

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | THURSDAY 14 | JANUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 28°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: 1 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Thai 1
Tithi: Prathamai/ Thuvithiyai
Star: Uthiradam/ Thiruvonam
Rahukalam:
1.30 pm to 3 pm
Yamagandam:
6 am to 7.30 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.18 am
Zohar: 12.20 pm
Asar: 3.31 pm
Maghrib: 5.57 pm
Isha: 7.12 pm

DECCAN Chronicle
wishes all its readers a
HAPPY PONGAL.

The offices and press of
Deccan Chronicle, Chennai
and Coimbatore will
remain closed on
January 14
(Thursday)
and there will
be no issue
dated January
15 (Friday).

COUNTER POINT



**Not drugs, he is
smuggling vaccine to
other countries!**

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**CM medal for 3,186
uniformed personnel**



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**Mother of murdered
5-year-old moves SC**

SPORT | 5

**Smith gets backing
of his coach**



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India to acquire 83 Tejas fighter jets for ₹48,000 cr

**PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 13**

Giving a major push to the Make-in-India programme, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on Wednesday approved the procurement of 83 Tejas Mk-1A fighter jets for Indian Air Force (IAF) from defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in the largest ever indigenous military aviation deal worth around ₹48,000 crore.

"The CCS chaired today approved the largest indigenous defence procurement deal worth about ₹48,000 crore to strengthen IAF's fleet of homegrown fighter

The aircraft: Tejas Mk-1A	Manufacturer: Hindustan Aeronautics Limited
Type: Light Combat Aircraft	Total cost: ₹48,000 crore
Generation: 4 plus	Delivery to begin: in 3 years
Total number: 83	Advanced equipment: active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar, beyond visual range (BVR) missile, electronic warfare (EW) suite, air-to-air refuelling (AAR)

jet LCA-Tejas. This deal will be a game-changer for self-reliance in the Indian defence manufacturing," tweeted defence minister Rajnath Singh.

The defence minister said Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas is going to be the backbone of the IAF

fighter fleet in the years to come. "LCA-Tejas incorporates a large number of new technologies many of which were never attempted in India. The indigenous content of LCA-Tejas is 50 per cent in Mk1A variant which will be enhanced to 60 per cent," said Mr Singh. Tejas

Mk-1A deliveries are expected to begin in three years. The CCS approved procurement of 73 Tejas Mk-1A fighter aircraft and 10 Tejas Mk-1 trainer aircraft at the cost of ₹45,696 crore along with design and development of infrastructure sanctions worth ₹1,202 crore.

IAF has already bought 40 Tejas Mk-1 aircraft. Tejas Mk1A cleared by Cabinet on Wednesday is more advance than Mk-1 with around 40 improvements.

The LCA Mk-1A variant is an indigenously designed, developed and manufactured state-of-the-art modern four plus generation fighter aircraft.

**DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 13**

A day after the Supreme Court stayed the implementation of the three farm laws and formed a committee to "study" them, the agitating farmers who had declared that their protests will continue, burnt copies of the three Acts on Wednesday to mark the harvesting season of Lohri.

The farmers' agitation entered its 50th day on Wednesday. With the next round of talks between farmers and the Centre scheduled for January 15, minister of

● **Farmers unions have shown willingness to attend the ninth round of talks but have insisted on a complete repeal of the farm laws**

state for agriculture Parshottam Rupala said that dialogue is the only way forward to resolve the deadlock. "It is only through dialogue that a way forward can be found," Mr Rupala said. Farmers unions have also shown willingness to attend the scheduled ninth round of talks but have insisted on a complete repeal of the farm laws. The agitating farmers' on

Wednesday received a boost as a delegation of 1,000-odd Kerala farmers aligned with the All India Kisan Sabha's Kerala unit decided to join the agitation at Delhi border on Thursday.

This will be the first delegation from Kerala to participate in the sit-in. The delegation is led by former Rajya Sabha MP and senior CPM leader K.N. Balagopal. "It is the government's propaganda that only Punjab farmers are impacted by the three laws. The truth is these laws will affect each and every farmer of the country," Mr Balagopal said.

Master opens in state; theatre owner fined for violating norms

**DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 13**

Chennai police on Wednesday booked the management of Kasi theatre in Ashok Nagar for violating the norm for allowing 50 per cent occupancy in theatres by filling up all the seats during the screening of the newly-released *Master*.

The image of the theatre screening the movie in full capacity was leaked on social media, after which the police booked the man-

agement under sections 188 (disobedience of order duly promulgated by a public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infectious disease and causing danger to life) of Indian Penal Code.

However, the ₹5,000 fine levied on the theatre led to the social media questioning the efficacy of the laws. The Tamil Nadu government had recently allowed 100 per cent occupancy in theatres after actors Vijay and Simbu, and theatre associations approached

the government seeking a relaxation in the norms. However, it had to be dropped after a strongly worded missive from the Union home ministry directed the government not to violate the norms that are in force nationwide.

Throwing Covid precaution to winds, hundreds of youth throng a theatre in Madurai to watch Vijay's *Master* on Wednesday.

— DC



30 days' notice under Special Marriage Act violates privacy: HC

Lucknow, Jan. 13: In a judgement that is likely to bring relief to inter faith couples, the Allahabad High Court Wednesday declared as optional the mandatory publication of notice of intended marriages under the Special Marriage Act, saying it violated the Right To Privacy. —PTI



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SHORT TAKES

Boy drowns in stone quarry pond

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

A 15-year-old boy, studying class 10 at a private school in Nanganallur, drowned while taking a bath in a stone quarry pond in Madipakkam on Tuesday evening. His body was retrieved by the fire and rescue personnel on Wednesday.

According to police, the deceased has been identified as R. Mohan Kumar, son of Ramesh, of Ullagaram in Madipakkam. On Tuesday evening after attending tuition class in B.V.Nagar in Madipakkam, Mohan, and his friend had gone to a stone quarry pond. Police said Mohan Kumar ventured into deep waters and drowned. His friend immediately alerted the locals.

Palavanthangal police and Velachery fire department were informed about the incident. Despite an extensive search by the fire and rescue personnel, Mohan Kumar was not found. On Wednesday, his body was retrieved. Palavanthangal police registered a case and sent the body of the deceased to Chromepet hospital for post-mortem.

Gold, iPhones, cigarettes worth ₹85 L seized

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

The customs officials at the Chennai airport seized 1.42 kg gold, iPhones, cigarettes, liquor worth ₹85 lakh and arrested two persons.

According to airport sources, based on intelligence Syed Ibrahim Gani (27) and Shahul Hameed (36) both of Chennai who had arrived from Sharjah by Indigo Flight 6E 8245 were intercepted at exit.

Six gold paste bundles weighing 1.48 kg, a 60 grams gold chain and 3 gold cut bits weighing 70 grams valued at ₹6.6 lakhs were recovered from their possessions.

Total 1.42 kg gold valued at ₹72.6 lakhs was recovered. Further on searching their bags, 44 cartons of Gudang Garam cigarettes, 11 iPhone 12 Pro, 8 old laptops, and 8-liquor bottles totally valued at Rs. 12.4 lakhs were recovered and seized. Both were arrested by the officers.

Goods totally worth ₹85 lakhs were recovered and seized under Customs Act.

Further investigation is under progress.

Pongal fest, shortage make flowers pricey

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

Ahead of Pongal, the price of flowers at the Koyambedu market has skyrocketed due to shortage to meet the requirements.

On Wednesday, the price of all flowers shot up by at least 40 per cent. However, the flower vendors say they get brisk business. According to the vendors, malligai (jasmine), which was selling at Rs 1,500 per kilo, was sold at Rs 2,500 while price of jaathi malli increased by Rs 400 per kilo on a single day and was sold at Rs 1,200. The price of mullai increased by Rs 900 and was sold at Rs 1,400. These flowers are delivered to Koyambedu mainly from Salem, Tiruvallur, Dindigul and Ariyalur districts.

