

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | WEDNESDAY 30 | DECEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 28°C
Min: 21°C
Rainfall: 2 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Margazhi 15
Tithi: Pournami/ Prathamai
Star: Thiruvathirai
Rahukalam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm
Yamagandam:
7.30 am to 9 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.11 am
Zohar: 12.13 pm
Asar: 3.23 pm
Maghrib: 5.48 pm
Isha: 7.04 pm

Famed French designer Pierre Cardin dies at 98

Paris: Frances Academy of Fine Arts says Pierre Cardin, the French designer whose Space Age style was among the iconic looks of 20th-century fashion, has died at 98. A licensing maverick, Cardins name embossed myriad products from wristwatches to bedsheets, making his label among the worlds most famous.

COUNTER POINT



You are lucky! You tested positive for Covid-19, not its variant!

STATE | 3

I don't hanker for CM's post, says Palaniswami



WORLD | 5

Biden sees risk in transition stalling

SPORT | 6

India floor Aussies on Day Four of Boxing Day Test



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Health conditions stop Rajini from making late political entry

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 29



With just a couple of days left for the scheduled announcement on his new political party, actor Rajinikanth, citing health reasons, called off his entry into electoral politics on Tuesday through a statement issued on Twitter.

In a three-page statement, Rajinikanth said that he would do whatever good he could to people without contesting elections and that he considered his taking ill at the shooting of the film *Annaathe* in Hyderabad as a warning from God.

Narrating the sequence of events, he said he went for the shooting despite the advice of doctors.

Though the around 250

members of the film unit underwent tests for Covid-19 infection daily, maintained social distancing and wore face masks and shields, four of them tested positive, leading to the immediate cancellation of shooting.

"My test results were negative, but my blood pressure was not stable and constantly fluctuating. As per my medical conditions, I should not have constant fluctuations in blood pressure, as it

would severely affect my transplanted kidney," Rajinikanth said.

If he were to start the party he would not be able to create the sort of revival he wanted only through media and social media campaigns, he said, adding, "I will have to meet people, attend meetings and go on campaigns that would hamper my health".

In view of an expected second wave of coronavirus infection, even though vaccines might be available soon, if he, who had been on immunosuppressants, took ill, it would put those accompanying him in his political journey into trouble, both economically and emotionally, he said.

"If I enter politics just

because people would talk ill of me for going back on my promise, I would be making a scapegoat of the fellow travellers, reposing faith in me," he said. He sought forgiveness from members of Rajini Makkal Mandram and his fans, who have been expecting him to start a political party, for disappointing them.

"For the last three years, members of the Mandram have been following my instructions sincerely. Even during the corona lockdown, you went ahead to help people in need, following all safety precautions and consistently served the people. Your good deeds will definitely come back to you and your family," he said.

■ More on P2

UK returnee tests +ve for new variant of Covid-19 in TN: Govt

DC CORRESPONDENTS
CHENNAI, NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

One person who returned to Tamil Nadu from the UK has tested positive for the new strain of coronavirus, health secretary J. Radhakrishnan said on Tuesday even as the union government said all the six UK returnees, including the one from Tamil Nadu who have been found to be positive with the new mutated Covid-19 variant genome have been kept in single-room isolation in designated health facilities by the respective state governments and

their close contacts have also been put under quarantine. These are just the initial results and more cases of mutated virus detection cannot be ruled out, the government said.

"The Centre has confirmed that one person from the state has been affected by the UK strain," Mr Radhakrishnan told reporters here.

While he has been isolated in a separate room in the King Institute of Preventive Medicine and Research in the city, his co-passengers and other contacts have been tested and found negative for Covid.

Home ministry sets up control room to monitor New Year celebrations

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

Following the sharp increase in Corona cases during Diwali, the Union home ministry has set up a centralised control room to co-ordinate with major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore among others to ensure that all safety and health protocols are strictly followed during new year celebrations. ■ P4

Talk only on how to repeal laws, farmers tell govt

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

A day before the next round of talks, protesting farmers' unions told the government on Tuesday that the discussion will only be on the modalities of repealing the three farm legislations. ■ P4

103 kg gold in CBI custody stolen with duplicate keys

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENAI, DEC. 29

The CB-CID police here on Tuesday said that 103 kgs of gold worth ₹45 crore that went missing from the custody of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), was reportedly stolen by using duplicate keys. ■ P3

NMR services to resume on Dec. 31

Ooty: The Southern Railway has finally bowed to public demand and decided to resume regular train services in the Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR). It had come under widespread criticism for giving nod for chartered train services in NMR and also for its silence over the public demand to resume regular hill train services. ■ P3

Man gets triple death penalty for child rape-murder

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
PUDUKKOTTAI, DEC. 29

The fast track Mahila court here on Tuesday awarded three death sentences to a 25-year-old man for murdering a 7-year-old-girl after sexually assaulting her at Pudukkottai.

According to the prosecution, the accused, Samivel alias Raja of at Embal in Pudukkottai district and a

The judge directed the Tamil Nadu Government to pay a compensation of ₹5 lakh to the victim's mother

flower vendor, kidnapped, sexually assaulted and murdered the girl who was playing near her house in the same village on June 30 this year. Later, he threw her body into a water body. Based on the complaint of the victim's mother on July 1, the Embal police arrested

the accused the next day under the Pocco Act and filed a case.

The accused who escaped from police custody was later nabbed.

The judge, Dr. R. Sathya, awarded death sentences to the accused on three counts and also sentenced him to

undergo a life sentence on another count of offence. She also convicted and sentenced the accused to undergo seven years rigorous imprisonment each in two other counts and also slapped a fine of ₹5,000 on two counts.

The judge directed that if the accused failed to remit the fine, he should undergo two more months of rigorous imprisonment.

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IN BRIEF

Central team inspects Burevi damages

DC CORRESPONDENT
RAMANATHAPURAM, DEC 29

An eight-member inter-ministerial central team assessed the damages caused by cyclone 'Burevi' in the district on Tuesday.

The team led by joint secretary, union home ministry, Ashutosh Agnihotri, arrived here on Monday, and met with state government officials led by TN additional chief secretary, Phanindra Reddy, at a hotel here on Monday evening (December 28).

On Tuesday morning, the team visited the fishing harbours at Rameswaram and Kunthukal harbour in Pamban, and studied the damages caused by Burevi to the fishing boats and infrastructure there.

The team later left Ramanathapuram district for Pudukottai district for inspection.

Two youth held for murder

DC CORRESPONDENT
KUMBakonam, DEC 29

The Kumbakonam East police arrested two youth on Tuesday in connection with the murder of a coolie, identified as Sridhar (38) of Srinagar Colony in Kumbakonam.

According to the police, Sridhar's body was found on Monday at Srinagar Colony with burns and head injury. When the police checked the CCTV footage in that area, it was found that Sridhar was waiting to fill petrol to his two-wheeler in a bunk on Monday night. Two youth were filling petrol to their vehicles in front of Sridhar. As Sridhar asked them to fill petrol quickly, an altercation ensued and the youth in an inebriated mood assaulted Sridhar, who ran into Srinagar Colony leaving his vehicle. The youth chased him, beat him with a rod, poured petrol and set him on fire.

The police found that the two youth were Santosh (21) and Ajith (23) of Darasuram. The police arrested them on Tuesday and on interrogation they agreed that they killed Sridhar. The two were produced in court and remanded to custody.

Edu dept got ₹27,500 cr in budget

DC CORRESPONDENT
ARIYALUR, DEC. 29

The state government has given top priority to the education department by allocating Rs 27,500 crore in its annual budget, according to chief whip Thamarai S. Rajendran.

He said in Ariyalur district, cost-free cycles were given to 6,294 students at a cost of ₹2.49 crore. Ariyalur Collector T. Rathna distributed the bicycles to the students of Ariyalur and Jayankondam at a function on Tuesday. She added that the government has also given 14 educational accessories free of cost to the students in order to concentrate on studies.

