

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 6 | DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 26°C
Min: 22°C
Rainfall: 20 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Karthigai 21
Tithi: Shashti
Star: Aayilyam/ Magam
Rahukalam:
4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.00 am
Zohar: 12.03 pm
Asar: 3.14 pm
Maghrib: 5.40 pm
Isha: 6.55 pm

All states accept Centre's borrowing plan for GST shortfall

New Delhi: Jharkhand has accepted the Centre's borrowing proposal and will get ₹1,689 crore through the special window to meet the GST revenue shortfall, the finance ministry said on Saturday. — PTI

COUNTER

POINT



Not long ago we used to live in the land of pure milk and honey!

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Pujara subjected to racism in UK



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Farmers ask for 'yes' or 'no' as Centre moots more talks

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 5

The government on Saturday proposed to hold another meeting on December 9 with representatives of protesting farmers as their fifth round of talks ended in a deadlock with the farmers' group going on a *maun vrat* (vow of silence) during the meeting, seeking a clear "yes or no" answer to their demand of repealing the three new farm laws. And, for the second time, farmers' leaders declined the Centre's offer of lunch and sat down on the floor to eat their packed food.

At the beginning of the meeting at Vigyan Bhawan, Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar told the group of farmer unions that the government is committed to cordial talks and welcomed all positive feedback on the new farm laws, sources said.

Later, minister of state for commerce Som Parkash, an MP from Punjab, addressed the leaders in Punjab and said the government understands the sentiments of Punjab. "We are ready to address all your concerns with an open mind," a source quoted Mr Parkash as telling the union leaders.

The government side also included railway, com-

UN says people have a right to protest peacefully

United Nations, Dec. 5: People have a right to demonstrate peacefully and authorities should let them do so, spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said on the farmers' protests in India.

"As to the question of India, what I would say to you is what I've said to others when raising these issues is that people have a right to demonstrate peacefully, and authorities need to let them do so," Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for the Secretary-General, said on Friday.

Mr Dujarric was responding to a question on the farmers' protest in India. —PTI

Trudeau speaks up again, but welcomes talks

Toronto, Dec. 5: The strong protest India has registered against his earlier comments on the farmers' agitation, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stuck to his decision to support the right of the farmers to protest peacefully. "Canada will always stand up for the right of peaceful protests anywhere around the world," Mr Trudeau said. "And we are pleased to see moves towards de-escalation and dialogue."

Asked if his comments would damage the relationship between the two countries, he said, "Canada will always stand up for the right of peaceful protests and human rights around the world." — Agencies

36 British MPs ask foreign secretary to intervene

London, Dec. 5: A group of 36 cross-party parliamentarians of United Kingdom has written to foreign secretary Dominic Raab asking him to make representations with his Indian counterpart, S. Jaishankar, about the impact on British Punjabis affected by the demonstrations by farmers against new agricultural reforms in India.

The letter, issued on Friday, has been drafted by British Sikh Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese and signed by other Indian-origin MPs including Labour's Virendra Sharma, Seema Malhotra and Valerie Vaz as well as former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. —PTI

The implicit question was, "Will the Centre scrap the farm laws?"

During Saturday's meeting, the farmers also threatened to walk out over "meaningless" discussions, but were persuaded to return to their seats.

■ Turn to P4

Haryana minister tests +ve after taking Covaxin

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD,
DEC. 5

Haryana health minister Anil Vij, who had received one shot of the two-dose trial of Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin a fortnight ago after he offered to be a volunteer, has tested positive for the coronavirus. Mr Vij, 67, had offered to be the first volunteer in the phase three trials for Covaxin, an indigenous potential vaccine being developed by Bharat Biotech against Covid-19. ■ P4

PM to launch work on new parliament building on Dec 10

New Delhi, Dec. 5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone on December 10 for a new parliament building and the construction is expected to be completed by 2022 at an estimated cost of Rs 971 crore, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Saturday. "Hopefully, in the 75th year of independence (2022), Parliament session will be held in the new building," he said. —PTI

■ Full report on P4

TN seeks ₹3,758 cr as Central relief

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

The Tamil Nadu government has asked the Centre to provide a financial assistance of ₹3,758 crore for relief and restoration work in the Cyclone Nivar-ravaged districts of the state.

The sum is the estimated loss to human lives in terms of compensation, property, cattle and installations and infrastructure of various government departments, including Tangedco and civic bodies, state revenue and disaster management minister R. B. Udayakumar said on Saturday.

This was conveyed to the visiting Central team when it held a meeting with senior officials at the secretariat here, the minister told reporters.

The state officials, following an instruction from the Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, briefed the team about the losses and sought immediate disbursement of ₹3,108 crore to take up the restoration work without delay.

"We have sought ₹650 crore as temporary relief and ₹3,108 crore for taking up relief and restoration work on a permanent basis," Mr Udayakumar said.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Edappadi K.

CM asks Chennai Corporation to feed 26 lakh slum dwellers

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has instructed the Chennai Corporation to provide cooked food to all slumdwellers in Chennai which comes to around 5.3 lakh families, covering 26 lakh individuals. Food will be made available to them from Sunday to December 13 to compensate for the loss of livelihood due to the flood as well as pandemic Covid-19.

A senior official of the Greater Chennai Corporation said that the civic body had made all arrangements to start the one-week food distribution programme from Sunday.

Palaniswami on Saturday deputed 11 ministers to visit cyclone Burevi affected districts to coordinate rescue and relief operations and also directed officials to do it on a war-footing.

The CM also announced a solatium of ₹10 lakh each to the families of seven people who died due to the cyclone, an official release said.

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SHORT TAKES

'India has history of bringing out successful vaccines'DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

The Indian society and health-care system have seen a sea of changes because of its extraordinary vaccine administering programme, said Prof. K. Vijayraghavan, principal scientific adviser, Government of India.

He was delivering a speech on science and technology and the 'new normal,' at 'Sangam 2020', a month-long virtual expo being conducted by the IIT-Madras Alumni Association.

"India has got an extraordinary history of successful vaccinations. The country conducted vaccinations for smallpox and other diseases. They were administered without much discussion. Today, the world has changed. Vaccines are administered to healthy people. Therefore, the demand for trials and safety are enormous. A vaccine that is administered has to be safe with an immune response. Therefore, all vaccines that are in late-phase trials are subjected to very stringent tests. Normally, vaccines take 10 years to develop but this (Covid-19 vaccine) has been done in a year."

'Sangam 2020', being held from December 1-6, also features a month-long virtual showcase of global innovations from startups.

National Institute of Siddha ties up with NIE for joint R&D, seminars

Chennai, Dec 5: The National Institute of Siddha here has signed an MoU with National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai, to take up joint Research & Development projects in clinical and health system, epidemiological studies and basic medical and allied sciences.

These projects would be funded by specific funding sources. The two institutes would also jointly conduct seminars, workshops, webinars, conferences, continuing education programmes (including Continuing Medical Education (CME)) and develop academic programmes in areas of mutual interest. Prof Dr R Meenakumari, Director, NIS and Dr Manoj Murhekar Director & Scientist-G, (NIE), signed the Memorandum of Understanding on December 4. Both the directors and their team of experts, scientists and doctors also discussed various collaborative works such as excellence in medical education and research. A release from NIS said that the two institutes, after considering their objectives and strengths, agreed to have an understanding for collaboration in the above areas. Further, they would promote exchange of students, PhD/post-doctoral scholars, and faculty for teaching/training programmes besides use laboratory and library facilities for institutional members and scholars, it said. —PTI

Woman accidentally falls into a septic tank, diesDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

A 24-year-old government employee died after she accidentally fell into a septic tank of a house in Kalakattur village in Kanchipuram district.

According to the police, the deceased has been identified as Saranya Shanmugam (24), a resident of Teacher's colony in Orikkai in Kanchi. Police added that she worked as a manager of a Government agricultural development Godown in Kalakattur village in the district.

Sources said that the government godown did not have toilet facility, while all the government establishments in the state should have at least one toilet each for men and women who visit the offices.

The incident happened on Saturday evening at around 5 pm, when Saranya due to the lack of toilet facility in the Godown, used the restroom in a house nearby. While walking back to the godown, she allegedly slipped into a septic tank with no cover. A few minutes later, other employees of the office found her unconscious inside the tank and rescued her. She was rushed to Kanchipuram government hospital. However, she was declared dead on arrival. Magaral police registered a case and began an investigation.



Passengers use newly installed face mask vending machine at Koyambedu bus terminus.

—DC

Plea to change fishing ban period in Tamil NaduDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

A fishing boat owners association has approached the Madras high court to direct the authorities to implement the fishing ban period in Tamil Nadu from October 15 to December 15 (62 days) instead of April 15 to June 14 (61 days) to coincide with the Monsoon Season in Tamil Nadu, by virtue of Section 5 (2) (b) of Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1983. Justice Pushpa Sathyanarayana before whom the petition filed by Chennai-Thiruvallur-Kancheepuram Districts Deep Sea Gillnet and Long Line Tuna Fishing Boat Owners Association represented by its president R.Varathan, came up for hearing, ordered notice, returnable by six weeks, to the Union and state governments, the Fishery Survey of India, the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, the Tamil Nadu Fishermen Welfare Board and the

Regional Meteorological Centre.

According to petitioner, the state government has imposed fishing ban in order to allow the fish to spawn and replenish its species. Justified as a means to reduce fishing effort and aid conservation, the annual fishing ban initially between April 15 and May 31 in the East coast of Tamil Nadu and initially between June 15 and July 30 in the West coast of Tamil Nadu, was designed in Tamil Nadu in 2001. The period has now been enhanced through the impugned order to 61 days between April 15 and June 15 in the East coast and between June 1 and July 31 in the West coast. This ban was only for motorized vessels and the non-motorized vessels have been exempted, he added. He said the officials have unilaterally assumed that monsoon season coincided with peak spawning periods of fishes, but unconsidered the fact that Tamil Nadu has different climatic conditions amongst the eastern coastal states. It was understood that the

Centre of Advanced Study in Marine Biology, Annamalai University, has found only 17 marine species spawning during the ban period. The peak spawning of commercially valuable Indian Oil Sardines was observed in July, immediately after the ban gets uplifted. Similarly, the Indian prawn, one amongst the highest commercial prawn species, spawns majorly in September. Overall there were 50 per cent higher chances for commercially valued species to breed in the northeast monsoon, he added.

He said the ban duration was in the summer season when the sea was calmest, making it idle for fishing. A common ban period was not appropriate for the entire East Coastal Region.

"We want our fish stock to replenish but ban timings are neither favouring us nor the fish breeding". Therefore, they sent representations to the authorities to change the fishing ban period. But there was no response, he added.

Election Commission quiz winners announcedDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

Winners of the quiz competition held by the Election Commission of India, as part of his Special Summary Revision of Electoral Roll, 2021, were announced by the Chief Electoral Officer on Saturday.

The winning teams, Anton Steven and Christie Therese (first prize), Anirudh and Arun Balaji (second prize) and Mohamed Riwin and Riswin (third prize), would be awarded the prizes in the State level National voters' day function to on January 25, 2021, an official press

release said.

The quiz competition was held to 'enhance the percentage of registration of eligible electors among the general public', the release said, adding that the State level Online Quiz was conducted by the Chief Electoral Officer of Tamil Nadu.

The competition consisting of three preliminary rounds was conducted on October 25 and 26, 2020. Totally 13602 number of people viewed the preliminary round of quiz contest from various parts of Tamil Nadu.

Among others, 36 persons cleared the first level and advanced to the second round, which was

conducted over five days (October 31, November 1, 7, 8 and 15), the release said.

The second round was conducted live on screen using Zoom link and all the rounds were streamed live on YouTube. Teams included father-son, husband-wife, mother-daughter, siblings, friends and relatives.

Four teams advanced to the final round which was held on December 5 at the video conference hall of public (Elections) department, Office of Chief Electoral Officer. The final round was also conducted through zoom meeting with the contestants.

Rains leave slum dwellers gaspingT. SUDHEESH I DC
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

The unrelenting rain lashing across Chennai city has become a double whammy for as many as 1,500 families living in the slums at G.M. Garden in Perambur.

Hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic that took away their livelihood, the life of thousands of inhabitants including children, women and elderly people turned upside down again with the recurring rainfall brought in by back-to-back cyclones destroying their valuables and properties.

Manikandan, an inhabitant and father of four girls, has been infected by flu, but is forced to stay inside a flooded tent. He said they were living in a nearby relief shelter for the last one week, and returned home a couple of days back after water receded from his dilapidated house. "I don't have a single penny in my hand. My children are starving. No cash to buy medicines. No support from the government as well. If the rain continues, the house will be flooded again. Now I can't either sit or lie inside the house, for the floor and walls are drenched, and furniture and other home appliances are damaged," he said.

Vinoth, another resident



The condition of KM Garden settlement on Saturday.

of K.M. Garden lived in a nearby school for a week after his house was flooded following cyclone Nivar. "My house is still under water though the corporation authorities carried out dewatering works. The area is again flooded by the drainage water and rainfall. Power supply remains inconsistent as the area is still under ankle deep water," said Vinoth, father of an

11-year-old girl.

It was in the wee hours of November 26 the cyclone Nivar passed over the city, forcing the slum-dwellers to move to relief centres. Though water was drained out by the authorities after a couple of days, the second cyclone, Burevi, has brought incessant rainfall to the city, resulting in the release of water from Chembarambakkom and

Poondi reservoirs that made life of slumdwellers miserable again.

Manishya, a class XI student, says she and her family were stuck inside the inundated house for three days without power supply and now water is at their doorstep. She could not attend online classes as her mobile phone battery ran out of power due to prolonged electricity outage.



MP minister Sarang has come down to Chennai to see for himself the work done by the state on the prevention of coronavirus spread and the measures taken during the floods, besides the functioning of the MGR Medical University.

