

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 1 | NOVEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: Nill

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aippasi 16
Tithi: Prathamai
Star: Bharani
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.50 am
Zohar: 11.58 am
Asar: 3.13 pm
Maghrib: 5.43 pm
Isha: 6.55 pm

SUNSET TODAY 5.58 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.14 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.37 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 8.14 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+43,084)	(+390)
81,79,250	1,22,071

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,511)
TN: 7,24,522 11,122

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

4,61,91,230

DEATHS

11,97,702

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES
215

uorldometers.info

Kamal Nath moves SC against EC's decision

Bhopal: Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath has moved the Supreme Court challenging an order of the Election Commission to revoke the Congress leader's "star campaigner" status for violations of the model code during campaign for the bypolls in 28 assembly constituencies in the state.

Online Rummy claims life of man in TN

Coimbatore: A 28-year old bank employee in the city died by suicide reportedly upset over the financial loss incurred by playing online rummy game, police said on Saturday. Madankumar, a resident of Seeranaickenpalayam, was found hanging in his house by the relatives early this morning. Preliminary investigation revealed that the deceased had become an addict of the online game after making money in the initial stage. However, he is said to have suffered losses in the game later and become an alcohol addict as he could not recover the lost money.

COUNTER POINT



Our campaign is very dull... our rival candidate gets more EC notices than us!

Sean Connery, first James Bond, breathes his last

London, Oct. 31: Legendary Scottish star Sean Connery, who became a global sensation as the first James Bond and featured in a string of cult hits in his five-decade-long career, has died. He was 90.

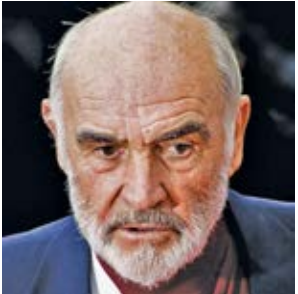
According to BBC, the actor passed away overnight in his sleep while in the Bahamas. He had been unwell for quite some time.

In the career spanning half a century, the actor fea-

tured in many critically-acclaimed and commercial blockbusters such as *The Hunt for Red October*, *Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade*, *Murder on the Orient Express* and *The Rock*.

Connery was born on August 25, 1930, to a Catholic factory worker and a Protestant domestic cleaner.

He left school at the age 13 with no qualifications and delivered milk, polished



coffins and laid bricks, before joining the Royal Navy. But he was invalided

out of the service with stomach ulcers only three years later. He initially made a living by doing odd-jobs like driving trucks, working as a lifeguard and posing as a model at the Edinburgh College of Art. The actor spent his spare time body-

building. It was in 1956 that Connery landed his first acting job for BBC production of *Requiem for a Heavyweight*. Soon after, he made his film debut with No

Road Back. The following year, he appeared in films like *Hell Drivers*, *Action of the Tiger* and *Time Lock*.

A major breakthrough in his career came when Connery, a relatively unknown actor, was cast as James Bond after an interview with producers Albert Broccoli and Harry Saltzman.

It is said that author Ian Fleming was not fully convinced that Connery can pull off the part. — AP



A worker wearing a PPE kit sanitizes inside a movie theatre authorities allowed the reopening of cinema halls, in Vijayawada, Saturday. — PTI

No e-registration needed to ply buses from TN to Puducherry

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 31:

The State government has permitted the plying of private and public buses between Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry without e-registration, thus lifting the ban that had been in force since the lockdown began.

A government order, issued on Saturday, said

that it came into force with immediate effect and cited the request of the Chief Minister of Puducherry to open up bus services and Tamil Nadu's unique geographical connection with the Union Territory.

The location of a few top hospitals like the JIPMER in Puducherry and in Karaikal, the regular practice of farmers and small

traders travelling between the State and Union Territory for their livelihood are among the reasons for the government allowing the bus services, the GO said.

Other reasons cited were the location of businesses and industries in Puducherry and Karaikal and people regularly travelling there from Tamil Nadu.

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, OCT. 31

The Election Commission has held that the promise made by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that it will ensure free administration of coronavirus vaccine to the people of Bihar in its manifesto for the assembly polls is not violative of the provisions of the model code.

The commission, in its reply to a complaint by RTI activist Saket Gokhale, said it has found no violation of the provisions of the model code in the issue. "...no violation of any of the provisions of Model Code of Conduct has been observed....," it said.

Mr Gokhale had claimed that the promise is discriminatory and a misuse of powers by the central government during elections.

"The Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution enjoin upon the state to frame various welfare measures for the citizens and therefore there can be no objection to the promise of such welfare in election manifesto," the EC said.

It was Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman who had released the BJP manifesto for Bihar which promised free Covid-19 vaccine once it is cleared by the ICMR.

Laser wall to protect Nepal border

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
HYDERABAD, OCT. 31

As India is fast-tracking the construction of its border infrastructure in view of increasing threats from hostile neighbours, the 1,751 km-long Indo-Nepal border will soon have 'laser walls' or infrared fencing to maintain effective vigil.

The infrared fencing will be in place around the Sonauli checkpoint on the Indo-Nepal border in Uttar Pradesh and will be extended to the border areas in Uttarakhand.

The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) that guards the Indo-Nepal border has taken a cue from the Border Security Force (BSF) which has installed infrared fencing along the India-Pakistan international border in Punjab to keep an effective vigil on terrorists and narcotics.

Sources in the SSB told *Deccan Chronicle* that though the work to install infrared fencing was supposed to commence early this year and completed, the project could not take off due to the Covid-19 induced lockdown. Now

● **The infrared fencing will be in place around the Sonauli checkpoint on the Indo-Nepal border in UP.**

that the lockdown has eased, the work is likely to commence soon.

Since the India-Nepal border is open under the international friendship treaty, it witnesses hectic activity as people do not require a visa or other documents to cross it. All that they need is an ID proof which facilitates easy

movement. The porous border also enables hassle-free entry and exit to illegal immigrants, terrorists, human traffickers and those involved in narcotics smuggling. The blueprint was prepared a couple of years ago and senior SSB officials were given a demonstration of infrared fencing and other state-of-the-art electronic surveillance gadgets at the SSB headquarters in New Delhi. "The India-Nepal border is porous and there is a need to have effective surveillance mechanisms," they said. ■ P4



SPECULATION AS IAS OFFICER OPTS FOR VRS

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 31

U. Sagayam, IAS, vice-chairman of Science City, Chennai, has opted for voluntary retirement from government service, three years ahead of his retirement.

Sources said Mr Sagayam applied for voluntary retirement on October 2 and is likely to be relieved next month.

His decision to opt for early retirement has led to speculations that he may join politics, with the Assembly election in the state only a few months away. The IAS officer had worked against the granite mining lobby and faced threats to his life.

■ SEE PAGE 3

tive director Dr Aravindan Selvaraj of Kauvery Hospital where he has been admitted, said in a bulletin. The hospital had said on Monday that the minister was being treated for severe Covid-19 related pneumonia and its complications and maintaining the functions of his vital organs was challenging, considering his multiple co-morbidities.

A CT scan had shown 90 per cent lung involvement

vis-a-vis the infection and he was put on ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation) and ventilator. The hospital had said days ago that Mr Doraikkannu, who was admitted with severe breathlessness, tested positive for Covid-19.

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and his cabinet colleagues had visited the hospital on October 25 to enquire about his health.

Law to deal with 'love jihad': Yogi

Jaunpur/Deoria (UP), Oct. 31: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said his government would come out with a law to deal with 'love jihad' and used the Hindu funeral chant 'Ram Naam Satya Hai' to threaten those who don't respect their daughters and sisters.

Welcoming the Allahabad High Court ruling declaring that conversion for the sole purpose of marriage is not valid, the Chief Minister also said posters would be put up of those involved in 'love jihad', a derogatory coinage referring to the alleged campaign of Muslims forcing Hindu girls to convert in the guise of love.

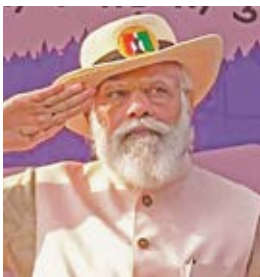
"We will bring an effective law. It is my warning to those who play with the honour and dignity of sisters and daughters by hiding their real names and identities... If they do not mend their ways, their 'Ram Naam Satya' journey will start," Adityanath said.

He was addressing election rallies in Jaunpur and Deoria ahead of the



SPORT | 8

Mumbai Indians thrash Delhi



Truth of Pulwama exposes politics of some, says Modi

Kevadiya (Guj), Oct. 31: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the truth of last year's Pulwama terror attack, in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed, has been accepted in Pakistan Parliament.

He also said that when the entire nation was mourning the death of brave soldiers in the Pulwama terror attack, some people indulged in "dirty politics" for their political gains.

Mr Modi's statement came days after Pakistan's science & technology minister Fawad Chaudhry admitted his country's role in the Pulwama attack during a debate in its National Assembly.

The Prime Minister was speaking at Kevadiya in Gujarat after paying tributes to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at the Statue of Unity on his 145th birth anniversary.

"The country cannot forget the unwanted statements given after Pulwama attack. Dirty politics laced with selfishness and arrogance was at its peak when the country was suffering from immense pain," Mr Modi said.

"The real face of such people has been exposed after the truth was accepted in the parliament of our neighbouring country," the Prime Minister added.

"Politics done after Pulwama attack shows that people can cross any limit for their political gains. I want to urge such political parties not to indulge in this kind of politics as it affects the morale of our security forces," he said.

"You should refrain from playing into the hands of anti-national forces, knowingly or unknowingly," Mr Modi added. — PTI

OTHER STORY

15 tonnes of smuggled rice seized from lorry

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 31

The Sriperumbudur Police on Friday night seized 15 tonnes of ration rice reportedly being smuggled to Bengaluru in a lorry.

Based on a specific tip-off, the police conducted a search at Mambakkam SIPCOT. The team intercepted a lorry carrying goods to Bengaluru. The team checked the vehicle and found 15 tonnes of ration rice were being smuggled to Bengaluru where the smugglers sell the rice at a premium to their associates.

Lorry driver Muniappan (30) and helper Dinesh Kumar (25) were picked up by the police for interrogation. They reportedly told the police that they were taking the consignment to Bengaluru on the instruction from their boss.

Police seized the vehicle and arrested the duo. They said the consignment will be handed over to the Kanchipuram district civil supplies officer.

College student murdered by gang outside church

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 31

A 23-year-old college student was allegedly killed by a six-member gang just outside a church in Pallavaram's Dargah Colony on Friday night.

The murdered person has been identified as A. Abhishek, a final year BA Economics student of a college in Pallavaram. He lived in Naduveerapattu, Ramji Nagar, in Kanchipuram district.

Police said Abhishek on Friday evening went for a wedding reception in the church in Dargah colony. The gang with weapons were waiting for him outside the church to hack him.

When he came out of the church, the gang attacked with him weapons. The assailants left him in a pool of blood and escaped in motorbikes. Eyewitnesses said Abhishek died on the spot.

Police said Abhishek on Friday evening went for a wedding reception in the church in Dargah colony. The gang with weapons were waiting for him outside the church to hack him

The Somangalam police rushed to the spot after an alert and sent the body to the Chrompet government hospital for post-mortem.

The Somangalam police registered a case of murder and began investigation.

Preliminary inquiries by the police revealed that one Joseph Raj, brother of Abhishek, is serving a jail term in an attempt to murder case.

Police suspect that the previous case might be the reason for the cold murder.

7.5% QUOTA FOR GOVT SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NEET LIST

Credit should go to HC, really

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, OCT. 31

While the rival politicos are slugging it out for the credit for the 7.5 per cent quota for the government school students in the Neet list for medical admissions, the crown must actually rest on the Madras high court for starting the process over a year ago.

A division bench comprising Justices N. Kirubakaran and P. Velmurugan had on September 27 last year asked the state government why a separate quota (within the 69 per cent overall reservations) for the government school students who cleared the Neet. The court was hearing a petition from a student who could not secure a medical seat despite getting more marks than many figuring in the selection lists of private medical colleges while filling up the 'reverted' NRI quota. There was a 'scam' in this, alleged petitioner S Dheeran.

Of the total 260 seats under the NRI quota, as many as 207 remained unfilled and got reverted to the management quota of the various private medical institutions. The government had filled the 53 seats in the first round of counselling and handed over the remaining to the private colleges without going through the second round and the mop-up counselling, resulting in the private institutions selling the seats at Rs.40 lakh each and earning Rs100 crore, Dheeran alleged.

He said in this process, only seven students of the chosen lot had secured more marks than him.

During the hearing, additional advocate general P H Arvind Pandian said most of the candidates were opting only for the government medical colleges. Upon this, the

bench remarked that while the students preferred private institutions at the school level, they sought government colleges when it came to higher education. "Why don't you devise a scheme for providing reservation to candidates who studied in government schools? Otherwise, we cannot save the government schools", Justice Kirubakaran said.

He did not rest there; the learned judge, known for several path-breaking judgments that addressed the dire needs of the challenged sections of the society, raised several questions during the subsequent hearings of Dheeran's case—pointing out that the government school students have mostly been at a great disadvantage while taking the competitive examinations such as the Neet whereas the privileged private school students enjoyed the benefit of pricy private tutorials.

Responding to a query raised by the bench, the government admitted that only 48 students had secured admission in government medical colleges without undergoing private coaching classes whereas 3033 got seats after taking such expensive tuitions. The court then expressed shock that medical education "is not available to the poor students" whereas only those who spent "lakhs and lakhs of rupees" on tuition classes emerged successful.

The 'assent' to the Bill did not come from the Raj Bhavan when two other students moved the Madurai bench comprising Justices Kirubakaran and B. Pugalendhi early October praying for relief under the 7.5 quota even for the students who had studied in private schools till the eighth class under the RTE and thereafter moved to the government institutions for affordability. The judge then referred to the September 15 Bill and wanted to know if the government contem-

110 statement, commission and bill:

Such repeated words of concern from the court seemed to have finally woken up the government



Justice N. Kirubakaran

to the cries of anguish from the challenged sections of student community as the Chief Minister on March 21 this year announced through a '110 statement' in the Assembly that government school students would "soon receive" reservation in medical seats. He also announced a commission under a retired judge to study the reasons behind the low numbers in the government school students securing seats in government medical colleges.

The commission led by Justice (retd) P Kalaiyarasan presented its report to the CM on June 8. It included a recommendation of 10 per cent quota for the students of government schools in the Neet list. Following this, the state cabinet decided on 7.5 per cent reservation and the Assembly approved this unanimously. The Bill was sent on the same day, September 15, to the Governor for his statutory approval.

The AG told the court on that day that the Governor required "three to four weeks" to take the decision on the quota Bill. He also pointed out that the Governor's action cannot be questioned in a court of law under Article 361 of the Constitution. The opposition parties, led by the DMK, launched agitations soon after the

When deadline was set for 'Constitutional authority'

Justice Kirubakaran of Madurai HC bench said the framers of the Constitution had given such protection, under Art 361, to the Governor only hoping that he would perform his Constitutional function "promptly" and there would not be any situation, wherein he would be "called for to give explanation or questioned by the court of law". In the present situation, the court must step in, said the learned judge, quipping: "extraordinary situation requires extraordinary remedies".

