollywood wand, bringing to life its world, complete with the *tehzeeb*, the music, the petty corruption, rising bigotry, the idealist politician, gorgeous, young men and women who seek and find love, and then lose some.

It's a world that buzzes with evening chatter over chai, where mornings smell of harshringar, and evenings are rich with the sound of the tonga and ghazals by Saeeda Bai (Tabu).

But Nair's A Suitable Boy opens on an artificial note. The pretty, wide-eyed Lata (Tanya Maniktala) is talking to a monkey who is chewing pieces of mango (or is it orange) she is tossing to him. Her super expressive, one-sided banter is a bit too precious and sets off the series on an artificial note.

This spurious, synthetic note stays with A Suitable Boy throughout, irritating us in the midst of worlds and characters that feel real. It is sometimes injected by characters that are reduced to caricatures, or unbelievable scenes — like lip-to-lip kissing between a Muslim boy and a Hindu girl on a busy ghat.

A Suitable Boy's main concern is *shaadi*, and that's what it opens and closes with.

Savita Mehra (Rasika Dugal) is getting married to Pran Kapoor. Savita is Mrs Rupa Mehra's daughter, and Prof. Pran Kapoor is the son of the state revenue minister, Mr Kapoor (Ram Kapoor). In attendance are Savita's brothers — Arun (Vivek Gomber) with his wife Meenakshi (Shahana Goswami), and younger brother Varun (Vivaan Shah).

From the boy's side there is the groom's younger brother, Maan (Ishaan Khattar), among others.

Written for the BBC by Andrew Davies — who has adapted several other big books for British television, including *Pride & Prejudice*, *House of Cards*, *War and Peace* — A Suitable Boy is an adaptation of a book that is second perhaps only to Mahabharata in the deep love and

respect it generates.

The book was written in English, and so is the serial. But, apart from the put-on air which encases some of its characters, the English dialogue throughout the first episode are shockingly trite, stagey. At one point Mr Kapoor asks his friend, Nawab Saab (Aamir Bashir), "Something is troubling you my friend. What is it?"

This hold-your-breath-in formality at a very Indian celebration — *beti ki shaadi* — relaxes a bit when Mrs Mehra (Mahira Kakkar) says to Lata, "*Tu bahut mazak karti hai*". We too exhale.

A Suitable Boy's home is the fictional town of Brahmur by the Ganges in Purva Pradesh. But it travels to Kolkata, Lucknow, Benaras, mostly in search of a suitable boy for Lata, and sometimes for India's first general elections.

But its setting really is a newly independent India as it struggles with the pain and devastation of Partition, the schism left on a nation's psyche, the feeling amongst some Hindus that India now belongs exclusively to them, and who feel emboldened to openly challenge Muslims' right to live in their own nation.

It's here, in Brahmur, that Lata, clutching books to her chest, goes to a college where James Joyce is not considered suitable reading for young ladies.

This is also where the free-spirited Maan, with his curly hair, mulmul Lucknavi kurtas, living on the joy and swag of youth, falls in love with Saeeda Bai, whose nose-pin and sensuous voice carry a hint of the bedroom. This is also where Maan saves and later hurts his friend Firoz (Shubham Saraf).

Brahmur is where Lata meets the passionate and temperamental Kabir Durrani (Danesh Razvi). And it's in Brahmur that Maan's decent and honourable Baoji pours over documents till late at night to challenge the Zamindari system.

And it's at the Brahmur legislative Assembly that he expresses worry over the actions of the Raja of Marh (Manoj Pahwa), who is building a Shiv temple next to a mosque.

I remember reading *A Suitable Boy* in 1993, because it was written by the man who had the audacity and genius to write *The Golden Gate*.

The book was riveting in its detailed characterisation, dialogue, elegant writing, but also excruciatingly demanding in attention and interest. I recall lots of details, some characters, but what has stayed with me the most is the feeling of entering and living in an India that was meant to be decent.

While the research and sharp political commentary that went into writing the 591,552-word novel gave it literary gravitas and heft, at its core *A Suitable Boy* is a very Bollywood, very melodramatic story.

Mira Nair has retained the essence of that world, that story, but has given a big Bollywood *jhappi* to a book that, though insanely impressive, was also a wrist-challenging tome with pages after pages devoted to how the tannery industry functioned, how land reforms were implemented.

She bypasses all that but enhances the romance and increases the seduction quotient by placing gorgeous people in gorgeous spaces.

As we stay with Lata's confusion between the forbidden, passionate Muslim, the impressive but unstable poet Amit, and the reliable but dull shoemaker Hareesh (Namit Das), and a Muharram procession clashes with Ram Lila, Mira Nair's series is a wet-eyed memorial to Nehru and Gandhi's India.