—DC

Testing continues even in relief campsDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

Testing for coronavirus continued even at the 4,799 shelters opened to accommodate the people displaced by the flood situation in the state, brought about by the couple of Cyclones that caused heavy rains for the past two weeks.

Health minister C. Vijayabaskar, speaking to the media along with Madhya Pradesh health minister Vishwas Sarang in Chennai on Saturday, said 8,456 medical camps

and mobile hospitals with 435 medical teams were also organised during the floods.

He said Sarang had come down to Chennai to see for himself the work done by the state on the prevention of coronavirus spread and the measures taken during the floods, besides the functioning of the MGR Medical University.

Sarang lauded the government for the exemplary work done on all fronts. He said he visited the health centres and found that they did good service in

controlling the pandemic to a large extent.

He also found the MGR medical university to be functioning well, he said and congratulated the Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and health minister.

Vijayabaskar said that the Chief Minister had made an announcement on the vaccine for Covid-19, adding that the guidelines issued by the Centre would be followed in administering the vaccine, free of cost, to all.

Pocso: Schools official gets 5-year jail termDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, DEC. 5

The district fast track Mahila Court here on Friday convicted and sentenced a private school administrator to undergo five years imprisonment for sexually harassing a seven-year-old class-2 girl at the school.

According to the prosecution, the accused Mohamed Salim (57) of Alwarthope in the city, sexually harassed the girl on September 5, 2019.

Based on the girl's parents' complaint, Srirangam All women police arrested him under the Pocso Act, and filed a case against him before the Mahila court. Judge Vanitha convicted and sentenced the accused to undergo five years imprisonment, and also slapped a fine of ₹1,000 on him.

According to the prosecution, the accused Mohamed Salim (57) of Alwarthope in the city, sexually harassed the girl on September 5, 2019

What has PMK stir done to Vanniyars?

G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

Whether there is any justification or not in PMK founder Dr S. Ramadoss suddenly reviving his old demand for 20 per cent exclusive reservation for Vanniyars in educational institutions and government jobs, the way the latest protest kicked off has not done any good to the community. In fact many individuals in the community, irrespective of political affiliation, have privately confided that the stopping of the train at Perungulathur on the first day of the agitation has put them on the back foot in social interactions with peers in their normal life.

One of the reasons for

the community to be suddenly being seen as one with a proclivity to violence was the manner in which the video clips of the incident at Perungulathur went viral on social media. There were too many videos doing the rounds, showing the train being stopped by the protestors who had trespassed into railway property. Then, the images are very clear on the stoning of the train. Also the identity of the men on the rampage is unambiguous as the twin flags used by the PMK and Vanniyar Sangam activists in meetings and rallies are being proudly waved by them.

One is the flag in blue,

yellow and red bands that represents the PMK and the other is plain yellow emblazoned with the Vanniyar's symbol 'fire pot' - the tattoo of which PMK youth wing leader Dr Anbumani Ramadoss once revealed proudly in a photograph. The videos were shared repeated on social media that many people had already seen it when Dr Anbumani Ramadoss lost his cool the mediapersons for raising questions on the violent incident.

Even if the police had not taken any action - even in the video the police are only chasing them away - people are angry. Unlike the 1987 agitation, then called by the Vanniyar Sangam under the leadership of Dr Ramadoss, vignettes from the field reached the handsets of the common people within seconds. It is a different matter that someone said that the videos were captured by only some protestors and shared with friends and

relatives.

In 1987, though the level of violence was at a much higher plane, involving cutting of trees, laying the trunks across the highways and paralyzing vehicular movement across several districts in northern Tamil Nadu, the images of the havoc took time to reach the people, mostly the next morning through the newspapers in black and white.

So when Dr Anbumani Ramadoss refused to take questions on the violence from the media, accusing them of being prejudiced, the people had seen the pictures themselves. And the image of the entire Vanniyar community had taken a beating among the people. Though, going by the videos, only some men were responsible for the violence, many of them were just waving flags or watching over, the blame fell on the entire community.

Indeed not everyone in the Vanniyar community

was in favour of the protest called by Dr Ramadoss, despite the fact that everyone would benefit if the government accedes to his demand, and definitely most of them were against violence. Yet they had to take collective responsibility for the unsavoury incident.

More than that, in the run up to the launch of the protest, Dr Ramadoss, while sounding the bugle for the war, had frightened the people in general. His call to the followers to ensure that the government bowed to its might did had a sinister glow to it. Most people who had been witness to the 1987 agitation were really scared. For apart from the damages caused to public property then, the PMK had been regularly accused in the media of indulging in violence at various points of time, including the Marakkanam incident of 2013 and the setting up of

houses at Natham village in Dharmapuri district in 2012.

Then of course, rose a band of naysayers, opposing reservation itself. They cocked a snook at the very idea for which Dr Ramadoss had called the agitation. It gave the opponents of social justice an opportunity to run down all those communities that enjoyed benefits from reservation, particularly Vanniyars since they were demanding a large chunk of the cake. Even that was a cause for snide remarks aimed at the Vanniyars who were not even part of the agitation.

Political workers belonging to parties other than the PMK expressed the fear that it might turn out to be a tough task canvassing votes for Vanniyar candidates from people of other castes. Their apprehension is that every Vanniyar would be seen with suspicion by the people in the local heterogeneous communities.

Also some people dread the prospect of Vanniyar youth being blacklisted by private recruiters. For, they say, even if the government gives in to the demand due to the agitation, the reservation would be only for jobs in government and government run organisations. As everyone knows, jobs are shrinking in the government sector and it is the private sector that offers more employment opportunities nowadays.

The PMK may accuse the mainstream media of being biased against the community. There is even a campaign by the party describing such 'negative stereotyping' and 'prejudice' as the first step to genocide. But public perception in the digital age is shaped more by social media, which is unfavourably tilted against the PMK's protest, irrespective of how the mainstream media interprets it.

SHORT TAKES

Man dies in wall collapse

Tiruchy: A 75-year-old man was killed on the spot when a portion of a wet wall of his house collapsed on him at Tennur in the city on Friday night, due to continuous rain. Police identified the deceased as Mani, a watchman in a private firm. He was rushed to the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial government hospital here, where he died in the wee hours of Saturday, police added.

Two TNEB workes electrocuted near Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

A Tangedco wireman and EB contract worker were electrocuted when they reportedly went to attend to a fault in Injambakkam in Kancheepuram district on Saturday.

The deceased has been identified as S. Bagyanathan, 48, a resident of Paruthikulam village in Kanchi and K. Dayalan, 42, a resident of Injambakkam village. Bagyanathan was a Tangedco wireman while Dayalan was a contract worker.

According to police, Tangedco officials received information about a snapped overhead cable in Injambakkam village in Kancheepuram district.

Based on the information, Bagyanathan and Dayalan, 42 went to attend to the fault. The incident happened around 3 am, when the duo was walking on a field in the village, they allegedly stepped on a snapped wire and got electrocuted, the police said.

Since Dayalan did not return home for a long time, his brother Gopi went to check on him and found the two lying dead in the fields. He informed the Baluchetty Chatram police about the incident. The bodies were sent to the hospital for post-mortem examinations. A Case has been registered by the police.

Chennai customs seizes gold and foreign currencies

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

The Air Customs at the Chennai Airport seized 1.62 kg gold worth ₹ 81.4 lakhs & 7500 Euros worth Rs. 6.6 lakhs , here on Saturday and arrested a smuggler.

According to a press statement from the Commissioner of Customs , on Saturday Zahir Hussain (40) of Chennai, who was destined for Dubai by Indigo Flight 6E-65 was intercepted at the departure terminal while he was proceeding to the security hold area on suspicion of carrying foreign currency.

On examination of his back pack , 7500 Euros in denomination of 50 valued at ₹6.6 lakh were recovered from hand baggage and same seized under Customs Act, 1962 read with the Foreign Exchange Management (Export and Import of currency) (Amendment) Regulations, 2015 as he had not declared the same.

On the same day, five separate cases of gold smuggling were also detected from flights arriving from Dubai. Three passengers Mohamed Idrish(25) of Tiruchirappalli, Mohamed Irfan(36) and Liyakath Ali (36) both of Ramanathapuram arrived by FlyDubai Flight FZ 8517 were intercepted at exit.

On personal search 7 bundles of gold paste weighing 1.52 kg were recovered from their rectum. On extraction 1.33 kg of gold of 24k purity valued at ₹67.1 lakh was recovered and seized under Customs.Mohamed Idrish was arrested by the department.

In another case,Two passengers, Abubackar Sithik (21) of Chennai and Syed Abuthahir (21) of Ramanathapuram who arrived by Air India Express Flight IX-1644 were intercepted at exit.

On personal search four gold paste strips two from each, weighing 341 grams , were found ingeniously stitched in the bottom part of jeans . On extraction 285 grams of gold of 24K purity valued at ₹14.34 lakhs was recovered and seized under Customs Act.

In Total , the seized gold and currencies were valued at ₹88 lakhs.

On personal search 7 bundles of gold paste weighing 1.52 kg were recovered from their rectum. On extraction 1.33 kg of gold of 24k purity valued at ₹67.1 lakh was recovered and seized under Customs.Mohamed Idrish was arrested by the department.

-----Maiam women task force set up-----

Kamal backs Anna varsity VC Surappa

Chennai, Dec. 5: Makkal Needhi Maiam founder Kamal Haasan on Saturday announced setting up a 'Maiam women's task force,' as part of his party's efforts to ensure equality and more role for them in various activities. This was an attempt at ensuring the subject of women's equality was not a mere talk but give them better role in the party's affairs, Kamal said in a statement here. "Towards that, a new Maiam Women's Task Force is



being formed," he said. Women office-bearers and those belonging to fami-

lies of party functionaries can join the initiative to take forward various activities, he said.

"Those not connected to the party, but interested in public welfare and that of Tamil Nadu will work along," he said.

The task force will primarily focus on general welfare across the state and involving women interested in alternative politics in the party's activities among others, he added. Meanwhile, the actor-politician extended

his support to beleaguered Anna University Vice-Chancellor MK Surappa, facing government inquiry over allegations of corruption and irregularities in the premier technical university here. He alleged Surappa was being targeted for being 'honest' and said "when one is hunted down for his honesty, I won't be a mere spectator." The Makkal Needhi Maiam won't keep quiet," he said in a video message.

— PTI

Mutharaiyar committee thanks PM, CM

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, DEC. 5

The Mutharaiyar Joint Action Committee (MJAC) thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for including one crore Mutharaiyar community people in the aboriginal tribes list, said MJAC coordinator, Dr S Panneerselvam.

Addressing a press conference here on Saturday after the MJAC meet, Dr S. Panneerselvam said a resolution to this effect was adopted at the meeting. The meeting also thanked the chief minister for his announcement that a separate commission will be established for collecting caste-based census and other details.

He said the meeting wanted political parties to at least provide 33 candidatures from the Mutharaiyar community in the forthcoming assembly elections, as the community members represent 15 percent of the state's population.

He said the meeting wanted that the existing reservation for scheduled castes and tribes in the assembly, Lok Sabha segments and in the local bodies be made only one time, and the same to be rotated for the same to ensure such rights to the Backward Class community people also.

He said the meeting wanted the government to ensure cent percent reservation for all communities as in the case of pre-independence, and to give representation for Mutharaiyars for the post of Rajya Sabha nominations, high court judges and chairman, public service commissions.

The meeting also thanked the chief minister for his announcement that a separate commission will be established for collecting caste-based census and other details

Pondy against privatising power distribution: CM

Puducherry Dec. 5: Chief Minister V Narayanasamy on Saturday said the territorial government was against the Centre's move to privatise power distribution.

"The Centre's current proposal to privatise power distribution in Puducherry is not acceptable. We will move the court to prevent the Centre from going ahead with its move," he told reporters here.

He said he had received a letter a few days back from the Centre urging the territorial government to privatise power distribution.

"I have made it clear already both inside and outside the territorial Assembly that power dis-

tribution here will never be opened up for private players," he said.

Puducherry does not have an Electricity Board and distribution of power has been done traditionally through a department. The power sector is not suffering any loss. Hence, there is no room for any move to privatise power distribution here, the Chief Minister said.

He appealed to the electricity department staff, who have been on a relay strike since Friday opposing the Centre's decision, to withdraw their agitation as the territorial government was on their side.

He said the strike would put the consumers to hardship as there have already been complaints of power cuts in the wake

of the rains.

Therefore, he said, the protestors should drop their stir and attend to restoration of power supply. "The territorial government will stand in solidarity with the employees and we are ready to join hands with them even through a court case to prevent the privatisation of power sector," Narayanasamy said.

The Chief Minister flayed Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi over the free rice scheme, blaming her for preventing implementation of welfare schemes. The Lieutenant Governor takes the stand that only cash equivalent to the quantum of rice should be deposited in the bank accounts of beneficiaries under DBT system.

—PTI

‘Sugar cards’ can be converted to ‘rice cards’

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami ordered that those holding 'sugar option family card' would be permitted to change it to 'rice option family card and that they should make an application for that before December 20.

Hitherto, it was not possible to change the type of ration cards that came broadly under three categories. One with no rations, second with sugar option and third with rice option.

An official press release said on Saturday that 5,80,298 families were holding sugar cards and many of them wanted to

convert it into rice cards. Hence they had been given the option to do it.

The application can be made at www.tnmps.gov.in or to the regional commissioner or deputy commissioner concerned. The applications would be reviewed and a decision be taken on it, the release said.

Criticised Rajinikanth out of ignorance: Tamaruvi Manian

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

Tamaruvi Manian, one of the two leaders who would be running the new political party to be launched by actor Rajinikanth in 2021, confessed to have criticized the actor without knowing the facts about him.