I don't hanker for CM's post, says Palaniswami

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NAMAKKAL, DEC. 29

Chief Minister K. Palaniswami on Tuesday said he does not hanker for the high post of CM but considered himself as "in-charge" having overall responsibility to "execute the task" people assign to him. His role as chief minister was only to serve the people as what remained everlasting is one's good deeds. The chief minister who launched "Vetrinadai Podum Tamizhagam" (Tamil Nadu leading the way), his poll campaign in Rasipuram in this district, said the people are the real chief ministers. "Earlier I was introduced as the chief minister. But I see everyone of you as chief minister. The people are the real chief ministers because you gave me this post which I accepted as in-charge to serve you, to execute the task you assign to me."

"Like others, I don't hanker for the chief minister's chair because as one hailing from a village I wish to work hard," Palaniswami said amid thunderous applause from party workers who had gathered in large numbers.

He said he came up in life through sheer hard



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, who is in Namakkal to launch Vetrinadai Podum Tamizhagam, his poll campaign, greets the public after garlanding MGR statue at Rasipuram new bus stand on Tuesday.

—DC

work. "I came up by working hard and thank our leaders (Late chief ministers) M. G. Ramachandran and J. Jayalalithaa for this. What remains everlasting is our achievements."

"This is what both our leaders have left behind through their good deeds," Palaniswami, whom the ruling AIADMK has announced as the chief ministerial candidate for the 2021 polls, said. He is also the AIADMK's co-coordinator. Training his guns against DMK chief M. K. Stalin, the chief

minister accused him of spreading misinformation that AIADMK party men are involved in door-to-door distribution of tokens for collecting the Pongal gift of ₹2,500. Stalin was spreading false information as he was unable to digest the fact that the Pongal cash gift scheme received overwhelming response from the people, he alleged. His government had announced a Pongal cash gift of ₹2,500 and hampers to all rice cardholders in the state, as the poor people are affected due to pandemic.

"He is doing so because the AIADMK will earn a good reputation among the people," he said. Palaniswami, who earlier offered prayers at the Anjaneyar Temple in Namakkal, appealed to the people to cast their votes in favour of the Two Leaves, the AIADMK symbol, in the next year's Assembly elections, due in April-May. He campaigned while sipping tea at a house and interacting with traders and vendors at the temple premises.

SHRC asks constable to pay ₹1L compensation to jeweller

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 29

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has directed a constable to pay a compensation of ₹1 lakh to a jeweller for registering a false case against him and assaulting him.

In the petition, jeweller Saran Srinivasan stated that he had gone to his grandmother's house to help her in November 2016. He went to buy milk at 11 pm on November 13, 2016. A police constable and three other cops, who were on patrol duty at the P o n n i a m m a n e d u , Prakash Nagar, Madhavaram auxiliary police station stopped him, and constable Thavasi Anandan questioned him. He replied by sitting on his two-wheeler and showed his driving licence and vehicle-related documents. Angered by this Thavasi Anandan slapped him, asking how dare he answer him sitting on the bike, without respecting him. Srinivasan stumbled and fell down with the vehicle.

Anandan assaulted the complainant with a lathi and put him in a cell in the police station. He pushed him into a room and made him sit with undergarments. He was beaten several times on the spinal cord,

hands and back. Anandan kicked the complainant in both legs with his boots. He was released from the police station after collecting a bribe of ₹200 from his parents. He was admitted to Stanley Medical College Government General Hospital.

In the reply, Thavasi Anandan denied the allegations and stated that the petitioner was taken into custody. SHRC member A. Chittaranjan Mohandoss said, it is clearly stated that as per section 41(1)(a) the powers of the police officer is to arrest any person who commits a cognizable offence. As per this section, if the complainant was arrested for a serious crime, how did the police set the accused free on that same night. Does this raise many questions about whether serious offenders involved in the cognizable offences were allowed to go out freely without any order from the court of law?

The complainant had suffered humiliation in the hands of the cops and had violated the human rights of the complainant. Hence, the SHRC directed Thavasi Anandan to pay a compensation of ₹1 lakh and recommended the government to initiate disciplinary action against him.

Software engineer killed in accident

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 29

A 24-year-old software engineer was killed in a road accident near Pallavaram on Tuesday night. Jaivendhan (24), who worked in a software firm in Perungudi was returning home after his night shift.

He was on a two-wheeler on Pallavaram-Thoraipakkam 200 feet radial road, at into 12 midnight, when he reportedly lost control of the vehicle and rammed against an elec-

tric pole on the road. He was thrown off the motorbike and subsequently suffered injuries.

Other motorists who witnessed the freak accident, alerted and ambulance and rushed him to a private hospital in Pallikaranai, however he was declared dead on arrival. St. Thomas mount traffic investigation wing police registered a case and sent the body of the deceased for postmortem at the Government hospital in Chromepet.



Government multi super speciality hospital, Omandur, Director Dr R. Vimala and hospital nodal officer Dr Ananda Kumar greet Rakesh after his surgery.

—DC

15 including SI arrested for gambling; ₹35,000 seized

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 29

Chennai police on Tuesday arrested 15 persons including a police sub-inspector for indulging in gambling at a bungalow in Perungudi near Tambaram. The police have also seized Rs 35,000 and card decks from them.

The operation was carried out by a police team headed by Tambaram Assistant Commissioner Ukrapandi acting on a complaint. The team arrested, Kanchipuram

Baluchettychatram police station SI, Sampath (58), Retired Fire officer Moorthy (59), Ponnuswamy (58), Arul Jothi (50), Parbhu Das (42) Krishnan (45), Purushothaman (27), Raja (45), Selvaraj (69), Ram Kumar (30) Thangaraj (53) Shankar (42), Krishnan (43), Venkatesh (29) and Jayakumar (48), who were gambling with cash at a bungalow in Perungudi.

Special teams have been formed in the city to thwart illegal gambling, both online and offline, which has been on

the rise recently.

Notably, in July, actor Shaam and 12 others who were present at a gambling party at his house in Chennai's Nungambakam area were detained and then let off. Police seized gambling tokens and cards from the premises. First Information Report (FIR) under Section 45 (Penalty for opening, etc., a common gaming-house), Section 46 (Penalty for being found gaming in a common gaming-house) of the City Police Act was filed against the group of people.

Drones, gold and cigars worth ₹47.8 lakh seized

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 29

Gold worth ₹41.63 lakh and drones worth ₹6.17 lakh were seized by the Chennai air customs. Products valued up to ₹47.8 lakh were seized from four flyers and one passenger has been arrested by the Chennai Customs.

According to an official statement from the department, Chennai residents, Karuppasamy (65) and Sasikuma (41) who arrived from Dubai by flight FZ 8517, were intercepted at the exit.

On examining their bags, four drones, 10 batteries valued at ₹4.17 lakhs and 100 cartons of Benson & Hedges cigarettes valued at ₹2 lakhs were recovered and seized.

Similarly, Sathakkathulla Mohamed Ismail (52) of Ramanathapuram who had arrived from the same flight was intercepted.

On his search, a strip of gold paste weighing 150 grams was recovered from inside his underwear which on extraction yielded 130

grams of gold. Also, Two gold chains weighing 84 grams were recovered from his pant pocket. In total 214 grams of gold valued at ₹11 lakhs was seized from him.

In another case on the same day, Puviarasan (25) of Mannargudi in Tamil Nadu who arrived from Dubai by Emirates flight EK544 was stopped and on his search, three bundles of gold paste were recovered from the rectum which on extraction yielded 593 grams of gold valued at Rs 30.63 lakhs. The same was recovered and seized under the Customs Act 1962. Puviarasan was arrested by the Airport Customs.

Further investigations are under progress.

Help retrieve auto, woman urges SP

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC
ERODE, DEC. 29

Police are investigating a complaint filed by a woman with the Superintendent of Police here on Tuesday, seeking action on a gang which snatched away her husband's load auto.

The woman, who identified herself as Kamala (26), stated in her petition that her husband, Arumugam, hailed from Attani Karuvalpadiputhurai near Anthiyur, in Erode district.