"When public interest requires, this court has to do its Constitutional duties and to address the situation. However, this court is of the opinion that such a situation would not arise to pass any order in this matter. Call on November 2", the bench said, literally placing deadline for the 'Constitutional authority'.

plated any follow-up since the Neet results were due October 16.

The court also pointed out that the shocking data showed that only three, five and six government school students got admission to government medical colleges in the three years following 2017-18.

When the case came up before the court on October 16, Justice Kirubakaran wanted to know what the government intended to do as the Neet results were due later the same day. The response from Advocate General Vijay Narain was that the government could do nothing in the absence of any decision from the Constitutional Authority (Governor). The court then posted the matter to October 29, but even then no word came from the Raj Bhavan.

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The opposition parties, led by the DMK, launched agitations soon after the

bench expressing concern over the delay in the Raj Bhavan. Significantly, even the state BJP leaders joined the chorus.

Within hours of the Madurai bench expressing serious concern in the issue on October 29, Health Secretary Dr J Radhakrishnan issued the GO for 7.5 per cent quota for government school students, stating interestingly that the government was exercising its "co-extensive legislative powers pending decision of the Hon'ble Governor" since the Neet results were already out and the admission process had started.

Even more interesting: Raj Bhavan issued a press release the following day informing the "people of Tamil Nadu" that the Governor had now given his assent to the quota Bill. It also sought to explain his delay saying he had sought the legal opinion from the Solicitor General of India "through a letter dated September 26, 2020 and the opinion was received yesterday (October 29, 2020)." "As soon as the opinion was received, the Hon'ble Governor has given assent to the Bill".

BREEZY STROLL



People go for a breezy evening walk near Chitlapakkam lake in the city. —E.K Sanjay

Spiders are more a friend than foes, says expert

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, OCT. 31

It is hard to forget the famed 'Robert Bruce and spider story'. Of course, the tiny spider is a fearsome creature. It is natural that man always would like to get rid of this tiny frightening creature from his environs. But, the world of spiders is fascinating and thrilling. Be it spiders that are found in domestic environs or be it those found in jungles, their life is intriguing.

Dr J Dharmaraj, a resident of Emerald village near here, who just completed his doctoral research at Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, on spider diversity in selected spots in the Nilgiris, had sweated it out in the thick wooded Avalanche forests cover near here and other jungles in the Nilgiris to study the life of spiders there. Indeed, it has helped him acquire more data about the life of spiders of different species in the jungles, their behavior, habit and habitats in different environs.

Dr Dharmaraj, the spider man, who already presented a paper at an international symposia held at Thailand, in the recent past on spider diversity, said, "The life of different species of spiders is fascinating, fabulous, and helps one observe how they play an important role in the ecology. Only a few studies have been done on spiders, especially about those in the hills. Spiders belong to a category of (invertebrates with segmented body and jointed appendages) called 'Arachnids', which includes scorpions. There are about 45,000 species of spiders across the world living in different environs. A spider has eight legs and two to eight eyes. The body is divided into two parts, the head and the abdomen. The life span of spiders is generally two years. It lays a little



Argiope anasuja



Oxyops shweta

more than a hundred eggs at a time, but only half of the hatchlings survive."

"A spider takes up to 24 hours to spin its web. The silk secreted for the purpose, is rich in protein. Some spiders use their webs to trap their prey, while others line their burrows with it.

Spiders are further classified as tangle-web spiders, orb-web spiders, funnel-web spiders and nursery-web spiders, according to the type of web they spin. Spiders also secrete venom to kill its catch in the web. Generally, spiders trap flies and insects in their webs or sometimes



Plexippus petersi



Leucauge decorata

hunt them down. Then they inject digestive fluids into their prey and then suck out the liquefied contents of the prey. Barring a couple of species, spider venom is generally not fatal to humans," he explained.

Claiming that he has identified 74 species of spiders in

the Nilgiris over a period of four years of his research, Dr Dharmaraj said that spiders control mosquitoes. Spiders are creatures created by nature to destroy mosquitoes. Spiders in farmlands control pests, thus are a friend of farmers, he added.

Food habits depend on habitat

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, OCT. 31

Explaining the various types of spiders which are adapted to various types of environs for life and survival, Dr J Dharmaraj, said, "Domestic spiders mostly prefer dark places. When the web is spun, it sits on one side and catches large insects, waiting for insects to arrive. These spiders act as biological disease control devices at home, as they trap

and eat the vectors (flies that transmit diseases)."

"The Garden spiders live in gardens and meadows. It has a bulged middle portion with black and yellow stripes. The male spins its web around the female and continues to enlarge the web around the female. This spider patiently sits on the edge of large flowers to catch its prey. When an insect lands on a flower, the spider catches it and loads its venom into its victim's body, and kills its

prey," he explained.

Another species is the 'Signature spider', and is green in colour, found in fields and forests, even amidst the shrubs along the jungle fringes. This fast-moving spider snatches and eats insects like a cat. The 'Carolina Wolf Spider' is another species found in farmlands and open fields. It generally preys on ground insects during the night hours.

The 'Desert Spider' is another species which lives

in the desert and open lands. It makes up for the largest species of spiders. It usually lives in pits under the sand or soil. During night hours, it patiently waits at the entrance of the pit to catch insects," explained Dr Dharmaraj.

Spiders help in pest control and act as ecological indicators to give clues on the health of the environs and suitability of the environs for their survival, Dr Dharmaraj added.

ARULOLI M | DC
TIRUCHENDUR, OCT. 31

DMK president MK Stalin cannot claim credit for the 7.5% reservation scheme for NEET-qualified government school students for MBBS admissions, as it is the brainchild of Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, said Minister for dairy development, K T Rajendra Balaji, here on Saturday.

Not even a single member in the Opposition party including DMK president MK Stalin raised their voice for creation of 7.5% reservation until the bill was tabled in the state assembly on September 15, said the minister, adding that the DMK president has been unsuccessfully claiming credit for something in

Rajendra Balaji also did not spare VCK president Thol Tirumavalavan for his comments on Manusmriti. "Manusmriti also has positive messages and Tirumavalavan should read it well before making such derogatory comments," he advised

which he has no role to play.

Reacting to Stalin's call to retrieve Tamil Nadu in the 2021 assembly election from the hands of other parties, Rajendra Balaji said, "Stalin need not strain needlessly himself, as Tamil Nadu is safe in the hands of Edappadi K Palaniswami, as is India

in the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

Rajendra Balaji also did not spare VCK president Thol Tirumavalavan for his comments on Manusmriti. "Manusmriti also has positive messages and Tirumavalavan should read it well before making such derogatory comments," he advised.

Taking a mild dig at filmstar Rajnikanth, Balaji said Rajini still remained a promising star in the cine field even at the age of 70 years, and has openly declared his health status. We respect his decision about his entry into politics," He said he was hopeful that even if Rajini decides to enter politics, he would stand by those providing good governance now in the state.

Rain damage



An EB transformer lies damaged at S S Colony in Madurai on Friday evening following heavy rains.

— K. Manikandan



Photos by Dr. J. Dharmaraj

SHORT TAKES

Plea to reduce stamp duty

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, OCT. 31

The Federation of All India Real Estate Association (FAIRA) appealed to the state government to reduce stamp duty and registration fees by at least 50 percent to boost the revenue of the registration department.

FAIRA's founder and national president, A Henry, told newsmen soon after the FAIRA Tiruchy zonal unit conference held here on Saturday, that a resolution to this effect was adopted at the meeting. It also requested reduction of GST tax on building materials.

The meeting also sought a single window clearance by linking all construction and real estate-related departments like revenue, real estate regulatory authority, water resources division of the PWD, forest, mines, archeological survey of India, and coastal regulatory zone, so that housing plots and construction approval could be obtained within 30 days.

Centralising the registration department could help anyone register property anywhere in the state. They also wanted the government to establish a welfare board for real estate brokers and document writers by including them in the unorganised sector 'labourers' category, and to simplify the emergency special registration norms, to set right the anomalies on the guideline value, he added.

Sangam urges Centre to withdraw farm bills

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, OCT. 31

The 'Desiya Then Indhiya Nathigal Inaippu Vivasayeegal Sangam' urged the Centre to withdraw its recent farm bills as it would affect the present generation and also destroy domestic agriculture.

Sangam's state president P Ayyakaanu told newsmen soon after their state executive meet held here on Saturday, that a resolution to this effect was adopted at the meeting. He said the meeting had decided that about 5,000 farmers from Tamil Nadu would participate in the proposed all India farmers' rally to be held at New Delhi on November 26 and 27 with their heads shaved, to draw the Centre's attention to withdraw the farm bill.

He said the meeting requested the Union government to write off farm loans and ensure profitable price for agricultural products, and also urged Union home minister Amit Shah to honour his assurance on farmers demands. They also wanted the Central and state governments to immediately settle the arrears of sugarcane farmers.

Annabishekam performed

Jayankondam: The annual 36th annabishekam at the Sri Bragatheeswarar temple at Gangaikondacholapuram near here was performed on the full moon day of Saturday, in a low key sans devotees, due to Covid-19.

Usually, 100 bags of raw rice was placed around the huge lingam (Sri Bragatheeswarar) and special poojas performed.

Then the rice which adorned the lingam will be distributed to devotees as prasadam. But this time, annabishekam was performed in a low-key with just 51 kgs of rice.

Rise in number of fever clinics in Chennai

T. SUDHEESH I DC
CHENNAI, OCT. 31

With the arrival of north-east monsoon heralding the winter season, the number of fever clinics, being conducted by the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) across the 15 zones for early detection of Covid-19 infection, has seen an increase during the last few days.

According to the data provided by the GCC, 379 fever clinics were conducted in Chennai on Friday. It's the highest during the last one week. While 332 fever clinics were conducted on Thursday it went up to 370 on Wednesday. The number of clinics on

Tuesday was 373 and 346 on Monday.

A total of 14,463 people attended the clinics on Friday and 582 symptomatic patients were identified and tested for Covid-19 and others were given medicines for minor ailments.

As per the data, 65,736 fever clinics were conducted in the city from May 8 till October 30. As many as 32,78,195 people attended the clinics and 1,84,832 symptomatic patients were identified and tested for Covid-19. The zone number IX (Teynampet) hosted the highest number of clinics, 7,098, followed by Anna Nagar (6,255) and TVK Nagar (6,029). Manali

has the least number of clinics, 990.

According to GCC officials, the success of the fever clinics is the higher turnout of people to each clinic that helped them to contain the spread of virus in the city which has a population of over 87 lakh. The number of active cases in the city as on Friday is 7,254.

As per the analysis of the GCC, at least 20 percent of Covid-19 deaths in the city took place due to the failure of the residents in revealing the symptoms to health workers who visited their homes as part of surveys.

The latest serological survey in the city found

that one-third of the population has been exposed to the SARS-CoV-2 infection and developed antibodies. Out of the 6,389 samples tested, 2,062 were positive for the presence of IgG antibodies, recording an overall positivity of 32.3 percent.

According to Jayapakash Muliylil, noted epidemiologist, the decline in the number of Covid-19 cases in Tamil Nadu, particularly in Chennai, is promising. The number of fresh cases is expected to be come down. "More people in the cities can develop the antibodies than the number provided by the serological survey," he claimed.

Is Sahayam headed to politics?

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, OCT. 31

News of popular IAS officer U Sahayam putting in his papers did not come as a surprise to those close to him for he had been unhappy with the way the government was treating him for some years now but the nagging question that no one is able to answer is: Is he, too, headed to politics like some others from the IAS and IPS in recent times?

Though journalists who had closely interacted with him when he was the Collector of Madurai, the time when he was all over the media for spending a night inside a crematorium, say that he had displayed signs of political aspirations in the past, some of his friends rule that out now.

So the question arises as to why should Sahayam, who has three more years to go in service, opt for VRS now? A valid reason could be that he has been dumped in an insignificant post as vice chairman of Science City for the past six years after developing misunderstandings with politicians.

Also it was a known fact that the State government had been a stumbling block to his attending overseas events held by Tamil organizations abroad, besides being totally neglected in assigning administrative and other tasks to officers.

But then for an officer, who during his days as Collector in Namakkal and Madurai districts,

had openly stated that being transferred out of a job in less than a year was common to him and that his children had not completed even one year of study in a school, should this stagnation, which also meant loss of monetary benefits, as some close to him claim, come as a last straw?

As Sahayam himself has mentioned in his resignation, he was not even allowed to do regular service to society. So he chose October 2, Gandhi Jayanthi, to submit his resignation and when there was no response from the government, he sent in a reminder after 15 days. He wants the government to relieve him from his duties by November 30 or earlier.

Already Sahayam is involved in coaching students appearing for the Civil Services examination and spends his time guiding young people. When he was in Madurai, there was even a legion of youth, swearing by his name, campaigning against corruption. There had been occasions when the youth organizations had given open calls to the IAS officer to join politics.

Corruption, of course, had been an anathema for the eloquent Sahayam, which he had repeatedly expressed through his speeches. He was a regular in college functions, where he invariably displayed his love for Tamil, besides motivating students who were weak in English.

He wore his humble background from a middle class home, studying

in Tamil medium, in his sleeves and delivered inspiring speeches, drawing applause. He was also a man of action. While in Namakkal he ordered that village administrative officers should live in the villages they worked in and earned the wrath of many, resulting in his transfer.

Then in Madurai, he worked hard to ensure that a 'Thirumangalam Formula' was not repeated in the 2011 elections and cracked down on those who were roaming around with hard cash. Later on, he took on the granite mafia that had denuded hills in the region. An inside story is that the granite quarry owner tried to bribe him at his camp office, earning his wrath.

It was in that skirmish he stayed back inside a crematorium for the night, lest some evidence would be removed from there in the dark. That brought him under the media limelight and endeared himself to the younger generation as a crusader against corruption, besides wowing Tamil society as an upright officer.

Now, will he carry forward his crusade in the political sphere with the help of the youth brigade that swears by him? Will he join a political party and fight the coming election? Or will some political party back him from outside and use him to fight bigger parties in the electoral fray? Perhaps it is too early for even Sahayam to answer these questions.



Under orders of Collector A. Shanmuga Sundaram, district supply officer Banumathi, flying squad tahsildar Kotteeswaran and circle supply officers Nedumaran, Venkatesh, Sivasanmugam, Shanthi and Balaraman, conducted raids at the wholesale onion shops in the Vellore Netaji Market, on Saturday morning, to check for hoarding of onions. The raids lasting two-and-half hours covered 36 shops, but no violations were found. Recent rains in neighbouring states and shortfall of onions in the local markets led to a sharp spike in onion prices, triggering the raid.

— K. Senthil Nathan

306 pass out of institute

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 31

India's new education policy has been crafted to touch the life of each and every citizen consistent with their needs, besides creating a just and equitable society,' said Dr. K. Kasturirangan, chairman, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 Committee.

He was attending the virtual convocation of Indian Institute of Information Technology, Design and Manufacturing (IIITDM)-Kancheepuram on Saturday.

"The approach of the NEP is to make a new system realise in alliance with aspirational goals of 21st century education without compromising India's traditional values and ethos", he said.

A total of 306 degrees were awarded during the eighth convocation in presence of Arun Jain, chairman and managing director, Intellect Design Arena, Chennai, Prof. S Sadagopan chairman, board of governors, IIITDM-Kancheepuram, and Prof. Banshidhar Majhi, Director, IIITDM-Kancheepuram.