Like the watercolor on canvas of the opening credits, Nair's series conjures up a simpler time and it yearns for the decency and friendship of men like Mr Kapoor and Nawab saab, and the benign irritation of Mrs Mehra.

Lots has

been left out, of course. And some bits that have been retained haven't been given the care and context they deserved — like the entire track with Rasheed (Vijay Varma). And when Nair's A Suitable Boy travels to Calcutta, it seems that it does so merely to poke at the pretensions of the *bhadralok* who, for a long time, pretended to be British.

Most of the characters in Calcutta are single-note and few actors are able to break through the few lines and costumes assigned to them.

Amit Chatterji (Mikhail Sen) is almost a joke, and Arun Mehra (Vivek Gomber) with his jaw perennially twisted into disapproval of all *desis* around him is boring. Mrs Mehra is almost funny in how bad she is. Mahira Kakkar contorts her face a lot, but only into three expressions — happy, sad, angry.

Not surprisingly, similarly limited characters assigned to Bollywood actors fare much better. Mrs Kapoor (Geeta Agarwal Sharma), for example, and Shahana Goswami's Meenakshi whose *pallu*-dropping, bed-hopping diva act is energising.

Sultry and sexy, Shahana Goswami's "Minxy" is like a naughty evening breeze that ruffles hair and ignites loins as it twirls about.

She brings lots of sizzle to what would have otherwise been rather drab outings to Calcutta and even reminded me of Rekha when she suddenly arrived crooning in a Calcutta club (*Parineeta*).

The stars of A Suitable Boy, however, are Ishaan Khattar, Tanya Maniktala and Tabu (whose singing voice is provided by Kavita Seth of *Itkara* fame from *Wake Up Sid*).

Khattar's Maan is the prodigal son who takes the story forward. Things don't happen to him, he happens to them, all in the pursuit of pleasure and love.

Tanya Maniktala's big, bright eyes, protected by thick, long eyelashes, are the lens through which we view *A Suitable Boy*. When they sparkle, we smile, and when she bats them gently, we pause.

Tabu, well, what can I say about her, except that she is Saeeda Bai, the resident of the haveli with pink walls and green interiors.

The various worlds of *A Suitable Boy* are lit by goodness, gorgeousness and a warm glow of nostalgia that women in sleeveless blouses and men with pants pulled up to their diaphragm, carry with them. This is courtesy Nair's old collaborator, costume designer Arjun Bhasin whose work always stands out for its fluidity, and who dresses characters characters here only to seduce us.

Inhabiting Mira Nair's world for six hour-long episodes left me with a deep sense of longing and loss for the spaces, characters and India she creates. But then, when Mrs Mehra shuts the door on Kabir without even acknowledging him, I thought, *shayad, hum aise hi hain, shayad hum aise hi the*.



Did we need another Rebecca? No, we didn't

Rebecca

CAST: Armie Hammer, Lily James, Kristin Scott Thomas

DIRECTOR: Ben Wheatley

RATING: ★★

JAKE COYLE

It's asking for trouble remaking Hitchcock, but with "Rebecca" you might be able to see a sliver of an opening. It's justly revered as a ghostly Gothic masterpiece and the only film of Hitch's to win best picture. Yet Hitchcock, himself, said it's not "a Hitchcock picture." He called his adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's 1938 book "a novelette, really" and noted that, besides, the Oscar didn't go to himself but to producer David O. Selznick.

And it's true, to a certain degree. More than any other top-tier (OK, second-tier) Hitchcock, "Rebecca" — the director's first Hollywood film — isn't a full expression of the filmmaker's devastating mischief, his clinical mastery of suspense. For that you'd be better off turning to "Notorious" or "Vertigo" or "Shadow of a Doubt" or "Psycho." Selznick insisted on too faithful of an adaption for Hitchcock to really sink his teeth in "Rebecca."

But let's not get carried away. "Rebecca" is still really good. Hitchcock, in movement and shadow, heightens the psychology of du Maurier's characters until every interactions quivers with tension. Joan Fontaine is exquisite, and Judith Anderson's frightfully poised Mrs. Danvers is a quintessentially Hitchcockian creation. Laurence Olivier ain't bad either. So did we need another "Rebecca"? No, of course not.

Ben Wheatley's "Rebecca," out Wednesday on Netflix, is a limp, gauzy retread that never has half as firm a handle on the material as Hitchcock's terrifically taut film. A script by Jane Goldman, Joe Shrapnel and Anna Waterhouse

lends a slightly more faithful adaptation (Hitchcock was restricted by the Hays Code in the film's final act). But throughout the film there's only ever a sense of searching vainly for a purpose. The best this "Rebecca" can come with is some florid production design, showy camera-work and several fine, very well-outfitted actors spread out across Southern France and the coastal English countryside. There is some quite nice light in this "Rebecca." But does anyone ever watch a grand Gothic fairy tale and think, "If only it had a bit more afternoon sun in it?"