Kamala said that her husband owned and operated a load auto for a living. "We have two children. My husband had borrowed Rs 20,000 from a person from Attani for family expenses, and he could not repay the loan due to lack of work caused by the curfew.

On December 26, some people came to my husband asking for interest. They scolded him mentioning his caste name, beat him up severely, and took away his load auto.

Arumugam has been admitted to the Anthiyur government hospital for treatment. When Kamala went to lodge a complaint with the Appakkudal police, no action was taken. Hence, she approached the Superintendent of Police seeking action against the gang, and secure her husband's load auto.

Youth's partial paralysis of right arm cured

N. SAMPATH | DC
CHENNAI, DEC.29

Rakesh, 19, from Villupuram was successfully treated for partial paralysis of his right arm at the Government Multi Super Speciality Hospital, Omandur recently. He met with a road accident in March.

The patient suffered a nerve cut in the neck which led to the paralysis and was rushed to the hospital in a critical state.

After a series of MRI scans and tests, it was found that the injury in

the neck led to nerve damage at two places which stopped movement of the hand. The doctors, in a surgery, fixed the cuts of the nerve and as a follow up, physiotherapy, nerve stimulation training and rehabilitation were given. Government Multi Super Speciality Hospital Director Dr R Vimala and nodal officer Dr Ananda Kumar said the patient had a successful surgery and regained complete mobility of the hand.

In another instance, a 25-year-old man from Manali in Himachal Pradesh, who

was suffering from fatigue and abdominal pain for a few months, went to the Government Stanley Hospital in Chennai for treatment. He could not continue the treatment for abdominal pain as his blood pressure was high. When he visited the Omandur Government General Hospital, doctors found that he had a tumour in his adrenal gland and removed it and the tumour. After the surgery, the patient has controlled blood pressure and the abdominal pain has been cured.

NMR services to resume on Dec. 31 Gold from CBI custody stolen using duplicate keys, says CB-CID

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, DEC. 29

The Southern Railway has finally bowed to public demand by deciding to resume regular train services in the Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR).

It had come under widespread criticism for giving nod for chartered train services in NMR and also for its silence over the public demand to resume regular hill train services.

In a release, the Southern Railway stated that the hill train services in the Mettupalayam-Ooty section of the NMR will resume on a daily basis with effect from December 31. Upon resump-

tion, the NMR services will be operated as "fully reserved special trains".

A pair of fully reserved special trains will ply between Mettupalayam and Ooty and three pairs of fully reserved special trains will be operated between Coonoor and Ooty.

All the Covid-19 safety protocols will be strictly followed.

Passengers are requested to wear face masks and keep social distance.

The fare structure which was in force before corona virus period (prior to suspension of services) will continue. Advance booking for the above special trains is open.

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 29

The CB-CID police here on Tuesday said that 103 kg of gold worth Rs 45 crore that went missing from the custody of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), was reportedly stolen by using duplicate keys.

The gold, which is part of 400.47 kg in bullion and ornaments, was confiscated by the CBI during its searches at Surana Corporation Ltd., Chennai office, in 2012. This was found to be missing from CBI custody. But the incident came to public light after the Madras High court, taking cognizance of

the matter, directed the Tamil Nadu Crime Branch-CID police to investigate the case.

After the raids at Surana's Chennai office in 2012, the yellow metal was kept in the safes and vaults of Surana Corporation under the lock and seal of the CBI.

The central agency claims that it had handed over the 72 keys of the safes and vaults at Surana Corporation to the Chennai principal special court that looks into CBI cases.

The agency had searched the building of Surana Corporation and prepared a search list.

The search list mentioned 400.47 kg of gold being inventoried and kept in the safes and vaults of Surana, sealed in the presence of independent witnesses and Surana Corporation MD, and other company officials.

The CBI claimed that the vaults were opened in presence of the official liquidator, officials associated with six banks and independent witnesses, and inspected between February 27 and February 29 this year, to hand over the gold to the lender banks of Surana, as per High Court directions.

The seals on the vaults were found to be untouched. The gold, however, weighing around 296 kg, meaning around 103 kg of gold was found missing from the vault.

Regarding the case, a five-member team of CB-CID officials headed by SP Vijayakumar, inspected the premises of Surana Corporation located on the NSC Bose road, on Tuesday. Officials have recovered CCTV footage and other related documents from the premises. After the inspection, CB-CID police said that the locker had been opened with duplicate keys.

Woman held for attempting to kill son over illicit relationship

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, DEC. 29

A 21-year-old woman has been arrested by the police for allegedly attempting to murder her five-year-old son, over an illicit relationship. The woman was arrested after her son told police that her mother attempt-

ed to strangle him.

According to the police, the arrested woman has been identified as Chitra, a resident of

Sriperumbudur in Kanchipuram district. Police said Chitra lived with his two sons, Karthik (5) and Arun (2), along with her partner Anandhan (45). However,

the sources said, recently, Arun died after suffering burns in a fire accident that happened in the house.

It is said that Chitra developed an illicit relationship with a man in the neighbourhood, and thought Karthik would be a hindrance to the relationship and subse-

quently hatched a plan to eliminate him with the help of her paramour.

As planned a few days ago, the woman attempted to strangle Karthik in his sleep, however, he woke up and managed to escape from the house. Meanwhile, two days before, a few residents spotted Karthik near

Sriperumbudur and brought him home. However, he refused to go to her mother and alleged that she tried to kill him.

He was then handed over to the Sriperumbudur police, who held an inquiry with the boy. During the inquiry, he told police that Chitra strangled her

and he escaped from the house.

Based on his inputs police arrested Chitra on Tuesday. A case has been registered and further investigations are underway, the police said. The police are also investigating if she had any role in the death of her two-year-old son.

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For further details and free downloading of tender documents visit www.tenders.tn.gov.in. If the date of receipt of tenders happens to be a holiday, the tender will be received on the next working day.	
DHPR / 5055 / TENDER / 2020 Chief Engineer, PWD, Technical Education circle, Chennai- 29	

DECCAN Chronicle

30 DECEMBER 2020

New strain demands a relook at measures

Reports of six returnees from United Kingdom testing positive for the new coronavirus strain are reason enough for the government and the people to be alert again against the threat of the pandemic Covid-19 marking another deadly wave across the nation. Experts are of the opinion that the new strain spreads at a faster pace than the original variant, and hence the government must put in place stringent measures to stop its spread.

The government has already decided that the guidelines for surveillance, which were to be effective till December 31, will continue to be in force till January 31. This is welcome, but it must consider if this is enough. Schools and colleges across the country, as well as entertainment centres, are in the process of opening, though under strict controls. Mass transport systems, such as railways are also easing the controls, albeit slowly. The government must examine the option of pressing the pause button on the “unlock” process in view of the discovery of the new strain, taking, of course, the nation’s economic interests, also into account. It must ensure that there is an aggressive contact tracing, isolation and treatment for all the affected in all the cases, unlike the way the country handled it when the virus arrived first time earlier this year. It must also consider relaunching the mass awareness programme it kicked off ahead of the festival season as the new strain could find the New Year festivities a perfect medium through which to afflict more people.

The government must examine the option of pressing the pause button on the ‘unlock’ process in view of the discovery of the new strain, taking, of course, the nation’s economic interests, also into account

and the government has put in place a proper policy and mechanism to inoculate all the susceptible groups of people. It is reassuring that the government is now rolling out a dry run for the vaccination drive. But the real issue will be the availability of the vaccine in the required quantity in time, meeting the logistical challenges such as cold chain and the financial wherewithal to carry out the operation.

Vaccination is going to be a massive process given that the government is considering vaccinating about 30 crores of the population. There are reports that a sizeable section of the global population is resisting the idea. That must be true for India, too, and it will necessitate another major public awareness campaign. There are already exaggerated reports about the after-effects of the vaccination flying thick and fast in mainstream, alternate and social media. The government must take early steps to ensure that such propagandists face the legal music. All its actions must be guided by the fact that the virus has not gone away and that it is making an attempt to make a virulent return. A stitch in time can save nine, so goes the saying.