Arul Viswasam of Koyambedu Wholesale Flower Merchants Welfare Association said the price of flowers went up due to

Pongal greetings from CM, Dy CM, Stalin

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

AIADMK top honchos Edappadi K Palaniswami and O Panneerselvam and DMK President M K Stalin were among the politi-

cal leaders who greeted the people of the State on the occasion of Pongal. The festival celebrates the farmer and his toil, the AIADMK leaders said while Stalin wished the darkness to give way for light, prosperity and well-being in the people of the State.

Other political leaders too expressed their greetings to the people through statements and social media posts.

Due to Pongal that resulted in the high price," he said. The Koyambedu flower market used to get at least 30 truckloads of flower every day in the post-pandemic period. This is the first Pongal season after the market was decentralised due to the pandemic.

S. Sreenivasan of Koyambedu Wholesale Fruit Vendors Association said there was no price fluctuation for fruits these days. Compared to the last Pongal season, fruit sales came down because of the continuous rain.

On Wednesday 50-60 loads (each one with 9 tonne) of mosambi, 15-20 loads of orange and 60 loads of banana came to the market. However, he says, the sale has not yet picked up. He added that they were hoping no change in the business this year for fruits.

CM medal for 3,186 uniformed personnel

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has announced the awarding of Pongal medals to 3,186 uniformed personnel in the State in recognition of their outstanding devotion to duty.

According to an official press release on Wednesday, 3,000 police personnel will be awarded the 'Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Constabulary Medals,' and 120 fire and rescue services personnel and 60 prison and correctional services personnel will be awarded the 'Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Medals.'

The monthly medal allowance of ₹400 to recipients of these medals will be sanctioned with effect from February 1, the release said.

Besides, 'Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Medal for Excellence in Technical and Specialised Services' will be given to 6 personnel, 2



3,000 police personnel will be awarded the 'Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Constabulary Medals,' and 120 fire and rescue services personnel and 60 prison and correctional services personnel will be awarded the 'Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Medals'

each from the police radio branch, dog squad and police photographers. The recipients will receive the lumpsum grant, depending on their ranks, it said. The medals, along with a scroll with signature of the Chief Minister, will be presented at a ceremonial medal parade later on.



Children celebrate Bhogi festival with hand drums in Chennai on Wednesday.

— DC

Bhogi air pollution levels fall this year, says TNPCB

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

The air pollution on Bhogi day was better compared to last year, according to the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB).

In a press release on Wednesday, the TNPCB said its air quality survey found that the overall status of gaseous pollutants, such as sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide at all stations, was found within the prescribed standards of 80 ug/m3 (micrograms per cubic meter) on both

pre-Bhogi and Bhogi days. On Wednesday, the particulate matter (PM2.5) level was in the range of 52-102 as against the prescribed standard of 60 and particulate matter (PM10) was in the range of 103-256 as against 100. Based on the Air Quality Index (AQI), the minimum value observed was moderate with 113.

Meanwhile, the TNPCB claimed that it had improved air quality compared to last year. As per the National Air Monitoring Programme,

AQI between 101-200 is categorised as "moderately polluted" and may cause breathing discomfort to people with lung diseases including asthma, and discomfort to people with heart diseases, children and older adults.

As part of awareness, the Greater Chennai Corporation authorities seized plastic wastes including 2.6 tonnes of useless tyres and sent them to the common hazardous waste management facility at Gummidipoondi, it said.

Smog delays 17 flights

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

Nearly 17 flights from and to Chennai faced a delay on Wednesday due to the smog formation in Chennai, due to the burning of old and waste items on Bhogi.

Despite the Airports Authority of India (AAI)'s appeal, people living in airport proximity on Wednesday burnt old materials affected services of nearly 17 flights.

Flights to and from Bangalore, Kolkata, Siliguri, Ahmedabad, Nagpur, and New Delhi were affected. Airport authorities said that while there wasn't any disruption of services until 7.30 am, the delay occurred later due to smog in the runways.

AAI: New terminal will be commissioned by 2022-end

New Delhi, Jan. 13: The Chennai airport's new integrated terminal, which would be constructed after demolishing existing terminals 2 and 3, would be commissioned by December 2022, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) said on Wednesday.

The new terminal will have a total area of 2,18,000 sqm and function as one large integrated terminal for international and domestic operations, the AAI said. The new terminal will enhance the present capacity from 21 million passengers per annum to 35 million passengers per annum, the AAI said in a press release. The project will be completed in two stages. In the first stage,

domestic terminal 2 has been demolished for construction of a new facility which is scheduled to be commissioned by June 2021, it said. In the second stage, international terminal 3 would be demolished and a new terminal would be constructed in its place. "The total project (single integrated terminal) will be commissioned by December 2022," the AAI noted. The Chennai airport is India's fourth busiest airport in terms of the number of passengers handled every year. A multi-level car parking is also being constructed with a capacity of 3,000 cars at a time, the AAI noted. The current parking facility is able to handle 1,200 cars at a time. —PTI

Why civic bodies letting out markets on lease: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

Taking serious view of the matter relating to the Corporations letting out their markets to the third parties, who in turn collect exorbitant toll charges and thereby harassing the vendors and the farmers, the Madras high court has appointed advocate N.Suresh as amicus curiae to assist the court and address the larger issue as to why the corporations are letting out the markets on lease and for what purposes these leases are granted to third parties and why not the same shall be done by corporations themselves.

Justice B.Pugalendhi passed the interim order on a petition filed by K.Prabakaran and seven others, who are running flower shops in the VOC flower daily market at Ammapet in Salem district.

According to petitioners since the new market building was being under construction now under the Smart City scheme at Salem, they were doing their business in a temporary place under the control of Salem Corporation. The Salem corporation let out the market on lease to one P.Murugan and directed him to follow the guidelines framed by it during 2016-2017. Accordingly Murugan started his toll collection from the petitioners from August 15, 2020. However, he has not followed the norms and guidelines fixed by the Corporation and started collecting heavy toll charges from the petitioners daily, they alleged.

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Tamirabarani river overflows

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUNELVELI, JAN. 13

The torrential rains in Tirunelveli and Tenkasi districts resulted in a flashflood in the Tamirabarani river due to heavy discharge of water from the Manimutharu and Papanasam dams.

With the discharge of 30,000 cusecs from the Papanasam dam that reached its full capacity coupled with around 25,000 cusecs from the Manimutharu dam flooded the Tamirabarani river. The 55,000 cusecs discharged from the two major dams in addition to the 2449 cusecs from a smaller reservoir, the Gadana dam, and the rainwater inundated the low lying areas along the banks of the river on Tuesday mid-night.

Around 150 families from Meenakshipuram in Tirunelveli city were evacuated to a rescue centre as their houses were submerged by the flood water from the overflowing river. Similarly, more than 20 families at Aladiyoor village too were evacuated by the NDRF personnel.

The discharge of surplus water from the Papanasam, Manimutharu and Gadana dams, that came down to



The Murugan temple at Karupanthurai village near Tirunelveli lies submerged in Tamirabarani.

— DC

14,731 cusecs, 12,117 cusecs and 1,625 cusecs respectively on Thursday morning, however increased after heavy downpour since Thursday afternoon in the catchment areas of the dams in the Western Ghats.

During the last 24 hours, Tirunelveli district registered a total rainfall of 360mm. The neighbouring Tenkasi district too experienced incessant rains as a result of which all the falls at Courtallam were in spate and banned for tourists.

District collector Vishnu inspected the low-lying areas

and vulnerable villages. He said no serious damage to human lives or houses was reported in the district. The swift action by the two teams of NDRF along with the personnel of fire force, revenue and police helped the people residing in low lying areas to be shifted safely to the rescue centres.

Teams comprising officials from the departments of revenue, police, PWD, fire service and local administration have been formed to monitor the situation round the clock in all the 87 low lying places in the district.

YouTubers warned to remove abusive content

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

Chennai police commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal said strict action will be taken against the YouTubers who upload abusive and obscene content on their YouTube channel.

The top cop called for the YouTubers in the state to delete the videos containing abusive contents.