For the 2020-2021 current academic year, the institute launched three new M.Tech programs in advance robotics, power electronics system design and computer science and engineering to empower the young engineers of India with specialised skills and face the technological challenge of the future.

"The approach of the NEP is to make a new system realise in alliance with aspirational goals of 21st century education without compromising India's traditional values and ethos"



Tamil Nadu police personnel take part in the parade near Island Grounds on the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel which is observed as National Unity Day .

— DC

TN records 2,511 new cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 31

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Saturday appealed to people to follow norms to prevent the spread of Covid like wearing masks and help contain the virus. The rate of infection has been brought under 7.30 per cent due to the work of doctors, Palaniswami said and pointed out that in the past one week the number of new cases was below 3,000. Also, the active cases were in the range of

only about 25,000, he added.

International air travel shall continue to be banned except for routes permitted by the Union home ministry. For those coming into Tamil Nadu from other states/ union territories (barring Puducherry) 'e- registration' will continue to be implemented.

Also, for people visiting Ooty, Kodaikanal and Yercaud the prior registration shall be followed. Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu on Saturday logged

2,511 fresh Covid pushing the tally to 7,24,522 while 31 deaths took the toll to 11,122.

Recoveries continued to outnumber the new infections with 3,848 people walking out of health care facilities after getting cured taking the overall tally to 6,91,236 till date. Active cases in the State stood at 22,164, a bulletin said.

Testing of samples as of today was at 70,767, taking the number of specimens examined till date to 99,56,210.

Will keep state best governed: CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, OCT. 31



In the survey for 2020, undertaken by the Public Affairs Centre, based in Bengaluru, Tamil Nadu scored 0.912 points while Kerala scored 1.388, AP 0.53 and Karnataka 0.468, according to an official press release

Tamil Nadu's neighbor Puducherry also came second in the list of Union Territories, in which Chandigarh was on top and Lakshadweep came third, the release added.

Reacting to the survey result, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said in his tweet: 'This is a result of our unwaver-

LOVERS COMMIT SUICIDE

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, OCT. 31

A teenaged engineering college girl allegedly committed suicide along with her lover by hanging themselves at a farm house in Melavelikkadu village under Kattuputhur police limits near here on Saturday, allegedly due to the opposition of the girl's parents to their affair.

Police identified the deceased as Rathi Bala, a first-year bio-tech student of a private engineering college at Namakkal. She had been in an affair with one Naveen Kumar (23), a building worker, for the last three years.

Both had left their houses on Wednesday and allegedly committed suicide at the farm house on Friday night.

On information, Kattuputhur police rushed to the spot and shifted the bodies to the government hospital, Musiri, for post-mortem.



The secretariat being lit up to mark Tamil Nadu Day (November 1).

— DC

What does this clamour for Rajinikanth mean?



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

In the ever vibrant political landscape of Tamil Nadu, the latest action-packed vignette was a handful of men congregating at a lane in Poes Garden where actor Rajinikanth lives on Friday.

Attired in colourful T-shirts with the portrait of the actor emblazoned along with a slogan 'change in government and politics,' the men, reportedly from Rajini Makkal Mandram, were purportedly there to lure their matinee idol into politics.

It's inconsequential if they had the much expected audience with Rajinikanth or not.

For, the actor is not someone who is likely to be swayed by the exhortations of fans, however earnestly they holler, or by the wall posters welcoming him to politics with the promise of support through as a punch line: 'If I were to vote, it is only for Rajini.' But the most touching line in the posters was that it was put up by 'people wanting a change.' And more poignant

is the belief of Mandram members that Rajinikanth alone can usher in a change, both in politics and governance.

That Rajinikanth has never ever proved his mettle in politics or governance in any way is not something that could be a deterrent to the Mandram men, who were earlier film fans, from holding such high hopes on their Super Star. Because they had watched his films 'first day, first show' without even having a faintest idea of what was inside the can. Of course, Rajinikanth had not let them down, ever. He always gave them the best. Whatever they looked forward to in a film was there and they cheered, clapped, whistled and were happy.

So, in that fashion they are sure that he would put in an

exemplary performance as a politician or as a Chief Minister. The collective hope of the fans, now members of the Mandram, is so overwhelming that it spills into social media platforms now and then. On Thursday when the Tamil hashtag 'If I were to vote, it is only Rajini' trended the whole day, even coming close to the top rank, what was on display was also a certain innocence of the fans.

Can there be people, educated and technically informed to use social media so effectively, who innocently believe that their favourite actor was the panacea for the political evils of Tamil Nadu, particularly when he has never played any role in politics in any meaningful way. He might have made a comment here and there and dropped a remark once a

while, impelling some politicians to believe that those gems of wisdom that he spilled helped in their garnering public support.

But most of what he had spoken so far have had no political meaning or qualify him to be a good people's leader. Someone who denounces public protests openly, saying that agitations will only turn the State into a graveyard, do not showcase any understanding of democracy or concern for the people. Unearthing such gems of wisdom from the past, however, does not help understand why the fans are so desperate to see their idol becoming the Chief Minister or why they believe that he would be able to make it if at all he just makes the move.

Apart from the fans, there are other out-of-work politi-

cians and some journalists who believe that Rajinikanth can easily become Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu if he wants to because he such a huge fan following and all his films run for days. They also vehemently bat for him on social networking sites and in different media channels.

Besides, the manner in which some of those informed opinion makers envisage the actor bringing in a certain beauty and sheen to the realms of politics and governance at times cause goose bumps on the listeners. They see the super star turning the State's affairs upside down, landing the inhabitants in an Eden on Earth, the moment the reins are handed over to him. So, it is not surprising that the fans, who had seen such things happening on the silver

screen and are convinced about their icon pulling up such magic in the real world, too, take an auto rickshaw to Poes Garden.

But why is there such a big clamour for change? Apart from a popular disillusionment over present day systems - remember the 'systems are not right' comment by Rajinikanth himself - the common people have been continuously bombarded with information on how corrupt, inefficient, diabolic, hanky-panky and guile politicians. It is the flow of such communications through various media coupled with an evidently inherent chicanery and deceit of most politicians that has prejudiced people against politicians.

For, most people, particularly youth, have absolutely no clue about the social and

other changes that politicians and political parties had ushered into a once oppressive society in which only a small section of people in the upper echelons enjoyed all the benefits. Even the change-seekers don't know that if they lead a dignified life now to talk about change it was because political parties and politicians once valiantly fought for social justice and equality.

But then, when parties that traditionally brought such reformations are not telling the present day voter about their own glorious past to drive home the relevance of political parties and ideologies in any social change, people will only turn to actors for succor. And with politicians too getting enamoured by the charms of actors, it can only get worse.

IN BRIEF

PARIS
BEHEADINGS
CONDEMNEDDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, OCT. 31

Over a hundred prominent Indians from diverse backgrounds have issued a statement condemning the Paris beheadings and deploring the outrageous statements by Muslim religious and political leaders. Among other things the statement read, “No God, gods, goddesses, prophets or saints may be invoked to justify the killing and/or terrorising of fellow human beings”.

The statement says, “We the undersigned unequivocally and unconditionally condemn the recent killings in France by two fanatics in the name of faith. We are deeply disturbed by the convoluted logic of some self-appointed guardians of Indian Muslims in rationalising cold-blooded murder and deplore the outrageous remarks of some heads of state.”

Among the signatories to the statement are Abdul Aziz Lokhandwala, Industrialist, Mumbai, Anand Patwardhan, Documentary filmmaker, Mumbai, Feroz Abbas Khan, Writer-director, Mumbai, J.S. Bandukwala, social activist, Vadodara, Krishnaswamy Kumar, Rtd Prof, Coimbatore, Mallika Sarabhai, Theatre personality, Ahmedabad, and Sandhya Gokhale, Feminist activist, Mumbai.

KASHMIR VALLEY
SHUTS AGAINST
NEW LAND LAWSYUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, OCT. 31

Normal life came to a grinding halt across Kashmir Valley on Saturday in response to a call issued by separatist Hurriyat Conference against various moves initiated by the Centre in past 15 months, particularly enacting a series of new land laws and amending some of the existing ones recently to make all Indian citizens eligible to own immovable properties in Jammu and Kashmir.

Market places and other business centres in almost all major cities and towns of the Valley remained closed whereas only skeleton transport services besides private cars were playing on select routes.

The impact of the strike call was maximal in Srinagar's commercial hub Lal Chowk and its neighbourhood and entire central Srinagar.

Hurriyat Conference faction led by Kashmir's chief Muslim cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq termed the success of the strike call a “befitting reply” to the Centre and “out-right rejection” of all the “anti people” moves and decisions taken by it since August last year in J&K.

This was for the first time since August 5, 2019 when J&K was stripped of its special status and split up into two Union Territories that the amalgam faction had openly issued such a call. Mirwaiz is under house arrest since August 5 last year but his close associates Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat, Bilal Ghani Lone and Masroor Abbas Ansari had in a joint statement issue here on Wednesday strongly denounced the “incessant anti people orders being issued by the government of India at frequent intervals to intimidate and psychologically torture the people of J&K”.

INDO-NEPAL
BORDER TO HAVE
'LASER WALLS'

From Page 1
The growing friendship between Nepal and China has a huge bearing on our internal security,” they said.

Explaining its functioning, sources said that the invisible laser walls has sensors that are monitored through a satellite-based signal command system. It also has night and fog operability tools.

“It can detect intrusions and relay information to the border guarding force. The latest laser walls can monitor large swathes of territory,” they said adding that the force was looking for non-obtrusive checking mechanisms.

Besides laser walls, the SSB personnel will also be provided with the state-of-the-art explosive-cum-narcotic detectors, fibroscope (a flexible fibre optic bundle with an eye-piece on one end and a lens on the other which is used to examine and inspect small, difficult to reach places like the insides of machines) besides other equipment to check smuggling.

EC BANS MP
MINISTER FROM
CAMPAIGN

New Delhi, Oct. 30: The Election Commission on Friday reprimanded Madhya Pradesh minister Mohan Yadav for using “intemperate language transgressing the limits of decency” and barred him from campaigning in the state bypolls for a day on October 31.

The Commission also issued a notice to BJP candidate Girraj Danotiya for allegedly making objectionable and threatening remarks against former state chief minister Kamal Nath.

He made the remarks in an interview and had been asked to respond to the notice within the next 48 hours.

In its order, the poll panel said it was not satisfied with Yadav's response to its notice.

“The Commission is satisfied that the statements therein amount to use of intemperate language transgressing the limit of decency,” it said.

The order stated, “The Election Commission hereby, reprimands you for violating the provisions of General Conduct of Model Code of Conduct and use of intemperate language transgressing the limits of decency and expects that you, being an responsible political leader, shall not repeat such indecent utterances during election time.”

— PTI

Remembering Sardar Patel



Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes salute of the Ekta Diwas Parade at the Statue of Unity on the occasion Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's birth anniversary, in Kevadia on Saturday. Modi also launched a seaplane service between the Statue of Unity near Kevadiya in Gujarat's Narmada district and Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad.

— PTI

Nirmala wanted me out of
finance ministry, says Garg

Ex-finance secy says she had some pre-conceived notions about him

New Delhi, Oct. 31: Subhash Chandra Garg, the former finance secretary who was shunted out of the finance ministry within three weeks of Modi-2.0 government's first budget last year, on Saturday alleged that new Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman got him transferred out.

Garg, who took voluntary retirement soon after being moved from the finance ministry — where he handled the Department of Economic Affairs — to power ministry, said Sitharaman, unlike her predecessor Arun Jaitley, had “a very different personality and knowledge endowment”.

Both Ministry of Finance and Sitharaman's office refused to comment on the blog Garg wrote on the day he said he would have in normal course retired from the government service but for the VRS.

Garg said he “did not share a good and productive working relationship” with Sitharaman, who came to the finance ministry “with some pre-conceived notions about me”.

“She did not seem to have confidence in me. She was not quite comfortable working with me as well,” he said adding differences over surplus RBI should

give as dividend to the government and dealing with problems of non-banks had surfaced within months of her takeover.

“Serious difference also developed on some key issues like economic capital framework of RBI, a package for dealing with problems of non-banks, partial credit guarantee scheme, capitalization of non-banks like IIFCL and other financial entities and the like.

“Very soon, not only had our personal relationship soured, but the official working relationship also became quite unproductive,” he wrote.

Sitharaman wanted him out in June 2019, ahead of the July 5 budget presentation, he said but did not say why her request wasn't immediately accepted by the government.

Garg was transferred out on July 24, 2019, as Secretary, Ministry of Power and he applied for voluntary retirement within half an hour of receiving the order.

“Mrs. Sitharaman asked for and insisted on my transfer from the Ministry of Finance in June 2019 itself, within one month of her taking over as FM,” wrote Garg, who exited the government after serving the mandatory notice

● **SITHARAMAN WANTED him out in June 2019, ahead of the July 5 budget presentation, he said but did not say why her request wasn't immediately accepted by the government.**

● **GARG WAS transferred out on July 24, 2019, as Secretary, Ministry of Power and he applied for voluntary retirement within half an hour of receiving the order.**

period on October 31, 2019.

Praising her predecessor Jaitley for his deep knowledge and understanding of the economy, he said his successor “Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman, has a very different personality, knowledge endowment, skill-set and approach for economic policy issues and also for the officers working with her.

“It became quite apparent very early that working with her was going to be quite difficult and it might not be conducive to undertaking necessary reforms for the attainment of the objective of building a USD 10 trillion economy of India.”

The former finance secretary alleged that Sitharaman, for reasons not very clearly known to

him, came with some pre-conceived notions about him. “Very soon, not only had our personal relationship soured, but the official working relationship also became quite unproductive.”

Garg recalled he made up his mind in June 2019, much before the Budget was presented, that he would take voluntary retirement from the service to be able to work on the wider economic reform agenda outside the government. “I drafted my months' notice for voluntary retirement sometime in the fourth week of June after going through the rules relating to voluntary retirement and decided to seek it from October 31, 2019,” he said.

Garg also said that he had discussed with the then Additional Principal Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, PK Mishra about his relationship with Sitharaman on a few occasions.

“Both of us agreed that the best course would be for me to make way for the new FM to ‘function smoothly’. Mishra offered me to choose any job in the government or outside the government in regulatory bodies or elsewhere,” Garg said. The former finance secretary, however, informed Mishra that he

had already made up his mind to seek voluntary retirement.

“I filed for voluntary retirement on July 24, the day I was transferred to the Ministry of Power instead of October 31, 2019, the date I had originally intended,” he recalled.

Garg, however on July 26, 2019, had asserted there is no connection between his transfer from the high profile Finance Ministry and decision to take voluntary retirement, saying he had already discussed the retirement matter with the Prime Minister's Office on July 18.

The 1983 batch IAS officer of Rajasthan cadre, Garg came to the Center in 2014 and was appointed Executive Director in the World Bank where he stayed till 2017 when he was appointed DEA Secretary in June 2017. In March 2019, he was elevated as the Finance Secretary.

Jaitley, he said, was “a mastermind with an uncanny ability to sift through massive amounts of information and government files to discover the pith and substance of the public policy issue involved. He also had the right temperament and ability to forge consensus.”