Just not cricket

Naming a cricket stadium after a politician-administrator is not new to India. But to have his statue erected as well as to name the historic Feroz Shah Kotla after him appears a bit of a stretch even if the personality honoured thus was Arun Jaitley, who was a leading BJP figure in his lifetime. In a country known to relish the celebration of death and birth anniversaries, it may have been par for the course to perpetuate the memory of a leader. In this case, encomiums for a departed soul comes at the cost of the traditions of the great game of cricket, which has principally recognised sporting talent on the field.

Sports lovers grow up worshipping their heroes and, as they age they learn to respect athletes for their skills and for sweat and blood they shed to perform in a competitive environment. The administrator is a different breed. In India, most of them are attracted to the so-called honorary posts in sports admin because of perquisites and privileges. Furthermore, cricket is not only a social entree but also a key to the powerful inhabiting spaces in the corridors of politics and bureaucracy.

Politicians have been drawn to Indian cricket admin like moths to a flame. Many made sport their fiefdom, ruling like martinets while basking in reflected glory as champions have to interact with them. This is one reason why Bishan Bedi, a cricketer famous for calling a spade a shovel, found his hackles rising with the decision to erect a 800-kg statue for Jaitley who made himself a fixture at the Delhi & Districts Cricket Association.

An incensed Bedi has threatened to sue if his name is not removed from the stand honouring him and fetting his achievements in the game as a bowler of spin in a seductive arc with a graceful action that was poetry in motion. Jaitley, for all his intellectual attainments as a forceful lawyer with a gifted gab and the country’s finance minister, had no claim to mastery of an art form. So why should his name adorn a sporting arena?

Subhani



After DDC: Will Centre further alienate J&K?



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

Propaganda apart, the result of the recent District Development Council elections in Jammu and Kashmir cannot have pleased the Narendra Modi government. This was the first proper test of popular endorsement in J&K after the willful destruction by the Centre of the erstwhile state’s constitutional autonomy in August 2019, imbuing the elections with more than ordinary significance.

While the Hindutva party won three stray seats (with no linking thread, or political meaning) in the Kashmir Valley, it lost quite heavily even in Hindu-dominant parts of the Jammu division. In these, the Valley-centric parties picked up seats.

Indeed, the BJP fared a lot worse here than it had in the Assembly election of 2014, which is a kind of comment on its all-round militaristic control of J&K since it scuttled its coalition government with Mehbooba Mufti’s People’s Democratic Party in 2018, possibly with the ulterior motive of playing games to install a Hindu chief minister, if feasible, for the first time in Muslim-majority J&K, or at least a BJP CM by roping in a Muslim.

Since the end of the rule of Maharaja Hari Singh — a Hindu ruler of mostly Muslim subjects — after he signed the Instrument of Accession in October 1947, the Hindu Right has been at odds with all CMs of Kashmir on account of their religion. There was a sense of loss of a “Hindu kingdom” in their narrative.

Breaking up the erstwhile state and making it a Union territory under “Hindu nationalist” control from the Centre might produce a

sense of catharsis. But that’s as far as it goes. Much sought success in the BJP’s bid to seek to stamp its political authority in J&K through the DDC polls failed to materialise. How the Modi government negotiates the terrain here on will therefore be keenly watched. Hindu nationalists are dealing with Muslim citizens in a sensitive region.

The BJP’s outsize celebration of the three Valley seats appears misplaced and pointless in the circumstances. Its chief purpose would appear to be to shore up the morale of the faithful when the picture is one of setback. Although the BJP government held a tight grip over Kashmir from the Centre, the electoral submission of Kashmir has not come to pass.

Obstacles were placed in the way of campaigning of the Kashmir parties. Kashmir’s best-known leaders were maligned as corrupt and their properties sought to be confiscated. Their key cadres were detained. To prevent voting in South Kashmir, cordon and search operations were mounted on polling day in certain constituencies to assist candidates of the BJP or the Apni Party — the quiescent party. The BJP’s opponents were detained yet again before the counting of ballots and after the counting. Does this look like democracy to anyone except the Prime Minister? And yet, it was BJP’s opponents who made themselves heard through the ballot box.

Even in the Hindu-majority area of Jammu, the saffron party could win only about half the seats, facing defeat in the constituencies of some of its key leaders. A below par showing in the Jammu division should be a matter of strategic

concern for the saffron party.

At first glance it suggests that the Hindu populace is no longer gung-ho about the abrogation of Article 370, as appeared to be the case initially. As in some other hill states and remote regions, in J&K too special constitutional protection was given to land rights and government employment for the local population. That has now gone in J&K and the Jammu Hindu is as aggrieved as the Kashmir valley Muslim (or the Pandit).

The story was the reverse in the Valley. The BJP’s bête noire, the People’s Alliance for the Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), a conglomerate of regional parties — National Conference, PDP, People’s Conference and some smaller parties, although traditional rivals, have banded together. Their larger aim is to work for the restoration of J&K’s autonomy. They practically swept the polls in the Valley and made inroads in Jammu.

The formation of the PAGD is the result of a lesson learned. The mainline parties of Kashmir had boycotted the panchayat election two years ago to protest against the Centre’s overbearing attitude after it had imposed Governor’s Rule. The result was that the BJP’s candidates or Independents backed by it won everywhere since there was no contest — in some places by as few as six votes. The Narendra Modi government’s publicised aim was to put the mainstream parties out of business, accusing their leaders of corruption and dynastic rule, and to grow a fresh crop

The method honed in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and the Northeast could well make an entry in J&K. But the more New Delhi alienates Kashmir, the harder it would be to deal with the Pakistan-China axis.

of politicians in the Valley.

To prevent a repeat of the farce of the panchayat polls, the mainstream parties came together as the PAGD. They decided to contest the DDC polls as well as to prevent a division of the anti-BJP vote. But more, it is the people of Kashmir, including those who have no love lost for the mainstream parties, who expressed their determination to keep the BJP and its proxies out of the reckoning.

The reason was straightforward. The saffron party’s government in New Delhi had snatched away Kashmir’s even largely technical autonomy, with which was linked its people’s identity and sense of dignity. The Centre was also impervious to Kashmir’s every need as a society. The Narendra Modi government had reversed the approach of late PM Atal Behari Vajpayee for whom showing respect to Kashmir’s sentiments was bound with India’s strategic imperatives.

In the DDC election it might have served the BJP’s cause best if the Hurriyat Conference (which doesn’t take part in elections) had given a boycott call, as it usually does. Then the BJP would have had a field day. But the Hurriyat did not oblige. The militants too stayed quiet. All of Kashmir appeared determined to show that it was not pleased with what had happened on August 5 last year.

However, the Centre can take revenge if better sense does not prevail. Fifty Independent candidates have been elected to the DDCs. Through the misuse of the official machinery, an effort could be mounted to ensure their defection, a process that has already begun in Shopian district with the defection of a National Conference member. The method honed in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and the Northeast could well make an entry in J&K. But the more that New Delhi alienates Kashmir, the harder it would be to deal with the Pakistan-China axis.

LETTERS

RAJINI’S U-TURN

It is not a surprise that actor Rajinikanth has eased himself out of compulsions to float a new political party in Tamil Nadu. Right from the beginning, the actor had been reluctant to float a party on realising the ground realities. There were external pressures and a few persons whom he trusted most were also encouraging him to form a political party but the actor had been dillydallying for decades and had been consistently inconsistent in his statements released at different intervals. The recent setback in his health condition has come handy for him to become bold enough to announce his decision not to float a political outfit and preferring absolute rest as per the advice of his doctors. Now that Rajini has announced his firm decision to be away from politics, he should also refrain from extending his support to any party and leave it to the judgment of the Tamil Nadu electorate to decide who should rule them in the next five years.