Replying to questions from the media on his being a virulent critic of Rajinikanth at one point of time, Tamaruvi Manian, who runs an independent party in the

Distinguishing between communal politics and spiritual politics, Tamaruvi Manian, who held discussions with Rajinikanth along with Arjunamurthy Ra at the actor's Poes Garden residence, told the waiting media that it was Mahatma Gandhi who first spoke about spiritual politics

name of Gandhi, said that his remarks then were based on what he saw in the actor from a distance.

Now that he had come closer and he had under-

stood him better, he said. Earlier he lacked the present understanding, he clarified.

Distinguishing between communal politics and spiritual politics, Tamaruvi Manian, who held discussions with Rajinikanth along with Arjunamurthy Ra at the actor's Poes Garden residence, told the waiting media that it was Mahatma Gandhi who first spoke about spiritual politics.

He said his party, Gandhi Makkal Iyakkam, would



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam and their cabinet colleagues pay floral tribute to late Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa on her fourth death anniversary in Chennai on Saturday. —DC

Jaya's fourth anniversary observed

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 5

The fourth death anniversary of former Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa was observed all over the state by her followers and well-wishers, most of them paying floral tributes to her portrait kept at public places and many other through remembrances on social media.

The ruling party that she left with an overwhelming mandate to rule

the State, led by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O

Panneerselvam, vowed to ensure that AIADMK rule continued for another 100 years.

The top leaders took a pledge to lead the party into a third time victory in the 2021 elections to the state Assembly while assembling to pay their respects to their leader at her resting place inside the MGR samadhi on the

Marina sands.

As a sign of mourning the leaders were dressed in black shirts.

Later in the evening they lighted candles at their homes or offices in front of her portrait individually.

The AIADMK's alliance partner, the BJP, also remembered her. A group of state BJP functionaries, led by the state vice president V. P. Duraisamy, visited the memorial and paid floral tributes.



DMK president M.K. Stalin waves black flag in support of farmers protest at Salem on Saturday. — DC

DMK urges PM to hold talks with agitating farmers

Salem, Dec. 5: Extending support to farmers protesting outside Delhi against Centre's three contentious farm laws, the DMK on Saturday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to hold talks with them and demanded withdrawing the legislations.

DMK president M. K. Stalin and senior party leaders staged protests in different parts of the state, extending support to the farmers, mostly from Punjab, who have been agitating for nearly 10 days outside the national capital.

Stalin, leader of Opposition in Assembly, led a well-attended protest demonstration here, which happens to be the native district of Chief Minister K Palaniswami.

In his address, Stalin said the farmers were protesting against the laws on issues including lack of assurance on minimum support price (MSP) and the "corporates enjoying the freedom to decide to whom the produce should be sold and at what rate."

"In the name of doing away with agents, these laws are enslaving farmers to big traders, firms owning large godowns and multi-national exporters," Stalin said.

He wondered if the laws would allow continuance of, among others, direct

procurement centres and distribution of essential commodities through fair price shops.

Stalin asked what was the 'haste' in passing the laws during the COVID-19 pandemic and raised a number of questions such as whether the laws had provisions for waiver of farm loans, fertiliser subsidy and minimum employment guarantee for farm labourers. "None of these. That is why the farmers are opposing these and so are we," he said.

The BJP should immediately convene Parliament and repeal the laws. "Till then, the DMK will stand by this protest," Stalin said.

He also took a swipe at Chief Minister K Palaniswami for supporting the Central laws and demanded that the state Assembly adopt a resolution against them. By doing it, Palaniswami will get "forgiveness," Stalin said.

Taking on Palaniswami for the chief minister's recent attacks on the DMK on 2G spectrum allocation scam, Stalin alleged the former was doing so since "we are exposing corruption" against him.

"He is raking up the 2G spectrum allocation scam (against DMK MPs Kanimozhi and A Raja) to conceal his corruption," Stalin alleged.

—PTI

1,366 new cases,15 fatalities in TN

Chennai, Dec. 5: Tamil Nadu on Saturday reported 1,366 new Covid-19 cases, taking the overall infection count to 7,88,920, while 15 more fatalities pushed the death toll to 11,777.

As many as 1,407 people were discharged from healthcare facilities after getting cured, taking the aggregate to 7,66,261, a health department bulletin said.

The number of active cases stood at 10,882. Two

districts, including the State capital, logged cases in triple digits with Chennai adding 353 and Coimbatore 137, while the rest were scattered across other districts.

Chennai continued to top the list of cases with 2,17,204 infections out of more than 7.88 lakh in the state.

The state capital also topped in the number of fatalities, accounting for 3,871 of the total.

IN BRIEF

MUKUL ROY
CHARGESHEETED
IN MURDER CASERAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
with agency inputs
KOLKATA, DEC. 5

In a major blow to the BJP, it's national vice president Mukul Roy, also a key strategist of the party for the next year's Assembly Election in West Bengal, was chargesheeted by the criminal investigation department (CID) of the state police on Saturday in the murder of Trinamul Congress MLA of Krishnaganj Satyajit Biswas in Nadia in February last year.

Mr Roy has been booked under sections 302 (murder) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code in a supplementary chargesheet filed by the CID before the additional chief judicial magistrate at Ranaghat Court in Nadia in the high profile case which saw Biswas being shot dead from point blank range at a Saraswati Puja mandap near his residence.

The senior BJP leader's name was not in the last two chargesheets in the same case however.

Alleging political vendetta by chief minister Mamata Banerjee, also the home minister, he wondered, "It can happen, why not? Afterall who is the CM? Who is adding the names in the chargesheet? Who is the minister of the department concerned? Doesn't she know who are the accused in the case? So it is hilarious if I am chargesheeted on her instructions."

Mr Roy is planning to move the Calcutta High Court to appeal to quash the chargesheet against him.

He is one of the five accused, named in the FIR, and also faced questioning by the state detective agency. In May last year, three accused including assailant Abhijit Pundari were chargesheeted by the CID after their arrest. But Mr Roy was spared.

In September Ranaghat BJP MP Jagannath Sarkar, who also faced the CID's grilling during a probe in the same case, was slapped with IPC sections 302 and 120B in a supplementary chargesheet filed by the CID before the court for his alleged role in the conspiracy.

SPICEJET PLANE
UNDERSHOOTS
RUNWAY

New Delhi, Dec 5: A SpiceJet plane undershot the runway while landing at the Guwahati airport on Friday, but no one was hurt in the incident, senior DGCA officials said.

Aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation has grounded the two SpiceJet pilots who were operating the SG960 Bengaluru-Guwahati flight, they said on Saturday.

"They (pilots) have been off-rostered. It (matter) is under investigation," one of the officials said.

Officials said that while the plane landed before the designated point on the runway, none of the passengers were affected. "However, some of the runway lights were damaged while landing the SG960 Bengaluru-Guwahati flight," an official said.

SpiceJet did not respond to PTI's queries on this matter. It was not clear how many passengers were on board the plane when the incident occurred. The SpiceJet plane, which has registration number VT-SLL, is fit for flying and has conducted multiple flights post the runway incident, the officials said.

HUBBY SEEKS
MAINTENANCE
FROM WIFE

Thane, Dec 5: A man from Bhiwandi in Thane district of Maharashtra has been booked for allegedly harassing his wife for delivering a baby girl and demanding ₹30,000 as "maintenance" from her parents for the child, police said on Saturday.

Besides the man, his parents were also booked under section 498A (Husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), an official said.

The woman (21) was harassed by the accused, identified as Dilshad Gaba Momin, Sonu Gaba Momin and Naushad Momin, for delivering a baby girl and was asked to bring ₹30,000 from her parents towards "maintenance" of the child, the official said quoting the complaint.

Police are yet to make any arrest in the case.



A model of the proposed new Parliament building in New Delhi on Saturday.

PM to lay foundation stone
for Parl building on Dec 10

LS speaker says as many as 1,224 MPs can sit together in the building

New Delhi, Dec 5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone on December 10 for a new Parliament building and the construction is expected to be completed by 2022 at an estimated cost of ₹971 crore, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Saturday.

"The existing temple of democracy is completing 100 years... It is a matter of pride for our countrymen that the new one will be built by our own people as a prime example of Aatmanirbhar Bharat," Birla said here announcing details of the new proposed building.

"The new building will showcase the cultural diversity of the country. Hopefully, in the 75th year of independence (2022), Parliament session will be held in the new building," he said.

Birla said the new building will be earthquake resistant and 2,000 people will be directly involved in the construction of the new building and 9,000 indirectly.

He said as many as 1,224

MPs can sit together in the building, while a new office complex for all MPs of both the houses would be built at the site of the existing Shram Shakti Bhawan.

The existing Parliament building will be conserved as it is an archaeological asset of the country, Birla said.

The existing building is a British era building, designed by Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker who were responsible for planning and construction of New Delhi.

The Foundation Stone of the existing Parliament House was laid on February 12, 1921 and the construction took six years and cost ₹83 lakh at that time. The opening ceremony was performed on January 18, 1927 by the then Governor-General of India, Lord Irwin.

The new building will have an area of 64,500 square metres and is being built at an estimated cost of ₹971 crore, Birla said.

He said the outlook of the new building will be similar to the existing one.

● **THE EXISTING** Parliament building will be conserved as it is an archaeological asset of the country, Lok Sabha speaker said.

● **THE EXISTING** building is a British era building, designed by Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker who were responsible for planning and construction of New Delhi.

● **THE NEW** building will have an area of 64,500 square metres and is being built at an estimated cost of ₹971 crore

"There will be a basement, ground, first and second floors in the new building and its height will be same as the old building so that both are in symmetry," he said.

The Lok Sabha Speaker said the invitation will be extended to all political parties. While some would attend physically and others would attend virtually, Birla said, while adding

that the ground laying ceremony at 1 pm on December 10 would follow all Covid-related guidelines.

As per rules, the speaker of the lower house of parliament is also the custodian of the parliament building.

Sufficient steps have been taken to control air and noise pollution during the construction work for the new parliament building, which will have separate offices for all MPs and those will be equipped with the latest digital interfaces as a step towards creating 'paperless offices'.

The new building will also have a grand Constitution Hall to showcase India's democratic heritage, a lounge for members of Parliament, a library, multiple committee rooms, dining areas and ample parking space.

In the new building, the Lok Sabha chamber will have a seating capacity for 888 members, while Rajya Sabha will have 384 seats for the upper house members.

This has been done keeping in mind the future increase in the number of members for the two houses.

At present, Lok Sabha has a sanctioned strength of 543 members and Rajya Sabha of 245.

In September this year, Tata Projects Limited won the bid to construct the new parliament building at a cost of ₹861.90 crore. The new building will be constructed close to the existing one under the Central Vista redevelopment project.

The existing Parliament House building will be suitably retro-fitted to provide more functional spaces for parliamentary events, to ensure its usage along with the new building.

The existing building is a massive circular edifice of 560 feet in diameter. The Parliament House Estate is enclosed by an ornamental red sandstone wall or iron grills with iron gates that can be closed when occasions demand. The building has twelve gates.

- PTI

Hindus will be
beaten up if they
visit church: VHPMANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, DEC. 5

In what is said to be in retaliation of alleged closure of a Hindu temple in Meghalaya, the right wing group Vishwa Hindu Parishad has warned Hindus against visiting churches during Christmas in Assam's Barrak Valley.

In a viral video Mithu Nath, the general secretary of Cachar district unit of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, declared himself "outraged" by the alleged shut down of the Vivekananda Centre (part of the Ramakrishna Mission) in Christian-majority Meghalaya state capital Shillong, and said that Hindus would "not be allowed" to attend Christmas Day programmes and festivities.

"If Hindus go and visit Churches on Christmas Day, they will get brutally beaten," warned Mr Nath in his speech amidst the slogan of "Jai Shri Ram" by his supporters. He added, "They are locking temples in Shillong and we are going and celebrating Christmas with them. This cannot happen, we will not allow this to happen."

"If we do so (assault by Hindus) I know the headlines in newspapers the

next day - 'Gunda Dal' has vandalised Oriental school.. but that is not our priority. We will not allow Hindus in programmes during Christmas when they are locking gates of temples in Shillong," he said.

Addressing a crowd of around 70 people dressed in saffron and shouting 'Jai Shri Ram' repeatedly Mr Nath also said, "We accept this", referring to claims the media twists the right-wing outfit's name.

However, Mr Nath's claim - that the Khasi Student Union had shut down a temple - has been denied by authorities of the Meghalaya government, who said it was the Cultural Centre (where students are taught advanced computer courses) whose gates had been closed - not locked - because of a district holiday. No temple of the Ramakrishna Mission has been shut, the official added.

Although the Christian population in the north-eastern state's Cachar district is relatively small, the Christmas is traditionally celebrated by the Oriental School at Ambikapaty near Silchar. People from various religions gather every year.

GUJARAT HC JUDGE DIES OF CARDIAC
ARREST DURING COVID TREATMENT

Ahmedabad, Dec 5: A sitting judge of the Gujarat High Court died following a cardiac arrest on Saturday while undergoing treatment for coronavirus at a private hospital here, a doctor said.

Justice G R Udhwani (59), who had tested Covid-19 positive on November 19, died at SAL Hospital due to complications arising out of the infection, the doctor said.

He died in the morning, days after he was admitted

to the hospital on November 22 in a critical condition, Dr Divyang Dalwadi, a critical care expert of the hospital, said. "He was admitted to the hospital with severe lung infection. He was also suffering from hypothyroidism," the doctor said.

In his career spanning over three decades, Justice Udhwani had also served as an additional judge of special POT court in 2003.

- PTI

Protestors ask
for firm answer

From Page 1

Sources said the government then sought some time from the unions to present a concrete proposal after further consultations within the government and proposed another meeting on December 9 next week.