— PTI

Kerala sees no
easing of Covid
with 7,983 cases

Thiruvananthapuram, Oct. 31: Kerala reported 7,983 fresh cases on Saturday, pushing the Covid-19 caseload to 4,20,166, while as many as 91,190 people are presently undergoing treatment, health minister K.K. Shailaja said.

In the last 24 hours, 59,999 samples had been tested. The death toll mounted to 1,484 with the addition of 27 more fatalities, the minister said. With 7,330 people recovering, as many as 3,40,324 people have got cured of the disease.

As many as 2,91,440 people are under observation, including 2,69,059 in home and institutional quarantine and 22,381 in hospitals. The fresh cases included 62 health workers, including 10 from Kozhikode. Two districts—Ernakulam (1,114) and Thrissur (1,112) reported over 1000 cases.

3,014 new cases in K'ataka: Karnataka on Saturday reported 3,014 infections and 28 deaths, taking the Covid-19 tally and cumulative fatalities in the state to 8,23,412 and 11,168 respectively, the health department said. The total infections comprise 7,57,208 discharges cumulatively including 7,468 on Saturday and 55,017 total active cases including 956 in the ICU.

“With 7,468 recoveries and 3,014 new cases, Karnataka witnessed more recoveries than new cases for the 17th consecutive day,” health minister Dr K. Sudhakar tweeted.

“Let us continue our fight against Covid-19 by wearing mask, ensuring hand hygiene and maintaining physical distance,” he added. The state had reported an alarming trend of over 10,500 infections and over

● **ANDHRA PRADESH on Saturday completed 80 lakh sample tests for coronavirus, which turned out a total of 8,23,348 positives so far.**

200 fatalities a day for almost a week, barely a month ago.

AP has 2,783 new cases: Andhra Pradesh on Saturday completed 80 lakh sample tests for coronavirus, which turned out a total of 8,23,348 positives so far. The state also crossed the 1.50 lakh mark in tests per million with an overall positivity rate of 10.25 per cent. In 24 hours ending 9 am on Saturday, 82,045 tests were done, yielding 2,783 fresh cases of Covid-19, the latest bulletin said. It said 3,708 patients had recovered from the infection while 14 more succumbed in 24 hours. The number of active cases fell below the 25,000 mark to 24,575, after a total of 7,92,083 recoveries and 6,690 deaths.

TS reports 1,445 cases: Telangana posted 1,445 new coronavirus cases taking the tally to 2.38 lakh while six more fatalities pushed the toll to 1,336. Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation accounted for the most number of cases with 286, followed by Medchal Malkajgiri 122 and Rangareddy 107, a government bulletin said on Saturday providing data as of 8 PM on October 30.

As many as 18,409 are under treatment and 41,243 samples were tested on October 30. Cumulatively, 42.81 lakh samples have been tested. The case fatality rate in the state was 0.56 per cent.

PTI

Raj tables Bills to
negate impact of
Centre's farm laws

Jaipur, Oct. 31: The Rajasthan government on Saturday introduced three Bills in the Assembly to negate the impact of the farm laws enacted by the Centre recently.

The move comes after the Punjab Assembly earlier this month adopted a resolution against the farm laws and unanimously passed four Bills to counter the Centre's contentious legislations.

Rajasthan's Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shanti Dhariwal introduced the Essential Commodities (Special Provisions and Rajasthan Amendment) Bill 2020, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services (Rajasthan Amendment) Bill 2020 and the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation and Rajasthan

Amendment) Bill 2020. He also introduced the Code of Procedure (Rajasthan Amendment) Bill 2020 on the first day of the Assembly session.

A number of provisions to protect the interests of farmers, including sale or purchase of a crop under farming agreement on a price equal or greater than minimum support price and imprisonment of three to seven years for harassment of farmers, have been included in the Bills.

The Congress leadership has suggested that states where it is in power should pass laws of their own to counter the central legislations that had triggered farmers' protests in several parts of the country.

Cong begins process for
selecting new presidentSREEPARNA
CHAKRABARTY | DC
NEW DELHI, OCT. 31

The Congress has finally begun the process of electing a new president, more than a year after Rahul Gandhi quit following the party's disastrous performance in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

The party's chief election authority, headed by Madhusudan Mistry, has written a letter to all Pradesh Congress Committee chiefs and general secretaries in-charge of various states informing them that an AICC session would soon be called and the process of registration for the same should begin.

In the Congress hierar-

chy, only AICC members have voting rights in case of elections.

In the letter, a copy of which is available with *Deccan Chronicle*, Mr Mistry has asked all states to send the list of names along with photographs for registration.

Sources said that the revision of the AICC rolls has begun at state level.

The AICC session is being planned for early next year in January or February.

Earlier, the party had decided to hold a plenary in April in Udaipur. However, due to the Covid-19 outbreak, it was put on hold.

Sources told this newspaper that efforts are on to bring in a consensus on

the name of Mr Gandhi before the meeting. However, the Wayanad MP has conveyed that he would like to wait for the Bihar Assembly results before taking a decision. In case Mr Gandhi decides not to return as party chief, there is likely to be a contest with many throwing in their hats, the sources said.

It might be recalled that a section of Congress leadership, including some top leaders like Ghulam Nabi Azad and Manish Tewari, had recently written a letter to Congress president Sonia Gandhi indicating that the party was rudderless and needed a proper leadership structure. The letter had created quite a furore within the brass.

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, OCT. 31

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, who is contesting Bihar polls as the face of grand alliance on Saturday targeted Chief Minister Nitish Kumar led government

alleging that in the past 15 years there have been over 60 scams in the state.

To prove his point he also shared an old video of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the social media listing over 30 scams linked to his government.

“Over 60 scams happened during Nitish Kumar's tenure as Chief Minister. Out of these 33 scams were

mentioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi five years ago”, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said in a tweet while sharing Prime Minister's five-year-old speech.

However, it's not clear where the Prime Minister was speaking and which government he was referring to in his speech.

When asked about the video, RJD leaders in Patna said that the Prime Minister's old video being circulated by Tejashwi Yadav on the social media is of 2015 assembly elections when Nitish Kumar was part of the grand alliance and contested against the BJP.

NOTICE

For substantial compliance of Order S.O 2900 (E) in pursuance to clause 13 and 21 of the Fertilizer (Control) Order, 1985, dated 24.10.2015 issued by The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, M/s. Consolidated Marketing Company (CMC) a registered Firm, having their Registered Office at 189, Bashiakarelu Road, R.S. Puram, Coimbatore - 641 002, hereby notifies that it intends to import and distribute the following 100% Water Soluble Fertilizers (WSF) as per the specifications given below (as percent by weight):

Grade	Total Nitrogen (in%)	Total Phosphorous (in%)	Total Potash (in%)	Calcium (in%)
NPK	16	30	0	-
NPK	9	0	43	-
NPK	0	40	37	-
NPK	13	40	13	-
NPK	14	48	0	-
NPK	10	10	10	-
NPK	10	31	10	10
NPK	14	5	24	10

Address for communication:
M/s.Consolidated Marketing Company (CMC)
189,Bashiakarelu Road, P.O.No.1140, R.S.Puram,Coimbatore - 641 002
Customer Care: 9422 - 421 5000, 01 02 | Ww.agriindia@consolidatedgroup.in

IN BRIEF

Saudi rams car into Mecca Masjid

Riyadh: A Saudi man rammed a car at high speed into the outer walls of Mecca's Grand Mosque, Islam's holiest site, authorities said on Saturday. Guards chased the driver as he crashed through two barriers before hitting one of the southern entrances of the mosque late Friday, according to officials in the holy city and videos on social media. Mecca authorities did not name the man but said he appeared to be in an "abnormal condition". He was referred to the public prosecutor to face possible charges, they added. Earlier in October, Saudi Arabia opened the Grand Mosque for prayers for the first time in seven months, and expanded the umrah pilgrimage to accommodate 15,000 worshippers from within the kingdom as it relaxed coronavirus curbs.

2 killed in blast at pipeline in Iraq

Baghdad: An explosion targeting a gas pipeline in southern Iraq killed two children Saturday after a blast in the north this week forced the closure of another pipeline, authorities said. An investigation had been launched into the latest explosion in Muthanna province, south of Baghdad, that killed "two children and wounded 28 people", state media said. The attack came after a blast targeted an oil pipeline in the north of the country, according to a statement by the Kurdistan Regional Government released late Friday. The statement said oil exports had been suspended after "terrorists" attacked the pipeline crossing the autonomous region to the Turkish port of Ceyhan on Wednesday evening.

New Berlin airport officially opens

Berlin: Nine years late and far above its original budget, Berlin's new airport is finally opening on Saturday with little ceremony and, thanks to the Coronavirus pandemic, few passengers. Construction of the Berlin Brandenburg Airport Willy Brandt, named after the former West German chancellor though better known as BER, started in 2006 and it was initially slated to open in October 2011. But a string of technical and planning problems forced officials to abandon six opening dates, most embarrassingly, in 2012, just four weeks before flights were supposed to start. That propelled the project to the status of a national joke as airport managers struggled to get a grip on various problems, including a complex fire safety system that long caused headaches. The airport has cost some 6 billion euros (USD 7 billion), about three times what was originally planned. It is finally opening at a time when air traffic has been hobbled by the pandemic.

MILLION TONS OF U.S. PLASTIC TRASH GO ASTRAY

Washington, Oct. 31: More than a million tons a year of America's plastic trash isn't ending up where it should. The equivalent of as many as 1,300 plastic grocery bags per person is landing in places such as oceans and roadways, according to a new study of US plastic trash. In 2016 — the last year enough data was available and before several countries cracked down on imports of American waste — the United States generated 46.3 million tons (42 million metric tons) of plastic waste, by far the most in the world. Between 2.7 per cent and 5.3 per cent of that was mismanaged — not burned, placed in landfills or otherwise disposed of properly, according to a study in Friday's journal Science Advances. Between 1.2 million and 2.5 million tons (1.1 million to 2.2 million metric tons) of plastic generated in the US were dropped on land, rivers, lakes and oceans as litter, were illegally dumped or shipped abroad then not properly disposed of, the study found. If you took nearly 2.5 million tons (2.2 million metric tons) of mismanaged plastic waste — bottles, wrappers, grocery bags and the like — and dumped it on the White House lawn, "it would pile as high as the Empire State Building," said co-author Jenna Jambeck, an environmental engineering professor at the University of Georgia.

US logs 1 lakh cases a day

Record surge in Coronavirus pushes hospitals closer to brink of capacity

Washington, Oct. 31: A record surge of Coronavirus cases in the United States pushed hospitals closer to the brink of capacity and drove the number of infections reported on Friday to an ominous new daily world record of 1,00,000, four days before the US presidential election.

The United States also documented its 9 millionth case to date on Friday, representing nearly 3% of the population, with almost 2,29,000 dead since the outbreak of the pandemic early this year, according to a Reuters tally of publicly reported data.

With the country facing the final stretch of a tumultuous presidential campaign dominated by the coronavirus pandemic, US health authorities on Friday also confirmed that 1,00,233 more people had tested positive for Covid-19 over the past 24 hours.

Friday's tally set a new single-day record in US cases for the fifth time in the past 10 days, surpassing the previous peak of 91,248 new infections posted a day earlier.

It also represented the world's highest national daily toll during the pandemic, exceeding India's 24-hour record of 97,894 set in September.

The accelerating pace of US infections continued as data trickled in on Friday, with at least a dozen states individually reporting a record number of new daily cases.

Serious cases of Covid-19 were on the rise as well, as hospitals in six states reported having the most patients suffering from the disease since the pandemic started. The number of hospitalised Covid-19 patients has risen over 50% in October to 46,000, the highest since mid-August.

Among the hard-hit states are those most hotly contested in the campaign between Republican President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden, such as Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania and



People enjoy the Jardin du Luxembourg on Saturday in Paris on the second day after France entered a second lockdown aimed at curbing the spread of Covid-19.

700km traffic jam in France ahead of second lockdown

Paris, Oct. 31: Parisians fleeing for the countryside jammed the roads ahead of France's lockdown to slow the spread of resurgent Coronavirus infections, and there was only a sprinkling of people hurrying along city sidewalks on Friday as the nationwide restrictions went into effect.

Dystopian images of logjams that stretched for 435 miles (700 kilometers) at one point on Thursday evening — exacerbated by the upcoming long holiday weekend — were a grim sign of a return to the dark days of the spring, when virus cases first swelled in Europe and many countries kept their

citizens inside for weeks on end. With infections hitting record levels in some countries, many are now resorting to severe restrictions again.

In France, concerns were growing that rising infections would swamp the country's health system, so authorities ordered another four-week lockdown beginning on Friday.

Many areas of the French capital resembled a regular lazy weekend morning — on what would normally have been a bustling weekday. Those who were out frequently clutched permission forms proving they had an exemption that allowed

them to be on streets.

The only places that were busy were grocery stores and markets as people stockpiled food and other necessities.

All of France's 67 million people have been ordered to stay at home at all times with no visitors, or risk steep fines or prosecution. There are a handful of exceptions, such as being allowed out for one hour of exercise a day within a half-mile (1 kilometer) of home, to go to medical appointments, to a place of work, or to shop for essential goods. Restaurants and cafés are shuttered, apart from those that offer takeout.

— AP

WHO: OFFICIALS MET WITH CHINA FOR FIRST TIME

Geneva, Oct. 31: The World Health Organisation said on Friday that international experts had held their first meeting, albeit virtually, with their Chinese counterparts in order to investigate the animal origins of the Covid-19.

The WHO has for months been working to send a team of international experts, including epidemiologists and animal health specialists, to China to help probe the animal origin of Covid-19 and how the virus first crossed over to humans.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press briefing Friday that the UN agency was continuing "to establish the origins of the virus to prevent future outbreaks." "Today, a group of international experts had their first virtual meeting with their Chinese counterparts," he said.

— AFP

Trump, Biden chase votes in Midwest finale

Des Moines, United States, Oct. 31: President Donald Trump and challenger Joe Biden waged pitched battles for the American Midwest on Friday, chasing every last vote with four days to go in a region that propelled the Republican to victory in 2016.

Trump and Biden are each barnstorming three heartland states, with a resurgent Coronavirus passing the alarming milestone of nine million cases as they hit the stump — highlighting their differences in a race overshadowed by the pandemic.

Trump, heralding a "big day" of campaigning as he left the White House, held a rally in Michigan before heading to Wisconsin and Minnesota.

"We just want normal," Trump told supporters — many of them unmasked — at an outdoor "Make America Great Again" rally near Detroit as he pushed states to relax public health restrictions and resume daily life.

He again bucked his own administration's health experts as he downplayed the Covid-19 threat, saying "if you get it, you're going to get better, and then you're going to be immune." Covid-19 has killed 2,30,000 people in the US, which is experiencing worrying surges in most states as the winter flu season threatens to throw kerosene on the fire.

The outbreak has ravaged the economy, and

● Trump flipped Iowa, Michigan and Wisconsin from the Democrats to clinch his shock victory four years ago. Now polls show Biden leading in all three, albeit narrowly in Iowa.

while there have been signs of recovery, millions remain jobless.

Biden was also stumping in Wisconsin and Minnesota, after the Democratic rat's first stop of the day, in Iowa, where he flayed Trump over his handling of the pandemic.

"Donald Trump has given up (and) waved the white flag," Biden told a drive-in rally with more than 300 cars in Des Moines.