Shalini Gerald, Chennai

■ **THE ANNOUNCEMENT** by actor Rajinikanth through Twitter that he would not be entering politics citing his health conditions and ongoing Covid-19 pandemic just two days before he was to reveal the details of the launch of his political party has come as a saddening news to hundreds of thousands of fans and supporters who were eagerly looking forward to his political plunge for decades. His recent hospitalisation following the fluctuations in his blood pressure readings and the advice of doctors to avoid stress and public contacts might have prompted the actor to backtrack from his early decision to float a political party. His right as a citizen to take a decision whether to launch a political party or not must be respected. Any attempts to ascribe motives for his decision to stay away from electoral battles other than what he had stated through Twitter needs to be decried.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

BOUNCING BACK IN STYLE

TEAM INDIA bounced back splendidly against Australia in the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne to keep the series alive at 1-1. While Skipper Rahane’s deft handling of bowlers, his classic century, new-comer Siraj’s effective bowling, Jadeja’s all-round performance and war horse Ashwin’s tight wicket grabbing spells are commendable, the repeated poor shows of Mayank Agarwal and Pujara do cause concern.

S. Vaithianathan, Madurai

Raj Mohan Tella



In 2020, did smart words keep you company?

Words have an awesome power. We all know that words can help us express our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, likes and dislikes. Words also help us describe situations — how about *slightly touchy* or *demographically explosive*? Arm them and you can spread both positive or negative energy — *You mean the world to me; I hate you*. The same word can take on a completely different meaning given the context. Some examples are “fire”, “sound”, “kill it”. What do you think this sentence means? *“Dude, Raja killed the biryani!”* A favourite word grouping of millennials, but if you are unaware, to “kill” actually means “to do something exceedingly well”. Words have many ways of actually reflecting our current preoccupations and trends. I believe that words are also lessons about humankind.

So what have we learnt about ourselves from words in 2020? “*Lockdown*” is the Collins Dictionary’s word of the year. For

Merriam Webster it is “*pandemic*”. The lexicographers at Oxford University Press could not find a winner for 2020. A report explained, “*Given the phenomenal breadth of language change and development in 2020, Oxford Languages concluded that this is a year which cannot be neatly accommodated in one single word.*” Some of the words they found ubiquitous were “bushfire”, “impeachment”, “acquittal”, “coronavirus”, “Covid-19”, “lockdown”, “social distancing” and “reopening”.

So we were largely a worried, panic-stricken lot. Coping with the virus and our lives. Searching for light at the end of the tunnel in the form of a vaccine!

But if you were a brand or a business that was interacting on a daily basis with audiences, would you not worry about the words that are getting associated with your activities and presence? Especially during the pandemic where the messaging load and anxieties are already high. The difference

between being noticed, staying relevant and getting lost was a matter of choice. So if food brands did not talk about safety, hygiene and the extra care in the manufacturing process and the supply chain, they have lost an opportunity. If a bank hasn’t emotionally packaged its digital banking services, then it, too, was on the wrong side. Another example is salon care where proximity is a given and the tensions of touch are high. So we had F&B brands talking about that *taste you could trust and serving happiness with extra care*. A salon chain stated its range of safety measures and its “*Touchology*” principle that would be at play when customers walked in with prior appointments.

Words, narratives and the meanings associated with them — all are important to brand messaging. Words to describe your brand. Words that express the sense of loyalty and belonging. The key for a business is how well the audience is grasping the intent of the brand.

Because beyond semantics lie emotions, feelings and attitudes. You ought to possess a way of keeping track of the words and the associated sentiment around them. Certainly, you could take the aid of search words and keywords to reflect your brand and business but these have the limitation of not bringing out the concepts associated with the words. To me, it makes business sense to chart out a plan of getting the most appropriate and relevant set of words associated with your business and brand narratives.

Three quick examples here: 1. For a producer of organic brown rice, the words that need to get linked up as concepts could be *has all parts of the grain, healthy nutrients, keeps you fuelled and fit*. 2. For a cloud migration company, the words could be *technology that grows with your business, pay as you use, unifying the data, securing the cloud with automated cloud anti-virus checks* and more. 3. For a chocolate company the words

could be *happy moments and memories*.

So, if you would like to build relevant narratives here’s a short framework: first thoroughly understand the needs of your audience; then brainstorm for the word concepts associated with them; don’t try to create big words, keep them simple and sometimes an uncommon combination works well too (examples: “*mobilise your data*” or the famous “*I love you Rasna*”); lastly test the word concepts out.

Remember, getting to the right words is a creative process and not a mechanical one. You need to connect with the audience. With your words. And don’t forget what Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said, “*The meaning of things lies not in the things themselves, but in our attitude towards them.*” This applies to words, too...

Raj Mohan Tella is the founder of Brandlogues, a global brand consulting firm. He can be reached at rajmohan@brandlogues.com.

SHORT TAKES

GOA: NO APPROVAL GIVEN FOR GANJA CULTIVATION

Panaji, Dec. 29: Goa chief minister Pramod Sawant on Tuesday said a proposal has been moved before the state government to allow cultivation of marijuana, but no approval has been granted in the matter. His statement came a day after Goa Forward Party (GFP) president Vijai Sardesai claimed there was a proposal to cultivate marijuana (ganja or grass) in the state for medicinal purposes.

Talking to reporters here, Sawant said a file on marijuana cultivation in the state has been moved before the government, but it has not been approved. "There is a proposal, but that does not mean we have given approval. It is for the government to take a decision. That way, there are many things which are proposed to the government, but are never approved," he said.

Sardesai, a former Goa deputy chief minister, on Monday asked how the government will ensure that cultivation of marijuana will be limited to medical purposes.

COURT GRANTS BAIL TO MAN IN DELHI RIOTS CASE

New Delhi, Dec. 29: A Delhi court has granted bail to a man in a north east Delhi riots case, saying there was no CCTV footage of the incident and the victim did not identify the accused when his statement was recorded the first time.

Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat granted relief to Osama on furnishing a bail bond of ₹25,000 with one surety of like amount in the case related to gunshot injuries received by one Rohit Shukla during the riots at Maujpur Chowk.

The court said the victim did not identify Osama when his statement was recorded in March but in another statement recorded in April, he identified the accused as allegedly being a part of the unlawful assembly.

"Out of this crowd, one boy aged 24-25 years came out with pistol and tried to kill him. He also fired at the witness who received injuries in his left thigh and blood started oozing out. Thereafter, the boy ran away," the court noted.

Control room set up to watch NY celebrations

Centre to coordinate with states to ensure norms are followed

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

Following the sharp increase in Corona cases during the Diwali festival, home ministry is clearly not taking any chances for the New Year celebrations. The Ministry has set up a centralised control room to co-ordinate with major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore among others to ensure that all safety and health protocols are strictly followed. Earlier on Monday, home ministry had extended the earlier issued Covid-19 containment guidelines till January 31.

Home ministry officials admitted that during the Diwali celebrations it was observed that people had become careless and it did not follow the health protocols which led to a sharp increase in number of cases particularly in big cities. Centre now clearly wants to avoid a repeat of the same and is thus closely co-ordinating with all metro cities and states to ensure all necessary "safety and health protocols are in place."

"We have learnt from the experience of the Diwali festival season when people had become extremely careless which led to a sharp increase in Coronavirus cases. Now we have asked states and those cities which record high footfall during New Year's to strictly follow all health and Covid protocols," a senior home ministry official said.

Earlier in its advisory issued to states on late Monday evening, the ministry had said that, "while there has been a continuous decline in active cases in India, there is a need for surveillance, containment and caution due to a surge globally and the emergence of a new variant of the virus in the UK"

The ministry also asked the states and union territories to keep a strict vigil to prevent any rise in cases during the New Year celebrations and the winter season.



A medic demonstrates administration of Covaxin, an Indian government-backed experimental Covid-19 vaccine, to a health worker during its trials, at the Urban Primary Health Centre at Tezpur in Sonitpur district of Assam on Tuesday.

istroy official said.