That will be the sixth round of talks between the government and representatives of farmers, thousands of whom are protesting at various borders of the national capital against what they claim are the laws meant to end the mandi system and minimum support price procurement system to give for benefits of corporates.

According to a PTI report, at the meeting the government managed to convince the farmers' representatives to continue with the talks. Sources added that some kind of division emerged among the participating farmer leaders on various issues proposed by the ministers. Later in the evening, the ministers began talking to

smaller groups of three-four farmers' leaders out of the total 40 representatives present there.

After the meeting Union agriculture minister Tomar said that a new proposal would be placed before the farmers after discussions within the government.

"Today different issues were discussed. We wanted a fair solution but it couldn't happen during today's talks. There will be another meeting on December 9. We have told the farmers that the government will discuss all issues. We will try to find a solution," Mr Tomar said.

"If we would have got some solutions from the farmer leaders it would have been easier. We will still wait for that," he added. Mr Tomar also urged farmer leaders to send their elderly and children — many of whom are among thousands camped out around the national capital in protest — back home citing winter and the Covid pandemic.

HARYANA MINISTER TESTS POSITIVE
FOR COVID AFTER TAKING COVAXIN

Frpm page 1

He was administered the dose on November 20 at the Civil Hospital in Ambala Cantonment, about 50 km from Chandigarh.

"I have been tested Corona positive. I am admitted in Civil Hospital Ambala Cantt. All those who have come in close contact to me are advised to get themselves tested for corona (sic)," Mr Vij, who is also the state's home minister, tweeted on Saturday.

Bharat Biotech took to Twitter on Saturday to allay concerns over the efficacy of the vaccine,

saying clinical trials are based on a two-dose schedule, given 28 days apart. The vaccine efficacy will be determined 14 days after the second dose, it said.

Bharat Biotech also said it is a double blinded trial in phase 3 where 50 per cent will receive the vaccine and 50 per cent will receive a placebo.

Though it is not yet known whether Mr Vij received the vaccine or placebo, the Hyderabad-based company has the data and any issue will be reported to the ethics committee of CDSCO-DCGI data safety monitoring board.

FARMERS BRING
THEIR OWN
FOOD, TEA AT
GOVT MEETINGNew Delhi, Dec 5:
Meeting the government for the fifth time on Saturday with their demands for scrapping the three new farm laws, union leaders decided to have their own tea and food, ferried from their langar (community kitchen) at Singhu border, where thousands of farmers are protesting for over a week.

The fifth round of talks began at 2.30 pm and was attended by 40 representatives of various farmer organisations.

Union leaders said they had their own food and tea during a break, rather than having what was arranged by the government at Vigyan Bhawan, the meeting venue.

During their last meeting on Thursday also, the farmer leaders had their own lunch, tea and even water.

Farmers' leaders had earlier on Thursday told the government to focus on resolving the issues instead of trying to be a good host by offering lunch.

Thousands of farmers have been camping at various borders of the national capital as part of their protest against the laws.

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Railways, Commerce and Food Minister Piyush Goyal and Minister of State for Commerce

Som Parkash, who is an MP from Punjab, are holding talks with the representatives of the farmer groups at the Vigyan Bhawan. The laws have been presented by the government as major reforms in the agriculture sector by removing middlemen and allowing farmers to sell anywhere in the country. - PTI

Support for agitation by farmers
grows, MP farmers leave for DelhiRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, DEC 5

Farmers from various districts in Madhya Pradesh on Saturday started for Delhi to join the ongoing stir in the national capital demanding scrapping of the three farm laws passed in the parliament recently.

Small groups of farmers took out rallies in Shivpuri, Dewas, Gwalior, Mandsaur and Raisen in protest against the farm bills and then left for the national capital in trucks to join the ongoing agitation.

In Dewas, around 40 farmers marched to the local district collector's office and submitted a memorandum to deputy collector demanding scrapping of the farm laws.

In Mandsaur, the local 'Kissan Sabha' staged a demonstration in protest against the farm laws and threatened to intensify the agitation if the Centre did heed to their demand.

Ruling BJP here, however, claimed that the call by some farmers' bodies to oppose the farm laws have no impact in Madhya Pradesh.

"No recognized farmers' bodies in MP have so far joined the stir. Only some local leaders have been trying to provoke the farmers to join the agitation. But, they have failed", BJP spokesman here Rajneesh Agrawal said.

Mr Agrawal said no farmer has joined the stir and only middlemen in the agriculture sector are opposed to the farm laws because they are well aware that the laws will eliminate their role in the market and ensure fair price to the farmers of their produce. Farmers in MP are happy with the Shivraj government for its pro-farmer policies, he



Fumigation drive being carried out at Ghazipur border amid the coronavirus pandemic, during farmers' 'Delhi Chalo' protest march against the new farm law in New Delhi on Saturday.

- PTI

RSS-AFFILIATE BKS SUGGESTS 4
AMENDMENTS TO NEW FARM LAWS

Jodhpur, Dec 5: RSS-affiliate Bharatiya Kisan Sangh proposed on Friday four amendments to the three contentious central farm laws to make it "farmer-friendly" and address the apprehensions that have led to protests.

"Instead of scrapping the new laws as some organisations have been demanding, we propose four amendments in these legislations," BKS general secretary Badri Narayan Chaudhary said, adding that it would be enough to address the apprehensions.

The amendments are that there should be no purchasing below the MSP in the wholesale markets or outside, registration of all traders on a government portal that

can be accessed by all, payment to the farmers in a stipulated time through bank guarantee and setting up of the agriculture tribunals for resolution of farmers' disputes in their hometown itself.

The BKS welcomed the new laws that it said was a "long-pending demand". Chaudhary said the outfit had been pushing for 'one nation-one market' since long.

The BKS leader said the wholesale markets were introduced with the welfare of farmers in mind and it helped them a lot. "But gradually, it became a means of exploitation of farmers," he said, adding that many organisations had been demanding rectification in the system for a long time.

- PTI

SHORT TAKES

MINE MISHAP:
NICARAGUANS
SEARCH MINERS

Managua, Dec. 5: An unregulated gold mine collapsed Friday in southern Nicaragua near the border with Costa Rica, leaving about 10 wildcat miners missing.

Vice President Rosario Murillo said firefighters and rescue personnel were being sent to the scene in the hamlet of La Esperanza.

Murillo did not specify how many people were trapped, but local media put the number at 10 to 15. They reported that one injured miner was able to escape and report the collapse. President Daniel Ortega said that “we hope we don’t have major tragedies” at the mine.

HIGH CARBON
MONOXIDE LEVEL
KILLS 18 MINERS

Beijing, Dec. 5: Eighteen of the 23 workers were killed in a coal mine in China due to an excessive level of carbon monoxide, local officials said on Saturday.

The accident happened at around 5 pm on Friday at the Diaoshuidong coal mine in the district of Yongchuan in Chongqing Municipality, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Eighteen miners were confirmed dead due to excessive level of carbon monoxide, it said. Rescuers, including police officers and firefighters, are trying to reach the trapped miners.

The cause of the accident is under further investigation, the report said. The Diaoshuidong coal mine, which was established in 1975 and became privately-owned in 1998, has an annual production capacity of 120,000 tonnes of coal, according to the local emergency management department.

Hydrogen sulfide poisoning in the mine left three dead and two injured in March 2013, Xinhua report said.

CRIME VICTIM
CHASES, SHOTS
MAN IN FLORIDA

Miami, Dec. 5: A man who says he was the victim of a burglary attempt chased a man down a South Florida street and shot and wounded him with an assault-style rifle as he begged for his life, authorities said.

Corthoris Jenkins, 28, was charged with attempted first-degree murder with a firearm, court documents showed Friday. Jenkins told investigators he was playing video games when a man burst into his Miami-area apartment on Tuesday, the Miami Herald reported.

Instead of calling 911, Jenkins grabbed the rifle and ran after the man, who fell to his knees in the street, a police detective said in court. “He begins to what appears to be to beg for his life,” Miami-Dade Detective Iry Watson told a judge on Wednesday afternoon. “But the defendant takes the assault rifle and shoots him multiple times.”

Authorities said the man who was shot remained hospitalised on Friday, and detectives have not yet been able to talk to him.

2 TRUMP ALLIES
APPOINTED BY
PENTAGON

Washington, Dec. 5: The Pentagon has appointed two close allies of President Donald Trump to a defence advisory board, continuing a post-election purge in the final weeks of the administration.

The acting secretary of defence, Christopher Miller, who was installed by Trump on Nov. 9 after he fired then-Defence Secretary Mark Esper, said in a written statement Friday that nine members of the Defence Business Board had been replaced with the appointment of 11 new members.

The new members include Corey Lewandowski and David Bossie, who are among Trump’s most vocal supporters. The nine others are Henry Dreifus, Robert McMahon, Cory Mills, Bill Bruner, Christopher Shank, Joseph Schmidt, Keary Miller, Alan Weh and Earl Matthews.

“These individuals have a proven record of achievement within their respective fields and have demonstrated leadership that will serve our department and our nation well,” Miller said. He also said the nine individuals removed from the board had been serving in “expired positions,” although this was not explained.

Biden proposes scaled-down
Prez inaugural to avoid Covid

US President-elect suggests lot of virtual activity with emphasis on safety

Washington, Dec. 5: US President-elect Joe Biden has said the presidential inauguration on January 20 will not be a “gigantic” event, but something closer to what the Democratic convention was like, with a lot of virtual activity across America and an emphasis on safety due to the raging Coronavirus pandemic. Biden said he expected to be sworn in on January 20 on the platform already being constructed on the steps of the US Capitol, but plans to avoid the crowds that typically gather on the National Mall and along Pennsylvania Avenue to view the ceremony and parade that attracts millions of people.

“My guess is there probably will not be a gigantic inaugural parade on Pennsylvania Avenue, but my guess is you’ll see a lot of virtual activity in states all across America engaging even more people than before. That’s in train now and I’m not in a position to give you an example of exactly what it will look like,” he said when asked about the inauguration planning at a news conference on Friday in his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware. “But, I promise you, it’ll be available either virtually or in-person for many and my guess is, there will still be a platform ceremony, but I don’t know exactly how it’s all going to work out. The key is keeping people safe,” he

MOSCOW OPENS
CENTRES FOR
VACCINATION

Moscow, Dec. 5: Thousands of doctors, teachers and others in high-risk groups have signed up for Covid-19 vaccinations in Moscow starting Saturday, a precursor to a sweeping Russia-wide immunisation effort.

The vaccinations come three days after President Vladimir Putin ordered the launch of a “large-scale” Covid-19 immunisation campaign even though a Russian-designed vaccine has yet to complete the advanced studies needed to ensure its effectiveness and safety in line with established scientific protocols. The Russian leader said Wednesday that more than 2 million doses of the Sputnik V jab will be available in the next few days, allowing authorities to offer jabs to medical workers and teachers across the country starting late next week.

Moscow, which currently accounts for about a quarter of the country’s new daily infections, moved ahead of the curve, opening 70 vaccination facilities on Saturday. Doctors, teachers and municipal workers were invited to book a time to receive a jab, and Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said that about 5,000 signed up in a few hours after the system began operating on Friday.

Russia boasted that Sputnik V was the world’s “first registered Covid-19 vaccine” after the government gave it regulatory approval in early August.

— AP

SPACE | ODYSSEY

Tokyo, Dec. 5: Japan’s space agency said the Hayabusa2 spacecraft successfully separated a capsule and sent it toward Earth to deliver samples from a distant asteroid that could provide clues to the origin of the solar system and life on our planet.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency said the capsule successfully detached Saturday afternoon from 2,20,000 kilometres (1,36,700 miles) away in a challenging operation that required precision con-



An aerial picture taken on Saturday shows a general view of Taksim square and Istiklal avenue in Istanbul during a weekend curfew aimed at curbing the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

— AFP

said. Biden, 78, suggested that the festivities could end up looking like the virtual convention Democrats held in August, with on-line activity in the states.

“We are in discussion with the House leadership and the Senate leadership as to what they plan for the inauguration, particularly those 200,000 spots they control. But I think you’re going to see something

that’s closer to what the convention was like than typical inauguration,” he said. He said that his first and foremost objective was to keep people safe but also allow them to celebrate. “We’re in consultation. My team is in consultation with folks who help us put on the convention, as well as with our colleagues in charge of the inauguration,” he said.

— PTI

Vaccine will not be
mandatory: Biden

Washington, Dec. 5: US President-elect Joe Biden said on Friday that Americans will not be forced to take the Coronavirus vaccine and he is willing to get vaccinated publicly to assuage any concerns about its efficacy and safety. “I don’t think they should be mandatory. I wouldn’t demand it to be mandatory, but I would do everything in my power just like I don’t think masks have to be made mandatory nationwide,” Biden told reporters at a news conference in Wilmington, Delaware.

Biden was responding to a question if Covid-19 vaccine be made mandatory. Biden, who is due to take office on January 20, said he will make sure that the vaccine is both free and available and that any follow up on the vaccine is free and available that relates to any health complications from it. “I will do everything in my power as the president of the United States to encourage people to do the right thing,

and when they do it, demonstrate that it matters. That’s why I said in my inaugural speech I’m going to ask people to commit for 100 days to wear a mask, not because I’m asking it for any reason to punish this is not a political issue,” he said.

“It has become one. But if people do it for 100 days in the middle of what will be still a raging crisis and the vaccine is able to be distributed, they are going to see deaths drop off the edge,” he said.

“They are going to see hundreds of thousands of people not getting sick; and my hope is they will be then inclined to say okay, it’s worth the patriotic duty to go ahead and protect other people,” Biden said. On Friday the US recorded 2,861 new deaths. It has seen more than 14 million confirmed cases in total and more than 275,000 deaths. Biden said he is willing to get inoculated in public to assuage any concerns about its efficacy and safety.