He said stringent actions will be taken if police find out about the videos. He also said the Cyber Crime Wing of the Chennai police is monitoring YouTube contents.

Enjoy Pongal holidays at home, get ready for Covid vaccine jab

B. Vijayalakshmi

Viewpoint

While Tamils will be celebrating all the three days of Pongal festival at home this year as the state government has banned public entry to popular tourist spots, the state government is gearing up for a massive inoculation exercise on Saturday with vaccine consignments having landed in Chennai.

Usually, during Pongal holidays, people flock to beaches and other recreational spots with families. This year all beaches, Vandalur zoo, Guindy national park and tourist spots in Mamallapuram have been closed to the public on January 15, 16 and 17 to stem the spread of coronavirus by preventing gathering of people in large numbers in such public places.

Till last year, thousands of police personnel have been deployed, all terrain vehicles rolled out, drone cameras put to use and special control rooms and watch towers set up to

manage the milling crowds thronging Marina and Elliot's beaches and other recreation spots on Kaanum Pongal.

However, this year, a majority of Chennaiites will be forced to stay at home due to Covid restrictions and will probably enjoy watching new movies released in television channels and OTT platforms.

It may be noted that the state successfully completed dry runs for vaccination at 200 centres involving 2,000 healthcare personnel and 510 participants. The vaccines transported to 10 storage facilities

in the city are being dispatched to all districts. With 2,000 vaccine centres readied, the vaccines will be administered as two doses. State health officials have said they would follow the Centre's guidelines for vaccination. It is said about 350 million frontline and healthcare workers will be covered in the first phase vaccination drive throughout the country. As hopes rise for an end of pandemic with the ensuing vaccination drives, both the state and Central governments should ensure Covid-hit citizens are given the jab without any hassles.

Vijay, VSP's performances save Master

MASTER—REVIEW

ANUPAMA
SUBRAMANIAN

CAST: Vijay, Vijay Sethupathi, Malavika Mohanan, Arjun Das

DIRECTION: Lokesh Kanagaraj

RATING:*** Good

After a long pause involving mostly small and mid-level releases, K'town has finally woken up with a block-buster outing in Vijay's Master. There's a lot of fanfare around this Pongal special as the pent-up demand gives new hopes of theatrical revival.

JD aka John Durairaj (Vijay), a college professor



who teaches personality development, is loved by the students and is hailed as a 'Master' but is disliked by the management due to his alcoholism. Due to violence during college elections, he is transferred to an observation home in Nagercoil to teach juvenile criminals and set things right. What he discovers is that the home is under the control of a ruthless beast called Bhavani (Vijay Sethupathi) who uses the inmates and the staff for his nefarious activities. A dreadful incident at the

home makes JD relinquish the drinks. He decides to take on Bhavani and the rest is all about the clash of titans.

Vijay for the first time has come out of his mass hero formula and kudos to him for accepting such a character that has negative connotations. He nails his flawed role JD and pulls it off with style, acting prowess with utmost ease. He is a treat to watch in dance sequences and high-octane stunts. But the action blocks looked stretched.

Vijay Sethupathi as usual hogs the limelight with his riveting performance and he is 'evil personified' in every frame. Arjun Das as a baddie continues his good act from Kaidhi. Mahendran does a

neat job. Poovaiyar also has some screen space. All others including the lead lady Malavika Mohanan, Andrea, Shantanu, Gouri Kishan and Srikanth have minuscule roles.

While the first half is full-filled and entertaining, post intermission the screenplay drags big time. We have a backstory to Bhavani turning a devil, but Lokesh has nothing to offer for the reasons behind JD's alcoholism. The climax is predictable and length is a major problem.

Technically, Anirudh's already popular songs are visual feast. His BGM including the theme music for Vijay as well as VSP is good. Sathyan Sooryan's cinematography is brilliant.

IN BRIEFS

MP hooch tragedy toll mounts to 20

Bhopal: The death toll in Tuesday's hooch tragedy in Morena district has mounted to 20 with 8 more people, who had fallen ill after consuming spurious liquor, succumbing in the hospital on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday. All the 20 deceased hailed from the villages of Manpura under Baghchini police station and Pahawali under Sumaoli police station in the district, official reports reaching from Morena said on Wednesday. Preliminary police investigation has revealed that the victims had purchased liquor from an authorised person, who was also hospitalised after consuming the same liquor, at the rate of ₹50 per bottle. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan who took stock of the situation at a high level official meeting here in the morning, ordered transfer of Morena district collector Anurag Verma and local superintendent of police Anurag Sujatia.

Major blaze in Kolkata

Kolkata: A major fire broke out at a slum in Kolkata's Bagbazar area on Wednesday evening. At least 24 fire tenders were pressed into service as the blaze engulfed several houses in the slum on Kshirode Vidyavinode Avenue beside the Bagbazar Women's College near the Chitapore Lock Gate Bridge. Blasts were heard in the slum which police suspect to be of gas cylinders at the houses on fire, officials said. There were no reports of any casualty as most of the people were evacuated on time, they said. The blaze also spread to the adjacent Sarada Mayer Bari as the firefighters escorted the saints out, an officer of the fire department said. "The reason for the fire is not yet known" an officer of the Kolkata Police said.

150-m cross-border tunnel found in J&K

This is the 3rd tunnel unearthed by alert BSF guards

Jammu, Jan. 13: A 150-metre tunnel constructed along the International Border (IB) to facilitate infiltration of terrorists into Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistan was detected by Border Security Force (BSF) personnel in Hiranagar sector of Kathua district on Wednesday, officials said.

This is the third tunnel unearthed by alert border guards along the IB in the twin districts of Samba and Kathua in Jammu region over the past six months and ninth in the past decade.

"A nearly 150-metre-long tunnel was detected by a BSF patrol party during an anti-tunnelling operation in Bobiyaan village of Hiranagar sector on Wednesday morning," Inspector General of BSF, Jammu frontier, N.S. Jamwal told reporters at the scene. He along with other senior officers rushed to Bobiyaan soon after the detection of the tunnel.

"The opposite of this side is Pakistan's Shakergarh which is notorious for having launch pads and bases of terrorists. We have inputs available with us as a result of that we are sensitive to whatever is happening here," the BSF officer said, assuring that all necessary measures are in place to counter Pakistani designs.

He said sand bags with Pakistani markings are evidence of the hand of Pakistani establishment in the construction of this tunnel, which is identical to the previously detected tunnels hav-



Security officers investigate near the mouth of a 150-metre underground tunnel, constructed allegedly by Pakistan beneath IB, at Hiranagar sector of Kathua district on Wednesday.

ing a depth of 25 to 30 metre with two to three feet diameter.

Asked whether this tunnel was recently dug or it's an old one, the BSF officer said it is a matter of investigation.

However, he said some of the sand bags recovered from the tunnel have 2016-17 year of manufacture which suggest that it is an old tunnel.

"We were searching for this tunnel for a long time and its detection was the effort of the anti-tunnelling operation which is underway all along the IB. Whether any infiltration had taken place through this tunnel in the past can be said after completion of

our investigation," he said.

Jamwal, however, said the BSF is sure that no infiltration had taken place through this tunnel in the recent past.

"We are undertaking some development works here and have strengthened the security in view of the anti-tunnelling drive, he said.

Referring to the killing of two Pakistani infiltrators in Surankote area of Poonch district and an encounter in Srinagar last month, the IG said Pakistan is always looking for an opportunity to push terrorists into Jammu Kashmir, whether it is through Line of Control (LoC) or

IB. "They are continuing with the attempts but we are fully alert to the situation. Our alertness resulted in detection of underground tunnels and shooting down of a Hexa-copter loaded with a huge cache of arms and ammunition," he said, adding the border protection grid comprising army, BSF and police are working jointly to scuttle Pakistan's attempts to push terrorists and weapons into this side.

Last year, the BSF detected two such tunnels in Samba district on August 28 and November 22 following successful infiltration by two groups of terrorists who were subsequently neutralised in separate encounters along Jammu-Srinagar national highway while they were enroute to Kashmir in trucks.