Earlier in its advisory issued to states on late Monday evening, the ministry had said that, "while there has been a continuous decline in active cases in India, there is a need for surveillance, containment and caution due to a surge globally and the emergence of a new variant of the virus in the UK"

The ministry also asked the states and union territories to keep a strict vigil to prevent any rise in cases during the New Year celebrations and the winter season.

It also asked the states and UTs to actively support central authorities in the preparations for an expected vaccination drive.

"Accordingly, containment zones continue to be demarcated carefully; prescribed containment measures strictly followed within these zones; Covid-appropriate behaviour promoted and strictly enforced, and the standard operating procedures (SOPs) prescribed in respect of various permitted activities followed scrupulously," the MHA said.

MUMBAI AIRPORT INTRODUCES EXPRESS TESTING

Mumbai, Dec. 29: The city's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) on Tuesday said it has introduced a new 24X7 Covid-19 testing facility, which gives test results in flat 13 minutes at a cost of ₹4,500.

Since its launch on December 15, CSMIA has witnessed an average of 30-35 such tests per day, CSMIA said in a release.

A total of 400 express tests have been carried out at the airport till December 28, which include passengers who had connecting flights to destinations outside Maharashtra, it said.

In compliance with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) standards, CSMIA is the first airport to adopt the express test method by Abbott 'ID Now, which is aimed at providing arriving passengers with quick and accurate diagnosis, CSMIA said in the release.

The round-the-clock testing facility option is available for all international arriving passengers at the airport at a cost of ₹4,500, CSMIA said.

— PTI

Farmer unions firm on repeal of 3 laws

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, DEC. 29

A day before the next round of talks, protesting farmers' unions took a hard stand and wrote to the Centre tightly ring-fencing the discussion scheduled to take place on Wednesday. In their letter to the government on Tuesday, the farmers unions wrote that the discussion will only be on the modalities of repealing the three farm legislations, giving a legal guarantee on Minimum Support Price, and on two other issues they proposed earlier this week.



Farmers prepare green colour Jalebis, symbolising green revolution, at Singhu border in New Delhi on Tuesday.

— PTI

Farmers choose unique protests

New Delhi, Dec. 29: Serving 'green jalebis' to taking out a 'baraat' (wedding procession), farmers protesting at Singhu border here are using innovative ways to communicate their grievances and demands to the central government.

A group of farmers from Mohali in Punjab have been serving special green jalebis (sweet), saying it symbolised the colour of their crops and the prosperity associated with it.

"We have been distributing green jalebis from the last few days. Nearly five quintals of the sweet are distributed everyday," Jasvir Chand, a protesting farmer, said.

"The green colour of the sweet symbolises Green Revolution as well as peace and tranquillity,"

Chand's companion Baldev Singh (65) said at the protest site. "We have been peacefully protesting against the three new farm laws of the central government for over a month. Although the government has not accepted our demand, we are determined to continue the protest peacefully," he said.

Notably, many curious people queued up to taste the 'green jalebi' which is usually available in golden colour. Meanwhile, some youths from Karnal in Haryana took out a marriage procession at the protest venue to draw attention towards their agitation.

"We thought a marriage procession will be an interesting way to communicate to the people and the government our demands," they said.

WORLD

Biden sees risk in transition stalling

Trump's Pentagon appointees giving hard time

Wilmington, Dec. 29: President-elect Joe Biden said that Donald Trump's appointees at the Pentagon were stalling on the transition and warned that the US faces security risks as a result.

After he and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris were briefed by their transition teams on national security, Biden said that political appointees at the Pentagon as well as the Office of Management and Budget had put up "roadblocks."

"Right now, we just aren't getting all the information that we need from the outgoing administration in key national security areas(s)," Biden said after the briefing.

"It is nothing short, in my view, of irresponsibility," Biden said he was seeking a "clear picture" from the outgoing administration on the force posture of US troops around the world.

"We need full visibility into the budget planning underway at the Defense Department and other agencies in order to avoid any window of confusion or catch-up that our adversaries may try to exploit," Biden said.

Trump has refused to concede the November 3 election, which Biden won by some seven million votes and by 306-232 in the state-by-state Electoral College. The president has made unsubstantiated claims of widespread fraud.

The Trump administration has drawn concern

Mike Pence sued to overturn Biden win

Washington, Dec. 29: Several Republicans have sued US Vice-President Mike Pence in an improbable bid to overturn President-elect Joe Biden's victory, according to media reports.

The last-ditch legal effort, filed on Sunday, came from Representative Louie Gohmert, an eight-term congressman from Texas, along with 11 Arizona residents who had been nominated by that state's Republican Party to serve as electors, The Hill reported.

It comes over a week before Pence is scheduled to preside over a joint session of Congress where the Electoral College votes for Biden and President Donald Trump will be tallied.

Electors have already cast their votes two weeks earlier. Biden received 306 electoral votes 36 more than he needed to win while Trump

received 232.

The lawsuit focuses on Pence's role in the January 6 meeting of Congress to count states' electoral votes and finalise Biden's victory over President Trump.

The lawsuit challenges the 1887 Electoral Count Act, which dictates the vice president's role in announcing the results as a ceremonial one, The Dallas Morning News reported. The Republican lawsuit, which was filed against Pence in his official capacity as vice president, asks a federal judge in Texas to strike down the law as unconstitutional. The Republican plaintiffs go further: They ask the court to grant Pence the authority on January 6 to effectively overturn Trump's defeat in key battleground states.

Election law experts have dismissed the lawsuit's prospects for success.

by shaking up the leadership of the Pentagon since the election including firing defence secretary Mark Esper, who had distanced himself from the president's use of force against unarmed anti-racism demonstrators earlier this year.

Trump's new acting defence secretary, Chris Miller, has said that the outgoing administration had agreed with Biden's people to pause briefings for the holiday season, an assertion that the incoming team called untrue.

More people hospitalised in UK than peak of first virus outbreak

London, Dec. 29: Official figures show more people are currently hospitalised with Covid in England than at the first peak of the outbreak in the spring.

There were 20,426 patients in hospitals as of Monday morning — the last day for which figures are available — compared to the previous high of 18,974 on April 12.

However, case figures do not include Scotland and Northern Ireland, which did not report over the Christmas period.

"Many of us have lost family, friends, colleagues and — at a time of year when we would normally be celebrating — a lot of people are understandably feeling anxious, frustrated and tired," said NHS England chief executive Simon Stevens.

"And now again we are back in the eye of the storm with a second wave of coronavirus sweeping Europe and, indeed, this country."

Health trusts have been told to begin planning for the use of Nightingale field hospitals, the temporary facilities created during the first wave that have largely gone unused.

London and southeast England are currently bearing the brunt of the outbreak, with paramedics in the capital saying they are receiving up

WHO: Be ready for worse pandemics

Johannesburg, Dec. 29: The Coronavirus has devastated lives and economies across the globe, but the World Health Organization (WHO) warned that worse pandemics could like ahead, urging the world to get serious about preparedness.

"This is a wakeup call," WHO emergencies chief Michael Ryan told reporters at a briefing marking a year since the UN agency first learned of the new virus spreading in China.

"This pandemic... has spread around the world extremely quickly and it has affected every corner of this planet, but this is not necessarily the big one," Ryan added.

"We need to get ready for something that may even be more severe in

the future." While huge scientific progress was made to study the virus and develop vaccines at record speed, WHO senior adviser Bruce Aylward cautioned that the world was far from ready for the next pandemic.

"We are into the second and third waves of this virus and we are still not prepared to deal with and manage those," he said.

"While we are better prepared... we are not fully prepared for this one, let alone the next one." 'Good riddance, 2020!'

Meanwhile, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa banned alcohol sales and made masks mandatory in public from Tuesday after a surge in Coronavirus cases.

— AFP

TOURISM REOPENS IN SRI LANKA AFTER 9 MONTHS

Colombo, Dec. 29: Sri Lanka has reopened to tourists after more than nine months.

The Indian Ocean island nation closed to tourists in March, amid the first wave of the coronavirus. Authorities also closed the two main international airports. The government says a pilot program to attract tourists is now being implemented. The first tourists arrived on a special flight from Ukraine on Monday. The 186 tourists are expected to stay in Sri Lanka for 10 days.