Biden, tailoring his speech to the Iowa crowd, also bashed the president for saying America's farmers were "doing better now than when they had a farm," after Trump's administration began paying billions of dollars in federal subsidies to farmers amid a trade war with China.

Trump flipped Iowa, Michigan and Wisconsin from the Democrats to clinch his shock victory four years ago. Now polls show Biden leading in all three, albeit narrowly in Iowa. It is his first time in Iowa since his inauspicious campaign start in February, when he finished a dismal fourth in the opening Democratic nominating contest.

— AFP

Crowd joins LGBT pride rally in Taiwan

Taipei, Oct. 31: Tens of thousands of revellers joined a gay pride rally through the streets of Taiwan's capital on Saturday in a colourful celebration of equality made possible by the island's successful vanquishing of the Coronavirus.

Taiwan is at the vanguard of the burgeoning gay rights movement in Asia and became the first place in the region to allow same-sex marriage in May 2019 after a bruising political fight.

It has also achieved remarkable success against the Coronavirus, recording more than 200 days in a row without a single local infection.

As a result there are few of the social distancing measures currently in place across much of the globe, allowing crowds to gather on the island.

Rainbow coloured flags and balloons were carried

through Taipei under blue skies on Saturday afternoon.

Drag queen Wu Po-sung was wearing a hand-crafted red "wedding banquet" dress — the traditional colour of marriage in Taiwan — complete with table settings.

"Gay marriage is now in its second year," Wu said. "I was hoping to be able to attend all of my friends' wedding banquets and that's why I am dressed like a wedding banquet." Saturday's parade came a day after two same-sex couples joined a mass wedding hosted by the military for the first time in another gay rights landmark in Asia.

Over 4,000 gay couples have registered their marriages since the law change took effect last year when Taiwan became the first place in the region to allow same-sex nuptials.

— AFP

Macron seeks to calm tensions over cartoons

Paris, Oct. 31: President Emmanuel Macron said that he could understand if Muslims were shocked by cartoons of the prophet Mohammed, as French authorities on Saturday sought to ascertain if a young Tunisian suspected of killing three people in a knife rampage inside a Nice church had outside help.

France is on edge after the republication in early September of cartoons of the prophet Mohammed

ORTHODOX PRIEST HURT IN FRENCH SHOOTING, ASSAILANT FLED: POLICE

Paris, Oct. 31: An orthodox priest has been injured in a shooting in the French city of Lyon and the assailant has fled, a police source said on Saturday.

The priest was fired on twice at around 4pm local time as he was closing the church, and was being treated on site for life-threatening injuries, the source said.

— Reuters

by the Charlie Hebdo weekly, which was followed by an attack outside its for-

mer offices, the beheading of a teacher and now the attack in Nice.

Macron sparked protests in the Muslim world after the murder earlier this month of teacher Samuel Paty — who had shown his class a cartoon of Mohammed — by saying France would never renounce its right to caricature.

But in an apparent bid to reach out to Muslims, Macron gave a long interview setting out his vision to Qatar-based TV channel *Al-Jazeera*, seeking to strike a softer tone.

"I can understand that people could be shocked by the caricatures but I will never accept that violence can be justified," he said. "I consider it our duty to protect our freedoms and our rights," he added in an extract of the interview to be broadcast from 1600 GMT.

France is still reeling from the latest attack in Nice which Macron has already described as "Islamist" terror.

— AFP

SCREEN ICON

World of entertainment mourns loss of global sensation who passed away in sleep

The original Bond had his tryst with Taj Mahal

Commanding screen presence for 40 yrs

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT SCOTTISH JAMES BOND ACTOR

THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF THE LITTLE KNOWN FACTS OF THE LEGENDARY STAR SEAN CONNERY, ACCORDING TO THE SCOTSMAN NEWSPAPER. CONNERY EPITOMISED AUTHOR IAN FLEMING'S SUAVE 007 AGENT IN SEVEN JAMES BOND MOVIES. THE ACTOR DIED ON SATURDAY AGED 90.



25-08-1930 TO 31-10-2020

● Despite being known as Sean, the actor's first name is Thomas, and he was referred to as Tommy in his youth.

● His first job was as a milkman with the St Cuthbert's Co-Operative Society in Edinburgh.

● Sir Sean worked as a coffin polisher before going into acting.

● He reportedly was placed third in the Mr Universe contest in 1953 although there is some dispute over whether he finished third in the Junior class, or failed to place in the 'Tall Man' classification.

● He turned out for Edinburgh junior side football Bonnyrigg Rose in his youth.

● He has a tattoo reading 'Scotland forever' which he got at the age of 16 when he enrolled in the Royal Navy.

● He donated his \$250,000 salary from his role as King Richard in 1991 film Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves to charity.

shall be forever grateful to him," they said.

Connery first played the role of James Bond in 1962's *Dr No*, which he followed up with *From Russia with Love* (1963), *Goldfinger* (1964), *Thunderball* (1965), *You Only Live Twice* (1967), *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971) and *Never Say Never Again* (1983).

Connery's portrayal has been a tough act to follow for successors like Roger Moore, Pierce Brosnan

and Daniel Craig.

Bond made a global star out of a relatively new Connery but it also pigeon-holed him for a long time.

The actor started challenging his image by shifting gears and taking up more dramatic movies such as John Huston's "The Man Who Would Be King", Richard Attenborough's "A Bridge Too Far", "The Name of the Rose", which was a big international hit.

Connery won an Oscar

for supporting actor for his turn as a tough Irish cop in Brian De Palma's 1987 *The Untouchables*.

In the 90s, Connery starred in a string of hits such as *The Hunt for Red October* (1990), *The Russia House* (1990), *The Rock* (1996), and *Entrapment* (1999).

After the turn of the new century in 2000, Connery's major acting appearance came in the superhero ensemble *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*.

The actor had officially announced his retirement in 2006, when he received the American Film Institute's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Connery was married to actor Diane Cilento from 1962-73. The couple divorced in 1973 and Cilento died in 2011.

He is survived by his second wife, painter Micheline Roquebrune, whom he married in 1975 and his son Jason Connery.

— Agencies

DECCAN Chronicle

1 NOVEMBER 2020



Shreya Sen-Handley

Off the beaten track

Winter upon us, so's the 'season of scapegoating'

Winter is coming." Long before *Game of Thrones*' Ned Stark starkly uttered this now famous line, the almost-as-famous William Shakespeare had put a rather more poetic spin on it, "Now is the winter of our discontent". Or, season of smogs and frigid fruitlessness, as Keats might have added, had he lived to write his *Ode to Winter*.

Here, in Sherwood Forest, it's already arrived, with the snuffing out of the fading autumn sun, as British Summertime ends and clocks go back, reducing daylight to a flash in the midday pan. In creeps the icy damp, searching for the elderly to chill to the bone, to find them already gone in this year of devastating loss. No season of cheer for the depressed either, huddled around their UV lamps, waiting for the lifting of the black fog. Only mildly depressed currently, I have eschewed mine for cake, Coke (the drinking kind, and my lockdown addiction- please send barrels) and my capering kids who keep my spirits high.

But this hard-hit year, there will be five million fewer English children frolicking, because going hungry instead, as the greedy Tory government denies them food aid, will keep them on their toes. If you've been following British news however, you'll know there's a streak of silver lining called Marcus Rashford, Manchester United striker, who has come to their aid once more, with a raft of British organisations and individuals rallying around him to feed impoverished children in their school holidays because the UK government won't.

Yet how many Marcuses will it take to change the planet? With winter's approach, we have more to worry about than George R.R. Martin's White Walkers. We have a pandemic. Coronavirus was not just the sting in last winter's tail, but the seasonal gift that keeps on giving. On its march across the globe, it has infected 44.5 million, killed 1.17 million, and left legions jobless, grieving, physically wasted, and mentally ill. In arriving in India later, it lulled many into a false sense of security, but now shows no signs of abating, with a predicted peak early next year when the deadly winter smog has the country in its grip, quickening the spread of the virus and increasing its severity to sufferers.

If it ever went away in Europe, with our chance to catch our breath, as infections and death tolls fell, briefer even than the English summer, it is back with coldblooded vengeance. In much of England, the contagion is now more widespread than at its zenith in late spring, forcing us to return to a harsh lockdown with its attendant hardships again. But BoJo's government is too busy lining its pockets to care, handing out crucial pandemic-constraining contracts worth millions to their friends and family, as they deflect, distract, spin and scapegoat their way out of scandals, when caught red-handed again and again.

What better time of the year for that than winter? Tis the season for scapegoating. For fake news and whitewashing. If Herod spreading heresies so he could get his nippers on his nemesis Baby Jesus wasn't enough, Ravana and Guy Fawkes are victims of spin too. For Dussehra, we burn giant effigies of the demon Ravana to symbolically slay evil and side with good, while in Britain, huge bonfires are lit on Bonfire Night, to commemorate the capture and execution of Guy Fawkes, alleged ringleader of the Gunpowder Plot to blow up the English parliament.

Yet modern interpretations of the history of Ravana, the Dravidian King of Lanka, suggest it wasn't as black and white as the legend would have us believe. Sita may not have been abducted, and Ravana, not the villain of the piece after all. Apparently a feint by the Aryans to start a war for new territory, the ten-headed, snarling Ravana might well be the ancient world's first fake news victim. Because history is, of course, written by the victors, and when they aren't whitewashing, they are wasp-white Anglo Saxon Protestant-ing. As Catholic Guy Fawkes discovered when, despite being neither assassination plot kingpin nor even conspirator, he was executed by King James I in 1606, as a cautionary example to Catholic opponents of Protestant power.

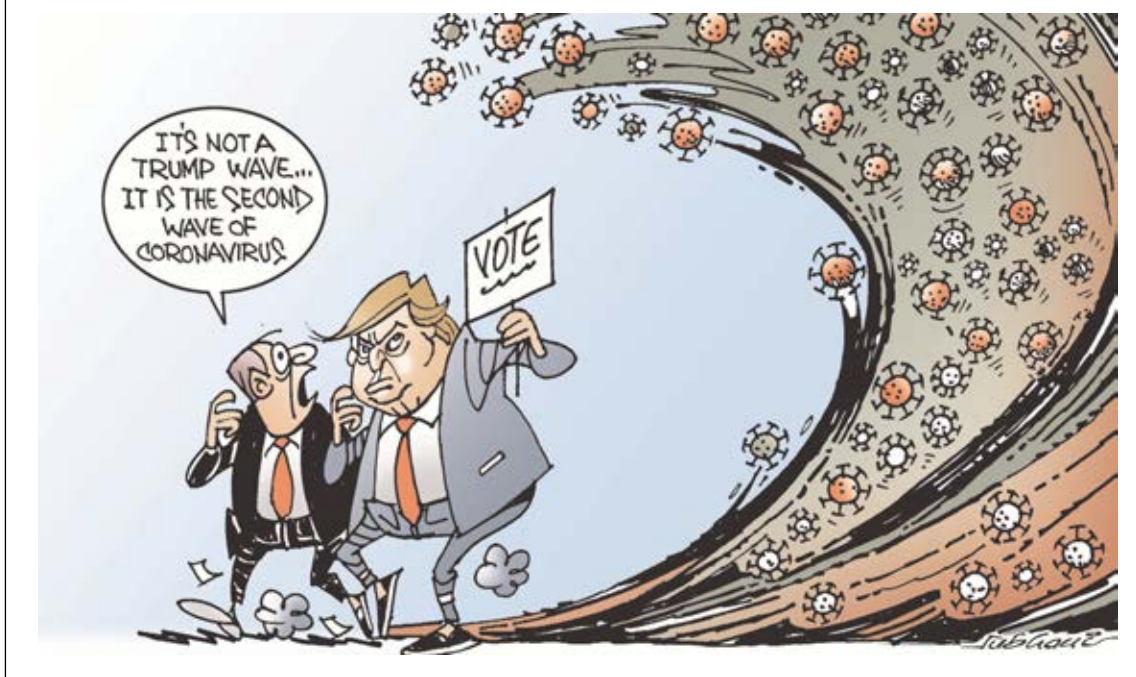
Not only do we gleefully revisit their torment every year, we are still being duped into hounding the wrong people. This summer, India concentrated all its energies on harassing an innocuous young actress called Rhea Chakrabarty, even as its government failed to contain the pandemic, salvage the economy, or keep women and children safe, while Britain after Corbyn continued its search for a suitable fall guy. You'd think it would be tax-dodging, law-breaking, extra-constitutional authority Dominic Cummings, but it will, as always, be immigrants instead.

Persecuting minorities is not a seasonal activity anywhere in the world, but a perennial favourite. In the US, Donald Trump's return to power this month will see scapegoats dragged in the mud behind him. Many of them immigrants, with "filthy" (as he called us recently) Indians amongst them. Will Democratic veep candidate, half-Indian, half-black Kamala Harris face the full force of his monstrously immature wrath when she's vanquished? That derision and degradation reserved for women when they challenge mainstream male power? Would that shock you, or that Trump might regain the White House, considering these nationalist demagogues, these selfish crooks, think nothing of twisting the law to their own ends?

Winter is nearly here, and will be a long litany of horrors, unless we act to prevent them.

Shreya Sen-Handley is the author of the recently published *Strange: Stories, the award-winning Memoirs of My Body, and a forthcoming book of travel misadventures*. Her Twitter and Insta handle is @shreyasenh.

Subhani



India must set example of pluralism, tolerance



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

Two weeks ago, an 18-year-old Chechen headed a teacher in Paris for having shown to his students caricatures of Prophet Mohammad. He was taking a class on freedom of expression. Just days ago, a knife attack inside a church in the French city of Nice by a 21-year-old Tunisian, brutally killed three people and injured several more. The gruesome attacks rightly created worldwide outrage. French President Emmanuel Macron vowed to fight this mindless terrorism. India did the right thing in supporting his stand. Ruthlessly violent organisations like the Al Qaeda and the ISIS, which misuse religious sentiment to justify the worst form of violence, are a scourge that the world must defeat. Terrorism in any form is unacceptable, and must be unambivalently condemned.

Turkish President Recep Erdogan, Pakistan PM Imran Khan, and Malaysia's former PM, Mahathir Mohamad, however, attacked Macron for unleashing 'Islamophobia'. Erdogan is seeking to wrench the leadership of the Islamic world by adopting radical Islam. Imran Khan, facing rising unpopularity within Pakistan, is falling back on the old card of catering to the conservative domestic mullah lobby. And, Mahathir, is somehow trying to keep himself relevant. Nothing can justify their failure to categorically denounce such violent cruelty in the name of religion. Not Macron, but the funda-

mentalist Islamic elements that plan and execute such despicable crimes, should have been decried by them.

France has the largest number of Muslims in Europe. They constitute the 'ethnic debris' that floated over the years to French shores from the countries they had earlier colonised and subjugated. The French colonial empire included many Muslim countries, especially in Northern Africa. Many European countries, who had once enslaved large parts of the world, now have to face the challenge of adopting a multiculturalism that assimilates different ethnic, religious and cultural groups from their colonies.