While three Pakistani terrorists affiliated with Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) were eliminated in a gunfight in Nagrota area near Jammu after they were intercepted aboard a Kashmir-bound truck in January last year, another group of Pakistani terrorists armed with weapons and a large quantity of grenades were killed at the same spot on November 19.

Investigations suggested both the groups infiltrated into this side through underground tunnels.

Meanwhile, Pakistani Rangers violated ceasefire by resorting to unprovoked firing on forward posts and villages in the Border Outpost area of Gurnam in Hiranagar sector, the officials said. — PTI

HC: Mandate of 30 days notice under Spl Marriage Act optional

Lucknow, Jan. 13: In a judgement that is likely to bring relief to inter faith couples, the Allahabad High Court on Wednesday declared as optional the mandatory publication of notice of intended marriages under the Special Marriage Act, saying it violated the right to privacy.

Making such publication mandatory would invade in the fundamental rights of liberty and privacy, the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court said.

It would also affect the couple's freedom to choose

marriage "without interference from state and non-state actors", Justice Vivek Chaudhary said.

He said it shall be optional for the parties to the intended marriage to make a request in writing to the marriage officer to publish or not to publish such a notice.

If the couple did not intend so, the marriage officer has to solemnise their marriage forthwith without publication of 30 days notice, the court said.

A section of the Special Marriage Act, 1954, requires

an inter-faith couple to give written notice of the marriage to the district marriage officer.

The court was considering a habeas corpus petition alleging that an adult girl is being detained against her wishes to marry her lover who belongs to a different religion.

The judgement comes against the backdrop of a recent controversial law enacted by the Uttar Pradesh government which prohibits forcible conversion for the sake of marriage. — PTI

Mother of murdered 5-year-old moves SC

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 13

In a development in the case involving the brutal murder of a five-year-old girl from Jadupur village in Odisha's Nayagarh district, the mother of the victim on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court seeking Central Bureau of Investigation CBI investigation.

Admitting the petition, the apex Court sent notices to the Odisha government and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to put forth their views.

Saudamini Sahoo, the mother of the victim filed a writ petition under Article 32 of the Constitution of India in exercise of her right to Constitutional remedies.

Soudamini has been opposing the investigation into the case launched by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Odisha Crime Branch apprehending a shoddy probe on account of the alleged involvement of influential politicians belonging to the ruling party in the crime.

She had earlier raised doubts over the veracity of the probe, especially when

● **ADMITTING THE** petition, the apex Court sent notices to the Odisha government and the CBI to put forth their views.

● **SAUDAMINI SAHOO**, the mother of the victim, has been opposing the investigation into the case launched by a SIT of the Odisha Crime Branch apprehending a shoddy probe on account of the alleged involvement of influential politicians.

the sleuths overlooked her complaint in bringing the "main accused" under the ambit of the investigation. She had identified Babuli Nayak, a close associate of Minister Arun Sahoo as the "main accused" behind the crime who, she said, was not properly investigated by the SIT. She had repeatedly punched holes in the findings of the SIT and alleged that the probe team had falsely implicated a juvenile in the case while the real culprits were moving scot-free.

The little girl, daughter of Ashok Sahoo and Soudamini Sahoo, was allegedly kidnapped on July 14 while playing in front of her house in the afternoon.

NCB SUMMONS MAHA MIN'S SON-IN-LAW

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JAN. 13

In a major embarrassment for the senior NCP minister Nawab Malik, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) summoned his son-in-law Samir Khan on Wednesday in connection with an alleged drugs case. The NCB's action came after its arrest of one of the co-owners of the Mucchad Panwala shop in Mumbai.

Samir Khan is the husband of Nilofer, the daughter Malik, who is a minister of minority affairs and skill development in the MVA government in Maharashtra. He is also the chief spokesperson of the NCP.

According to the NCB sources, the agency summoned Khan for questioning in an alleged drug procurement case and recorded his statement. Khan's name came up during the interrogation of British national and drug peddler Karan Sajjani.

There is an online transaction of ₹20,000 between Sajjani and Khan.

Treat adultery in armed forces a crime, Centre tells SC

PARMOD KUMAR IDC NEW DELHI, JAN. 13

The Centre on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court seeking to exclude from the ambit of its 2018 order decriminalising adultery of all personnel of the armed forces, who can be cashiered from service on the grounds of "unbecoming conduct" for committing adultery with a col-

league's wife.

A five-judge Constitution bench, in a landmark ruling on September 27, 2018, had unanimously decriminalised adultery after striking down a British-era provision, Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code, terming it as "unconstitutional, archaic and manifestly arbitrary". Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman had said women can't be treated as "chattel".

Issuing notice on the Centre's application seeking clarification, Justice Nariman, heading a bench that included Justices Navin Sinha and K.M. Joseph, said as the clarification sought by the Centre was on an order by a Constitution bench, it should go before a five-judge bench. The court directed the registry to place this before Ch left Justice Sharad A. Bobde for

appropriate orders.

The Centre said the order decriminalising adultery should not apply to the armed forces, where such acts amount to "unbecoming conduct". Under Army rules, adultery is a ground for court martial for unbecoming conduct.

The Supreme Court had in its 2018 judgment said Section 497 is a denial of the constitutional guarantees

of dignity, liberty, privacy and sexual autonomy that are intrinsic to Article 21 of the Constitution. "Mere adultery can't be a criminal offence. It is a matter of privacy. A husband is not the master of a wife. Women should be treated with equality along with men," then Chief Justice Dipak Misra said in the judgment, also speaking for Justice A.M. Khanwilkar.

Airline official's murder in Patna raises political heat

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, JAN. 13

Nitish Kumar led NDA government facing attack over rising crime graph in Bihar was in for another setback when a private airline official Rupesh Kumar Singh was gunned down in Patna Tuesday evening.

The incident occurred out-

side his residential complex in Patna's crowded Punaichak area under Shastri Nagar police station.

According to the police, he had returned from the airport after duty and was entering into his residential building when criminals started firing indiscriminately and pumped at least

six bullets from the window of the car.

He was rushed to a hospital for treatment where doctors declared him brought dead.

While investigating the case police found that CCTV of the building was not working and the security guard was not present when the incident occurred.

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DECCAN Chronicle

14 JANUARY 2021

Election fever grips TN as early hustings begin

It is a bit early for Tamil Nadu to go into election mode with at least four more months left for the AIADMK to relinquish power. But it has happened as the principal contender to the throne, the DMK, launched an all-out war to storm Fort St George quite early, forcing the ruling dispensation to quickly respond. Thus, the battle lines have been drawn between the two traditional rivals, who have been ruling the state alternately since 1967, after that indistinct threat that loomed for about a year in the form of actor Rajinikanth dissipated and the other actor, Kamal Haasan, is not expected to play a big role.

Of course, Mr Haasan is around and has already started going around spouting rhetoric and another actor, Seeman, with his Naam Tamilar Katchi is, as usual, spewing chauvinistic vitriol. But there is no scope for a third front to take on the might of the DMK and AIADMK as a plethora of smaller parties in the state, which include the BJP and Congress that are otherwise political giants at the national level, have started rallying around the Dravidian majors, in the run-up to the state Assembly elections. But the same small parties are now promising to provide scope

Another thorn in the flesh of the AIADMK is the PMK bargaining for an assurance to provide 20 per cent exclusive reservation for the Vanniyar community that it represents to remain in the alliance

The rumblings of discontent in the two coalitions, forged during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, are signs of potential wrangling, triggered by the overt ambitions of the two lead parties that want to rule the state. Both DMK and AIADMK are keen on contesting in an extremely high number of seats, as both are averse to sharing power with allies. For them, alliances are for winning elections and not ruling the state and hence they expect at least a simple majority to form the government on their own. And the fallout is allies not getting the desired number of seats.