— PTI

Congress urged to pass \$900 bn stimulus

Washington, Dec. 5: US President-elect Joe Biden on Friday urged Congress to pass the \$900 billion stimulus package required to provide relief to people and small businesses who have been badly hit by the deadly Coronavirus pandemic.

“Americans need help, and they need it now, and they need more to come early next year,” Biden said at a speech in

Wilmington in Delaware, noting that he is encouraged by the bipartisan efforts in the Senate for the economic relief bill of about \$900 billion.

“It’s a bipartisan effort. If Congress as they work out the details of this relief package they’re going to have to focus on resources for direct public health responses to Covid-19. We need meaningful funding for vaccines now,

so don’t lose time and leave people waiting for additional months. We need serious funding for testing now,” he said.

“We need to ramp up testing to allow our schools and businesses to operate safely. The sooner we pass the funding, the sooner we can turn the corner on Covid-19,” said Biden, who will take oath as the 46th president of the United States on January 20.

“As we inherit the public health and economic crisis, we are working on a plan that we will put forward for the next Congress to move fast to control the pandemic, to revive the economy, and to build back better than before. We hope to see the same kind of spirit of bipartisan cooperation as we are seeing today,” the President-elect said.

— PTI

Hayabusa2 left the asteroid Ryugu, about 300 million kilometres away, a year ago

Japan awaits spacecraft with asteroid soil samples

fists as everyone applauded the moment command center officials confirmed the successful separation of the capsule.

Hayabusa2’s return with the world’s first asteroid subsurface samples comes weeks after NASA’s OSIRIS-REx spacecraft made a successful touch-and-go grab of surface samples from asteroid Bennu.

China, meanwhile, announced this week its lunar lander collected underground samples and sealed them within

the spacecraft for return to Earth, as space developing nations compete in their missions.

Many Hayabusa2 fans gathered to observe the moment of the capsule separation at public viewing events across the country, including one at the Tokyo Dome stadium.

In the early hours of Sunday, the capsule, protected by a heat shield, will briefly turn into a fireball as it reenters the atmosphere 120 kilometres (75 miles) above Earth.

At about 10 kilometers (6 miles) above ground, a parachute will open to slow its fall and beacon signals will be transmitted to indicate its location.

JAXA staff have set up satellite dishes at several locations in the target area to receive the signals, while also preparing a marine radar, drones and helicopters to assist in the search and retrieval of the pancake-shaped capsule, 40 centimeters (15 inches) in diameter.

— AP

Bureaucrats face
axe if caught for
graft, says Imran

Islamabad, Dec. 5: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has said the government will introduce a new system of “reward and punishment” for the civil servants under which corrupt bureaucrats will be sacked instead of just transferring. Speaking at a ceremony to celebrate the completion of two years of Pakistan Citizen Portal at the Prime Minister House on Friday, Khan said he was dissatisfied over the performance of the current local governments, the *Dawn* reported. “The government was introducing a new system of ‘reward and punishment’ for the civil servants. Under the new system officials would not be transferred but sacked if found involved in corruption and irregularities,” he said.

He also said under a separate new system introduced at the village level funds would be transferred directly to the councils. “A new local government system is being introduced which will usher in a revolution. It will be implemented at the village level where people will be able to elect their representatives who will directly receive funds every year,” he added.

— PTI



Imran Khan

BLAST KILLS ONE
IN RAWALPINDI

Islamabad, Dec. 5: At least one person was killed and seven others wounded in a rare bomb attack in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi on Friday, police said.

Rawalpindi, the country’s fourth-largest city, is known for its military garrison and adjoins the capital Islamabad.

“One person was killed and seven others wounded. It was a timed device and was planted near a bus terminal,” Rawalpindi police spokesman Sajjad ul Hassan said.

No group immediately claimed responsibility. The police spokesman said investigators were probing all angles, including the possibility of terrorism.

— AFP

Lanka to hurry
Easter Sunday
probe: Minister

Colombo, Dec. 5: Sri Lankan government will expedite the ongoing probe of Easter Sunday suicide bombings that killed 258 people, including 11 Indians, last year, a senior Cabinet minister said on Saturday.

Nine suicide bombers, belonging to local Islamist extremist group National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ) linked to ISIS, carried out a series of blasts that tore through three churches and as many luxury hotels in Sri Lanka, killing 258 people, including 11 Indians, and injuring over 500 on the Easter Sunday on April 21, 2019.

“Sri Lankan government will expedite the ongoing probe of Easter Sunday suicide bombing. I will meet the Attorney General on Monday to see how we could proceed,” Sarath Weerasekera, the minister of public security, told the parliament.

He was reacting to an

opposition lawmaker charging that the current government appeared not interested now to carry on with the probe.

Niroshan Perera, the opposition member told parliament, that the head of the local Catholic Church Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith had just a few days ago had expressed doubt if the investigations were leading nowhere. Ranjith said if the current government showed no genuine interest in the investigations to see its conclusion the catholic minority would lose confidence in the government.

Assuring there was no attempt to sweep the investigation under the carpet, Weerasekera said the legal process would be expedited from next week. Weerasekera said 257 people have been arrested and 86 of them are currently under detention orders while 172 are in remand custody.

— PTI

NMC hosp founder
‘stopped’ by India

Mumbai/Dubai, Dec. 5: The founder of troubled hospital operator NMC Health has filed a legal challenge against a move by Indian immigration authorities to prevent him from departing to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) last month, according to his court petition.

B.R. Shetty’s NMC, listed in London and UAE’s biggest hospital group, went into administration in April following months of turmoil over its finances and the compa-

ny’s disclosure that it had \$6.6 billion in debt, well above its earlier estimates. Shetty had said November he planned to return to the UAE and denied reports he had fled the country after the hospital group’s implosion.

His petition, filed in the Karnataka high court on November 30, said immigration officials at Bengaluru airport stopped him boarding a flight to the UAE on Nov. 14, “without assigning any reasons whatsoever.”

— Reuters

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Tender Reference No.	007/M(P)/HYG-KIT/ TNMSC/2020, Dated 07.12.2020
Tender Document Sale Period	07.12.2020 to 21.12.2020
Last Date and Time for receipt of tender	22.12.2020 upto 10.30 AM
Date and time of opening	22.12.2020 at 11.00 AM
The tender document can be downloaded from the websites of www.tnmsc.tn.gov.in and www.tenders.tn.gov.in on free of cost.	
DIPR/4513/Tender/2020 General Manager (Drugs)	

DECCAN Chronicle

6 DECEMBER 2020



Shashi Warriar

Off the beaten track

The evolution of the indigenous BPO

A friend of mine, a professor of business communication at a business school nearby, dropped in recently after renewing his driving licence. “What’s up?” I asked. “I just thought of something more for us Indians to be proud of,” he said.

“What?” I asked. “Well, Indians thought up aircraft and plastic surgery long before the people in the West thought of them,” he replied, “but there’s also something in management science that we invented long ago.”

“What?” I asked. “Business Process Outsourcing,” he replied. “BPO. The backbone of some of our business... The West invented the term and took credit for the concept, as usual. But we thought of it first. You see it all over the place.”

Pictures came to mind of ranks of young people wearing headphones, speaking in fake American accents answering tedious telephonic questions from overseas customers, or ranks of computers recording inter-bank transactions, and so on. I couldn’t make the connection. “How so?” I asked.

“Back in the 1980s,” he replied, “when I was in Bangalore, if you wanted to register a company, you went to the Registrar of Companies. You did your paperwork, and, when it was done, you handed over an envelope containing his private fee for your work. He’d say, ‘Heh, heh, *saar*, this is not necessary,’ and place the cover in his drawer. A few years later, it had changed. You handed him the cash when the job was done, and he counted it before putting it away. And a few more years down the line, you never even got to see the registrar. You handed your papers and the fee to an agent outside his office and you got your registration a day or two later.”

“I don’t understand,” I said. “Forgive me for being so slow.” “I see you haven’t thought about it,” he said, straightening up and using the professorial tone that he might use on a backbencher who’s just slept through a lecture. “The purpose of governance in India is to create and manage queues. Where there are queues, there are people willing to pay to jump them. Governance is about helping people to jump queues for a consideration. The longer the queue, the bigger the consideration, and the happier the officials. Okay?”

“Okay,” I replied. “That’s why no one bothers about overpopulation,” he continued. “The greater the population, the longer the queue. The idea was, the more the people suffer, the longer the queue, and the more people are willing to pay to jump.”

“Right,” I agreed. “But that’s old hat,” he went on. “Thirty years back, someone saw the virtue of a freer economy. Simple: the more money people have, the more they’ll pay to jump the queue. So they loosened up bits of the economy, and watched the money roll in. And that was when they thought of BPO. People were beginning to complain about corruption, you see.”

“But what’s BPO got to do with corruption?” I asked. “Everything!” he said, happily. “Officials began to outsource their business to agents. The agent collects the money and delivers papers. He settles with the officials afterwards, outside the office. One side-effect: it keeps the officials safe. A surprise check at the office will produce no evidence that anyone’s taken any money under the table!”

“And it doesn’t end there. The government can hire more people for the vigilance department whose people conduct raids. Since there are queues for those jobs as well, they can make more money there, and depend on the vigilance fellows — who have paid to get those jobs — to do what they can to sustain the system, but the people can be lulled into thinking that someone is doing something about corruption. Brilliant!”

“Yes,” I said, not knowing what else to say, “but what does all this have to do with your driving licence?”

“Ah!” he said. “I should have told you. I got my licence from a new transport office at Melkar, some 30 kilometres from Mangalore. It’s a new office, and my wife I only had to wait two minutes to get our work done. So, you see, the agent tells the officials when it’s time to expand the office to get more work done. So there are more jobs, more buildings, more of everything, and they make money out of all that, and at least some people are happy because they get their work done really fast.”

“The system has evolved. It used to create queues and take what the traffic would bear. Now, it manages queues so that the people running the system get the best possible income with the least possible risk. It works in good times and in bad. In good times, people earn more, and are willing to pay more. In bad times, the population increases, so there are more people willing to pay...”

“Terrific!” I said. “You should write a paper about this!”

“No way!” he said, horrified. “Officials hate whistleblowers, and they protect themselves. Remember the officer who gave the Wadhawan family a certificate allowing them to travel to their farmhouse during the lockdown? The Wadhawan family is in trouble, but the official who signed the certificate is the police commissioner of Pune. If I write a paper about this, it’ll cost me my job!”

“Right,” I said. “It works very well for officials. But the people are suffering, aren’t they?”

He looked a little shame-faced, but only for a moment. “For an answer to that,” he said, “we have to look to the West.”

“How so?” I asked.

“Before the French Revolution,” he said, resuming his professorial persona, “someone told the French Queen, Marie Antoinette, that the people of France were suffering. ‘The masses are starving,’ he said, ‘they have no bread to fill their bellies.’”

“And how did Marie Antoinette respond?” I asked.

“Let ‘em eat cake!”

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

Subhani



Battle of ‘Bhagyanagar’ concludes in stalemate



Sriram Karri

It begins with the name. Always. You can hold on to it or change it, but the decision is never easy. Ask parents as they go through greater anxiety in deciding the name of their child to be over any other birthing issue. Should we continue to be Hyderabad, or become Bhagyanagar?

When a city of over one crore was thrown the challenge, over which its nearly 77 lakh registered voters brooded hard during a fortnight of the most shrill vituperative campaign that forced the attention of the nation, in which less than half turned out to vote in the midst of a pandemic, some turning nostalgic for a chance to vote on paper ballots again, the Hyderabad or Bhagyanagar duel, with all its underlying implications of this symbolism and euphemism, ended in an uneasy stalemate.

A SPLIT VERDICT

The ruling TRS, receiving yet another drubbing by the BJP in the state, received 12,04,167 votes (35.81 per cent) to the saffron party’s 11,95,711 (35.56 per cent), the MIM holding on to its fortress, winning 6,30,866 votes (18.76 per cent), a distant but formidable third. The TRS has 55 divisions in the 150 municipal council, while the BJP has 48. The MIM held on to its 44. A high court judgment on Monday will give us the result for the last seat. The ruling TRS in short had only 8,456 votes more than its challenger.

The Bhagyanagar reference resonates strongly amongst both its supporters and opponents, and is a very viscerally fundamental call to people to

decide on their idea of “mini India” as the city perceives itself to be. Over half of them said they would rather watch from the sidelines. The one that turned up to vote, was nearly split. Statistically, combining the MIM votes to TRS does mean a decisive rejection of the name change idea and all other implications, but it is still largely an uneasy stalemate.

SAFFRON-PINK BATTLES AHEAD

The TRS has failed to defend its 99 incumbent seats won in the last elections, losing 44 out of them to the BJP. Where it has won too, it is the BJP, which was a close second in most. More importantly, the BJP has stolen the narrative and set the agenda — it has successfully portrayed the TRS as a dynastic, nepotistic, corrupt, decadent party and government, which has failed to deliver its promises, all of which are exploited by their policy of appeasing Muslims under pressure from the MIM.

The TRS, in turn, tried hard to set its stated narrative of continuity and development as an alternative paradigm but was unconvincing. The TRS called the BJP communal, fanatic, insane, divisive and a big failure, even promising to be the nucleus of a new formation that would challenge Narendra Modi on a national level.

As a voter said, “while according to the TRS, it was a vote between development and communalism, the BJP dubbed it a battle between a dynasty’s corrupt politics versus nationalistic

Hindutva without appeasement. People see the picture in their own way, without the funnel vision of parties — as a battle between corrupt, nepotistic development versus communal nationalism”.

In this round, the advantage is still with TRS-MIM but the momentum has been taken by the BJP. The impasse will be broken by battles, nay, war, that lies ahead.