Different countries have adopted different strategies to deal with this task, but it is not an easy one, and religious fealty is an emotive issue for people of all faiths. The West was right in opposing — in the name of freedom of expression — the ban on Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, and India was wrong in imposing the ban. But, many Western countries have showed great intolerance to the derogatory display of Jesus. Filmmaker Scorsese's irreverent *The Last Temptation of Christ* provoked public outrage unprecedented in the history of religious films. Militant Christians castigated Universal Pictures, abused Lee Wasserman, chairman of the company, and forced movie chains not to show the film. Similarly, they took to the streets when Christ was portrayed as a charlatan in *The*

Passover Plot. The film was hounded out of cinema halls and never seen again. It is also perhaps less known that while the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published a dozen cartoons of Prophet Muhammad in 2005, its editor had earlier turned down cartoons of Jesus as too offensive.

The French president Nicolas Sarkozy actually took up with then PM Manmohan Singh, when the latter was on an official visit to France in October 2008, his "anguish" about the "massacre of Christians in India". Over 40 Indians of the Christian faith had been killed when suspected Hindu extremists resorted to violence in the states of Odisha and Karnataka, ostensibly to protest against perceived missionary activism in converting Hindus to Christianity. The reprehensible killings were condemned by every political party, including the BJP. Police reinforcements were sent to the disturbed areas; the chief ministers of both states, as well as national leaders, personally met with the heads of the Church to reassure them about their safety and that of their flock. And yet, Sarkozy, the head of a country that prides itself in keeping matters of religion out of matters of state, considered it fit to take up an aberrational incident about the well-

being of Christians in India during a summit political meeting. On its part, France does not allow the wearing of turbans by Sikh children and headscarves by Muslim girls. However, there is no ban on the wearing of the Christian cross.

For India, both as a Republic where the Constitution expressly espouses religious harmony, and as a civilisation that has completely rejected violence on religious grounds, radical and violent Islam is abhorrent. In fact, India's civilisational history presents the best example of a plural society. Hinduism was never a proselytising religion; it did not conduct crusades. In ancient times, Hindu kings patronised both their own temples and Buddhist viharas. The Jews lived peaceably in India before they did anywhere else. Muslim traders from the Arab countries practiced their faith undisturbed in Kerala more than a thousand years ago. The Parsis came in the seventh century and the Christians in the fourth to harmoniously become a part of the national fabric.

While supporting President Macron in his stand against the savage bigotry of certain fundamentalist Islamic groups, and renewing its commitment against all kinds of terrorism, India can and should strive to present to the world its own civilisational legacy of respect for all religions, and the ability of people of different faiths to live in harmony and peace. Our condemnation of what happened in France recently will resound even more globally when we ourselves reiterate and demonstrate afresh that India is the best example of a plural and tolerant society.

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

While supporting President Macron in his stand against savage bigotry, India can and should strive to present to the world its own civilisational legacy of respect for all religions and the ability of people of different faiths to live in harmony

LETTERS

WILL HE, WON'T HE?

The guessing game of whether Rajinikanth will make a political entry or not continues. According to the actor, the doctors have advised him not to take the plunge, given his health conditions. He has, however, said unequivocally that he would take a decision based on the wishes of his Rajini Makkal Mandram members. In other words, in case the RMM members want him to enter politics, he would do so ignoring the doctors' advice. If anyone is under the impression that Rajinikanth has called it quits before entry itself, he is sadly mistaken. Depending on the political climate nearer the time of the TN Assembly election, the actor will surely come out with another announcement. Every film actor in the country thinks that it's easy to convert his fan-following into votebank.

P.G. Menon,
Chennai

WELCOME ACT

According to the new Code on Wages, which has replaced the Payments of Bonus Act, 1965, those who are facing sexual abuse charges will be denied bonus. It is no doubt welcome considering the fact that the cases of rape/sexual abuse are on the rise in society. But the million-dollar question is 'can the perverted be brought to book quickly. The answer cannot be in

the affirmative, thanks to the provision 'due course of the law' and the oft-repeated argument. "A thousand guilty can escape the clutches of law, but an innocent cannot be punished."

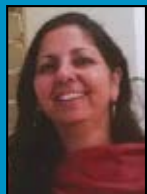
S.Ramakrishnasayee,
Chennai

QUOTA BILL

Governor Banwarilal Purohit has rushed to give his assent for the bill to provide 7.5 per cent quota for government school students in medical courses to avoid further embarrassment to him, after the honourable judges of the Madras high court came heavily on the Governor for sitting on the bill from September 15 and making their mind clear if the stalemate continued coupled with the decision taken by the state government to issue a GO through the executive route to reserve seats to students from the government schools from this year itself ignoring the reluctance of the Governor to give assent for the earlier bill pending with him. Credit should also be given to the Opposition leaders particularly DMK president Stalin who offered his party's unstinted cooperation to the AIADMK government in this case and suggested the executive route to overcome the obstacle created by the Governor for the bill to be made law.

Tharcus S. Fernando
Chennai

Anita Katyal
Political
Gup-Shup



Gehlot 'friend' Nath picks Pilot; RJD hope rests on savarna pitch

Rashtriya Janata Dal's chief ministerial candidate Tejashwi Yadav has made a concerted effort in the ongoing Bihar Assembly polls to expand the support base of his party beyond its core Muslim-Yadav vote bank. Not only has the RJD given a large number of tickets to upper caste candidates but Tejashwi makes it a point to hammer home this point during his campaign. The RJD leader ensures he is flanked on either side by the party's Bihar chief Jagdanand Singh and Rajya Sabha MP and party spokesperson Manoj Jha at his major rallies. Singh is a Rajput — in fact, he was the first upper caste leader to be given charge of the RJD's state unit. Jha is a Brahmin and is said to be Tejashwi's right-hand man. The upper castes in Bihar have never voted for the RJD as they have a special aversion to Lalu Prasad Yadav's brand of politics. It is to be seen if the course correction attempted by Tejashwi will work to

his party's advantage.

Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath enjoys a good rapport with his party colleague and Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot. But when it came to picking a campaigner for the Madhya Pradesh bypolls, Nath chose Sachin Pilot, who is not exactly Gehlot's favourite person. Nath apparently made several phone calls to Pilot requesting him to campaign in the Gwalior region which has a large Gujjar population. The veteran leader is also believed to have told Pilot that he was the only one who could do justice in this belt. Pilot has since addressed several election rallies in Madhya Pradesh but if Nath was hoping to pit the young Congress leader against his bete noire Jyotiraditya Scindia, he must have been disappointed. Pilot avoided attacking his former colleague Scindia in his speeches and instead went full throttle against Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. As for

Pilot, this invitation is an opportunity to send out a message to his detractors that he has national appeal and cannot be ignored.

Candidates who were hoping to be nominated by the Bharatiya Janata Party for the Uttar Pradesh Rajya Sabha elections spent several sleepless nights last week because of the delay in the announcement of the final list. Urban development minister Hardeep Puri was among those who went through some tense moments before the official list came out. His staff worked the phones endlessly to find out the status of the nominations. Puri had a truncated first stint in the Upper House as he was elected two years ago in place of Manohar Parrikar who resigned his seat when he went back to Goa as chief minister. Though there was no doubt that he would be re-nominated, Puri was on tenterhooks primarily because there was a buzz that another former diplomat, known to be the Prime Minister's favourite, was likely to be

inducted into the government. In the end, all's well that ends well as Puri was very much among the eight candidates on the BJP list.

Is Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh contemplating an early Assembly poll? Though the next election is only due in 2022, there is a growing view in the Singh camp that it might be a good idea to dissolve the Assembly and call for an early poll, preferably along with the Assam and Kerala elections next year. This section believes that Singh is currently on a strong wicket, especially after the tough stand he took on the farm laws passed by the Centre. His detractors in the party are currently in no position to pose any serious challenge. Similarly, the Shiromani Akali Dal, which recently parted company with BJP, is still in the process of putting its house in order. Not only were the Akalis mauled in the last Assembly election but they have also been facing serious internal dissensions. Given more time, there's every possibility that the

Akali Dal will recover lost ground while Amarinder Singh's stock may slump by then.

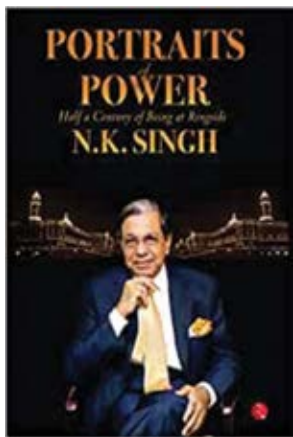
A seemingly minor bye-election in the Assembly segment of Baroda in Haryana has acquired immense significance as political pundits believe the result will reflect the popularity or otherwise of the BJP-led state government. Several disgruntled legislators from the Dushyant Chautala-led JJP do not want their party to continue its alliance with the BJP because of its stand on the farm laws which are being opposed by farmers in the state. They have been mounting pressure on their party leadership to snap ties with the saffron party but to little avail. These legislators are looking for greener pastures but they have decided to await the bypoll result before upping the ante. However, their defiance could well come to a nought if the BJP wins this election.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

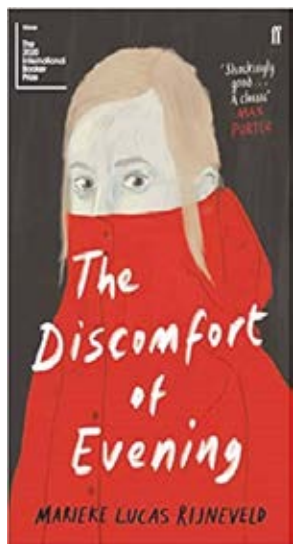
NON-FICTION

- 1 PORTRAITS OF POWER**
N.K. Singh,
Rupa, ₹595
- 2 THE INDIA WAY**
S. Jaishankar,
HarperCollins, ₹699
- 3 JINNAH HIS SUCCESSES,
FAILURES AND ROLE IN
HISTORY**
Ishtiaq Ahmed,
Penguin, ₹999
- 4 REMNANTS OF A
SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra,
HarperCollins, ₹599
- 5 HONOUR AMONG SPIES**
Asad Durrani,
HarperCollins, ₹499
- 6 VOICES OF DISSENT**
Romila Thapar,
Seagull Books,
₹499
- 7 THE ULTIMATE GOAL**
Vikram Sood,
HarperCollins,
₹699
- 8 TEN LESSONS FOR A
POST-PANDEMIC
WORLD**
Fareed Zakaria,
Allen Lane, ₹599
- 9 THE HOUSE OF JAIPUR**
John Zubrzycki,
Juggernaut, ₹599
- 10 DEEPAWALI
POOJA-VIDHI**
Pawan Kumar Mishra,
Tara India Research
Press, ₹299



FICTION

- 1 THE DISCOMFORT OF
EVENING**
Marieke Lucas
Rijneveld,
Faber & Faber, ₹499
- 2 A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham,
Hodder & Stoughton,
₹699
- 3 HAMNET**
Maggie O' Farrell,
Tinder Press, ₹699
- 4 GIRL IN WHITE COTTON**
Avni Doshi,
Harper, ₹599
- 5 THE LYING LIFE OF
ADULTS**
Elena Ferrante,
Europa Editions, ₹699
- 6 THE SHADOW KING**
Maaza Mengiste,
Canongate, ₹799
- 7 PRIVATE MOSCOW**
James Patterson
& Adam Hamdy,
Century, ₹699
- 8 THE HEART ASKS
PLEASURE FIRST**
Karuna Ezara Parikh,
Picador India, ₹699
- 9 REAL LIFE**
Brandon Taylor,
Daunt Books, ₹650
- 10 THE NEW
WILDERNESS**
Diane Cook,
One World, ₹399



Bahrsions, New Delhi

A whitewashed portrait,
shorn of nuance, insight

Ranjona Banerji

review

I picked this book with great enthusiasm. Because I do believe that in many ways V.P. Menon is the architect of modern India and that he is largely unsung. I have read both *The Transfer of Power in India* and *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States* by Menon several times over. In Menon's books, incredibly detailed, informative and insightful, you get a remarkable portrait of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and the enormous task he was entrusted with: to bring together a disparate and motley group of princely states within the borders of India. But hovering below the surface of Patel's astounding achievement was the writer himself, Menon. It is clear within the story that Patel could not have done this without Menon and yet Menon himself was ephemeral, elusive. This biography, by his great granddaughter, seemed like the perfect answer. To the

riddle that was Menon and to acknowledgement at last of his formidable accomplishment.

When all the controversy erupted over Jawaharlal versus Patel, at the launch of this book, I was still at the beginning of the story, where in a sleepy Kerala village and with an indulgent mother, Menon, was a brilliant if rebellious young student. Here, we focus on the development of a young man. The dynamics of family life. And how childhood moulds us for the future. There are dramatic moments here. That a young boy should be so angry that he burned down his school and ran away from home. The sheer grit that made him work as a labourer in the Kolar mines and claw his way up. The losses and tribulations that the young Menon faced and his dogged determination to rise above every setback. That a man without formal education could rise so far and so brilliantly.

This was the story I wanted. Alas, it was not to last long.

Between the fascinating beginning that draws you in and the final, moving, emotional end, V.P. Menon remains lost. Instead of a story of his life, with his insights, you get the story of the last days of the Raj and India's Independence. You are not even sure whether this version is that of the writer Narayani Basu, as a historian, or that of Menon. There are pages and pages of history — available anywhere for anyone to read — and one line thrown in about what Menon thought about what was going on.

It is evident early on though that Basu, and perhaps Menon,

is no fan of Jawaharlal Nehru's. For one, he is called "Jawaharlal" through most of the book, although everyone else is referred to by their surname. Nehru is also dismissed as a petty vindictive tyrant with no thoughts of his own. You may consider this harsh or fair but either way this view is not sufficiently substantiated. Now whether Basu picked this up from her family or these are her views as a historian or whether Menon was clear about his feelings is not fully explained to the reader. And so also with Menon's own personal life. It is interesting enough, his rocky relationship with his sons, the collapse of his first marriage, his relationship and subsequent marriage to his mentor's wife, all you get is the bare bones. There are no insights, no conflicts, no impression of how his life affected his work. Or vice versa.

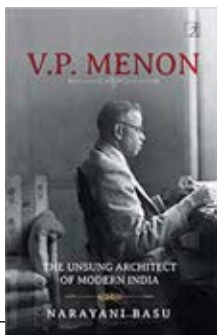
Indeed, until you reach the transfer of power, Menon himself gets lost in the tumultuous events around India's Independence. And if you want to read about the transfer of power, Menon's own books are freely available. There are missed opportunities here. The friendship between Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Menon would have made fascinating reading. There are nuggets on how Menon felt about Partition which are too

disparate and disconnected to make a lasting impression on the reader. The struggle for power, such as it was, between Patel and Nehru finds a few pages at the end and not enough before or between. Patel himself, who played such an important role in Menon's life, does not shine through.

It is possible that the linear structure of the biography is the problem. That by juxtaposing Menon's lifeline along that of India's, the man himself has got lost in the turmoil of the times. If instead, we were told Menon's story without India's story taking centre-stage, we may have learnt more about him. Basu tells us that Menon was unpredictable and remote and you feel that sometimes in his interactions with his sons. But clearly, he loved his second wife. That dichotomy is not explored.

For this reviewer, the fact that a book has been written about V.P. Menon is insufficient. His character and achievements are such that he deserved a more intimate portrait without the massive presence of Indian history as a distraction and detraction.