In the past, as it happened in 2016, disillusionment over seat allocation had united small parties to form alternative alliances. But this time there is no sign of such rebellions as the small parties seem to be prepared to accept whatever is given, though they have started asserting themselves in a different way. Almost all the parties want to retain their individual identity by contesting in their own symbols and names. Since that goes against the wishes of both the alliance leaders, who want smaller allies to opt for their popular election symbols, thus marking ally candidates, at least in Election Commission records, as their representative, there is bound to be friction and action.

Another thorn in the flesh of the AIADMK is the PMK bargaining for an assurance to provide 20 per cent exclusive reservation for the Vanniyar community that it represents to remain in the alliance. How the AIADMK deals with the belligerent PMK and how both the lead partners coax allies to settle for low numbers of seats would form the next act of the long drawn electoral drama, whose climax is, as said earlier, four months away.

Policy not court's domain

The value of the committee of four experts appointed by the Supreme Court in arbitrary fashion in an effort to defuse the national political crisis caused by the prolonged agitation by tens of thousands farmers is questionable.

The farmers are knocking on Delhi's gates to protest three farm laws recently passed by the Narendra Modi government. In such haste was the regime that it first brought the legislations in the form of ordinance — or executive fiat — in mid-June and then rushed these through Parliament in three days flat by the end of September, short-circuiting and bypassing norms and procedures.

The top court waded into the delicate situation caused by the agitation, which has attracted world attention, when neither the government nor the farmers called for its help, although during negotiations the government's ministers did tell the farmers' representatives to try their luck in the Supreme Court if they weren't satisfied with what the government was offering. The farmers didn't take the bait. But the court stepped in anyway.

It has held the three laws in abeyance. Maybe, this is in order to appear even-handed. But this is not cutting ice outside government circles. The farmers' demand is the repeal of the laws, which they see as bad policy, adversely impacting their lives. Evidently, the top court does not understand this. Nor does the SC see that it has no role in determining policy, which is the exclusive domain of the executive.

As per the court, the committee it has brought into being will hear all sides and help the apex court understand whether the farm laws are in the “public interest”. This self-given assignment is outside the top court's remit. The SC's job is to determine the constitutionality or otherwise of a legislation, not whether it is in the public interest. That is for the people to decide. When court-appointed experts seek to do so, it is the ayatollah syndrome that looms.

For the sake of record, all the four experts in the committee are strongly pro-government on the agri-laws, and yet the Chief Justice of India expects farmers' representatives to appear before this committee. What a display of seeming the honest broker, the CJI may be courting disdain. What a pity!

DECCAN CHRONICLE

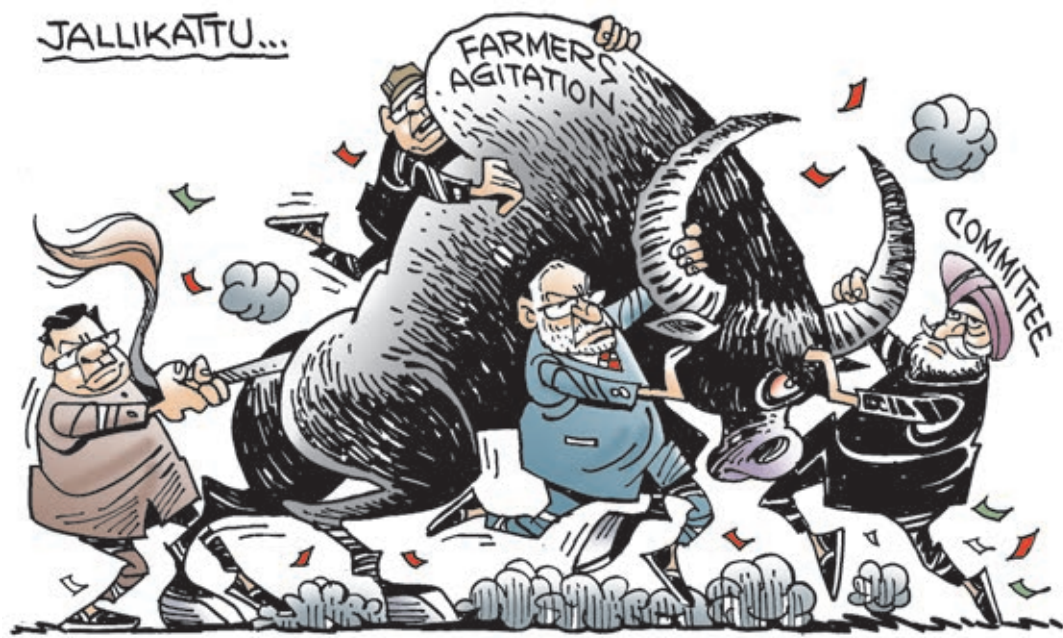
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Subhani



Is ‘new normal’ really a return to the old ways?



Patralekha Chatterjee
Dev 360

Poverty. Inequality. Precarity. Vulnerability. These are mere words, until they hit us directly or confront us in a way which makes it difficult to look away.

A flood of images of migrant workers walking down national highways burst into middle class India's living rooms following the nationwide lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March last year. The lockdown came into effect with barely four hours' notice. All economic activity came to a grinding halt; and there was no transport.

Those searing images of migrant workers — men and women reduced to collateral damage for the State in its battle against the coronavirus — jolted many people.

Suddenly, everyone was talking about the heart-breaking conditions in which all daily wage earners — the face of the country's vast informal sector — lived and worked.

For a fleeting while, optimists wondered if the Covid-19 pandemic had sledgehammered some fundamental lessons about the need for solidarity between the “formal” and “informal” sectors, if not for anything else but enlightened self-interest.

Almost a year down the line, as we get ready for the vaccine rollout and for the economy to recover fully, what really has changed?

Are we trying to do science and fix the economy in a way that factors in the needs and rights of our most vulnerable? Or is our “new normal” really going back to the old ways?

Last week, once again, images of precarity and poverty came together through the testimonies of desperately poor people who had volunteered to participate in the ongoing clinical trial of Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine candidate, Covaxin, in Bhopal.

Covaxin, as everyone knows by now, has been cleared by India's drugs controller for restricted emergency use. This means, along with Covishield, the Serum Institute of India's coronavirus vaccine, it is part of the vaccine rollout.

Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech has given safety and immunogenicity data. But there is no efficacy data yet. This data is expected in a couple of months.

Meanwhile, the ongoing trial has attracted a lot of public attention after the allegations of irregularities and violations of ethics. Many questions are being asked about the manner in which People's Hospital in Bhopal, one of the trial sites, enrolled participants for the Covaxin trial.

Once again, we are face to face with stark images of vulnerability.

The video testimonies arranged by a Bhopal-based human rights group in the wake of the death of a participant in the trial made it clear that those who had signed up to participate in the trial had little idea of what it entailed. Bharat Biotech says the post-mortem analysis has revealed that the death was not related to the vaccine. The family of the deceased feel differently.

Most of those who offered their testimonies on camera are victims of the horrific Bhopal gas tragedy, the world's largest industrial disaster in December 1984; and many said that they could not read or write.

What leaps out from among the many statements they made is the stark reality of “informed consent” when it comes to poor people with no education and little bargaining power.

As is widely known, there are four key parts of informed consent in a clinical trial — information, comprehension, voluntariness and documentation. “Giving information does not mean it

has been comprehended. According to the new clinical trial rules in India, there should be an ‘impartial witness’ while informed consent is being taken from an illiterate participant,” says Dr Anant Bhan, a well-known researcher in global health and bioethics.

Additionally, for vulnerable participants, there is a requirement for audio-visual documentation of the process, Dr Bhan points out.

“The recent testimonies of volunteers, many of whom are illiterate and poor, for a Covaxin trial site in Bhopal, show big gaps in oversight in the regulatory process,” he adds.

Doing science must not mean playing with the basic human rights of vulnerable people, says Dr Bhan emphatically. Clearly, this is in no one's interest and will also raise questions on the quality of data coming out of such trials.

“The seriousness of the allegations made by some volunteers in public in full view of the national media raises a question about whether audio-visual recordings of the informed consent process were done in line with the protocol laid down by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO),” says Amar Jesani, another leading expert on ethics, rights and health systems and editor, *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*.