A MULTI-CUT STRATEGY

The BJP has demonstrated successfully, with three different electoral coups — in Nizamabad Lok Sabha elections in 2019 defeating K. Kavitha, incumbent MP and daughter of chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao; in a byelection in Dubbaka last month, in which they humbled the TRS strategist in-charge, T. Harish Rao, minister and CM’s nephew; and finally, the GHMC, in which they had generated the hitherto invincible image of K.T. Rama Rao, CM’s son and heir apparent.

As a BJP leader said, “daughter, nephew and son have been given a drubbing each. Each individually and three together add up to what people feel — a strong anti-KCR family and TRS emotion. The next defeat is reserved for KCR in the Assembly elections”.

Meanwhile, the next byelection is in sight, in

The BJP has demonstrated its strategic edge successfully with three different electoral coups — defeating K. Kavitha in the 2019 LS elections, humbling T. Harish Rao in a byelection in Dubbaka last month, and finally, the GHMC, in which they have dented the image of K.T. Rama Rao

Nagarjunasagar constituency, whose sitting TRS MLA passed away on December 1.

BJP’S SECOND SOUTH-EERN BASTION

Despite the fascinating changes in Tamil Nadu and Kerala politics, it is unlikely the BJP is realistically close to winning power on its own in any southern state as

Telangana. In 2013, MIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi told me in an interview, explaining why his party was opposed to the formation of a separate Telangana. “The YSRC and TDP will die out in this region because they will be dubbed as Andhra parties. A new regional party may win and come to power based on sentiment, but as we have seen in Jharkhand and other such states, such parties lose credibility soon because of corruption and family domination. Telangana will become very vulnerable to a BJP onslaught.”

Owaisi’s words, spoken when Narendra Modi was chief minister of Gujarat, have come very true. The BJP is not coming for some 60 MLA seats or 17 Lok Sabha seats; it is coming to make more fundamental changes to how south India perceives itself.

For too long, most people argued and believed that the five southern states are not rife as a social soil for a political Hindutva to bloom. Pakistan is too far away, far less people understand Hindi, education and prosperity levels are relatively higher and delivery of development and welfare much more effective for decades here. The case of Karnataka was dismissed as an exception.

Not any longer. Not the way Telangana is rapidly shifting from pink to saffron. Not unless the development alternative introspects and reinterprets itself as a stronger moral alternative, not a merely more convenient substitute.

LETTERS

RAJINI SHOULD NOT GO ALONE

It is but quite natural for ecstasy and euphoria to erupt at the statement of the superstar about his much awaited decision to float a political of his own. Though his decision sent his countless fans into raptures, the big question is whether the support he gets at the hustings from his followers alone is sufficient to establish his dream government free from the ills plagued during the rule of the two major Dravidian parties. Whether he likes it or not the superstar is under compulsion and in need to seek alliance with like-minded parties as it is next to impossible to dislodge or downsize the Dravidian parties’ influence and power as they are well entrenched in TN politics for more than 50 years. In this critical phase it will be a dangerous pursuit to take a plunge in the deep waters of electoral politics without a trained escort like BJP for support. In electoral politics only the number that is polled decides the winner or loser and a win can be achieved even by a single vote majority.

Kongumaattan, Coimbatore

DOUBLE JOY FOR INDIA

IT IS a matter of pride for all Indians that Gitanjali Rao, a 15-year old Indian-American who is a scientist and inventor has been named as the first ‘Kid of the Year’ by Time magazine for inventing an app to detect cyberbullying. The fact that she was selected from among no less than 5,000 nominees reveals her intelligence, social awareness, interest, dedication and hard work. She will be an inspiration to several youth (especially Indians) to involve themselves in constructive work/hobbies which will help society and world to become a better and safer place in this age of technological developments. It is double joy for Indians (even amid pandemic) that 2020 has made the world look up to India thanks to the success of Vice-President elect Kamala Harris and Gitanjali Rao in the US.

M.C. Vijay Shankar, Chennai

COVID-19 VACCINE

AS PER our Prime Minister’s assurance, the first vaccine doses may be available in a matter of weeks and that the pricing of the same would be finalised keeping in view the public health interest in mind and also after deliberations with state governments. I wish to recall the Bihar election manifesto of BJP wherein they had assured free shots to one and all. Similarly the free shot should be extended to all citizens, especially poor, in our country. Most of the state governments have a health insurance scheme, paying crores of premium to insurance companies. Likewise employees in government departments, banks, private companies too have health insurance tie-up scheme with insurance companies. Hence these insurance companies should be asked to foot the vaccine costs. Above all, while paying health insurance premiums, we pay 9% GST and hence even the Central/State government could give free shots to the citizens in each state.

N. Mahadevan, Chennai

A.G. Noorani



Indians are not alone in falling for the ‘strong man’ myth

IT is not fashionable to cite old classics. But if one turns to Roman, Greek and, more so, the English classics, one is struck by their relevance to modern times. Take this, from John Stuart Mill’s essay on representative government: “There are nations who will not voluntarily submit to any government but that of certain families, which have from time immemorial had the privilege of supplying them with chiefs.” This applies to South Asia.

He added, “But there are also cases in which, though not averse to a form of government — possibly even desiring it — a people may be unwilling or unable to fulfil its conditions. ... Thus a people may prefer a free government, but if, from indolence, or carelessness, or cowardice, or want of public spirit, they are unequal to the exertions necessary for preserving it; if they will not fight for it when it is directly attacked; if they can be deluded by the artifices used to cheat them out of it; if by momentary discouragement, or temporary panic, or a fit of

enthusiasm for an individual, they can be induced to lay their liberties at the feet even of a great man, or trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institutions; in all these cases they are less unfit for liberty: and though it may be for their good to have had it even for a short time, they are unlikely long to enjoy it.”

India is passing through this dangerous phase. It ought to have known better. Indira Gandhi all but tore up the constitution during her regime and installed herself as a dictator. A wave of anger swept across the country and she lost the 1977 election. But the small men who formed a government fell apart over the loaves and fishes of office. In 1980, the people returned her to power, unmindful of her past record.

Now, Narendra Modi is following in her footsteps. He undermined the cabinet, suborned the civil service, but his greatest challenge was political. As soon as he came to power in 2014, he called for a ‘Congress-free India’. He began

campaigning from day one.

Hyderabad just held municipal elections. Modi was about to descend to the city to campaign against two parties: the Telangana Rashtra Samithi and the All India Majlis-i-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, which was founded by the legendary Bahadur Yar Jung and now led by the indomitable Asaduddin Owaisi. Modi sent his deputy Amit Shah to campaign for the BJP. Owaisi asked, “Why not Donald Trump?”

There is no doubt that Modi enjoys popularity across the country, though it is on the decline. He was elected to power in 2014 and 2019. Why? By common consent, the government led by the extraordinarily upright Manmohan Singh was scarred by his ministers’ corruption. He was perceived as ‘weak’. Nor did he receive the support of his party and its president Sonia Gandhi, which it was her duty to extend. She was focused on grooming her mediocre son. The Congress is in a deep crisis.

Modi is out to wipe out not only the

Congress but also all regional parties and establish one-party rule. To what can we attribute his rise? Besides presiding over the Gujarat pogrom in 2002, Modi oversaw the state’s economic revival. Businessmen courted him and vice versa. He portrayed himself as a ‘strong man’, and the country fell for him.

But Indians are not alone in falling for the ‘strong man’ myth. Countries like Hungary and Poland also revel in democracy in form, but dictatorship in reality. In The Myth of the Strong Leader, Archie Brown writes: “The central misconception, which I set out to expose, is the notion that strong leaders in the conventional sense of leaders who get their way, dominate their colleagues, and concentrate decision-making in their hands, are the most successful and admirable.

“While some leaders who come into that category emerge more positively than negatively, in general huge power amassed by an individual leader paves the way for important errors at best and disaster and

massive bloodshed at worst. ... [T]he myth of the strong leader is a central thread which unifies the discussion of democratic, revolutionary, authoritarian and totalitarian leaders. Those in the first of these categories can do far less damage, precisely because there are constraints upon their power from outside government.

“It is, nevertheless, an illusion — and one as dangerous as it is widespread that in contemporary democracies the more a leader dominates his or her political party and cabinet, the greater the leader. A more collegial style of leadership is too often characterised as a weakness, the advantages of a more collective political leadership, too commonly overlooked.”

Stalin and Mao created famines, as did Churchill in Bengal. Thatcher had to be booted out of power by her party, while Atlee is highly regarded by history. This is true of both domestic and foreign policies. Modi is in decline. Witness the mammoth protests by Punjab’s farmers. But his end is not very near.

Kaushik Mitter Editor, R. Mohan Resident Editor

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INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

NON-FICTION

- A PROMISED LAND**
Barack Obama,
Penguin Viking, ₹1999
- JUGALBANDI: THE BJP BEFORE MODI**
Vinay Sitapati,
Penguin Viking, ₹799
- THE BATTLE OF BELONGING**
Shashi Tharoor,
Aleph, ₹799
- REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra,
HarperCollins, ₹599
- JINNAH HIS SUCCESSES, FAILURES AND ROLE IN HISTORY**
Ishtiaq Ahmed,
Penguin, ₹999
- PORTRAITS OF POWER**
N.K. Singh,
Rupa, ₹595
- THE INDIA WAY**
S. Jaishankar,
HarperCollins, ₹699
- THE COMMONWEALTH OF CRICKET**
Ramachandra Guha,
4th Estate, ₹699
- A NEW IDEA OF INDIA**
Harsh Madhusudan & Rajeev Mantri,
Westland, ₹799
- MY YEARS WITH RAJIV: TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY**
Wajahat Habibullah,
Westland, ₹799



FICTION

- SHUGGIE BAIN (2020 BOOKER PRIZE WINNER)**
Douglas Stuart
Picador, ₹499
- THE DISCOMFORT OF EVENING (2020 INTERNATIONAL BOOKER PRIZE WINNER)**
Marieke Lucas Rijneveld,
Faber & Faber, ₹499
- HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT**
Jeffrey Archer
Pan Macmillan, ₹450
- A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham,
Hodder & Stoughton,
₹699
- HAMNET**
Maggie O' Farrell,
Tinder Press, ₹699
- DAYLIGHT**
David Baldacci,
Pan Macmillan, ₹650
- WHAT THE BODY REMEMBERS (20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION)**
Shauna Singh Baldwin,
Tara-India Research Press, ₹599
- INSIDE STORY**
Martin Amis,
Jonathan Cape, ₹799
- THE EVENING AND THE MORNING**
Ken Follett,
Pan Macmillan, ₹499
- PRIVATE MOSCOW**
James Patterson & Adam Hamdy,
Century, ₹699



Bahrison, New Delhi

The good doctor's submissions



Indranil Banerjee

review

The coronavirus pandemic holds many lessons for India, primary among which is the need for a robust public health system. In times of crisis, the private sector healthcare industry can and surely will help but the brunt must be borne by the government sector, which operates beyond the dictates of profitability and with a freedom mandated by the fact that it is an arm of the government.

Much before the current pandemic exposed the terrible gaps in our healthcare system, one doctor had gone to great lengths to make the public aware of the serious shortcomings of Indian medical institutions, systems and practitioners.

Dr Samiran Nundy, one of the country's leading surgeons in the field of gastroenterology and former head of the department of gastrointestinal surgery at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), had painstakingly put together an encyclopaedic book on the ills of the Indian healthcare system. Although the primary focus

of the book was on the corruption in the medical profession, the book's many, well-researched papers dealt with the larger issue of the state of healthcare in India.

In his introduction, Dr Nundy had focussed on the heart of the matter, asserting that "public health must remain a public responsibility and neither the lack of financial resources, the inability to manage systems, the unwillingness to govern responsibly nor an unfamiliarity with technology should become an argument or excuse for outsourcing healthcare to private enterprise. Corruption arises precisely because of these issues but these are remedial situations."

The root of the problem is low government spending on healthcare. "India is a poor country", he writes, "but there is no justification for the fact that for many years now the total public expenditure on healthcare has hovered between 0.8 per cent and 1.1 per cent of the GDP. It is not that funds cannot be provided."

Of course, as many of us know, there is money, espe-

cially when it is not being spent on populist vote catching schemes or freebies like free power and loan waivers. The several lakh crores of the taxpayers' money which have gone to garnering votes for the next elections could well have been spent on the country's tottering government healthcare system.

Apart from political profligacy, there are additional problems as some of the papers in the book elucidate. Authors Ritu Priya and Prachinkumar Ghodajkar in their chapter titled "The Structural Basis of Corruption in Healthcare in India", point out some factors that have eviscerated the Indian healthcare system.

"Since the 1980s, the role of the nation state has

weakened in social welfare; commercial entities have become stronger and shape state policies rather than the other way around. They, or the new institutional structures developing under their influence, operate increasingly on market principles informed by 'new public management' approaches, often contrary to the welfare and service orientation of healthcare", they explain.

This is troubling because, as the authors of this paper point out, the "conventional logic of the buyer and seller in the marketplace does not apply to the health sector" since "the user often does not have the choice of not buying the services, as it can be a matter of life and death or discomfort and disablement". This is the basic underlying problem associated with medical care.

Added to these are structural problems that have fuelled corruption in healthcare, according to the authors. These create "conditions for an increasing segment of healthcare professionals moving away from the expected moral moorings of healthcare providers and thereby increasing distrust of the profession and healthcare services in society at large."

The book is really a magnum opus on not just corruption but the plethora of ills plaguing the country's healthcare system, including issues such as the rise of the medical-industrial complex, problems of regula-

tion, government spending, the unholy nexus of doctors and pharmaceutical companies and much more.

There are a total of 41 chapters or papers in the book written by a diverse set of experts in their own fields. This book is for practitioners, policy makers, researchers as well as the lay reader, who now more than ever must make herself aware of the myriad and very serious problems ailing our healthcare apparatus.