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



VP MENON. THE UNSUNG ARCHITECT OF MODERN INDIA
By NARAYANI BASU
Simon and Schuster
₹799

THE HUMBLE BISCUIT HAS A NOBLE HISTORY

Prue Leith

review

Sin-eating is an old European practice. After a person's death, during the period of lying-in, a biscuit would be placed on the corpse in its coffin. Before the burial, one of the mourners would eat it in order to take on the sins of the departed and allow them to move on into the next life free of the burdens of their transgressions.

Such fascinating info is the stuff of Lizzie Collingham's book *The Biscuit*. This review, sadly, won't touch on a tenth of it.

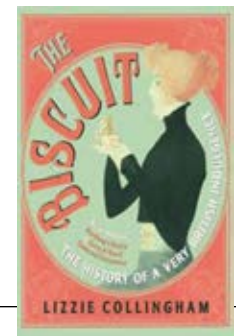
Collingham has bagged a senior place among writers telling history through a single item of food. The book ranks up there with *Salt and Cod* by Mark Kurlansky. Her previous such book was *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors*, which I thought would be hard to match, but Collingham has pulled it off again. A former research fellow at Jesus College, Cambridge and history professor at Warwick, she resists the temptation to speculate, exaggerate or invent. What you get is well-researched, detailed information, but written as a

clear and interesting story. The biscuit has been around at least since the third millennium BC, when cooks in Mesopotamia found that drying their bread in the sun meant it didn't go stale or mouldy. This quickly led to drying by the fire or in the oven, hence bi-cuit (twice-cooked).

The Biscuit isn't chronological, but jumps around following stories loosely linked by concept. The survival theme takes in hard tack, the sailors' biscuit, of which the mutineers gave Captain Bligh 150lbs when they set him and 18 men adrift in a longboat in the South Seas. By the time they reached Timor, 4,000 miles to the west, they were down to an ounce of biscuit a day.

Army and navy rations relied heavily on biscuit, and Collingham tells of its role in the Napoleonic wars, and of the dastardly bakers who delivered damp, adulterated sacks of biscuit, which quickly contained more weevils than flour. This

eventually led to the industrialisation of the baking process, both by the navy itself and by civilian (mostly Quaker) manufacturers, who boasted of their refined, untouched-by-human-hand products, meant only for the middle classes and aristocracy. Huntley & Palmers, Peek Frean, McVitie's, Jacob's, Carr's and Lang's all had their heyday in the 19th century.



THE BISCUIT: THE HISTORY OF A VERY BRITISH INDULGENCE
By LIZZIE COLLINGHAM
The Bodley Head
£18.99

Once sugar arrived in plentiful supply from the colonies, sweet biscuits and fancy iced biscuits overtook cream crackers and water biscuits. Sugar was promoted as a health-giving food. The baker barons fought ferociously for the custom of the rich, copying each other's successes and stealing each other's top staff. It wasn't until after World War I that American competition brought the price of biscuits down to a level everyone could afford. Today we eat more biscuits than any other nation, presumably helping to make us the fattest in Europe.

'Dunking' seems to stem from the business of soaking hard biscuit to make it

palatable. One of the earliest sweet biscuits was the lady's finger. It is the perfect shape for dunking into the small glasses of the time. So are the Italian biscotti and the French langue de chat. Dunking may be considered a working-class delight today, but dipping your 'sipet' into your cordial or tea was once an elegant way to behave.

Soaking biscuits also led to the famous English trifle. In 1604 Lady Elinor Fettiplace's cookbook recommends steeping bits of biscuit in wine and covering them with custard. By the 18th century Elizabeth Raffald was using macaroons soaked in sweet white wine topped with custard and a frothy syllabub of cream, the whole decorated with flowers and comfits. Today we've replaced the biscuits with stale cake and added (a mistake to my mind) a layer of jelly.

My only complaint about the book is that there is no mention of Aberffraw biscuits, allegedly the first British biscuit, revived in Wales five years ago; nor the oldest biscuit in the world sold at auction, with the effects of a sailor who fought at the battle of Trafalgar. But there, you see, Collingham has got me so hooked on the subject I am probably Googling fake news which she has wisely rejected.

By arrangement with the Spectator

FAST FACT

Youngest International Booker Prize winner Marieke Lucas Rijneveld does not refer to themselves as 'trans'; but as 'in-between'. The 29-year-old comes from a farming household in the Netherlands and her visceral *The Discomfort of Evening* — which deals with trauma and guilt following a death in the family — is autofictional.

Saeeda Bano, 1st female Indian radio jockey, meets Akhtari Bai

Shahana Raza

excerpt

In December of 1942 Masud came back on vacation and we began making arrangements for his marriage with Sughra. Most of the responsibilities were once again handed over to me. Aqila and I got busy with the shopping. The main incident I can recall from this time that's well worth a mention is that Begum Akhtar was called to do a *mujra* at the bride's house from our; that is the groom's, side. She was still a courtesan at this time and went by her former name, Akhtari Bai. Akhtari had a unique character. Despite performing *mujra* her body language did not reflect the vulgarity or cheapness one associates with women from this profession.

Around 1938 a radio station was set up in Lucknow. Everyone was extremely interested. Shows for women and children were also being broadcast which used to be hosted by women. Listening to a radio discussion or radio play, we would often hear the names of these women being

announced on air. Some of us began to wish we could also hear our voices booming across the air waves. At the same time we realised this would not be possible since women from good families kept purdah from courtesans.

Slowly executives at the radio station also got to know that most women from traditional families of Lucknow, maintained purdah from courtesans and because of this, would never visit the station. The radio station was in need of educated women to participate in various on-air programmes. The officials made a concerted effort to become friendly with men from the most conservative of families. They informed them that though courtesans visit the station (as it would be next to impossible to have any programme on air without them; after all they are accomplished singers and it is essential to have good music on air) the entrance they use and the studios they work out of are completely separate from the ones used by the other employees.

After managing to create a good impression of themselves with various families of Lucknow, the officials started sending out invites to their friends and the women in their homes to come and participate

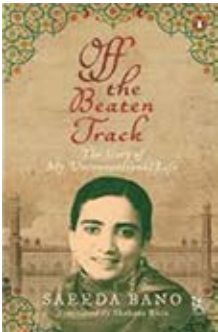
in a talk or discussion at the station. I also received a letter from the Director in which he politely suggested, I should come to the station with my relative Huma Bai to take part in a discussion, on so and so date. I showed the invite to my husband. His response was, 'of course... you must accept it.'

Now every second week or so I would receive a request to give a talk on some topic or the other or to narrate a story for the children's show or compere a ladies programme on radio. I already had Abbas Raza's permission. After a while, one of the officers by the name of Haseeb *sahab* suggested I start compere a woman's programme regularly. When I asked for details, he said, 'Just come once a week to the radio station for a couple of hours. Whatever has to be broadcast will be scripted and handed over to you.' Saeed was around two years old and by the grace of God I had a fabulous maid. I accepted Haseeb *sahab*'s offer. Once a week I drove down to Lucknow, read out details of a woman's programme for radio and returned to Barabanki by evening. I used to drive myself.

During our stay in Barabanki we became quite friendly with a District Magistrate by the

name of Mr Abbasi Wahajuddin. Eight miles to the north of Barabanki there is a small town called Dewa Sharif. It is famous for the mazar, the shrine of an early 19th century Sufi, Haji Waris Ali Shah. Every year to commemorate his death anniversary, a grand celebration is held for an entire week at Dewa.

One such night, the *tawaifs* (courtesans) were invited to sing. Special arrangements



OFF THE BEATEN TRACK: THE STORY OF MY UNCONVENTIONAL LIFE
By SAEEDA BANO
Translated by SHAHANA RAZA
Penguin Random House, ₹499

were made for us to sit behind a *chilman*, a thin cloth curtain, and see them perform since women from good families kept purdah from *tawaifs*. How strange and very hypocritical! When it came to hearing the qawwalis perform, we sat with the men.

Anyway, we were simply delighted to be attending the event. From behind the *chilman* what do we see? A white spotless sheet spread out across the length and breadth of the large hall stretching in front of us; several plush carpets rolled open near the walls on top of which *gautakiyas* or bolsters had been placed strategically. Reclining comfortably on these, were the privileged listeners, the audience of men. Lounging regally on a *gautakiya* with an extremely beautiful *razai* (quilt) thrown over her feet sat the famous courtesan Benazir Bai. On either side of her, at the opposite end, inside the same *razai*, sat two of her ardent admirers.

Another *tawaif* was seated in the same *andaaz* (style). She also had a gorgeous quilt covering her feet. To one side of her sat Akhtari Bai.

She was wearing a simple sari, pale grey with beautiful silver zari embroidery. Her face looked radiant, without a trace of arrogance. She did not

have a *razai*, nor was she lounging on a bolster.

After a short while, Munni Bai finished her song and Akhtari Bai picked up the *tanpura*. She hummed a few stray notes to tune the instrument to her voice, smiled, looked at the audience and started singing. What a magical voice! Within seconds, the entire gathering was mesmerised.

The *mehfil* ended around 4am, but we didn't feel as though we'd had enough. I felt a woman who can sit in a gathering surrounded by all sorts of men and present her talent with such dignity that everyone seems hypnotised must have an amazing personality; one should say a prayer at the hem of her skirt.

Every Friday I used to drive down from Barabanki to broadcast a women's programme on All India Radio. One day, after rehearsals as I was sitting alone in the studio, Akhtari Bai suddenly walked in. Greeting me warmly with a quick *salam* she said, 'Begum *sahab* I would like to speak with you.' I was shocked to see her to begin with, but her second sentence had me stumped.

'Bittan, please get me married to Ishtiaq Abbasi *sahab*.' 'Ya Allah, what sort of woman is this?' I thought, keeping my feelings to myself. I can't recall

In turbulent
Assam, a lonely
granddad spars
with grandchild

Rupa Gulab

review

Undertow is a tightly packed novel that unravels strained relationships. When Loya gets a grant to study elephants in Kaziranga National Park for her PhD, she jumps at it. Elephants aren't the only attraction — this gives her the opportunity she's longed for: to visit Assam and the home her mother was banished from for marrying a man "who was not of her religion, let alone her caste, nor of her race, not from any region remotely near hers, and a man whose skin was dark, to make matters worse".

It is Loya who takes the initiative to walk into her grandfather Torun's house in Guwahati — a bold move to claim her birthright. Once she meets him, however, she's not willing to give him a chance, and thinks of little ways to punish him — understandable, because she's reacting to the treatment meted out to her mother.

Torun is a complex character. He was weak only when it came to his wife — a strong woman he loved dearly, and he intends to stay loyal to her memory. He does not give Loya an inch, even though it almost catches at his throat when he sees glimpses of his wife in his granddaughter. They are not a sweet storybook grandfather and granddaughter pair, but sparring partners, both determined to hold out against each other.

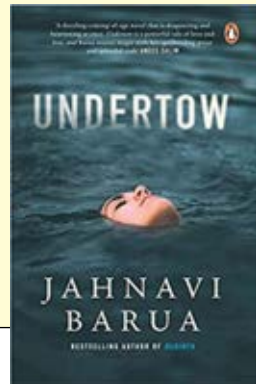
As Loya traces the path her mother walked before her, the history of Assam unfolds with every step: while it's beautiful, it's also sullen, resentful and often turbulent. Activities of the All Assam Students' Union are threaded into daily life. People around Loya's grandfather, from old friends to the house help, have family members in the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), some who are still in hiding, and some who have surrendered. Romen, a family retainer, speaks scathingly about his brother: "First he runs away from home, joins the ULFA, drives our mother crazy and then after a couple of years he surrenders, comes back, becomes Surrendered ULFA and swaggers about the village terrorising good folks and now he is tired of that and wants to become a businessman. Ha!"

Political chatter is a constant, and most of the characters are dead against illegal migrants. Loya tries to understand this sentiment, but when she points out to Torun that the Ahoms were migrants too (from old Burma), he narrows his eyes. Loya does not feel uncomfortable: "As she lay in bed looking out at the starry sky, Loya was restless with a vague disapproval. She did not feel strongly about politics in any way, but she took for granted certain things — the idea of loving one's country and wishing it no harm."

The politics doesn't get heavy or overpower the story, fortunately. Loya and Torun are firmly at the centre of it all. She has the advantage over him, because while she's aware of the baggage he carries, he's unaware of the weight she carries on her shoulders.

While there's hope that their relationship may thaw, other forces are at work as well. Unpredictable undercurrents run through this novel, and make it all the more powerful.

Rupa Gulab is a freelance writer and the author of Girl Alone, Chip of the Old Blockhead and The Great Depression of the 40s



UNDERTOW

By JAHNAVI BARUA
Penguin Viking
₹499

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Rupa Gulab is a freelance writer and the author of Girl Alone, Chip of the Old Blockhead and The Great Depression of the 40s

In 1945, Akhtari Bai married Ishtiaq Ahmed Abbasi, the Lucknow-based barrister, and was thenceforward known as Begum Akhtar. This excerpt is published from Off the Beaten Track: The Story of My Unconventional Life by Saeeda Bano, translated by Shahana Raza with permission from Penguin.

SHORT TAKES

Amit, Sanjeet bag gold in France

New Delhi: World silver-medallist Amit Panghal (52kg) and Sanjeet (91kg) struck gold in their first competition after a coronavirus-forced break, claiming the top honours at the Alexis Vastine International Boxing Tournament in Nantes, France. Amit defeated American Rene Abraham 3-0 with a dominating performance on Friday night.

Sanjeet, a former India Open gold-medallist, too put up a clinical show to get past Frenchman Soheb Bouafia in his summit clash and secure a gold.

In the 75kg category, Asian silver-winner Ashish Kumar also claimed a gold after his opponent, American Joseph Gerome Hiks, gave him a walkover due to injury. — PTI

Bottas snatches pole from Hami

Imola, Italy: Valtteri Bottas snatched pole position for Sunday's Emilia Romagna Grand Prix from his Mercedes team-mate Lewis Hamilton with a dramatic late lap in qualifying at Imola on Saturday.

The Finn, who is 77 points adrift of series leader and six-time champion Hamilton with five races remaining in this year's title, grabbed the prime grid position by a tenth of a second.

Hamilton, who was fastest in the only practice in the morning, had been on top through most of the qualifying session and took provisional pole on his first run in Q3 before Bottas beat him in the final seconds. Max Verstappen was third for Red Bull. — AFP

Sonogo upsets Djokovic in Vienna

Vienna: Novak Djokovic won just three games in a lackluster quarterfinal performance at the Erste Bank Open, losing 6-2, 6-1 to 42nd-ranked Lorenzo Sonogo. It was only Djokovic's third loss of the year, after being disqualified for hitting a line judge with a ball at the U.S. Open and losing the French Open final to Rafael Nadal. "I came here with the intention to try to earn more points and secure the No. 1 in the end of the year. I have done that, so I move on," Djokovic said. — AP

Wolves share EPL lead after win

Wolverhampton: Wolverhampton earned a share of the English Premier League lead after beating Crystal Palace 2-0.

Teenage defender Rayan Ait-Nouri's first goal for Wolves and Daniel Podence's other first half effort highlighted their most complete performance in the league.

Wolves sit third, level on points with Everton and Liverpool, in their best start to a top-flight since 1979.