“This is not filming a wedding party,” says Jesani acerbically. “There is a specific protocol on how these situations need to be filmed. Many of the volunteers are from highly vulnerable groups who did not know their rights. But just because someone does not know his/her rights does not mean rights don't exist.”

There are many legitimate questions. Do audio-

What leaps out from among the many statements in the Bhopal Covaxin trial is the stark reality of ‘informed consent’ when it comes to poor people with no education and little bargaining power

visual recordings of the informed consent process exist for all trial participants from vulnerable groups? Or was it done for only a few? Why?

“This also raises questions about the role of the local ethics committees. Have they investigated whether the audio-visual recordings were done and according to protocol? If such video recordings exist, they can be made public by blurring the face and identity of participants who have not on their own publicly identified as participants,” Jesani adds.

The face of vulnerability is equally stark when it comes to the green shoots of economic recovery.

“There are reasons to fear that economic recovery from the pandemic, like the ‘growth story’, will be shouldered by precarious labour. An already deep employment crisis is worsening further,” wrote SOAS academic Dr Subir Sinha in a recent essay in *Open Democracy*, a website covering international affairs.

So, is there any reason for hope?

Mukta Naik, an architect and urban planner working with the Centre for Policy Research, acknowledges that many informal workers face “worse terms” as the Indian economy seeks to recover. The images of the long march of migrant workers, she says, sensitised many among India's middle class, but sadly, the lockdown months made them retreat into their individual bubbles.

However, she points out, many states are now talking about social protection for the vulnerable. There is an appetite for discussion on the subject.

But pathways and mechanisms to operationalise this vision are still not clear, Ms Naik says.

That much-needed clarity could make all the difference.

India doesn't have to let millions lead a precarious existence. It could use its resources to build back better.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

LETTERS

BACK TO SCHOOL

The decision of the Tamil Nadu government to start classes for students of X and XII from January 19 across the State is welcome. It is imperative that schools strictly follow the standard guidelines prescribed for the safety of students and staff, as a little lapse anywhere will result in closure of schools again putting students' lives in jeopardy. One hopes that the political parties in the State do not throw a spanner in the works in the matter of reopening schools in the name of cautioning the government.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

ALARMING THREAT

APROPPOS REPORT *Armed protests planned at all Capitols, Washington: FBI* (Jan. 13). It is alarming that there is a threat perception to all 50 State Capitols and Washington DC. What baffles is Mr Trump, in his first appearance after the Capitol Hill attack, brazenly blabbered that “his instigated statement is appropriate and the Dems are dividing the nation.” As one gets what he or she deserves, Mr Trump gets his impeachment. In fact, the incitement of insurrection is nothing but a declaration of war on American democracy. Had it happened in India he would have been booked as anti-national under Sedition Act and imprisoned. The moot question is could there be a ‘foreign hand’ which may have covertly interfered, indoctrinated, financed the natives who are renegades, like the Antifa infiltrated the Trump followers' protest march to destabilise the US with a vengeance. It was alleged earlier that the Russians and Chinese had helped Mr Trump to win the 2016 polls. Hence the CIA and FBI should probe whether there is any ‘foreign hand’ behind the Capitol Hill attack.

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

INJURY PROBLEM

THE GAME of cricket is a tough one and physical fitness plays a pivotal role in playing international cricket. But we find that the Indian players have been facing injury problems throughout the tour Down Under and the playing XI is reduced to the minimum for the Brisbane Test. The Gabba wicket is a tricky proposition and we need to have an experienced side the bank upon for the crucial match. The tough quarantine rules hit India on the tour's final leg. With Jasprit Bumrah ruled out, the pace bowling attack is weakened and skipper Rahane may have to play any 11 fit players. We hope Ashwin is fit enough to lead the attack and play a sheet anchor role as a batsman as well.

C.K. Ramanathan, Chennai

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



K'taka home secy shunted out for calling Safe City ‘scam’

IPS officer D. Roopa, who was the first woman home secretary of Karnataka has been transferred as the managing director of Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation amid her public spat with another IPS officer Hemant Nimbalkar, who, too, was transferred. Mr Nimbalkar was the additional commissioner (administration) in Bengaluru before being transferred to the internal security department.

Public spats are rarely pretty and the one between these two senior IPS officers of Karnataka over the tender process to procure CCTVs has brought out in the open the intense rivalries in the service. The two IPS officers locked horns after Ms Roopa accused Mr Nimbalkar of irregularities in the tender process of the ₹619 crore Bengaluru Safe City project under the Nirbhaya scheme. Mr Nimbalkar, on the other hand, accused Ms Roopa of interfering with the tender process without jurisdiction.

Ms Roopa had written to state chief secretary T.M. Vijaya Bhaskar alleging that Mr Nimbalkar was trying to favour a private company in the Bengaluru Safe City Project and demanded a probe against Mr Nimbalkar, alleging, in turn, that while the Home Department has started an enquiry against her, it has hesitated to do the same against Mr Nimbalkar, even after months since the CBI sought sanction for his prosecution.

According to sources, Ms Roopa wrote to the chief secretary after media reports that suggested she was under investigation by the chief secretary for allegedly “impersonating” the home secretary and interfering with the tendering process for the multi-crore project. It is unclear where the question of impersonation arises, as Ms Roopa was the home secretary of Karnataka! The content of the report is on the lines of a complaint written by Mr Nimbalkar to

the Karnataka chief secretary.

As the two trade charges, sources say that the government has started an inquiry in the matter. Expect more salvos in the days ahead!

KHEMKA DIGS IN HIS HEELS

Haryana IAS officer and whistleblower Ashok Khemka never gives up on his first principles.

Now principal secretary in the state's archaeological department, the indefatigable Mr Khemka continues to pursue the case which brought him into the national limelight. Last year, Mr Khemka had appealed to the Haryana State Information Commission under the Right to Information Act.

He had sought information relating to the inquiry commission that probed the grant of land use licences in Gurugram during the Congress government's tenure, including the alleged role of Robert Vadra, son-in-law of Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi. He informed the information com-

mission that the complete information sought had not been provided to him.

The commission has now issued notice to the office of chief secretary (political department) and the town and country planning department to give their response to the rejoinders filed by Mr Khemka. Sources say that the IAS officer has sought “penal action” under Section 20 of the RTI Act against those who failed to provide the information he had sought, claiming there is a “cover-up attempt”. This, too, is the letter of the law.

J&K BABUS DEFY INSTRUCTIONS

The government has taken serious note of several IAS officers of the Jammu and Kashmir cadre openly flouting instructions on the online filing of immovable property returns (IPRs). Non-compliance can lead to disciplinary proceedings and denial of vigilance clearance.

According to sources, online fil-

ing of IPRs was introduced in 2017. In terms of the extant rules, the babus have to necessarily file IPRs electronically as there is no provision for manual submission.

But much to the disappointment of the department of personnel and training (DoPT) and the general administration department (GAD), several IAS officers have not acted on the instructions issued repeatedly since 2017. Now, sources say, the commissioner secretary of GAD, Manoj Kumar Dwivedi, has issued a circular stating that failure to comply would “constitute good and sufficient reason for the institution of disciplinary proceedings”. The IAS officers have been advised to follow the instructions in letter and spirit or face the consequences. The government has clearly decided that it will not give further leeway to the defaulters.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

SHORT TAKES

Ankita out of Oz Open qualifiers

Melbourne: Ankita Raina's bid to qualify for a Grand Slam singles main draw failed yet again when she lost the final round of the Australian Open qualifying event to Serbian Olga Danilovic on Wednesday.

In the women's singles qualifiers being held in Dubai, Ankita lost the third and final round 2-6, 6-3, 1-6 to her Serbian opponent in almost two hours. Not being able to win points on her first serve hurt Ankita. It was the Indian's sixth attempt to qualify for a competition at the grand stage.