Ultimately, the message, as far as the good doctor is concerned, is clear: "Governments at both centre and state levels, must continue to be the primary player in healthcare, and certainly in primary healthcare. The specious difference between providing and purchasing care must be called out. Even if government were to purchase the services, it must still provide those services to the people at little or no cost."

In these times of crisis, the grave inadequacies of our government-run healthcare system are destined to adversely affect millions. The lessons Dr Nundy has learnt over years of medical service need to be disseminated among all thinking Indians, as well as the country's leadership.

The writer is an independent commentator on political and security issues



IS 'SERIOUS MEN' TAUTOLOGY AND OTHER NIGGLING QUERIES



Aditi Sriram

essay

Published in 2010, to well-deserved global success, *Serious Men* by Manu Joseph is about a pair of opposites: a brahmin scientist, Arvind Acharya, and his dalit assistant, Ayyan Mani, and how their lives intersect in cunning, cruel, and even collaborative ways. Acharya is the director of the "Institute of Theory and Research", and committed to proving that alien life exists. Mani hardly appears on his radar, except as a meagre clerk in his office. But in fact — and this is how Joseph delights and seduces his readers — the phone-answering, mail-receiving assistant has been regularly interfering with Acharya's work. The results are a shocking professional climax, a romantic one, and lots of ethical ones. *Serious Men* is a witty page-turner, and brilliant in how it recasts the word 'serious' to connote everything but.

Ten years later, the word takes on

still new meanings: unstoppable, deadly. The coronavirus is serious; the consequences for humanity are serious. In such a world, have opposites become irrelevant? Has seriousness given us more in common?

Not according to Acharya, who dismisses all scientific approaches other than his own as myopic. In an argument about how best to identify extraterrestrials, he derides his colleague's proposal to emit radio signals into space.

"I will not support people who presume that somewhere, far away in space, there could be beings so human that they will build machines that will send us a radio signal. Man is not searching for aliens. Man is searching for man. It's called loneliness. Not science." (— p. 50 of Google e-book)

Maybe, but man's loneliness might well have been the primordial urge which led him to seek distant shores, build cities, and devise the technology that, today, keeps us connected twenty-four-seven. Acharya, however, is weary of such primitive

impulses; his experiment is far more sophisticated, since it is searching for microbial particles. Still: how would he feel nowadays, if he could not sit in his office daily, work in his basement laboratory, and shout at his colleagues face-to-face? He continues to anticipate the alarm clock that blares in his home every morning at 7.45 a.m., even though his daughter, who used it, is long settled abroad. Might he acknowledge that his search for aliens, in whatever form they exist, is to dispel a certain interstellar loneliness?

We'll never know, because Acharya would have stalked off in a huff by now, feeling nauseous by such unworthy (and unscientific) questions while Mani would have lingered behind, eavesdropping for his own ulterior motives. Indeed, Joseph's characters conduct their vitriolic scheming in parallel hallways: the hallowed, hushed ones in the Institute; the

concrete, rat-infested ones in the BDD chawl where Mani lives. Recalling his own experience living in a chawl as a novice reporter, Joseph says he was "struck by this unnecessary design flaw: the way people live in Bombay". He uses Mumbai's tropy-turviness creatively, to ensure that his novel's action is as steamy in an office basement as it is in a chawl attic. Covid or not, nobody really wants to be alone.

A decade ago, *Serious Men* was about the chasms between things: Scientists and laymen. Humans and extraterrestrial life. The rich and the poor. Women and men. Lust and love. Humour and severity. Truth and fiction. Secret games and invisible science. English writing and vernacular lives. A decade later, it is a book — as well as a film — about the social distances between these things. A question for Joseph, Mani, Acharya and all of us, is how this distance will narrow or widen in the coming days, months and years.

Aditi Sriram teaches writing at Ashoka University. Her first book, Beyond the Boulevards: A Short Biography of Pondicherry, was released in 2019. She also freelances for several publications including The New York Times, The Atlantic and The Washington Post.



Douglas Stuart (44) has taken home the 52nd edition of the prestigious Man Booker Prize for his debut novel *Shuggie Bain*. While writing the story of young Shuggie and his alcoholic mother, Agnes, Stuart drew from his experiences of growing up gay in economically-ravaged Thatcher-era Glasgow. Stuart dedicated the book to his mother who died when he was 16.



'Even forthright women can be submissive'

As the first Indian female newsreader and radio jockey, Saeeda Bano left behind a pioneering legacy. SHAHANA RAZA, her granddaughter who translated her memoir, Off the Beaten Track, remembers her as an emotionally resilient person in a chat with SUCHETA DASGUPTA

Aside from being an Indian radio pioneer, who broke bread with India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, your grandmother was one of India's first independent Muslim women. Not only was she living by herself in the 1940s, in the 1930s, she drove a car unchaperoned. This is a freedom not available to most Indian women, Hindu or Muslim, even today. Did Saeeda Bano consider herself a feminist?

Did Saeeda Bano consider herself a feminist? I don't know that for sure, but she most definitely knew she was ahead of her times, that the life she led was *Dagar se Hatt kar*, off the beaten track, which is why she used it as the title of her

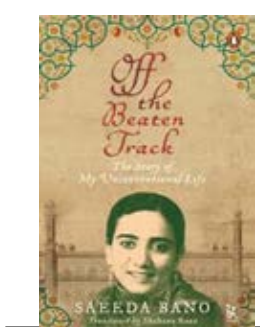
autobiography. Your grandmother was more sporting than studious. She was not, in that sense, the typical intellectual feminist. Would you consider her a rebel in her household? How well was she loved by her family?

Relatively speaking, compared with her older siblings, Saeeda Bano was definitely the rebel in her family. The fact that she was allowed to be herself, especially by her father, went a long way in filling her with confidence and also proves they loved her for who she was.

In the book, she refers to herself as a girl with "a strange blend of complicated traits in her personality. Yes, she was more sporting than studious, but she also read voraciously. After marriage she receives both love and importance from her husband's family as well, especially from her father-in-law Justice Mohammed Raza.

What, to your mind, did she have to give up in order to lead the life that she did and accomplish what she did?

In order to achieve what she did, Saeeda Bano had to, first and foremost, give up the emotional comfort and the financial security that comes with being part of a loving joint family. Embracing



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

uncertainties, she forsook the familiarity and convenience of living in an easygoing city like Lucknow and went off to Delhi at the time of Partition in August 1947, tackling courageously the various challenges that came her way during this crucial time in history. To lead her life according to the dictates of her own conscience, she schooled her heart to face social disapproval.

One of the most charming episodes in the book is to do



with Saeeda's friendship with the singer and courtisan, Begum Akhtar. This friendship was forged despite the then prevailing custom of women observing purdah from courtesans. Surprisingly, her interactions with Akhtar met with little resistance at her in-laws' and she managed to create from them a family tie. Was her husband's family relatively liberal or was it due to her personal charisma that this became possible?

Bit of both, I would say. Initially, there was some feeble, lukewarm resistance from her family. Ultimately she managed to persuade her husband Abbas Raza to visit Akhtar Bai's *kotha*.

Was it Saeeda who broke the ice between lawyer Ishtiaq Abbasi's acquaintances and Akhtari, thus clearing the path for their eventual marriage?

I don't think Saeeda Bano had much to do with breaking the ice between Ishtiaq Abbasi's acquaintances and Akhtari Bai. But after Akhtari approached my grandmother at the radio station and said, "*Bittan, please get me married to Ishtiaq Abbasi sahab*," she took the bull by the horns. In her inimitably bold style, she called Ishtiaq *bhai* over for tea and candidly asked him to marry Akhtari! The rest, as they say, is history.

There is a documentary on Begum Akhtar called *Hai Akhtari*, on YouTube for which director Kalidas Swaminathan interviewed my grandmother. In that, you can hear Saeeda Bano narrate this entire incident in the most delightful manner, exactly as it is written up in this book.

While reading the book, I noticed that when Saeeda examines the relationship of her lover, three-time Delhi mayor Nuruddin Ahmed, with his English first wife, Billy, she concludes that it had faced challenges due to Billy's not belonging to his own culture of compliant, coquettish or circumspect, women. But she herself was neither of those. Why this inconsistency?

Since I never had the oppor-

tunity to see my grandmother with Nuruddin Ahmed *sahab*, I can't say what she was like with him as a woman. Perhaps she was coquettish and felt vulnerable around him. People do have various sides to their personality. How we interact with our children is not what we are like with our spouse or our parents. Even headstrong forthright women can be submissive when they choose to be!

What is your earliest memory of your grandmother?

My earliest memory of my grandmother is when we came from Lucknow to Delhi during our school vacations to visit her. We would meet up with our uncles, aunts and cousins and spend a lot of time eating all sorts of delicious foodstuff at India International Centre and go on these enjoyable family picnics to Lodhi Garden. She loved picnics! I also remember her cook Shakur Baba vividly.

What has been your own career trajectory? Why do you think she chose you to translate her book?

Over the years, I've had to transform myself professionally into several avatars. After starting out as a VT editor for programmes and documentaries, I moved to news

editing, then reporting, before I finally settled down as video producer and freelance writer.

Around the time she asked me to translate her book we had grown quite close, without really realising it. We had managed, by default, to forge a strong one-on-one bond and learnt to accept the not-so-palatable sides of our personalities as well. If she ticked me off, I couldn't go running to any parent. I was living alone and working in Delhi. If I triggered her off, there was really no one she could complain to about my behaviour. With no other adult to help us navigate our relationship with one another, we grew closer.

What, according to you, is the strength of this book?

The appeal of the book, in my opinion lies in the brutal honesty with which she visits the past, confronts her own experiences and decides, even when she comes face to face with a painful raw emotion, that yes, I want to speak about this. She could have chosen to leave some hurtful incidents out of the book. But she doesn't. As I mentioned in the translator's note, Simone de Beauvoir said in *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, "The writer is a traitor to his despair as soon as he writes a book."

How Mowgli grew up, grew old and loved his mothers



Rachna Chhabria

review

When I received a copy of *Feral Dreams* — *Mowgli and his Mothers*, written by Stephen Alter, the herd of elephants tramping through the jungle on the cover gave me a big hint of what the pages hold. *Feral Dreams* takes the story of Mowgli, the human child, the main character of Rudyard Kipling's novel, *The Jungle Book*, forward in time.

For animal lovers, it is one big jungle treat. Alter's Mowgli is found by the elephant matriarch in Hathi Talao Wildlife Sanctuary, she hands the baby to the monkeys for feeding. Growing up with the monkeys and other wild animals, the boy, given the name Mowgli by the elephant matriarch, considers himself one of the jungle creatures.

The first part of the book brings the jungle to life, the banyan tree with its aerial roots where the boy is sitting with the troop of monkeys. "Drawing in a deep breath through his nostrils, he smelled the mouldering leaves and a sour earthy odour that he recognised as the passing scent of a sloth bear that had wandered by a short while ago."

By the end of the first chapter Mowgli is caught by the forest guards, while they are transporting him to the town, the herd of elephants led by the matriarch, rescue Mowgli, taking him back into the sanctuary. Mowgli's relationship with the elephants and the monkeys is so beautifully expressed through their conversation, that feels more like a telepathic link than a verbal dialogue, written in italics, it elevates the book to another level altogether, as do the descriptive paragraphs that bring the jungle with its sights, sound and smell to life, literally thrusting the reader smack into the middle of it all.

Mowgli's relationship with the elephant matriarch is reminiscent of a mother-son bond, and his relationship with a young monkey, reminded me of the interaction between siblings.

By the end of part one, Mowgli is found near the waterhole in an emaciated condition by two forest guards who bring him to the Calvary Mission Children's Home in Shakkarganj run by an American missionary Miss Elizabeth Cranston. Mowgli now christened Daniel lives with the other orphan children under the strict care of the principal Miss Cranston.

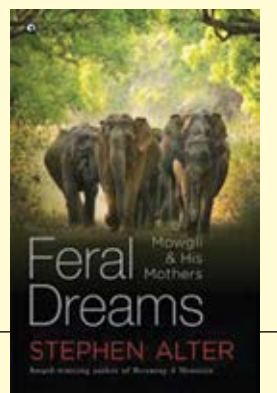
In the children's home, Daniel is bullied by the other children, as his behaviour is different from theirs, he isn't as humanised as them. Slowly Daniel learns Hindustani and a smattering of English, he learns to wear clothes, eat like a civilised person and sleep on a mattress.

As the story progresses, after one particularly harsh bullying episode, when Daniel is distraught, Miss Cranston decides to adopt him as her son. When Miss Cranston gives refuge to a dacoit, it results in her and Daniel's deportation to America.

The book chronicles Daniel's journey in life, from the jungle to civilisation, from childhood till his sixties. From Daniel's relationship with his two mothers, Daniel is more comfortable with the elephant matriarch than Miss Cranston. He is awkward with her and is seldom able to express himself well with her. Sadly, as he grows up, he distances himself from her, but a patch-up of sorts is brought about by his live-in partner, Nadia.

The ending made me smile, Daniel paid a wonderful tribute to both his mothers. The book has so many breathtaking scenes that a reread is a must. I fell in love with Alter's mastery of his craft and his firm grip over the story held my attention till the end.

Rachna Chhabria is a Bengaluru based children's author and a freelance writer



FERAL DREAMS — MOWGLI

By STEPHEN ALTER
Aleph, ₹599

SHORT TAKES

Covid-hit Hamilton may miss next GP

Manama: Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton, who was diagnosed with coronavirus this week, is struggling with the illness and is in doubt for next week's season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff said on Friday. The seven-time champion won the Bahrain Grand Prix last weekend and was ruled out of Sunday's Sakhir Grand Prix after waking up on Monday with mild symptoms.