Palace had a penalty correctly overturned by VAR, and a Michy Batshuayi strike was disallowed for offside but they were well beaten. — AP

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL: Chennai Super Kings vs Kings XI Punjab from 3.30 pm; Kolkata Knight Riders vs Rajasthan Royals from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

Women's Big Bash League: Melbourne Renegades vs Sydney Sixers from 8.15 am on Sony Six

FORMULA ONE

Imola Grand Prix: Main race from 5.35 pm on Star Sports Select 2 HD, Star Sports 3

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Aston Villa vs Southampton from 5.30 pm; Newcastle United vs Everton from 8.30 pm; Manchester United vs Arsenal from 10 pm; Tottenham Hotspur vs Brighton & Hove Albion from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 2

Italian League: Udinese vs AC Milan from 5 pm; Spezia vs Juventus from 7.30 pm; Napoli vs Sassuolo from 10.30 pm on Sony Ten 2; Roma vs Fiorentina from 10.30 pm on Sony Six; Sampdoria vs Genoa from 1.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2

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Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**

Mumbai on Cloud 9

MI thrash Delhi by nine wickets, ensure top-two spot

Dubai, Oct. 31: Mumbai Indians ensured a top-two finish in the IPL league table with a clinical nine-wicket decimation of an already battered Delhi Capitals, who wilted under relentless pressure from Trent Boult and Jasprit Bumrah. While Boult (3/21 in 4 overs) dealt telling opening blows, Jasprit Bumrah (3/17 in 4 overs) broke the backbone of the Delhi Capitals middle-order, choking them to 110 for 9.

The defending champions coasted to victory in 14.2 overs, taking their points tally to 18 and will have two shots in the play-offs to get into the final.

Delhi Capitals, who had won seven out of their first nine games, have now lost four on the bounce and with a match left are in danger of missing out on the play-offs with an ever deteriorating net-run-rate of minus 0.159.

While batting, Delhi Capitals consumed 62 dot balls, which effectively meant that more than half of their stipulated 20 overs had

gone without scoring. A target of 111 can't be defended nine out of 10 times and the pocket dynamo Ishan Kishan scored 72 not out off 43 balls to make the chase look like a walk in the park.

Not for once did Delhi Capitals looked like being in control as they made the Dubai strip and the MI bowling attack look doubly menacing with some of the best batsmen abdicating their responsibilities of playing fearless cricket.

Boult was brilliant upfront removing openers Shikhar Dhawan (0) and Prithvi Shaw (10 off 11 balls) in the powerplay which pegged the Delhi Capitals back.

Captain Shreyas Iyer (25 off 29 balls) and Rishabh Pant (21 off 24 balls) then compounded their team's worries as they failed to regain the lost momentum.

The duo, for the umpteenth time, looked like playing for themselves and the intent was missing which affected the morale of the batsmen coming down the order.

— PTI

SCORECARD

Delhi Capitals: Prithvi Shaw c de Kock b Boult 10, Shikhar Dhawan c Yadav b Boult 0, Shreyas Iyer st de Kock b Chahal 25, Rishabh Pant lbw b Bumrah 21, Marcus Stoinis c de Kock b Bumrah 2, Shimron Hetmyer c Krunal b Coulter-Nile 11, Harshal Patel lbw b Bumrah 5, Ravichandran Ashwin c Krunal b Boult 12, Praveen Dube (not out) 7, Kagiso Rabada (run out) 12. Extras (lb-3 w-2) 5. **Total (for 9 wks, in 20 overs) 110.**

FoW: 1-1, 2-15, 3-50, 4-57, 5-62, 6-73, 7-78, 8-96, 9-110. **Bowling:** Trent Boult 4-0-21-3, Krunal Pandya 3-0-13-0, Jayant Yadav 3-0-18-0, Jasprit Bumrah 4-0-17-3, Nathan Coulter-Nile 2-0-14-1, Rahul Chahal 4-0-24-1.

Mumbai Indians: Ishan Kishan (not out) 72, Quinton de Kock b Nortje 26, Suryakumar Yadav (not out) 12. Extras (w-1) 1. **Total (for 1 wks, in 14.2 overs) 111.**

FoW: 1-68. **Bowling:** Ashwin 4-0-18-0, Rabada 3-0-27-0, Nortje 2.2-0-25-1, Stoinis 1-0-4-0, Dube 3-0-29-0, Patel 1-0-8-0.



Jasprit Bumrah of Mumbai Indians celebrates the wicket of Rishabh Pant of Delhi Capitals in an Indian Premier League match in Dubai on Saturday.

— BCCI

Royals look to ride momentum

Dubai, Oct. 31: They have just given their play-offs qualification hopes a lift and Rajasthan Royals will look to sustain the momentum against Kolkata Knight Riders in another must-win IPL game here on Sunday.

Besides a victory in their last league game, the inaugural edition winners will also need other results to go their way if they are to make the playoffs of the lucrative event, in its 13th edition now.

The best-case scenario for RR would be Kings XI Punjab losing their last match and Sunrisers Hyderabad winning no more than one in their last two outings.

In that case, RR will go through with 14 points, without net run rate coming into play.

However, RR's first task is to do what is within its control — win the match against the Knight Riders and then hope for the best. Given the tight situation, the bigger the margin of win, the better it will be for the Steve Smith-led side.



The Royals are certainly look forward to their batting at the Dubai International Stadium. Their talismanic England all-rounder Ben Stokes has just won a man-of-the-match award, having made a breezy half century after picking up two wickets, in the team's win over KXIP on Friday.

The 2019 World Cup final hero getting his mojo back, at such a crucial juncture of the tournament, is great news for

the Royals. And, needless to say, a bad one for KKR as the leading all-rounder can singlehandedly influence the outcome of a game.

Sanju Samson rediscovering his touch must have also gladdened the hearts of the RR team management.

The wicketkeeper-batsman had started the tournament on an explosive note before going off the rails midway, only to come back all guns blaz-

NUMBERS GAME

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL:
● Matches: 21 ● Kolkata: 11
● Rajasthan: 8 ● Tied: 2
(Rajasthan Royals won both tied matches against Kolkata Knight Riders in Super Overs.)

MEETING IN 2019

● KKR beat RR by 8 wickets in Jaipur.
● RR beat KKR by 3 wickets in Kolkata.

MEETING IN 2020

● Kolkata beat Rajasthan by 37 runs in Dubai.

FOR THE RECORD

● Sanju Samson with 26 sixes in 13 innings is leading the chart this season.
● Nitish Rana, who has smashed 47 sixes in 39 innings, needs three more to become the sixth batsman to complete a half-century of sixes for Kolkata Knight Riders.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

ing against KXIP.

Skipper Smith can play according to the situation and opener Robin Uthappa can put any attack to the sword on his day.

— PTI

GAYLE FINED 10 PER CENT OF HIS MATCH FEE

Abu Dhabi, Oct. 31: The swashbuckling Chris Gayle has been fined 10 per cent of his match fee for breaching the Indian Premier League's code of conduct during Kings XI Punjab's match against Rajasthan Royals here.

The IPL did not specify the exact incident for which he was penalised but it is understood the Jamaican was penalised for throwing his bat away in disgust after getting out for 99 on Friday night. Gayle has admitted to the offence and accepted the sanction.

Requiring a run to complete his century, Gayle was cleaned up by a Jofra Archer yorker in KXIP's last over and reacting to his dismissal, he tried to hit his bat on the ground in frustration but the willow slipped from his hand and landed a few metres across the pitch. He smashed eight sixes and six fours on the way to becoming the first player to score 1000 maximums in T20 cricket. — PTI

SRH stay alive in play-off hunt

Sharjah, Oct. 31: Sunrisers Hyderabad defeated Royal Challengers Bangalore by five wickets to stay in the race for the IPL play-offs, here on Saturday.

Chasing 121, SRH reached the target in just 14.1 overs with Wriddhiman Saha (39), Jason Holder (26 not out) and Manish Pandey (26) guiding them home.

Opener Josh Philippe top-scored for RCB, making 32 runs while Sandeep Sharma and Holder took two wickets apiece for SRH.

Earlier, Sunrisers Hyderabad produced a brilliant bowling effort to restrict a batting-heavy Royal Challengers Bangalore to a modest 120 for seven.

SRH strangled RCB by picking up wickets at regular intervals after opting to bowl.

Young Devdutt Padikkal (5) and skipper Virat Kohli (7) departed in quick succession, falling to Sandeep (2/20). Sandeep has now dismissed Kohli seven times in IPL.

AB de Villiers made a run-a-ball 24 before perishing and then Josh Philippe (32) again got a start but failed to capitalise. He was caught by Manish Pandey off Rashid Khan (1/24) in

SCORECARD

Royal Challengers Bangalore: Josh Philippe c Pandey b Khan 32, Devdutt Padikkal b Sandeep 5, Virat Kohli c Williamson b Sandeep 7, AB de Villiers c Abhishek b Nadeem 24, Washington Sundar c and b Natarajan 21, Gurkeerat Singh Mann (not out) 15, Chris Morris c Warner b Holder 3, Isuru Udana c Williamson b Holder 0, Mohammed Siraj (not out) 2. Extras (b-1, lb-2, w-8) 11. **Total (for 7 wks, in 20 overs) 120.** **FoW:** 1-13, 2-28, 3-71, 4-76, 5-106, 6-113, 7-114. **Bowling:** Sandeep Sharma 4-0-20-2, Jason Holder 4-0-27-2, T Natarajan 4-0-11-1, Shahbaz Nadeem 4-0-35-1, Rashid Khan 4-0-24-1.

Sunrisers Hyderabad: D. Warner c Udana b Washington Sundar 8, W. Saha st de Villiers b Chahal 39, M. Pandey c Morris b Chahal 26, K. Williamson c Kohli b Udana 8, Abhishek Sharma c Gurkeerat Singh b Saini 8, J. Holder (not out) 26, Abdul Samad (not out) 0. Extras (w-6) 6. **Total (for 5 wks, in 14.1 overs) 121.** **FoW:** 1-10, 2-60, 3-82, 4-87, 5-114. **Bowling:** C. Morris 2-0-19-0, Washington Sundar 3-0-21-1, N. Saini 2-0-30-1, Mohammed Siraj 1-0-12-0, Y. Chahal 3.1-0-19-2, I. Udana 3-0-20-1.

the next over as RCB slumped to 76 for four in 11.4 overs.

— PTI

IPL POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
Mumbai Indians	13	9	4	0	18	+1.296
Royal Challengers Bangalore	13	7	6	0	14	-0.145
Delhi Capitals	13	7	6	0	14	-0.159
Sunrisers Hyderabad	13	6	7	0	12	+0.555
Kings XI Punjab	13	6	7	0	12	-0.133
Rajasthan Royals	13	6	7	0	12	-0.377
Kolkata Knight Riders	13	6	7	0	12	-0.467
Chennai Super Kings	13	5	8	0	10	-0.532

Tabulated as Played, Won, Lost, No Result, Points, Net Run Rate

Kings XI face CSK in do-or-die game

NUMBERS GAME

HEAD TO HEAD

OVERALL:
● Matches: 22
● Chennai: 13
● Punjab: 8
● Tied: 1 (Kings XI Punjab beat Chennai Super Kings in Super Overs after match ended in a tie)

MEETING IN 2019

● Chennai Super Kings defeated Kings XI Punjab by 22 runs in Chennai.
● Kings XI Punjab beat Chennai Super Kings by six wickets in Mohali

MEETING IN 2020

● Chennai Super Kings defeated Kings XI Punjab by 10 wickets in Dubai.

FOR THE RECORD

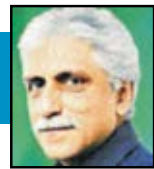
● Chris Gayle, who had smashed 84 sixes in 30 innings of as many matches, needs four sixes to become the highest sixer hitter for Kings XI Punjab.
● Ruturaj Gaikwad, who made 985 runs in 33 innings of as many matches, needs 15 runs to complete 1000 runs in Twenty-20 cricket.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

points from 13 outings with a net run rate of -0.133, will have a good chance of qualifying provided they win against CSK on Sunday.

— PTI

Proliferation of English players add more glitter to IPL



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

On Friday, a tweet by @englandcricket, the "official home of all of the England Cricket teams on Twitter", caught my attention. The tweet read, "Good luck to our lads in today's huge IPL game!" and accompanied a photograph of Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer in Rajasthan Royals colours.

Former England captain Kevin Pietersen (@kp24) retweeted this tweet with a pithy observation. "Just imagine, IMAGINE, this tweet 8/9 years ago...I'm so happy these guys are bene-

fitting positively from the IPL".

Pietersen, was derided for chasing mammon when he embraced the IPL with unbridled enthusiasm about a decade back, starting with Delhi Daredevils and later representing Royal Challengers Bangalore and Pune Rising Supergiants.

He was among the most highly paid overseas professionals in the league, and his public appreciation of the IPL did not sit too well with fellow players and critics back home.

English players were few in the IPL, one part because the second half of the league's season coincided with the start of their home season, but secondly also because of snobbery.

There are 10 top English players in IPL2020: Eoin Morgan, Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Jos Butler, Johnny Bairstow, Chris Jordan, Moeen Ali, Tom Banton, Jofra Archer, Ben Stokes.

Had Chris Woakes not pulled out at the last minute, it would have been 11 of the best white ball players from the country, a far cry from the times when Pietersen's participation in the IPL was seen so skeptically.

The mainstreaming of the IPL was, of course, not dependent on how many English cricketers played the league.

From inception, the best Australian, Kiwi, South African, West Indian, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi — and in the first couple of years even Pakistani — players were seen in action.

The proliferation of English players, however, makes the IPL's influence in the sport comprehensive.

Importantly, English players are now negotiating with their countries to give them larger 'windows' for playing in this league.

Just how significant and influential the IPL has become for players, member countries of the ICC is evident from how things have panned out in 2020, year of the Covid pandemic.

Just the other day I read a report about how Steve Smith has decided to skip

this year's Big Bash League because he did not fancy spending more time in the bio-secure bubble.

David Warner, the other Australian batting stalwart and pace ace Pat Cummins are similarly inclined. The mental toll that being in the bio-secure bubble is taking of players is becoming an important issue.

But it is pertinent to note that none of these players decided to miss the IPL, having been in the bio-secure bubble in England for bilateral ODI and T20 series before the league commenced in the UAE.

All three Aussies are high value acquisitions for their franchises. The lure and attraction of playing in the IPL, however, is not just the money though that undoubtedly plays a huge part.

It is also about rubbing shoulders and competing with the best players in the world and reaching out to the largest audience. In all three aspects — money, talent, audience — the IPL is several times larger than any other T20 league.

Size of the audience defines the revenues for the IPL. Since inception in 2008, these have been super normal, making not just the BCCI very rich, but consequently also helping make the coffers of other boards heftier.

This allowed the BCCI to leverage the IPL even against the ICC's T20 World Championship which was scheduled for October this year, and finally scrapped in August-September with host country Australia tilting in favour of the Indian league.

The pandemic disrupted the calendar for most sports. However, IPL2020 survived on demand from various stakeholders — players, boards, broadcasters — even if played six months later than usual.

Widely touted as the fifth or sixth most valued sports property in the world, the IPL has the potential to get into the top three if the huge audiences (TV only) for this season are anything to go by.

This will not come only by hosting the tournament, and milking profits though. The BCCI has to be proactive, perhaps add a few more teams (12-16 to allow for two groups), with a relegation/promotion system in place to make it more competitive, and thereby more compelling to watch.