Her defeat means that Sumit Nagal will be the only Indian to compete in the singles event of the first Grand Slam of the season. Nagal has been awarded a wild card entry into the men's singles. Ramkumar Ramanathan had lost in the first round of the men's singles event while Prajesh Gunneswaran lost in the second round. — PTI

Boxers ready for European tour

New Delhi: Their Olympic preparations back on track after the disruption caused by Covid-19, Indian boxers will be travelling extensively to compete in various European tournaments in the next couple of months starting with the prestigious Strandja Memorial in Bulgaria. Indian boxing's High Performance Director Santiago Nievea revealed that apart from an international schedule, he would also like to see the national championships take place some time before the Olympic Games. "This year, we are starting with the Strandja Memorial in Bulgaria, then hopefully a tournament in Hungary and one more after that. Apart from this, we will be staying put at Bengaluru for the national camp," Nievea said giving a lowdown of the plans for the next six months. — PTI

BLAME IT ON IPL

Oz coach says 2020 edition cause for growing injury list

Brisbane, Jan. 13: He loves the IPL but Australia coach Justin Langer on Wednesday questioned the timing of the last year's edition, which he believes could have been a contributing factor in the injury setbacks that both his and the Indian team have endured in the ongoing series.

The IPL was held in the September-November window in 2020 in the United Arab Emirates due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The lucrative tournament is usually held in India during the April-May window. India have had a spate of injuries since the IPL and also in the current Australia series. Australia too had its share of injuries.

"It is really interesting how many injuries (it) has been throughout this summer. I can't help and think that the IPL this year (2020) was in really, probably wasn't ideal timing for anyone, certainly for such a big series like this," Langer said.

The latest addition to the Indian injury list is Ravindra Jadeja and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah. For Australia, David Warner was a big blow but he recovered in time for the last two Tests.

Langer was all praise for the IPL saying it helps in development of young players but was critical of the previous edition's timing. "I love the IPL, I look at IPL now like I used to look at county cricket for our young players. They go and play county cricket and it helps them (in) their cricket development enormously. I think it is the same with the IPL, helps their white-ball develop-

SMITH GETS BACKING OF HIS COACH

Brisbane, Jan. 13: Australia coach Justin Langer cannot believe the "absolute load of rubbish" that Steve Smith was trying to scuff up Rishabh Pant's guard in the drawn Sydney Test, and has called the criticism of his "quirks" way out of line and ludicrous.

Smith was accused of scuffling up the batsman's guard during the drinks break in the first session on Monday in the drawn Test. But Langer backed Smith to the hilt, coming down heavily on the criticism, mostly driven by fans online and some former players like Michael Vaughan.

"...I literally cannot believe some of the rubbish I read about Steve Smith. Absolute load of rubbish. I mean, if anyone knows Steve Smith, he is a bit quirky and he does some weird (stuff) and we have laughed about it for the last couple of years," Langer said. — PTI

ment. But the timing of it... because of what happened with Covid... probably wasn't ideal, and I just wonder whether that is having an impact on the injuries that we are seeing for both teams throughout the summer, so I'm sure they'll review that." — PTI



Australia's David Warner (left) and coach Justin Langer attend a training session at the Sydney Cricket Ground in this file photo. — AFP

Limping Team India train at Gabba

Brisbane, Jan. 13: The injury-ravaged Indian team on Wednesday underwent their first training session at the Gabba here, hoping to field 11 fit players in the series-deciding fourth Test against Australia.

Ruled out of the last Test with an abdominal strain, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah still accompanied the visiting team for their training session.

The likes of Rohit Sharma,

Shubman Gill, skipper Ajinkya Rahane and others were seen in their training kits.

Bumrah, though, was not in his training outfit as he got involved in a discussion with bowling coach Bharat Arun.

"After an epic fightback in Sydney, it is time to regroup. We have begun our preparations for the final Test at the Gabba," the BCCI posted on its twitter handle. Chinaman bowler Kuldeep

Yadav was seen bowling at the nets and there is a chance that he could be picked for the match with influential all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja ruled out due to a fractured thumb.

Also part of the session were seamer Shardul Thakur and all-rounder Washington Sundar. Either T. Natarajan or Shardul is likely to replace Bumrah in the playing XI at Gabba, forming a new-look pace attack alongside Mohammed Siraj and Navdeep

Saini.

Bumrah picked up the abdominal strain during the third Test in Sydney.

Head coach Ravi Shastri, who was keeping a tab on the proceedings, addressed the team huddle. He was also seen having a discussion with the rest of the support staff, which includes batting coach Vikram Rahtour and fielding coach R. Sridhar, apart from Arun. — PTI

NATIONAL | KARTING

NK Racing rule the roost

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

Narain Karthikeyan's NK Racing Academy (NKRA) clinched both, the teams' title as well as the drivers' title in the 2020 FMSCI NK Rotax Max Karting Championship.

NKRA's Arjun Maini emerged on top in the Senior Max category as the team dominated the field on their debut season. The Indian factory team of CRG founded and operated by India's first Formula One driver ran five KT2 karts in the Senior MAX category.

The final weekend began with Kush Maini re-entering the Championship battle on Round 3, bagging pole position and the win

closely followed by his brother Arjun Maini. The academy rookie drivers Divy Nandan from Delhi and David Ryan from Chennai also displayed strong pace as well, finishing P10 and P11 respectively with Sohil Shah was yet again, the reserve driver for the team running the fifth kart finishing P8 in the race with some strong moves in the race.

Narain was pleased with the team's performance: "We achieved what we set out to do, most importantly in the development of young drivers from India. Also it was a great effort from CRG in giving us a dominant chassis specially made for our Indian track conditions," he added,



NK Racing's Arjun Maini in action.

ISL | SEASON 7

Chennaiyin inch closer to top four

Goa, January 13: Their first clash in this season's Indian Super League on Sunday may have ended in a goalless draw, but Chennaiyin FC's encounter against Odisha FC at the GMC Stadium on Wednesday wasn't short of goals.

After struggling for goals all season, Csaba Laszlo's men turned on the style against Odisha, scoring two in the opening quarter of the game. Portuguese forward Esmael Gonçalves opened the scoring in the 15th minute, before putting Chennaiyin two-up by converting a penalty in the 21st minute. However, a

Diego Mauricio screamer in the 64th minute gave Odisha hope but Chennaiyin held on for a 2-1 win, which lifted them all the way to fifth place.

Goncalves had the chance to put his team ahead in the fifth minute when he got in behind the Odisha defence, but with only keeper Arshdeep Singh to beat, he blasted his chance over. However, he made amends for that ten minutes later with a well-taken goal. Gaurav Bora failed to deal with a long ball from Rahim Ali and it fell towards Goncalves, who did not make a mistake this time.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES

FLOYD CASE: EX-COP'S TRIAL IN MARCH

Washington, Jan. 13: The trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin — charged with murdering African American man George Floyd — will begin as scheduled March 8, but his co-defendants will appear separately in late August, a judge ordered in a decision made public Tuesday. Both the prosecution and defence had requested to postpone the start of the trial in Minnesota due to the Covid-19.

Even in the largest courtroom in the county, it would be "impossible to comply with Covid-19 physical restrictions in a joint trial involving all four defendants," judge Peter Cahill said in his decision.

SIX NIGERIAN TROOPS KILLED BY JIHADIST

Kano, Jan. 13: Six Nigerian soldiers were killed when a jihadist rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into them during a clash in northeast Nigeria's Borno state, two military sources said Tuesday.

The suicide bombing by a member of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) group occurred Monday as the soldiers were conducting a raid of the group's stronghold in the village of Talala.

They said scores of jihadists have been killed in the operation launched last week on ISWAP's second largest camp. "Our men dominated the terrorists, killing dozens, and out of frustration they sent a suicide bomber who killed six soldiers," one of the officers said.

Pence refuses to invoke 25th Amendment to oust Trump

House of Representatives passes resolution urging VP to remove Don

Washington, Jan. 13:

US Vice President Mike Pence told House leaders Tuesday he does not support invoking the 25th Amendment process to remove Donald Trump, all but guaranteeing an impeachment vote against the besieged president. "With just eight days left in the President's term, you and the Democratic Caucus are demanding that the Cabinet and I invoke the 25th Amendment," Pence wrote to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, referring to the process that would declare Trump unable to fulfill his duties and install Pence as acting president for the remainder of the term. "I do not believe that such a course of action is in the best interest of our nation or consistent with our Constitution," he said.