Under the pilot program, which will run to Jan. 24, 2,580 tourists are expected to arrive in Sri Lanka, mostly from CIS countries.

Covid-19 has dealt a severe blow to tourism, a vital economic sector for Sri Lanka, accounting for about 5% of its GDP and employing 250,000 people directly and up to 2 million indirectly.

Previously, the government announced that the country would reopen to tourists on Aug. 1, but the date was pushed back after new clusters of Covid patients emerged.

KIN OF HONG KONGERS TOLD ACCUSED HAD 'PLEADED GUILTY'

Hong Kong, Dec. 29: Relatives of the 10 Hong Kongers accused of fleeing the city by speedboat during a government crackdown on dissent say they've been informed that the group pleaded guilty and that the verdicts will be delivered by a court in mainland China on Wednesday.

The families were informed by court-appointed lawyers on Tuesday, according to the 12 Hongkongers Concern Group, which is assisting the families of the detainees.

The 10 defendants all faced charges of illegally crossing the border, while two of them faced additional charges of organizing the attempt, according to an indictment issued in the southern city of Shenzhen. The trials began on Monday afternoon, according to a statement issued by the Shenzhen Yantian District court.

Separate hearings were expected for two minors who were also aboard the boat that was apparently heading for Taiwan when it was stopped by the Chinese coast guard on Aug. 23.

explosive killed 3 French army in mali

Paris, Dec. 29: The French presidency said three soldiers were killed in Mali when an improvised explosive device hit their armoured vehicle.

The soldiers were participating in a military operation in the Hombori area of Mali's central Mopti province, part of a larger mission aiming at fighting Islamist extremists in Africa's Sahel region, the French presidency said in a statement on Monday.

Defense Minister Florence Parly said the soldiers were working "in an area where terrorist groups are attacking civilians and threatening the regional stability".

Parly said they were involved in a mission aiming at helping Mali to gradually be able to ensure its own security. The defense minister did not provide further details.

UK to ban 'Buy 1, get 1' on fatty foods

London, Dec. 29: The UK government has set out plans to ban unhealthy promotions on food and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar from April 2022 as part of a wider anti-obesity drive. The new rules, confirmed on Monday, will prohibit retailers from offer-

ing multibuy promotions such as buy one get one free or 3 for 2 offers on these products. Unhealthy promotions will also no longer be featured in key locations, such as at checkouts, store entrances, aisle ends and their online equivalents.

We know families want to be presented with healthier choices. This is why we are restricting promotions and introducing a range of measures to make sure the healthy choice is the easy choice, said UK Public Health Minister Jo Churchill.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

Former NZ Test player Reid dead

Wellington: John F. Reid, who scored six centuries in 19 Tests for New Zealand including 108 in a famous win over Australia, has died. He was 64.

His death after a long illness was confirmed on Tuesday by New Zealand Cricket. Reid's century against Australia at Brisbane's Gabba ground in November, 1985 was instrumental in New Zealand's win by an innings of 41 runs.

He shared a then-record 225-run partnership with Martin Crowe (188) for the third wicket which helped New Zealand to 553-7 in their only innings.

Richard Hadlee took 9-52 in Australia's first innings and 6-71 in the second to secure the win. Reid was an elegant left-hander known for his skill against spin bowling and the Brisbane innings, on a fast, bouncy pitch, proved his ability against pace.

— AP



John Reid

Chennaiyin, ATK split points

Goa: Both Chennaiyin FC and ATK Mohun Bagan were left frustrated as they played out a goalless draw in the Indian Super League at the GMC Stadium, here on Tuesday. Chennaiyin, in particular, had multiple chances to put the game to bed, but a brilliant display from ATKMB goalkeeper Arindam Bhattacharja prevented them from finding a goal. It was Chennaiyin who were on the attack early on, with Arindam called into action as early as in the fifth minute. Chennaiyin captain Rafael Crivellaro fired a shot at goal only for Arindam to block it.

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IT'S A KNOCKOUT!

India floor Aussies on Day Four of Boxing Day Test

Melbourne, Dec. 29: Hungry for redemption, India recorded a win for the ages under an inspirational Ajinkya Rahane, beating Australia by eight wickets in the second Test to level the four-match series 1-1 here on Tuesday. The target of 70 was never a big one but for a team that was bowled out for its all-time lowest score of 36 only 10 days back, one can't fault them if that played at the back of their minds.

Shubman Gill (35 not out) and skipper Rahane (27 not out) knocked off the runs in 15.5 overs to complete the victory.

This was after the quartet comprising Jasprit Bumrah (2/54 in 27 overs), debutant Mohammed Siraj (3/37 in 21.3 overs), Ravichandran Ashwin (2/71 in 37.1 overs) and Ravindra Jadeja (2/28 in 14 overs) showed maniacal consistency over a period of 100 overs on the flattest of decks, where extra bounce became their go-to weapon.

"The talk was all about showing attitude, intent and character. One hour took the game away from us in Adelaide, but we still have a lot to learn," Rahane said in the post-match presentation.

Indian teams, since the turn of the new millennium, have had some memorable overseas victories but when the backdrop and context of this Test at the iconic MCG is recorded for posterity, Rahane and his magnificent bowling unit will find more than an honourable mention in the pages of history.

"Really proud of all the players, credit to our debutants Gill and Siraj. The way they showed character was amazing," Rahane said.

Australia captain Tim Paine had nothing to offer as an explanation for why his side could not capitalise on the big absences.

— PTI



Captain Ajinkya Rahane (right) and opener Shubman Gill embrace to celebrate India's victory in the second Test against Australia at the MCG in Melbourne. — AP

SCORECARD

Australia 1st Innings 195

India 1st Innings 326

Australia 2nd Innings (overnight 133 for 6): Matthew Wade lbw b Ravindra Jadeja 40, Joe Burns c Pant b Umesh 4, Marnus Labuschagne c Rahane b Ashwin 28, Steven Smith b Bumrah 8, Travis Head c Mayank Agarwal b Siraj 17, Cameron Green c Jadeja b Siraj 45, Tim Paine c Pant b Ravindra Jadeja 1, Pat Cummins c Agarwal b Bumrah 22, Mitchell Starc not out 14, Nathan Lyon c Pant b Siraj 3, Josh Hazlewood b Ashwin 10. Extras (lb-5, nb-3) 8. **Total (all out in 103.1 overs) 200.**

FoW: 1-4, 2-42, 3-71, 4-98, 5-98, 6-99, 7-156,

8-177, 9-185.

Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 27-6-54-2, Umesh Yadav 3.3-0-5-1, Mohammed Siraj 21.3-4-37-3, Ravichandran Ashwin 37.1-6-71-2, Ravindra Jadeja 14-5-28-2.

India 2nd Innings: Mayank Agarwal c Paine b Starc 5, Shubman Gill (not out) 35, Cheteshwar Pujara c Green b Cummins 3, Ajinkya Rahane (not out) 27. **Total (For 2 wks, in 15.5 overs) 70.**

FoW: 1-16, 2-19.

Bowling: Mitchell Starc 4-0-20-1, Pat Cummins 5-0-22-1, Josh Hazlewood 3-1-14-0, Nathan Lyon 2.5-0-5-0, Marnus Labuschagne 1-0-9-0.

PRAISE APLENTY

To win a Test match without Virat, Rohit, Ishant & Shami is a terrific achievement. Loved the resilience and character shown by the team to put behind the loss in the 1st Test and level the series. Brilliant win. Well done TEAM INDIA.

— **SACHIN TENDULKAR**
India great

What a win this is, absolutely amazing effort by the whole team. Couldn't be happier for the boys and specially Jinks who led the team to victory amazingly. Onwards and upwards from here.

— **VIRAT KOHLI**
India captain

Hats off to Indian cricket team, what a fantastic game after playing poor cricket in Adelaide, you made us proud. Ajinkya Rahane, you and your team, proud of you, you didn't have your captain but you showed the way... carry on doing that, well done.