The film's central trio — Lily James, Armie Hammer, Kristin Scott Thomas — is far from shabby James plays the low-class young woman rescued from her job as a lady's companion (Ann Dowd plays her wealthy, unpleasant employer) by the rich and galante widower Maximilian de Winter (Hammer) in a fast-unfolding romance that's practically rom-com on the Cote d'Azur but grows dark as a horror film back home at Maxim's enormous estate, Manderley. There, the spirit of de Winter's dead first wife looms everywhere, none more so than in the personage of Mrs. Danvers (a regal, menacing Thomas). James' never-named protagonist can't live up to Rebecca's always-looming image of beauty and grace, and she's helpless in the estate management her precursor handled so easily. A crippling feeling of inadequacy is at the heart of "Rebecca."

It's less the casting that feels wayward. James, holds the film reasonably together even as Wheatley — a British filmmaker known for high-stylized thrillers — works to fill the film with a distracting sheen. A work of fierce interiority has been turned into a hollow exercise in exteriority. One could argue about the authorship of the original "Rebecca," but this one is most definitely not "a Hitchcock picture." —AP

The Chicago Seven trial gets the Aaron Sorkin touch

The Trial of the Chicago

7

CAST: Joseph Gordon-Lewitt, Sacha Baron Cohen, Yahya Abdul Mateen II, Frank Langella, Eddie Redmayne, Mark Rylance, Jeremy Strong, John Carroll Lynch, Daniel Flaherty, Noah Robbins, Alex Sharp, Michael Keaton, Alex Sharp, Noah Robbier

DIRECTOR: Aaron Sorkin

RATING: ★★★★★

LINDSEY BAHR

If anyone was born to make a film about the infamous federal trial surrounding the protests outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention, it's Aaron Sorkin.

The grandstanding of the celebrity revolutionaries Abbie Hoffman and Tom Hayden, the clash of disparate personalities and protest styles, the earnestness of the anti-war cause and the general chaos of the trial itself are all perfectly suited to his brand of storytelling. That he actually got to do it and release it in a year when police and protesters and riots are once again in the news, is almost too on the nose for even a Sorkin joint.

But sometimes things just fall into place perfectly and "The Trial of the Chicago 7," which Sorkin wrote and directed, is like a little gift in this



very complicated year — relevant, smart and very entertaining. And seeing it only requires a Netflix subscription.

As he did in "Molly's Game," Sorkin starts his film in a sprint, energetically introducing the audience to key players getting ready to go to Chicago: "Yippies" Hoffman (Sacha Baron-Cohen) and Jerry Rubin (Jeremy Strong). Students for a Democratic Society members Hayden (Eddie Redmayne) and Rennie Davis (Alex Sharp), the conscientious objector David Dellinger (John Carroll Lynch) and Black Panther co-founder Bobby Seale (Yahya Abdul-Mateen II).

But instead of taking us with them to the protests, the film skips ahead to 1969 when Richard Nixon's Attorney

General, John N. Mitchell (John Doman) decides he wants to charge the anti-war all-stars, or "the school-boys" as he calls them, with conspiracy to cross state lines to incite violence. It's some masterful exposition that sets up a trial that not even the lead prosecutor Richard Schultz (Joseph Gordon-Lewitt) believes is winnable or right. Schultz will later try to convince the jury that the eight people on trial are just the "radical left in different costumes."

Sorkin does a fine job of bringing to life the circus of the trial, with Judge Julius Hoffman (Frank Langella) doling out contempt of court charges and defendants talking back and cracking jokes (mainly Hoffman and

Rubin).

Mark Rylance as the defense attorney William Kunstler has the perfect combination of affability and gravitas to bring balance to a trial that was on one hand ridiculous and on another gravely serious. Seale was there without representation and the judge couldn't have been less interested in that fact.

The script assumes at least a little bit of knowledge about the players but also tells you everything you need to know to stay engaged. And it's a joy watching actors stretch with different types of roles (and accents). Strong has fun going full stoner and Redmayne is effortless as the more buttoned-up American. Baron-Cohen perhaps is the most exciting as Hoffman, the activist/showman who even his fellow activists seemed to underestimate.

But the whole production is stacked with brilliant actors in both big and small roles. Kelvin Harrison Jr. appears too briefly as the Illinois Black Panther head Fred Hampton, as does the always wonderful Caitlin Fitzgerald as an undercover cop, to name a few.

As in any Sorkin joint there are at least three lines of dialogue that might make your eyes roll into the back of your head and your body produce an involuntary groan so extended that you will likely have to rewind. But it just goes to show how good the rest of it is that a few clunkers could stick out that much. —AP



[illegible]