Democrats mobilised rapidly to begin the process to have Trump removed after he encouraged his supporters last Wednesday to "march" to the US Capitol and "fight." In a violent insurrection, the rioters storm-

160 FBI investigations against Capitol rioters

Washington, Jan. 13: The FBI has opened more than 160 investigations against the January 6 Capitol Hill rioters, officials said here, and asserted this is just the tip of the iceberg. The agency has worked hand-in-hand with the United States Attorney's Office and law enforcement partners in DC and across the country to arrest and charge multiple individuals who took part in last week's breach of the US Capitol, FBI Washington Field Office Assistant Director In-Charge Steven M D'Antuono said.

"In six days, we have opened past outnumbered police, ram-paged through and ransacked the building, and interrupted Congress as it was certifying Joe Biden's election victory.

The Democratic-controlled US House of Representatives, which is

opened 160 case files, and that's just the tip of the iceberg," he said, adding the FBI has received more than 100,000 pieces of digital media. D'Antuono said the FBI will be knocking on the doors of the people who participated in the attack on the Capitol. "But before we do this, this is your opportunity to come forward as several individuals involved in Wednesday's riots have done," he added.

In the weeks leading up to the January 6 rally, the FBI, D'Antuono said, developed some intelligence that a number of individ-

uals were planning to travel to the DC area with intentions to cause violence.

This was immediately shared and action was taken as demonstrated by the arrest of Enrique Tarrio by the Metropolitan Police Department the night before the rally. Other individuals were identified in other parts of the country and their travel subsequently disrupted, D'Antuono noted. Acting US Attorney for the District of Columbia, Michael Sherwin, said the scope and scale of the investigation in these cases are rarely unprecedented. — PTI

rushing ahead towards impeaching Trump over the unprecedented Capitol Hill attack, has passed a resolution urging Vice President Mike Pence to invoke 25th Amendment to remove him from office. The resolution was voted by 223 to 205 votes on

Tuesday night. The voting was mostly on party lines, with one Republican voting in favour of the resolution and five abstaining.

Earlier in the day Trump said the 25th Amendment was of "zero risk" to him. — Agencies

IMPEACHMENT MANAGERS FOR TRIAL NAMED

Washington, Jan. 13: Speaker Nancy Pelosi has named a Maryland Democrat grieving his son's recent death as leader of the nine House Democrats who would prosecute US President Donald Trump during his expected Senate impeachment trial.

The team includes three women, four people of colour and lawmakers from states stretching from Rhode Island to California. Rep. Jamie Raskin will be lead manager. The 58-year-old has often been an energetic presence during floor debates. — AP

YouTube suspends Trump channel

Washington, Jan. 13: Google-owned YouTube on Tuesday temporarily suspended President Donald Trump's channel and removed a video for violating its policy against inciting violence, joining other social media platforms in

banning his accounts after last week's Capitol riot.

Trump's access to the social media platforms he has used as a megaphone during his presidency has been largely cut off since a violent mob of his supporters stormed the Capitol

for violence, we removed new content uploaded to Donald J. Trump's channel for violating our policies," YouTube said in a statement. The channel is now "temporarily prevented from uploading new content for a 'minimum' of 7

days," the statement read. The video-sharing platform also said it will be "indefinitely disabling comments" on Trump's channel because of safety concerns. Facebook last week suspended Trump's Facebook and Instagram.

US Covid-19 toll hits new daily record of 4.5K

Washington, Jan. 13: The US death toll from Covid-19 hit a new daily record of nearly 4,500, Johns Hopkins University said Tuesday evening.

As the health crisis rages out of control in the US, this was the first time the toll in the country hardest hit by the pandemic sur-

passed 4,000 in 24 hours. The US recorded more than 235,000 new cases of coronavirus infection and 4,470 deaths, according to the Johns Hopkins tally as of 8:30 pm (0130 GMT).

Around 131,000 people are now hospitalised in the US with Covid-19, said the Covid Tracking Project.

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY	
Civil Engg. • E-TENDER NOTICE • No. W.623/15, Dt. 11/12.01.2021	
Sr. Divisional Engineer (Coordination), West Central Railway, Kota, for and on behalf of the President of Union of India, invites following open E-Tenders.	
Tender No. 1/2021 MR:- Description of Work: BHARATPUR Depot - Supplying of 90000 cum. 65mm. Size machine crushed stone ballast of approved quality and loading into hoppers/wagon at. Approx. Cost: ₹ 6,40,17,000/- Earnest Money: ₹ 4,70,100/- Tender No. 2/2021:-	
Description of Work: CTR(S)-14.850 Kms. with 60 Kg. rail and 60 Kg. PRC Sleeper @ 1540 with ballast cushion and earth work from inside Ammunition Depot (Bharatpur) shed No. 139/148. Approx. Cost: ₹ 2,99,19,920.02. Earnest Money: ₹ 2,99,600/- Tender No. 3/2021:-	
Description of Work: Kota:- 1. Augmentation of sewerage pipeline network for passenger platform No. 4 and line No. 8. 2. One STP at old pit line 0.3 MLD with pipeline network. 3. Provision of 1.5 MLD water recycling plant (WRP) with colony network. Approx. Cost: ₹ 2,91,27,734.15. Earnest Money: ₹ 2,95,600/- Tender No. 4/2021 MR:-	
Description of Work: Widening and repair to cess and slope of bank in jurisdiction of DEN/North/Kota in connection with 160 kmph. Approx. Cost: ₹ 7,86,22,099.28. Earnest Money: ₹ 5,43,100/- Tender No. 5/2021 MR:-	
Description of Work: ADEN Bharatpur Section: Repairs of minor bridges in connection with Mission Refur. Approx. Cost: ₹ 1,71,58,309.57. Earnest Money: ₹ 2,35,800/- Tender No. 6/2021:-	
Description of Work: 1. Hindaun City:- Provision of 5000 liters capacity STP for station area with pipeline network. 2. Bharatpur City:- Provision of STP 20000 liters capacity with pipeline network for station area. Approx. Cost: ₹ 77,06,738.60. Earnest Money: ₹ 1,54,100/- Tender No. 7/2021 MR:-	
Description of Work: Nagda-Kota Section:- Through Formation Treatment by Geogrid & geotextile with BCM from Km. 698.220 to 725.000 UP & DN (46.520 Kms.). Approx. Cost: ₹ 7,05,08,313.21. Earnest Money: ₹ 5,02,600/- Tender No. 8/2021 R:-	
(Short Tender Notice) - Description of Work: Development of green belts and plantation under DEN/North/Kota Section. Approx. Cost: ₹ 14,46,087.18. Earnest Money: ₹ 28,930/- Tender No. 9/2021:- (Short Tender Notice) - Description of Work: Indergarh & Sawaimadhopur - Development of green belts and plantation under DEN/C/Kota section. Approx. Cost: ₹ 14,75,156.72. Earnest Money: ₹ 29,500/-	
Last Date & Time of submission of Tender:- For Tender Nos. 1/2021 MR, 2/2021, 3/2021, 4/2021 MR, 5/2021 MR, 6/2021 & 7/2021 MR: 15.30 Hrs. on 02.02.2021. For Tender No. 8/2021 R: 15.30 Hrs. on 25.01.2021. For Tender No. 9/2021: 15.30 Hrs. on 27.01.2021.	
For all the above Tenders:- Complete details are available in the E-Tender Notice uploaded on the Railway website www.reps.gov.in and also placed on the notice board of the Sr. Divisional Engineer (Coordination), DRM Office, West Central Railway, Kota's Office. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only.	
रेल यात्रा के दौरान विकल्प हेतु 138 पर एवं सुरक्षा हेतु 182 पर संपर्क करें।	



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