— **KAPIL DEV**
Ex-India captain

Stunning response from India after the 1st Test, Australia's top order have been horribly exposed, some tough decisions required.

— **TOM MOODY**
Former Australia player

Cricket fraternity hail Rahane & Co.

New Delhi, Dec. 29: The Indian cricket fraternity on Tuesday hailed the national team for the "resilience and character" it showed to redeem itself after the Adelaide debacle to win the second Test in Melbourne.

India, led by Ajinkya Rahane, levelled the four-match Test series 1-1 after defeating Australia by eight wickets in the second match at the MCG. Rahane led from the front with a match-winning 112 in India's first innings.

Star batsman Rohit Sharma, who will join the side in Melbourne on Wednesday after completing his mandatory quarantine, praised the team for showing composure in difficult times.

"Fantastic win for the Team India at the MCG. Character and composure shown throughout the game was excellent to watch @bcci," Rohit tweeted.

However, former India captain Bishan Singh Bedi had a word of caution for the 'Men in Blue' and advised them to stay calm. "(The) 36 all out was terribly 'freakish' but an 8wkt

win is not ... I hope Indns can forget both ... one as a nightmare & the other as nothing to float on cloud nine ... still 2 more Tests to go..& plenty of work to do..stay calm Fellas as yur Capt @ajinkyarahane88 & 'think' how to outwit OZL," tweeted Bedi.

Former India batsman V.V.S. Laxman singled out debutants Shubman Gill and Mohammed Siraj for special praise.

"Lot of positives from this win. Rahane led the side brilliantly, bowlers were relentless but the biggest positive is the performance of two debutants. Both of them were confident and not overawed by the big occasion. Strength of Indian cricket is their strong bench strength," he tweeted.

Former India opener Virender Sehwag also took to Twitter to praise the performance of Rahane and his team.

"A really special win at the MCG. Great Determination and great character. Rahane led from the front, the bowlers were terrific and Gill is chill," tweeted Sehwag.

— PTI



Mohammed Siraj (second from left) is congratulated by teammates after dismissing Nathan Lyon on the fourth day of the second Test at the MCG on Tuesday. — AP

FINANCIAL Chronicle

quick BITES

INDICATORS

		%
Sensex	46,973.54	1.14
Nifty 50	13,749.25	1.09
S&P 500*	3,703.06	0.35
Dollar (₹)	73.42	0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.92	0.70
Euro (₹)	89.95	0.08
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	49,985	28 0.06
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	51.29	0.00
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.929	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.926	0.00

* As of 9:30 PM IST

ICICI Bank buys 9.09% stake in edtech firm

ICICI Bank on Tuesday said it will acquire 9.09 per cent stake in educational technology platform Myclassboard Educational Solutions Pvt Ltd for cash consideration of Rs 4.5 crore. "ICICI Bank has entered into an agreement... in relation to an investment in Myclassboard Educational Solutions Pvt Ltd," ICICI Bank said. MESPL offers an online school management platform.



Auto parts biz revenue to grow 16% in FY22

Mumbai, Dec. 29: Ratings agency ICRA on Tuesday said that it has revised its outlook on the auto component industry from negative to stable, on the back of demand revival across original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), replacements and exports.

ICRA expects the domestic auto component industry's revenue to grow 16-18 per cent in the financial year starting April 2021, supported by factors such as increasing content per vehicle, low base effect, and higher realisations.

Long-term demand drivers include increased focus on localised supply chains by Indian original equipment manufacturers. Diversification of supply chain risk by global OEMs is also expected to lead to increased sourcing from India in the coming years, ICRA said in a statement.

— PTI

ICRA expects the domestic auto component industry's revenue to grow 16-18 per cent in the financial year starting April 2021.

SANGEETHA G.
CHENNAI, DEC. 29

Gold prices have provided 27 per cent returns in 2020 — the highest since 2011. With economic uncertainties and lower interest rates prevailing, the gold prices are expected to move past ₹60,000 during the first half of next year. Moving up from ₹39,280 per 10 gm in the Indian market at the beginning of the year, gold prices have almost ended the year

around ₹50,000, providing handsome returns of 27 per cent. This is the highest return the yellow metal has provided after 2011 when it had appreciated 31 per cent.

In the international market, gold moved up 19 per cent from \$1,574 per ounce at the beginning of the year to \$1,878. In between gold prices had made fresh highs by moving past \$2,000 per ounce in August. Silver provided spectacular returns of 45



per cent in the domestic market as well as the international market. Lower interest rates across economies, bond-buying programmes and

Airbags may become a must for front seats

Centre proposes to implement new policy from April 1, 2021

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, DEC. 29

In a bid to increase safety in cars, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways on Tuesday proposed to make airbags for front passengers mandatory in Asia's third biggest car market. The move is aimed at improving passenger safety in case of accidents.

According to a draft notification prepared by the Transport Ministry, the Centre plans to implement this safety norm for all new models of cars which are manufactured from April 1, 2021, onwards.

And, for already existing units, the date for complying with the new rule is proposed to be June 1, 2021.

In this regard, the Centre has invited stakeholders to comment on its proposed new rule in the next one month.

Earlier, the Centre had made having an airbag mandatory for the driver's seat in all cars. This had come into effect on



July 1, 2019.

"Vehicles manufactured on and after 1st Day of April 2021, in the case of new models, and 1st day of June 2021, in the case of existing models, shall be fitted with airbags for the person occupying the front seat, other than the driver. The requirement for such airbags shall be as per AIS 145...under the Bureau of Indian Standards act, 2016," the

draft notification issued by the Transport Ministry stated.

For now, only the driver's seat airbag is mandatory for all cars.

However, this leaves the passenger in the front seat completely vulnerable to severe injury or even death in case of accidents as the passengers in the front seat are not protected by the airbag.

Low-cost inclusions

such as speed alert, reverse parking sensors and seat-belt reminders are some of the standard features in most cars but life-saving airbags are still not mandatory in India. The government has invited the concerned stakeholders to give suggestions on the matter in the next one month. Airbags for drivers were made mandatory by the Union government from July 2019.

FC BANKING BUREAU
MUMBAI, DEC. 29

The deceleration in the total number of ATMs (on-site and off-site) operated by banks has reversed during the year 2020, aided by all categories of banks, except public sector and foreign banks, an RBI report said.

In a report titled *Trend and progress of banking in India* released on Tuesday, the RBI said the total number of ATMs

BDB lifts ban on lab-grown diamond trade

SANGEETHA G.
CHENNAI, DEC. 29

In a move that will streamline lab-grown diamond processing in the country and help it grow as a separate segment, Bharat Diamond Bourse has revoked an earlier ban on its trading.

By revoking the ban, Bharat Diamond Bourse has accepted the expansion of lab-grown processing happening in India. BDB had passed a resolution to ban the trading of lab-grown diamonds in 2015.

Increasing processing activity, De Beers launching its Lightbox jewellery brand of lab-grown, detection becoming cheaper and quicker, advent of blockchain technology for tracing diamonds through the pipeline and greater consumer acceptance are some of the reasons that led to the decision.

"Five years back, machines to detect lab-grown diamonds from natural diamonds were not readily available and were expensive. But now we have advanced machines available at reasonable rates. Further, enough

Increasing processing activity, De Beers launching its Lightbox jewellery brand of lab-grown, detection becoming cheaper and quicker, advent of blockchain technology for tracing diamonds through the pipeline and greater consumer acceptance are some of the reasons that led to the decision.

awareness has been created around the world and across the full pipeline and the demand for lab-grown also has immensely increased across the globe," said Vipul Shah, the vice-chairman of GJEPC. Import of rough lab-grown diamonds as well as exports of polished ones have been significantly growing in the recent past.

The pandemic has further increased demand for lab-grown compared to mine diamonds in the US and the European countries. Between April and November, the exports have grown 61 per cent to ₹1,943 crore.

Gold gives 2nd highest return in 10 yrs

Fall in ATMs stopped: RBI