The 35-year-old is now in the process of isolating for 10 days according to the established protocols. "He is not great," said Wolff after Hamilton's replacement George Russell posted an outstanding time-topping lap in opening practice. "Covid-19 is something you mustn't take lightly and he is in safe hands." — *AFP*

Anderson retires from int'l cricket

Christchurch: Plagued by injuries, New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson, who once held the record for fastest ODI hundred, called time on his international career and signed a three-year deal with USA's Major League Cricket. The 29-year-old, who has played 13 Tests, 49 ODIs and 31 T20Is for New Zealand, didn't feature in any of Black Caps' assignment for the past two years. In the 93 international games across formats, he scored 2,277 runs with two hundreds and 10 half-centuries. He also picked up 90 wickets. "It's been a huge honour and (I am) extremely proud to represent New Zealand," Anderson, who holds the record for the fastest ODI century for his 36-ball innings against West Indies in 2013, was quoted as saying by *'Cricbuzz'*. — *PTI*

PCB to probe team Covid cases in NZ

Karachi: The Pakistan Cricket Board has started a probe into how as many as 10 players tested positive for Covid-19 after landing in New Zealand. The investigation has been launched after it emerged that some players from one or two teams in the ongoing domestic Quaid-e-Azam Trophy had complained of coughing, fever and sneezing — symptoms of a possible Covid-19 infection — just a few days before they left for the tour of New Zealand.

NZ's push for 1st Test win stalled

Hamilton: New Zealand's push for an innings victory over the West Indies in the first cricket Test was stalled on the third day Saturday by a bold, counter-attacking partnership for the tourists' seventh wicket between Jermaine Blackwood and Alzarri Joseph. New Zealand seemed to be coasting to a win within three days when captain Kane Williamson enforced the follow-on with a 381-run lead after dismissing the West Indies for 138 in reply to their first innings of 519-7 declared. — *AP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

Australia vs India: Second T20 from 1.40 pm on Sony Six, Ten 1

South Africa vs England: Second ODI from 1.30 pm on Star Sports 1

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: West Brom vs Crystal Palace from 5.30 pm; Sheffield vs Leicester City from 7.45 pm; Tottenham Hotspur vs Arsenal from 10 pm; Liverpool vs Wolverhampton Wanderers from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Indian Super League: Mumbai City vs Odisha from 4.50 pm; Goa vs Kerala Blasters from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Italian League: Verona vs Cagliari from 5 pm; Roma vs Sassuolo from 7.30 pm; Crotone vs Napoli from 10.30 pm; Sampdoria vs AC Milan from 1.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

FORMULA ONE

Sakhir Grand Prix: Main race from 10.35 pm on Star Sports Select 2

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Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**

Sub-plot thickens

Cricket fraternity divided over concussion rule

Sydney, Dec. 5: Indian batting great Sunil Gavaskar finds nothing wrong in Yuzvendra Chahal coming on as a "concussion substitute" for Ravindra Jadeja but doesn't like the concept of teams being provided cushion for a batsman's inability to face bouncers.

Chahal replaced Jadeja, who got hit on the head, in the first T20 International and did a star turn with figures of 3 for 25 in the team's 11-run victory in Canberra.

"First and foremost let me say that match referee is a former Australian cricketer David Boon. He was okay with Chahal substituting for Jadeja. They normally say like-for-like and Chahal is not an all-rounder but if he goes out with the bat whether it's one run or 100 run, he is an all-rounder," Gavaskar told *India Today*.

"An Australian match referee had no objection to that. So I don't see why there is so much of noise about it."

One of the greatest batsmen to have played the game, Gavaskar however doesn't endorse the concept as he feels it is a leverage given to batters for a technical deficiency.

"On the business of concussion substitute itself, I don't agree with it. Maybe I am old fashioned and I have always believed that if you are not good enough to play the bouncer and get hit on the helmet, then you don't deserve a substitute. I am sorry," Gavaskar said, forthright in his observation.

"But at the moment, it is being allowed as part of the rules of the game and according to the rules of the game, there was no problem with Chahal playing instead of Ravi Jadeja."

'RULES SHOULD BE USED FAIRLY'

Former Australia captain Mark Taylor has cautioned against



Ravindra Jadeja (third from left) has a trainer tend to his leg during the first T20 international between India and Australia at Manuka Oval, in Canberra, on Friday.

— AP

abusing the concussion substitute rule, saying it is for the protection of players and needs to be used fairly and responsibly.

"The concussion rules are there to protect players," Taylor was quoted as saying by *'Sydney Morning Herald'*.

"If they are abused there's a chance it will go like the runner's rule. The reason the runners were outlawed was because it started to be abused. It's up to the players to make sure they use the concussion sub fairly and responsibly." — *PTI*

INDIANS READY TO HIT TEST MODE

Sydney, Dec. 5: India will look to figure out their playing XI as the Test squad gets into the groove by taking on Australia 'A' in a three-day warm-up game at Drummoyne Oval from Sunday. With India and Australia playing the second T20I on the same day, the visiting Test squad has been named India 'A' for the first of the two practice games scheduled ahead of the four-Test series.

The tour games will be a chance to sort out India's

combinations both in the batting and bowling departments ahead of opening Day-Night Test scheduled at Adelaide from December 17. In batting, Mayank Agarwal is set to open the innings but there is a question mark over his partner with the choice being between Prithvi Shaw and Shubman Gill.

While Shaw was preferred in the New Zealand series, he struggled for consistency in the IPL. Gill, on the other hand, have scored

440 runs for Kolkata Knight Riders.

The other option is K.L. Rahul, who has been in rampaging form and also formed a formidable pair with Mayank for the Kings XI Punjab, but the last time he had played a Test was in September 2019.

In the bowling department, Jasprit Bumrah, who was rested for the opening T20I, is expected to play the practice match as he looks to get into Test mode. — *PTI*

Pujara subjected to racism in UK

Leeds, Dec. 5: English county side Yorkshire finds itself in the centre of a raging issue with their former players and employees backing cricketer Azeem Rafiq's claims of "institutional racism" at the club, including reference to India's Cheteshwar Pujara with a generic name.

Former West Indies international Tino Best and Pakistan's Rana Naved-ul-Hasan provided evidence in support of Rafiq as part of an ongoing investigations into his allegations.

According to *ESPNCricinfo*, two former Yorkshire employees — Taj Butt and Tony Bowry — have also given evidence against the club which has institutionalised racism. "There were continuous references to taxi drivers and restaurant workers when referring to (the) Asian community," Butt, who was employed within the Yorkshire Cricket Foundation as a community development officer, was quoted as saying by the cricket portal.

"They called every person of colour 'Steve'. Even (India batsman) Cheteshwar Pujara, who joined as an overseas professional, was called Steve because they could not pronounce his name."

Butt tendered his resig-



Cheteshwar Pujara

nation within six weeks of joining.

Having worked as a coach until 1996, Bowry was the cultural diversity officer at the Yorkshire Cricket Board from 1996 until 2011, before he was appointed as a cricket development manager to develop the game for black communities.

"Many youngsters struggled to make progress, and the few that did found the environment of the dressing rooms very difficult and unwelcoming, as a direct result of racism they faced," Bowry said.

"It affected performance... they were labelled trouble-makers." — *PTI*

NorthEast Utd two good for EB

Goa, Dec 5: NorthEast United FC piled further misery on SC East Bengal with a 2-0 win in their Hero Indian Super League Season 7 encounter here.

A Surchandra Singh (33') own goal and an injury-time strike from Rochharzela (90') helped the Highlanders remain unbeaten and climb to second spot in the league table. East Bengal are yet to score in the league. SCEB will be disappointed that a good display did not lead to points, with a couple of key refereeing decisions going against them.

SCEB coach Robbie Fowler made a solitary change to his starting XI which suffered a 0-3 defeat to Mumbai City FC with Sehnaj Singh coming in place of Daniel Fox.

NEUFC coach Gerard

Nus continued to shuffle his squad making five changes to the side that drew against FC Goa. Gurmeet, Ashutosh Mehta, Mashoor Shereef, Kwesi Appiah and Ninthoingamba Meetei were back in the playing eleven.

MUMBAI EYE THIRD STRAIGHT WIN

With a well-oiled unit at their disposal, in-form Mumbai City FC will be eyeing their third successive win when they take on Odisha FC in Bambolim, Goa, on Sunday.

Mumbai first registered a 1-0 win against FC Goa and then routed East Bengal 3-0 in their last game.

Much will again depend on how strikers Adam Le Fondre and Bartholomew Ogbeche fare. Fondre scored a brace in the game against East Bengal.

Cullinan wants MSD in coaching role

NEHA SURANA | DC CHENNAI, DEC. 5

Former South African batsman Darryll Cullinan expects M.S. Dhoni to take up coaching or a mentoring role in a few years. Dhoni has retired from international cricket, but is expected to play one more IPL season for the Chennai Super Kings.

"Dhoni's iconic status goes beyond the cricket ground. I am sure we will have him in a mentorship role, guiding children, if not as a coach. He might not be on the field but I am sure he wants to build a team for the future," said Cullinan after launching the MS Dhoni-Centre for Sports Sciences' High Performance Centre at Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research.

Research on Saturday. Cullinan will make frequent visits to Chennai as Director of Coaching at the high performance centre, set up in partnership with



Darryll Cullinan at the launch of the MS Dhoni-Centre for Sports Sciences' High Performance Centre at Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research.

Aarka Sports Management Private Limited.

The 53-year-old South African who played 138 ODIs and 70 Tests said it would be interesting to see

how the next IPL auction pans out for Dhoni's CSK.

"They had a tough season after the double pullouts of Suresh Raina and Harbhajan Singh. It will be exciting to see what Dhoni does at the next auction," Cullinan added.

Cullinan feels the academy could become one among the top cricket destinations in the world. "I also hope it becomes a CSK academy. This place has everything to offer, with state-of-the-art technology. It's quite spectacular," he said.

Cullinan said the academy will offer scholarships. "It's MS's vision to take cricket to all parts of the country. There are 40 more institutes in the offing. It will help identify young cricketers in the U-16 age group," he said.



Everton's Dominic Calvert-Lewin scores against Burnley during their English Premier League match at Turf Moor in Burnley on Saturday.

— AP

DOMINIC RESCUES POINT FOR EVERTON

Burnley, Dec. 5: Dominic Calvert-Lewin scored his 11th Premier League goal of the season on Saturday to rescue a point for Everton in a 1-1 draw against struggling Burnley.

Everton were the surprise early season pacesetters in the English top-flight

but have lost their way in recent weeks, defeated in four of their previous five league games. Carlo Ancelotti's team trailed early at Turf Moor after a fine strike by midfielder Robbie Brady but England forward Calvert-Lewin levelled on the stroke of half-time. — *AFP*

Chahal for concussed Jadeja was a legitimate switch



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

India's recovery after losing the ODI series in the first two matches itself has been smart and impressive. Winning the third ODI against the trend of play showed resolve, resilience and wherewithal, which was being seriously questioned. It also created the confidence to win the first T20 international.

There was some quirky luck for India when Yuzvendra Chahal, who came in as 'concussion

substitute' for Ravindra Jadeja did the star turn, picking up three wickets. Without Jadeja's batting and Chahal's bowling, India would never have won, so maybe the Man of the Match award should have been shared between the two!

That the Aussies did not like how the substitution was carried out was evident from coach Justin Langer haranguing match referee David Boon during the innings changeover.

Australia's objections, as one understands from reports, was on two fronts.

One, since Jadeja continued batting after being hit on the helmet, was this strictly a case for concussion substitution? Second, was Chahal for Jadeja a "like-for-like" replacement which this rule demands? Debate on the matter will doubtless continue for some time. What's clear though is that the decision of the referee is final and binding, so Chahal for Jadeja in the first T20 was a legitimate switch.

The momentum is now with India, and if the T20 series can be won, it will be a shot in the arm for the team which looked so beleaguered in the first two ODIs. There is no scope for

excuses at the highest level and India — to put it bluntly — were outplayed and outclassed by the Aussies in the first two matches of the ODI series.

But it must also be acknowledged that unlike the Aussies, who've played a bilateral series in England and also some domestic Sheffield Shield cricket — plus the IPL for those who were in the league — India's players have had no such opportunities apart from the IPL.

Even being in a bio-secure bubble at home is an advantage, which is why I think this turnaround by the Indian team has been quite remarkable. Issue now is sustenance — of form and fitness — and resource management by

the support staff as there is still a lot of cricket remaining on this tour.

Jadeja, for instance, will not play in the remaining two T20s. That is a major blow considering he is a genuine all-rounder and has been in excellent form with bat though his bowling has been found wanting. In the T20s for instance, will he be replaced by Chahal? And if so does that weaken the Indian batting?

This is Kohli/Shastri's immediate vexing problem. In a slightly longer time frame is the bigger concern: will Jadeja be fully fit for the first Test? The Test series which starts on December 17 is the main assignment and India will want all their

players ready, physically and mentally, more so with Virat Kohli returning home after the first match.

Hopefully, Rohit Sharma will be on the flight to Australia after the NCA medical staff assess him on December 11, but there are still other areas to cover adequately. Some of these may be linked to injury and rehab (like Jadeja), some to form and having back up players in place.

This is where I believe Hardik Pandya and T. Natarajan can be of great value. Though neither was in the original Test squad, their presence in Australia can be exploited. Both Pandya don't have to go through the mandatory quarantine process which

any other player would have to. And their skills are no less pertinent.

While Pandya was left out from the Test squad because he isn't bowling much, his batting in white ball cricket on this tour has been magnificent. He could be an asset as a batsman alone. Debutant Natarajan has impressed hugely in the two white ball matches he's played.

As a left arm seamer he brings variety in the attack. He wasn't originally in the ODI squad too. Drafted in late, he made an impact. Even if he's not played, just the experience of being with the team in such an important series would be an invaluable learning curve for Natarajan.